

Edited by **Christos Carras**



THE HANDBOOK

OF

CULTURAL WORK

**ONASSIS
STEGI**

B L O O M S B U R Y

The Handbook of Cultural Work

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Edited by
Christos Carras

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Gabriele Rosana is Policy Director of Culture Action Europe (CAE), where he coordinates the policy analysis and policy work in contact with the membership and in close relations with the Brussels-based decision-makers of the European Union. Before joining CAE, he

worked as an advisor in the European Parliament for the coordinator of a major political group. An independent policy analyst and freelance journalist, he is a regular contributor to several media outlets. Gabriele holds a master's degree in Law from the LUISS University in Rome and an LL.M. in EU Law and Affairs from the College of Europe in Bruges. CAE is the major European network of cultural networks, organizations, artists, activists, academics and policymakers. Brussels based, CAE is the first port of call for informed opinion and debate about arts and cultural policy in the EU. As the only intersectoral network, it brings together all practices in culture.

Caroline Barneaud is a director of artistic and international projects at Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne. As a curator and producer, she is involved in the programming, design and implementation of the theatre's artistic projects.

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John Bingham-Hall is a researcher and cultural practitioner interested in ecological, infrastructural and performative dimensions of public life in cities. With a background in music (BMus, Goldsmiths) and architectural theory (MSc & PhD, UCL Bartlett), he works across creative and critical forms to analyse and participate in the production of the urban public sphere. As Director of *Theatrum Mundi* from 2015 to 2022, he has initiated projects on cultural infrastructure, urban commons, political voice and sonic urbanism; co-curated multiple research residency programmes; and organized programmes in Lisbon, Beirut, Glasgow, Buenos Aires and Paris. He currently leads *Theatrum Mundi's* Staging Ground residency in Paris, as a member of the LINA European architecture platform. He has held fellowships at the Collège d'études mondiales and University of London Institute in Paris, and research positions at LSE and UCL in London. He is also a research collaborator on the SONCITIES project at University of Oxford and a visiting lecturer on the MA Cities programme at Central St Martin's, London. His research is published across academic journals as well as arts and architecture media including *Frieze*, *Architectural Review*, *Architectural Design*, *Faktur* and *Theatrum Mundi Editions*.

Christos Carras was born in London (UK) in 1962. He studied philosophy at Cambridge University and then earned his PhD from the University of Paris I – Sorbonne (1989). His research interests and publications include the aesthetics of contemporary sonic art, the significance of digital technologies in cultural production, the role of art within broader networks and fields, the politics of cultural production and consumption. From 2000 onwards, he has been working in the cultural sector, having been involved in many European projects. In 2006 he became General Manager of the B & M Theocharakis Foundation for the Fine Arts and Music. From 2009 to 2022 he served as Executive Director of the Onassis Cultural

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Vasil Chaprazov is the author of three books of poetry (Искам да съмне, 1996; Циганско лято, 2006; Сънувам гълъби, 2020), a book of feature stories of distinguished Romany artists (Звезден Ромол, 2012) and a collection of Romany fairy tales, written in both Romany and Bulgarian (Ромски приказки/Романи масаля, 2005). He is also the editor of a collection of Romany poetry (Романо Кхер, 2008). Already an author of numerous articles in leading Bulgarian newspapers and magazines, in 1991, Chaprazov published the first Romany magazine *O Roma*. Four years later, he launched the newspaper *Дром Дромendar*, an outlet for Romany voices and culture. He has been editing and publishing the newspaper for more than two decades. In 2006, the Union of Bulgarian Journalists awarded Chaprazov the Golden Feather for overall contribution to Bulgarian journalism. Chaprazov is one of the founders of 'Roma' (1976), a dissident organization that fought against discrimination and assimilation of the Bulgarian Roma. In 1989, after the fall of the communist regime, he was elected vice-chair of the Democratic Roma Union, and in 1991, he was elected chairman of the United Roma Union.

Christophe De Jaeger is a highly regarded art historian and curator with expertise in contemporary art and the intersection of art and research. As a leader in the cultural community, he has dedicated himself to promoting the integration of artists into efforts to address the pressing ecological and scientific challenges of our time. Currently, he serves as the director of Gluon, a Brussels-based platform for art, science and technology. Gluon's mission is to facilitate artists' engagement in the systemic changes necessary for our time, achieved through residencies that connect artists with researchers and expose them to cutting-edge technological and scientific advancements. From 2014 to 2020, Christophe was employed at the Center for Fine Arts, where he established the Bozar Lab, which focused on media arts.

Adrian Ellis is Founder of AEA Consulting (1990) and the Global Cultural Districts Network (2013). He has worked in senior management and as a board member in both museums and the performing arts and as a strategy consultant to leading clients in the cultural, public and business sectors around the world. He is recognized as having contributed to the cultural sector's deeper understanding of a number of areas including the development of successful cultural building projects, the role of cultural districts in social, economic and cultural development, capitalization needs, impact assessment, the creation of new business models and investment strategies for cultural infrastructure, and strategic responses to long-term societal changes in technology, philanthropy, demographics and the use of leisure time. He was born and raised in the UK, lived in New York from 1998 to 2020 and now lives in central Italy.

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Ben Evans is Head of Arts & Disability (EU Region) at the British Council (the UK's international cultural relations organization) and Project Director of the large-scale Creative Europe-funded cooperation project *Europe Beyond Access*. Ben is currently Interim Coordinator of the European Arts & Disability Cluster. Ben trained as a theatre director in London, Madrid and Moscow, before becoming a freelance director, and Artistic Director of his own company. Ben subsequently held the post of Director of Theatre at London's OvalHouse – a theatre with a rich tradition of supporting emerging artists who sit outside of mainstream culture: including artists of colour, disabled artists and LGBTQI+ artists. Later Ben became Creative Director of BeCreative, an independent producing company, working on a variety of international projects including the inaugural Lagos Theatre Festival. Ben first joined the British Council's Drama & Dance team in 2011, and subsequently was Head of Arts in Portugal before taking his current role in 2015.

Jasmína Ibrahimović knows the world of community arts through her work as Director of *Het Rotterdams Wijktheater* (RWT) and as Programmer of the International Community Arts Festival (ICAF). She also lectures on community arts at various schools.

Catherine Koekoek is familiar with the practice of RWT as an actor and draws on that experience in her PhD research. Based at the Erasmus School of Philosophy in Rotterdam, her dissertation deals with the implications of post-truth politics for democratic theory and practice.

Milica Ilić is a cultural worker specialized in transnational cooperation in contemporary performing arts. She was coordinator and one of the initiators of RESHAPE, an experimental research and development project looking at reimagining the art sector's organizational models in Europe and southern Mediterranean. Previously International Advisor at Onda, the French office for contemporary performing arts circulation, Communication and Administration Manager at IETM, international network for contemporary performing arts and Project Manager at the University of Arts in Belgrade. As a freelance consultant, she worked on numerous international cooperation, training, research and evaluation projects in the field of culture and authored and edited various articles.

Philippe Kern is Founder and Managing Director of KEA European Affairs (www.keanet.eu), a research centre specialized in advising territories and organizations on culture and sport policy since 1999. He has authored numerous studies for European institutions on culture, copyright, culture and creative industries as well as audio-visual policies notably *The Economy of Culture in Europe and The Impact of Culture on Creativity*. KEA had an office in Shenzhen (China) from 2014 to 2018. KEA is involved as an initiator or scientific coordinator of various high-profile European projects in the field of creative entrepreneurship, heritage, culture economy and capacity building. Kern is the co-founder of IMPALA

– the association of independent music companies. He is an expert adviser to the European Union, the Council of Europe, WIPO, the EIB and Eurocities. Since 2018 KEA manages b.creative, an international association aimed at networking creative entrepreneurs worldwide. He advises numerous public and private organizations on strategic development and public affairs' strategies. Philippe was former Director of Public and Legal Affairs of PolyGram (now Universal) and Head of the IFPI Brussels office. He graduated in law from the universities of Strasbourg and Paris II as well as the College of Europe in Bruges. He authored two books: *European. What about Union?* (2017) and *The Future of Cultural Policies* (2020).

Hicham Khalidi is Director of the Jan van Eyck Academie in Maastricht (NL), a Post-Academy for Art, Design and Reflection that offers residencies to international artists, designers – ranging from graphic, fashion, to food and social design – writers, curators and architects. The Jan van Eyck Academie has committed itself to exploring the agency and roles of art, design and other creative practices in relation to the climate crisis and its manifold effects. This institutional focus opens up a wide discourse and creates a framework that embraces a diversity of practices and allows for a multitude of voices. Khalidi previously worked as Associate Curator for Lafayette Anticipations in Paris, curated the ACT II group exhibition in the Beirut Sharjah Biennial in 2017, served as a cultural attaché to the Biennale of Sydney in 2016 and was Chief Curator of the Marrakesh Biennale in 2014.

Rolando Vázquez is a teacher and decolonial thinker. Vázquez is currently Associate Professor of Sociology at the University College Utrecht. He co-directs with Walter Mignolo the annual Maria Lugones Decolonial Summer School. Vázquez's work places the question of the possibility of an ethical life at the core of decolonial thought and advocates for the decolonial transformation of cultural and educational institutions. His most recent publication is *Vistas of Modernity: Decolonial Aesthetics and the End of the Contemporary* (Mondriaan Fund 2020).

Gundega Laiviņa is Freelance Performing Arts and Interdisciplinary Curator from Latvia, former Artistic and Managing Director of the New Theatre Institute of Latvia and Homo Novus, International Festival of Contemporary Theatre. Gundega has been a curator of the Latvian exposition at the three latest editions of the Prague Quadrennial of Performance Design and Space and a member of the curatorial team of the Latvian pavilion at Biennale di Venezia 16th International Architecture Exhibition. From 2010 to 2014, she was a member of the artistic board of Riga – the European Capital of Culture 2014, responsible for artistic practices that engage with urban spaces and communities. Since 2016 she regularly gives talks and runs international workshops and individual mentoring sessions on performative curating that engages with place and communities; she is Lecturer at the Art Academy of Latvia and the Latvian Culture Academy. In her curatorial work, she focuses on novel festival formats and artistic practices devised together with different communities and aimed at igniting social change. She develops art projects that generate encouraging conditions for the co-existence of different communities in urban environments, remind us of our rights to the city, raise awareness of urgent issues such as climate change, threatened democracies and human rights, and give agency to ideas and voices that have been unheard and unseen.

Gundega has studied music, the theory of culture and social anthropology, and has received several European-level diplomas and certificates in arts management. Currently based in Brooklyn where she has recently graduated from the Pratt Institute's Graduate Centre for Planning and the Environment. Her thesis looked at how creative placemaking could become more democratic and inclusive, targeting both human and more-than-human communities that have been excluded from the public realm.

Alessandro Ludovico is a researcher, artist and chief editor of *Neural* magazine (<http://neural.it>) since 1993. He received his PhD degree in English and Media from Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge (UK). He is Associate Professor at the Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton. He has published and edited several books, including *Post-Digital Print*, and has lectured worldwide. He also served as an advisor for the Documenta 12's Magazine Project. He is one of the authors of the award-winning Hacking Monopolism trilogy of artworks (*Google Will Eat Itself*, *Amazon Noir* and *Face to Facebook*).

Marta Martins is a cultural manager, with a degree in Law (FDUL), postgraduate degree in Cultural Management in Cities (INDEG-ISCTE) and Master in Cultural Studies (FCH-UCP). Since 2010 she is Executive Director of Artemrede, a cultural network with seventeen years of activity and eighteen associates (seventeen municipalities and one cooperative), which promotes the development of the territories through artistic creation, cultural mediation strategies, capacity-building activities and policymaking. As an executive director, she has been responsible for strategic planning, management and cultural programming, design and coordination of inter-municipal and intersectoral projects, both at European and national levels. Between 2005 and 2010 she was Production Director at Artemrede. Before that she worked at the Youth Department of the Municipality of Lisbon and collaborated as a consultant with Quaternaire Portugal and with different cultural associations. As a speaker she has participated in several conferences and seminars in the area of cultural policy and management.

François Matarasso is a community artist, writer and researcher. His 1997 report, 'Use or Ornament? The Social Impact of Participation in the arts', established influential concepts in cultural policy, and his subsequent work has been widely published and translated. He has worked for foundations, cultural institutions and public bodies in about forty countries. He has been a trustee of NESTA, Arts Council England and the Baring Foundation and has held honorary professorships in the UK and Australia. Between 2011 and 2015 he worked on undervalued areas of cultural life under the collective title 'Regular Marvels'. His latest book *A Restless Art – How Participation Won and Why It Matters*, was published in 2019. He is a partner in Traction (2020–2) which is researching how technology can support opera co-creation and social inclusion.

Kristina Maurer (AT) is a cultural producer, curator and researcher with a background in Cultural Studies, Media and Art Theory. She develops exhibitions at the nexus of art, society and technology and works together with artists, universities and scientific partners such as the MIT Media Lab and the European Space Agency. From 2018 to 2019 she served as lead producer for 'Compass – Navigating the Future', Ars Electronica's large-scale redesign of the Ars Electronica Center. Her research interests focus on the social, political and societal

implications of new technologies, the evolution of digital cultures as well as current developments in the fields of artificial intelligence, material studies and biotechnology.

Veronika Liebl (AT) is currently Managing Director at the department Festival/Prix/Exhibitions of Ars Electronica. She studied economic and business science at Johannes Kepler University in Linz (graduated in 2010) with study visits at Harvard University (US) and Université de Fribourg (CH) and has an interdisciplinary background in non-profit and innovation management. Since 2011 she is in charge of cultural management and European project development at Ars Electronica Linz and serves as a member for the Linz' city culture council and Linz' UNESCO City of Media Arts Executive Board. She leads Ars Electronica's European collaboration projects in the field of culture, research & education and developed, launched as well as executed in this position – together with her team – numerous EU projects such as the STARTS Prize, DOORS (Digital Incubator for Museums) or the European ARTificial Intelligence Lab.

Piotr Michałowski is a researcher with twenty years of experience, expert on territorial development, Cultural Consultant and Manager. He is Vice-Chairman of the European Network of Cultural Centers ENCC Brussels, and Independent Expert of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme for the period 2022–6. He is also Consultant, Project Manager & Expert on Creative Economy and Territorial Development at EUROCONSULSTANTS S.A. Thessaloniki. He holds MA in Cultural Studies (University of Wrocław), MSc in Management (Lower Silesian University for Public Services) and second MSc in Cultural Diplomacy (Jagiellonian University in Krakow). He is a graduate of the Polish-American Freedom Foundation's School of Moderators, of the University of Wrocław in Musicology and of the Wrocław School of Jazz (as a jazz guitarist). He has trained at the National Centre for Culture in Poland and at Stanford University on International Cultural Management, Local Strategic Development for Cultural Institutions, and Creativity and Innovation. He is a certified leader of the Design Thinking methodology. He has successfully coordinated over 100 projects. He has got twenty of experience working for NGO sector, fifteen years – for public sector. Since 2013 he runs own creative company called 'Micro Art Center', involved in cultural consulting, management, artistic productions and international cooperation.

Oonagh Murphy is an arts manager, writer and lecturer, and her research has taken her around the world to explore international best practice on the scalability of emerging technologies for cultural organizations. She is based at the Institute for Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship at Goldsmiths, University of London where she is Lecturer in Arts Management. Major research projects include being the Principal Investigator of the Museums + AI Network, an AHRC-funded project that has brought over fifty digital leaders together from the UK and the United States to explore models of ethical AI practice within the cultural sector; and institutional Co-I on UnChartered, a European Union-funded multi-partner project examining the societal value of culture. She is a member of the DCMS College of Experts and supports the development of evidence-based policymaking that shapes policy and practice across the broad digital, media, culture and sport portfolio. Alongside writing for *The Guardian*, *Arts Professional*, *The Irish Times* and *Museum Practice* she has been an invited speaker at museum, innovation, digital and creative

industries conferences in Switzerland, Netherlands, Ireland, Latvia, Romania, England and the United States.

Lucia Pietroiusti is a curator working at the intersection of art, ecology and systems, usually outside of the gallery space. Pietroiusti is the founder of the General Ecology project at Serpentine, London, where she is currently Strategic Advisor for Ecology. Current projects include the research and festival series, *The Shape of a Circle in the Mind of a Fish* (with Filipa Ramos, since 2018); the opera-performance *Sun & Sea* by Rugile Barzdiukaite, Vaiva Grainyte and Lina Lapelyte (2019 Venice Biennale and 2020–4 international tour); *Persones Persons*, the eighth Biennale Gherdeina (May–September 2022, with Filipa Ramos) and the non-profit organization, Radical Ecology (with Ashish Ghadiali, since 2022). Recent and forthcoming publications include *More-than-Human* (with Andrés Jaque and Marina Otero Verzier, 2020); *Microhabitable* (with Fernando García-Dory, 2020–2) and *PLANTSEX* (2019).

Mieke Renders is Founder of Raindeer AB, a Swedish company. Mieke was born in Belgium in 1975 and is passionate about culture and languages, having lived in several countries. She is a strong believer in the independence of cultural operators, and their capacity to self-organize in networks in order to achieve greater impact. Before she moved to Sweden, she was General Manager of the Flemish Cultural Center 'De Brakke Grond' in Amsterdam and worked as Cultural Attaché for Flanders House in New York. She has studied physical anthropology and arts management, which led her to start in the museum and cultural heritage field, where she worked both as a curator and as a project manager. Many years later, she shifted more into the living arts and made connections between heritage and performing and visual arts. Networking is a passion, which she has developed as managing director of Trans Europe Halles. In December 2020 she founded a company Raindeer AB together with her sister to develop new concepts in the countryside, connecting food, innovation and circular economy. With the company they run the Not Quite Café/Bistro in Swedish countryside and repurposed Old Paper Mill in Fengersfors and collaborate as much as possible with local producers.

Annick Schramme is Professor at the University of Antwerp (Faculty of Business and Economics), responsible for the master's programme in Cultural Management. In addition, she is Academic Director for the Creative Industries at the Antwerp Management School. In 2018 she started there a new international master's in Fashion Management and an executive programme Leadership in Culture (LinC) in collaboration with the University of Utrecht. Moreover, since she is Chair of the Strategic Advisory Board Culture, Youth, Sports and Media of the Flemish government and also Member of the Flemish UNESCO Commission (2016–24). From 2013 until 2017, she has been President of ENCATC, the European network on Cultural Management and Cultural Policy Education and Research and is regularly invited as an evaluator for European projects or expert commissions.

Her research is primarily focused on the challenges for the cultural and creative sectors locally, nationally and internationally. The overarching question in her work is how management and entrepreneurship in the cultural and creative sectors can be improved and what

role policy can play in this development. In her research, she follows an interdisciplinary approach.

Robertina Šebjanič is an artist whose work explores the ecological, geopolitical and cultural realities of aquatic environments and the impact of humanity on other organisms. In her analysis of the Anthropocene and its theoretical framework, the artist uses the terms 'Aquatocene' and 'aquaforming' to refer to the human impact on aquatic environments. Her projects call for the development of empathetic strategies aimed at recognizing the rights of more-than-human entities.

Her artwork Aurelia 1+Hz/proto viva generator (a. p.) is part of BEEP {collection;} in Spain since 2019. Her works have received awards and nominations at Prix Ars Electronica, Starts Prize, and Falling Walls and many more.

She has exhibited/performed at solo and group exhibitions as well as in galleries and at festivals: Ars Electronica (Linz), Kosmica festival – Laboratorio Arte Alameda (Mexico City), Matadero (Madrid), La Gaîté Lyrique (Paris), Le Cube (Paris), MONOM, CTM (Berlin), Art Laboratory Berlin, ZKM (Karlsruhe), re:publica (Berlin), Mladi Levi (Ljubljana), Centro de Cultura Digital (Mexico City,) Device art and Touch me festival_Kontejner (Zagreb), The Museum of Contemporary Art Belgrade – MoCAB, Eastern Bloc (Montreal), Eyebeam (New York), Palais des Beaux-Arts BOZAR (Bruselj), Cukrarna Gallery (Ljubljana) and more.

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She holds a degree in Philology & Modern Greek Studies, as well as an MA in Cultural Management & Theatre Criticism. She is currently writing a book, *Sustainable Theatre: Theory, Context, Practice*, which will be published by Methuen Drama (Bloomsbury Academic).

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Christina Varvia is currently Research Fellow and formerly Deputy Director of Forensic Architecture where she held a variety of roles, from leading investigations and overseeing research and the development of new methodologies, to organizing exhibitions and setting up office structures. She was trained as an architect at the Architectural Association (AA) and Westminster University and has taught a Diploma unit (M.Arch) at the AA (2018–20). She was also Member of the Technology Advisory Board for the International Criminal Court (2018). Currently, Christina is teaching at the Centre for Research Architecture, at Goldsmiths, University of London, as well as pursuing her PhD at Aarhus University where her research focuses on biopolitics and imaging of the human body. She has received the Novo Nordisk Foundation Mads Øvlisen PhD Scholarship for Practice-based Artistic Research and is also Fellow at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, where she co-curated the Forensic Architecture exhibition *Witnesses*. She is a founding member and Chair of the Board of Forensis: the Berlin-based association established by Forensic Architecture.

João Vasconcelos is Founder of Canal180, a Cannes award-winning television channel focused on culture and creativity, targeted to the creators of the world. The economics graduate has dedicated most of his work experience to marketing, media and communications. Started in the Telecommunication industry as Product Developer in Sonae Telecom and six years later moved to the renowned advertising Agency BBDO to specialize in brand development and marketing strategy in multiple sectors. In 2010 he won first prize in the Creative Industries Entrepreneurship National Award (Serralves/Unicer) with the project OSTV (Open Source Television) an original collaborative approach to develop a television Channel in the increasingly fragmented cultural and media landscape.

Isabelle De Voldere is Senior Economist at IDEA Consult. She has over twenty years of work experience in both academic and applied policy research and advice. Her work focuses on topics related to sectoral and regional competitiveness, innovation, entrepreneurship, access to finance and socio-economic impact analysis. Isabelle collaborated and managed numerous projects for clients such as the European Commission, regional and local governments, sector federations and public agencies.

In the last fifteen years she has developed a particular interest in advising on the competitiveness of professional cultural and creative actors, the socio-economic position of culture and creative entrepreneurs, access to finance for creative ventures and the role of culture in societal transformations. She contributed to policy evaluation and development in the area of cultural and creative sectors at both regional and European levels. In recent years, Isabelle managed European studies on crowdfunding4culture, the impact of digitization on market dynamics and value creation in creative value chains, the effects of the COVID-19 crisis on cultural and creative sectors and fostering knowledge valorization through the arts and cultural institutions, among others. Isabelle is currently also part of the core research team in the EU-funded project 'Creative FLIP – Finance, Learning, Innovation and Patenting'.

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Martina is co-author of the *So You Need Money?* guidebook, helping cultural and creative entrepreneurs through the financial jungle, and is now involved in the development of content for a web application to direct cultural and creative sectors towards the most suitable funding and financing opportunities for their needs and characteristics.

Martina obtained a master's degree in Economics and Management of Arts and Cultural Activities at the Ca' Foscari University of Venice in 2018, where she graduated with a research thesis on governance and change management in cultural and creative organizations.

André Wilkens is Director of the European Cultural Foundation in Amsterdam, whose mission is to grow a European sentiment. In March 2022 the Foundation activated the Culture of Solidarity Initiative's Ukraine edition in response to the war in Ukraine. The Culture of Solidarity Initiative was originally launched in 2020 in response to the Covid-19 crisis. André is also the Board Chair of Tactical Tech, the co-founder of the Initiative Offene Gesellschaft and a founding member of the European Council on Foreign Relations. In the past he worked as Strategy Director of Stiftung Mercator, as Director of the Open Society Institute Brussels and as Head of Strategic Communications of UNHCR in Geneva. André is the author of two books, on Europe (*Der diskrete Charme der Bürokratie*, S.Fischer 2017) and on Digitalization (*Analog ist das neue Bio*, Metrolit 2015), and a regular media contributor.

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Her area of interest and expertise is culture for social transformation and urban development. Among others, she has initiated the Inner Space programme, an international initiative on arts and well-being, including an annual conference, a series of pilot interventions, research projects and policy proposals on the topics of art, health and well-being.

Currently she is Programme Director of the Cluj Cultural Centre. She is also a co-founder and member of the Board of Directors of the AltArt Foundation, a member of the Strategy Group of the A Soul for Europe initiative and a board member of the Balkan Express network. Rarița is one of the co-founders and a former president of Fabrica de Pensule, an independent collective space for contemporary arts functioning between 2008 and 2021 in Cluj. She has been involved in strategic planning and programming for the participation of the city of Cluj in the competition for the title of European Capital of Culture 2021 and has coordinated the development of the cultural strategies of the city of Cluj for the past three planning periods.

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Foreword: Cultural work in a complex world

At the Onassis Foundation, we are driven by an overriding objective – to ignite meaningful dialogues and provoke discussions on the critical issues that define our era. From human rights and democracy to equality and the ever-pressing climate crisis, our mission is to shed light on these multifaceted challenges through our work in culture, education and health. For us these are not isolated domains, but rather interconnected dimensions that offer diverse possibilities for understanding and progress.

Innovation and disruption lie at the heart of our endeavours. The world has undergone profound transformations during the past few years, necessitating a constant alignment with the challenges of our time. To be contemporary means to be attuned to the prevailing circumstances that shape, influence and impact us. Culture is a matrix out of which poignant questions arise and responses are crafted that illuminate the path toward a life worth living.

While our home city, Athens, may be viewed as a microcosm of these times, it is important to recognize that Europe and our world at large are facing similar and unprecedented challenges. Recent years have had more than their fair share of destabilization, demanding adaptations across all sectors. The cultural realm, in particular, has undergone significant transformations, and it is incumbent upon us to encourage critical reflections on its current state.

In light of our recognition that we find ourselves in a ‘polycrisis,’ a term aptly coined by Edgar Morin in the 1990s, we must confront how this reality impacts our work in the cultural sector. What implications does it have for engaging with the public space? How can we create cultural content and support creative endeavours that challenge exclusion and discrimination? How might cultural work contribute to mitigating the climate crisis? How can we thoughtfully navigate the multifaceted consequences of the digital transition?

These pressing questions lie at the very core of our endeavours at Onassis Stegi, and it is only natural that we should invite thinkers and cultural practitioners to move the discourse around them forward. At Onassis, we aspire to create a world in which critical awareness and hope co-exist. Culture transcends artistic expression; it serves as a conduit to discuss the essence of coexistence, democracy and social justice. Is this an ambitious pursuit? Perhaps. But it has always been so and will continue to be.

In closing, I extend my gratitude to all the authors who have contributed their insights, expertise and creativity to this book. It is my sincere hope that their words will inspire readers to reflect, challenge prevailing norms and actively contribute to the vibrant landscape of cultural work today.

Afroditi Panagiotakou
Director of Culture
Onassis Foundation

Introduction

A European perspective

The Handbook of Cultural Work brings together leading experts, practitioners and theorists who work throughout Europe. The book consciously adopts a European perspective, and even more specifically one centred on the European Union (EU). The conditions that inflect the way work in the cultural and creative sectors (CCS) intersects with other areas of social, political and economic life vary greatly in different parts of the world, and we felt that any attempt to articulate a global understanding would inevitably remain superficial and nonetheless partial. Not that Europe is a unified cultural area itself, far from it. However, although culture is not a competency of the EU and remains to a large degree the affair of each member state, the overarching political priorities of the EU, its various funding instruments and of course its Agenda for Culture, do constitute a shared framework, as indeed does the mobility of European cultural workers and researchers within Europe.

We have decided, obstinately, to include the UK within this EU-focused approach both because its history of cultural policymaking and research on cultural policy have been influential well beyond its borders and because strong collaborations have connected and hopefully will continue to connect arts organizations and cultural practitioners on both sides of the Channel.

The Covid pandemic as catalyst

The dynamics that are shaping the evolution of the CCS today emerged to a large degree from the turbulence the sectors underwent during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic affected the CCS – with the exception of certain sub-sectors such as video games – more than almost any other sector of the economy. A report for UNESCO in June 2021 (Naylor et al., 2021) estimated that in 2020 there was a contraction in Gross Value Added generated by the cultural and creative industries worldwide of \$750 billion in 2020 compared to 2019, with a corresponding loss of around 10 million jobs. For Europe in particular, a widely discussed Ernst & Young (EY) study estimated a €199 billion or 31 per cent decline in industry turnover, again compared to 2019 (Lhermitte et al., 2021). This unprecedented crisis revealed significant structural weaknesses in the sector, particularly in terms of labour and insurance conditions, drastically accelerated the integration of digital methods of production and distribution of the cultural product, highlighted the importance of culture for society and sparked many debates about the ways in which it could and should recover.

The impact of the pandemic forced governments to support the CCS in an unprecedented way, even though these interventions could not cover their losses and shrinkage. The crisis once more drew attention to questions of how to assess the cultural sectors' creation of value, and therefore to articulate justifications for their funding in the face of other potential priorities. It also obliged the sector's own actors to ask themselves whether they had up until then achieved a holistic understanding of the ways in which culture contributes to the production of social and economic value and had managed to communicate it. As stated in the EY research mentioned above, a key challenge for the sector's robust recovery was to deepen its links with society and to leverage the 'multiplying power of its millions of individual and collective talents – as a major accelerator of social and environmental transformations in Europe' (Lhermitte et al., 2021: 10). One of the pandemic's collateral results was therefore to prompt a reformulation of the CCSs position in the policy landscape.

A new cultural deal

In November 2020, in the midst of the pandemic, four major European organizations presented the manifesto 'A Cultural Deal for Europe'. This document underlines the cross-cutting importance of culture, stressing that 'Culture is more than a sector. It is a vector of positive change' and stating:

The proposed Cultural Deal for Europe aims to mainstream culture across all policy fields to fully realise its potential:1 from the green transition to Europe's geopolitical ambition, and from the digital shift to a value-driven Union. It brings together both short-term and long-term perspectives. It eyes the immediate recovery of our societies with the ambition to build a new paradigm for designing the Future of Europe.

(Culture Action Europe et al., 2022)

In his opening remarks during the online debate that launched the 'Cultural Deal', the then-President of the European Parliament, the late David Sassoli, stated: '(We need to) think (...) of culture as a pivot for recovery, in particular for the green and digital transition but also as the social cement of a post-Covid world that needs to be rebuilt ...' ('A Cultural Deal for Europe', n.d.). It was certainly not the first time it was suggested that culture could play a developmental role at the social and economic level. Particularly in relation to cities, there had been a number of studies and reports that underlined the contribution of culture to urban resilience and sustainability.¹

The difference in the approach of the 'Cultural Deal for Europe' lies in the proposal that culture should be involved in shaping the goals, not only in achieving them. Perhaps the most tangible example of this approach at the level of European policies is the New European Bauhaus (NEB),² an initiative based on three values: sustainability, aesthetics and inclusion. The forms of development and innovation promoted by the NEB are imbued with cultural values and are based on a cross-sectoral approach in which people from the CCS are fully involved.

Another recent policy proposal in the same vein, analysed in detail in this volume by Philippe Kern, is 'Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)15 of the Committee of Ministers [of the Council of Europe] to Member States on the role of culture, cultural heritage and landscape in addressing global challenges' (CoE, 2022), which was adopted on 20 May 2022. The

Recommendation, among other things, states that ‘the cultural world can make an important contribution to defining collective goals and activating cooperation to achieve them’, while the first recommendation to Member State governments is to ‘take forward actions at governmental level aiming at further development of a new understanding of cultural, cultural heritage and landscape resources – and hence new policies – as strategic elements to help address global challenges and as drivers of social transformation, with the aim of creating an open and diverse cultural space and a safe and sustainable environment, accessible to all, as a basis for democratic societies’ (CoE, 2022).

The recognition of the role of culture in social and economic development is certainly not limited to the European institutions. The Rome Declaration of the G20 Culture Ministers (2021) – the first of its kind within the G20 – proposes a horizontal role for the cultural industries, based on five fundamental principles:

- Seeing the CCS as drivers of renewal and sustainable and balanced development
- Protecting cultural heritage
- Addressing climate change through culture
- Building skills through training and education
- Enhancing the digital transition and the adoption of new technologies in the cultural sphere

To mention one more example, in June 2022, the OECD published ‘Culture Fix’ (OECD, 2022), a report highlighting the cross-cutting importance of CCS for the recovery and resilience of societies in the post-Covid era and presenting evidence-based proposals for maximizing their positive impacts on society and the economy. Some of the key premises of the report are:

- The CCS contribute to innovation in many areas. They lead to the development of new products, services, business models, and contents. This would suggest the need for cross-sectoral, integrated planning.
- Participation in culture not only strengthens the sector itself but generates important societal benefits, such as social inclusion, an active civil society, expanded learning skills, health and can also contribute to addressing problems such as the climate crisis.
- Cultural ecosystems are cornerstones of ‘placemaking’. Investing in such ecosystems is an essential element of urban regeneration and development projects though of course policies must be sensitive to local contexts.
- Local ecosystems in the CCS benefit from the development of smart and innovative synergies, for example, between local and other businesses, research centres and universities, civil society organizations, schools, international bodies in relation to specific thematic axes.
- Financing of the CCS should be seen as an investment, not a cost, because of the direct and indirect benefits to the economy and society. This also indicates a need to leverage new financial resources and facilitate the CCS access to financial systems. Of particular importance is the development of mechanisms that respond to local conditions.

The proposition, emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic, was therefore that culture is not just a valuable source of spiritual, emotional and intellectual engagement that thrives in and binds communities large or small, but that it is a core component of political and economic activity and policy. Not just in the general sense of ‘culture’ as a way of being, expressing oneself and doing things, but in the specific sectoral sense. As Gijs de Vries wrote, ‘To harness the power of culture [...] the EU needs a comprehensive strategy. Opportunities for synergy with other policy domains – from the Green Deal to economic and foreign policy – should be systematically explored, and culture should be integrated in the Commission’s flagship strategies. It is time to connect the stove-pipes. It is time for a Europe of culture’ (de Vries, 2021: 5).

Engage, experiment, create

These policy documents, reports or proposals focus on the capacity of culture to reinforce the implementation of political priorities. There is no doubt that funding is one of the main instruments of policy; to the degree that funding instruments reflect these policy priorities, this cannot but profoundly affect the way the sector today conceives of its role in practice. However, it would be wrong to believe that this connection between culture and social issues has emerged solely from a top-down policy-driven process. It is important to remember, and not just for reasons of historical accuracy, that artists and cultural workers were engaged with critical social issues long before policy identified culture as a lever for effecting change in selected areas. For decades already, albeit principally outside the mainstream, artists have been curious about using scientific data and testing new materials, disabled dancers have created amazing productions, theatre directors have felt the need to work against the politics of representation and promote works with marginalized communities, curators have thought deep and hard about bias and decolonization, and practitioners from across all disciplines have explored the potential of participatory art forms to further bottom-up democratic agendas.

The search for an understanding of the relationship between the ‘art world’ and the ‘real world’ has a long and fascinating history. For example, the historical avant-garde, driven by the life-shattering experience of the First World War trenches, strived for the elimination of the gap between art and life because it wanted to destroy the symbolic and conceptual order that sustained a world of injustice and destruction.³ That life should become more like art, with its capacity for radical imagination, was a desire that also underpinned much of the politics of May ’68. Likewise, there is a rich history of institutional critique which attempts to reveal how the art world can function as a distracting front-end for the extractive and exploitative back end of capitalism, and many fascinating examples of artistic or curatorial work that attempts to rectify social inequalities that permeate the art world itself.⁴ Peter Weibel, for example, has also written about the connection between political activism and artistic practice in terms of the ‘parallel between performative, interactive and participative art forms and global activism’ (Weibel, 2015: 25). And beyond the creative dimension itself, the cultural sector has also created its own institutions and practices that support different forms of community relations or systematic confrontations of crucial social issues and we shall read about several such instances in the pages of this volume.

The role of the CCS is to constantly create and experiment, inevitably from within the tensions and dynamics of their world. In recent years the cultural sector has often been directly challenged by society on various fronts: the catastrophic climate crisis, the deep-rooted racism confronted by the Black Lives Matter movement, the restitution of colonial era artefacts and a more general reckoning with the heritage of coloniality, gender equality which remains an ongoing demand, the highest ever number of refugees and displaced people.⁵ One could add as more specific sectoral concerns, the importance of structurally eradicating discrimination of all kinds within the sector's hierarchy and protecting artistic freedom. As Adrian Ellis, a contributor to this volume, notes:

Most of these things are threats and challenges to the status quo, many are opportunities for a more equitable and morally grounded society but addressing or progressing them axiomatically requires human beings to work together in ways that clearly do not come naturally to us. We are walking across a very narrow bridge to an uncertain future – a future that is within our collective grasp our genetic optimism tells us, we know, but also elusive.⁶

Working together implies working across the usual institutional boundaries of the cultural world. And it might therefore seem that the policies described above that aim to enlist culture in addressing many of these challenges might be a response to these societal pressures. However, there are two issues that need to be mentioned here, even if it is not possible to expand upon their implications.

Instrument or matrix of new perspectives?

The first is that there is a real risk of encouraging an instrumentalization of creative work. This can occur at two levels. Firstly, creative work is burdened with the task of healing social wounds that are in the first place created by systemic inequality, violence and oppression that it clearly cannot affect. So, although there is no doubt that specific cultural action can be immensely beneficial, rewarding and effective for specific communities and groups, as is powerfully exemplified in the texts by Marta Martins and François Matarasso in this volume, one should be wary of the claims made by policy aspirations in regard to the real overall potential of culture to deliver to the level expected of it within a political system that leaves fundamental inequalities and degradations of life-worlds untouched. A corollary to this is that those of us working in the cultural sector must push back against unreasonable expectations despite the temptation to gain access to funding by buying in to discourses of instrumentality that in many instances are lacking in substantiation.

Secondly, overvaluing the instrumental capacity of cultural work can lead to an undervaluing of its critical potential that, although less practical in scope, opens up horizons of possibility that are essential for imagining and perhaps desiring a different world. As Claire Bishop writes in 'Artificial Hells', 'there is an urgent need to restore attention to the modes of conceptual and affective complexity generated by socially oriented art projects' (2012: 8) rather than fixate on their possible instrumental outcomes. Although this is not the place to expand on this line of thought, it is worth referring to Jacques Rancière's understanding of the political impact of artistic practices: 'Politics invents new forms of collective enunciation; it reframes the given by inventing new ways of making sense of the sensible, new

configurations between the visible and the invisible, and between the audible and the inaudible, new distributions of space and time – in short, new bodily capacities’ (Rancière, 2010: 139). This ‘newness’, and the corresponding friction it generates is what Rancière terms *dissensus*, and as he affirms that ‘If there exists a connection between art and politics, it should be cast in terms of dissensus, the very kernel of the aesthetic regime’ (Rancière, 2010: 140). Policy and politics in Rancière’s sense are of course radically different things, indeed in most instances probably contradictory. Nevertheless, in a paradox already noted by Theodor W.-Adorno in his essay ‘Culture and administration’ (2001) cultural policy can possibly enable the emergence of political content, as long as we do not restrict its horizon of efficacy to the instrumental satisfaction of policy. And, to bring the discussion back to the conceptions of the value of culture that inform policy Geoffrey Crossick and Patrycja Kaszynska note:

... one of the most significant ways in which [Arts and cultural activity and engagement] bring value to individuals and society is by creating the conditions for change, with a myriad of spillover effects that include an openness, a space for experimentation and risk-taking at the personal, social and economic levels, an ability to reflect in a safer and less direct way on personal, community and societal challenges, and much else.

(2016)

The value of cultural work

The second issue related to the new expanded role of culture today brings us to a consideration of the situation of cultural work today. The cultural worker is more and more often obliged to don the clothes of the social worker, educator, entrepreneur, innovator. Although it would clearly be both quixotic and reactionary to propose that artists and cultural workers more generally should work within the confines of traditional artistic disciplines, it is useful to retain a critical clarity regarding the uncanny connections between this new role of the artist and traits of what Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello analysed as the ‘new spirit of capitalism’ (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005: 161–88) and facets of what Zygmunt Bauman termed ‘liquid modernity’ (Bauman, 2000). The kind of cross-disciplinarity that is so characteristic of contemporary thinking and policymaking is definitely related to the modalities of work in the creative sectors today. Cultural workers need to be constantly shifting from project to project, relying on short-term contracts, becoming adept at promotion and branding, expanding their skills, chasing innovation, cultivating an entrepreneurial mindset and a high level of self-reliance (de Peuter, 2014: 264). And whereas this flexibility can be seen as an attractive and positive antidote to routine, hierarchy and standardized processes, the other side of the coin is a heightened precarity. This contemporary dimension, along with the traditional insecurity of work in the arts and culture sector, became painfully apparent during the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting shut-down of the sector to which we have already referred above.

It would be perverse not to refer to the conditions of work in a volume entitled ‘A handbook of cultural work’. On the one hand, the overall precarity of the workforce in the cultural sector is by now well understood and documented. According to EU Labour Force Survey data, in 2019 32 per cent of the cultural workforce was self-employed (vs. 14 per cent in

general) and 75 per cent were in full-time employment (vs. 81 per cent in general). Precarity is however also related to the more general characteristics of the sector:

[...] artists and cultural workers have atypical work patterns. These include the non-standard nature of their working conditions, status and income, the unpredictability of the end product of artistic work and of its reception, the fact that artistic creation is both time – and labour-intensive, business models driven by artistic excellence and other societal values rather than market goals, and propensity for cross-border mobility (which includes atypical situations that aren't easily translated into pre-existing categories associated with visas, social protection or taxation).

(Culture Action Europe and Dâmaso, 2021: 7)

Furthermore, “the EU Labour Force Survey does not consider in its statistics the great number of “invisible” workers in the CCS: temporary and intermittent workers, persons working under unpaid volunteer programmes and persons holding a second job in the cultural or creative field while maintaining a first main non-cultural occupation’ (Voldere et al., 2021: 16). Finally, the shift to digital has further destabilized the sector by significantly modifying production and consumption modes and value chains.

Reports and policy recommendations underline the need for a profound understanding of the sector’s conditions in order to adapt existing EU legislation and develop new ones that will address the primary concerns: fair income, rights enforcement, regulatory systems, access to information and education. A recent report for the International Labour Organization also underlined the importance of developing ‘legal frameworks [that] can be easily translated into policies that ensure effective coverage, taking into account particular employment circumstances such as fluctuating employment status, irregular incomes, intermittent nature of work, geographical mobility, etc.’ (Galian, Licata and Stern – Plaza, 2021: 28). Many of these themes are also taken up by Annick Schramme in her contribution to this volume.

Value flows

This situation raises more general questions about flows of value and who benefits from them. As we have seen, there is an almost unanimous embrace of cultural work’s more general contribution to the economy and society. The CCS are (and are increasingly promoted and defended as) one of the most dynamic sectors of the European economy, with multiple direct and indirect benefits to society as a whole and function as a ‘prototyping’ lab in relation to technological and social innovation. It is therefore a serious issue that, as we have noted above, they rest on largely unsustainable labour relations and work conditions. Beyond this however, I would suggest that the case of the CCS raises broader questions, even in relation to our conception of the contemporary relationship between work and value more generally.

It is not feasible to radically change the importance of self-employment and project-based work in general because it is in the DNA of how new cultural content is produced. It is also characteristic of many types of work in the platform economy, whose importance for better or for worse is growing. Likewise, whereas some cultural sub-sectors have adaptable and robust business models, many are and will remain largely dependent on public,

grassroots or philanthropic support in various forms, whilst nonetheless providing services that are seen as beneficial, even essential. Moreover, the new value chains created through the digital transition raise serious issues regarding the remuneration of cultural work, about which Prodromos Tsiavos writes in this volume. Finally, as several reports have noted, there are large numbers of people who contribute in important ways to the vitality of the CCS but do not register at all in sectoral statistics regarding employment, social security and remuneration. It goes beyond the scope of this volume, but it would seem that a deeper understanding of the gap between the value created for society in general by the cultural sector in areas as diverse as health, social cohesion, innovation and urban regeneration and the ways in and degrees to which this value returns to those who perform work in the cultural sector is required. One might even further suggest that people contribute to the overall wealth of society in many essential ways that are not directly related to the market and to salaried employment and that philanthropic and state funding does not bridge this shortfall in a dependable and satisfactory manner. If so, could it be that this wealth should rather be considered to be held in common and that ways to redistribute it might be sought?

It is not by accident that the onset of the pandemic saw a renewed interest in the idea of a universal basic income (UBI) or similar approaches to guaranteeing that there is a minimum revenue floor through which citizens cannot fall. The experience of widespread precarity, the renewed awareness of the importance of solidarity, perceived simplicity and ease of application and the simple fact that, to meet the needs of the poorer sections of their societies, many governments adopted policies of cash transfers brought this form of policy closer to home. Though the idea of a UBI has yet to become mainstream and entails many complex issues, the case of the CCS during the pandemic but also more generally thereafter could provide an opportunity to rethink the relationship between value, work and remuneration in ways that are important not only for the sector but for society as a whole.⁷ This line of questioning is also adopted by Tere Badia and Gabriele Rosana in their contribution to this volume.

The Handbook

The Handbook of Cultural Work presents perspectives on these and other themes and problematics from inside the sector. As we have seen, intersections between cultural work and critical social issues are to be found across a wide-ranging field, and the perspectives presented are equally diverse. Some examine and interrogate the significance of policies in relation to culture, others are closer to actual processes of artistic production, and others still reflect the experience of those who are active at the various interfaces between production and consumption.

Part 1: 'Spaces of cultural action'

The first part approaches the 'Spaces of cultural action' from diverse angles. Adrian Ellis examines how the role of cultural infrastructure is evolving within the broader agendas of urban development. He compares the roles of cultural districts and creative districts and reflects upon their function as policy instruments. Jasmina Ibrahimovic and Catherine Koekoek examine cultural spaces as a different kind of – social – infrastructure, one that can support the emergence and sharing of narratives that are at once personal and plural. Investing spaces

left void by the market and shifts in production patterns also leads to the creation of cultural infrastructures that, as Mieke Renders says, go well beyond cultural production to ‘create new forms of collaboration and new concepts of power and accessibility whilst actively shaping new ways of thinking about civic use, citizenship, democracy, and (participatory) governance’. The exploration of alternative spaces for cultural production also goes to the heart of the creative process and its presuppositions. As Gundega Laivina writes, ‘It is increasingly an intentional art workers’ choice to question hierarchies that prevail in conventional art production and presentation and enter relationships that continuously challenge the artwork’s structure and power relations.’ John Bingham-Hall reflects upon the processes put into play when trans-disciplinary artistic research takes the city itself as its object, workshop and stage, when the complex dynamics of urban space give rise to new forms of scholarly, artistic and activist practices. Although most of the contributions to this chapter focus on urban space as the matrix of much contemporary cultural practice, Piotr Michalowski reminds us of the ‘potential of rurality to be a laboratory for conceiving an innovative vision’ for societies more generally, whether urban, peri-urban or rural, and for putting communities, wherever they are, at the centre of our cultural practice. Finally, Milica Ilic analyses how mobility, extending the space of cultural action beyond any particular locality, and acting and thinking trans-nationally beyond the limitations of the nation-state open up vital perspectives, but remain confronted by obstacles that reflect the national model of cultural politics that still prevails today.

Part 2: ‘Cross-sectoral cultural action’

The second part, ‘Cross-sectoral cultural action’, focuses on some of the interfaces between work in the cultural sector and some of the other areas that we mentioned in the first part of this introduction that are the object of broader policy objectives pertaining to culture. Sylvia Amann argues that the rapid transformation of the social and political environment combined with the range of wicked problems that societies face mean that cultural policy is of necessity cross-sectoral. However, she points out that although younger cultural professionals are both aware of and capable of responding to this need, sectoral policies remain siloed at many levels. The potential synergies between the cultural and health sectors have been the object of an increasing number of studies, such as the ‘Culture for Health Report. Culture’s contribution to health and well-being. A report on evidence and policy recommendations for Europe’ (Zbranca et al., 2022). Rarita Zbranca, one of the coordinators to this report, contributes a chapter that serves as a concise and clear introduction to the relationship of culture and well-being and provides a roadmap for further research and practice. One of the core EU policy areas concerns the digital transformation. Kristina Maurer and Veronika Liebl in a chapter based on in-depth experience from the groundbreaking programme of the Ars Electronica Centre in Linz, Austria, examine how artists and creatives are ‘taking on various roles in bridging arts, technology, and society’, and in so doing are critically interrogating the impact of digital technologies on our lives. Christophe De Jaeger writes of the experience of Brussel-based research laboratory Gluon in using creative approaches developed in the context of the S+T+ARTS (Science+Technology+Arts) ecosystem to bridge the gap between informal and formal education. Finally, Jaana Erkkilä-Hill in her contribution examines the transversal nature of artistic practice and thought, taking examples of thinking and

acting across perceived inter-species divides as the most radical embodiment of art's liberating and healing potential.

Part 3: 'Politics, power and access'

Policies, such as the ones referred to in the first half of this introduction, aim to leverage the dynamics of culture for the attainment of a range of socially useful objectives, such as social cohesion, well-being, climate change mitigation and others. However, policies have significant blind spots, in which significant imbalances in power and access remain unaddressed. The contributions to the part on 'Politics, power, and access' look at specific examples of the ways in which culture works inside these areas which are flattened in the broad brushstrokes of policy. François Matarasso, one of the most experienced researchers and practitioners in the field discusses the challenges of articulating a contemporary approach to cultural participation. He focuses on one of the traditionally most 'elite' art forms – opera – to shed light on the potential of inclusive cultural policies and practices. Marta Martins also discusses the value of participation, through the prism of her work in a range of different territories and contexts. She discusses the ways in which cultural work can promote 'values such as solidarity, empathy, and creativity' in a world that is marked by growing inequality and marginalization. DEI (the acronym for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) features in almost all programmatic declarations in the corporate and in the cultural worlds, and rightly so. Yamam Al-Zubaidi reflects upon the degree to which the cultural world has moved from principle to practice and highlights the importance of connecting diversity and pluralism within a critical understanding of its 'internal structures and [...] entrenched definitions of merit'. At the very heart of cultural discrimination in Europe we find the Roma communities. In a forceful, informative, and lyrical contribution Vasil Chaprazov underlines the profound vibrancy of Roma culture and reminds us that working for the right of Roma communities to live their culture with dignity is important not only for these communities, as 'it favours the growth of us all [and] is the antidote for the macabre plans of budding fascism'. Addressing another widespread area of discrimination, one that is also profoundly undemocratic and undermines the universal right to cultural participation, Ben Evans discusses disability and contemporary cultural practice. Even though there are encouraging signs of change, it remains the case that significant institutionalized barriers remain, 'preventing disabled people achieving full equal access to the arts as audiences and as artists' and this is not only unjust, but also impoverishing for the arts themselves. In the part's final text Christina Varvia reflects upon the significance of the mediatic proliferation of images of violence. Based on her academic research but also her significant involvement in the work of *Forensic Architecture*, she suggests that these forms of 'secondary witnessing' carry political potentialities to which we should attune ourselves.

Part 4: 'The cultural economy, funding and policies in Europe'

This part looks at how policy (both public and philanthropic) inflects the cultural sector, and also examines the interest in developing new forms of funding and revenue, beyond public sector support, grants or traditional forms of earned income. Tere Badia and Gabriele Rosana discuss the very important issue of minimum labour standards for artists and cultural

workers, one that was brought to the forefront of the policy arena by the pandemic and its effects on the cultural sector. They reflect upon the fragmented European policy landscape, promising initiatives that have emerged, and the need for a common EU approach. The Recommendation of the Council of Europe to its members ‘on the role of culture, cultural heritage and landscape in addressing global challenges’ adopted on 20 May 2022 is a potent call for the mainstreaming of culture into policy. Philippe Kern who was responsible for proposing and coordinating the draft of the recommendation analyses its ‘contribution in highlighting the role culture can play in addressing global challenges’. Approaching the question from another angle and reacting to the unthinkable challenges posed by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Andre Wilkens and his colleagues from the European Cultural Foundation ask what the role of philanthropic organizations could be in reinforcing the cultural dimension of the European project. Underlying the potential, the authors highlight that there is much more that the philanthropic sector could do reinforce Europe’s cultural capacity to respond to challenges of all kinds. As public funding for culture comes under pressure and the promotion of self-reliance and entrepreneurship gains ground, the two final chapters in the part address two important contemporary dimensions of this notion of financial self-sufficiency. Isabelle de Voldere and Martina Fraioli examine the uptake of crowdfunding by the CCS in Europe and argue for the need to think in terms of a broader and inclusive financing mix. Annick Schramme discusses the new importance attributed to entrepreneurship in the cultural sector and reflects on the degree to which actors in the sector are trained and prepared for the demands this places on them. Recognizing that a diversified funding approach is inescapable, she underlines the need to critically understand the dynamics of public-private partnerships for culture and the public values that culture is an integral part of.

Part 5: ‘Culture, the climate emergency and the sustainable development goals’

The climate emergency is without a doubt the central crisis of our age, not only because it is quite literally an existential crisis for humanity and all other animate beings on the planet, but also because it is so inextricably linked with issues of global justice, inequality, human rights and more generally with the underlying logic of our contemporary extractive civilization. Over the past few years, the cultural sector has been trying to understand how it can engage most effectively with this emergency, broadly speaking by working to reduce its own carbon footprint, by creating content that deepens the public understanding of the climate crisis, and by taking measures, especially in the cultural heritage sector, to adapt to the consequences of climate change. Part 5 examines different perspectives on this crucial interaction between culture and sustainability. Lucia Pietroiusti goes straight to the heart of this relationship by asking ‘Can an art institution remain faithful to its discipline while bridging the distance between it and the planet, and what philosophical and epistemological foundations can help undertake this journey?’ The contribution by the author of these lines tries to take the discussion beyond carbon and the climate crisis in the narrow sense, though recognizing its centrality, by examining the broader contribution of cultural work to the attainment of many of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the interlinkages between issues of justice, equity and environmental action. Iphigenia Taxopoulou, author of an in-depth study of theatre and sustainability (Taxopoulou, 2023) provides us with an overview of policy initiatives

and shortcomings and proposes that the role of cultural work must go beyond ‘storytelling’ or thematic projects to address the materiality of cultural production and its implications for the environment. The chapter by the team of Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne and the University of Lausanne gives us a fascinating account of what doing this means in practice while searching for a delicate balance between ‘promot[ing] the minimum social standards essential to human integrity while limiting impact on the environment’. In their contribution Hicham Khalidi and Rolando Vázquez discuss the broader ethical imperative of ‘seeking social, environmental, and ecological justice’ and examine what it would mean for cultural practice to respond to it. They unpack Euro-American extractive practices to reveal the connections between the colonial destruction of other worlds and the capitalist degradation of planetary ecosystems. Closing this part, artist-researcher Robertina Šebjanič introduces us to her multifaceted work on and in the oceans, both artistic and scientific, that makes our impact on these essential ecosystems powerfully clear. The ‘empathetic strategies’ she encourages could act as a basis for a radically different relationship with the world we inhabit.

Part 6: ‘The digital transformation of cultural practice’

The final part touches upon certain important facets of another central European policy priority, the digital transformation, but in ways that go beyond the classic cases of production paradigms and digital distribution to interrogate both the risks it brings and the spaces of contestation that it opens. Oonagh Murphy opens the section with a discussion of the ‘Digital transformation of cultural practice’, presenting examples of work that creates conditions for a thought-provoking engagement of the public with the broader social issues digital technologies raise. Digital platforms are much more than platforms for the distribution of cultural content. As Prodromos Tsiavos argues, they play a techno-regulatory role whose repercussions are profound. Alessandro Ludovico, building on his experience as publisher of *Neural* magazine, examines the ways in which digital archives have transformed cultural institutions into expanded hybrid spaces that reinforce the importance of collaboration and networks, and reflects on the further potential for a paradigm shift that networked archives represent. The closing chapter takes us through the evolving practice of Canal180. João Vasconcelos describes the tension between the promise of a global audience that digital technologies brought with them, and the realization of the importance of building real communities of interest and combining digital and physical engagement.

There are of course many other areas and topics that could be included in a handbook such as this, many of them of great importance and urgency. Perhaps a second edition of the handbook will allow us to broaden its scope even more, not least in the light of the discussions and debates that we would like to believe it will stimulate.

Notes

1. See for example UCLG (2004), OECD (2018), OECD and ICOM (2019).
2. https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/index_en.
3. See for example Bürger (1984).
4. See for example Alberro and Stimson (2009).

5. 100 million people according to United Nations High Commission for Refugees, see <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/12/1131957#:~:text=The%20100%20million%20figure%2C%20which,some%2090%20million%20in%202021> (Accessed: 25 January 2023).
6. From the Three Bells Podcast, S2:E8, transcript available from <https://www.thethreebells.net/episodes/s2e8> (Accessed: 25 January 2023).
7. See also Carras and Van Parijs (n.d.).

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Part 1 Spaces of cultural action

1.1 Cultural and creative districts in a changing Europe

ADRIAN ELLIS

Cultural districts and creative districts as policy instruments

Cultural and creative districts are areas – usually urban in character – defined by the concentrations of cultural activity, organizations and buildings that they contain. Over the past two decades they have grown in significance as a focus of cultural and urban policy, just as strategies for the cultural sector and for and creative industries themselves have become a more prominent and nuanced focus of public policy – especially at local government level. This chapter analyses some of the ways in which they work as ‘policy instruments’ and explores their continued effectiveness as such in a changing operating environment.

The term *cultural* district is generally used to describe districts that are predominantly characterized by the presence of arts organizations presenting and producing work for the general public; the term *creative* district is used for a district predominantly characterized by the presence of cultural production of some sort – for example film, design or fashion. These terms are fluid and overlapping – cultural districts often include a substantial element of creative production and indeed seek to protect and promote its presence not least it gives ‘texture’ and authenticity to the district’s character. Creative districts almost invariably have venues where music or other performing arts are presented as well as produced, or art galleries or both. They do not however usually have the larger scale non-profit cultural institutions, museums, performing arts centres and concert halls – that are typical ‘anchors’ of cultural districts. The distinction between them is useful if not absolute – they are the ends of what is in effect a continuum.

The rationale for public investment in establishing or developing cultural and creative districts is largely ‘instrumental’ in nature, focusing on the contribution of cultural investment to wider social and economic ambitions for tourism, city branding, innovation, urban revitalization, social cohesion and, more recently, health and well-being. Because of the demonstrated or assumed impact of a critical mass of cultural activity – broadly defined – on these contiguous areas of public policy, these districts are increasingly planned and developed intentionally, either ‘from scratch’ or from some cluster of cultural activity that has grown organically.

‘Intentionality’ – the idea that a district is something that is conceived *by some entity* – a public agency, a local government or in some cases a private developer – with a *purpose* in mind, may seem self-evident but it also raises the obvious question of their effectiveness

in fulfilling that purpose, and what governance arrangements and programmatic elements are most supportive of those aims.

We should however remember that the first creative districts evolved organically and without intentionality although in some respects they still provide the conceptual basis for planned districts today. The more general process of spontaneous co-location of production and consumption, of which 'naturally occurring' cultural and creative districts are a subset, was first identified by the economist Alfred Marshall at the end of the nineteenth century. Marshall argued that the concentration of specialized industries in particular localities is caused by the economic efficiencies that the combination of competition and cooperation can bring when competitors in each part of the supply-chain cluster together with both one other and others located elsewhere in the supply chain. This may seem counterintuitive: one might anticipate that competitors would distance themselves from one another to capture a larger market share rather than huddling in a given city or district or – as is often the case – street. However, he argued, clustering encourages accelerated transfer of knowledge, spurring innovation; and it creates the critical mass of end-users or customers that a dense concentration of suppliers can attract. The physically distanced competitor lacks a market, easy access to trained staff and the opportunity to learn swiftly from competitors' innovations, and thereby retaining a competitive edge. Marshall's clustering logic remains broadly the intellectual rationale for innovation hubs and creative and cultural districts 130 years after he published the theory in his *Principles of Economics* (Marshall, 1890).

Districts today are intended to generate and to accelerate the benefits that spontaneous clustering brings, fostering the conditions that stimulate cultural production and consumption, and with them the intended boost to economic growth, innovation and broader social development goals. The move from spontaneous clustering to planned concentrations of cultural activity is not recent – one only has to think of the museum districts of Berlin, London or Vienna or theatre districts like Lisbon's Parque Mayer, all planned in the nineteenth century – but the scale of investment and breadth of policy goals are.

The positioning of investment in culture firmly in such a utilitarian causal framework may need some defence. The intention is not to diminish or sideline the underlying artistic or aesthetic value of cultural activity or to diminish its contribution to aesthetic pleasure or self-actualization. Indeed, without cultural activity succeeding on its own terms, it is unlikely that those activities will succeed in contributing to the contingent policy ambitions placed upon them. If a cultural or creative district stalls *culturally or creatively*, then axiomatically it is also likely to stall in terms of its wider intended impact.

It is a common criticism levelled at some significant capital investments in new cultural infrastructure – particularly the theatres, museums and concert halls that are intended to anchor cultural districts – that the focus of public funders has been too much on the hardware (new and refurbished buildings) and too little on supporting the software – the activities and programming for which they are intended. The impact of the bias towards capital is to reduce the overall potential impact of investment because the vitality of the cultural offer that is the engine for impact itself requires commensurate financial support.

Indeed, the impact of capital investment without corresponding revenue can in fact reduce rather than increase the level of cultural production and creativity, as the United Kingdom discovered in the 1990s when it introduced a significant new stream funding exclusively

for capital generated by the National Lottery. This perverse effect is because investment in physical expansion of cultural infrastructure *without* corresponding increases in the operating budgets of the organizations receiving that capital investment increases both the fixed cost base of the organization *and* the ratio of fixed costs (overhead) to variable costs (in effect, programming). As it is often the case that capital is more readily available from both public and private sources than operating support, this challenge is a common one facing the cultural organizations that anchor districts. And it can often be compounded by the systemic optimism that often informs the estimation of operating budgets during the planning phase of new or expanded facilities. Cumulatively, this can and does dampen effectiveness of the underlying cultural asset as a driver of the wider policy benefits on which it was premised.

Cultural activity that succeeds as cultural activity is therefore necessary to fulfil the wider goals of cultural districts' stakeholders. But it is not sufficient to meet those wider policy ambitions. The further step in the implicit logic model is that the cultural outputs need to drive social or economic outcomes – on job creation, for example, or social cohesion, or health and well-being. Our current understanding of the ways in which different forms of investment in different parts of the cultural ecosystem facilitate different outcomes is still incomplete – the impact of a Euro spent on arts education, say, versus one on arts programming or spent on direct support of artists versus capital expenditure, or investment in museums versus the performing arts. It is also often distorted by the cultural sector's understandable desire to make the strongest possible case for its impact in its efforts to secure public or private funding, often leading to hyperbolic claims based on questionable evidence.

Nevertheless, the policy discussion around impact is far more nuanced today than it was twenty years ago and the theory around impact is much more grounded in robust analysis. When the current long cultural infrastructure boom began, broadly in the 1990s, job creation was the primary measure of impact, and that was assessed by applying arbitrarily derived 'multipliers' to direct expenditure in order to estimate the ripple effects of arts-related expenditure on the wider economy. This was usually done whilst ignoring 'displacement' effects and opportunity costs – i.e. where or how that money would otherwise have been invested. Well-developed methodologies for assessing the impact of arts expenditure on a wide range of policy goals are now available, even if the sector sometimes lacks either the appetite or the resources to apply them (Ellis, 2015).

If today's cultural and creative districts are 'purposive' or 'intentional' in that they are created to promote specific policy goals, then it is reasonable to ask what those goals are for any individual district. One challenge in answering this is that policy goals that a given cultural district is intended to serve are usually multiple; often conflated; and sometimes in flux. Sometimes overt or stated ambitions and unstated or even covert ambitions are in tension if not outright conflict.

This tension is most common when investment in cultural infrastructure is part of a strategy for urban redevelopment, which if successful axiomatically enhances land values. As land and property values increase, this threatens displacement of existing communities whose consent is premised on their own circumstances improving. Successful culturally driven redevelopment, like other forms of redevelopment, therefore often brings with it the displacement of existing communities, including artists and creative sector workers, eased out by higher rents, a result often at odds with the legitimating rhetoric surrounding the development. Lincoln Center – the 6.7 hectare complex in New York's Upper West Side – has

recently marked the latest phase in its development with the commission of a multimedia work celebrating the predominantly African-American, Afro-Caribbean and Puerto Rican community that was displaced by its construction in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

There are abundant techniques for tempering the impact of this sort of development on residents – subsidized housing, land banks, etc. – but to have the desired effect they require foresight and action *early* in the planning and development of a district, before land values have escalated to a point when intervention in the market is prohibitively expensive and, of course, they also require that the protection of existing residents and businesses be afforded some sort of priority in early planning. This is not always the case.

A second overarching issue implicit in addressing the effectiveness of cultural districts as policy instruments is ‘*Whose policy does the district embody and promote?*’ The various stakeholders within a district often comprise a mix of private, non-profit and public sector entities, residential populations (renters and owners), office workers, visitors, commercial property owners and businesses, managers of public space and of course cultural actors. The cultural actors themselves are organized in multiple configurations that range from employees of the large arts institutions that often serve as district ‘anchors’ to individual artists, makers and other freelancers, whose interests may or may not be well-aligned with those of larger institutions. (The ‘fissure’ in the cultural sector between cultural workers and cultural institutions became more pronounced during the Covid pandemic when different cultural institutions and their funders interpreted their responsibilities towards the wider cultural community very differently.)

Collectively, these groups constitute a complex amalgam of interests and agendas that do not always aggregate comfortably a coherent vision or a single set of common interests. The district’s organizing entity needs somehow to articulate a common agenda and this often puts in high relief the importance of the governance (including the proactive management of stakeholders) and of the business model underpinning the district’s operation – what resources it can command – and the degree of agency afforded to a district’s managers, of which there is a wide variation in practice.

Layered over these local ‘in-district’ stakeholders are invariably political stakeholders, usually elected officials, sometimes representing those working or living in a district but also often representing or promoting city-, region- or even national agendas that place a district and its potential benefits in a wider context than that of the immediate community. By focusing on the wider economic benefits of cultural tourism, economic development, inward investment, attraction of knowledge workers or city branding that a high-profile district can bring, they often defocus or downplay issues of displacement and social tension. And *those* stakeholders are in turn often dependent upon sources of restricted or designated funding (e.g. European Regional Development Fund support) that require that any investment meets – or more precisely *is positioned as meeting* – national or EU-wide grant criteria. These criteria may again only partially coincide with the ambitions of local stakeholders.

In short, cultural districts may embody policy ambitions but understanding those ambitions requires more than a review of a given district’s mission statement or even its stated strategic plan. Perhaps the most useful injunction is the biblical one: ‘by their deeds will you know them ...’ In other words, a reasonable indication of the policy goals that a district

supports is what it does rather than what it says. But even this method of interpretation can also be challenging as it assumes that the organization is an effective one – that it has the agency and exercises that agency in the translation of its goals (covert or overt) into decisive, intelligible action.

In the past twenty years the most significant driver of the development of cultural districts has been cultural tourism – tourism that is organized formally or informally around visiting cultural or heritage assets. It accounts for some 40 per cent of all European tourism (Cultural Tourism, no date) and cultural tourists are attractive, *inter alia*, because they tend to stay longer, spend more and return more often than the median tourist. Districts are important for tourism strategies because co-location of multiple cultural activities – whether physical or simply conceptually – creates a critical mass that provides a fuller visitor experience and a more potent marketing profile.

Cultural tourism has also been a growth market: Europe is the global leader in international tourism, accounting for roughly two-thirds of international tourist arrivals worldwide with a peak of 745 million international visitors to European countries immediately pre-Covid in 2019 (yes, including Britain here) (Travel and Tourism in Europe, 2022). The arc of post-war globalization, the growth of air travel and the competition for tourists' disposable income have all led to significant competitive investment strategies, within Europe and of course beyond, of which investment in cultural infrastructure has been a highly significant part. The focus of tourism-driven cultural districts has mostly been on serving the visitor through performing and visual arts and museums or art, science and history, together with public spaces and iconic architecture, and, importantly, performing arts festivals and art fairs which have seen spectacular growth over the past few decades (Gerlis, 2022).

Arts buildings provide an attractive 'canvas' for exploring highly expressive designs embodying developments in materials science and structural engineering. Frank Gehry's 1997 Guggenheim in Bilbao is the most well-known example of an iconic cultural anchor as the centrepiece of an economic and social development strategy that has, in turn, created synergies with retail, broader entertainment offers, restaurants and hotels and higher-end residential property. This model, or critical elements of it, has been analysed extensively and replicated globally, with respect to the creation of wholly new cultural districts with wholly new anchors (most notably in Hong Kong and Abu Dhabi) but also in the reinvigoration and rebranding of existing cultural clusters (Ellis, 2007). So far, so good ...

Meanwhile, at the other end of the continuum stretching from pure cultural consumption to pure production, the most common policy focus of creative districts and their stakeholders is on the fostering of innovation and creativity, attracting a critical mass of creative enterprises and workers, sometimes within a given sub-discipline such as design, fashion or film. They are perhaps as much as a subcategory of a wider class of innovation districts as they are a subcategory of cultural districts – that is clusters of start-ups, incubators, accelerators and entrepreneurs incentivized to co-locate to ignite Marshallian synergies and collaborations by low rents, good transport, the proximity of support services, good communications and the presence of organizations providing infrastructure, training, advice and access to funding.

Although there is clearly often a tourism angle in these developments, the rationale is invariably linked to broader policy aims for economic development, usually at city level. The anchor organizations tend to be production oriented rather than public-facing and the

districts often combine cultural production with educational anchors or innovation hubs more generally. Well-explored examples include 22@Barcelona in the former cotton mill district of El Poblenou and Nantes' SAMOA (*Société d'Aménagement de la Métropole Ouest Atlantique*). Their missions often seek to combine the economic and social dimensions of innovations agendas, embracing inclusivity combining social, urban and economic development, again reflecting the complex amalgam of stakeholder interests.

Whereas the core assets for cultural districts tend to be cultural organizations that have programmes and infrastructure that can drive visitation, the anchors of creative districts are often research-oriented universities, and the core attributes tend to be walkable distances, public spaces, attractive ground floor spaces, affordable work spaces and sources of advice on tech transfer and intellectual property protection. The metrics of success do not focus on visitation but include job creation, start-up formation, business growth and, increasingly, opportunities for disadvantaged populations, given that many districts are close to low- and moderate-income neighbourhoods: 'The success of innovation districts going forward will increasingly be measured by their ability to upgrade the education and skills of local residents by investing in cradle-to-career initiatives' (Andrews, 2019).

As we emerge from the Covid pandemic and look forward to the next chapter of cultural development, it is perhaps worth speculating on the prospects of these two somewhat-idealized models of cultural and creative districts as policy instruments. Creative districts seem well placed to meet important social and economic goals in a broadly sustainable fashion. Their infrastructure is as much intellectual as physical; their assets are adaptable; and their business models are highly pluralized in terms of sources of income. The increasingly explicit combination of economic and social goals and the localized nature of their social agendas make them if not 'anti-fragile' at least resilient.

Tourism-based cultural districts may be in for a more challenging time. We are currently experiencing the convergence of a number of profound changes in the wider operating environment that have significant implications for tourism-based cultural districts as effective 'policy instruments'. These include the emerging legacy of the Covid-19 pandemic; the impact of the climate crisis; and the longer-term impact of new technologies on place-based institutions and their audiences.

Cumulatively these suggest a chapter of 'continuously discontinuous' change that has direct implications for the model. The long-term impact of the pandemic is still to be fully determined but evidence suggests erosion of attendance habits amongst core audiences (often older, more cautious) and, as important and less speculative, long-term changes in working patterns, with diminished density of office workers in city centre locations (who have historically provided mid-week audiences as well as support for adjacent retail and restaurants); and a trend towards 'hyperlocal' cultural provision (Centre for Cultural Value, 2022). It is unclear if and when tourist air-travel will return to 2019 levels – habits and sensibilities have changed, and the economics will continue to.

The climate crisis also presages a number of factors dampening tourist-driven demand: reduced propensity and, *in extremis*, ability to travel of tourists; changing priorities in public expenditure as the costs of effective mitigation strategies are absorbed; and changing sensibilities and policies *vis a vis* touring content in performing and visual arts (e.g. touring symphony orchestras or international blockbusters). Advances in the technologies

supporting digital distribution together with the growing acceptance levels of audiences have both been accelerated by the pandemic; the rapid growth in the popularity of hybrid immersive experiences among younger audiences underscore the secular decline in the priority afforded to both 'standard models' of live performance and the symbolic importance of 'authentic objects' on which museum attendance is premised (Sargent, 2021).

Last but not least, perhaps, of these contextual factors is the higher priority that cultural organizations are affording issues of racial and social equity, both in operational matters (staffing, board composition, investment) and in programming (what is displayed or performed, how and for whom) encouraged by pressures from funders, staff and opinion formers alike (especially in social media). Although subtle, these are all a preoccupying agenda for boards and senior management of cultural institutions.

None of this suggests that the cultural districts anchored by cultural and heritage assets of indisputable resonance will wither on the vine. But it does suggest a more challenging chapter for tourist-based cultural district strategies premised on anchor cultural institutions willing and able to generate programming that will succeed in drawing national and international tourists at historic levels.

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1.2 Transformative arts. Community theatre as democratic infrastructure

JASMINA IBRAHIMOVIC AND CATHERINE KOEKOEK

Like in many other countries, government services in the Netherlands have declined over the last thirty years. In a reconstruction of this process, the journalist Coen van de Ven writes: 'In places where services declined the most, right-wing populist parties grew in strength in every election' (Ven, 2021, translation by authors). Without infrastructure to express something in a democratic way that does justice to plurality and equality, people might take the shortcut of expressing it in an anti-democratic way. Voter turn-out drops, populist parties grow.¹ While there is on the one hand a seeming overpoliticization, polarization, a continuous flood of shocking news and strong disagreements among various societal groups, on the other hand the neoliberal politics of the last decades have hollowed-out the contexts, like community centres, that enable us to address this information and these disagreements.²

In this context, places where connections are made between different personal lives and the structures of society are rare and important. We suggest we can understand the practice of the Rotterdam-based community theatre *Het Rotterdams Wijktheater* (RWT) as a democratic infrastructure that transforms personal stories and experiences into plural narratives that can be publicly shared and can have unexpected effects.

Drawing upon our combined experiences between practices of community arts and theory, we start by giving a brief account of the core ideas behind the worldwide community arts movement, and specifically the community theatre practice of RWT. We then explore three scenes and scales corresponding to the personal, public and political meanings of this practice, and conclude by drawing out implications for starting artists more generally.

Community arts, theatre and RWT

Community arts consists of two highly contested words: 'community' and 'art'. To understand the potential of community arts, we must first review our understanding of 'art', 'community' and the role of the artist in this. Contrary to what the term 'community art' might suggest, this worldwide movement is not only about empowering existing marginalized or vulnerable communities (which it often does), but also about critically questioning who is, or is not, part of 'the community', and why. Community arts practitioners believe that this work has potential to deconstruct and reconstruct communities. Challenging 'our fixed identities and perceptions of difference' (Kester, 2004: 84), they embrace the idea that each individual is a complex, multi-layered human being in constant transition, and that we can connect with each other despite our differences. Community is therefore not understood as

a shared essence, but as something that is continuously constructed – a process where community arts can play an important role.

This also changes our understanding of ‘art’. Art historian Grant Kester makes a distinction between product-driven art and dialogue-driven art, with community arts falling under the latter category (Kester, 2004: 90). He argues that we are used to only localizing art in a final product: a theatre performance, a painting, an installation, a piece of music, a presentation. But aesthetic experience is not situated in that object, performance or end-manifestation. It always lies in the communication between the artist and the recipient or participants *through* the artwork. This artwork, then, can be many things and take different forms. Kester argues that for an aesthetic experience one does not necessarily need an object or a presentation, it only needs the right ‘context’. This context can be facilitated and directed by an artist. According to Kester, the dialogical artist therefore is more of a *context provider* than a *content provider* (2004: 1). In other words, the artist creates, directs, develops and initiates an aesthetic space, a process and the right conditions in which aesthetic encounters can take place. She creates an aesthetic situation, in which people are invited to relate to each other in a new way – questioning our identities, relationships towards each other and opinions about certain topics. Often imagination, playfulness, careful listening, being open and respectful are key aspects of that space.

The artist-as-context provider plays a facilitating role – but not a neutral one. The artist is always present in the process as a person and as an expert of her own art discipline. Sheila Preston, applied-theatre practitioner and facilitator, therefore argues for a ‘critical facilitation’ in which the facilitator is constantly aware and reflecting on the social, historical conditions, priorities, agendas and power relations. ‘In addition, what a facilitator actually *does* emerges out of complex relationships that are forged during that process’ (Preston, 2016: 6). The very diverse practices of international community arts, then, provide contexts for (re-)constructing and questioning communities, through reciprocal collaborations between trained artists and people who are generally excluded from active involvement in the arts.

RWT was founded in 1992 by theatre directors Peter van den Hurk and Annelies Spliethof with the mission to create theatre for all those people in the suburbs of Rotterdam who did not encounter or relate to the expensive, highbrow theatre in the centre of the city. They resented that the transformative power of theatre, of art did not reach places where it is perhaps most needed: the poorer suburbs where there is little time and space for reflection and imagination. They started developing new repertoire, based on personal stories of ‘ordinary’ people they interviewed in the neighbourhoods. They soon found out that real recognition occurs when the plays were not performed by professional actors but by the neighbourhood residents, the people that have lived through these experiences themselves. It was important that these performances always took place in community centres in the middle of the neighbourhoods where the stories come from and resonate, for a single euro or two and if you couldn’t afford it, for free. The power of this reciprocal process, its life-changing effect on the participants, and the magic when it is performed for an audience that recognizes itself and often feels heard, is still central to the methodology of *RWT*, thirty years later.

But where *RWT* used to perform its plays about 80 to 100 times a year in diverse and lively community centres in the neighbourhoods of Rotterdam, in recent decades, this entire

social infrastructure has been virtually dismantled by the government, leaving few places where people can come to meet without immediately having a plan or having to pay for it. Moreover, our society has increasingly digitalized so that it is not a given that people physically meet plural others in public – a phenomenon that has only intensified over the past two and a half years of Covid-19. RWT still travels through the neighbourhoods to perform their plays, but nowadays needs to rebuild a community for every project and every performance and must first get its audience from behind their front doors.

In this context, spaces where personal stories are translated into the public sphere become even more important. In what follows we trace how personal narratives can become part of a plural public sphere through three stories from the RWT-project *Zomaar een Straat* ('just another street').

Everyone has a story

The fact that everyone has a story is the starting point for theatre at RWT. In her book on the importance of storytelling for selfhood, *Relating Narratives*, the Italian feminist philosopher Adriana Cavarero argues that people have a desire for narration. Everyone has a story: this is why Cavarero understands every human being as a *narratable self*. Even if, living through it, we do not fully articulate our story, we desire 'to hear one's own story in *life*' (Cavarero, 2000:33).

To understand this desire for narration, Cavarero invokes a scene from the *Odyssey*. After Odysseus has left the island of the goddess Calypso, where he has spent the last seven years, he washes up on the shores of the Phaeacians. Feasting at the court of Queen Arete and King Alcinous, he – disguised – hears his own story for the first time,

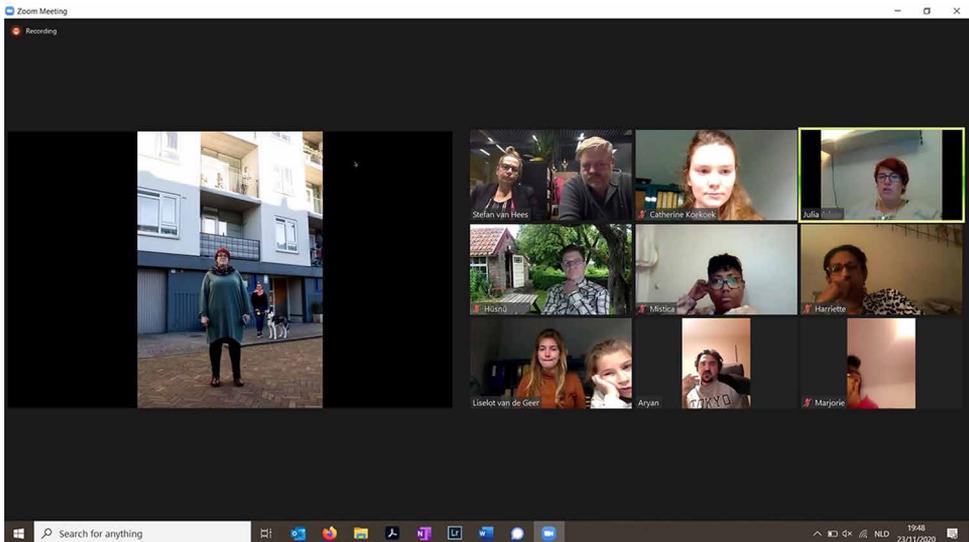


Figure 1.2.1 Screenshot of the zoom meeting where Julia's photographic and narrative portraits are shared. Julia speaks. Photo: Catherine Koekeok.

and weeps. How to understand his tears? Cavarero argues that only when the story of our lives is told by another, who bears witness to it, can we grasp its meaning and understand who we are. Desiring the unity of our unique story, a red thread of our life, we can only make sense of it through the eyes of someone else. Someone's life story, after all, 'always results from an existence, which, from the beginning, has exposed her to the world' (Cavarero, 2000: 36).

During the pandemic, it was often impossible to come together as a group. The cast of *Zomaar een Straat* stayed in touch via zoom when the lockdown first started in April 2020, but in the second lockdown in the fall, we needed to find a different form and decided to make narrative portraits of every cast member. From November 2020 onwards, directors Liselot van de Geer, Stefan van Hees and participant-researcher Catherine Koekoek visited each cast member at home, making a photographic portrait of them at home and on their street, often with neighbours and passers-by as figurants. These were long, intimate afternoons where cast members often told us their life story. At the end of the day, we shared a meal while Catherine turned pages and pages of scribbles into a story, which was read out during a zoom session with the protagonist of that day, as well as the other cast members. The photographic portraits were shown as a screen-share (Figure 1.2.1).

One afternoon, we visited Julia's flat, a German woman who has long lived in the south of Rotterdam.³ While catching up in her sunny living room, with Liselot and Stefan taking photos of Julia, the doorbell rings and a large DHL parcel arrives. We keep intending to go outside to take a street portrait, but the conversation meanders to Julia's relationship with her mother. She describes how, as a teen girl in rural Germany, she seemed decent enough at home, wearing her hair parted in the middle. But every day when leaving the house, she turned her hair into a mohawk using ink and sugared water in the neighbour's barn. When her parents had to unexpectedly come to school one day, her dad laughed but her mother was shocked to see her like that. School was difficult, she was bullied, and while she had a good relationship with her dad, it was more difficult with her mom. She shows us a picture, saying that her mother was always a natural beauty, and very thin, while Julia was the only fat person in her family. Her mom was ashamed of this, and still has never told her that she loves her. But now, years later, Julia tells us she has made peace with this fact – she knows her parents love her in other ways, even if they do not express it explicitly, they send 'care packages' like the parcel arriving today. When she was in debt, she got a package like that every week.

Just before we leave, Julia opens the package and reads the card out loud. It is in German, but she live-translates it for us in Dutch. It ends with *Wir Lieben Euch*. It really says: We love you.

When reading out this story during the subsequent zoom-session, Julia, like Odysseus, cries. In a moment like this, the storytelling practice of the theatre, transforms one's lived life into a representation of that life on stage or in this case, on zoom. This narrated version of one's life makes it possible to understand the meaning of it, to feel the impact of it – to respond to the question 'who am I?' (Cavarero, 2000: 45) But it also places this life-story in a wider context. Julia is not the only cast member who lacked a sense of feeling loved by her parents – this intergenerational question is indeed one of the red threads throughout the play, to which we turn now.



Figure 1.2.2 Scene from *Zomaar een Straat*, where many voices tell one shared story. Photo: Kees Deenik.

Plural stories on stage

What happens after your story is shared in public? For Hannah Arendt, followed by Adriana Cavarero, politics means to appear in public in all your uniqueness. In the theatre practice of RWT, it does not stop there: different life stories are crafted into a larger script that becomes a performance for an audience. A unique life story, like Julia's, is woven into a net of other people's stories. And together, these stories are performed on stage to challenge the dominant narratives in the public sphere – told by people who have rarely acted before, whose voices are not often heard.

In November 2019, the cast of *Zomaar een Straat* rehearse for the upcoming première. At the start of an unusually focused rehearsal, director Liselot gives us a new piece of the script on two printed A4 sheets. It immediately raises a lot of questions, especially for Marjorie, the protagonist of the play, who says that the story includes factual mistakes. The director dismisses her concerns until the end of the rehearsal, saying that she wants to read the text first and then discuss it. She reads the text to us, playing background music on her phone. She then directs us to the stage to try it out. We rehearse the piece some six to eight times, while both directors give us cues for increasing the clarity – changing a line from this person to that person, looking up instead of down or changing the speed at which we respond to each other's lines.

Instead of engaging in a factual discussion about the correctness of the story represented in the script, we feel the effect of the scene on our bodies. Where at first there was

a sense of consternation, there now appears to be a consensus that this scene works. What has happened? This scene, taking place towards the end of the play, represents that folding into a larger story. This creates a degree of alienation: it is not exactly the story of the protagonist anymore. But it brings the story of Marjorie together with the stories of other members of the cast who have encountered similar situations as she has. It is no longer just the protagonist who speaks – with everyone standing on the stage, a story is told by many different voices who quickly follow-up on another (Figure 1.2.2). The bills have not been paid, electricity is cut off, you lose your job and have to move to a different city, no money for a new toothbrush, you get ill, in the end it seems like there is only one solution: *onder bewind*; being placed under guardianship. The scene is intended to convey the stress of what happens when you can no longer control your own life. This is a situation that most cast members have experienced to a certain extent, through such diverse causes as debt and poverty, partner violence, sexual abuse, migration or often a mix of these factors.

Enveloping specific stories into a larger story that can be performed for an audience changes the nature of these stories. The director facilitates this transformation. It is no longer purely about recognizing ‘who you are’, or about appearing as a unique being in public. Now, a political message starts to appear: the message that these stories, that are often subject to taboos, and these people, who cannot always make their voice heard, matter.

Unexpected effects

There is still no ending to the play in early December 2019, a week before the opening night of *Zomaar een Straat*. We rehearse a whole Saturday; it is our last practice before the dress rehearsal. Director Liselot has written the last, climactic scene and hands the prints out to the cast. The scene is intended to transfer the experience of a guardianship. While everyone reads out their lines, one of the actors breaks down and starts to cry intensely, saying that she can’t do it. Another actor explains what happens: ‘This is what it is, you can tell your story, but it’s different if you see it on paper ...’ It is confronting to re-play this traumatic experience, that for some of the actors is ongoing.

The directors respond immediately: we will not use this text. The directors want to steer clear from letting people relive trauma; the point is to create conditions for actors to tell their story in a way that is empowering and even joyful. Liselot thinks of a different ending to the play. This experience of losing power over the maintenance of your own life, which is clearly still too traumatic to articulate in words, will be represented without language. Instead of text, there is music (Paolo Nutini’s *Iron Sky*) while the actors empty-out the décor, removing all props from the stage (Figure 1.2.3). No more plants, rugs, away with the microwave. The actors move back to their now-empty houses, while Catherine takes up a camera and points it to their faces, now projected on the back wall. Towards the middle of the song, the camera turns towards the audience, filming the faces on the front rows, before turning back to the stage. The audience snuffles and sobs; afterwards, people tell us they experienced this moment as the most touching. But for the actors, it is a surprisingly easy scene – they just sit, quietly. The emotion now lies with the audience, not the actors. At the end of the song, the camera moves towards the youngest actor, who just turned ten. She walks towards the camera, which turns off. The final scene starts – *hier spreekt de*



Figure 1.2.3 The ending of a performance of *Zomaar een Straat*, December 2019. Actors sit in their now-empty houses, while their faces, filmed by the camera, are projected onto the back wall. There is no spoken text, only music. Photo: Liselot van de Geer.

toekomst ('this is the future speaking'). Alone in the spotlight, she delivers her monologue. Black-out, applause.

Conclusion

The artistic process of RWT's community theatre shows the potential of creating aesthetic spaces that invite people to relate to each other and to their own story in a new way, in a highly polarized, neoliberal society. For art and the artist to fulfil this potential, we must re-evaluate our definition of art and of the role of the artist in our society. Through the three scenes described in this text we have shown how the theatre directors of RWT have facilitated a series of transformations. The first transformation crafts the unboundedness of a lived life into a story in which you can recognize yourself, understand who you are. The second folds these plural stories – because everyone has a story – into a script, a performance that can be rehearsed and performed on stage. The story is no longer just yours but starts to relate other people's experiences and larger structures of society. The third transformation transfers the weight of this story from the actors to the audience. Unlike institutionalized democratic processes, we do not know exactly what the effect of this will be. But this is the magic of theatre: something happens between the actors, live, on stage and the public.

In our troubled political times, it can be difficult to relate to each other, especially if these others do not share our opinions. In this context, community arts can create openness to hear each other's stories and to transform them into something else. Horizontally, fostering understanding between people, but also vertically so that private lives can be turned into something publicly shared.

Notes

1. On this topic, see for instance *Strangers in Their Own Land* (Hochschild, 2016), recent commentary by Jürgen Habermas (2018). For a discussion of low voter-turnout in Rotterdam, see Klaauw and Koekoek (2022).
2. Bonnie Honig, the American political theorist, describes this situation as *shock politics*. Reflecting on the political predicament of the Trump years, she understands this as the fatal combination of the disorientation and desensitization caused, for instance, by the constant flood of contradicting information about a president like Trump. Without points of orientation, and overwhelmed by constant shocking news, 'we are overwhelmed, desensitized, and disoriented, left nearly incapable of response or action because we are confused, exhausted, or fatigued' (Honig, 2021: 13).
3. This is a heavily shortened and translated version of the story of the day we visited Julia. The original can be found at: <https://www.rotterdamswijktheater.nl/armoede/2020/11/18/zomaar-op-sstraat-verhalenreeks-armoede-julia/>.

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1.3 The power of neglected spaces

MIEKE RENDERS

Introduction

The power of abandoned places repurposed by grassroots cultural organizations cannot and should not be underestimated. In society more and more collectives gather around social questions whilst the self-evidence of initiatives and actions by governments or economical actors is declining. Bottom-up projects create new forms of collaboration and new concepts of power and accessibility whilst actively shaping new ways of thinking about civic use, citizenship, democracy and (participatory) governance. There are many good examples of bottom-up initiatives 'from around the corner'. These places often emerge as a needed fight against the (institutional) establishment, against segregation, wars, climate crisis, gentrification and capitalism. Trans Europe Halles – a European network for grassroots cultural organizations in repurposed spaces – has identified over 2,500 independent cultural and creative hubs in Europe and the number is increasing¹.

This chapter addresses the re-appropriation of disused spaces or adaptive reuse of neglected or abandoned post-industrial urban sites by bottom-up grassroots and collective initiatives with a cultural, artistic and/or social purpose. How to start an artistic space and what are the consequences, bearing in mind that each initiative is unique?

Cities are vital organisms and constantly evolving. Each city has its own dynamics, migration patterns, demographics, geography and financial capacities. Urban areas are gaining importance as we see a trend of fast-growing metropolitan areas². Where there are people, there are arts and culture, audiences and communities. In urban areas available and affordable spaces as well as green public space can be scarce and there is pressure upon them, although it is precisely in highly populated areas that artistic activities happen. An inquiry involving members of Trans Europe Halles revealed that 71.4 per cent of its organizations are in urban-central areas, 17.5 per cent in urban areas whereas only 11.1 per cent in rural areas (Sayin and Pierzchawka, 2022).

Creative placemaking

With the moving in and out of businesses, industries and people, a city is a dynamic entity, with shifting areas and neighbourhoods. A once-flourishing industrial area might be abandoned during other times, screaming for a re-use. There are various ways to repurpose urban spaces for the use of arts and culture: it can be the repurposing of post-industrial and other heritage buildings, it can be permanent or temporary, or it can be the creative placemaking of (neglected) urban areas.

In creative placemaking there is often the use of arts as a tool for community development. Its use empowers communities and gives them sense of connection to a place. Public spaces, playgrounds, underpasses, parks, neglected spaces or common grounds are turned into lively social hubs. Creative placemaking often happens in dialogue with the city, residents and community groups, designers and artists. It goes together with the creation of safe areas, especially for children and women in more dangerous, worn-down or rather poor areas. They stimulate the quality and development of healthy, liveable and happy communities in urban areas. During Covid, we realized how crucial outdoor urban spaces are, and how important it is for our well-being to be able to go outside and experience meaningful contacts with your local community (Polyak, 2021).

Whereas creative placemaking can be induced by city/local governments and has a community-based participation at its centre, it often uses outdoor public spaces and does not always involve arts in its realization³. 'It is a crucial and deeply valued process for those who feel intimately connected to the places in their lives. Placemaking shows people just how powerful their collective vision can be. It helps them to re-imagine everyday spaces, and to see anew the potential of parks, downtowns, waterfronts, plazas, neighbourhoods, streets, markets, campuses and public buildings.'⁴

Empty space wanted

Another way of re-activating urban spaces is the re-appropriation of neglected and abandoned spaces. There are many collectives, individual artists or (young) creatives, who organize themselves in the quest for affordable working spaces, ateliers, showrooms and studios. Cities tend to be expensive places with on the one hand, scarce affordable and accessible places to rent, and on the other hand ample empty space. Unfortunately, there is often a lack of long-term perspective and vision for the creation of artistic spaces within a city. 'In Brussels, there are about 6,5 million square meter empty spaces, such as offices, housing, industrial sites, ... Simultaneously, many organisations and individuals are looking for affordable places to get their projects realised.'⁵ Artists do not always need a long-term space, but often short-term and flexible working space, rehearsal room, or a temporary office. A well thought-out cultural and social policy would do wonders in many cities and could stimulate creative and social connectivity. Despite many good-willing mayors and aldermen, many collectives feel left alone and search for their own creative spaces in urban areas. To find affordable spaces, they regularly direct themselves towards former industrial parts of cities. Those are often neglected, partly abandoned and/or located in the outskirts. In these areas, ample space is available for the germination of their ideas and visions, for forming communities and starting up new forms of collaborations. Post-industrial buildings are very attractive as they offer so much character to a place. They are objects of memory for older generations, whilst future generations breathe in new life. They are the lighthouses in between past and future.

These kinds of sites require a lot of creativity, co-creation, hands-on people and financial resources, to get started. Many of these spaces require years or even a decade of engagement and activities before getting acknowledged and supported (both morally and financially) by public authorities. But it is worth the efforts: 'Moreover, the most successful built heritage adaptive reuse projects are those that best respect and retain the building's

heritage significance and add a contemporary layer that provides value for the future. Adaptive reuse of buildings has a major role in the sustainable development of communities; the benefits of reuse extend far beyond the conservation of our cultural legacy' (Fouad, Eldin and Mansour, 2017).

Many examples show us that a turn-around from former productive use into new forms of creative economies has long-term benefits for these neighbourhoods and have helped the creation of new (green) creative spaces, creation of jobs, encouraged connectivity and helped building thriving communities.

Starting up your creative space

What are the things to consider now? When you want to start up a creative project with your collective and start using an abandoned space for artistic and community purposes, you will need to

- Create a mission and vision
- Temporary or permanent use?
- Who's the owner of your building and access?
- Build up an engaged community
- Walk the talk
- Find financing
- Define your governance model

The work you will be doing will leave its mark on the surrounding areas and can change whole neighbourhoods. Often and unfortunately, gentrification could be a result of years-long cultural work.

Mission and vision

When starting up a culture and arts organization, it is important to have a mission and vision, as not to diffuse your profile in the long run and have a clear branding and image of your organization. This does not mean that you cannot be interdisciplinary. It is important to have a well-thought structure on how you will work and what profile you wish to create and then find a good governance model for the daily and strategic activities. Many repurposed spaces organize and host activities such as festivals, expositions, concerts, circus, theatre, literature, visual arts, performing arts, professional courses, bars, parties, courses, workshops, music schools, music recording facilities, photo studios, ateliers, residencies, coworking spaces, urban gardening, upcycle-recycle activities, etc., but they also can become spaces for co-living (sometimes with multiple generations), education (for their children) and for starting up greening communities. The artistic offer is in constant development.

Temporary or permanent?

When starting up activities in a post-industrial building, you can choose between, or grow organically from temporary use to permanent use. Many so-called 'third places' (or 'Tiers

Lieux' in French) are popping up: buildings or spaces which are often temporarily and legally taken over and in which different collectives and communities collaborate. Temporary use could be a strategic choice of the artistic organization, or it could be a transition phase until the collective gets final permission to stay and use the space. The advantage of temporary use is its experimental character which allows the organization to quickly address social, cultural and ecological needs of society.⁶

Permanent use has the advantage of allowing you to work slowly and steadily towards your goals, find ample time to fundraise, deploy your activities which make your organization visible to important stakeholders and attract other like-minded organizations towards the same neighbourhood to build up your common project and mission.

There are many things to consider to be successful and long-lasting: ownership, governance, fundraising, PR, activities aligning with your mission and vision, staff (whether volunteers or paid) and so on. A start-up organization often starts with enthusiastic energy and gets stuck at some point, facing issues with the building, payments and bank transfers, acquisition of money, staff, insurance, communication and marketing, production, etc. It often takes many years to 'get settled' and to 'professionalize' or find a balance. There is no recipe which fits all: circumstances over Europe, as well as working conditions can vary highly, as well as the place that arts and culture takes in society (Keulemans, Glubokyi, Arduini and Boljuncic, 2021).⁷

Who's the owner?

An empty space has an owner, but it is not always clear who the owner is. It can take some time before you find out and come to an agreement about the use of the space. Access to neglected buildings can therefore go into many directions. Spaces can also be squatted and used for living purposes in combination with artistic, social and cultural activities, but consider that each country has different rules and laws for this and in some countries (e.g. Germany or the Netherlands) it is more common than elsewhere.

Concerning the ownership of your space there are a few different models to consider:

- Private ownership – in a leased or your owned space;
- Private-public partnership – this is in cooperation with your local community or city level authorities;
- Public ownership – initiated and financed by public sector on different levels, in which you rent the space (whether symbolically or at the market rate).

Investing in a building is an expensive matter, which you wouldn't do on your own. Beyond money, you should also find other forms of investments, such as skills, working hands, volunteers, materials and other forms of capital.

Your community

The repurposed space is becoming a space for collaboration and for networking whilst new biotopes are created. A collective or community sprouts: it can be one of artists, but it mostly a melting pot of people with highly diverse backgrounds who come together in this new space. They form an inspirational and fertile breeding ground for the arts practice of

creatives and will become highly attractive for companies, organizations and governments: 'Adaptive reuse of derelict industrial areas can play a very important role in regeneration in raising the quality of the local environment, preserving local distinctiveness, and attracting visitors and new business, and it is very popular with local communities' (Fouad, Eldin and Mansour, 2017).

The community could be seen as the rippling water rings after a stone has been thrown into. The inner circle is the founders, the vision holders of the initial idea. The second circle is the volunteers and a community, collaborating on your project. Another circle is the artists and cultural professionals working with you for fulfilling your mission and vision. Your board will be another circle, as well as your stakeholders. The neighbourhood is another circle of community and then there is the wider city and its audiences. Every community needs another approach regarding communication. The goal is that each and every one of them finds meaning in your project and supports you.

Walk the talk

It is important to get word out: talk a lot with your neighbours, artists, other organizations, companies, the local government, your city, and so on. Talk with as many as you can about your project and vision. Advocate for your work. This will not only help with the acquisition or renovation of your building, but it will also give you access to permissions and to funding possibilities. Spread the word, so for example (commercial) companies might rent a space in your attractive creative place which will help increase and diversify your income. A cultural space is interesting and has a great networking function and can strengthen the artists' position. Don't be shy to go out to share your experiences and listen to other like-minded initiatives. This will create new ways of developing new concepts with peers, friends, researchers and all kinds of audiences. This is how you will find your allies and supporters. Tell the world what you are doing. Be curious about how others are doing it and invite them by sharing their experience and tilt your initiative to the next level. To collaborate with like-minded initiatives will also create a better support base towards your local and regional politicians, whose support you will also need in the long term.

Financing

Besides the aesthetics and the amount of space of abandoned heritage, it can be very interesting to work in neglecting buildings as mostly rental prices are very low, but you will also need to find a lot of means, investors, funding streams, to make your dream come true whilst respecting your vision. You will need to mobilize money and figure out how you would like to do this through different models: collectively, privately, loans, public funding, and so on. There are new ways of thinking like commoning, peer-to-peer for collectives and cooperations (De Tullio, 2020).⁸ The Creative Hubs Network has published a toolkit on the use of business model canvas.⁹

Whilst fundraising, you will learn that talking to the business and political world requires other ways of logic and of thinking and working, which can be challenging. Crowdfunding and fundraising initiatives are often used for kickstarting a project or gathering your starting capital. For bigger renovations, it might be wise to rely on governmental and even European

funding streams. It is not easy to find funding for independent cultural spaces, but there are ways to find them at local, national and international levels. If your project is not only based on arts and culture, but also, e.g. on urban gardening, community work, social initiatives, working with migrants, it is possible that you may find transversal funding streams and you could tap into different sources coming out of different sectors. Be creative and knock on several doors!

Governance

How to organize and structure this whole process? We already mentioned ownership, mission and vision above, but also your governance structure is a crucial aspect. Starting up a cultural organization will give you lots of energy, but there are also managerial aspects which need to be considered and tackled. This requires the building of an organization or structure. Each country has own legal entities to choose from and you need to consider carefully which one to use which supports your mission and vision. The way you will organize your governance could also impact which type of organization you wish to install. It is good to consult with like-minded organizations in your region on what kind of structures they have built.

It is not easy to define the right governance model for your newly built structure, and it might be the case that this is a process which is neglected and postponed as there are more urgent issues in the start. Typically for a pioneering organization everybody does everything all the time and there is a high drive and motivation going on. When more income is acquired, more activities are emerging, and the centre has started growing, there will be need for a structure with the delegation of responsibilities and clear decision-making processes. You might face an evolution in which volunteers will turn into paid staff and there is a need for more specialized skills. It is very typical that ‘the independent scene, with its small core teams and wider network of co-creators, is developing skills in building community-oriented, horizontal, engaged, less centralised and more efficient organisation models’ (Keulemans, Glubokyi, Arduini and Boljuncic, 2021).

Many cultural organizations try to be as participatory as possible and have democratic governance structures and decision-making processes embedded in their daily operations (Campagnari, 2020). Your leadership will find a model which supports the value and value-creation of the artists and the valorization of the arts. It is important that the governance model supports your mission and vision and your direct communities (Tamimi, 2021).¹⁰

Effects on urban dynamics

Abandoned and neglected spaces have many disadvantages for a neighbourhood: the building wears down quickly and it attracts vandalism and criminality, which is bad for the owner, for the neighbourhood and for the city. If a city acknowledges this, it can turn this around into a powerful opportunity, when it allows professional creatives to use and boost this space. Post-industrial sites offer many advantages to local collectives who would like to be creative and show their talents, as these sites can be very cheap locations, they are highly inspirational, offer ample space and a diversity of rooms, don't have nor cause hindrance of neighbours and offer a blank canvas for experimentation. Unfortunately, there

are some downsides too. Chemical pollution (with its liability and clean-up questions remaining), bad conditions of the buildings, high renovation and redevelopment costs to achieve a basic standard (poor or no insulation, old heating systems, broken windows, water leaking in the buildings ...), bad local transportation, often dangerous neighbourhoods (with e.g. drug dealing and sex workers) and no services (cafés, bars, ATM, ...) around. In the year 2022 the cry for long-term sustainable renovations has become very loud, increasing the cost of repurposing brown fields and industrial sites. It must be considered though that the standards required for new buildings cannot be achieved within older buildings.

Unfortunately, but rather often, in the mid- and long term, the re-appropriation of old heritage sites causes a gentrification around the once abandoned space. Housing prices might increase because the neighbourhood becomes attractive to businesses and hipsters. The original social goals and objectives may fail as local residents and cultural initiators might need to move out again and look for cheaper places (Fouad, Eldin and Mansour, 2017).

Sometimes your location could become a new touristic attraction, hence finding new streams of income to help your project to be self-sustainable or even survive. A famous example is 'Les Grands Voisins, in the posh 14th arrondissement in Paris. Les Grands Voisins was created in an old hospital: 600 homeless people found shelter, but it was also the place for hip start-ups, a restaurant and an alternative hotel. A future example will be the old offices of Ricard in Marseille, which are being reconstructed into 'L'Épopée, a talent village in which vulnerable youngsters will be able to develop their talents, but in which there is also space for start-up entrepreneurs, a city farm, a making space and other initiatives' (Quintens n.d.).

There are many transformative effects on the urban dynamics and on local communities, when a cultural place in a re-appropriated building becomes a serious point of interest with new ways for inclusion, new working forms and a wave from 'me' till 'we', bringing added value for multiple communities. Sometimes gentrification is a consequence, but mostly before that, there is an increase in safety, pluralism, sustainable working and housing. These places are the freestates for the creative, and are strongholds for new, horizontal, inclusive and sustainable ways of creating, working and living. Each re-appropriation of a neglected building will ask for its unique way and there are many ways to do this, but in its multitude, we find its souls and drive. 'We' will be the future. A future of communities and collective energies.

Notes

1. <https://www.spacesandcities.com/resources/andhttps://teh.net/members/?filter=otherspaces>.
2. 'Most of the 20 largest metropolitan areas of the world are growing faster than other metropolitan areas. Between 2000 and 2015, they grew on average by 29 %, which compares to 20% for other metropolitan areas around the world ... The vast majority of shrinking metropolitan areas have a population of less than 1 million inhabitants.' OECD, European Commission (2020), 'Cities in the World, A new perspective on Urbanisation' [online].
<https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/9b73e35den/index.html?itemId=/content/component/9b73e35d-en#:~:text=Most%20of%20the%2020%20largest,the%20world%20>
3. For a toolbox on placemaking, look at: <https://placemaking-europe.eu/about-the-toolbox/>. For literature on placemaking, look at: <https://placemaking-europe.eu/placemaking-is/>.

4. 'What Is Placemaking?' Project for Public Spaces, 2007. <https://www.pps.org/article/what-is-placemaking> [online].
5. 'In Brussel staat er zo'n 6,5 miljoen vierkante meter leeg aan kantoorgebouwen, woningen, industriële panden, ... Tegelijk zijn heel wat organisaties en individuen op zoek naar een betaalbare plek om hun project waar te maken.' <https://toestand.be/over> [online].
6. Cfr to Toestand vzw in Brussels. <https://toestand.be/>. More about the use of empty spaces in: L. Dirx, P. Kennis, L. Destrijcker (2018). 'Leegstond. Handleiding voor gebruik van leegstaande ruimte'. Brussel: Toestand.
7. The publication offers insights, tips and lessons learned on the main challenges of starting up a cultural centre on the borders of Europe.
8. The publication offers insights and tips on using the commons for cultural purposes.
9. The toolkit 'How to set up a Creative Hub' is on how to set up a creative hub and offers handy guidelines on the building of a business model canvas, which is useful for every organization: http://creativehubs.net/uploads/Creative-Hubs-Madrid-Toolkit_Final.pdf.
10. In the toolkit for cultural leadership, you can read more about the different kinds of governance models and the use of digital tools for participatory governance.

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1.4 Spaces of cultural action: Focusing on working in and with communities, in public spaces, urban districts or rural areas, or across borders

PIOTR MICHAŁOWSKI

Place matters. Cultural policies are essential to promote a sense of place, identity and belonging that leaves no place behind. The integration of heritage and culture in urban planning needs to include appropriate cultural impact assessment methods.¹

I remember one defining experience when in 2012 I was completing the Grundtvig Job-shadowing programme with the company called 'Art Beat'² from Glasgow Scotland. Tutor and founder Jane Bentley was providing workshops, among others, for the Renfrewshire's Buddy Beat³ (djembe drumming group for adults with mental health experience) in nearby Paisley. The premise of the workshop (a desacralized church), whose use was conditional upon the financial contribution of the participants, had a leaking roof. Members of the group, not really disturbed, were putting out several plastic bowls to collect the rain drops in order to continue the activities. That moment described a pure definition of place-based socio-culture: it generally happens naturally in specific circumstances, when there is such high social demand for active participation in culture that no obstacles could destroy this connection. I took some photos of that situation and was later showing them locally in Poland to several stakeholders who had to be encouraged since they rarely used publicly funded cultural premises that were 'ready and there for them'. Place matters. Its condition is of a secondary importance. But it is the community that should feel the need to use the space. Each community has its unique references, culture and habits.

Clifford Geertz described culture as that which 'denotes a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life' (Geertz, 1973: 89).

This definition of culture shows a strong connection between values, patterns of life, symbols, examples of behaviours imitated in the socialization phase of one's development. This gives the right to speak about place-based culture, which cannot exist without the context, people and without a space. For the common understanding of culture related to **togetherness**, there is a need to specify other approaches to culture, which could enable a better understanding of processes happening locally. Those elements are inevitably fundamental when designing and implementing any project. The categories of '*private homeland*' and '*ideological homeland*' were introduced by a Polish sociologist Stanisław

Ossowski (1990). The first is the space designated by the place of birth or residence of a single person, the second – by a common national territory. According to this theory, people belonging to one nation may have different *private homelands*, while *ideological homeland* is common to them. This is already close to the theory of Lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) introduced by the German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1984) in the 1930s. Experienced individually, our own lifeworld enables us to create original definitions of the homeland. On the other hand, *ideological homeland* might lead to attempts to unify and internalize some values over others, in order to feel part of the nation with a particular sense of the homeland. The challenge in the first category is to find a common joint understanding on the level of, e.g. one community when trying to grasp numerous individualistic *private homeland definitions*. The fear of defining the *ideological homeland* is enclosed in numerous political attempts to impose one life pattern on society, leading to mythical, almost tribal reductionism, fostering however exclusive and calculative political strategies. The *homeland* concept is always related to emotions, which are vulnerable and might be steered. The same happens with public spaces and ways the community sees them, defines them and internalizes them. The nature of space development implies that it should be accompanied by research to learn about local community needs and potentials. Well-shaped policies can only be based on dialogue.

Different spaces and approaches

According to the 2020 Charter of Rome it is highly important to be ‘supporting community groups to bring their work into public spaces’.⁴ As in the first example from Scotland, there are many examples of **non-obvious spaces**, where culture flourishes. Regardless of whether it is a roofed space or open-air facilities, the community would need ‘gathering rituals’. The Chartreuse Notre-Dame-des-Prés⁵ is a monastery located in Neuville-sous-Montreuil, in the department of Pas-de-Calais in France. It was founded in 1325 by the Count of Boulogne for the Carthusian order. It last served as the hospice-asylum of the Centre Hospitalier de l’Arrondissement de Montreuil-sur-mer, from 1950 to 1998. Presently it is a vibrant cultural centre, managed by Alexia Noyon, director of the Chartreuse. Initially, the strategic objective was to create a meeting space for various social actors in order to support the development and societal innovation of the region. But the goal of the premise developers was that the Chartreuse would become a place of incubation for projects. As the member of the ACCR⁶ network (Association Centres Culturels de Rencontre) founded in Paris in 1974, the venue also searches for international know-how exchanges.

A different type of spaces where culture based on meetings, socialization and networking could be developed is **co-working spaces**. It is worth mentioning the EU-funded research project called ‘CORAL-ITN’,⁷ a Marie Skłodowska Curie Innovative Training Network (2021–4). The special focus of the PhD candidate’s Team is on non-urban areas. As the published project description says, its aim is to ‘unpack the latent dynamics and impacts of collaborative workspaces in rural and peripheral areas and integrate them as development tools in local and regional policies to open up new potentials for socio-economic development’.⁸

The Project Consortium Coordinator is Dr Vasilis Avdikos, Assistant Professor of Creative Economy and Regional Development at Panteion University in Athens. In his research he focuses on the Creative Economy and the spaces of its development, with a special

attention given to Athens and the Attica Region. He described those relations by stating that ‘the economic and touristic power of Athens resides in its unique combination of roots in its ancient history and the breeding of a new, and growing daily, cultural and creative space. The emerging clustering phenomenon – so typical of the creative economy – can be observed in the city centre districts in particular’ (Lavanga et al., 2020).

The CORAL-ITN project also highlights regenerated **hybrid spaces**, previously at risk of demolition and presently serving the multiple purposes of current users’ needs. Former horse stables in Oslo were turned into the ‘Gamlebyen Loft’,⁹ a neighbourhood development project, a cultural initiative and a factory of workspaces located in the old town of Oslo. The venue offers offices suitable for small- or mid-sized companies of all kinds, spaces for local food production, as well as indoor and outdoor event spaces. It also hosts community events and street festivals. Gamlebyen Loft is a place for collaboration and conversations. Its mission is to develop a **multi-disciplinary and inspiring environment** and community for founders, freelancers, established companies and start-ups from a multitude of practices. It is possible to combine working on one’s own, joining in-house projects and being a part of a collective working environment.¹⁰

A similar approach to creating hybrid spaces is a part of the ECoC Elefsina 2023 legacy programme.¹¹ Previously an industrial and manufacturing region, Elefsina has decided to make a switch towards a creative economy and at the same time use its historic heritage and past. The city has tried to perform a mapping of the region to seek out people involved and interested in the creative industry. As mentioned by Georgia Voudouri, ECoC Director of Cultural Development, the major difficulty in the region is that there is no concrete existing creative ecosystem in place. In places like Elefsina, some of the most important uses of a Creative Economy Center will be the development of the region but also stopping the significant ‘brain drain’ by promoting the creative industry and providing incentives for talent gathering as well as opportunities for professional growth.

There is a cooperation foreseen between the projected Capacity Building Hub & Incubator in Elefsina and the to-be-established Creative Economy Center in the former Lyssiatreio¹² in Athens (former rabies hospital). I’m in a team developing this project in the framework of Euroconsultants S.A.,¹³ while it was commissioned by the ‘NEW METROPOLITAN ATTICA SA’.¹⁴ The ambition is to create a hybrid and multidimensional space, which would spread its offer to the whole Region, while remain Athens-based. The huge potential in its history and heritage – both with a market demands and a supply of talents – is in favour for the positive adoption of the Center.

The Creative Economy Center in Athens and Elefsina’s Capacity Building Hub & Incubator could then create the collaborative network – the horizontal model of cooperation which may lead to the **spoke/networking model** with some more nodes on the Attica Region map. In such ‘brain-drain’ aid approach, the cross-sectoral hubs might also appoint an expert committee, which would consist of mentors/experts of all the locations. Yet to grow and start developing in Attica, the Arts and culture require important funding to create the necessary space and infrastructure. In addition, this sector and such **Hubs** must also be given the opportunities to form a network and cooperate with similar institutions to grow and progress together. Hubs and Creative Economy Centres can help greatly with the professionalization phase of freelancers, creating opportunities and providing assistance to young talents.

Covid-19 impact

The most severe disruption to those local gathering *performatives* was caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, whose impact we have faced globally and that threatened all aspects of life. However, it was necessary to struggle not only for health, jobs and the economy, but also for the social life of cities. The cultural sector was immensely impacted by Covid-19 but at the same time this sector had to give the most creative response to it. For a large number of artists and cultural professionals this period implied financial instability, or the necessity of finding other occupations. Pandemic restrictions have had a significant impact on the activities of community centres and have impacted their finances. It was a difficult time for cultural institutions too and for the audiences as well. The pandemic situation limited the pursuit of cultural activities in Poland for example by 69 per cent in 2020.¹⁵ In some ways digital media helped to empower networking during the long time spent at home.

Yet the isolation created an even stronger need for **togetherness**. Organically we understood how culture – term originated from ‘colere’ (cultivation) – is essential as an enabling platform to simply meet with each other (Cicero, 1877). We need live interaction and the pandemic enabled us to also look for non-obvious spaces to be re-used and filled with art. The need to be together was strong and the even the potential meeting spaces became differently defined. The famous choirs practising in Canada in individual cars on the parking lot, with FM radios enabling sounds to be transmitted back and forth¹⁶ showed how strong social-bonding energy accompanies culture.

The Covid-19 pandemic gave us the opportunity to reflect on our lifestyle. At the same time, apart from the cultural centres and entities run in non-urban areas, one another asset given to localities are artists and cultural professionals migrating from cities. Rural areas were already a solution for some artists to leave the pricey workshops and studios and move to different contexts. The Covid-19 pandemic amplified this tendency – also giving possibilities to those who are web-connected to work no matter where they are located. Yet the reality of these places is very different. Non-urban areas have their identity and norms, and cannot be reduced to vast and empty spaces, as potentially seen by some urban digital nomads.

At the same time not only rural areas were offering opportunities. Cities like Wrocław in Poland were adopting special measures to support culture. On the basis of dialogue with cultural institutions and NGOs, the City of Wrocław developed a catalogue of the most important aid activities – an over 3 million EUR ‘Wrocław Social Intervention Programme’, introduced in April 2020 and continued in 2021 and 2022. It was addressed mainly to inhabitants and entities whose functioning was limited or prevented by the pandemic. The Programme was conceived as catalogue that was not closed and it was modified as the situation changed. To support the financial conditions of local artists, a ‘1 % renting fee’ (99 per cent discount) for artistic studios, rented from the municipality was introduced. The ‘Aid Purchasing of Art Pieces’ programme from visual artists of Wrocław was also implemented. All of the above-mentioned activities were included in the ‘Voices of Culture’ report on Artists Working Conditions, published in 2021.¹⁷ Furthermore, Wrocław was included in May 2022 among the 50 Best Actions under the UCLG Agenda 21 for Culture for its Covid-related cultural aid policies with two labels: Innovative Sparks and Planning for Care.¹⁸

Participation in spaces

The category of participation was one of the key aspects related to the constitutive experience of the recent European Capital of Culture¹⁹ which was held by Wrocław in 2016. The process of becoming ECoC was based both on the inhabitants' desire to be more actively involved in cultural activities, or in planning cultural policies, and on an external approach to decentralization and territorial development, which was promoting known international solutions of bringing cities and regions together, with the support of culture. It was the European Network of Cultural Centres (ENCC)²⁰ that co-organized in 2016 with local partners a conference in rural areas near Wrocław, initiating a four-year creation process of a 'Crowdsourced ENCC Manifesto for Territorial Development'²¹ and 'Beyond the urban'²² policy paper, both launched in March 2020, right before the Covid-19 pandemic. The latter document stated: 'contemporary artists and cultural professionals, in collaboration with multidisciplinary teams, can help realizing the potential of rurality to be a laboratory for conceiving an innovative vision on how global societies, whether urban or rural, central or peripheral, can reinvent current modes of economic, social and political functioning and ensure a sustainable future for our planet'.²³

Culture is one of the best investments in the sustainable development of a model in which the city is open and involves residents in decision-making processes. In the Thematic Think Piece of UNESCO called 'Culture: a driver and an enabler of sustainable development'²⁴ published in 2012, there are relevant references to culture-led development. 'Culture has a transformative power on existing development approaches, helping to broaden the terms of the current development debate and to make development much more relevant to the needs of people.'²⁵ The emphasis was given also to the other aspects, stating that 'culture-led development also includes a range of non-monetized benefits, such as greater social inclusiveness and rootedness, resilience, innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship for individuals and communities, and the use of local resources, skills, and knowledge'.²⁶

Such assumptions were also a part of the programme document 'Culture – I'm Present!'²⁷ which was constituted after the ECoC experience in participation with inhabitants. The strategic documents highlighted the need to develop space and cultural resources outside the centre, creating and supporting new forms of participation in culture and spending free time, including citizens in the process of co-deciding on cultural programmes and activities, ensuring social inclusion and relations through culture.

The above-mentioned activities were related to answering the growing needs for co-decision-making processes, indicated by several inhabitants, and which characterize the well-governed, progressive and sustainable city. A visible switch from the city investing into infrastructure, to the city investing in well-being and tools for co-governance was needed. High importance was dedicated to decentralization, which not only gives a sense of delegating competences and local policymaking into the hands of local leaders, but also significantly and positively changes the local environment of the districts, simply by taking collective responsibility for their own surroundings.

Such an approach of laboratories for social experimentation was fundamental for the city of Wrocław to introduce a large-scale decentralization, based on socio-culture as an ECoC legacy, which resulted in the substantial support and development of its forty-eight neighbourhood councils and the establishment in 2020 of the Civic Advisory Board for Culture.

Those policies were also identified in 2020 as Best Practices by the UCLG Agenda 21 for Culture.²⁸ A fine example of this approach is a socio-cultural city network called ‘Centres of Local Initiatives’. Since 2016, it has grown to twenty-four locations, scattered all over the city – according to a decentralized model – one of the ECoC 2016 legacy key projects. The Centre’s main features are related to geographical coverage and proximity, participatory programming, accessibility, social experimentation and intergenerational dialogue. Inhabitants are able to provide activities based on their aptitudes, taking a leading role and becoming tutors.

Those venues became active supporters of civil society during Covid-19 times, for example by inviting volunteers for protective masks sewing, for providing volunteering support to the elderly and persons remaining in quarantine, or becoming Crisis-Aid Centres. Those centres have successfully activated civic responsibilities. That was crucial for flexibility that became apparent later, manifested in how they were immediately able to re-organize towards support during Pandemic times. Just as in rural areas, those centres in Wrocław are inviting all generations and are building social cohesion, being more of a platform to meet and co-develop, rather than other typical events centres.²⁹ This example shows how cities are becoming more ruralized, adopting patterns and schemes from the non-urban areas and the decentralized models that are more widely known there.

ENCC microgrants for local site-specific projects

Local, personal and owned culture and the understanding of the ownership of place, traditions and values are the driving elements for promoting and presenting projects, and are characteristic of projects submitted to the ENCC UPscale cascading grant scheme: ENCC European network’s UPscale³⁰ in 2020 and ENCC UP Grants³¹ 2022. Yet the most important and visible was the local dimension. Thinking global while acting local, developing neighbourhood communities and capacity building are all very present in all the propositions of best practices. While received projects were related mostly to culture and sustainability, the additional level of ‘going beyond’ localities, uplifting those space-based practices to an international and European level (as an act), was related fully to internationalization, global cross-border outreach and the promotion of local creative eco-system models.

It is crucial to highlight the international visibility, enabled by the position of the cascading grant scheme organizer – the ENCC network. When such re-granting is organized locally, the scope and possible learning process is narrowed to the regional circumstances. The multiplication effect, essential in similar programmes, could happen then not only locally, but internationally. Up until 2021 European networks were mostly organizing, among others, activities like conferences, webinars and publications in order to catalogue, highlight and promote existing best practices. However, in this current Creative Europe programme’s new eligibility rules³², the supported networks are able to financially support the projects by re-granting, assisting with their implementation and their development. Those re-granting practices are also a highly on demand and appropriate small-scale remedy for the immense impact which the Covid-19 crisis has caused to the cultural sector.

Instead of a summary, I would like to recall again Clifford Geertz and his words explaining what ethnography is (also basing his concept on ‘thick description’ [Geertz, 1973: 6] introduced previously by Gilbert Ryle): ‘doing ethnography is like trying to read (in the sense

of “construct a reading of”) a manuscript – foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries, but written not in conventionalized graphs of sound but in transient examples of shaped behavior’ (Geertz, 1973: 10).

Speaking then about the relations between culture actions and spaces, these are complex and very diverse. There exist different purposes, ideas, potentials and demands to be incorporated. Simply tailor-made solutions, based on mapping, and well-elaborated needs might be the only way for the developers to understand what kind of the space is needed for a certain community. Urban and landscape planners are used to observe which paths are naturally used by citizens in order to build pathways afterwards. The well-developed, community-owned space should be based on the same principles – listening and following the local ‘footsteps’.

Notes

1. https://agenda21culture.net/sites/default/files/izmir2021_statement_en.pdf.
2. <https://artbeatmusic.org/>.
3. <https://www.thebuddybeat.org/>.
4. https://agenda21culture.net/sites/default/files/2020_rc_eng_0.pdf.
5. <https://lachatreusedeneuville.org/>.
6. <https://www.accr-europe.org/en/network>.
7. <https://coral-itn.eu/>.
8. Ibid.
9. <https://gamebyenloft.no/>.
10. Ibid.
11. <https://2023eleusis.eu/mysteries-of-transition/?lang=en>.
12. <https://athensville.blogspot.com/2012/11/o.html>.
13. <https://www.euroconsultants.gr/web/guest/aboutus>.
14. <https://www.developattica.gr/en/home>.
15. According to Statistics Poland: <https://stat.gov.pl/en/>.
16. <https://www.npr.org/2021/01/11/954007807/car-concerts-offer-choirs-a-way-to-rehearse-and-perform>.
17. <https://voicesofculture.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/VoC-Brainstorming-Report-Working-Conditions-2.pdf>.
18. https://www.agenda21culture.net/sites/default/files/files/documents/minidocuments/eng_-_award_uclg_-_cdmx_-_c21_2022_-_best.pdf.
19. <https://strefakultury.pl/en/ecoc2016/>.
20. <https://encc.eu/>.
21. <https://encc.eu/resources/database/manifesto-culture-shared-smart-innovative-territories>.
22. <https://encc.eu/resources/database/beyond-urban-contemporary-arts-and-culture-keys-sustainable-and-cohesive-europe>.
23. Ibid.
24. https://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/Think%20Pieces/2_culture.pdf.
25. Ibid., p. 5.
26. Ibid., p.4.

27. <https://www.wroclaw.pl/rozmawia/konsultacje-kultura-obecna-dokument>.
28. <https://obs.agenda21culture.net/en/good-practices/wroclaw-participatory-sustainable-and-culture-friendly-city>.
29. <https://scalwroclaw.org/>.
30. <https://encc.eu/calls/up-grants>.
31. <https://encc.eu/calls/up-grants>.
32. <https://ec.europa.eu/culture/calls/call-european-networks-cultural-and-creative-organisations>.

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1.5 Places for life

GUNDEGA LAIVIŅA

A few years ago, I read Bruce Pascoe's book *Dark Emu* which re-examines colonial accounts of Aboriginal people in Australia. The book starts with a story about Baiame, the Spirit Emu, a creator god and father of sky in the Dreaming of several Aboriginal peoples' cosmology. After creating the earth, he left to reside as a dark shape in the Milky Way. The story ends with a poetic juxtaposition: 'Europeans stare at the stars, but Aboriginal people also see the spaces in-between where Spirit Emu resides' (Pascoe, 2014: n.p.). Within our contemporary societies, artists have that exceptional ability to notice and activate in-between spaces, to open them to us and to animate via place-based momentums that have the power to trigger change – from individual to societal and political levels. To me, the most vital and forward-looking of those practices are the ones that respect, celebrate and sustain different agencies – human, non-human, and more-than-human, and weave connecting tissues among them, carving out places for life and relatedness.

In her book *For Space* the human geographer Doreen Massey writes: 'We cannot "become" (...) without others. It is space that provides the necessary conditions for that possibility' (Massey, 2005: 56), emphasizing place as an essential factor in the formation and transformation of our identities and relationships. The 'black box' in performing arts and the 'white cube' in visual arts are still considered the most relevant sites for presenting contemporary creation. However, more and more art workers choose to work in different, often challenging and unpredictable spatial conditions – public and private settings, apartments, schools, hospitals and prisons, urban and rural contexts, forests and shores. Unlike conventional stages and exhibition halls that unconsciously force us to withdraw from reality for a while, these moments often unfold in the very centre of the real world, where there is an urgent need for attention, intimacy, care and empowerment.

Inevitably, this move has changed and occasionally slowed down the creation, presentation and touring pattern, and introduced a multi-layered notion of sustainability as one of the core principles in contemporary practice. Moreover, it has led to more profound and mutually enriching connections to place, its materiality and communities, often softening anthropocentric ideology and related power dynamics. We are witnessing the shift from the status quo of a globally thriving art worker who is not bound to a specific territory and belongs everywhere/nowhere to the realization that in order to change something, it is vital to know the texture and the life story of that thing. It takes time, rootedness and courage.

Artistic activity has historically happened in various spatial conditions. The incentives and context have evolved, however. At present, we are less concerned about the reasons for departing conventional infrastructure or technical or aesthetical aspects of site-specific

work. Instead, there is an urge to explore how we share the space as artists and citizens, acknowledging that every place and place-based artwork is co-created and co-experienced by humans and non-human agencies – animals, plants, objects and minerals, weather and even viruses. How to relate to real, imagined and metaphoric spaces, permitting their response, contribution and occasional takeover? It is increasingly an intentional art workers' choice to question hierarchies that prevail in conventional art production and presentation and enter relationships that continuously challenge the artwork's structure and power relations.

Moreover, an active, transformative space is no longer considered only a physical place. It is a hybrid of physical and social infrastructure through which new relationships are constantly produced. An individual body or group of bodies can become change-makers by performing specific rituals and ceremonies in a particular place and time. The body becomes a vessel that stores this experience and carries it further. Unlike conventional infrastructure, those performing spaces can be temporary, agile, elusive, porous and fluid.

Those processes invite us to rethink not only the notion of space as a fixed and constant unit but also the idea of the centre – what constitutes it and who determines it. Try to imagine a theatre ecosystem in a specific city: recognizing the potential of any space to become a stage dismantles the idea of conventional theatre buildings as central to that landscape. Instead of acknowledging one centre, we are encouraged to notice the multiplicity and diversity of centres – some are fixed, others – are fluid, landing here and there depending on the need. This vibrant network disrupts the centre–periphery dichotomy and confronts the widely accepted view that the centre has a higher value. Seemingly marginal cultural spaces are essential for developing novel ideas and their ability to disturb the centre and constantly question its exclusivity.

Despite a growing appreciation of the role of audience participation and 'co-production' with communities, these processes have been often applied to places, with people being compelled or encouraged to participate in the work rather than the work 'participate in the place'. Thus, space and communities have been in service of the pre-made dramaturgical structure of the artwork. Within the current shift, however, they are acknowledged as co-authors, and their agency is essential in generating that structure. More and more art workers avoid approaching a place or a community with a ready idea as if that place was empty before their arrival – a *tabula rasa* with no story. Instead, they try to build their relationship with the place based on the composite question – 'Who is there/What is there?' trying to disclose its *genius loci*. Only once they have understood which memories, communities and relationships the place already accommodates do they turn to question what might be their contribution. They allow the idea to emerge during the process of learning the site. Space here is approached not as a resource but as a living, intimately and continuously shared matter engendering life, deepening awareness of the material connections within the particular place and recognizing its continuing and multiform exchanges with other places and times. This approach derives from lived experience and is somewhat close to the situationist practice of *dérive*, which urges us to let be enchanted by the terrain, encounters and social relations found there. Those practices suggest that no place is ever 'complete' as everyone and everything with some agency participates in its constant recreation, but the art worker is simultaneously an observer, a creator, a participant, a host and a guest.

This summer I visited *documenta*, a contemporary art exhibition taking place every five years in Kassel, Germany, every time curated by a different individual or group. *documenta fifteen* was conceived by Jakarta-based interdisciplinary collective *ruangrupa*. My experience there resonates deeply with some of the above principles and practices. Together with hundreds of art workers and creators that exist in the margins of the conventional art market and geography, *ruangrupa* transformed the city following *lumbung*¹ values and principles: collectivity, resource building and equitable distribution. Objects, actions, conversations and performing bodies in underground passages, churches, galleries, museums, greenhouses, train stations, compost pits and parks celebrated action over reflection, collectivity over the artist's ego and a place that is performative, fluid and ever-changing. *documenta* dismantled existing spatial structures and hierarchies, uncovered and allowed in-between spaces and 'heterotopias' to emerge, engaged people, matter, rivers and plants. It generated a situation where everything is possible, and the most unexpected can happen as everyone and everything is invited to contribute to the ongoing process of creation at any time. Thereby, during *documenta fifteen*, the entire city was organically turned into a loose, locally rooted but extremely open-minded laboratory. Intrinsic to this process-focused journey were fallibility, messiness, radical inclusivity, certain irreverence, and – over all – a joy and celebration of communality. Instead of collaborating to make art, *documenta* shifted focus and propagated the art of collaboration, coaxing aesthetics out of these social relations and communal feelings.

In many ways, *documenta* resembles a school. This format is reclaimed within contemporary artistic practice more and more often. It aims to create a place where the skills and knowledge not present in the conventional educational system are highlighted and circulated. Those free schools focus on learning as a continuous, open-ended process involving bodies and subjectivities, enhancing a collective dimension. One such school, *Bodies of Knowledge*, is a long-term research project and artistic practice by the artist Sarah Vanhee. She arrives in different public places and transforms them into a temporary, nomadic classroom, a forum for sharing repressed or underexposed, non-dominant knowledge and channelling it to the broader community. 'In *Bodies of Knowledge*, we exchange knowledge that feeds a more just and humane society', says the artist, welcoming life experts rather than professional authorities. Sarah Vanhee is among those art workers who have turned the one-time event into ongoing practice, merging it with their own lives and the life of the place and community. The notion of 'life experts' resonates with the concept of the 'experts of the everyday' brought into the spotlight by German-Swiss documentary theatre collective *Rimini Protokoll* a few decades ago. They are convinced that literally everybody is an expert in a particular field and, thus, deserves a moment on stage to share their expertise.

Similarly, *McDonald's Radio University*, created by Japanese artist Akira Takayama brings suppressed knowledge into the spotlight. The choice of 'stage' is compelling – the project takes place in a roadside McDonald's. When talking to newcomers who had migrated to Europe via the Balkan Route, Takayama learned that thanks to free Wi-Fi, phone charging possibilities and access to toilets, McDonald's was seen as a meeting point and place where information about the journey could be shared. In this trivial setting, 'professors' of this university – among them refugees, people in precarious jobs and homeless people – share their versatile life experiences and expertise that are not recognized by traditional academia but are crucial for survival.

Another highly appreciated nomadic format of knowledge circulation is Hannah Hurtzig's *Black Market of Useful Knowledge and Non-knowledge*. Devised in the form of an agora where every visitor can purchase a thirty-minute one-on-one meeting with an expert, this assembly or 'community college' offers learning and unlearning, knowledge and non-knowledge, and strategies for living. It questions the ownership and access to knowledge in today's society. The *Black Market's* space, co-created by Hurtzig, experts and audience members, and filled with dozens of voices that simultaneously transmit the knowledge, is highly theatrical. Moreover, it gives every audience member the power to be in charge of the knowledge-sharing episode they are part of, as their behaviour guides the course of the conversation.

The key goal of the *documenta fifteen* is to make decisions collectively so that they create resources that would live on beyond the show. Those questions increasingly prevail in contemporary artistic and curatorial practice that rely on communities and specific spatial contexts and aim to make the change. What happens after the artwork as a one-time event is over? What relationships live on and continue to expand? Gradually, for many artists, it becomes impossible to separate life and creative work anymore. The ethics and aesthetics, as well as the function of performer and spectator start to coalesce, becoming one.

One of the more extreme examples in this regard is a *Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination* established by artists and activists Jay Jordan and Isabelle Fremeaux. Several years ago, they left London, their academic jobs and festival circuit to settle down in Notre Dame des Landes in Brittany to live on the *zad*², the zone to defend. It comprises 4,000 acres of wetlands, farmland and forest that were due to be destroyed for a new international airport. Jay and Isabelle joined a community to safeguard the place using creative forms of direct action and land occupation and to establish a new relationship with the place and more-than-human communities. Everything those artists undertake coalesces art, activism, and everyday life and deals directly with defending places and processes that prioritize life over death, care over fear and attention over neglect.

Similar is the path of British artist James Leadbitter (aka *the vacuum cleaner*), best known for his rigorous activism and continuous project *Madlove: A Designer Asylum* that combines research, artistic practice and political struggle. The necessity for this endeavour emerged from James's personal experience while he stayed in several hospitals during his long struggle with mental illness. The grim setting of the psychiatric ward worsened the artist's condition and posed a question: how would this place look if designed by the patient? This project consists of a series of workshops around the UK and internationally involving patients, medical personnel, architects, and designers and imagining patient-centred spaces where madness can be experienced in a less painful way. Born from a very personal experience, *Madlove* merges art, play, activism, and life and directs attention to a specific problem that needs to be addressed for the well-being of a larger community. Moreover, it challenges the stigma and discrimination of patients by putting them in charge, acknowledging their agency and listening to their imagination. When asked about the ideal place for surviving his mental condition, a young man from Birmingham concluded: 'All I want is a room with Fabergé eggs and a hammer.'

A place-based artistic practice allowing for simultaneous collective remembrance and dreaming is a monthly ritual held by Emily Johnson, an artist and activist of Yup'ik origin who resides in New York. Once a month, she lights up ceremonial fires in the heart of Mannahatta

(present-day Manhattan), inviting the community to celebrate indigenous wisdom and collectively re-create landscapes and social situations long gone. The regularity of this practice is a pre-condition for the emergence of the jointly devised epistemology that becomes intrinsic to how we co-inhabit the space. Each ceremony hosts guests who share their stories and performances in honour and protection of the land, water and air of the homelands of the Lenapeyok community. As the gathering unfolds, the boundaries between performers, storytellers and the audience gradually collapse. Art of collaboration of this level has the potential to alter the course of everyday social and political course and establish bonds to the places and communities of various times – past, present and future.

Some places are not only performative; they travel, enabling people to determine when and where the artwork shall be experienced. They appear where it is most expected/unexpected and reach out to those who are not regulars at conventional art institutions. Often, these practices spotlight the politics of the everyday, the potential of micro-practices and the power of one-on-one encounters. During the Covid-19 lockdown, when theatres closed their door and people were forced to remain in their private spaces, the Flemish artist Benjamin Verdonck manufactured a tiny black-box theatre that could fit on his bike rack. He embarked on the journey in the city, visiting people in hospitals, shelters and retirement homes. The miniature spectacle in the viewing box could engage a larger or smaller audience day or night, inside or out, without beginning or end. In front of closed windows or glass doors, he unpacked his theatre, did the performance, packed it away and vanished into the empty city. Via social media, he approached people with an invitation to place a colourful object outside their homes if they wanted the travelling theatre to stop by. Unexpectedly the ancient practice of travelling theatre had become timely and relevant again.

A daring multi-year project by the British artist Sonia Hughes explores the potential of nomadic performative space, a sense of home, the relationship between public and private, and belonging. With her project, *I am from Reykjavik*, Sonja travels to different cities where she builds and takes down the shelter. It is erected in a different neighbourhood every day. The decision to either ignore the artist's undertaking or engage and become a spectator or co-creator is left to the people. Many pass by. Some stop for a second, some offer help or start a conversation. Some return the next day. It is a reciprocal space and situation as the artist makes sure not only to thank people for offering help but to collect their stories and memories that become part of her artwork. The artist submits to the place, people and situation, thus overturning the conventional pattern of artistic creation and presentation. Neither do we know where we might find Sonja's home tomorrow, nor does she know what kind of encounters the future will bring.

The British geographer David Harvey has said that 'the right to the city is [...] far more than a right of individual or group access to the resources that the city embodies: it is a right to change and reinvent the city [...]. It is, moreover, a collective rather than an individual right [...]. The freedom to make and remake ourselves and our cities is [...] one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights' (Harvey, 2019: 4). Whether they appear in an urban or a rural setting, temporary spaces for cultural action constantly remind us about those rights and invite us to see places not as fixed and finished environments through which we move but as mediums where something becomes possible. Those places are not the final stage of some processes but rather – the beginning. In times of war, potentially new

shut and lockdowns in many cities, and democracies under pressure, this form of art constitutes an important political practice in its core sense. It demands paying closer attention to our relations and dependencies. And this does not have to be smooth – it is full of conflict, misunderstandings, the unknown, but hopefully also respect and creativity.

Notes

1. Translated from Indonesian, lumbung means ‘rice barn’ where the surplus harvest is stored and distributed for the benefit of the community according to jointly defined criteria.
2. Zone à défendre (*in French*).

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Links to listed artistic practices

- <http://en.bodiesofknowledge.be>
- <http://mobileacademy-berlin.com>
- <http://portb.net>
- <http://www.catalystdance.com>
- <http://www.documenta-fifteen.de>
- <http://www.iamfromreykjavik.com>
- <http://www.labo.zone>
- <http://www.thevacuumcleaner.co.uk>

1.6 The street, the field, the workshop and the stage: Staging grounds for transdisciplinary urban enquiry

JOHN BINGHAM-HALL

Theatrum mundi is a concept, or a provocation, proposing to see the world as a stage on which reality is performed. It suggests that performance can be both a framework and a set of tools for interrogating and intervening in this reality. Performance is a broad and flexible phenomenon: mobilized conceptually in studies of gender and identity, refined and rehearsed in music and dance, even used to describe the economic and environmental efficiency of infrastructures. The work of the independent urban research centre Theatrum Mundi draws from all of these manifestations of performance to ask questions about urban public life that are hard to answer with the visual languages of architectural and urban design: how could urban mobility become an experience of cultural and social immersion rather than dislocation?; how do citizens find and amplify a political voice?; what does sonic heritage sound like? The projects we lead propose responses to these provocations, responses in the form of critical writing, speculative design and artistic production; developed through residencies and workshops; platform on the radio, the stage or in print; and aiming to offer forms of knowledge and practice that can act back on the streets these questions interrogate.

My aim here is not to describe these projects, but to share learning from the facilitation of collaborative thinking across divergent forms and materials – sound, choreography, writing, urban design, governance and planning. For the meeting of these fields to be generative requires conditions that favour the development of shared experiences and directions. So where can these conditions be created? The street, the field, the workshop and the stage. Together, these act as infrastructures for transdisciplinary urban enquiry, each representing both a physical space and a way of working together. Drawing on a series of creative research residencies led by Theatrum Mundi – touching ground in Greece, France, Switzerland and Egypt, and with partners including Onassis Stegi, Mucem and EXPLORE Geneva – we will move through these interconnected spaces to build a landscape within which transformative thinking for cities can emerge from cross-disciplinary encounters.

The street

Urban streets vary the world over in their form and politics, but ‘the street’ endures as an emblem of everyday public culture. The street, as an emblem, opposes the symbolic, processional avenues where state power is performed. Places like The Mall in London, leading towards Buckingham Palace, or Paris’ Champs-Élysées around the presidential residence, have their visual and spatial orders tightly controlled. Backdrops for televised

state events, they are more like stages, which we will discuss later, than everyday infrastructures. The street implies the precedence of use over representation: the necessity of travel, commerce, access to services and social life. It also, to many, stands for barriers to that access or to mobility, for violence and the production of pollution and noise that undermine health. After the domestic space in which our most primary needs are of concern – rest, shelter, nourishment and intimacy – the street acts as a second layer reality, and one's ability to navigate it can offer or deny access to employment, sociability, even a place in society. As Saskia Sassen (2013) has argued, streets are the spaces in which powerlessness can be inversed, where those with the least political sway in society can mark their presence through everyday adaptations, or make themselves heard through protest. From an urban design perspective, everyday streets are troublesome, because whilst they have a clear material form, that form is made and remade by overlapping processes that cannot be controlled by a designer. Shopkeepers' signs and stalls, café tables, vehicles, clothes, residents' window or doorstep plants, voices, buskers, groups of people stopping and talking, engineers installing and repairing infrastructures: all of these are the makers of the visual and sonic ambiance of the street. By what means, then, can interventions be made to help streets respond to needs for empowerment, contact and mobility?

Urbanism has responded with materials – tactical interventions like those made in many cities in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, to expand café terraces or introduce temporary cycle lanes. This kind of design intervenes in the 'stage' but lacks the tools to re-imagine performance itself. The crafts of the stage – dance or theatre for example – would always start with bodies, words and ideas, with the material design for the setting coming after. *Theatrum Mundi* takes its cue from these crafts in order to test ideas for interventions in the politics and ambiances of the street. In the residency project *The City Talks Back*, for example, *Theatrum Mundi* and Onassis Stegi invited architects, anthropologists and performance artists, to document and propose strategies for amplifying political voice in Athens. Rather than making spatial interventions – such as the architectural interventions developed for the ideas challenge *Designing for Free Speech*¹ that formed part of the background to the project – the residents investigated domestic creativity, radio, protest rhythms and song, to show the diversity of modes and spaces through which the inhabitants of the street make themselves heard in the politics of the city. Engaging with the street demands an overlapping of fields – spatial design, language, politics, technology – and taking the street as a field of study enables these artificially divided systems of knowledge to come together around a shared focus. So how can fields, rather than suggesting enclosure, become infrastructures for an imaginative expansion of urbanism?

The field

'Fields as research sites and fieldwork as a distinct set of research practices are foundational to many sciences today, but it was not always so' (Brinitzer and Benson, 2022). Fields are both material and imaginary infrastructures: real places studied by researchers; and 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1983) shaped around linguistic and conceptual norms within research practice. In both forms, though, the field has its roots in a violence that must be challenged and overcome in order to support caring and equitable cultural actions. The field as a site to conduct research finds etymological origin in territory to be conquered,

originally through the enactment of military strategy, and then through the controlling and ordering of the world through human and botanical ‘sciences’ that were wrapped up with colonial extraction from indigenous cultures and lands. ‘In practice, rather than eliminating colonial practices or colonialism, the period since the mid-twentieth century has been marked by a series of mutations of colonial relations that have often been masked or elided by new discursive formations’ (Anderson, 1983). As nations, which are imagined as coherent communities through the imposition of languages and rules, scientific fields have also replicated a colonial mindset, competing for territory in the form of funding and political power. Both bringing practitioners and researchers from different imagined fields together and entering together into the field of a research site are sensitive undertakings. There are strategies, though, that can make them important propositions for the ongoing undoing of these enclosures of ideas and resources.

The first strategy I would propose is simply in the asking of a question. *The City Talks Back* framed a question around processes of urban political engagement in such a way that it could be worked at from diverse positions – scholarly, artistic, activist and so on. In order for a question to be common, it cannot belong to any one field, nor can it sit outside all of them. Picture the question as a signpost in open fields on a country walk, for example. It might indicate distances and directions to surrounding points of interest, suggesting paths of action without constraining destinations. If the signpost is located at the edge of the field, it can be viewed from different enclosures, perhaps showing ways between them. The question ‘*how can we improve citizen participation in city-making?*’ would have acted as a signpost squarely in the centre of a field occupied by the urban planning departments of municipal authorities and their public engagement officers. So instead, we placed *voice* at the centre of the project. By framing voice as both a metaphor for political participation and a bodily, fleshy mode of communication, it became possible for vocal performance artists, anthropologists and architects to meet at signpost that made sense within their own fields, and to embark together from there in a shared direction. As a result, for example, architects Stefania Gyftopoulou and Mara Petra of the *Curing the Limbo* refugee housing project found a new (for them) way to narrate political experiences of migrant welcome (or otherwise) in Athens, through recording and creative mapping of songs and speech filmed by service users within their homes.²

The second strategy I would propose for working with fields is *immersion*. When the field is the city, and particularly the street, this means immersion in people, relationships, memories and ideas, as much as it does a material environment. The nomadic residency programme *School for Sonic Memory*, curated by Theatrum Mundi with Onassis Stegi and Mucem, asked a diverse group of artists and researchers how sonic heritage, that may often be fleeting and ephemeral, could be remembered or created, taking the three cities of Alexandria, Marseille and Athens as fields of experience through which to develop responses. The nomadic format necessitated a short-term engagement with each city. Rather than see this as a negative, we highlighted a focus on the position of the ‘tourist’ as a figure driven by curiosity for a new place and carrying cultures with them as they move. The aim was to enter into these fields as tourists, but not recreate the extractive dynamics that have come to define so much mass tourism, in which globalized enterprises profit from urban spectatorship in ways that do not bring value back into the common life of the city. The *School for Sonic Memory* connected the group of six nomadic artists travelling between

the cities with three local artists in each city, immersing them for a week in the work of these artists, in their company, and in a view of that city through their eyes. The effect, we hoped, was to shift from observing the field and its inhabitants, in the nineteenth-century colonial model of the lone scientist or explorer, or even extracting ‘data’ in the model of the contemporary one, towards the experience of *being together* in the field. Sharing experiences in the moment and in the flesh, the visitor’s perspective and indeed emotional response can transform the way a local sees their own environment, as much as their knowledge can inform the experience of the visitor. As we have observed across all of these projects, these two-way exchanges can surpass question on the signpost, leading to the kinds of lifelong camaraderie and even life-changing turns that come from sharing a path together.

Cities are ideal settings for these strategies to overlap. They are thick realities that surpass any singular expertise, necessitating the framing of shared questions, and responses informed by cultural and social immersion. Urbanism – the ‘field’ that studies and designs cities – is already transdisciplinary by necessity. Urban ‘fields’ are therefore infrastructures for kinds of real-world learning that are necessarily transversal, for ideas grounded in but not limited to a specific set of material conditions. By working in them in embedded ways, transdisciplinary groups can find common ground through shared experience, though the work they make may speak beyond that place. This immersive experience is hard to create within the ‘white cube’ of a workshop or residency space perhaps, where the onus is placed on finding similarities in identity and thinking in order for commonalities to emerge. As part of a broader infrastructural landscape, though, the workshop plays an important role.

The workshop

To test ideas by saying them out loud for the first time, or to make first steps towards a performance by experimenting with sound and movement: these moments of vulnerability in creative processes requires conditions of safety and intimacy. *Theatrum Mundi*, in its ‘field-work journals’ on infrastructures of cultural production, has described these conditions as the urban ‘backstage’, where production of all kinds of forms takes place before coming out into and shaping the public world (Bingham-Hall et al., 2021). The workshop works as both a metaphor for and space of this productive work. Richard Sennett describes the workshop as a setting for common focus and develop implicit bonds that can overcome difference (Sennett, 2008). In Sennett’s reading, pre-modern workshops of woodwork, metalwork, and other guilded crafts gave rise to family-like bonds between master and apprentice, with shared concern for a common object being shaped by careful work as a common glue. By facing a shared goal, rather than one another, the focus is taken away from shared identities or ideas as the basis for solidarity. Learning from a master who does not deign to explain themselves requires ‘absorption into tacit knowledge, unspoken and uncoded in words ... the thousand little everyday moves that add up in sum to a practice’ (Sennett, 2008: 77). Like many of the cultural producers we have spoken to for our research documenting urban backstages – including tailors, sound technicians, bakers, sculptors and dancers – the craftspeople in the medieval workshop owned their own labour and lived from the product of their craft. Of course, there are many conditions from this time we would not want to emulate, but there is a lesson that resonates with the projects in question here. By

producing new thinking together, in the mode of the workshop, rather than bringing existing knowledge directly to the stage, deeper and more durable collaboration can be fostered.

So, what makes possible the kinds of horizontal workshop conditions described by Sennett, where shared making is prioritized over the performance of the existing? Of course, the kinds of questions posed by *Theatrum Mundi* do not require a craftsman's tools, a workbench or raw materials to answer. But that does not mean that tacit knowledge and the bonds formed around a common object cannot be created. If in the field a question is like a signpost at the overlap of different territories, then in the workshop it might be pictured as a block of wood, and the languages spoken in different those territories as tools to work it with. A single tool – a chisel for example – can certainly make a form, but the addition of a plane, a circular saw, or even completely new materials, can create more nuance and shape. The messy work of shaping is rarely intended to be made public, but it is essential to the production of forms that can become focal points of shared public meaning, as artworks are often intended to be. This is why we understand the workshop to be a metaphor for the backstage. Putting the workshop on display takes the focus away from the form and puts pressure on the performative qualities of the gestures that craft it. A panel discussion and a critical workshop, for example, may both be a conversation around a shared question, but the presence of an audience in the former favours the reproduction of existing knowledge, whereas intimacy and privacy of the latter creates a setting for putting ideas to work as tools towards something new.

And what about the 'tacit knowledge' described by Sennett, not only in his book *The Craftsman* (2008) as part of cultural production and learning, but in later writing such as *Building and Dwelling* (2018) as part of learning how to inhabit the complex environments of cities? The academic version of a workshop might often mean sitting and sharing presentations on a screen and communicating from fixed positions. Engaging the crafts of the stage means recognizing the ways movement and creative listening can be engaged to expand the tools for communication. A choreographic workshop, for example, as part of the backstage of dance practice, will move back and forth between movement and conversation, as part of an iterative feedback process. Dance, here, is not a performance but a way of thinking about spatial possibilities. Workshop conditions, then, could be brought about by moving together, even for urbanists, offering both a shared experience and a way to learn from other people's bodily responses to a prompt or set of conditions.

In this way, a workshop can be a physical space or event, but it can also be a set of conditions carried out into the field. Workshop conditions are ones in which a common focus can be tested through both words and actions, which are not directed outwards towards an audience but inwards towards the building of shape around that focus. For the *Tram des Nations* creative research residency, curated by *Theatrum Mundi* for the City of Geneva, a group of local and visiting urbanists, visual and sound artists traversed the landscape of a new tramway extension through four walks led by local practitioners, pointing to ecological and political processes informing a set of responses by the project residents. The collective *Dénominateurs Communs* proposed a walk that reversed this logic: instead of sharing their knowledge of the landscape, they invited residents to test unhabitual ways of moving through it: walking behind instead of in front of a bus stop, taking the path through the trees instead of the pavement, feeling the textures of surfaces instead of looking at them.³ All of this without verbal instructions, only suggestive gestures. The result was not a

transfer of information but the production of a new shared sensory reality that was for many of the residents the most influential experience of their immersion in the field. This could not have happened directly on a stage, but neither would it have been as powerful were it not directed to a moment at which final ideas would be staged.

The stage

Staging

noun

- 1 the act, process, or manner of presenting a play on the stage.
- 2 a temporary platform or structure of posts and boards for support, as in building; scaffolding.⁴

Typically, of course, the aim of the creative production supported through a residency is to present work to the public, and this always involves some kind of stage. It may not be the raised platform of a theatre, but it will certainly be some kind of communication setting that favours focus and the temporary placing of certain forms – sounds, texts, objects or images – in the foreground, over others that may be present in the same space. In the performing arts, staging is an end point – the moment that forms that have been carefully developed through workshopping, perhaps fieldwork too, are mounted as a public action. The definition of the English word *staging* already has a double meaning spanning building and the performing arts, and whilst it is translated directly to the French phrase *mise-en-scène*, it has become clear in Theatrum Mundi's bilingual practice across English and French that there are important differences between the two, that can lead to productive clarifications. It becomes clearer in the verb form of the word: 'to stage', or *mettre en scène* (literally 'to put, or place, on stage'). The latter, as we understand it, is the careful arrangement of elements in a predetermined relationship – 'placing'. To stage is of course to present a version of a play, or indeed other scores or pre-scripted performance, but it is also to furnish the infrastructure for this performance – the stage itself, the scaffold, the set.

In the kinds of projects described here, then, *mettre en scène* is a punctual moment placing in the foreground responses that have been developed around shared questions and through workshop conditions. But this moment is rarely an end point. An imaginative response to a question about political voice, sonic heritage or bodily mobility is always intended as an infrastructure for something further. *The City Talks Back*, for example, has become part of a curriculum developed by Theatrum Mundi and MA Cities programme at Central St. Martin's, University of the Arts London. The *Voices from the City* module asks students to develop a creative response to the propositions staged by the resident artists at the backtalks.city online platform and on Movement Radio Athens, and the artists have joined the programme to respond to these responses. Staging is just one moment in an ongoing process, one that constructs and works through temporary infrastructures of street, field and workshop to arrive at a moment of response that ideally acts as a provocation for the next cycle of production, whether by the same people or in handing on to someone else. Staging, then, could be rephrased as *infrastructuring*, a concept has its roots in anthropological re-readings that see infrastructures as ongoing processes of making and maintaining systems that underpin life, whether in the form of social networks, computer

code or pipes and cables (Amin, 2014). The stage drives the processes of infrastructuring by giving a clear point of arrival, the goal of making something visible.

Staging ground: A landscape for transdisciplinary urbanism

When overlapping fields, collaborative workshopping and the shared achievement of staging all intersect with the street, the latter becomes an intensely fertile ground for possibilities. As well as its own structures being challenged and improved by the responses that can come from the interdisciplinary thinking immersed within it, it is a ground from which friendships, solidarities and durable collaborative relationships can spring. Staging is a long process of organizing, facilitating and holding together the kinds of infrastructures described here. It is particularly challenging and rewarding when the focus of the staging is the very ground it sits upon. I have come to think of the landscape of infrastructures described here collectively through the concept of the staging ground: a platform for action; the making of urban grounds into the stage on which to be heard; or putting the ground on stage, making it the focus.⁵ Appadurai argued that 'imagination is a staging ground for action, and not only for escape' (Appadurai, 1996: 7). To build a common imaginary grounded in a place, angled towards its transformation, therefore become a 'lever' for action, a collective and active project to tend imaginaries towards realities. Placed at the origin of a process of spatial transformation, the 'staging ground' would therefore have every chance of deploying its potentialities to kickstart threads of hopeful change within challenging urban worlds.

Notes

1. *Designing for Free Speech* was an ideas challenge proposed by Theatrum Mundi in 2015, asking 'what does a space for free speech look, feel, and sound like?' It was the first in a series of challenges under the title *Designing Politics*. The briefs and responses can be found at designingpolitics.org.
2. See backtalks.city/project/athens-tessellation. The project was co-curated by Fani Kostourou, George Kafka, and Pasqua Vorgia.
3. See tramdesnationsresidency.art. The project was co-curated by Fani Kostourou, Mathias Lecoq, and Petra Krausz.
4. Source: dictionary.com.
5. This concept comes from an unpublished paper written with urbanist Dimitri Szuter in relation to the report *Voïfe,x,sj: une en-quête politique indisciplinée* authored for Theatrum Mundi on a performance-making project based around the Chapelle Charbon site in the north of Paris and led by opera company Cie MPDA-Alexandra Lacroix. See voixs.fr for more details.

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1.7 Artists without borders – Building a case for cultural policies that transcend nations

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Working in the European performing arts today, one can feel a growing disconnection between how artists work and how the institutional system supports them. On the one hand, performing artists across the continent – in particular those interested in contemporary forms of artistic expression – are working increasingly above and beyond borders of the countries and regions where they are born or based in. They do this to pursue artistic or intellectual interests, work in complicity with fellow artists, find more suitable or more respectful working conditions; their mobility is a central component of their professional trajectory.¹ Their work often ends up questioning, overcoming or simply ignoring borders. In the words of a diverse group of artists and art workers gathered around the research project RESHAPE and working on the topic of transnational/postnational artistic practices (Bobrikova et al. n.d.):

While working beyond and despite borders, we are not necessarily working ‘inter’-nationally; meaning using our nation states to define us. But rather ‘trans-’ or ‘post-’ nationally; queering or diminishing the importance of national borders by placing the similarities and differences elsewhere than in national identity. We might hope that this perspective brings about awareness, empathy, and inspiration.

And yet, artists have to navigate a landscape of public support structures which by and large consider these borders one of the main criteria of access. Cultural policies and their respective instruments support artists precisely *because* they are born and/or based in a particular territory. From the perspective of the policymakers, public funding institutions and support structures, on which side of the geographical, linguistic or cultural border an artist stands is a crucial fact (alongside other criteria) in the decision to provide or deny support. Other public structures that make up the performing arts value chain – art schools, presenting theatres and festivals, production companies, institutes and archives – by and large function in the same manner, serving artists and/or audiences within the borders of a particular territory. While artists tend to be motivated by their artistic interests, the public institutions that support them are generally inscribed in the logic and the framework of the nation-state, therefore rooted in, or related to a shared national identity-building narrative.

In fact, in order to be able to produce work and reach an audience, artists are pulled by two forces which both seek to instrumentalize them. They have to navigate a market whose invisible hand is moving them away from experimentation and towards Western-centric monoculture and/or respond to – or participate in – geopolitical positioning and national narrative construction.

With the current rise of right-wing politics across the continent, nationalistic discourses, cultural isolationism and fear of the intra- and extra-European Other have increased in the European public space and political arena.

This dynamic is further exacerbated by other crises currently affecting society.

In recent years, the awareness of the European arts sector of climate disaster and of the urgent need for climate action has significantly increased. Although this acknowledgement of the climate emergency was long-overdue and is certainly to be applauded, it has also provoked some questionable arguments, where some were quick to translate the necessity to reduce carbon footprint into the necessity to give up transnational collaboration and concentrate exclusively on local and national initiatives. Likewise, the Covid-19 pandemic further underlined the same tendency: as national borders closed and cultural cooperation became more complex, many arts institutions were very quick to refocus their efforts on local artists and national initiatives.²

While the nation-state logic of the current policies was certainly valuable and relevant for decades, it is useful to look at it in the light of the recent societal developments. In his article concentrating on policies in relation to diversity, Kevin Robins (2007) gives us valuable hints as to how our political and cultural contexts have evolved:

What has become more evident is that the new and various mobilities and movements associated with so-called globalization have brought with them new kinds of diversity and complexity into the European cultural space, involving new kinds of cultural juxtaposition, encounter, exchange, and mixing. And, crucially, these new forms of diversity and complexity are transnational and transcultural in their nature – functioning, that is to say, across national frontiers and operating across different cultural spaces.

(Robins, 2007)

He points at the essential flaw of the national paradigm, predominant in current policies and public institutions' practices, which doesn't take into account a new reality, one where identities are complex and multiple and relations built less on a single commonality and more on '*a different kind of sociality, one based on social networks and nexuses*' (Robins, 2007). In other words, our policies have inherited a logic constructed around the homogenizing effect of a single national narrative, whereas in today's reality identities are built around relations and identifications which are increasingly disconnected from a single territory (or even disconnected from territory in general) and tap into multiple narratives.

It seems necessary for cultural policies to acknowledge and integrate the existence of '*globally available cultural resources*' which define, influence, shape, brush off each other and develop '*new and distinctive languages of affirmation and identity*', as Colin Mercer (2005) puts it. The aim is not to further contribute to globalization, but rather to be able to embrace and support the cultural and artistic value that makes the richness of today's society, even though it is created above and below the dominant national narrative, and to be able to stimulate creativity and imagination that is rooted in the reality of the lives of today's citizens.

How to reconsider the structures and methods of public support and the institutional framework of performing arts, to better integrate these evolutions? How can we adjust public support to better match the practices, interests and needs of the artists? How can we take a broader vision of the arts scene, and experiment with models that would stretch and adapt the institutional logic of the nation-state?

This text proposes a few ideas – a few possible pathways to explore – in order to bridge the growing gap between the needs and interests of artists and those of the cultural policies and public support structures. The text will put forward a few arguments towards rethinking the public institutions and policies and the ways they support the artists and the arts sector.

Ultimately, the current model of public support acknowledges that policy instruments are financed by taxpayers' money and therefore need to directly or indirectly benefit those taxpayers. With this in mind, my intention is not so much to question the validity of this model, or to call for the dissolution of nation-states and their institutions, but rather to challenge the predominant interpretation of what, in the current social and artistic ecosystem, constitutes this benefit. It is understandable that the investment of taxpayers' money needs to bring direct value to the tax payers; but what is this value? Can we adopt a broader interpretation of it, that will help us better serve both artists and audiences?

What follows is an attempt to unpack some aspects of these benefits.

On the political value of art

In her inspiring speech 'Embracing the Elusive, Or the Necessity of the Superfluous', festival director Frie Leysen (2015) makes an elegant plea for the value of arts in society: '*While we are all running around, busy doing things, the artists decide to stand still, to look closely at us and the societies we have constructed – at how we have organised ourselves. They look, analyse, reflect and criticise. And develop visions of what is and what could be.*'

Leysen highlights here the vital role artists have in inspiring audiences' imagination towards alternative ways of making society together. By creating a potential of a different way of being, artistic endeavour is a profoundly political act, adding layers of possibilities to our imagination of a different society, thus participating actively in the democratic processes. '*The real argument to defend the arts is what happens in the heads and hearts of people who attend a theatre show,*' goes on Leysen.

And indeed, the heads and hearts of the people are what interest national policymakers: they will develop policies and instruments that contribute to the sharing of a common, binding, national narrative. Public institutions will follow the frameworks and logic of the nation-states that they serve, including by, for example, giving priority to collaboration with partners from certain countries or with artists in certain countries, these choices often being rooted in geopolitical or economic interests, where foreign or economic policies seek to extend or reinforce their zone of influence.³

As a result, what members of the audience in the country and abroad get to see and experience will often be, at least partly, defined by choices that are disconnected from the political value of the artistic endeavour that Leysen highlights.

If we acknowledge that arts inform and shape our vision of society, we need public policies and public institutions which will actively support and encourage the multiplicity and diversity of these visions. Rather than comforting us in the shared national narrative, the focus of public policies and public institutions that serve them should be to encourage audiences to experience artistic work that questions, criticizes and triggers alternative futures, even (or especially) if it means questioning the dominant national narrative. Here, the most crucial question is: in a globalized and interconnected world, with rising nationalism and a looming climate catastrophe, which artists propose experiences and visions that help us

deal with these radical and multiple crises? Which are the narratives that we miss and that can help us gather forces and reboot our reflections? Confronted with a multiplicity of complex crises, public policymakers and support institutions need to prioritize putting the spotlight on those that can *provoke* and *inspire us* in the re-imagining and construction of our societies.

On contextualization

Following this logic, it might seem obvious that we need to be much more attentive and have a much deeper understanding and appreciation of the artistic practices and organizational models of artists and art workers that have experience in dealing with insecurity, precarity and instability. And yet, art scenes from precisely these fragile contexts are the least connected to the European networks and market.

The European performing arts is a very lively and dynamic sector, albeit marked by heavy discrepancies and imbalances. Networking has contributed to the diversification and dynamism of Europe's arts sector and has had '*a decisive and prolific impact on the development of innovative performing arts initiatives across Europe*' (Janssens, Hesters and Fraioli, 2021). However, it has also actively kept some of the artistic practices aside, or at least has not managed to include them.

Artists from the countries of Europe's periphery, in particular those based in East and Southeast Europe, clearly have less opportunities to work or present their work transnationally, and are therefore less visible to audiences in countries other than their own.

In 2019, On The Move analysed the existing mobility funding opportunities in Europe⁴ confirming that mobility opportunities are concentrated on a very limited number of countries: '*over identified concentrate in only 5 to 8 countries. While the list of countries varies slightly, a large majority are Western European countries particularly for demand-led funding opportunities.*'

The strength of the Western market combined with the power of its national support institutions makes it difficult for an artwork that ventures beyond the topics, aesthetic and forms promoted in the perceived (or self-perceived) centre to get any attention, usually falling somewhere in between being too different and not different enough from the (Western) standards. Even when programmers are motivated to pursue an artistic interest that takes them beyond the beaten path, there is very little support for it: programmers often don't know where to start, who to talk to or how to finance this endeavour. Programming artwork from regions and countries that programmers are less familiar with is complex and risky and requires a lot of effort in unpacking and understanding the context and how that particular work resonates in its natural habitat, even before being able to make the decision of inviting the work to be shown to another audience. Once the decision is made, the contextualization necessary to bring the audience to understand the work in a way that does justice requires further investment.

To circumvent the discriminatory logic of the current market dynamic, more support mechanisms are needed, addressed to artists and art workers, encouraging contextualization for both professionals and audiences, in regard to a greater variety of art scenes.

Organizations like On The Move have been tremendously important in spreading the word on the existing opportunities, and the recently launched EU-led mobility fund Culture

Moves Europe⁵ will certainly be a valuable resource. The ball now is in the court of the national, regional and local public institutions to take on the challenge on their level and better support artists and art workers to counterbalance the discriminatory logic of both the market and the current policy.

On responsibility and care

In his excellent and much-cited open letter to Jérôme Bel,⁶ reacting to Bel's carbon-reducing activism, the Mexico-based artist Lázaro Gabino Rodríguez (2021) asks a provoking question: 'do European festivals belong to Europeans?'⁷ And he immediately proposes an intriguing reply: 'yes and no'. What Rodríguez raises here is a crucial issue concerning the entangled, interdependent relations between transnational artists and art workers and their transnational audiences. The presence of an artist and their artwork at a festival (or indeed a performing venue or space) is a two-way street, an experience that influences both the audience and the artist. Through the experience of the artwork, the audience is artistically and intellectually challenged, inspired and stimulated. Artists, on the other hand, feed and develop their artistic interests from the encounters with other artists and with audiences in various contexts. Their work evolves and takes shape partly due to the discourses, encounters and exchanges that they experience in various localities. They bring back this knowledge to their own artistic practice, they build it into their experimentation, they share it with their artistic communities. While artists and their work influence audiences, the opposite is also true: audiences and their broader context influence artists.

On a more practical level, when (Western) European festivals coproduce and/or present the work of non-Western European artists, they also financially contribute to the work and lives of the artists who can then continue to create work, to produce ideas, to test and further develop their practice in their own environment. The examples of non-European artists whose careers have been supported and developed through the contribution of (Western) European co-producers and programmers are legion. To the joy of local as well as transnational audiences, the input of Western European festivals made it possible for artists and companies as diverse as Wooster group, Faustin Linyekula, Lia Rodrigues, Bouchra Ouizguen and Amir Reza Koohestani – to only name a tiny portion – to work locally as well as transnationally.

With such a multiple and complex influence, it is indeed not easy to answer the question who these festivals belong to. Or to put it differently: if such is the impact of Western European festivals, can we say that consequently their *responsibility* extends beyond the mere territory whose citizens and audiences they serve? How responsible are (Western) European festivals – or programming venues – for the artistic careers of non-European artists they host and, by extension, the artistic scenes that these artists are a part of? What capacity and resources do they have to assume this responsibility and care for the arts scenes other than those they are evolving in?

The nation-state framework creates disbalances that it can never solve: artists working in countries without strong cultural policies and instruments cannot access resources and opportunities that others can, which ultimately affects the diversity of artistic visions that audiences are confronted with, even in countries with strong and generous policies. Cultural policies need to better understand the logic of this shared responsibility and integrate care

for non-national artists as one of the notions to be tackled by their instruments. Likewise, carefully accompanied in the process, public institutions can be valuable allies, as they could raise their own knowledge, skills, know-how and financial capacity to adequately welcome non-national artists, for the benefit of audiences in the country and outside of its borders.

Public policies in the field of culture, throughout the continent, have largely ignored the dynamics described here above: while artists and art workers increasingly tap into the experience of an interconnected and interdependent world, the impulse of most public institutions is still to look at artists through national glasses.

However, there are signs that a different way of thinking is gaining ground. Increasingly, public institutions define their open calls for support of artists or art projects in a more open way. They still take the territorial criterion in consideration, but instead of insisting on the specific nationality of an artist or art worker, they use broader notions, more subject to interpretation, such as 'based in', 'living and working in'.⁸ Some also open their support to artists who are not physically based in a specific country, but whose work is produced in the country. The notion of belonging to an arts scene and therefore having access to the institutional support dedicated to that scene is getting extended.

Likewise, a few initiatives emerged in the recent years that acknowledge the necessity to step away from a traditional nation-state/territorial approach. The EU-funded project RESHAPE brought together European intermediary structures to research and propose tools for the positive transformation of the sector, in a bottom-up process led by artists and art workers across the continent. It created a space in which European national/regional support structures could propose together a research and action framework without the limits of their individual national policies.⁹ The Nordic Culture Fund's programme Globus Call is open to artists from all geographies – it still has a strong territorial component as it requires for projects to have a clear connection with the Nordic region but it leaves space for a more open interpretation of that connection and of territoriality in general.¹⁰ Through its Fair New Idea?! programme¹¹ the Flanders Arts Institute supported ideas that contribute to a strong, fair and sustainable arts field. By launching an open call without geographical restrictions, the Institute acknowledged the value of working globally to tackle the sector's urgent problems. There is also much to be learned from the work of Ettijahat – Independent cultures,¹² the organization that supports the Syrian independent scene in the process of cultural and social change. With the Syrian art scene being so tragically dispersed around Europe and the world, Ettijahat has been very active in rethinking what it means to support a scene whose territoriality is questioned in such radical ways. Finally, there is much to unpack in the recent evolution of artistic residencies who are often much freer to welcome artists without relying on territorial/national criteria.

To take these positive evolutions further, public policies and national public institutions need to embrace the value that comes from confronting audiences with a diversity of artistic voices and visions, in particular those that have experience in dealing with multiple crises. They should invest and support more and better contextualization for artists, art workers and audiences. They should integrate responsibility and care for artists of other art scenes into their objectives and actions.

The nation-state framework that defines public support for the arts is increasingly uncomfortable for artists and art workers. In a globalized and interconnected world, artists work across borders, pursuing their artistic interests that often have little to do with their nations

or the countries they live in. Discourses and formats travel, influencing, inspiring and reshaping one another – these processes nourish and enrich artistic practices and challenge and inspire audiences.

Some public institutions are already adjusting their own criteria to include a broader vision of the arts scene that they serve. Others experiment with alternative approaches, seeking to actively support the interconnectedness of the arts scenes beyond nation-state frameworks.

To better understand today's artistic practices and how they relate to multiple, mixed, and complex identities beyond nations and territories is an essential step to make sure policies stay relevant for artists and audiences alike.

Notes

1. Operational study Mobility Scheme for Artists and Culture Professionals in Creative Europe countries, *On the Move*, 2019.
2. The real effect of this is yet to be seen, but it doesn't look promising: during the years of Covid measures, the programming venues in countries like France, Belgium or Germany, that financially drive the transnational cooperation and support the European performing art market have put their international programming largely on hold. Bearing in mind that in many places the programme is defined years in advance, and that there is still talk of 'congestion' caused by two years of produced and not yet presented local/national performances, it is easy to imagine that artists whose practices serve neither the Western-centric market nor the instruments of soft power, can easily be abandoned.
3. Thus, for instance, the Dutch government's list of priority countries/regions contains its immediate Dutch-speaking neighbour Flanders, some of the largest world markets like Brazil and China, Europe's cultural powers like France and Germany as well as its former colony Indonesia, amongst others. <https://www.government.nl/topics/international-cultural-cooperation/international-cultural-policy/priorities-international-cultural-policy>.
4. More precisely, the study collected and analysed data in forty-one countries participating in the Creative Europe programme. <https://www.i-portunus.eu/wp-fuut/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/OS-final.pdf>.
5. <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/news/culture-moves-europe-commission-rolls-out-new-eu21-million-mobility-scheme-for-artists-and-cultural-professionals>.
6. <http://somosreclamos.blogspot.com/2021/02/open-letter-to-jerome-bell.html>.
7. Of course the generalization is somewhat problematic: it is unclear which festivals would go under this label 'European'. Putting under a single (European) label and a single type of economic and artistic impact such diverse festivals across a continent that holds such huge disbalances in access to resources and mobility is reductive. However, here we can suppose that, like many authors, Rodriguez makes a shortcut from 'Western European' to 'European', not taking into account the multiplicity of festivals, in particular in East and Southeast Europe, that function on the margins, or completely outside of the Western-centric market dynamic.
8. A lot of valuable information on the formulation of the open calls can be found by analysing data on mobility calls on *On the Move* <https://on-the-move.org/>.
9. Amongst the many prototypes created through the RESHAPE project, one is specifically dedicated to rethinking artistic practices outside of the national frame: the Transnational and Postnational Practices Manual. <https://reshape.network/prototype/>

transnational-and-postnational-practices-manual. More info on RESHAPE: <http://reshape.network> See also Reshape (2021).

10. From the 2022 call for projects: 'Here the Nordic is not defined as a collaboration between nation states but as a notion or context that transcends borders and whose content and relevance might be explored and developed through artistic and cultural encounters within and around the world.' <https://www.nordiskkulturfond.org/en/globus-call>.
11. <https://www.kunsten.be/en/research/a-fair-new-world/a-fair-new-idea/>.
12. <https://ettijahat.org>.

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Part 2 Cross-sectoral cultural action

2.1 New cultural policies for enabling cross-sectoral positive transformation

SYLVIA AMANN

Times of perceived crisis provide momentum to reflect more in depth about the requirements of the modernization of cultural policies. The accelerated transformation speed caused by the pandemic, geopolitical disruptions and climate change urgencies require new answers enabling positive change by the means of culture and the creative sectors.

Cultural practices have been deeply anchored in societies and their related narratives since ancient times. When briefly considering the last 300 years some fundamental developments can be observed related to the fact that the transformation of (political, values) systems also implied a different interaction with and financing of artistic and cultural activities. We are again living in more disruptive times.

Whereas in historical monarchies the more expensive art works were produced and performed for the nobles and for the church, the systems then dominated by the bourgeoisie somehow adapted this approach to their context and needs. As the royal theatres and museums for example became open to the public, a public policy was installed which was called culture policy. By the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, public cultural funding started, and the notion of cultural policy became a more widely used term (Wagner, 2005: 75).

Historic backgrounds of public cultural policies

This approach is also linked to a classic logic of cultural hierarchy: ‘Thus, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, the increasing cultural distinction by factions of the aristocracy and the upper-middle class, both between each other and in contrast to the common people, eventually resulted in the institutionalization of “high culture”’ (Van den Haak, 2018). Popular culture continued to be produced and consumed by the majority of the population. Furthermore, the nineteenth century then saw the first rise of mass culture which was furthered by technological advancements and a rising middle class (Block, no year). This historical background still influences cultural perceptions and use patterns, for example, by social elites and also has effects on today’s policies. They can help to explain the considerable public cultural budgets used to finance the State theatres and public museums. When investigating current financing patterns for culture and arts organizations outside the public sphere, the situation, for example, in England was as such in 2017–18 (MTM, 2019: 9): Roughly 33 per cent of financing is generated from public sources, around 50 per cent from earnings as well as from a remaining private investment of around 15 per cent.

Culture and the arts are building blocks of our societies and economies. As integral parts of people's present and future, the cultural and creative sectors (CCS) are – together with all others – actors of change. By this very nature, interaction, interferences and inter-dependencies between the CCS and other sectors take place. Based on this analysis, cross-sectoral and cross-disciplinary cooperation in culture and arts could be natural, and they in fact often are.

The emergence of cross-sectoral initiatives

The twentieth century brought further developments and especially in its second half, new approaches towards an opening of societies, cultural practices and related public support. The rise of the socio-cultural centres, for example, in Austria led to the establishment of a dedicated department in the Ministry of Culture, including structural funding, support for innovative projects as well as exchange programmes for emerging cultural managers. These initiatives – often based in small villages and non-central urban quarters – were more cross-sectoral in their practices and aimed at involving a wide range of social strata.

Another major topic emerged in the cultural policies at the beginning of the twenty-first century with the so-called creative industries. This is another example for a strong cross-sectoral policy linking cultural and artistic practices with the generation of economic benefits and jobs as well as more widely with the topic of innovation. While these policies were anchored in some countries in the cultural ministries – as is the case in the UK – in other countries ministries of innovation or economy are the leading policy and support actors.

Furthermore, the European Union became a strong actor of cross-sectoral cultural support and policies in the first twenty years of the twenty-first century investing in areas like cultural regional development, cross-border cultural collaboration, cultural diplomacy, as well as considerably in the area of the creative industries. The latter had already a strong anchoring point with the funding of the European film industry and related global export activities. Also illustrative of the cross-sectoral foci of the EU cultural policies is the New European Agenda for Culture (European Commission, 2018) – the guiding compass for related policy action.

Why further emphasize cross-sectoral approaches?

In this article, I elaborate on the potential of culture for positive change which is per se a cross-sectoral endeavour. This objective implies that by the creation, production, consumption or dissemination of culture and art a range of positive effects can be generated. These positive effects might, for example, be achieved for individuals in relation to their better health, for organizations able to better train students, for political systems benefitting from more social dialogue – and many other in addition. This focus requires also cross-sectoral policies which I will argue are not yet sufficiently in place.

Positive change is another important notion related to cross-sectoral cultural policies and implies the attempt to arrive at a definition. We can, for example, distinguish planned and emergent changes, episodic or continuous ones (Dunphy, 1996; Munduate and Bennebroek Gravenhorst, 2003; Weick et al., 1999 and Nonås, 2005: 28). The notion

of 'positive' is based on the prevailing value-sets of those in charge of taking decisions. In the case of cross-sectoral cultural policies, one of the related main actors will be cultural ministers, cultural councillors, as well as the cultural administration at the different governance levels. In addition, addressing the (desired, undesired) change can be or not part of the competences of these stakeholders.

The European Union as a main actor of cross-sectoral (cultural) policies

When further investigating cross-sectoral policies, for example, by the EU, long-term objectives (desired positive changes) are formulated by the means of strategies like the Lisbon agenda, the Europe 2020 agenda as well as the 2021–4 European Commission political agenda.

While the Lisbon agenda aimed at making the EU 'the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world', the Europe 2020 initiative focused on 'smart, sustainable, inclusive growth' and the 2021–4 policy priorities cover inter alia the European Green Deal, an economy that works for the people as well as policies related to international cooperation and European values. Besides these planned positive changes for the EU, the European Commission had also to react on the effects of the pandemic (non-planned emergent, negative change) with the Recovery Plan for Europe.

The policy actions and support programmes of the European Union targeting the CCS are embedded in these frameworks with a strong cross-sectoral focus. However, some EU cultural policy approaches became more sectoral towards the 2020s. Related examples are Music Moves Europe and Perform Europe. At the same time, major cross-sectoral EU innovation and research initiatives like the Horizon Europe Knowledge and Innovation Communities in the CCS and Industries were launched. And the Recovery Plans for Europe as well as further initiatives in EU Members States addressed the disruptive changes of the pandemic 2020–1 inter alia with innovation support programmes.

The Pandemic 2020–1 as a potential positive change enabler

The pandemic allowed for deeper insights into current challenges as well as into the potential of the CCS (Amann, 2020; IDEA Consult et al, 2021). It showed considerable structural deficits – especially related to the individuals working on contract-basis as well as concerning the frameworks for sustainable earning on the digital markets. These more negative elements can be now further addressed, for example, by the full implementation of the EU copyright directive.

On the positive side, during the first phase of the pandemic the substantial social cohesion power of the CCS became clearly visible. The first lockdowns saw the emergence of a wide range of initiatives allowing for connecting people despite social distancing rules of which, for example, the courtyard concerts organized by Kaunas – European Capital of Culture 2022 are one example. Furthermore, cultural consumption rose considerably during this phase – at least in some areas like film streaming (Bakhshi, 2020). Probably, most human beings would not like to imagine a lockdown without access to cultural products and services like books, films or music.

Furthermore, research had already remarkably shown the beneficial effects of cultural activities on people's health and well-being before the pandemic.

A research conducted on a representative sample of the Italian population measured this particular aspect with reference to a specific measure of wellbeing, the Psychological General Wellbeing Index (PGWBI), finding that cultural participation was the second most important factor in determining the level of psychological wellbeing of the sample subjects after the number of chronic diseases and before income, age, gender, job or place of residence.

(Grossi, Tavano Blessi, Sacco and Buscema, 2012)

However, when analysing new cultural policy initiatives and support programmes on the EU level in 2021, cross-sectoral innovation programmes related to social cohesion and solidarity in EU Member States were rather the exception and very often a continuation of previously existing initiatives (Amann et al., 2021).

The Culture and Health Nouvelle Aquitaine programme in France is one related reference aiming at the cross-sectoral potential of the cultural and creatives sectors. 'Each proposal must be based on a cooperation between a cultural operator and a health institution. A wide range of project activities is possible including artist residencies, co-creation activities, artistic parcours, etc. Target groups are the patients, their families, the employees as well as the wider "environment" of the health institution (like schools, associations)' (Amann et al., 2021: 43). This is an example for a programme enabling cross-sectoral positive change with potential for transfer and scaling.

First outlook on post-pandemic innovation support policies in the EU

When further screening the innovation support programmes in place in the EU in 2021 which aimed at supporting the CCS to recover from the effects of the pandemic, a considerable number of challenges still persist (Amann et al., 2021: 4).

'The shift from emergency programme to innovation relaunch programme is slow, with considerable hesitation on the side of policy makers.' Furthermore, 'large parts of non-cultural decision makers still lack a deeper understanding of the crucial benefits that the CCS provide to the (post-pandemic) European societies and economies'. In addition, 'huge territorial differences in the use of innovation support instruments as crisis response measures were further accentuated inside the EU'.

On the positive side it can be observed that large budgets could be mobilized, experimental settings were tested and, in some countries, private foundations continued to engage in CCS innovation funding.

In the future, to generate positive change by the means of innovation with the CCS, policymakers should consider the following lessons learnt (Amann et al., 2021: 10): Cross-sectoral innovation support programmes should be widely accessible regarding the different types of organizations including non-standard workers targeted. The latter was, for example, successfully implemented by the Creatives for Vienna Programme in 2020 and 2021 (Amann et al., 2021: 38).

Further emphasis is required for innovation enablers and to the understanding of related territorial frameworks. The application of a broad notion of innovation and the

understanding that innovation goes beyond digitalization is crucial for sustainable eco-systems. Competences and skills gaps became more visible during the pandemic and would require more action in the area of training programmes and lifelong learning. Up- and Re-skilling needs were, for example, addressed by the Creative and Cultural Jobs Stimulus Funding Measure from Creative Ireland in 2020 (Amann et al., 2021: 55).

Future cross-sectoral policies ...

The CCSs have widely shown their potential for enabling positive change demonstrated by a wide range of past developments like the socio-cultural centres for integrative and participative cultural activities outside city centres and non-urban territories, the considerable success of the creative industries generating 700,000 new jobs in the EU between 2013 and 2019 (Alvarez et al., 2021) and the research impressively showing the positive effects of cultural practice on the well-being of humans.

However, the period of 2020–2 was also a time when the European societies rediscovered situations of uncertainty and disruption as well as accelerated transformation. These provided considerable amounts of major challenges, but also opportunities for the CCS. This period also allows for deeper reflection on the potential need for modifications in the CCS ecosystem and related cultural policies.

I would like to highlight the requirement for future cross-sectoral transformation policies on the basis of two main areas of future scenarios – climate change and democracy.

... in a framework of permanent transformation

While a lot of public discourse focused on a narrative of crisis and how to ‘bounce back’ or ‘bounce back better’ after the crisis, I would argue that we are not in a crisis mode, but in a situation of permanent transformation which will even accelerate in the coming decades.

The foresight scenarios of the European Commission provide insights into a wider range of potential future scenarios (expected, mainly disruptive changes) (European Commission, 2021). All scenarios link to the CCS in one way or another. Related policies – by definition – need to be cross-sectoral as they address the topics highlighted by the foresight perspectives (e.g. water policy) as well as by culture. This is a pre-condition for culture to become an enabler for further positive change.

The EU foresight scenarios address four major challenges, namely (European Commission, 2021: 1–7) climate change and other environmental challenges, digital hyperconnectivity and technological transformations, pressure on democratic models of governance and values, and shifts in the global order and demography.

Culture, climate change and democracy

When further investigating the different scenarios, the context of raising sea levels provides one exemplary case on how the CCS are affected by these developments and in which way these sectors might be able to provide positive contributions to this major transformation (Amann, 2022). It is expected that in the EU especially the coastal cities in the Netherlands

(The Hague; Amsterdam), Belgium (Bruges) and France (Calais, Bordeaux), Denmark, Germany (Bremen), Italy (Venice) and Poland (Gdansk) will be profoundly concerned by flooding already by 2030¹.

Coastal flooding will generate direct effects like the destruction of basic infrastructures such as coastal roads which might lead to access problems to cultural offerings at the coasts and a subsequent limited use of cultural infrastructures, leading to revenue and income loss. Mitigation measures like the relocation of people from coastal zones can generate a loss of identity and feeling of belonging which could induce multi-risk effects like pressure on democracy due to contestation movements instrumentalizing artistic expressions.

However, many risks often also bear opportunities, for example, the development of new cultural tourism offerings as underwater sites, investments in community building of dislocated people by the means of art and culture or the investment in social cohesion, and well-being by cultural practices to reduce tensions in the communities.

The missing (public) policy links

Public cultural policies are still partly anchored in the reflexions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with considerable amounts spent for cultural institutions like public theatres and State-owned museums. Concepts of high- and mass culture persist as well as related segregation potential and negative effects on social cohesion. There seems to be a slow uptake of emerging and youth cultures into a more balanced public spending for cultural activities and artistic production. Sectoral policies and related silos prevent enhanced cooperation and cross-sectoral fertilization. The territorial dimensions of cultural activities are underplayed, and city centres still absorb major parts of public cultural budgets.

Many, including cultural administrations, face rigid structures and have to handle complex as well as time-consuming decision-making while an accelerated transformation framework would require rapid action and flexibility. In view of the climate change emergency a rapid cross-sectoral transformation needs to be brought in place before 2030 in order to ensure cultural production and access to heritage for future generations also. Cross-sectoral cooperation between the ministries of culture and the environment are required for comprehensive and fast answers. Simplification of related programmes is an urgency and must go beyond the mere statement of well-meaning intentions.

A wider range of individuals working in the CCS and artists face increasing difficulties to cope with unstable frameworks and non-sustainable practices and non-fair payments (IDEA Consult et al., 2021). While these structural changes require serious answers of which some are already under development, the workers in the CCS must be better prepared for working across sectors. In addition, the simplified support frameworks must ensure that income flows are stable.

The twenty-first century would require a cultural policy of cooperation bringing cross-sectoral exchanges and synergies to the centre. Public cultural administrations have shown during the pandemic that they can react quickly, understanding that perfectionism is not attainable and mobilizing considerable budgets in short periods of time. This more flexible attitude seems to be one of the corner stones for cultural policies enabling positive change. Institutional change and transformation are another element in order to overcome outdated frameworks and profoundly modernize cultural administrations for the challenges

of the twenty-first century. The young professionals entering the CCS have a crucial role to play in order to achieve a modernization of attitudes and to update ways of doing and priorities. This concerns also the cultural administrations and ministries. The young professionals have the potential to create solid ground for cross-sectoral policies based on their deeper understanding of global interconnections and socio-economic transformation needs.

Note

1. https://coastal.climatecentral.org/map/7/5.12/49.0978/?theme=sea_level_rise&map_type=year&basemap=roadmap&contiguous=true&elevation_model=best_available&forecast_year=2030&pathway=ssp3rcp70&percentile=p50&refresh=true&return_level=return_level_1&rl_model=gtsr&slr_model=ipcc_2021_med.

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2.2 Culture and well-being – A promising area of cross-sectoral action

RARITA ZBRANCA

Why culture and well-being?

The association of cultural experiences with states that one can identify as uplifting, positive, insightful, meaningful or transformative is not new. Certainly not for artists and those working in the arts. They have experienced the power of their work and they have seen in the responses of their audiences, over and over, the signs of being moved in various ways. In the cultural sector, we have been taking this power of the arts as a (known) fact, to the point that we get surprised, even frustrated, that it is not merely acknowledged by everyone.

In the recent years, there has been a growing interest in the link between culture and well-being. This follows the rise in a preoccupation for well-being in general. After using the gross domestic product (GDP) to measure progress and prosperity for a long while, governments realized that there are other aspects such as quality of life and social and environmental realities that need to be also taken into account. In 1968 Robert F. Kennedy captured this idea well in a few words by saying that the GDP measures everything except that which makes life worthwhile (Bergink, 2016). It is after the 2007 'Beyond GDP' international initiative – started by international organizations such the European Union, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) – that several indices of well-being including both objective and subjective measures have been developed (Facchinetti and Siletti, 2022).

This interest in culture 'and', 'for' or 'as' well-being translates into a rich body of practices, research and policies. The growth of this area is to a great extent due to grassroots and localized initiatives, and only in a small part owing to top-down action. That is, while at the level of practice an incredible number of projects, interventions and experimental actions have been carried out, there are limited policies to specifically address culture, health and well-being. Consequently, with the view to provide robust arguments for the development of policies, the effort to measure the impact of cultural projects and engagement with the arts on well-being has grown too, a vast scientific literature on this topic being currently available.

Why now?

'May you live in interesting times' is, allegedly, a Chinese curse, suggesting that interesting times are troubled and not so desirable. We could say that we are now living 'in

interesting times'. Since this saying (even though not confirmed as being an actual Chinese curse) has been around for at least the past 150 years, we know that each age must have had its own challenges. Our parents, grandparents and the generation before, they too lived in troubled times. The specific challenges that human society is currently confronting seem to require responses that culture may be able to inspire and catalyse, if not even provide.

To begin with, rapid urbanization and economic growth have led to an unprecedented rise in mental health challenges. Depression is the leading cause of disability worldwide, with an 18 per cent increase in the number of people living with depression between 2005 and 2015. Similarly, anxiety disorders affect an increasing segment of the population (14.9 per cent increase over ten years) (World Health Organization, 2017). This mental health crisis has been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has generated a large and immediate decline in mental health in many countries worldwide and increased the existing inequalities in mental well-being (Helliwell et al., 2021).

Two years after the beginning of the pandemic, burnout and stress are at all-time highs across professions, with 79 per cent of employees (participating in a US survey) experiencing work-related stress (Abramson, 2022). According to the World Happiness Report 2021, while the pandemic caused the largest economic crisis in a generation (with a drop by 5 per cent in global GDP in 2020), life satisfaction decreased significantly for those that lost their jobs, but also for some of those that had to adapt to the new work conditions (Helliwell et al., 2021).

The accelerated adoption of digital technologies to adapt to the pandemic restrictions has also brought radical transformations in the way we work, learn and connect. Moreover, there have been more breakthrough innovations – such as electricity, the television, the internet – in the past 200 years, than in the previous 2,000 years. And, predictions say, that we are about to face more than 150 such radically transforming technological and scientific innovations in the next two centuries (Lee, 2013). If we consider that the human body has been adapting to its environmental conditions across hundreds of thousands of years, how prepared are we to adapt to such a flooding of stimuli and fast-changing environments? That is, we are living in a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous context, and we need to find ways to accept, adapt and re-invent our strategies as individuals and communities to navigate these new realities.

It is in this context that the potential of the arts to stimulate reflection, support emotional regulation, increase social engagement and connection, enable health promotion and prevention and management of diseases, increase resilience and improve the quality of life and of built environments becomes a valuable resource to tap into.

What do we speak about when we link culture and well-being?

There is no single definition of *well-being*. And thus, *culture and well-being* is, too, an area that has a multitude of approaches and possible definitions.

Since, as said before, well-being is beyond material conditions, including individual assessments of satisfaction and happiness, we could say that each individual defines well-being in different ways. Thus definitions of well-being have been either avoided or cautiously formulated. In the view of the What Works Centre for Wellbeing, well-being 'is about "how we're doing" as individuals, communities and as a nation, and how sustainable that is for the future'. The same

organization identifies ten broad dimensions that are key to well-being: the natural environment, personal well-being, our relationships, health, what we do, where we live, personal finance, the economy, education, and skills and governance (What Works Centre for Wellbeing, no date). Other frameworks to measure and compare well-being at the level of cities, regions and nations use different sets of well-being indicators. For instance, the OECD well-being framework includes on the one hand indicators about current well-being, and, on the other hand, indicators on future resources for well-being such as natural, human, social and economic capital. The current well-being indicators consist of material conditions (income, jobs, housing) and quality of life aspects (health, education and skills, work-life balance, social connections, civic engagement and governance, environmental quality, personal security and subjective well-being) (OECD, 2011). Well-being is often used in the context of health and healthcare. The WHO constitution defines health as 'a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity' (World Health Organization, 1948).

Theoretical frameworks about culture and well-being are currently being drafted by different research teams. It is an emerging interdisciplinary field supporting cultural participation and the inclusion of cultural practices for improving well-being at the level of individuals, organizations and communities. It is a field of cross-sector action, involving intersections between culture and sectors like health, social care, education and spatial planning. It is an emerging area, since, as already mentioned, it is mainly constituted of bottom-up actions, and policies to support and regulate this field are yet to be developed. That is, drawing on the experience of successful pilot projects and on the knowledge generated through scientific research the task at hand is to seek ways to scale up solutions and enable long-term impact.

Broadly, we can identify three levels of impact: micro level – that of individual, meso level – that of the groups and organizations, and the and macro – that of the society. These are corresponding to individual, organizational and community well-being.

The term 'culture' is also used in this context in various ways. It refers to the cultural sector (visual arts, performing arts, film, music, museums, archives, libraries, etc.), and the activities delivered by cultural professionals, but is not limited to it. It also encompasses activities that involve art and creativity carried out by professionals from other sectors and non-professionals.

When speaking of health-related well-being, it may be useful to make the distinction between art therapy, on one hand, and art activities and cultural participation for well-being, on the other. Art therapy is a distinct form of psychotherapy that incorporates arts and creative methods of expression in the therapeutic process and it is practised by certified art therapists. Other art practices – art projects, creative activities, art interventions, community projects – contributing in one way or another to improved health and well-being can be delivered by artists, health staff, educators or social workers. They can be included in prevention or treatment programmes, in social inclusion programmes or stand as cultural activities in themselves.

What works and how?

According to Fancourt and Finn (2019) arts activities are complex, multimodal interventions, involving specific engagement mechanisms that facilitate health and well-being outcomes.

More often, these outcomes are not direct, causal effects of the encounter with the arts, but the results of *psychological, physiological, social and behavioural* changes triggered by the arts. The mechanisms through which arts activities enable these changes include *aesthetic engagement, imagination stimulation, sensory activation, cognitive stimulation, social interaction, physical activity* and the *engagement with knowledge* through the contents of the artworks or art projects (Fancourt and Finn, 2019).

The diversity of arts and culture activities multiplied by the variety of material and cultural settings in which they are carried out make it impossible to define simple models and unique mechanisms through which impact on well-being is being produced. A narrative review published in 2021 identifies no fewer than 600 mechanisms of action through which engagement with cultural activities generate health and well-being outcomes (Fancourt et al., 2021).

That being said, certain factors have been shown to favour or limit the effects of engagement with the arts on well-being. Warran et al. propose a framework consisting of 139 'active ingredients' of arts in health activities. These are divided into the categories of project (aspects related to the content of the arts activity itself), people (how people interact through engagement with the activity and who is involved in this interaction) and contexts (places, things and surroundings). Aligning with complexity science, the effects depend not only on these individual ingredients, but also on various ways in which they may overlap, interconnect or feed into one another (Warran, Burton and Fancourt, 2022).

A scoping review carried out in 2022 in the framework of the CultureForHealth project, found that, among the included studies, active cultural participation is more likely to generate measurable well-being benefits than receptive cultural participation. The dose of the participation is also relevant, cultural activities that involved multiple sessions or regular involvement showing in most cases better results. Some activities are designed as individual cultural experiences, others involve participating in activities as a group, or combining individual with group engagement. In group settings it is important to be sensitive to issues that can arise due to the group dynamic, such as tensions due to differing individual preferences, the impact of possible dropouts and timetabling issues. The content and quality of the artistic delivery, the skills of the art lead or activity facilitator, the format of the activities and the place where they take place (the atmosphere, the accessibility) are just a few of the factors that may influence the results and how long their effects will last. Also, it is important that interventions are adapted to suit the needs and social conditions of participants (Zbranca et al., 2022).

Another distinction based on the artistic content and forms of engagement is useful in this context. On one hand, people may derive well-being benefits from voluntary participation in the arts, that is from reading books, dancing, going to the theatre and visiting museums based on their personal tastes, preferences and choices. The authors of these art works more often than not have not specifically aimed for well-being outcomes from their works. These manifest as by-products of processes that are intrinsic to arts such as providing imagined alternatives that could disturb or provoke imagination. On the other hand, there are art interventions and projects that are specifically designed to generate health and well-being outcomes. In these cases, art may be considered 'a means to an end'. Pathways to participation may include here social or medical referral, recruitment through open calls or invitations, but also voluntary enrolment from participants.

What type of well-being outcomes resulting from involvement with the arts has been documented?

To date, a consistent body of scientific research on the impact of arts and cultural participation on health and well-being has been produced. A milestone in this respect is the publication in 2019 by the WHO of the report 'What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review' (Fancourt and Finn, WHO, 2019). A number of outstanding studies are also available, in the form of domain specific scoping or systematic reviews, randomised control trials, observational studies, qualitative studies and text and opinion papers.

Listed below are a few categories of well-being outcomes resulting from involvement with the arts, as they have been identified and presented by the CultureForHealth scoping review.

Culture and Personal Well-being: Benefits at the level of subjective perception of well-being identified by the CultureForHealth scoping review include (1) personal fulfilment and engagement – through acquiring and developing skills, self-expression, empowerment, increased social engagement, bonding and inclusion and a sense of identity and belonging; (2) personal orientation – resilience, positive behaviours, empathy, confidence and self-confidence; (3) experiences of emotions – improved mood, positive emotions, emotional regulation, reduced anxiety and depression, reduced stress, improved relaxation, flow and bereavement support; and (4) personal evaluations of life – improved well-being and quality of life, life satisfaction and motivation, meaning-finding and improved knowledge and reflectivity (Zbranca et al., 2022). To give an example, a study aiming to measure how attending live theatre might enhance the well-being of season ticket holders aged sixty and older, found out that attending performances is a combined social, cognitive and affective experience that goes beyond entertainment. Participants benefited from increased positive mood, social engagement, belonging and flow (Meeks, Vandenbroucke and Shryock, 2020).

Culture and Community Well-being: The CultureForHealth scoping review identified several categories of benefits of arts and culture for community well-being: (1) social inclusion – social bonding and inclusion, inclusion of disadvantaged groups, increasing social engagement and reducing isolation, reducing stigma, well-being and inclusion of refugees; (2) school and work related well-being such as reducing stress and development of stress management strategies, reducing burnout and development of certain skills; (3) improved quality of built environments in healthcare settings and public spaces; and (4) community development – active citizenship, environmental awareness, public engagement in health-policy development and city cultural profile and well-being. As an example, working adults with severe burnout symptoms participating in a series of weekly creative workshops involving drama, dance, drawing and photography benefitted from reduced levels of burnout and a higher level of well-being as a result (Cacovean et al., 2021). Also, during the COVID-19 pandemic, engaging with creative activities helped people develop innovative strategies to cope with challenges (Zbranca et al., 2022).

Culture and Health: In this area, according to the WHO 2019 Report, engaging with the arts can support (1) health promotion and prevention of illness, and (2) the management and treatment of diseases. In the first category, the contribution of the arts is connected to positive effects on social determinants of health, caregiving, child development, prevention of ill

health and health promoting behaviours (Fancourt and Finn, WHO, 2019). Evidence from a systematic review shows that group singing is effective in improving respiratory and cardiovascular function, cognitive function, psychological well-being, social inclusion and bonding of different populations (Hagemann, 2021). In the second category, arts can support the management and treatment of mental illness, acute conditions, neurodevelopmental and neurological disorders, non-communicable diseases and end-of-life care (Fancourt and Finn, WHO, 2019). For example, randomized control trials showed that people with Parkinson's benefit from slight improvements in speech and prevention of deterioration of speech function as a result of singing (Elefant et al., 2012), as well as of improved movement and medication use after attending dance activities (Duncan and Earhart, 2012). Considering the above-mentioned challenges, culture may play an important role if, as a society in general and in Europe in particular, we are to transition from a treatment-focused healthcare system to a paradigm centred on health promotion and disease prevention. Also, the arts may provide effective interventions for health challenges that may not have appropriate health-care solutions yet.

What is the way forward in culture and well-being for cultural practitioners?

In conclusion, we can regard the emerging field of action at the intersection of culture and well-being as a promising area for practitioners, researchers and decision-makers in culture, health and social welfare. In response to current global challenges, art and cultural participation have the potential to provide, among other measures, rich, diverse and accessible pathways for increased awareness, emotional and mental resilience, self-confidence and mutual trust, health promotion and treatment of disease, social inclusion and active participation in community life of people facing illness, disability, social exclusion and loneliness.

At the level of policies, we can expect frameworks supporting action in culture and well-being to develop in the next few years. Currently, one of the three strategic objectives of the New European Agenda for Culture is to harness the power of culture and cultural diversity for social cohesion and well-being, by promoting cultural participation, mobility of artists and protection of heritage (European Commission, 2018). This is also one of the five priorities of the EU Work Plan for Culture 2019–2022, urging decision-makers at all levels to include culture as a cross-cutting issue in social, health and local development policies, and for a more effective implementation of cross-sectoral cooperation activities with social care and healthcare areas. The next EU Work Plan for culture is expected to include more specific action points in this direction. Several countries such as the UK, Finland, Sweden and Denmark have already developed policies that make use of the arts to support health and well-being, and specific funding schemes have been launched or piloted. Thus, in the future cultural professionals may find new resources for developing their work in culture and well-being.

While there is increased interest from artists, cultural workers and institutions to contribute to well-being and health, a few aspects need to be more carefully considered in view of future action. First, although this area is expanding, there is still a limited understanding of the links between the arts and well-being and such activities may still be reluctantly

received by audiences, peers from the health and social sectors and decision-makers. Thus, further documenting the evidence on the effects of their art projects on well-being is needed. Developing adequate and compelling narratives to communicate these results publicly is also important. Secondly, strong and long-term collaborations with partners in the other sectors such as hospitals, care centres, schools and community organizations need to be established. Thirdly, specific knowledge and skills should be acquired to adequately tackle aspects related to mental and physical health and approach vulnerable groups.

Future action needs to focus on possibilities for scaling up initiatives that had already proven successful, on strategies to enable large-scale access to culture as welfare or well-being. The reality is that individuals and groups that could benefit the most from participation in such activities are usually not aware of cultural offers and have limited, or in some cases no access, to cultural opportunities, while very few cultural events are designed to adequately include them. Finally, synergies not only between sectors but also between actors working concurrently with similar goals unaware of the others' efforts, as well as platforms for sharing knowledge and methodologies need to be developed.

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Digital resources

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- Art as Therapy. A Tool to Put You in Contact with Particular Works of Art That Are Helpful to Look at When Facing Certain Problems, School of Life* (2013). Available at: <http://www.artastherapy.com/>.
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2.3 Navigating the digital future

KRISTINA MAURER AND VERONIKA LIEBL

Throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, society has been irrevocably changed and transformed by the rise of digital technologies – whether it be our modes of working, of communicating or managing our daily lives. While many of these developments have come with positive effects, the accelerated pace with which technologies are being implemented also leaves a significant permanent impact on our living spaces, puts a strain on the environment, and often happens without considerations of the ethical and moral implications for individual human users.

Climate crisis, political and societal upheaval, economic shifts, with increasingly urgent far-reaching challenges: it is rapidly becoming clear that a new, human-centred approach to innovation and integration of digital technologies is needed. At the same time, it is evident that global efforts to tackle these problems will require a new culture of collaboration, trans-disciplinary thinking and new skill sets that allow the users of technology to shift from a passive role to becoming active and empowered agents. As digital transformation is rapidly changing the world and increasing complexity, creativity and innovation have become an inseparable pair for societal and economic development, with a growing community of cultural institutions and actors, artists and creatives advocating for the need to include creative and artistic perspectives in innovation processes. Artists have always been at the forefront of exploring new tools and methods in their work – they are driven by an inherent curiosity to explore and push the boundaries of their artistic practice. With the rise of digitalization and digital technologies, this inquisitiveness was directed towards exploring an entirely new set of digital approaches and devices, leading them to being at the forefront of highlighting the pitfalls and potentials of these new and ubiquitous companions in our everyday lives.

Due to their openness to take on new technologies in proactive and head-on ways, artists, scientists, researchers and engineers are often guided by the exact critical questions that can lead us to a more active engagement on a societal level: How can we alter our role from being mere consumers to being active producers, actors, prescribers and influencers of change? Over the past forty to fifty years, an ever-growing artistic and creative community developed across the globe that has continually been pushing the envelope.

A new culture of innovation: Shaping spaces for artists and catalysts

Art serves as an important catalyst to bridge technology and society, leading to new forms of innovation. Extensive studies have argued that innovation, economic prosperity and

growth as well as competitiveness go [...] beyond the economic dimension and can include social and various other forms of innovation' through a [...] link between social innovation, social cohesion and the arts and cultural sectors' (Moulaert, 2013). Embracing these new ways of human-centred innovation requires however often leaving known territories and allowing mindsets of experimentation. It calls for places with capacities to develop projects for which there are no existing models or predefined implementation plans.

One of these places, which has been in existence for more than twenty-five years, is the Ars Electronica Futurelab. 'It is neither an academic institute nor a corporate department, but a hybrid of artistic atelier and research laboratory. Quite in tune with the spirit of Ars Electronica, the Futurelab became an agile, ever-changing and self-reinventing "Laboratory of the Future," and thus also a kind of self-reflecting prototype making it possible to explore what "the future of the laboratory" should look like' (Hörtner, Haring and Ogawa, 2021). Laboratories and experimental places like this are pivotal to test ideas and the practical applications of technologies such as internet-based services, new user interfaces, human-machine interaction or robotics.

Pivoting to a human-centred perspective and mediating the digital future

Navigating our digitalized future in a manner that holistically considers collective and individual human needs and rights as well as a sustainable co-existence with the natural world and non-human agents requires new skill sets and know-how. In order to tackle the challenges of the twenty-first century in a way that prioritizes a human-centred approach and facilitates the involvement of artists in innovation processes, both new and redefined soft skills and hard skills will be necessary.

Society will rely on transdisciplinary and cross-sectorial collaboration, concerted efforts to demystify digital technologies and a deeper involvement of the civil society. Due to the complex nature of their artistic practice, digital artists and cultural practitioners working in this field often require both a theoretical and practical understanding of areas such as robotics, biotechnology, artificial intelligence or quantum computing. Thus, cultural institutions, artists, researchers and protagonists who are part of the global digital-, bio- and hybrid-arts communities have been honing the skills needed for effective co-creation and collaboration processes for decades. They are finding themselves involved in and drawn to projects that require expertise of others is an inherent part of their work, leading to the development of a network that values collaboration and the sharing of knowledge.

Moving beyond collaborative projects with peers from the artistic field, collaboration and co-creation activities extend to researchers and scientists, research institutions and universities as well as industry and technology producers who have recognized the potential of working with artists and creatives through national-, regional- or EU-level research projects in formats such as residencies and fellowships. As such, there already exists a keen awareness of the necessary skill sets that allows for successful collaborations across different sectors: '[...] transdisciplinary cooperation requires openness, a willingness to take risks, the ability for self-reflection, respect, and esteem for the other culture as well as a lot of appreciative listening from both parties' (Rillig et al., 2021). On a practical level when specifically considering orientation and movement in digital spaces, artists operating at the nexus of technology and science in their practice rely on an understanding of code, high-level

computational methods, interpretation of data and data sets and the operation of both commercial and open source or hacked hardware and software.¹ This in-depth knowledge allows them to mediate critical aspects of technology in their artistic practice and artworks – which puts them in a unique position of being able to act as translators between specialist and non-specialist audiences.²

Together with cultural institutions, art festivals, science centres and museums, artists and creatives are taking on critical topics such as the integration of AI technologies in work and private lives, data privacy and governance or the urgent need of developing sustainable ways of integrating technology in our living spaces and are fostering a discourse around these topics. The ease with which they traverse disciplines and their experience in collaborative endeavours with cultural institutions, research institutions, as well as industry and technology partners has allowed many members of the artistic and creative communities to become skilled educators who are sharing their hands-on knowledge of technologies through educational formats such as workshops, hackathons, community co-creation projects or capacity-building programmes with non-specialist audiences of all ages. By sharing both the practical skills needed to use, operate, manipulate and develop next-generation technologies and opening up the critical societal, individual and global implications of their production and application, they are empowering the general public to develop a more inquisitive approach to the digital devices and realms surrounding them, and giving them the hands-on tools to transition from mere users to active agents in the design of our digital future.

Envisioning the future: Speculative scenarios as potential triggers for change

To understand the intricate balance between the drive for innovation and development and the strains this drive places on humans and the environment on a planetary scale, one approach or methodology that has been identified as particularly impactful is the creation of speculative scenarios and future visions. This spectrum of artistic practice takes its cues from speculative design, design fiction or critical design, and is applied by creatives from fields such as architecture, design, media arts, film, fine arts and visual arts. While some of these artistic pieces open entirely fictional visions, more often than not they are based on concrete scientific research which is used as the starting point to develop scenarios of the future rooted in reality. Succinctly summarized by Fiona Raby and Anthony Dunne in ‘Speculative Everything’, these artistic explorations are especially interesting when not viewed as a tool to predict the future, but rather as an approach to identify different versions of the future – both of a utopian and a dystopian nature: ‘What we are interested in, though, is the idea of possible futures and using them as tools to better understand the present and to discuss the kind of future people want, and, of course, ones people do not want’ (Dunne and Raby, 2013: 2). Artistic work created in this field tackles present challenges and their future implications from various scales: Austrian artist collective Time’s Up, for example, have been disclosing possible ramifications of climate change through their multiyear project *Turnton*,³ a fictional coastal town in the year of 2047 that audiences can experience through immersive installations of different scales. Time’s Up envisions an optimistic scenario and invites its visitors to imagine this future beyond the art piece itself, all the while being clear

that ‘we are not offering a prognosis, but rather a proposal’.⁴ Coming from a similar but more dystopian angle, the work *Life Support System* by DISNOVATION.ORG highlights the technological implications and challenges of indoor farming by growing one square meter of wheat in an enclosed space and urges us to become more concerned of the effects of environmental change on our established agricultural systems.

Building a culture of collaboration: Nurturing collective intelligence

Collaborations across different disciplines can be demanding. On the one hand, such collaborations are bringing together agents with significantly different ideation and creation processes: artistic thinking meeting innovation strategies (Freygarten and Strunk, 2017). Finding a common language to facilitate interchange between the agents is described as one of the main challenges of collaborations between arts, science and technology (Henchoz, 2019). On the other hand, the involved parties have distinct legacies for the handling of intellectual property rights. Nurturing this collective intelligence and forming alliances between science, technology, arts and the creative sector at large are nonetheless indispensable to unleash new pathways towards innovation and bundle all necessary fields of expertise.

Giulia Foscarini and UNLESS in their wide-ranging, multi-disciplinary project *Antarctic Resolution* have demonstrated how to form collaborations to research global warming and climate change and act on environmental policies. With 150 leading Antarctic experts from the fields of architecture, art, biology, chemistry, climate science, engineering, geography, history, law, literature, logistics, medicine, physics, political science, sociology and technology, the project succeeded in bringing an unparalleled range of expertise together to work on the scientific potential of the data from Antarctica on climate history. It further demonstrated how experts are using advanced digital techniques like data-driven infographics or environmental modelling to address global challenges and significantly reinforce data democratization at the same time.⁵

While the importance of collaboration between individuals across disciplines and cultures is undisputed, collaboration between people and machines is also rapidly gaining in significance. Often, we can learn from nature as well as the behaviour and patterns of animals to design closer connections between robots and humans. In their research on *Artificial Collectives*, the Ars Electronica Futurelab demonstrates that ‘multi-agent systems that collaborate in physical space to accomplish tasks take many forms, from drone swarms to sensor networks, and their variability and versatility will only increase in the future. Every such system has degrees of autonomy in its control mechanisms: The more autonomous, the more trust is placed in the system’s algorithms to make good decisions, and the less it burdens humans with supervising it.’⁶

Altering the purpose: Hacking technologies and digital processes

Today, economic added value alone is no longer enough for innovation, and it must also do justice to social and ecological sustainability. Concurrently, technologies must meet the requirements and be developed also for the benefit of our society, environment and legal systems, rather than developing at an ever-faster pace for the sake of technology. Digital artists and creative professionals are impelled to reflect this and put it in the centre of their

work to illustrate contradictory sides of these developments and act with an inherent moral compass. Some are proposing actual process innovation with existing technologies. Some also deal with creative and open forms of technological development such as grassroots initiatives, citizen science and altering or hacking technology towards use cases in yet-unknown ways. And many projects promote an agency shift from industry to consumers to increase aspects of privacy.

Björn Karmann's and Tore Knudsen's *Project Alias* is offering users precisely this transfer in control of privacy and enables customization through a DIY (do-it-yourself) approach. 'Through a simple app the user can train Alias to react on a custom wake-word/sound, and once trained, Alias can take control over your home assistant by activating it for you. When you don't use it, Alias will make sure the assistant is paralysed and unable to listen by interrupting its microphones.'⁷

While such tools are brilliant and can support us in our everyday lives, we clearly need to increase our own efforts in constantly questioning how and by whom digital technologies are developed, deployed, governed and monitored. The Linz Institute of Technology – LIT Law Lab embroiled the public in a fictitious courtroom in an experiment and discussion on who is better suited to take decisions in a court: a judge or an artificial intelligence based on an extremely advanced lie-detector technology using eye-tracking mechanisms. The confrontation with questions of what is possible in current legal frameworks and what is desirable in future legal policies leads to important reflections on data protection, the use of digital technologies in public administration and current digital topics such as 'transparent citizen' and 'social scoring'.⁸

Venturing beyond the surface: Understanding technological impact on a deeper level

Artistic and creative work also has a significant potential to help us gain a deeper understanding of technologies and to open up layers that tend to remain hidden for many users in their everyday applications. Many artists take on these challenges through the lens of data visualization, investigative techniques rooted in journalistic approaches and grassroots- or citizen-driven information design. Vladan Joler and his team at Share Lab, for example, have developed several sweeping visualizations of the hidden infrastructures of technology, taking on the platforms of Web 2.0, their inherent surveillance architectures and entire value chains. Their investigations provide a visual toolkit that has the potential to empower passive users of digital technologies to understand digital processes, act in an informed manner and take more agency.

Demystification of digital technologies plays a vital role here, with artists and creatives also working with methodologies coming from film and storytelling – such as the sweeping exploration of the inner workings of deep fakes and artificial intelligence in the work *In Event of Moon Disaster* by Halsey Burgund and Francesca Panetta. Using the evocative example of the moon landing, a deep fake of President Nixon announcing the failure of the moon landing based on a never-used contingency speech becomes the central piece for an educational online platform, a filmic exploration and immersive installation that allows its audience a deeper understanding of an AI technology.

Applying a different creative practice coming from architecture, yet a similar approach of combining visual explorations, online and community-focused archives and rigorous scientific research, the UK-based studio Territorial Agency uses high-level geo-sensing technologies and data visualization to advocate for sustainable territorial transformation. In their project *Oceans in Transformation*, they visualize the far-reaching implications of human activity on marine life and use the data sets for an extensive exploration to develop capacities to act on complex environmental issues.

Such artistic practices are marked through their potential to aid us in navigating a deeper understanding about the makeup of digital technologies, while also helping us reflect what technologies can do for society and how to take advantages of co-existing with autonomous machines.

Navigating unknown territories, navigating the digital future

These striking examples demonstrate that arts and culture are playing a significant role in 'bridging the space between technology and society and contributing to technology innovation' (Ziegler, 2019). Now more than ever before, we rely on the creative and disruptive potential of the key players in culture and creative industries to connect with the private sector to challenge and strengthen Europe's position in international innovation culture. With the dominance of digital conglomerate tech giants worldwide, Europe must in return balance these developments by combining artistic ingenuity with publicly funded research and innovation, generating curiosity and openness for uncharted, digital territories. In addition, Europe must take its role in creating fair, socially, ecologically, and economically balanced regulations and legislations for technologies.

The extraordinary achievements made in recent years at the intersection of art, science and technology point to a promising path to our shared digital future that is increasingly being recognized and demanded. It will however need significantly increased investments in interdisciplinary education, infrastructures and places for experimentation to lead us towards a more empowered and transparent way of reflecting and interacting with digital technologies.

Notes

1. <https://www.arts.gov/impact/research/publications/tech-art-supporting-artists-who-use-technology-creative-medium>.
2. *ibid.*
3. <https://timesup.org/productions/physical-narration/turnton>.
4. *ibid.*
5. <https://starts-prize.aec.at/en/antarctic-resolution/>.
6. <https://ars.electronica.art/futurelab/en/research-artificial-collectives/>.
7. https://bjoernkarmann.dk/project_alias.
8. <https://ars.electronica.art/keplersgardens/en/ki-wahrheitsmaschine/>.

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2.4 The Lion and the Mouse – The move from informal to formal education in Brussels

CHRISTOPHE DE JAEGER

Gluon is a platform for art, science and technology based in Brussels. In this chapter we would like to give an insight our educational programme, this starting from ‘lessons learned’ of fifteen years of working together with artists. This chapter can’t be considered as a scientific paper, but as an open-ended reflection by the Gluon team based on relevant field experiences, interactions and contacts with many different stakeholders; teachers, school directors, pupils, students, artists and researchers. What are the challenges we are confronted with today and what are the best options to make our educational programme with artists even more relevant in the coming years?

We develop our educational programmes in the capital city of Europe. Brussels is an interesting laboratory to work in because, compared to London or Paris, it’s a small-scale city, nearly 1.3 million people are living here. But Brussels has the complexity of large metropolises because of its history. In one community of Brussels, Sint-Joost-Ten-Node, more than 180 different languages are being spoken. The colonial past of Belgium, interwar migrations escaping authoritarian regimes from Italy and Spain, people from Marocco and Turkey looking for work in the coal industry or the arrival of Eurocrats working for the European institutions, all have contributed to the hyperdiversity and liveliness of this capital city.

But of course, this diversity also brings challenges. Depending on different measurement indicators such as home language, education allowance or the educational level of the mother, we have to conclude that at least 35 per cent of the young people in difficult communities of Brussels live below the SES (social economic status) threshold. Moreover literature study points to a strong dualization of the living conditions of the Brussels youth. There seem to be two types of young people living in Brussels who live ‘parallel’ lives and never meet, either at school or during their free time. They don’t have the same type of mobility, nor the same level of education, nor the same opportunities to find work.

One of the major places of concern is the ‘Kanaalzone’ in Brussels. This area extends over a distance of fourteen kilometres along the Brussels Canal and covers seven different communities. Two of these are Schaarbeek and Molenbeek that hit the international spotlights after the horrific attacks on Paris in November 2015 and the massive manhunt for the terrorist Salah Abdaslam. The territory roughly corresponds to the nineteenth-century industrial districts along the canal and is characterized by high levels of vacancy, abandoned industrial buildings and a fragile socio-economic situation of the inhabitants.

Over the course of more than fifteen years, Gluon, with its offices bordering the Kanaalzone has encountered these problems in the field and has applied to open calls from different

governments in Brussels and Flanders to help solve them. One of the solutions we offered was the development of non-formal education programmes that reinforce the digital skills of young generations in Brussels. The capital city has thousands of job vacancies that are difficult to fill and the number of applicants looking for work increases month by month. This means that the education, interest, ambition or skill sets of the job seekers don't match with the available job offerings by companies or other organizations. This seems to be particularly true in the field of ICT and media.

The digital sector alone in Brussels represents 7.6 per cent of GDP and accounts for 31,578 jobs. 25 per cent of the start-ups are located in Greater Brussels.¹ The digital skills that the market demands are both basic, such as working with excel and advanced, such as having knowledge of programming languages. In many cases, other competencies are also required. A software developer not only needs expertise in technical architectures and information systems, but must also be creative, able to communicate with customers and show a sense of initiative. European policy is increasingly emphasizing the importance of creativity in the economy. Flexible thinking, unorthodox methods and creative ways to problem solving are seen as the appropriate approaches in today's globalizing world. To find creative solutions to complex problems is understood as an important input for innovation which is seen as the main motor of the European Union economy.

A good example reflecting this way of thinking is the European S+T+ARTS programme (Science, Technology and Arts). This is an initiative by the European commission supporting projects that connect artists with researchers in companies and research institutions. The representatives of the programme believe that the creativity of artists can lead to more social and human innovations in the digital industry. One of the pillars of this programme is the S+T+ARTS academy supporting initiatives that connect pupils, students and citizens in general with artists and ICT experts.

The informal education programme offered by Gluon is strongly in line with this S+T+ARTS philosophy. It consisted in the creation of vacation camps in different fablabs in Brussels and workshops in schools. On these locations we offer a programme and a team of artists and ICT experts that help pupils between fourteen and eighteen years old, the so called post-millennials or Generation Z (GenZ) to develop digital projects and applications that can make their neighbourhoods or the city in general more inclusive, beautiful and sustainable. The methodology of these labs has been influenced by the learnings of the British author Ken Robinson. We want to develop a peer to peer learning programme that unites pupils from general, technical as well as arts education. Practical skills are as strongly valued as abstract thinking or aesthetic experiments. What interests the youngsters themselves is the starting point of our labs. We understand very well that their passions or local problems can differ hugely from what we as an organization presume. We never make strict differences in age groups. In the labs different people come together, students from universities or university colleges coach the younger pupils from different secondary schools. In these labs they collaborate in small groups and are learning by doing or learning by playing. 'Easy to learn but hard to master' is the leading quote of the Gluon project manager who runs the labs. That is how they get used to work with cutting-edge digital technologies, such as artificial intelligence, data visualization, augmented or virtual reality, Internet of Things and the basics of coding. Just to give an example of one outcome, during the *Hungry Cities Lab* Leslie V. (15 years old) developed a shopping cart connected to a GPS system so that her blind

grandmother could still find the necessary products in the supermarket. This led her to work with programmable chips (M5Sticks), sound modules and distance sensors.

The artists are crucial in the overall educational programme of Gluon. Here, it is interesting to quote the writer Ezra Pound: *'Artists are the antennae of the human race. They sense and describe aspects of the world around us that the rest of us don't see because we are so busy living in it.'* By working with artists the participants ask questions that they otherwise wouldn't ask and approach the challenges of our world in a larger holistic, societal and critical perspective. This artistic approach also changes the way of working in the labs. The young people are not always searching for practical solutions to existing problems, but are also challenged to shape new worlds and narratives. In his book *'The Savage Mind'* (1962) the French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss used the word *'bricolage'* as the skill of using whatever is at hand to recombining them to create something new.² As opposed to engineers we consider artists as bricoleurs, handyman-inventors who improvise to remake old things to serve new purposes. In the light of ecological urgencies, the bricoleur refers to or combines older myths and constructs new stances for the future.³ The young Damien A. developed a *dystopian* 'space ark' that people would not be able to leave anymore. With the help of 3D printers and laser cutters he constructed the shuttle and imagined how this would look like and what people would do there. Peeping from the windows of a 3D printed scale model from the ark we see sponges of dirt floating around on toothpicks. It's just a thinking machine, something that triggers discussion on the future of our world and stimulates us to pose questions we would otherwise not be asking today.

Now, does our solution in the end succeed or fail? The answer is twofold. In the first place we succeeded to reach a very diverse and coloured group of young people from the *Kanaalzone* with a strong interest in digital technologies. People with Turkish, Moroccan, Algerian or African roots mix without problems with the kids of well-heeled Europeans living in the better quarters of Brussels. These young citizens in Brussels not only embrace diversity, they also demand justice.

Year after year people come back and that is how a very multicultural and specialized community of participants and coaches was created. Most of them started as participants to the labs, but once they started to study at the university or university colleges, they came back during the vacations to teach the new and younger participants. This is how an enthusiast and engaged peer-to-peer network was born. We also got the necessary support from parents in the *Kanaalzone*, they encourage their offspring to participate because they believe it will make them stronger to apply for future studies and jobs. With the support of the state we made our educational programmes free so that anyone with interest could participate.

The other success is that we introduced the concept of 'arts thinking' in our labs. Together with the artists, the participants are not only looking to develop solutions for existing problems. We ask them to imagine more far-reaching ideas and changes. Art Thinking brings about radical, positively disruptive innovations based on plural views and different approaches. And to reach those we need to collaborate with artists. We need those specific qualities artists use in their artistic practice to imagine new things such as spontaneity, inspiration, emotional engagement, creativity, serendipity, abstract thinking, but also dedication, fanaticism, fatalism and radicalism. The way an artist works is very much in line with the GenZ thinking. Media artists in general are very tech savvy, they like to take distance

from the world to develop their own ideas, but love to collaborate with different experts for the concrete realization of their projects. And they tend to be extremely critical towards the digital industry. The participants share these critical attitudes towards the multinationals that steal our data and try to influence our opinions and behaviours. They want to challenge the corporates and build or understand their own systems. *'No!, The metaverse doesn't belong to Facebook'*. Youngsters like to participate in the labs because the informal learning processes trigger them. They discover things they can't learn at school, like collaborative processes, independent learning and critical thinking.⁴

But the story of Gluon is not one of undivided successes. In the first place we don't reach a large audience. With our labs we reach 100 new pupils a year, with our workshops 3,000 participants. The pupils participating in the workshops obtain important new skills, the ones participating in the workshops only get an introduction to digital technologies. Our focus on the difficult age group of 14–18 years old and our stubborn persistence to focus on quality makes it difficult to reach a large audience. Our programme is intense and requires a lot of commitment from young people. Following a sports – or adventure camp, or just hanging around in the city is for many of them much more attractive than learning the basics of code in a Brussels fablab. This situation makes the cost per *capita* for the Gluon education programme rather high and by times difficult to defend to people from political cabinets and administrations. But we think it's worth it, each year we deliver to Brussels a hundred new starters that might become the entrepreneurs of tomorrow, innovators in a wide range of companies and institutions, lawyers, policymakers and philosophers with extensive knowledge on technology or successful media-artists reflecting on the societal impact of these technologies.

The second challenge Gluon and many other cultural organizations are facing in Brussels is the big divide between formal and non-formal learning for secondary schools. On the one hand secondary schools do not have the resources and expertise to respond to the rapid digitization. They cannot afford the ever-changing technological equipment and associated expertise to familiarize young people with the latest ICT developments. The shortage of teachers in Brussels has increased by half in 2022 which has an impact on the quality of education. Teachers have to focus on their courses and can't liberate their time to develop sustainable extra muros activities with cultural partners.

So Gluon, like many other European partners, faces major challenges when it comes to our educational project. Perhaps the biggest challenge is embedding our small-scale, experimental projects in formal education in Brussels. The AULAB 2020 programme of the Spanish cultural institute Laboral in Asturias serves as an interesting international example. Laboral did not invite the students to their own workplace, a large cultural exhibition space with ateliers, but started to develop their educational programmes inside schools. Together with the teachers they defined projects that matched the specific learning objectives and impacted the lessons, the schools themselves and their environment. Artists were used as freelance experts to shape the programmes together with the teachers and basic technological infrastructures were installed in the school. Inspired by this and various other projects, Gluon wants to embed its activities increasingly in formal education. We also look at the New Bauhaus Movement launched by the European president, Ursula von der Leyen. This movement aims to create creative spaces where; architects, artists, students, scientists, engineers and designers work together on projects that make our society more sustainable

and inclusive. The European commission states that the New Bauhaus Movement has to become a cultural project urging the cultural world to develop a new aesthetic language that expresses the urgent need for a system change. When it comes to education, the New Bauhaus Movement or the European S+T+ARTS project can play an important role in supporting innovative educational projects in Europe.

Notes

1. Source: Next Tech Plan BHG.
2. <https://literariness.org/2016/03/21/claude-levi-strauss-concept-of-bricolage/>.
3. <https://www.acsa-arch.org/proceedings/Annual%20Meeting%20Proceedings/ACSA.AM.106/ACSA.AM.106.36.pdf>.
4. Intersections in Design Thinking and Art Thinking: Towards Interdisciplinary Innovation, 2018.

2.5 Artistic thinking and societal change

JAANA ERKKILÄ-HILL

The meaning of art has changed through centuries and even during the past decades. Some of the old meanings have kept their status quo and new ones have taken their place alongside the old and tried ones. Art has always had instrumental value: as a religious object or ritual, as a sign of wealth, as a mean to demonstrate, to make a statement, as a sign of belonging to a certain group or class, in everyday design of domestic items and so forth. Even the absence of art carries a meaning. Art unites and it divides people. Art is active; it works on us.

Joseph Beuys wrote his famous words 'Jeder Mensch ist ein Künstler' (Every Man is an Artist)¹ in 1975. He did not claim that all of us could or even should be artists producing art works, but that everyone could participate in constructing and contributing to the social modelling of a society. This approach is often referred to as artistic thinking in our time. Artistic thinking can also be understood as a process of thinking through making in music, literature, visual arts and performance. It can also be seen as a capacity to build imaginative worlds, to live in a world of impossible possibilities that lead a way to societal change. Whereas creative thinking or design thinking claim to find solutions and answers for practical problems, artistic thinking has a capacity to unveil hidden questions. Artistic thinking can identify a problem that we did not recognize or were unable to be aware of.

Alva Noë writes about art as strange tools (2015). According to his view art is a philosophical practice and he says that one way to think about something is to look at it and pay attention to it. Paying attention, trying to understand something that feels strange, alien to our everyday life, can open new insights and make us to question our old ways. Through works of art, I ask myself if there was a new way of constructing reality, making sense of something unexpected and unknown?

For me art and artistic thinking is about thinking the impossible or unspeakable and to make it communicable through various means. We are dealing with the realities of imagination and that is what makes a change possible. If we can imagine a different world, we can also make it happen. My research is about implementing artistic thinking in society and seeing present challenges in a new light. Patricia Leavy (2013) argues strongly for using fiction as research practice. Going back in time we can refer to Mircea Eliade and Edmund Husserl both of whom have argued that fiction often reveals new knowledge from more unexpected angles than arguments based in so called 'hard evidence'. Through fiction and artistic expression in its multiple forms we can reveal knowledge that would be hard, even impossible to reach by any other means.

The current state of the world needs art and culture for building bridges and changing attitudes towards more inclusive and understanding collaboration between people from different walks of life. There is a need to have another view on idea of economic growth and how we share resources. We also need to rethink the relationship between human and non-human world.

How to live together

I have been fascinated by ideas of Anne Conway (1631–79), who was one of the few seventeenth-century women who was able to study philosophy. She was associated with the Cambridge Platonists, particularly Henry More. Her only surviving text *Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy* was published posthumously and anonymously in 1690. She argued strongly against the cartesian view of seeing body and mind as separate things.

Conway's metaphysics is an ontology of three kinds of being, which she calls species. I am especially interested in her third species that includes all human and non-human animals, plants, minerals, everything and anything. She claims that we all are of same origin and of the same substance. I quote her: 'yea, daily experience teaches us that Species of diverse Things are changed, one into another, as Earth into Water and water into air and air into fireand also stones are changed into metals and one metal into another ... and in animals, worms are changed into flies ... and so on, and in the end a human is changed into earth' (quoted in Hutton, 2021).

I would like to emphasize our unity, our being all of the same substance with the whole universe. When we abuse one part of the whole, whatever Thing it is, our fellow humans, the non-human world, we attack ourselves and it is difficult to mend wounds, to wipe away scars.

Spoken language is often hard to understand and easy to misinterpret. Too often we follow the famous words by Wittgenstein: '*Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen*' (Whereof one cannot speak thereof one must be silent) (1922: 162). Art can speak about things that are too difficult to communicate in any other ways. Through our bodies, our senses we can interact with Things that do speak different language from us. We can talk to non-human worlds, and we can listen to the dust of the earth and try to understand what it can tell us about worlds beyond our imagination.

I have had an opportunity to visit old Icelandic Turf houses (Figure 2.5.1.) during a research project *Turfiction* led by Tinna Grétarsdóttir and Sigurjón Baldur Hafsteinsson from the University of Iceland. A traditional turf house has two faces: a front that looks like any other wooden house with gabled roof, a door with windows on both sides. But when you go around the house and approach it from behind there is another world facing you. The house has nearly disappeared into landscape under grass, and only tiny windows indicate that there must be a constructed dwelling underground. And when you enter the house, you step into a living organism that makes it very difficult to regard yourself anything else but a part of 'one species of diverse Things' as Anne Conway expressed our unity with all the natural world. A turf house is a strange environment where you are swallowed by earth in the corridors that combines different parts of the house, and when entering diverse rooms like a



Figure 2.5.1 Turf house in Iceland. 2022. Photo: J.Erkkilä-Hill.

bedroom, kitchen, workshop which are panelled, you come back to familiar human space. Layers of turf and stones in the walls of the corridors and behind the wooden panels are inhabited by little creepy-crawlies, and spiders are watching when a fly is trapped in a net, ready to be eaten. As a human I could be digested by the house and disappear for good. It is not a frightening but rather a reassuring feeling. According to Tinna Grétarsdóttir and Sigurjón Baldur Hafsteinsson the turf house is a form of architecture that is at once human and non-human, co-produced and cohabited (2020).

A turf house demonstrates in a very practical way how our lives are connected both with a human-constructed world but also with natural world that we are a part of whether we want it that way or not. A turf house shows a way to work together with nature, not on it or against it, but with it. Being inside a turf house raises questions about how to live together, how to share a space with creatures that feel strange to us. Tinna Grétarsdóttir and Sigurjón Baldur Hafsteinsson call Icelandic Turf house a super-organism, a multispecies assemblage of entangled roots, lichen, soil, fungi, mycelium, microbes, stones, wood, insects, cows, sheep, dogs, humans, to name few (Figure 2.5.2.). One can experience a turf house as a space of heritage of the past but also as a space for the future. Looking into a turf house does not mean to approach something primitive and shameful in the past, but to revisit old ways of understanding how everything is interdependent in our universe.

A question of survival has become very real and timely for a big part of the natural world that includes humankind. Our biggest challenge is our resistance towards living together



Figure 2.5.2 Window in a turf house. Iceland, 2022. Photo: J.Erkkiä-Hill.

with anybody who happens to share our space uninvited. People in the richest countries are most selective and discriminating what it comes to choosing your neighbours. Selectiveness does not only apply to other human beings but also to animals and even landscapes. Some live rather with a chosen animal than with another human who does not feel familiar in their habits and values. We prefer one animal to another and one type of flora to a different one. Halldór Laxness writes in his novel *Under the Glacier*: ‘This is the dilemma I have now reached at Glacier. I ask: 1) Is it morally right to kill flies, taking all things into consideration? 2) Although it may in certain circumstances be excusable, for instance if flies are proved to be carrying disease into the house, is it still morally right for a guest to kill these creatures? Would that not be comparable to killing the host’s dog?’ (2004, 28). Through fiction he tackles the question of regarding one creature as more valuable than another one. The narrative deals with attitudes towards unexpected behaviour, a priest choosing to focus on practicalities of neighbouring farmers instead of keeping up with church services. People in Laxness’ novel make their own choices and don’t think too highly of authorities.

If I take Conway’s philosophy seriously and regard myself being of same species as whatever Thing in the natural world, and if I put the same value on my beloved dog and an irritating insect that speeds away from daylight, I cannot but rethink how to live together and tackle the issue of keeping warm and fed in these uncertain times. I might have no other alternative but to turn to my fellow species-creatures.

Art works

The world is still struggling with Covid and its new variants. Southern Europe, especially Greece and Italy, is facing an increasing crisis of asylum seekers who are fleeing difficult and unbearable circumstances caused by climate crisis, wars and poverty. The current war in Ukraine is causing threat of hunger in countries that have relied on imported grain, and there is likely to be more refugees reaching Europe in the coming winter 2023, not only because of war activities in Ukraine and other countries but because of starvation in countries caused by the lack of food supplies. We are faced with an urgent question how to live together with strangers. How to see ourselves in our fellow creatures who look different from us, who see us as strangers? And are we going to receive number of non-human refugees as well? When the United States and the UK withdrew troops from Afghanistan in 2021 we saw for the first time a group of rescue dogs and cats evacuated with fleeing humans from a war zone. Pen Farthing managed to rescue sixty-seven staff members, ninety-four dogs and sixty-seven cats from Kabul. He was strongly criticized for putting animals before humans, but if we think that we all are of same origin there is no reason to think that a dog or a cat is less valuable as a living being than a human.² The question becomes difficult and complicated when we really have to make a choice between human and non-human animals.

Professor Ang Bartram from the University of Derby is an artist and artistic researcher. Her research focuses on documentation as an act of ephemeral art process, and with animality and empathy (as acted and/or intuitively behaved) in human–animal companion-species



Figure 2.5.3 Reading to dogs. Photo: Ang Bartram.

relationships. The research with companion species is specifically with dogs (and more recently horses and cats) and the critical and social contexts in which they have relevance. Through video works, photographs and sculptures Bartram tackles the question of relationship between human and non-human animals in a way that would be hard in any other means but through works of art.³ Her work is fun and serious at the same time. Do we share our love for art with our animal companions? (Figure 2.5.3.) Do we expect them to experience the same excitement as we? Does it make a difference to horses when a human is reading aloud for them? Bartram's art and artistic research challenge the way we think about intelligence, ownership, emotions, feelings of belonging, value of life among other creatures. Bartram (2022) calls animals companion species. She has said about her approach:

I am interested in a series of ethical 'co's', of being para both in position, significance and level of (being able) to input, when engaging animals in artistic research and its collaborative potential. These co's, two of which have already been mentioned, co-laborative and co-mpanion, and are the most significant in the construct of the ethical position. For, I follow Haraway in that there are two companions in a relationship, and each has to be given and afforded equal importance – this is in terms of contribution, direction and artistic potential. This relates to all sites and circumstances: in the home, the gallery, the research project, the relationship, all collaborators are given the right to be as active as they wish, irrespective of species and perceived capabilities. Non-humans flourish given the right and agency, and true companionship allows that to exist.

Through artistic thinking we can move from seeing animals as 'them' in comparisons to 'us', and so there is no reason to prioritize the needs of 'us' before the needs of animals since we all belong to 'us'. Martin Buber (1923/1999) wrote about how we make differences by using words. He argues that when we divide living creatures into I /us and he/she/it/them instead of using I and Thou, we enable othering, making the other one into a stranger. Buber was referring humans, but I want us to widen his ideas into all living things. We talk often about extended family; I want to talk about extended understanding of species. That phenomena can be discussed through art. By reflecting on the works by Ang Bartram we can ask ourselves do we encounter Thou in our animal companions or are we looking at them. And what has all this to do with the question of how to live together? (Figure 2.5.4.)

Alain de Botton and John Armstrong (2013) make a list of different ways of looking at works of art and addressing diverse problems of everyday life through reflecting on the works. Their approach mainly concerns human issues, for example, loneliness, relationships, death, etc. Alva Noë and Botton and Armstrong have very similar idea when it comes to art and how art works. Noë refers to art as strange tools, and when there is a tool there needs to be someone to use it. de Botton and Armstrong see art more as therapy when we make new and individual interpretations of it, and when we direct our questions in a certain way. The contemporary tendency in relation to art has moved away from an art historical context towards free interpretations according to the viewer's needs. The intention of an artist seems to be uninteresting to Noë, Botton and Armstrong, and they are not alone in their view. Art is more important than the one who has created the work if the creator is a professional artist. But when a creator is Everyman, she/he/they become more important than the work: emphasis is on the process and what happens to the creator during the process. The outcome in itself may be without any value to an outsider but extremely valuable to the



Figure 2.5.4 Be your dog. Photo: Dom Moore.

one who has made it. I think that it is crucial to recognize these two different ways in which something we call art is created and how it is used. We can focus on the process and the maker. Or we can emphasize the work of art itself and forget about the maker. Both ways are valuable but have different impacts on the individual and societal levels.

My proposal is to recruit artists and art educators to work with all of us. I still believe that professional artists are needed despite an increasing agency of Everyman when it comes to making and interpreting art. Art cannot solve a housing problem or the production of food and raw materials but through the means of art we can create new visions of what could be possible. Using socially engaging art as a means to communicate and to create understanding between strangers is a start. Artists cannot replace social workers or healthcare professionals, but artists are able to create alternative approaches to everyday life. The question is not only how we work on art, but how art works on us. Art can work on us in unexpected ways. I have worked years ago with different groups of people with special needs that could have been understood as a need to learn a new language, to integrate into a new culture, to cope with children's behavioural challenges and so forth. I also have experiences of artistic interventions in work-places to promote innovative thinking and well-being at work. Art has worked as a means to bring out cultural differences and on the other hand art has revealed what we have in common among strangers. Encountering art can lead us to creative well-being and open us to intuitive knowledge. All of us have experienced situations when we just know something without being able to explain why and how we know it. Creative well-being could be defined as something achieved through intuitive knowledge that is a private awareness of one's innermost being. According to Chuang-yuan Chang in the sphere of intuitive knowledge there is no separation between the knower

and the known; the subject and object are one and the same (2011: 68). Intuitive knowledge cannot be transmitted and explained in ordinary intellectual and reasoning ways. This is a question of artistic thinking and the experiential knowledge that is gained through arts-based activities, or sudden wakening to deep understanding through experiencing art (Erkkilä-Hill, 2017).



Figure 2.5.5 Falling. Jaana Erkkilä, 2022. Photo: J.Erkkilä-Hill.

To fall and fly

The reason we need professional artists is that they are open to risks, to playfulness and accepting the unexpected. Artists are ready to fall and fly, and this is something that everyone should learn (Figure 2.5.5.). We must recognize that a work of art does not happen accidentally and that not everyone is capable of creating something that speaks to another being's condition. Making needs practice whether it is skill to master an instrument or skill to think out of the box. Artistic thinking happens when there is no expectation for a predetermined outcome. If you are on your way to look for the miraculous you are bound to get lost and then find your way again, hopefully. Encountering art might give you courage to risk falling and eventually finding your wings to fly.

One of the most important personal experiences in art for me was an encounter with the work by Bas Jan Ader in the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam in 1988. His art has worked on me over thirty years. I will never forget the moment when I entered a room and saw a man crying in a film screened on a back wall of the exhibition room. The title of the work was *I am too sad to tell you*. There was nothing else in the room, just a crying man (the artist himself) and the title text. The works that spoke most strongly to me were about fallings. The artist is falling from the roof of his house in California; he is falling into a canal in Amsterdam; he is falling here and there and everywhere. Bas Jan Ader has taught me about falling and getting up more than any modern self-help book written by consultants and psychologists making money on people's vulnerabilities and anxieties to deal with shortcomings and mistakes. He has demonstrated through his films and photographs how easily we fall, and how there is no other way but climb up again, sometimes crawling, but still moving on.

Learn to fall, learn to fly. Two elements of artistic thinking that can have a power to make a change in our societies.

Notes

1. <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/beuys-joseph-beuys-every-man-is-an-artist-ar00704>.
2. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-essex-59652240>.
3. <http://www.angelabartram.com/>.

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Online resources

- <http://www.angelabartram.com/920/be-your-dog-karst-plymouth-2016/>.
- <http://www.angelabartram.com/1087/human-school-be-your-dog-at-animals-of-manchester-mif-2019/>.
- <http://www.angelabartram.com/1040/reading-animal-theory-to-animals/>.
- <http://www.basjanader.com>.
- <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/conway>.
- <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/conway>.

Part 3 Politics, power and access

3.1 The meaning of participation

FRANÇOIS MATARASSO

Rights are the claim that we must ask of any social process or power relationship: Who counts as human? What is right? And who is responsible?

Brysk, 2018: 9

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (1948) was imagined, drafted and adopted in a little over two years. It was a response to the unprecedented trauma of the Second World War, which had caused tens of millions of civilian deaths and shattered confidence in old ideas of human values and civilization. In thirty brief articles, this visionary document set out a novel concept of human rights: individual, universal and inalienable.¹ Its power is moral, though, not legal. The fulfilment of the Declaration's promises, which it would be generous to describe as uneven, has depended on a series of covenants, conventions and charters agreed by states, also unevenly, in the subsequent decades. Enforcement has often been impossible, while the text's cultural and ideological biases have been contested and used to justify non-compliance.

Despite these weaknesses, the Declaration is a vital standard and an inspiration to many whose lives and freedoms are constrained by power. In seeing human rights as distinct from citizenship or law (though influencing the operation of both) the Declaration asserts a compelling idea of human equality. It does not only concern nation states. It speaks to everyone and empowers civil society organizations and even individuals to challenge refractory governments in court. Legal battles make news, and preoccupy lawyers and politicians, but the UDHR has an equally important but less obvious power to motivate people to turn its ideals into lived reality through their own actions. This has certainly been true of Article 27.1, which states:

Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.²

The idea that culture is a human right might surprise those who consider it – and especially art – an inconsequential dimension of public policy, but its inclusion in the UDHR is a mark of the Drafting Committee's imagination (as well as its predispositions).

Culture is how human beings define and express their values, how they create and share meaning. It is also how their different beliefs are communicated, tolerated and contested, sometimes violently (it has been invoked by both nations in the Russian invasion of Ukraine). Culture is expressed in the everyday activities through which people meet their basic needs. We all have to eat, dress and take shelter: the immense variety of ways in which we do those things is culture, and we invest its specificities with meanings that we often believe

to be of the first importance. But culture extends much further, indeed, it touches every aspect of human life, from entertainment to religion. Art, in the influential concept developed during the European Enlightenment, is another expression of culture, one of whose distinctive qualities is to encourage a questioning, self-critical perspective on culture itself. That is why, whatever their actual reasoning for doing so, the Drafting Committee were wise to include culture in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The right to participate in the cultural life of the community – and therefore to hold and publicly express cultural values, beliefs and identities – is intrinsic to being human. The denial of that right, to Jews, Roma and other minorities in the 1930s, to Uighurs, Rohingya and gay people today (to take only the most notorious examples), is the first step to denying people other human rights. The right to culture is a cornerstone of contemporary human rights architecture and its removal should always raise alarm.

But this right, like others set out in the Declaration, is unevenly protected. Even in stable democratic nations, a range of economic, social, political and even cultural barriers prevent many people from participating in the cultural life of the community. At best, they are observers and consumers of a culture created and controlled by others, notably the powerful who shape the arts, media, education, religion and all the other fields in which a community's culture is articulated. Following the emergence of industrial societies in the early nineteenth century, many of those who felt excluded from culture acted to gain access to its empowering resources. Working people established institutes, libraries and associations to support their intellectual and cultural development, contributing to the rise of capable and articulate labour movements that improved the lives of millions (Rose 2010). In doing so, they adopted ideas of self-improvement that had been part of the idea of culture since the classical period (Belfiore & Bennett 2008). But after the Second World War, the UDHR offered a new rationale for access to culture: human rights. This contributed to the policies of cultural democratization implemented by both social democratic and communist welfare states, and the huge expansion of publicly funded theatres, museums, galleries and libraries in post-war Europe. It also energized the competing idea of cultural democracy that emerged in the 1960s and sought to replace what it saw as a static and paternalistic model with a dynamic approach that valued the diversity of cultures and forms of expression in contemporary society as a factor in democracy itself. In this second model, participation in the cultural life of the community was an active experience: culture not *for* the people, but *with* them and *by* them.

Unfortunately, although Article 27.1 of the UDHR establishes the principle that everyone has a right to participate in the cultural life of the community, it is not easy to interpret that in practice, hence the continuing tension between cultural democratization and cultural democracy, and other weaknesses in cultural policy of democratic governments. Although there are unavoidable ambiguities in the Declaration, terms such as 'death penalty', 'torture' or 'slavery' are clear. On the other hand, it is hard to imagine any government accepting that it prevents citizens from exercising their right to participate in cultural life, though there is little common ground between the realities of cultural participation in China, Italy, Mali, India or the United States.

In 2020, the umbrella body, United Cities and Local Governments, worked with the City of Rome to find an answer to this problem, through a new rationale for the right to cultural participation expressed in the form of a charter. I was invited to help draft the text, with experts and local politicians from across the world in a series of online meetings, during

the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. The 2020 Rome Charter was presented at the UCLG World Council in November that year (UCLG, 2020).

In seeking to define what cultural participation might mean, the document deliberately avoids defining culture, except in the broad sense proposed above. It says:

Culture is the expression of values, a common, renewable resource in which we meet one another, learn what can unite us and how to engage with differences in a shared space. Those differences exist within and between cultures. They must be acknowledged and engaged with. An inclusive, democratic, sustainable city enables that process, and is strengthened by it too. Culture is the creative workshop with which citizens can imagine responses to our common challenges. Sometimes it is a solution, sometimes it is how we discover other solutions.³

To say that culture expresses values, and that those values are different and sometimes contested, is both to recognize reality and to protect the acceptability of the Charter. More important, in the present context, was the Charter's use of the Capability Approach, developed by Amartya Sen, Martha Nussbaum and others, to establish a consistent meaning to the idea of participation in cultural life. Until now, the Capability Approach has been used principally in economics and development, and the 2020 Rome Charter may be its first application in cultural policy. Nussbaum describes capabilities as 'the answers to the question, "What is this person able to do and to be?"' (Nussbaum, 2011: 20). But those answers are not determined only by personal abilities. Nussbaum continues:

They are not just abilities residing inside a person but also the freedoms or opportunities created by a combination of personal abilities and the political, social, and economic environment.

(Nussbaum, 2011)

Sen and Nussbaum call this an 'approach' rather than a model because they prioritize individual autonomy expressed through choice, and the freedom of judgement that implies. In Sen's words, the Capability Approach gives a central role to:

The evaluation of a person's achievements and freedoms in terms of his or her actual ability to do the different things a person has reason to value doing or being.

(In Robeyns, 2017: 18)

In respecting a person's judgement about what they value doing or being, the Capability Approach is aligned with a concept of culture as the expression of values (personal or communal) rather than a value in its own right (though that has been a common belief since the Enlightenment). Culture is, in this sense, what people care about. Connecting these two ideas leads to the conclusion that individuals are the best judges of what participation in the cultural life of the community means to them.

But this does not imply a simple laissez-faire approach to cultural policy. Respecting citizens' judgement does not absolve cultural institutions, local authorities or governments in democratic states that respect human rights from the responsibility to establish a 'political, social, and economic environment' that enables people to exercise their freedom to be and to do what they wish, in culture, or indeed in any other aspect of their lives. A wish to attend school is the clearly expressed judgement of millions of Afghan girls, which the Taliban

government currently denies them (BBC, 2022). The 2020 Rome Charter therefore defines five capabilities that public bodies should ensure that people have – the right to *discover, enjoy, create, share* and *protect* culture.⁴ If citizens can do these things, in whatever ways they have ‘reason to value’, then it can be said that they are indeed able to exercise their right to participate in the cultural life of the community.

This is a new approach to thinking about cultural participation. It is rooted in cultural democracy, but provides a firmer basis for that policy than has yet been established. It does so, moreover, in language and concepts that are designed to be understandable by everyone. Each person can determine whether they can freely discover, enjoy, create, share and protect their culture. It rejects the sometimes condescending ideas and practices that underpin the access initiatives of public cultural institutions, which tend to assess their success according to whether they either improved a person’s appreciation of elite art or their social situation as defined by the institution, rather than the person concerned. The approach set out in the 2020 Rome Charter simply defines capabilities that people have a right to exercise, leaving assessments of performance and success to them. In principle, it seems clearly preferable. But how useful is it in practice?

The answer to that should become clearer through Traction’s research into the potential of opera co-creation as a route towards social inclusion. The Traction project (2020–2) is funded through the EU Horizon 2020 research programme and centres on three operas co-created using new digital tools by professional and non-professional artists in Portugal, Ireland and Spain. The first involves a community music school in Leiria and the inmates of a local youth prison; in the second, Irish National Opera is creating a virtual reality opera with community groups in different parts of Ireland. The largest and most ambitious project involves the Liceu theatre in Barcelona, a traditional opera house that celebrated its 175th anniversary in 2022.

With a capacity of almost 2,300, the Liceu is the biggest such auditorium in Europe, a gilded palace of red velvet that has welcomed the elite of Catalan society for decades. Its main entrance is on La Rambla, the city’s famous tree-lined route from the centre to the sea, and a focus of contemporary tourism. The rear of the building gives onto el Raval, a neighbourhood characterized by huge social, cultural and economic diversity, where 47,000 people live in just over one square kilometre of densely packed buildings. Almost half of them were not born in the EU, and Arabic, Bengali, Tagalog and Urdu are as commonly spoken as Spanish or Catalan. Raval has a poor image in the media, which often focuses on crime, drugs and prostitution, but it has a dynamic and tightly knit social fabric with many NGOs, community groups and cultural venues, including four independent music schools and a dozen amateur choirs. Despite their close proximity, there has been little contact between these two communities, who might be seen to represent different ends of social life in Barcelona.

In 2018, as part of a long-term project to redefine the opera house as a cultural space for all, the Liceu began ‘Opera Prima Raval’ to create a new work with the people of Raval and in the process transform the relationship between them. The playwright Victoria Szpunberg drew on interviews with local people to create a fictional story about the neighbourhood’s spirit of community action and resistance. Her libretto, *La Gata Perduda* (‘The Lost Cat’), then formed the basis of a five act opera composed by Arnaud Tordera, a popular Catalan musician. Raval’s input to this work was necessarily limited by the artistic and technical

demands of musical composition, but hundreds of residents are contributing to the process of bringing it to the stage.

From the outset, the Liceu sought to pair its production process with partners in the neighbourhood, so it made contact not only with community music groups but also with social organizations skilled in clothing, construction, carpentry, graphic design and other crafts associated with theatre. As a result, the costumes for the opera were created in partnership with Dona Kolors, a fashion brand that supports vulnerable women, and Top Manta, a collective of migrant workers who produce new street clothing. The construction of the stage set involved a local training workshop, Impulsem, and graffiti artists from the neighbourhood who created the floor design. Even the posters for the opera were created by students from the Massana design school and disabled creatives at the Sínia Occupational Centre. The production was co-created through a similar partnership with members of twelve different amateur choirs, ranging from Kudyapi, a youth choir of Filipino heritage, to Cor Mon Raval, which involves older residents. A former member of Kudyapi was chosen for one of the principal roles – the lost cat herself – while professional opera singers performed other characters. The orchestra involved student musicians from the Liceu conservatoire. This intensive process, entirely unprecedented for the Liceu, culminated in two performances on the main stage of the opera house in October 2022. It was a genuine co-creation, an inclusive community opera that neither professional nor non-professional artists could have created alone.

‘Opera Prima Raval’ has been a long, slow process, interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic which affected those living in precarious situations especially badly. In Raval, the loss of income from shop and restaurant closures brought great hardship, and thousands depended on the social support of local NGOs and the public administration. The opera was delayed by almost a year, but work continued throughout, with co-creation of the poster designs taking place online during the winter and spring of 2021.

It is not simple to trace the process of Opera Prima Raval or the effects it may have for everyone involved. In fact, it may be years before the outcomes can be properly understood. Traction published its evaluation at the end of 2022, but the postponement of *La Gata Perduda* makes it very early to reach firm conclusions. That said, it is already possible to ask whether social inclusion was the best concept within which to frame the project. Many Raval residents are indeed at risk of social exclusion (even more since the pandemic) and participating in the opera has opened new opportunities for them. However, the potential of a relatively short cultural project to sustain social change is limited, at least when compared to the work of permanent social entities such as Dona Kolors, Top Manta and Impulsem, or even the amateur choirs who play an important social function in the lives of their members. A community opera production can contribute to social inclusion and cohesion, but only within a tissue of similar effort and a supportive policy context. Taking part in an opera will not change the basic life circumstances of people confronted by poverty and poor services, and it is unrealistic (at best) to place such expectations on cultural programmes.

But projects like ‘Opera Prima Raval’, and the parallel productions in Portugal and Ireland, do protect people’s human right to participate in the cultural life of the community. In doing so, the early results of evaluation show, they address people’s capabilities by simultaneously strengthening their individual abilities and changing the organizations that have most influence on how those abilities can be used.

One experience from the Portuguese Traction project demonstrates the potential. The opera, *O Tempo (Somos Nós) – Time (As We Are)* – was performed twice at the prison in Leiria where it was co-created by inmates and professional artists, and twice at the Gulbenkian Concert Hall in Lisbon, in June 2022. The 1,200 places for the Lisbon performances were sold out. Among those who attended was Tiago (not his real name), a smartly dressed young black man. He had got a ticket as soon as the performance was announced and travelled several hundred kilometres on his own to be present. Why? He told me as we waited for the performance to begin that he had performed on that stage five years ago, in an earlier iteration of SAMP's prison opera project, when he had been in the cast of Mozart's *Così fan Tutti*. He was here to support the inmates, some of whom he knew, and to show what the project had meant to him. In prison, he had discovered, created and shared opera, and the experience had given him new capabilities and new choices. His experience was echoed in subsequent interviews by many of the young inmates who performed that night.

It has become common in recent years to consider the social impact of cultural projects, a term that implies a one-sided idea of how such experiences work: they have *impact on* the groups who are supposed to benefit. But people are not passive recipients of culture, and positive outcomes are indissociable from their agency. The Capability Approach recognizes that lasting change depends on the ways and degree to which people are enabled to fulfil their capabilities by the institutions with which they engage. The changes taking place within the Liceu, and also in social entities such as Dona Kolors, Top Manta and Sínia Occupational Centre, are as important to positive, sustained social development as any benefit individual participants may gain. Tiago's story is a success because support was available to assist him make good his personal capabilities. The effects of such projects become clear only over time, but there is reason to think that a human rights and capabilities approach can help not only to understand the outcomes of participation in cultural programmes but, perhaps more importantly, how the cultural sector needs to change if it truly intends to play a progressive role in twenty-first-century society.

Notes

1. This is an unavoidable simplification of a document that reflects the time and circumstances of its creation: for an account of the philosophical complexities and compromises involved see Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History*, 2010, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
2. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.
3. *Preamble*, The 2020 Rome Charter: <https://www.2020romecharter.org>.
4. The 2020 Rome Charter op. cit.

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3.2 How can culture and the arts recover and reaffirm values of solidarity? Strategy and action from a network of municipalities

MARTA MARTINS

Truth cannot be the ethical ground of our choices – only solidarity can be.

Franco Berardi

A bold step: Participation as a strategic priority for Artemrede

In 2015, after a broad process of strategic reflection, involving multiple actors and debating under different lenses the future of the Association, Artemrede took a bold step for a network of a semi-public nature, composed of more than a dozen municipalities (seventeen in 2022) in a diverse, extensive and asymmetric territory. In its Strategic and Operational Plan 2015–20, Artemrede ceases to define itself as a network of theatres, focused on touring, to assert itself as a cultural cooperation project aiming the development of the territories and the communities. This meant, among many other things, that the focus of Artemrede's activity became the creation of long-term projects, built from the diverse local contexts and promoting the participation of the populations. One of the network's strategic priorities becomes 'Strengthening the links of culture and the arts with the territory and the population', which means, quoting the said Plan:

Artemrede believes that arts and culture have a fundamental role in the construction of the city and of citizenship, in the reinforcement of the sense of belonging to communities and in the promotion of social well-being. (...) it is essential to look at cultural programming from the perspective of mediation, not being sufficient the artist-public relationship and the mere reception of artistic proposals. (...) In this sense, Artemrede elects as its priority, in the area of artistic creation, the production of community projects or projects that have an effective intervention in the territories (...) This choice represents a commitment on the participation of the populations in cultural life as an inseparable element of the construction of a democratic and prosperous society (...). It also reveals Artemrede's conviction in the transversal potential of culture, in the capacity that this has to appeal to identities and to resort to emotions to build communities, even if temporary, and to recover senses of belonging and identification with the Other(s).

(Martins, 2015)

This new positioning of the network was deeply debated internally, among programmers, mediators and political decision-makers. It faced technical resistance – unprepared, reduced and demotivated teams – and political resistance – different visions about citizen participation and reluctance in the investment of resources. It was thus a risky act by a network just emerging from a financial crisis, subject to slow decision-making processes and influenced by electoral timetables and changes.

However, this step revealed a belief in the potential of participatory artistic practices, not only in creating cultural audiences, but in promoting a certain social cohesion:

Artemrede is aware that it is not up to cultural institutions to solve structural problems of society. Problems such as social exclusion do not end after successful artistic projects of community involvement, and they cannot fall into the temptation of creating that expectation. However, Artemrede believes that they can be determinant in the construction of a social and cultural imaginary that enables the creation of bridges and stimulates thought, contributing in this way to a democratic and inclusive society.

(Martins, 2015)

Is culture bad for you?

A recent study in Portugal revealed what we all already knew empirically: culture, cultural fruition and participation are spaces of privilege. Only the most privileged – in terms of class, educational capital and socio-geographic context – participate in or regularly consume culture (and even these in minimal percentages). The Survey on the Cultural Practices of the Portuguese, carried out in 2020 following a commission from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation to the Institute of Social Sciences (Pais, 2022), outlines a devastating scenario: 61 per cent of the respondents did not read any printed book in 2020, only 28 per cent went to museums in the year before the pandemic started, 13 per cent went to the theatre and 6 per cent watch a classical music concert. On the other hand, 38 per cent attended local festivals. Analysing the profiles of the respondents who attend cultural practices, the data reveal the social asymmetries in the access to culture in Portugal. They are, in their majority, people with greater economic capacity, schooling capital and coming from a family context that favours cultural habits since childhood. This reality is not specific to Portugal. In England, in the book *Culture is bad for you* (Brook, 2020), the researchers Orian Brook, Dave O'Brien and Mark Taylor demonstrate that culture is strictly related to social inequality. They present data that reveal that culture is a privilege for some and that its consumption accentuates this same privilege by reinforcing the cultural capital of its consumers/practitioners. According to Bourdieu, cultural capital works as a domination device, which allows access to social status and power (Brook, 2020). But the definition of culture, who defines what is culture and what is not, also reinforces social inequality – the way surveys are constructed and what is considered low culture and high culture, cultural participation and leisure, assigns value to certain consumption and forms of participation in culture, while others are devalued and excluded (Brook, 2020). Culture is an instrument of expression, recognition and social representation that 'shapes the space of the visible and the invisible, of the speakable and the unspeakable' (Rancière, 2010) – the political scope of culture is therefore a global democratic and political issue (Dupin-Meynard, 2020).

Both studies demonstrate how important the family and the social context are in the development of cultural habits. Cultural participation, from childhood, is one of the most important elements in the creation of spectators and practitioners and, especially, in the professional choice of culture workers: 'The inequalities in access to culture profoundly shape how our cultural workers understood the possibility of a career in a cultural occupation. For some they were totally at home in cultural occupations. For others it was a revelation later in life that culture was something they could do for a living' (Brook, 2020).

Besides the economic, social and educational factors (in Portugal there is no data on the racial characterization of the population), there is another one that has been a battle of Artemrede in the correction of inequalities in access to culture: the geographical factor. There are large territorial asymmetries in access to culture in Portugal: Lisbon and Porto concentrate the vast majority of cultural institutions and agents – 40 per cent in Lisbon, 14 per cent in Porto, according to 2014 data (Garcia, 2014). Cultural democratization, associated with decentralization, has been mostly ensured by the action of municipalities, whose expenditure on culture represents more than 5 per cent of the total expenditure of municipalities (compared with the State Budget expenditure for culture, which in 2022 represents around 0.3 per cent). There are, however, very disparate situations and this investment is not always reflected in structuring cultural policies and outlined and concerted strategies.

However, access to a diversified and decentralized cultural offer does not necessarily mean appropriation, involvement, interpretation. The policies based on cultural democratization have failed because it is not enough to distribute the cultural offer, build equipment and invest in programmes with more or less educational activities. And a higher schooling capital does not necessarily represent a determining factor in the formation of an assiduous cultural consumer (despite being more favourable, it is not evident, as the data above show, with very low numbers of culture audiences at any level of education). This is where cultural participation, as the empowerment and capacity building of communities, acquires a fundamental role in the construction of cultural democracy. 'Facing the current fragility of democracies, participation is transversally summoned as a possibility of reinvention of these systems (...). The need, at present, for civic and political imagination to rethink conventional configurations of participation, ways of life and production, is decisive' (Cruz, 2021).

But what do we mean when we talk about participatory art?

There are different conceptions and approaches to the concepts of participatory art and community art, but I will use here François Matarasso's proposal: 'Participatory art is the creation of an artistic work by professional artists with non-professional artists.' The first important characteristic in this definition is the creation of an artistic object, without which the project is situated in the educational or social sphere and not in the field of art (Matarasso, 2019). The second characteristic, according to this author, is that everyone involved is an artist, in the sense that everyone makes art. What about community art? Matarasso claims that the roots of participatory art lie in community art and advances a more complex definition for the latter:

Community art is the creation of art as a human right, with professional and non-professional artists, who cooperate among equals for jointly established purposes and with

jointly established standards, and whose processes, products and results cannot be known in advance.

(Matarasso, 2019)

Although similar to the definition of participatory art, community art envisages a balance of power, where the assumptions of the work are defined jointly, without hierarchies and without a pre-established goal. Matarasso thus situates community art in the sphere of cultural democracy, while participatory art would be in the field of cultural democratization.

These definitions and interpretations are obviously complex, and it is not always clear how to fit a certain practice into the dimension of participatory art, community art, social development or educational activity. At Artemrede we have already developed projects that easily fall into one or another category and many that navigate between concepts.

As they cross borders – art, social, education, health, urbanism, etc. – and challenge roles – artist, educator, creator, mediator, participant, spectator – the projects based on citizens' participation in artistic processes can be powerful instruments in the construction of more cohesive, democratic, fair and solidary communities.

Meio no Meio: A journey of a thousand steps

Artemrede plays the role of an ally of municipalities and even of a driving force of local policies and programmes. Artemrede's action is based on the specificities of territories and populations – urban, suburban, rural, semi-rural, inland, coastal, small, medium and large cities, with greater or lesser cultural offer – introducing elements such as cooperation, peer learning and innovation. It is also in this scenario that the participative and inter-municipal projects that focus on capacity building and training arise.

Meio no Meio was the second project developed by Artemrede under the funding programme PARTIS (Artistic Practices for Social Inclusion) of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. Lasting three years (2019–22, extended six months due to postponements caused by the Covid-19 pandemic), the project worked with young people and vulnerable adults from the municipalities of Almada, Barreiro, Lisbon (Marvila) and Moita. These are peripheries of the city of Lisbon, with a strong presence of immigrant populations and communities with different origins and cultures, with low incomes and with an occurrence of risky behaviours. They are territories with a significant percentage of young people, with several identified problems: unemployment, absenteeism and school failure, mental illness, drug use and petty criminal offences, as well as a high percentage of adult population without professional skills. In this sense, the project proposed a strategy centred on artistic training, the acquisition of personal, social and professional skills and intergenerational dialogue. Developed on the foundations of a previous project in these territories (Odisseia), also co-funded by the PARTIS programme, Meio no Meio was structured by the learnings acquired in that project and by the conception of the impact it proposed to achieve: to promote tools and habits of participation of the population contributing to a more solidary and resilient community. Under the artistic direction of a renowned choreographer – Victor Hugo Pontes – and involving four other artists based in the territories involved, the project promoted, in the first two years, artistic training in the disciplines of dance, theatre, cinema, hip-hop music and visual arts to seventy-three participants (forty-six young people and

twenty-seven adults). In the third year, Victor Hugo Pontes selected twelve participants to be part of the cast of a show directed by him and involving other professional artists. I would like to highlight some characteristics of the project which, in my opinion, enabled its success:

- a robust management and competences in the areas in question: double teams of local coordination were formed in each municipality, made up of professionals from the cultural and social areas, so that none of these dimensions were neglected in an artistic project of social inclusion
- the mediation between the community, the artists, the municipalities and Artemrede, through four individuals from the local communities, two of whom were participants in the previous project, in a perspective of empowerment and investment in the technical and professional evolution of these two young people
- the focus on empowerment, namely in the acquisition of skills through training cycles in various artistic disciplines with multiple objectives: promoting social and personal skills such as teamwork, autonomy, a critical sense and communication; broadening the horizon of opportunities for professional choice; strengthening the final show; consolidating the group, reinforcement of personal relationships, thus facilitating the creation of friendship and solidarity networks, namely intergenerational ones
- the existence of annual Sharing Meetings, bringing together all the protagonists, where they shared what had been achieved so far, promoted exercises that appealed to the creativity and the knowledge of the other and dynamics to jointly identify problems and find solutions
- the alliance between professionals and non-professionals in the casting of the final show
- the dimension of evaluation and investigation, which allowed the achievement of the proposed results to be assessed.

This project had a significant impact on several participants and the community that was created proved to be a fundamental support in situations of emotional fragility, namely during the social isolation caused by the pandemic outbreak in 2020. The pandemic caught the project early in its second year, when personal relationships were foundering. The isolation shook the group, laid bare serious situations of loneliness and lack of economic and social structure, called into question the participants' involvement, and required a rapid and creative response from coordinators and artists. The team kept participants in touch through creative exercises on digital platforms, which required a personalized follow-up, finding solutions when access to digital was not a possibility for some (Lucena, 2021).

The creation of the performance was a turning point in the project and essential in the construction of the results achieved. The artistic director, Victor Hugo Pontes, selected twelve participants and one mediator to join three other professional performers. The selection process was tough and obeyed criteria such as assiduity, dedication, acquired skills, but also age diversity: the youngest participant was eighteen and the oldest seventy-three.

The residency process was particularly demanding, lasting a very short time and always under the threat of the Covid-19 virus. The text, written by the dramaturge Joana Craveiro, was based on conversations with the participants, stories of their lives, elements that were

identified as transversal and always present: colonialism, racism, the opportunities (or constraints) for the design of their future.

This strategy made it possible to provoke a debate on democratic values, to confront ideas, to create space and time for the various voices to be heard. The training and the Sharing Meetings had already managed to question some prejudices associated with age and difference, but the process of creating the show allowed us to go deeper into these themes and to break down the last walls.

For some, *Meio no Meio* was also the beginning of a professional path they had never imagined possible: Benny, eighteen years old, from the district of Trafaria, confronted one of the professional performers at the beginning of the artistic residency: ‘but is this your work? And do they pay you for it?’ Working in something that gives pleasure was not part of what he imagined his future could be.

Meio no Meio, like other participative or community projects, has left seeds: sometimes they are capable of changing the lives of a few people; in most cases they are moments of encounter, dialogue, knowledge, participation in a collective project, elements which are the foundations of democracy: ‘A journey of a thousand steps begins with one, the first’.¹

Participation and politics, a troubled relationship

The relationship between cultural participation and political participation, between culture and democracy, is neither linear nor a magic formula (Cruz, 2021). As we already warned in 2015, in the Strategic and Operational Plan, it is not up to art to solve social and political problems and falling into this simplistic discourse is a trap of the neoliberal and populist agendas. There is, however, a potential in art and participatory projects, of expanding horizons and creating spaces of freedom. ‘Freedom thought of as the autonomy of the being that invents, re-signifies its time and enhances itself as a being, including and above all in thinking, creating and enjoying freely. This is the field in which aesthetics meets politics, as it contributes to promote the conditions in which freedom is a value, and the arts, a power for life’ (Porto, 2019).

Cultural participation assumes different levels of engagement – Spectating, Enhanced engagement, Crowd sourcing and Co-creation (Dupin-Meynard, 2020) – which are also related to different conceptions of democracy in culture: cultural democracy and cultural rights, democratization of culture, participatory and deliberative democracy, empowerment and social transformation (Dupin-Meynard, 2020). In both the cultural and political fields, participation can be limited, controlled, instrumentalized by those who hold decision-making power. In the cultural sector most participatory artistic practices are situated in the field of access rather than cultural democracy, insofar as not everyone has equal control of the means of creation. The definition of what is presented and valued as art and what is excluded from the public spaces of culture is in the hands of specialists, which contributes to the distancing of citizens from cultural institutions, as happens with political institutions.

The sharing of decision-making power is thus decisive in democratic participatory processes and something difficult to observe in both the cultural and political fields. The quality of participation is what can avoid the instrumentalization of community artistic practices and create a safe, equitable space that stimulates creativity and contributes to personal and human development. For this, there are elements that must be ensured in these practices: continuity, focus on the process and not so much on the result, diversity, reflection, shared

decision-making, connection to the local and social context, collaboration, clear and fluid communication, are some of the factors to be taken into account to ensure real participation (Cruz, 2021). If the relationship between cultural and political participation is not direct, we can advance that participation has the potential to generate political participation and that community artistic creation spaces can assume themselves as platforms for experimentation of other ways of doing art and politics (Cruz, 2021). 'The relationship between artistic and community practices and civic and political participation is one of mutual influence. (...) Previous experiences of civic and political participation perceived as effective and satisfactory (...) influence integration into theatre groups, and community artistic practices seem to reinforce civic and political participation' (Cruz, 2021).

In a world controlled by neoliberal governments that foster inequality, alienation and individualism, it is also up to cultural organizations and professionals to be agents of change. How can they do this? Starting by ceasing to perpetuate hierarchical relationships and placing citizens at the centre of their actions. By creating democratic, open, plural spaces that represent multiple voices and that are not centred only on buildings and programmes defined by the few for the few. By believing that the transformative potential of culture and the arts only materializes when everyone feels represented, recognized, heard and empowered to contribute and receive.

Note

1. Sentence taken from the synopsis of the project *Meio no Meio*, promoted by Artemrede in collaboration with the municipalities of Almada, Barreiro, Lisboa and Moita, the association Nome Próprio and the cooperative Rumor. Co-funded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

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3.3 Et maintenant, on va où? Diversity in arts and culture: Between formal correctness and genuine needs

YAMAM AL-ZUBAIDI

Introduction: Diversity or equality?

One central challenge for a diversity agenda for the arts and culture is the elasticity of its main constituents. Concepts such as art or culture are notoriously difficult to define. The same applies to the concept of diversity.

As with the concepts of art and culture, the challenge with understanding diversity is the multitude of available definitions rather than lack of any definitions at all. Thus, it is a concept that can easily be stretched or shrunk. In fact, in the European context, the concept of diversity seems to have been assigned different meanings in different European countries, depending largely on the national regulatory context (Tatli et al., 2012).

One way to understand the concept of diversity, avoiding the definitional puzzle, is to approach it in terms of its intended function. After all, most definitions seem to indicate that a lack of diversity is understood as an indication of prevailing inequality, discrimination or unfairness, with the wording depending on the national and organizational context (Noon and Ogbonna, 2001 and Greeff, 2015). This is also compatible with the historical emergence of the concept.

Diversity management has its roots in the North American context of the late 1980s and its arrival in the European context is relatively recent, gaining popularity in continental Europe by the late 2000s (Tatli et al., 2012). Its emergence is often attributed to the need to frame the individual in the organizational context and thus move away from the group-based approach of the North American tradition of affirmative action that created a certain backlash among the dominant white majority (Tatli et al., 2012).

Generally, diversity management seems to be understood as one of two approaches to counteracting inequalities and discrimination (Noon and Ogbonna, 2001). The traditional equality of opportunities approach is normally based on relevant national legislation and is seen as the regulatory solution to social inequality in a wider context. The disappointment with the equal opportunities approach, and the shift of focus to the needs of specific organizations, specifically in working life, gave birth to diversity management. One central demarcation line between the equal opportunities approach and the diversity management approach is the underlying incentive. While the equal opportunities approach is most often

*Inspired by the title of Nadine Labaki's film: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Where_Do_We_Now%3F

assumed to be built on 'the moral case', diversity management is driven by 'the business case'. In brief, one has a focus on moral incentives while the other puts utility into focus.

The equal opportunities approach is often criticized for its formality and unrealistic or even naive belief in self-regulatory markets and meritocracy (Fredman, 2006 and McCrudden, 2012). As Makkonen (2012) remarks equality law is too often tailored to protect market equality, thus it is hardly 'politically innocent'. The diversity management approach on the other hand is criticized for its functionalist approach, as Greeff, (2015) remarks it implies a considerable risk that 'employees and their diversity is seen as simply a function of the organization, ready to be manipulated to serve the goals and their attainment in the organization'.

From a theoretical point of view, the two approaches may intuitively be labelled as competing or conflicting. Obviously, the choice of approach depends, to a certain extent, on the type of organization involved. A public institution, being subject to the relevant international human rights obligations of the state it is part of, would naturally lean towards the moral approach. On the other hand, a profit-making company may instead prefer the business case approach for pragmatic reasons. Others, such as non-profit and value-driven organizations and sectors (without necessary being public), face the dilemma of balancing between their values and their resources.

From a practical point of view, a healthy complementarity between the two approaches may allow for more realistic solutions to inequality, thus handling practical organizational challenges without explicitly disregarding moral principles and the rule of law.

The case of arts and culture

In more recent years, the disappointment with the lack of diversity within the arts and culture seems to have expanded beyond traditional demands concerning representation. We have witnessed an increase in the demand to review our common cultural heritage including actions targeting public statues as symbols of historical oppression and injustice,¹ and measures for decolonizing museums² to mention some examples.

In brief, the diversity agenda for the arts and culture seems to include a review and re-definition of an unequal past as a prerequisite for shaping a fairer and more inclusive future. In other words, this is an ambitious agenda with a clearer pluralistic, participatory and democratic dimension than what might be the case for other sectors or industries. It is not an exaggeration to describe the case of diversity for the arts and culture as being of a transformative character while for most other sectors it would be of a rather corrective character.

The transformative nature of the arts and culture is endorsed not only by the sector itself,³ but also by the European Union. Despite the fact that cultural policy falls under the exclusive competence of the Member States, the European Union has been more active in relation to cultural policy in recent years, relying on its competence according to Article 3 of the Treaty of the European Union (TEU)⁴ and Article 167 of the Treaty of the Functioning of The European Union (TFEU).⁵ Thus, the EU issued an action plan for culture in 2007, which was later followed by another plan in 2018 that emphasized 'harnessing the power of culture and cultural diversity for social cohesion and well-being', raising 'awareness of our common history and values and reinforce a sense of common European identity' and specifically mentioning culture as a 'transformative force for community regeneration'.⁶

It is not unfair to say that both the arts and cultural sector as well as the European Union, and thus the Member states, express an agenda that fairly well mirrors the transformative demands of the protests against the lack of diversity and equality in the arts and culture. The remaining question is – why is this not happening?

The diversity agenda for the arts and culture can be described as twofold. On the one hand, the pluralism of narratives is a self-interest for the arts and culture, as one (or few) dominant narrative implies that critical thinking is provided by one or a few perspectives. Due to the segregated world we live in, it is hardly surprising that our experiences, unfortunately, to a significant extent depend on characteristics such as sex/gender, ethnicity/race, age and disability, to mention some common examples. This is where diversity is a practical necessity for the arts and culture – a multiplicity of narratives is a prerequisite for relevance. On the other hand, the agenda is value-driven and thus has the moral obligation to adhere to the principles that underlie equality and anti-discrimination legislation in Europe as well as the rule of law.

However, European anti-discrimination legislation is built on the notion of merits, thus, taking protected characteristics such as sex/gender or race/ethnicity into account normally risks being deemed as discrimination in the legal sense. This contradicts the genuine need of the arts and culture to take these same characteristics into account. There is a tension between the moral obligation to respect the rule of law and the self-interest driven diversity needs.

Decision-makers in the arts and culture face a difficult task – how to make decisions that combine the legal and moral obligations with the genuine needs? How to keep the sector free from political intrusion and stay away from a counter-productive form of identity politics at the same time? This inevitably actualizes the two questions: how to combine the two approaches and who is making the decisions?

The legal response to inequality: An imperfect necessity

Anti-discrimination legislation, at least in relation to employment law, has become a relatively well-established area of regulation and research within the European Union. A number of directives, known as the European Equality Directives,⁷ have provided a minimum level of protection against discrimination across all member states of the European Union and in relation to a number of pre-defined characteristics. National laws in the Member States have to be in line with the minimum requirement of the European Directives, but might also offer a more extensive protection.

Historically, European anti-discrimination regulation, both on the European level and within the national contexts, seems to have developed in a similar manner. According to Hepple (2009) it is possible to recognize five generations of regulation.

Before the Second World War ‘unenforced constitutional provisions’ were the dominant form of protection against discrimination in most European countries. A first generation of European national regulations (1948–58), inspired by the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR), recognized equality as a basic human right and several developments in constitutional law introduced equality as a general principle. However, the international development, mainly through two International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions,⁸ was still more progressive than most national regulations. As Hepple (2009) points out:

In a sense, the history of discrimination law in Europe since 1958, has been an exercise in levelling countries up to the standards laid down in the two ground-breaking ILO Conventions.

The second generation of regulations (1958–75) marked the adoption of the notion of formal equality, thus regulating equal treatment as a general principle. Focus was put on the individual right to be treated in the same way independently of sex/gender and race/ethnicity and an enforceable ban on direct discrimination was a reality.

The third generation (1976–99) marked the introduction of substantive equality. The principle of formal equality based on a formal comparison between individuals was criticized for its reliance on the idea that the market is self-regulatory. Thus, a formal comparison between a man and a woman would necessarily put the woman in a disadvantaged position by not taking into account women's reproductive rights. The same was true in relation to race, where comparing a person from racial minorities with a person from the dominant racial majority was often translated into requirements of conformity. This period marked the introduction of the enforceable ban on indirect discrimination that challenges formal comparison as well as developing the notion of positive action, thus introducing the group dimension as complementary to the dominant individual perspective.

The fourth generation of regulations (after 2000) marked the introduction of comprehensive equality that was no longer limited to sex/gender and race/ethnicity which meant that the protection against discrimination was expanded to other pre-defined characteristics such as disability, sexual orientation and age.

Finally, the fifth generation (also after 2000) brought about a major shift of focus from the individual to the organizational. The main new idea is equality mainstreaming meaning introducing an obligation for organizations to review their practices in terms of their effect on equality rather than putting the burden on the individual to file a complaint. This development was adopted by the European commission at the policy level (at least in relation to sex/gender).⁹

One example of transformative equality legislation is the concept of an equality duty in the UK's Equality Act 2010 which requires a review of decision-making in relation to vulnerable communities.¹⁰ This is the kind of measure that moves the equality agenda closer to the notion of equity, thus closer to the notion of fairness.

However, legally speaking, these kinds of measures were introduced only in the UK and Northern Ireland. As Hepple (2009) remarks, this is largely due to the fact that the European Equality Directives allow but do not require this type of regulation. According to Schiek (2007), even the latest developments, including the adoption of the Race Directive and Employment Directive, the fifth generation of transformative equality in Europe are still far away:

The new directives, starting with the Race Directive, have been criticized for not proceeding towards the fourth generation of equality law in the UK, although otherwise attempting to transplant UK law to the continent.

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From a perspective beyond the UK, these directives – taken together with the ECJ case law – insufficiently mirror the move from formal towards substantive equality.

Despite the fact that the TEU mentions social justice, the European legal response to inequality is only slowly moving towards the notion of transformative equality. Or as Makkonen (2012) puts it:

Yet between the lines, the different documents set formal equality of opportunity, national unity and political liberalism as 'default positions'. There is, in a sense, a bias towards social order rather than social justice.

European Equality law has developed in a piecemeal manner (Hepple, 2009). Thus, a possible transition to transformative equality regulation in Europe is subject to the political priorities of the national governments (Hepple, 2009). However, historically the development of the regulations has not always been primarily in response to equality ambitions. The first gender equality clause in the Treaty of Rome came as a consequence of the French opposition to the competition advantages of other countries (Hepple, 2009). This can be compared to the adoption process concerning the Race Directive which came about largely as a direct consequence of most European Member states being unwilling to be associated with the anti-immigration Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) which had been successful in the Austrian elections (Niessen and Chopin, 2004). In 2008 the European Commission proposed a new anti-discrimination directive known as the Equal Treatment Directive or Horizontal Directive. This directive is meant to expand the ban on discrimination beyond employment law to cover social protection, healthcare, education, housing and access to goods and services in relation to characteristics such as disability, sexual orientation or age as current protection covers only gender and race. In 2022, this proposal for a directive has still not been adopted.¹¹ This indicates that another 'black swan'¹² may be needed to make the move towards transformative equality on the European level a reality (Al-Zubaidi, 2022 and McEachrane, 2022).

In the meantime, the arts and culture sectors in Europe continue to face the challenge of living up to its transformative agenda which assumes values such as social justice, pluralism, critical thinking and a diversity of narratives for a common future.

Decision-making and expanding the 'Overton window'¹³

The European Directives still do not require any sort of specific diversity or equal or proportionate representation of social groups.¹⁴ In other words, the current regulatory framework establishes some rules based on a moral basis, but does not require any specific outcome. It is heavily dependent on a re-active approach, focusing on the individual, thus its relation to the notion of diversity is 'neutral' at best (Scheik et al., 2007). This is not a coincidence; the equality of opportunity concept has become the most dominant moral base for equality legislation in the Western world as it fits well into the dominant free market ideology (Schaar, 1997).

However, debates about a 'seemingly banal norm of equality of opportunity reveal profound disagreements as to the nature of fair terms of cooperation in the modern world'.¹⁵ It is true that the concept may have different interpretations; formal equality of opportunity would be close to the rather conservative notion of equal treatment, whereas real equality of opportunity would be closer to a rather more progressive notion of equity or fairness.

The current legal framework recognizes that distinction clearly. Member states are allowed to do more than the minimum requirements in European Equality Directives to achieve ‘full equality in practice’.¹⁶ Much of the criticism in relation to the formal equality of opportunity has been directed to the concept of a comparison between individuals in terms of their formal merits or qualifications in relation to recruitment. Or as Fredman (2012) puts it:

Thus, the basic premise, namely that there exists a “universal individual”, is deeply deceptive. Instead, the apparently abstract comparator is clothed with the attributes of the dominant gender, culture, religion, ethnicity or sexuality.

In fact, re-definition of the notion of merits is one of the key measures that are identified as game-changer moving from a formal equality of opportunity towards a more *real* equality of opportunity (McCrudden, 1986) that celebrates our differences instead of entrenching conformity. Unsurprisingly, re-definition of merits is also one of the central issues that are often mentioned as a possible course of action to achieve diversity (Schiek et al., 2007 and Noon and Ogbonna, 2001).

A corner stone in all Equality Directives in relation to employment is the ban on discrimination, simply put – recruitment decisions that take into account any of the protected characteristics such as gender or race, risk being deemed as discriminatory. Still, an exception is possible in terms of a ‘genuine occupational requirement’.¹⁷ In other words, where the protected characteristic, such as gender or race, is necessary to be able to do the job and there is no other way to meet the legitimate aim, it is allowed. One such example is a salesperson that would demonstrate the use of skin care products made specifically for dark skin. It goes without saying that colour of skin in this case is a genuine occupational requirement (Schiek et al., 2007 and Fredman, 2012).

Technically speaking, if a diversity of artistic and cultural narratives is recognized by the sector itself as a genuine need and as being related to different characteristics (among other things), then recruitments to the sector can be opened up to a diverse pool of artists and cultural workers. Different characteristics can then be understood as a reflection of different experiences and celebrated as genuine occupational requirements in the legal sense of the term. This implies stretching the ‘Overton window’, critically re-evaluating the formal notion of merits – widening the scope of what is considered to be acceptable as a genuine occupational requirement.

Needless to say, the notions of merits and meritocracy have been subject to much debate during a long period of time. This is hardly a new issue. Technical solutions, such as the one above, might look bold, difficult and require certain legal skills – but they are doable. However, they are not universal and they do not come packaged and ready-made. One prerequisite for such a technical solution to be meaningful and fruitful is a socialization process that leads to the arts and cultural sector honestly endorsing diversity as a genuine need in relation to its transformational agenda.

Without a deep and genuine commitment, well-intended radical technical solutions run a considerable risk of stigmatizing already vulnerable communities of artists and cultural workers.

One way to approach the debate on the limits of current legal framework and the re-definition of merits is a diverse internal debate within the arts and cultural sector itself. This means having artists and cultural workers with diverse backgrounds and experiences in

decision-making positions. 'Representation' at the bottom of the power structure is not enough.

In fact, improved decision-making is widely recognized, with few exceptions, as one of the major benefits of diversity.¹⁸ This is less bold and provocative compared to the re-definition of merits in recruitments as most board positions fall outside the scope of employment regulations and thus are not subject to the formal legal requirements in employment law or anti-discrimination law.

Independently of the outcome, an internal diversity debate in the arts and culture sector, where artists and cultural workers from excluded or vulnerable communities occupy decision-making positions rather than being only consulted would be a healthy step towards a more inclusive and transformative arts and culture sector in Europe. With changing demographics and better organized vulnerable communities, this will happen in the long run. The question is whether the arts and culture sector wants to lead or to follow.

Concluding reflections

In 1998, The Starting Line Group – an umbrella for a number of non-profit organizations lobbying for a new European legislation to forbid discrimination in relation to race/ethnicity – interviewed the representatives of the Member States at the EU level on the subject. This is their conclusion (Niessen and Chopin, 2004):

From these interviews it became clear that Community anti-discrimination legislation was not a high priority for the Member States. It was even unlikely that a few Member States would take the lead in pressing for or strongly supporting a Commission initiative to that effect. Even countries with anti-discrimination legislation in place were reluctant if not hostile to Community legislative initiative in this field.

In 2000, the Race Directive – at the time, the most complete piece of European equality legislation – became a reality as a direct outcome of the Austrian national elections (Niessen and Chopin, 2004 and Tyson, 2004). The history of equality legislation in Europe provides us with an important lesson.

Despite formal adherence to social justice, the European Union is only slowly moving the direction of creating a legal order that underpins social justice. Our present way of organizing society is neither inevitable nor permanent. The same applies to our legislation.

If the arts and culture sector is committed to its transformational agenda, it has to do some work itself to achieve a corresponding European transformational legal framework. Political naivete is not helpful and a transformational agenda implies making a bold political statement, but also taking the risk of re-balancing power dynamics within the sector in a manner that goes beyond opening up recruitment processes. Another lesson in this respect is the culture wars in the United States, easiest to summarize in this context with the words of Arthur Levitt Jr (1991) (emphasis in the original):

The same is true for board representation. If one believes that cultural institutions are important for the well-being of communities, then they must be managed with skill and creativity *guided by and representing their multicultural communities*. It is a risk-taking idea. It means sharing power and decisions. It means accepting change. But aren't risk taking and change intrinsic to the nature of the arts?

But being rebellious is not as difficult as it may seem. Being vigilant, pursuing a progressive agenda and stretching the 'Overton window' within the rule of law is much more difficult. This is the real challenge. After all, as Jamie Bartlett put it 'not all radicalisms are equal' (Bartlett, 2018). So where do we go from here?

Notes

1. See, for instance, a review of target public statues by The New York Times: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/24/us/confederate-statues-photos.html>.
2. For instance: <https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/decolonising-museums/#>.
3. See, for instance, the value-declaration by Culture Action Europe, major European network of cultural networks, organizations, artists, activists, academics and policymakers: <https://cultureactioneurope.org/our-belief/>.
4. Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:2bf140bf-a3f8-4ab2-b506-fd71826e6da6.0023.02/DOC_1&format=PDF.
5. Consolidated Version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT:en:PDF>.
6. A New European Agenda for Culture: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0267&from=EN>.
7. Directive 2000/43/EC against discrimination on grounds of race and ethnic origin, Directive 2000/78/EC against discrimination at work on grounds of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, Directive 2006/54/EC concerning equal treatment for men and women in matters of employment and occupation and Directive 2004/113/EC concerning equal treatment for men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services. For further information see the official website of the European Commission: https://ec.europa.eu/info/aid-development-cooperation-fundamental-rights/your-rights-eu/know-your-rights/equality/non-discrimination_en.
8. Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100) and Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111). Full text can be found on the official website of ILO: www.ilo.org/.
9. European Commission. 2008.
10. For detailed information, see the website of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (UK): <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/public-sector-equality-duty>.
11. For the text of the proposed Directive see note 14. Also see the following comment: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/justice-home-affairs/opinion/time-to-adopt-the-equal-treatment-directive/>.
12. The black swan theory: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_swan_theory.
13. For the definition of the Overton window see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Overton_window.
14. Race Directive does not mention diversity at all. The Employment Directive (Dir. 2000/78/EC, Article 15) mention diversity only in relation to an exemption for Northern Ireland and the Recast Directive (Dir. 2006/54/EC, Preamble, point 22) mention diversity not as a requirement but a possibility for the Member States.
15. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/equal-opportunity/#Con>.
16. Article 5 in Directive 2000/43/EC, Article 7 in Directive 2000/78/EC, Article 3 in Directive 2006/54/EC.

17. For instance: Article 4 in Directive 2000/43/EC and Article 4 in Directive 2000/78/EC.
18. Some relevant examples: (Sommers 2006, Sheen et al., 2014).

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Further reading

Keynote speech by Hassan Mahamdallie (UK Playwright, Journalist and Specialist in Diversity and Art): 'Why Diversity Is an Essential Element in the Arts, That Cannot Be Ignored'. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EYT7My-iXGQ>.

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3.4 Road of oblivion and love: Orchestrated ebbs and flows in Romany cultural development

VASIL CHAPRAZOV

‘Манги ли рацила, манги ли зивизила’
(‘For me does the sun rise, for me does it set’)

Romany folk song

Roma, Romany culture?!
Isn't that the traveling magnetic cymbal of Mokoolu,
This tall, handsome Gypsy, who warmed
The souls of goodness at all ends of the Balkans;
Isn't that the ethereal, recalcitrant love
of the violin of maestro Peyo Budakov, principal
artistic director of the Central Gypsy Theater 'Roma,'
who handpicked music's stars for the stage from neighborhoods across the country;
Isn't that the songs of Yashar Malikov, Hasan Chinchiri,
Mutzi Ivazov, Altun Shishikov, Ibro Lolov that
Not once were interrupted, and in 1958 castoff
Just like that, by grim party orders, but until now, unclear why.
Perhaps because the budding steps on the big stage,
even though rented, of Romany art were winning the loud ovations not
only of Roma, but of non-Roma as well, first-class artists
from all walks of Sofia's bohemia – Metodi Andonov,
Vili Tzankov, Petko Karlukovski, Georgi Partzalev,
Georgi Kaloyanchev, Georgi Georgiev-GETz,

Or, the powerful gust of the four-part Sliven choir of one hundred
Beautiful young men and women, who shone with 'Станджедис' ('Weavers'), 'Дуй Чирикли
Пена Пъй' ('Two Chicks are Drinking Water'), 'Романо Ози' ('Romano Heart'), all songs
Of the genius composer and conductor Danko (Jordan Kurtev), sung by Bulgarians,
Armenians, Turks, Jews...

And have you seen, listened to, Nikolai Slichenko's 'Очи черные' ('Black Eyes'), Lyalya Chernaya, Rada and Nikolai Volshaninovi, and the whole flotilla of gifted men, women, children – all actors from the stage of Romeni, this world-known treasury of Romany art!

Perhaps you remember the dear, gone-too-early, bass-baritone of the soloist of the Leipzig opera, Ivan Hadjikostov – he has sung in the Sliven community centre 'Nikola Kochev'; or the one hundred violins of the virtuoso Roma from Hungary; or the unforgettable stars of Balkan music: Esmā Redžepova and Šaban Bairamović.

You remember or have read about the royal majesty of flamenco – the dances of Carmen Amaya, which have graced the stage of Carnegie Hall in New York and stages in London, Paris; the music of Gypsy Kings, loved far beyond the borders of their country; Joaquin Cortez, a soloist of Spain's national Ballet, who grew under Maya Plisetskaya's care – the most ardent flamenco dancer, he made famous across the world the art of his people.

I stole this tiny particle of Romany culture – they, the Roma, will understand me. The young ones, however, especially the really young ones, will they approve? Perhaps they will ask about their '*chalga*,'¹ about the rhythm that lures them into the music, the dances, born with the sins of love for life (we have seen ballerinas dance with such excitement and pleasure *kyuchek*,² so easily renamed by someone as 'belly dance')?!

Arrests for playing gypsy music

All these people of music and dance lived without the big stage at the time when they were not allowed on it, when doors were closed on them, when they were 'taken' from the street, from the taverns ... The Plovdiv³ orchestra of Vasko Todorov was severely punished for performing two Gypsy songs at a wedding at the request of the groom. After the festivities ended and everyone left, police officers⁴ entered through the backdoor of the wedding venue and arrested all seven members of the orchestra. They crammed all musicians into the patrol car, took them to the regional police station, and in short order sentenced them to fifteen days of hard labour. The charge was formulated thus: 'For performing Gypsy music in public space' (Kolev, 2010: 104).

'It was the summer of 1985 when they were changing the names of Roma-Muslims in Omurtag,'⁵ remembers Krassimir Kiriliov, a Romani activist. 'The times were ugly, with all kinds of bans and censorship, especially when Romany music was concerned. Ibryama,⁶ Ivo Papazov, was invited to play at a wedding in our town. To avoid arrests or the interruption of the music, along with a group of boys, we dispersed to different corners of the neighbourhood and watched for suspicious people from downtown, so we could warn the orchestra in time of their coming. The musicians knew what to do – they went from *kyuchek* to classical music without missing a beat.'

During the same time, in Sofia, Yashar Malikov was arrested as well; his travelling bag and personal documents were seized. The police officer sifted through every tattered music sheet – only notes. But ... today, that is what they are looking for. This person and his notes are dangerous; he has created music that frightens the bigwigs. He is taken in for 24 hours, questioned, therefore: guilty.

After the arrest, the composer went to meet the first secretary of the regional committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP). 'Comrade secretary, I can no longer be a member of the party,' declares Malikov. 'If people are arrested for music and songs, the party is in jeopardy and so is the state.' Bai⁷ Yashar remembered these words on a rainy evening in 1992, on our way back from a tour of the houses in the Sofia neighborhood 'Filipovtsi'; we were preparing lists for the founding of a Romany party.

Despite the humiliations, Bai Yashar remained a communist; he always remembered the Gypsy theatre, established with the blessing of the BCP, at the insistence of Shakir Pashov, MP, a Rom, and with the personal support of Georgi Dimitrov.⁸

Five words on history

Difficult is the road of the Roma – they always stayed in the shadows even though they loved the sun.

The emigration of Roma from 'Mother India' acquires an especially important role in the Balkans, justifiably named their 'Second Home'. Suffice it to mention that here, under the Balkan Mountains and Olympus, next to the Bosphorus and the Adriatic, in the Balkan states, settled the largest part of the twelve-million European Roma community that left the north-western parts of Punjab, where women had long hair, took baths, powdered their faces, wore hairpins, lipstick, and various golden, silver and copper ornaments (Cholakov, 1996: 2).

Athens, Sofia, Belgrade, Skopje, Sliven, Stara Zagora, our neighbourhood in Gradets as well, are only a few of the numerous stops during the Balkan travels of the Roma. They walked and walked, and always reached their destination. But with them travelled either kings or princes, or dukes, voivodes in carriages, rickshas, charrettes. It is not a coincidence, perhaps, that students from the Romany neighbourhood in Plovdiv went to their graduation ball with a golden carriage.⁹ For years now, Fakulteta¹⁰ residents relish the sight of their 'golden space rocket' driven by graduating students. Such curious royal vehicles are mainly enjoyed by high-school graduates and brides and grooms, who do not travel without a brass orchestra, a thousand violins or a thousand tubas – music is of the essence. Today, what used to be the cultural privilege of the Roma is emulated by non-Roma: they too want to live, to dance.

But let us return to history, to highlight that Bulgaria has been the preferred Roma destination in the Balkans. In the past, as in the present, Roma population is densest in Bulgaria. According to a tax-collecting register of the Ottoman Empire from 1522 to 1523, within the limits of the current Balkan States, the distribution of Romany households (17191 in all) was as follows: 'Turkey – 3185, Greece – 2512, Albania – 374, ex-Yugoslavia – 4382, and Bulgaria – 5701' (Marushiakova and Popov, 2000: 31).

While Sofia, Montana and Lom are worth mentioning, after the liberation from Ottoman Rule (1876), Sliven plays the most notable role in sustaining the lead of Bulgaria's Romany population in the Balkans; according to national census numbers, in 1888 there lived the most Roma in Bulgaria: 1397. In more recent times, 'the city under the Blue Stones'¹¹ continues to be the leader, boasting, moreover, a large army of highly educated professionals and experts in various social and economic spheres.

И Пхуеки Ои Чшела¹² (He tries to cheat the earth)

Yes, such are the facts, but I think about the ways they will be turned into the next occasion for internal, external, even international enquiries, comparisons, doubts, dusty memories, all of which lead to quarrels and, worse, neglect of the cultural needs of the community. Who is interested in these facts? The answer is chilling, uninviting a conversation. The Roma are fed up with the supposed 'objective aloofness' that, with the means of 'science', of 'history,' and the names of the most prominent gypsologists, established university aces, attempts

to question primordial facts, even the name, self-designation of their ethnos – Rom, Roma – and to impose the familiar Gypsy, also known as *Zigeuner*, whose first letter Z was put on clothes to mark Roma as targets in Hitler's death camps (Chavdarova and Chaprazov, 2009: 4). These same authorial 'good intentions' argue that 'In Gypsy studies, there is not an established clear and shared view on the place of Gypsies in the hierarchy of human communities [one has to wonder for what people there is an established 'clear and shared' view about its place in the hierarchy of human communities!]. The views on this issue are *diametrically opposed* in literature' (Marushiakova and Popov, 1993: 57, my emphasis).

Notably, immediately in the next few sentences, the same authors assert: 'In their own land of origin, the Gypsies were members of the lowest social strata and did not form an identifiable ethnic group' (Marushiakova and Popov, 1993). Why do the authors still insist on identifying the Roma as – pariah? Is this the point of today's researchers, of their science – to seek to deny, pass by, reject the facts they know so well? Are not such actions pouring more and more water into the dry, torn-by-yelling throat of hatred that honest fascists seek to validate, to make socially acceptable. How is it possible to break the conspirative silence of scientists, politicians, historians, who have 'forgotten' the names of Roma artists, conductors, composers, choreographers, engineers, doctors, officers (including generals who fought in the war against Hitlerism), teachers, scientific workers, professors, hard workers, builders, border keepers, soldiers in the wars, at Shipka,¹³ athletes with Olympic, world and European championships? In the name of what national interests does the silence persist, whom does it serve? Yet again, are there no Roma in Bulgaria – have they been renamed, re-christened, or is it particularly important that what is good is not Romany?!

'What Gypsies?! There are no Gypsies in Bulgaria,' such was the response of the General Secretary of the BCP, Todor Zhivkov, to a question by a French journalist in Paris, in 1966, about what actions had been taken to improve the state of Bulgarian Gypsies (Kolev, 2010: 128).

Of course, there are Roma in Bulgaria, even if at times they existed only in the Party registers. The military and police archives absolutely cannot stand ellipses: musician, conductor of an army ensemble, of a symphony orchestra, artist, poet, teacher, private, colonel, prime-minister, soldier – G y p s y – all is documented, in full. They, the hats, always knew everything, especially who is 'other'? They just did not know that one day, there will not be Gypsies in Bulgaria, because ... the Party (leader) said so!

Such tactical, unsound moves of the state's chosen darlings, for better or worse, do not have a say when the truth about Roma and state is concerned. What is the truth? A loaded question that more than once has reminded me of an old Romany idiom, typically used to describe someone's gait „Й пхуеки ои чшела' ('He tries to cheat the earth'). Who will get whom?

Исяли Насяли Ек Вакъци (Once upon a time there was, wasn't)

THE NON-ROMA: 'Oh, you have fairy tales?'

THE ROMA: 'Well, is there a people, a tribe without its own fairy tales? How does one survive a long road without light, without a fairy tale!'

The Romany fairy tales in the bilingual (Romany and Bulgarian) collection *Romany Fairy Tales* begin with 'Once upon a time there was, wasn't', a beginning different from that of the fairy tales of Bulgarians, Serbians, Russians, Danes, Germans. It generates an unfamiliar equality between 'there was' and 'there wasn't', a new reading of the 'haves' and 'have-nots'. A religious life philosophy of a people perhaps? All these thoughts, questions remained unheard by children, highschoolers, university students *until the end of the twentieth century*. These fairy tales were not included in books, were not played on the radio, TV, were not in Bulgarian textbooks. They were in the archives, in the records of Mustafa Aliev (Manush Romanov), Dimitar Golemanov, Vasil Chaprazov, Pavel Ivanov, Yashar and Andjelo Malikovi – hidden, recited from time to time in friendly circles.

The first book with Romany folklore stories, *Цигански приказки (Gypsy Fairy Tales)*, was published in Bulgaria in 1991, at the beginning of the democratic changes in Bulgaria. Five years later, 'Stigmati'¹⁴ published fairy tales from the Pazardjik region, recorded by Iosif Nunev. In a short period of time, a number of books with fairy tales from various regions of Bulgaria, as well as *Истории край огнището (Around the Hearth: Stories)*, a textbook for second to fourth grade that includes Romany counting rimes and celebration songs also appeared on the literary market.

Hindered, forbidden, persecuted, this work was constantly controlled – without law or documentation, with a nod or a wink, with a certain attitude, with whispers in the ear, with isolation ..., a denial of ancestral support, of the breath of familial inspiration, of the spiritual power of centuries-old folklore.

Yet, the youth sought, believed, stood up

In 1980, along with young people from the Nikola Kochev neighbourhood, we organized a literary club.¹⁵ The young men and women who attended our meetings were taking their first steps in poetry, literature, theatre, the artistic sphere in general. Some of them were interested in listening to poetry and reciting it. With them, we started preparing texts that would highlight the role our community played in various historical events. The neighbourhood grew excited, encouraged us and soon we took part in a regional artistic-work contest. We were honoured with a medal, which put us on track to compete at the national level. I put together a team of the most prepared and enthusiastic among the members of the club, and we started rehearsing diligently on a daily basis.

Our recital was dedicated to the workers' fights for rights before 9 September 1944,¹⁶ with a specific focus on the Women's Rebellion in Sliven (1918), during which Romany women played a leading role; gendarmes killed a young man and woman from the neighbourhood: Peyo Yonkov (Dachito) and Tenya Nedeva Malakova. Two streets used to bear their names, but today, the heroes are forgotten.

We chose powerful texts by Geo Milev, Nikola Vaptsarov, Georgi Djagarov, Usin Kerim, Nadya Nedelina's poem dedicated to the revolt. As background, we used Romany music Also included was a *short piece of text in Romany*.

The party secretary of the neighbourhood attended one of our rehearsals. He did not approve of the text in Romany, nor did the party members with him – they asked that I remove the words in Romany. I explained that the words were translated in the text of the

recital, nothing unexpected. 'No, that is not allowed. If you do not want to make the change, you have to leave the premises of the community centre!'

The ensemble was summoned to a meeting with the party bureau and a representative of the Regional Committee of the BCP. We met, and they decided we had to leave the premises of the community centre. This happened on the eve of the national competition.

We performed the original text without changes. Everyone in the hall applauded us, and the jury chair announced we were the troupe with the '*purest Bulgarian literary speech*'. Leaving the hall, I came across the neighbourhood party secretary and his retinue. All of them were euphoric; hiding their tears, they embraced me. The jury honoured us with a gold and two silvers. That night we feasted.

We did it! We showed the party activists they had missed something, that they had forgotten their roots, their language. They were led by the fear of making a mistake, of troubling the Party. This same fear, their tacit agreement with Party orders, divided people, destroyed the thin, precious stream, born in the neighbourhood, that flows into the deep current of national culture. With their decrees, decisions, teachings, they wanted to 'reform' us, to make us forget our heritage, our language, our roads, to build us their way.¹⁷

О ново дром, е пуране пхенибя **(New road, old words)**

The newly arrived democracy rejected tradition and unexpectedly knocked on the door of the Roma – there, they had been waiting for a long time (in Sliven, Sofia, Balchik, Vidin,¹⁸ organizations had been working). They swiftly mobilized and established the Democratic Union Roma, the dream of so many Roma. Soon, however, numerous organizations mushroomed across the country, which eventually raised the issue of unified community representation. It took a few months, but we found a way to listen to each other and unite. In October 1992, the United Roma Union (URU) was established in Sofia.

URU organized the first traditional Roma celebrations, such as Vasii, Hederlezi, with guests from the whole country; it created the first artistic posters dedicated to 8 April and officially celebrated the day¹⁹; it organized Days of Romany Culture that highlighted the work of Romany artists and poets; it inaugurated the first Romany poetry competition, established courses for preparing Roma journalists and for learning English at the American University in Bulgaria ... The Days of Romany Culture continued their existence in the following years, became a tradition inspired by a number of young Roma, members of URU's youth organization.

2017 – 'Sliven' Hall is bursting at the seams; Roma of all ages and neighbourhoods of the town have arrived; for so long, they had not listened to their own songs, the songs of Danko, kept in the most precious corners of their memory; they used to sing these songs at parties, family gatherings. Friends from other towns are in attendance, along with Roma actors Nataliya Tsekova, Valery Lekov and the director Tosen Ramar. Representatives of the Swiss embassy, sponsor of the event, are also among the guests. Everyone is here to listen to the new, smaller version of the old, great ensemble 'Romany Chalhuya' (Romany Stars), put together by Stella Kostova, granddaughter of Danko. Of course, the show cannot happen without the music of the celebrated Karandila Brass Orchestra that has toured the biggest

concert halls in Europe and reached all the way to 'Mother India'. The band of Theodosii Spassov, the genius kaval player and most inspired fan of Roma music, is a guest as well.

Naturally, the headliners of the show are the songs of the women's choir 'Romany Chalhuya', conducted by Kolyo Bondev; they are news, faith, memory and love. They are also the favourites of Mr. Roland Python, the Swiss embassy representative. After their wonderful four-part performance, he approaches Stella: 'Are there any Roma in the group?' She barely manages not to laugh: 'They are all Romany women.'

The ancient *Cante Jondo*

Cante Jondo, the alloy of sorrow and wisdom, the proud world of Roma, Moors, Spaniards, is fading, disappearing. 'The song that used to be holy for the people, a ritual, is becoming cheap tourist entertainment', said the forty-six-year-old Manuel de Falla during one of his first meetings with Federico García Lorca, expressing his desperation. 'The great, ancient art of *Cante Jondo* is dying in front of our eyes', he adds. 'And how many true *cantators*, such as Don Antonio, are there? They are all old. Who will inherit their art?' Lorca is troubled. His eager letters to the great composer were not enough, had expressed too little of his fear for the vanishing wealth of this centuries-old tradition, passed down from generation to generation (Ospovat, 1958: 153).²⁰

Summer of 1922. Hot. Lorca travels with Falla from village to village, neighbourhood to neighbourhood, through taverns, pubs, to look for the living, true performers of *Cante Jondo*. Together, step by step, they prepare the great stage for celebrating Romany 'deep song': *El Concurso de Cante Jondo*.²¹ The contest is held on 12–13 June in Granada. The jury consists of Falla and the renowned Andalusian singers Antonio Chacón, Pastora Pavón, Manuel Tores, the great guitar player Andrés Segovia (Universo Lorca). Diego Bermudez, from the suburbs of Sevilla, is awarded first place for an **old song** unknown to those present that puts de Falla and the Roma on their feet. The foundation is laid, the first page of *Cante Jondo*'s history is written. It begins with the Roma, the magic of the deep, piercing music and words of their singing.²²

Со Жарас? Конес Жарас?

(What are we waiting for? Who are we waiting for?)

That is what *they* did – the great Manuel de Falla and the young, bursting with energy and truth Lorca. They let Roma speak as forebears, creators, authors of an art with a forgotten royal past.

What Lorca and de Falla did for this rejected and cursed part of the Spanish people, whose voice for centuries has been elevating the songs of their ancestors to the thundering heavens, has yet to be equalled. Perhaps it was the fortitude of their belief that provoked Lorca's killers. Little is known about them, but one thing is sure: they were nationalists, bigots, who could not bear the idea that the poet, beyond his humanity, had also discerned the turpitude, the fascist nature of his enemies.

2022. A century has passed since the filial confession of *Cante Jondo* to the Roma.

Two years earlier, on 5 March 2020, thanks to the persistent fight of Roma and their allies, the Andalusian parliament proposed a law that will recognize, protect, and highlight the

'Gypsy' population's 'central role in the birth and current formation of Flamenco' (Hodgson 2020). Twenty-five months have passed since then, in translation: 'stay calm and give it another century.'

The words 'flamenco' and 'Gitano' are synonymous in Andalusia (Claramunt, 1984: 7). How can one continue to **erase** the centuries-old, essential Romany work that has royally enriched **the way we imagine** Spain? What is the difference between **such acts of erasure** and the policies for Roma cultural development in Bulgaria? None. Perhaps the aims are not much different either – just another attempt to obscure the work of an ancient people, in culture **moreover, undoubtedly** the most **dynamic** sphere for Europeanization, that is, for a deeper understanding of the other, for bringing people together.

Notes

1. 'Chalga' is a Bulgarian pop-folk genre that burst on the musical scene after the fall of communism. It typically employs a mix of Romany, Asian and Balkan elements.
2. 'Kyuchek' is the (old) Romany and Bulgarian word for dancing to Romany music, *chalga* as well. The latest trend is to call it 'belly dance', an attempt to make the dance sound more sophisticated.
3. Plovdiv is the second biggest town in Bulgaria.
4. Before 1989, when the described event takes place, the police in Bulgaria was called 'militia'. The word 'police' is used here for purposes of clarity, because of the connotations the word 'militia' has in English.
5. Omurtag is a town in northeastern Bulgaria.
6. 'Ibryama' is the nickname of the great clarinet player Ivo Papazov; it derives from his given Muslim name Ibryam – everyone with a Muslim name was forced to change it in 1984.
7. 'Bai' is a title of respect used for an older man.
8. The first communist leader of Bulgaria (1946–9).
9. See the photographs included in Toni Mihajlov's 'Пловдивски абитуриенти 2022: На бал със златна каляска, трактор и Ферари'. *Марица*, 23/05/22, <https://www.marica.bg/galerii/plovdivski-abiturienti-2022-na-bal-sas-zlatna-kalqska-traktor-i-ferari-snimki>.
10. 'Fakulteta' is the biggest Romany neighbourhood in Sofia.
11. The rock of the mountains above the city of Sliven appears to be blue at times; this happens only under specific atmospheric conditions. Hence the name 'the city under the blue stones'.
12. The headings in this chapter in Cyrillic script are in the Romany language.
13. The Battle of Shipka Pass (July 1877–January 1878) was fought between the Russian and Ottoman Empires. Bulgarian volunteer soldiers played an important role in the battle.
14. 'Stigmati' is a publishing house that is currently defunct.
15. 'Nikola Kochev' is an emblematic Romany neighbourhood in the town of Sliven, Bulgaria.
16. This day marks the beginning of the socialist revolution in Bulgaria. It led to the socialist *coup d'état*.
17. Executive order 258 of the Council of Ministers, 1958.
18. All of these are towns in Bulgaria with big Romany populations.
19. 8 April is International Roma Day; it celebrates the culture, language and heritage of Roma across the world.

20. Also see Tanev, S. (1980), *Поетическият театър на Федерико Гарсиа Лорка* [Poeticheskiat Theater na Federico Garcia Lorca], Sofia: Nauka i iskustvo.
21. From Spanish: 'Contest of the Deep Song'
22. During 'Days of Romani Culture,' 2003, both the hosts and the guests listened to one of the most talented Bulgarian pianists and composers, Iovcho Krushev, who toured the world playing music by de Falla, C. Debussy, M. Ravel, I. Stravinsky, F. List, M. Glinka, all inspired by Romany folklore, including *cante jondo*.

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3.5 Art, aesthetics and access: Disability and contemporary cultural practice

BEN EVANS

Something remarkable is happening in Europe. Increasingly, the arts sector is realizing that the long-stated commitments to greater diversity in the arts need to be implemented: not just for the sake of society, but for the sake of the arts themselves. The mainstream cultural sector is finally noticing that some of the most radical and innovatory cultural practices are emanating from those who have often been ignored.

At the same time, those communities long marginalized by the mainstream cultural sector are finding new ways to gather political momentum in pursuit of their aim of equal cultural representation and access. Nowhere can this more clearly be seen than in the transnational movement demanding greater access to the arts for disabled people as artists, as arts professionals, and as audiences.

This is the first of two contrasting assertions I am making in this chapter. A positive note on which to start a discussion of how the cultural sector must change, can change and is changing: encouraging and supporting greater access to the arts for disabled people and celebrating a unique generation of disabled artists.¹

I feel very lucky to be doing my job at this moment in time.² Every week I get to work with some of the most innovative and thoughtful artists working today; I get to collaborate with companies, venues and festivals which are committed to promoting dynamic new work to new audiences; and I get to engage with arts funders and policymakers from many cities, regions and countries who are genuinely interested in contributing to a more equitable cultural sector.

I have also sat next to Artistic Directors and cultural Policymakers both in Italy and in Poland watching the dance artist Claire Cunningham's performance lecture *4 Legs Good, Two Legs Bad*, and I have seen a transformation in their understanding of the skill, artistry and training required to create the complex and nuanced works that Claire produces. I have read the work of theatre critics in Germany and Italy: critics were shocked to find that on their first attendance at a performance of disabled artists they were encountering nuanced, innovative and high-quality works of art. And, I have seen artists from Serbia to Portugal finally achieving the international recognition that is due to them.

Better late than never, as the saying goes.

Exciting times.

Of course, whilst celebrating that this is a moment of significant (and long-over-due) change, it is important to note that remarkable work by Deaf and disabled artists

is nothing new. Neither is a political demand for change. Across Europe and across the world, disabled artists and disabled activists have been making work, insisting on change and forming their own communities of practice for decades. Of course, much of this history is not written down. It is hard to find. As with all history, the authorship of cultural history is selective and reflects the passions and also the prejudices of its authors.

A word about the UK, where I am based, and which is recognized as having a particularly rich vein of Disability Arts practice. This of course is no accident.³

The Disability Arts movement in the UK has forty-year history as an artistic movement, but also as a political movement. Shape Arts was one of the first UK organizations addressing the fact that disabled people were very rarely to be seen in Britain's galleries, theatres, concert halls and cinemas. Disabled people were rare as audiences, spectators and visitors, but almost unknown as artists and arts managers. Tony Heaton, the Chair of Shape Arts' Board of Trustees states: 'It is important to remember that Disability Arts started in Britain, and it was part of a struggle for civil rights.' Jenny Sealey, Artistic Director of Graeae Theatre, one of the leading disabled-led theatre companies in Britain suggests: 'Back in the 80s, if you were marginalised, what you did then, politically, was you set up your own company' ... 'We started developing performances for each other, and over a period of years really, we started to get braver and much more confident that what we had to show was good. We stepped out into the more mainstream world and said "Excuse me, we've got stories to tell"' (British Council, 2015).

The complex relationship between art and politics which represents the British Disability Arts movement has been explored by artists and advocates such as Jenny, Tony and many others. For now, it is enough to say that like all great art movements, an understanding of social, political and personal history is vital to any investigation of the artistic work itself.

Today, a new generation of artists is making work which balances activism with aesthetics. I personally love the work of Finnish artist Jenni-Juulia Wallinheimo-Heimonen, including her mischievous performance, *Forms*, in which she dresses in a costume made of the hundreds of questionnaires she, as a person with disabilities in Finland, has been required to complete in order to request financial assistance from government. Or the powerful work of Dalibor Šandor, a Serbian dance artist with learning disabilities, who has choreographed a work entitled 'We are not Monsters', in which he explores historical and contemporary views of people with learning difficulties as monstrous.

But, alongside the hard-won political battles of artist activists, I think that there are two ways of thinking about the world, about the arts and about disability, that are contributing to a welcome change in the European cultural sector. Here I would like to share these two contemporary approaches to culture and ways of thinking about the world which I believe are slowly helping change mainstream cultural practice: *The Creative Case for Diversity* and *The Social Model of Disability*. Neither of these is my original thought, and neither is brand new; however, I do believe that the combination of both is currently having an impact in the arts ecology.

The Creative Case for Diversity in the arts⁴

The term 'The Creative Case for Diversity' was coined in 2009 by England's arts funding organization, Arts Council England. The ideas contained therein were not necessarily new, but they were presented in a new way, and were being outlined by the main funding body for culture in England. If you wanted to be funded, you had to listen.

The Creative Case for Diversity sets out how diversity and equality can enrich the arts for artists, audiences and our wider society. The reason artists and organizations should actively embrace diversity (including diversity of sex, race, religion, sexuality, class, age and of course disability) was because that diversity contributes to a richer and more innovative cultural sector. The benefit to the arts themselves was highlighted.

Other, less progressive ways of thinking about diversity in the arts are perhaps more widely known and relied upon.

The **moral** case for diversity in the arts is something I anticipate is accepted by most people reading this, and by most people working in the cultural sector today: that it is *morally right* that disabled people have the same access to the arts as non-disabled people. If we believe that everyone should have the opportunity to benefit from the life-enriching role of art, then we extend that opportunity to disabled people. Art for all is a good thing.

Of course, the problem with the moral case is that generic principled feelings of what is right or what should happen is a very long way from any action. Cultural managers have managed for decades to somehow reconcile their belief in the principle of art for all whilst disregarding the almost 20 per cent of the population who are disabled.

The **legal** case, in contrast, is framed within the legal rights of disabled people to have access to goods and services. Of course, these legal rights vary from legal jurisdiction to legal jurisdiction, with the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) often being stated as an example of a robust legal instrument which has led to world-class access to cultural institutions and to National Parks and monuments.

As another example, in 1995 the UK government passed the Disability Discrimination Act. This decreed that employers and service providers were, for the first time, under a duty to make 'reasonable adjustments' to their workplaces and services to overcome barriers experienced by disabled people. Employers, shops, theatres and galleries could be taken to court by individuals who felt they were unfairly discriminated against. In the arts, this had a major impact in the funding decisions and contract agreements made by arts funders and other statutory bodies involved in supporting all arts organizations.

National laws differ of course, but more than 160 countries have signed and ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, authored in 2006 and including Article 30 of the Convention which relates to 'Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport' – insisting on 'the right of persons with disabilities to take part on an equal basis with others in cultural life'.⁵

However, not only have there been some surprise laggard nations (e.g. The Netherlands only ratified the Convention in 2016, four years after the convention was confirmed in Afghanistan!), there is no doubt that in the majority of signatory nations' day-to-day practice and law do not match the declared ambition of the convention to which governments have signed up.

Of so many possible examples of nations not meeting their legal obligations to the treaty they have signed, one of the most shocking for me is that fact that currently (September 2022) it remains illegal in Greece for a disabled person to enrol at a nationally funded Dance conservatoire. (The similar law preventing disabled people from enrolling in tertiary-level Drama school was only struck from Hellenic Presidential Decree in 2017.) Even in a country such as the UK, often lauded as a good example of accessibility in the cultural sphere, lack of access to cultural activities is ubiquitous.⁶

Thus, a different way or thinking about disability (and all diversity) in the arts is needed: and this is where the **Creative Case for Diversity** is so helpful.

The Creative Case for Diversity was developed as a way of proving to cultural professionals that the arts themselves are improved when a wider group of people contribute to them.

It is an argument grounded in cultural history – noting that the history of twentieth-century cultural innovation is the history of artists outside of the mainstream and from a diverse set of backgrounds influencing and revolutionizing the art establishment. Thus, we learn that twentieth-century music was transformed by the development of Jazz in Harlem by marginalized African American musicians; or that the dance innovator George Balanchine was hugely influenced by his often-forgotten collaboration with the African American dancer – Arthur Mitchell.

But, it is also an argument which relates directly to the innovation and challenge to traditional art forms offered by disabled artists. Here is my own interpretation.

I believe that no serious contemporary dance promoter, interested in the way the human body moves and how it travels in space, can ignore those leading disabled dance artists who have non-normative bodies, and different ways of moving in space. When the dance artist I mentioned earlier, Claire Cunningham, talks about herself as a Quadruped, she disrupts our notions of what a body can do on stage.

I believe that presenters of Live Art or Performance Art will understand the profound and complex narratives at play during Noëmi Lakmaier's durational performance, *Cherophobia*, in which her immobile body is attached to a growing number of helium balloons, until they number around 20,000 and lift her off the ground.

And it is clear that there is a symbiotic relationship between disabled musicians alongside developers of digital musical instruments designed to support access needs, with the popular music industry, such as Kris Halpin's use and re-purposing of the MiMu gloves.

These artists are not just making new works with interesting content which has never been seen before. They are challenging the art forms themselves. So much so that the acclaimed visual artist, Yinka Shonibare (2007) describes Disability Arts as 'The last remaining avant-garde movement'.

So, in the words of one of the authors of the Creative Case, Hassan Mahamdallie (2011), 'what is key about diversity is its unique ability to refresh, replenish and stimulate the arts. Diversity should not be regarded as a burden on the arts (or wider society), it should be seen as a motor for innovation and change.'

Although promoters, producers and arts professionals around the world are unlikely to have heard the term 'Creative Case for Diversity', I do believe that there is a growing recognition of the current unique generation of Deaf and disabled artists who are making works of art that are challenging traditional art forms, who are making works of high quality, and

who are demanding the cultural sector rethinks reactionary notions of artistic perfection: not despite of disability, but perhaps because of it.

So, in relation to the Creative Case, the first question I would like to suggest all artists, cultural professionals, organizations and funders ask themselves is this:

What am I doing to ensure the arts benefit from the innovatory practices offered by disabled artists?

The Social Model of Disability

The Social Model is a way of viewing disability within society, a model for how society engages with disabled people. The Social Model is a term first used in 1983, and used and revised frequently since then (and, to be fair, in some places replaced by newer more radical models). However, it is amazing to see how few people understand this way of thinking, and how the model challenges us all to review our actions and processes.

The Social Model of Disability contrasts with other more predominant and yet problematic ways of seeing disabled people in society: the Charity Model and the Medical Model. In the **Charity Model** – perhaps the most pervasive model across society, disabled people are seen as unfortunate, should be pitied and need financial and other support. It is morally right that non-disabled people should support them in their endeavours.

The **Medical Model** focusses on the impairment of the disabled person and ways to correct the impairment. Disabled people need to be cured; they are seen as passive and dependent on medical specialists. Perhaps a technological solution can be found to make the individual 'less-disabled'.

In contrast, the **Social Model** explores disability as a construct of our society. People have different impairments but they are disabled by our society – by structural, cultural, economic or attitudinal barriers. For example, a wheelchair user is actively disabled by the steps built at the entrance to a building. It doesn't matter what her impairment is. If the architect had designed the building differently the wheelchair user would be less disabled. Or, if every child was taught sign language at school, Deaf people would experience fewer barriers in society. Disability, in the Social Model exists because of decisions that society has made consciously or unconsciously. It is society which needs to change, not the disabled person.

For arts professionals the Social Model teaches us that it is vital that we constantly examine what the barriers are which prevent disabled people from equal access to the arts as audiences and as artists.

For audiences these include physical access to the arts – such lack of wheelchair access, or no sign language interpretation, tactile museum resources for visually impaired visitors or relaxed viewings & performances⁷; they include financial access to the arts – as disabled people often have far higher transport costs to get to an arts venue, and less disposable income than non-disabled people; and they also include cultural assumptions – such as 'the arts are not for me', or perhaps other gallery visitors glaring at a child with severe autism who responds to a painting he loves by making loud noises of pleasure.

But artists and arts professionals face these barriers and more.

In the table below I have outlined just some of the potential stages in an artist's career trajectory:

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Young audience member | <input type="checkbox"/> Amateur performances / exhibitions | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional development opportunities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aspiration | <input type="checkbox"/> Entry into professional arts education (part-time/full-time) | <input type="checkbox"/> Supported by arts incubation projects |
| o <i>'I'd like to do that'</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> Collaboration with peer group | <input type="checkbox"/> Residencies |
| o <i>'That could be me'</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> First professional (often unpaid) opportunities | <input type="checkbox"/> Workshops |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family/community culture that supports ambition | <input type="checkbox"/> Joining existing ensemble or first own works | <input type="checkbox"/> Exchanges |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Opportunities at school | | <input type="checkbox"/> Mentoring |
| o Small focus at young age | | <input type="checkbox"/> Paid presentation of works |
| o Increasing seriousness as growing older | | <input type="checkbox"/> Tours. Commissions. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> After school club. Lessons | | <input type="checkbox"/> International opportunities |

The sad fact is that that at every stage disabled people experience barriers, prejudice and the simple assumption that a professional career in the arts is not from them.

In the first column we see those key elements which so frequently contribute to an artist's commitment to a career in the arts: starting with being a young audience member. Of course, for so many, even this first step is impossible as already noted regarding audiences. But the barriers continue through school and amateur practices, and with concerns and fears from families who just cannot imagine a fruitful future in the arts for children with impairments – even simply a future of amateur cultural participation.

Moving to the second column we can see a trajectory taking the artist into contact with formal organizations, including arts education institutions and established companies. I have already pointed out the overt discrimination in cultural education such as the example of Dance schools in Greece, but it is fair to say that it is only a tiny minority of cultural education institutions which enable the full participation of disabled students. This is an area rich in horror stories – with potential students arriving at inaccessible audition spaces or interview rooms, or those 'lucky' enrolled students being asked to sit in the corner of a room watching other students experiencing a workshop.

As artists move on into the professional world they are desperate for work, and feel it impossible to demand access provision. Even being accepted into an unpaid showcase, ensemble or art show feels like a win. But how to insist on access, when so many organizations in this area of the cultural ecosystem have so little money to spare, and the emerging artist has no agency?

And then, having become an early career professional artist, on to the next steps of professional development. So many career development opportunities which support artistic growth are completely inaccessible – the workshops, residencies and international exchanges which are so important for a developing artist are largely inaccessible. Quite apart from the physical or logistical barriers, artists simply don't receive the invitations from organizations worried about 'getting access wrong'. Disabled artists also face barriers in the cost of showcasing or touring their work: if their work sometimes costs more because there is an extra team member in the touring company, or a sign language interpreter needs to be paid, these artists can often lose out to cheaper companies. And the all-important

networking can be a challenge: why would a Deaf artist attend an event when there is no sign language interpretation offered: no way to engage with the others in the room?

In the third column I have underlined *Tours, Commissions & International Opportunities*. I do that as an *aide memoire* to myself. That is the area of an artist's career where I, in my current job, engage with them. That is the area in which I can make a difference: my sphere of influence. I would encourage everyone in the cultural ecosystem to do the same – to examine their field of influence, and the barriers they can help reduce or remove.

Thus, the second question all artists, organizations and funders should ask themselves is this:

What am I doing to address the barriers preventing disabled people achieving full equal access to the arts as audiences and as artists?

Whilst I have framed the story so far as a positive story of long-awaited change, I have my concerns as well.

One concern, of course, is the age-old story from the established cultural sector, arguing that there simply is not enough money available to support disabled audiences and artists to have equality of opportunity. This is often accompanied by statements that of course disabled people are valued and that changes will be made where possible – given time: given money. I am sceptical however. Surely, this is about priorities?

In 2020 I took part in a German conference hosted by a very prestigious Schauspielhaus (municipal theatre) with an enviable artistic reputation. The Artistic Director was asked directly whether more could be done to support Audio Description and Sign Language access to the productions – ‘only if extra support is given by the city council’ was the reply (with a nod to the City Councillor with responsibility for culture who was on the panel). For a moment I admired the public lobbying of the theatre leader, but then I reflected this is one of the most well-funded cultural organizations in Germany – a country with one of the most well-funded cultural sectors in the world. The message was clear: disabled people are low priority for this extraordinarily well-resourced arts institution.

But perhaps more worrying still is the argument that cultural policies designed to encourage greater diversity and equality in the arts compromise artistic freedom and the arm's-length principle of good cultural management. In summer 2021 the Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis (a government body given the task for exploring how cultural policy and funding instruments affect the cultural sector), published a report into ‘*The impact of cultural political governance on the artistic freedom*’.⁸ Following a survey of applicants for project funding, and also discussions with the Swedish cultural sector, the report strongly argued that cultural policies designed to encourage greater diversity and equality in the arts risk compromising artistic freedoms and the arm's length principle. The report led directly to the decision by Arts Council Sweden to stop asking artist applicants to their project grants fund how project outcomes would support and further diversity objectives.

I found this document frightening: not because it is an exception, but rather because it articulates a problematic argument which is well-established in the cultural sector. ‘Why should the state, region or city funder have the right to tell artists what art to make?’ ‘Isn't

this just State intervention in the Arts?’ Of course, many countries, Sweden especially, have proud history of protecting artists from political interference, for good historical and political reasons. But I find frightening the suggestion that arts funding bodies should focus their attention on protecting the artistic freedoms of the same group of largely white, straight, cis-gender, non-disabled men who have historically been the beneficiaries of their largesse. Of course, I thought to myself, if you ask the largely white, straight, cis-gender, non-disabled men in a survey whether they are happy being asked to devolve some power to others who don’t look like them, they will resist. And when the people asking the questions also are white and cis-gendered and non-disabled Well, you can see why I am sceptical.

In my opinion, a more valid, honest and politically neutral observation is that cultural professionals, including funders and policymakers, simply don’t have enough knowledge in this area.

In December 2021 the British Council (for which I work) commissioned a report into the knowledge levels of mainstream performing arts professionals: exploring their knowledge levels of the work of disabled artists, and their knowledge levels of how to make artistic process accessible to disabled artists, and productions accessible to disabled audiences. *TIME TO ACT: How lack of knowledge in the cultural sector creates barriers for disabled artists and audiences* (British Council, 2021) was authored by On The Move, the international cultural mobility network, and commissioned within the context of the transnational project *Europe Beyond Access*.⁹ The results were sobering. (Figure 3.5.1.)

There is little room here for the results, so I encourage you to read the executive summary of the report – the first report of its kind. But here are some highlights (or should that read ‘lowlights’?).

- 52 per cent of European Performing Arts Managers reported poor or very poor knowledge of work by disabled artists
- Only 28 per cent of venues and festivals have presented or supported work by disabled artists
- 31 per cent of arts organizations do not look for new work by disabled artists
- 48 per cent of European Performing Arts Managers reported Poor or Very Poor knowledge on how to make their artistic programmes accessible to disabled artists
- 81 per cent of Venues don’t have an accessible website

A bleak picture. But with some hope too, as it was clear from the report’s findings that respondents were hungry for information on how to improve their own knowledge and that of their colleagues.

In fact, one of the most striking findings was that Performing Arts Professionals explicitly wanted dedicated information from Arts Funders and Ministries of Culture. This was problematic, however, as the survey also showed that staff at the Arts Funders and Cultural Ministries reported an even lower level of knowledge than the artists and cultural workers they are meant to be supporting.¹⁰

With those statistics in mind, therefore, my second assertion:

The history of the subsidized cultural ecosystem in Europe in the Twentieth and Twenty first Century is one in which disabled people have been marginalized, unseen and unwelcome.

Variations in levels of knowledge of work by European disabled artists

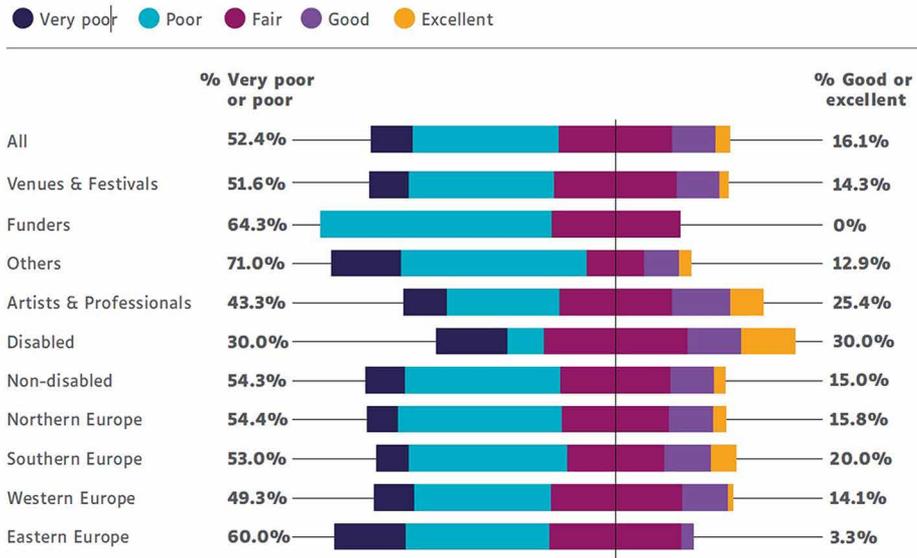


Figure 3.5.1 TTA Report, Variations Graphic.

The ‘good intentions’ of artists, institutions and funders simply have not been sufficient. Relying on the moral compass of arts managers and cultural policymakers has failed.

Thus, if you as a reader are perhaps an early-career professional or student who has never seen work by a disabled artist, never attended a workshop or masterclass by a disabled artist, or never attended an exhibition or performance by a disabled artist, the fault is not yours. Just remember that you are the product of a system which has prevented those artists from gaining access to the Universities, Conservatoires, Theatres, Drama Schools, Art Colleges or other institutions where you should have been introduced to them. And if you haven't been informed of ways in which your work can be made more accessible to disabled audiences, or open to disabled artists as participating professionals, it is probably because your educators, your national institutions, your professional development incubators and your mentors don't have the knowledge themselves.

So, at this exciting moment of cultural change and re-invention, you now have the opportunity to be one of the few arts professionals that do know this information, that have done the research, and that are prepared to embrace a changing cultural ecosystem. The responsibility now becomes yours.

Here are my top tips:

- See the work. Do the research and see works by disabled artists.
- See more than one work. No artist's work is representative of all others.
- If you don't know disabled cultural practitioners, make it your job to know them. They have a lifetime of lived experience and can be valuable allies.

- But as soon as you have budgets, pay these people for their expertise. Don't expect them to be free advisors.
- Ask professional development organizations if they can run programmes led by disabled artists.
- Do the research yourself. The information is out there. It takes a few minutes to find online.
- Think about developing access and adapting your working methodology as active processes, and not a sedentary goal.
- And keep asking yourself those two key questions:

What am I doing to ensure the arts benefit from the innovatory practices offered by disabled artists?

What am I doing to address the barriers preventing disabled people achieving full equal access to the arts as audiences and as artists?

Notes

1. In this chapter I have used the preferred British terminology around disability including terms such as 'Disabled Artist' or 'Disabled People'. I know that language and terminology is a contested issue; and even in other English-speaking countries such as the United States or Ireland, activists prefer the use of the term 'people with disabilities'. Similarly, I have used the terminology 'Learning Disabled' whereas other countries may use other terms such as 'having an intellectual disability'. I acknowledge and respect the choices of those in different countries and encourage the reader to engage with local disabled people not only to learn the accepted local terminology, but also to understand the historical process of developing that terminology. However, in this chapter I have used the preferred terminology of UK activists and communities.
2. The author is the Project Director of Europe Beyond Access, a collaborative European project supported by the Creative Europe Programme of the EU. He does this in his role as Head of Arts & Disability in Europe for the British Council – the UK's overseas cultural relations organization. The author acquired a physical impairment at the age of forty, and identifies as disabled.
3. The UK's Disability Arts Movement can be explored using a substantial web resource entitled *National Disability Arts Collection and Archive*: <https://the-ndaca.org/>.
4. Extensive resources regarding The Creative Case, including responses from the cultural sector can be found on Arts Council England's website: www.shorturl.at/deLPO.
5. Article 30 of the UNCRPD states (amongst other things) that 'State Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to take part on an equal basis with others in cultural life, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities: a) Enjoy access to cultural materials in accessible formats; b) Enjoy access to television programmes, films, theatre and other cultural activities, in accessible formats; c) Enjoy access to places for cultural performances or services, such as theatres, museums, cinemas, libraries and tourism services, and, as far as possible, enjoy access to monuments and sites of national cultural importance'. www.shorturl.at/DHKY7.

6. The most comprehensive statistics on lack of access in the UK have been provided by the organization Attitude Is Everything. Their biennial State of Access Reports each focuses on a specific area of access: www.shorturl.at/agju7.
7. 'Relaxed performances' are designed to create performance conditions in which those people who find it difficult to follow the usual conventions of theatre behaviour feel welcome. These are performances in which noises and movements coming from the audience are permitted, and leaving and re-entering the auditorium is welcomed. Relaxed performances are often used by audiences with learning disabilities, those on the autistic spectrum, or those with neurological conditions. But venues have also found that other audiences have taken unexpected advantage of these performances – such as parents with babies and young children.
8. Myndigheten för kulturanalys: *Så fri är konsten Den kulturpolitiska styrningens påverkan på den konstnärliga friheten Rapport 2021:1* www.shorturl.at/ghZ24.
9. www.EuropeBeyondAccess.com.
10. 64 per cent of respondents who identified themselves as Arts Funders, Policymakers or employees of Cultural Ministries reported poor or very poor knowledge on how to make their programmes accessible to disabled artists.

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3.6 A call to bear witness

CHRISTINA VARVIA

'SOLIDARITY'

In a recent exhibition at a small gallery in East London called Four Corners, I meander amongst photographs of protests in the UK (Figure 3.6.1.). Images of scenes full of posters with slogans such as 'SMASH CAPITALISM', 'SUPPORT TRICOWOMEN'S EQUAL PAY STRIKE', 'GAY LIBERATION IS OUR LIBERATION', 'TROOPS OUT NOW!', 'STOP THE RACIST BILL', 'NATIONAL HEALTH NOT NATIONAL WEALTH'. I stand in front of a photograph of an eighty-year-old woman jumping over a barbed fence, photographs of women with scarves on their heads holding banners against racism, people in wheelchairs, others lying on the asphalt stopping London buses by passively resisting, smiling people marching for Black lesbian liberation. The exhibition titled *Photographing Protest: Resistance through a feminist lens* presents the work of twenty-seven women and non-binary photographers from the 1960s until today who engaged not only in recording scenes of social activist movements but also in actively constructing the narratives of these struggles through their participation in protests, the designing of banners, magazines and other publications. The exhibition presents a compressed history of social struggles in the UK. By staging work from feminist photographers, it both elevates the role of women and queer activists that often go unnoticed in rights campaigns, as well as directly counters the male gaze that dominates established photojournalist practices. The purpose of these photographs is to communicate the scenes of struggle to those who were unable to be present. The political dimension of their work is to grow these movements by creating more visibility. By capturing protesters shouting, singing or raising their fists these artists and cultural workers invite us, a wider public, to witness these events through the images.

The exhibition frames these photographers as both documentarians and activists, also introducing a tension between the two roles. The catalogue quotes Sally Fraser, one of the photographers who decided to give up on photography after covering many of the marches: 'I wanted not to be continuously in the observer position. I wanted to be part of it' (2022, p. 5). This quote and the exhibition at large present an interesting framing in regard to the position of the witness, the struggle for visibility and its relationship to political action. How could we think of the act of witnessing in the struggle towards social justice and especially in a time of environmental emergency?

The time span covered in this exhibition, from the 1960s until today, traverses a vast duration of technological development, where the practice of photography has changed significantly. Protests today are not only recorded by professional journalists but also by the



Figure 3.6.1 Elainea Emmott, 'Solidarity', 21.01.2017.

participants themselves who constantly produce audio-visual content that they immediately upload through various social media channels. As such they complicate the distinctions between the observer/documentarian and participant. They also complicate the question of witnessing of such events. It is now possible to follow not only protests remotely, but also uprisings, bombings, scenes of active battle and other events of conflict by streaming clouds of images and videos through the intimacy of our phones. The way mediated evidence circulates, is consumed and arbitrated implicates viewers in secondary witnessing, a position that holds political potencies as well as dangers. Far from simplifying the narrative, this hyperconnectivity demands different reflexivities in digesting and responding to this content responsibly. It calls for a mapping of political power as it is distributed through the realm of visibility. How do we avoid the traps of misinformation? How do we take care not to neglect other political occurrences that are not as easily documentable? No longer having to depend on the executive summaries of professional journalists, online audiences need a whole set of new skills to parse the noise and direct their political attention where it matters.

To our eyes and ears

In his 1984 speech *Confronting Governments: Human Rights* Michel Foucault suggested that civil society is tasked with 'bring[ing] the testimony of the people's suffering to the eyes and ears of governments' (Foucault, 1984: 474). In other words, our role as citizens of the world, as an international body politic, is to raise the events of suffering towards visibility; to mediate between the ones who suffer and the ones who are in power and thus are responsible for managing life. Unfolding Foucault's proposition, Yates McKee in his article '*Eyes and Ears*': *Aesthetics, Visual Culture, and the Claims of Nongovernmental Politics* highlights how this function of civil society, or of international citizenship as Foucault describes it, translates to a series of aesthetic practices by artists, activists and nongovernmental actors that negotiate the power of images. Images, or image-texts as McKee calls them, contain both textual and acoustic dimensions, and encapsulate the function of technical apparatuses to determine the power of the visible. Following Jacques Rancière who developed the theory of the *politics of aesthetics*, McKee uses the examples of a handful of projects in order to demonstrate the way aesthetic means claim political power in practice. Rancière's conception of the 'distribution of the sensible' is a useful formulation for us here. He states: 'Politics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time' (Rancière, 2013: 8). It is thus equally important to highlight not only what is seen, but also what is left out, and to advocate for the visibility of such events that fall outside the public lens. Both Rancière and Foucault understand the distribution of the sensible, which many would consider a cultural function, as a political power. Culture elevates events, concepts, ideas and histories into visibility, digesting and translating them, and in doing so outlining their political potency. Indeed, McKee as well describes cultural work as a set of complex and diverse aesthetic practices that are tasked to navigate a field of power. 'Drawing on the vocabularies of art history, anthropology, and film theory, this mode of analysis challenges the idea of "culture" as either a bounded set of agreed-upon values or a rarefied class of artifacts, understanding it instead as an unstable network of signifying practices, technical

apparatuses, and institutional power relations that hail subjects in multiple, overlapping, and often contradictory ways' (McKee, 2007: 330). Cultural work is thus not a simple, politically neutral act, but a deeply implicated work that keeps negotiating the value of certain political relations over others by striving to reach more eyes and ears.

An example of such aesthetic cultural work that aims to elevate questions of injustice to both the eyes and ears of governments, the judiciary and the court of public opinion, is the Forensic Architecture investigation of the murder of Pavlos Fyssas by Golden Dawn (Forensic Architecture, 2018). This event immediately gained national importance in Greece as it came at the pinnacle of Golden Dawn's political power, being both a criminal organization and at the time a political party with representation in the Greek parliament. The incident was observed by a number of witnesses on the ground, including the police officers who were present at the crime scene but failed to prevent it. It was also recorded by a few private security cameras. The resulting footage was of low resolution and only captured the incident from a distance. Additionally, the official criminal investigation and the court proceedings that followed revealed a series of sound recordings from the ambulances that were called to the scene, from the emergency response centre and from the police communications with their headquarters. Each of these pieces of audio-visual evidence was treated separately in the official investigations, analysed and presented in court in full. Yet there were a few discrepancies in the timing of these files, mostly deriving from incorrect metadata. In order to fully synchronize the files, Forensic Architecture, at the request of the family of Pavlos Fyssas and their legal representatives, started to look for links between the mute video files and the blind audio files, what slipped between the eyes and ears. Through spatial queues, and the tracing of actors that crossed multiple image planes, the investigation started to create a web of connections between the different pieces of evidence. It was the arrival of the ambulance that was captured both in the video and the audio that became the catalyst for the synchronization. The resulting investigation which was both presented in court and published openly through the Forensic Architecture website and multiple other news channels and exhibition spaces presented the incident through a perspective that resembled a control panel. By combining image and sound, the investigation offered a synthesized real-time viewing of the event through multiple channels. It offered a type of witnessing that we might call *hyper-witnessing*, as it was a synthesized perspective that none of the witnesses on the ground had access to at the time of the incident. Technologically enhanced it was both a witnessing of the event from a distance as well as a newfound audio-visual proximity. This simple act of synchronization and alignment amplified the understanding of the event and offered viewers a chance to really understand how the incident played out.

This type of aesthetic amplification for the purposes of an investigation is what Eyal Weizman and Matthew Fuller in their book *Investigative Aesthetics* call *hyper-aesthetics*. Hyper-aesthetics utilizes the perceptive capacity of multiple entities: human and non-human, technological and environmental, in order to amplify our perception of certain events of interest. Hyper-aesthetics allow for an expanded political field of investigation by suggesting a collaboration between diverse entities. Most importantly, I would suggest that hyper-aesthetics can amplify citizens political power by allowing them to become educated secondary witnesses to a larger number of events. As Weizman and Fuller have it 'to be politicized is to increase one's ability to be aestheticized to the world' (Fuller and Weizman, 2021: 36).

Hyper-aesthetics then creates political subjectivities that are enabled by an expanded field of perception.

The insensible

The constant exposure to violent imagery creates a difficult type of secondary witnessing, existing in a condition that scholar Jacob Lund describes as *contemporaneity*, a state where we are constantly connected to multiple distant realities and times at once (Lund, 2019). The simultaneous access to mediatized information presents multiple challenges to the politics of visibility, as well as our positions as global witnesses. Importantly contemporaneity creates an uneven distribution of political attention. Well-documented events dominate the political stage while other acts of violence that do not lend themselves to straight-forward imaging practices, fall through the cracks of representation and get lost in the clouds of data. As Fuller and Weizman argue, governments also exercise aesthetic power by either controlling media or by producing hypes around certain events that allow other actions to go unnoticed (Fuller and Weizman, 2021: 91–103). And although these practices of diversion are not new, the recent condition of intensified contemporaneity and hyperconnectivity exacerbate aesthetic power. This is clear in the Greek context, for example, if we consider the way that constant military threats by Türkiye’s president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan dominate Greek news and fuel a sense of insecurity. Is there space for the news of a different type? Do we hear as often about events of slow violence (Nixon, 2011) such as the slow leaking of toxic waste from dumpsites into the Marathon lake near Athens? Do we know how to witness oil spills from shipwrecks or the contamination of the Aegean Sea through the ship-breaking practices in Aliağa?

Understanding the political as the distribution of the sensible means paying attention to the zones of opacity that fall out of the public gaze. While there are now multiple techniques for investigating incidents with an overload of audio-visual material, there are other incidents which do not lend themselves to the same public scrutiny. Incidents of domestic violence, migrants being pushed back across borders through closed military zones or the slow toxic contamination of soils and waters slip through the cracks of traditional evidentiary representation. They form what Kathryn Yusoff calls the *insensible* (Yusoff, 2013). Insensible worlds for Yusoff are the incalculable, unknowable, uncertain lives and environments of our non-human kin that are both protected and threatened by this lack of visibility. Especially at a time of an urgent ecological and climate crisis, these insensible worlds demand new approaches to investigation and new strategies for creating political interest.

How to bear witness to something that cannot be seen or heard in the metrics of a traditional event of violence, to something that cannot be sensed immediately by the human body yet still affects the bodies of humans and other Earthly inhabitants? Could we expand the notion of witnessing in order to make urgent that which might seem distant?

Witnessing an expanded body

Elsewhere, I have followed feminist, posthuman theory to propose the understanding of the human body not as a distinct body hermetically sealed by its skin but as a constantly expanding assemblage of matter. In the notion of an *expanded body*, I trace the space

occupied by all the material bits that come to be part of a human body within its lifetime. This includes an average of thirty-five tons of food, 62,400 lt of water, 242.2 million litres of air, 3,400 kg of faeces and 37,300 lt of urine (Varvia, 2021). This rendering of a body spans multiple dispersed locations at once. As such it challenges the notion of physical presence that is a precondition for any act of witnessing. While our eyes and ears and other organs capable of sensing stay close to our body's centre, the matter that comes to be part of our bodies, including these sensing organs, exists in multiple sites in a pre-individuated state (Simondon, 1992). This dispersed matter may not be capable of sensing the distant worlds that it is a part of per se, but it is, in a sense, witnessing earthly practices by its mere physical presence. Practices such as industrialized agriculture, toxic contamination of waterways, the burning of forests and the production of plastic by-products, affect the particles of air, water, nutrients and toxins that come to be absorbed by human bodies. What happens if we consider all these multifaceted, textured and mutating particles of (human) matter, as mediating surfaces that register the memory of their journeys? What stories do they have to tell?

In a recent seminar, Achille Mbembe elaborated on a quote from Frantz Fanon to develop the theoretical framework of an Earthly Community. The quote which is the closing sentence from the book *Black Skin White Masks* goes like this: 'My final prayer: O my body, make of me always a man who questions!' (Fanon, 1986). Mbembe's analysis of this prayer helps unpack the way the material body carries with it the histories of violence and colonialism that determine human subjecthood and the way the body itself can be considered an archive. I will not attempt to recreate Mbembe's examination here (I can only encourage readers to seek it out) instead I will endeavour to consider this prayer and Mbembe's understanding of it, in relation to the notion of an expanded body. If we were to ask our *expanded bodies to make us always into people who question*, what sort of questions would they bring about? It seems to me that we could read Fanon's prayer as an invitation to *witness* the way we are entangled with other organic and inorganic Earthly inhabitants. Witnessing the world through the material singularity of the body is enough to keep us busy for more than a lifetime. I do not suggest that we should be exhaustive, but rather that we can use this invitation strategically, diving into the relational affiliations we have with distant landscapes in order to make those far away troubles more urgent.

Witnessing beyond the sensible, means paying attention to those relationalities that fall beyond the perceptual sphere of humans. To really let our bodies invoke these questions, requires not only a phenomenological attunement, but also careful study of material flows. In this sense, witnessing through our expanded bodies would mean witnessing beyond the empirical, in a sort of post-phenomenological fashion, while simultaneously being grounded in the materiality of our flesh. This practice requires study and the aid of our nonhuman kin. It is also what Weizman and Fuller suggest with their term hyper-aesthetics. 'Such aestheticization is not only perceptual, but also may involve creating existential or conceptual dispositions through experience, attention, even by studying' (Fuller and Weizman, p. 36). In this sense I would suggest that to be politicized one needs only to start by being aestheticized to one's own extended body. Investigating the relation between the material self and the body of the Earth, not only through the senses but also through the close study of the insensible is the way to locate oneself within the Earthly community. It means to redraw our relation to the material commons as one that is not of individual subjects sitting distinctly next to each other, but rather temporal singularities of matter that individuate and

transindividuate (Simondon, 1992), forming perceptual vantage points, and storing memory while they transform through mediation.

Here I follow Richard Grusin's powerful concept of *Radical Mediation* which 'treats mediation as the process, action, or event that generates or provides the conditions for the emergence of subjects and objects, for the individuation of entities within the world' (Grusin, 2015: 137–8). Grusin allows us to consider mediation as the way that subjects and objects form and transform when they interact or are in relation to one another. Mediation thus has an ontogenetic function. 'For radical mediation, all bodies (whether human or nonhuman) are fundamentally media and life itself is a form of mediation' (Grusin, 2015: 132). How could we then learn how to witness our own expanded bodies as media and as mediating forces? Whether it is hyper-aesthetics or another form of hyper-witnessing, this process of careful attunement has a political potency. As we witness all the ways that our material bodies are implicated in global flows, we operationalize a material proximity to distant creatures and critters. At the same time, we witness the plasticity of our bodies as we allow ourselves to be affected by the world that passes through us.

A call to action

A call to bear witness to our expanded bodies is not a passive call to observe from a distance events that are irrelevant to us, but an invitation to be implicated by understanding an event through its multiple mediatic expressions and through all the ways that our human lives are complicit in it. In this form of militant secondary witnessing, we become sensitized to the way our actions are involved in the lives of other Earthly co-inhabitants and don't shy away from our responsibility towards future generations. Rather, enabled by hyper-aesthetics, working with organic and technological sensors, we form political alliances and sensibilities that allow us to engage with complexity. Yusoff advises that to really pay attention to the insensible, to respond to it responsibly, we must slow down our gaze, to consider justice work as one that needs to span across generations. This is not to delay our actions, but rather to consider the effect of our actions beyond the small scale of our local and temporary social contracts.

To respond to Sally Fraser's call at the top of this article, we are never fully passive observers, we are already implicated in the worlds of conflict, whether we are cognizant of it or not. That does not mean that we are already doing enough to address these urgent ecological problems. On the contrary, the call to bear witness is a call to map out our own complicity. By understanding how our lives are fully entangled with violent Earthly practices, we aim to draw a different type of responsibility. Not only towards alien others, but first and foremost towards ourselves, and the lifeworlds that sustain us.

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Part 4 The cultural economy, funding and policies in Europe

4.1 The busy intersection of cultural and social policy

TERE BADIA AND GABRIELE ROSANA (CULTURE ACTION EUROPE)

Framing the question

Culture is at the basis of the European project: it brings our societies together and shapes their common future. Therefore, it carries an important intrinsic value. It also contributes significantly to the economy, with 4.2 per cent (European Investment Fund et al., 2019) of the EU GDP and 7.2 million jobs created (Eurostat, 2020), according to pre-pandemic data. However, the cultural and creative sectors face an uncertain future. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a disruptive impact on them, accelerating pre-existing trends, including unprecedented income loss, growing precariousness and increasing inequalities.

The pandemic exacerbated the difficult financial situation faced by many artists and cultural creators. According to a report from early 2021 (Ernst and Young, 2021), revenues in the cultural and creative sectors plunged by 31.2 per cent in 2020 compared to 2019. It was hit even harder than tourism, which lost 27 per cent of its income. In 2020, the cultural and creative sectors lost approximately €200 billion in revenues. However, the economic impact of halting production has been evident from 2021 (Ernst and Young, 2021). As a result of the pandemic, in the last two years, many professionals have been leaving the sector and institutions. With them, accumulated talent, knowledge and skills have been permanently lost, and the cultural and creative ecosystem has been profoundly weakened.

Against this backdrop, calls have gained wide support to strengthen the working conditions of artists and cultural workers, and with them, the resilience of the sector. While still blurred and to be better defined, the idea, supported by several key decision-makers both at national and European level, is to tackle this topic in a coordinated and coherent fashion.

The European Union (EU) enjoys very little competence in the field of culture, which is still deemed to be at the core of national sovereignty and preserved by rigorous respect for the principle of subsidiarity that inspires the very foundation of the EU. However, the topic of working conditions in the cultural and creative sectors proves to be a hybrid one, at the crossroads of cultural and social policy. It is a promising testing ground for creative public policy solutions at the EU level, which refute the one-size-fits-all tendency, but offer the opportunity for the EU to step up to its game and upgrade its policies with a view to break down silos and set out shared and coherent rules to safeguard a specific sector.

In March 2021, Culture Action Europe published a background analysis (Culture Action Europe, 2021a) on the situation of artists and cultural workers and the post-Covid-19 cultural recovery in the European Union, commissioned by the European Parliament. The

study provided an overview of key characteristics of artists' and cultural workers' status across Europe, their working conditions, precariousness and career paths, outlining the justification for specific policy solutions and providing a mapping of key challenges for a European framework for working conditions in the cultural and creative sectors.

Several factors contribute to the precariousness of artists and cultural workers: the non-standard nature of their work, which is not always output-driven and which affects their status and income, a high level of intermittence, heterogeneity, instability, self-employment (33 per cent in the sector, more than double the value registered in other sectors of the economy) and high dependence of intra-EU and international mobility, which currently limits their access to social security (Voices of Culture, 2021).

As always, the first challenging issue is to find a common definition able to cover all the labour activities in the cultural and creative sectors. The UNESCO definition from 1980 (UNESCO, 1980) proves to be limited and outdated.¹ This hinders a full-fledged recognition of the artist's and cultural workers' status while showing a highly fragile ecosystem that precisely requires specific public responses to protect diversity and freedom of cultural expressions, to ensure career development and skills upgrading pathways, in particular in the face of the consequences of the Covid-19 crisis.

The vitality of European culture and of Europe's cultural diversity depends on the above. This is the primary condition for the very sustainability of the sector.

It is in this context, that the European Union (EU) institutions have slowly but steadily recognized the working conditions of artists and cultural workers as a priority field which to focus on. It is an area where the EU enjoys in principle limited powers.

The European level

The EU can take measures to ensure that its Member States coordinate their economic, social and employment policies at the EU level, and to put in place coherent and complementary policies that can ensure the protection of artists and cultural workers. In 2017, for example, the proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights reaffirmed the EU's commitment to ensuring better living and working conditions throughout the bloc, as recalled in 2021 by the Porto Social Summit. In the meantime, the European Commission – the EU's executive arm – is spearheading work on modernizing labour legislation, including platform work and minimum wage across the Union. It is also reviewing its competition law framework in order to tear down old barriers and allow collective bargaining for self-employed workers, such as artists and creatives.

Such broader initiatives are likely to have a positive impact on the working conditions of artists. However, more targeted approaches are needed to address the sectors' specificities and for culture to thrive. In September 2020, the European Parliament adopted the Resolution on the Cultural Recovery of Europe (European Parliament, 2020), setting a vision for the EU and its Member States to address the recovery of the cultural and creative sectors, and recognizing the importance of culture as a driver in Europe's recovery post-pandemic. The Resolution also foregrounded the need to improve the working conditions of cultural and creative workers, which have been exacerbated by the pandemic, and proposed the creation of a European framework for working conditions in the cultural and creative sectors and industries. The Parliament, the EU's only directly elected body, followed up on this

resolution with a second one, in autumn 2021, on ‘The situation of artists and the cultural recovery of Europe’. It reiterated the call for the adoption of a coherent policy framework to help artists and cultural workers ‘by clarifying their status and simplifying access to social security’.

With the Member States more determined than before to continue their work of alignment in the years to come, it is on the EU Institutions to set the guidance and propose ambitious yet concrete ways forward. This can entail in particular the benchmarking of existing initiatives and imagining a European umbrella that could enumerate very few but clear minimum standards. The twenty-seven countries of the bloc have already started sharing their practices through the Open Method of Coordination (OMC), a form of ‘soft’ coordination not resulting in any binding legislative measures or mandatory alignments. The following paragraph will try to give the sense of this debate.

National initiatives

Several initiatives are being piloted or adopted by some national governments to address the working conditions in the cultural fields, with specific regard to fair remuneration. Among them are the Fair Practice Code in the Netherlands, the Fairness Process in Austria and the Basic Income for the Arts (BIA) in Ireland.

An overview of the key features of these three public policy schemes will help illustrate the different directions that Member States are exploring in order to address the improvement of working conditions at home. These initiatives, together with similar ones, are being benchmarked at European level in exercises such as the already mentioned OMC Expert Group. Formed by experts named by the national governments, according to information circulated in Brussels the OMC Group on the working conditions in the cultural field is among those of its kind with the broadest level of participation, bringing together officials from both cultural and social affairs.

Moreover, from a political point of view, the improvement of working conditions and the adoption of a status of the artist have been interestingly and explicitly featured in the post-pandemic National Recovery and Resilience Plans (NRRPs) of at least two Member States: Czech Republic and Spain. The NRRPs will implement until 2026 reforms and investments to sustain the post-Covid recovery of Europe. At the end of 2021, Culture Action Europe mapped the types of interventions directly supporting Europe’s cultural ecosystem, which has been among the most affected by the long crisis and the subsequent containment measures (Culture Action Europe, 2021b).

The Netherlands. The front-runner in the introduction of a co-created bottom-up reflection on fairness practices were the Dutch cultural and creative sectors already a few years ago. The Fair Practice Code (Dutch Culture, 2017) aims to offer a normative framework, agreed upon by a broad representation of cultural and creative workers, for sustainable, fair and transparent employment and enterprise practices in the arts, culture and creative sectors. The code invites all stakeholders to accept a shared responsibility for a Fair Chain, giving artists and creative professionals a Fair Share and Fair Pay in view of the value of their professional skills, expressivity and unique value in society. The Fair Practice Code serves as an umbrella under which regulations and guidelines can be developed for the various sectors which truly contribute to improving the earnings capacity and development

perspectives of people working in the cultural and creative sector. This Code takes the form of a statement of intent and has a clear soft law approach: anyone who wishes to comply with it and wants to contribute to its further development can sign up and display the related label. It is also meant for institutions affiliated with the sector, such as trade organizations and funds as well as public administrations, so that they can share in the responsibility and help create the conditions to apply, support and promote the Fair Practice Code.

Austria. Building on the Dutch example, yet moving beyond the pure soft law framework, the Austrian Fairness Process (Federal Republic of Austria, 2021), constitutes a federal-state level of national cooperation aiming to promote respect-based interaction in arts and culture, create more fairness in the sector of independent arts and culture and implement fairer pay. Based on the central topic of fair pay, the process also includes topics such as transparency and cooperation, adjustments in the funding system and respectful cooperation, prevention of abuse of power and diversification.

For the purposes of the initiative, a survey was commissioned first to identify the fair pay gap, meaning the difference between actual pay and recommended salaries in the arts and culture sector in Austria. Based on the results of the survey the Fair Pay Focus Group, consisting of representatives of the Laender, the federal government and stakeholders, has started working on a Fair Pay Strategy for Arts and Culture in Austria.

During the initial phase, the federal government provided additional fair pay funding of approximately 2 million euros, earmarked for higher salaries and fees. In addition, funding for scholarships was increased by 1.1 million to help young artists in particular to get off to an easier start in their professional careers. The funds made available are intended to contribute to fairer payment within organizations – excluding those owned by local authorities or applying collective agreements. Those fees that have a high fair pay gap are primarily considered. It is important to note that the Fair Pay subsidy may only be used for existing jobs, not for the creation of new jobs. From June 2021 to January 2022, the Fairness Code Focus Group worked on drafting a Fairness Code for Arts and Culture in Austria. In a structured, cooperative process, the federal government, the Länder, institutions and stakeholders have laid down a common standard of cooperation. Preliminary work on this topic has identified sustainability, diversity, respect and transparency as key fairness values. The federal government has also supported the establishment of an independent Ombuds Committee for persons working in arts and culture who are affected by abuse of power. This ombuds board is open to everyone working in the field – regardless of whether they are volunteers, employees or self-employed – and also provide guidance and training for those working in arts and culture management functions. The Legal committee has been dealing with the framework conditions for better legal protection of artists and working conditions in the entire arts and culture sector which are further core concerns addressed in the Fairness Process.

From 2022 onwards, the Fairness Working Group of the Länder and the Forum Fairness of the stakeholders will meet annually to exchange information on the progress of the joint efforts and to openly discuss further topics and measures under the Fairness Process. In addition, fairness will be a regular item on the agendas of the cultural officer meetings at Länder level.

Ireland. A different policy solution being piloted in Ireland goes beyond the fair pay considerations seen in the Netherlands and Austria and tests the waters for the introduction of a basic income for the artists (Irish Government, 2022). Arising as a recommendation from

the Arts and Culture Taskforce, established in 2020 in response to the devastation wreaked by the Covid-19 pandemic on the sector, the Basic Income for the Arts (BIA) constitutes a pioneering pilot scheme to support artists and creative arts workers. The initiative aims to address financial instability faced by many working in the sectors by examining, over a three-year period (between 2022 and 2025) the impact of a basic income on artists and creative workers, in the form of payments of €325 per week to approximately 2000 individuals, similar to what happened nationwide in Finland in 2017–18, although with a clear sectoral focus. The overarching objective of the scheme is to address the earnings instability that can be associated with the intermittent, periodic and often project-based nature of work in culture and the arts. The scheme will research the impact on artists and creative arts workers' creative practice of providing the security of a basic income, thereby reducing income precarity.

According to the Irish authorities, the BIA aims to pilot sector-specific support for the arts, to recognize the value of time and labour spent on creative practices. In addition, it enables artists and creative workers to focus on their artistic research, practice or production without having to enter into part-time employment in other sectors in order to sustain themselves, thus minimizing the loss of skill and experience in the arts sector. Eligibility is based on the definition of the arts as contained in the Arts Act 2003; arts means any creative or interpretative expression (whether traditional or contemporary) in whatever form. A creative arts worker, therefore, is someone who has a creative practice and whose work makes a key contribution to the production, interpretation or exhibition of the arts. All practising artists, creative arts workers or recently trained applicants (within the last five years) who are eighteen years of age or older, in a position to evidence their creative practice or career in the arts, based in the Republic of Ireland and tax compliant are eligible to apply. The Department of Social Protection will treat income from the scheme as income from self-employment for the purpose of its various means tests.

Conclusion: The way forward

Nurtured by the benchmarking exercise of existing national schemes, the topic of working conditions of artists and cultural workers is very likely to stay high on the list of priorities of the EU Institutions. The next Work Plan for Culture 2023–6 of the Council of the EU, the main roadmap for coordination of cultural policies among Member States, is expected to follow up on the subject, building on the alignment processes such as the OMC Group. However, in order to bring a meaningful contribution, such reports need to trigger a policy shift beyond peer learning.

The European Union is best positioned to contribute to the global struggle to improve the very sustainability of the cultural and creative sectors in a holistic fashion that takes into account not only the environmental impact and relevance, but also the social conditions for the arts and the artists to thrive. In this regard, the effort to adopt a European Status of the Artists, as long asked by the cultural and creative sectors and championed by the European Parliament, could set the tone for a follow-up (and an update) of the UNESCO Recommendation on the subject, which is more than forty years older. This cannot but start with the crucial issue of defining the scope of application of such policy solutions, which traditionally proves to be a contentious point – yet one to tackle if the EU Institutions are serious about strengthening their cultural and creative sectors.

With broader initiatives advancing in the policy area of social affairs (see paragraph 2), time is ripe for a sectoral focus on artists and cultural workers, given their specificity and the non-standard working conditions in the sectors. As previously proposed by Culture Action Europe (Culture Action Europe, 2021a), this can happen by setting minimum standards in EU legislation, after having identified a common pattern among Member States' policies.

Touching upon a very national competence, national governments represented in the Council will necessarily be at the driving seat of this process. This, however, does not make the way towards the adoption of a European Status of the Artists less of an EU matter. The European Commission will need to assess the implementation of the reforms leading to the approval of a national Status of the Artists in the countries which have linked it to the unlocking of rescue funds under the Recovery and Resilience Facility. Building on that, the EU's executive arm might decide to feature recommendations on improving the working conditions in the cultural and creative sectors as part of the European Semester process, the cycle of economic, fiscal, labour and social policy coordination within the EU – at least for those Member States where policies are non-existent or least developed.

Last but not least, being the only democratically elected institution, the European Parliament can continue its pioneering role in advocating for a European Status of the Artists, following up on its two resolutions from 2020 and 2021 (more than thirteen years after the last time it dealt with the topic) and sustaining the political scrutiny on both the EU's executive and the Council of the EU, in particular when the rotating Presidencies present their programmes.

To conclude, there is a fertile ground more than ever before in the EU for an effective cooperation of cultural and social public policies with a view to improving the working and living conditions of artists and cultural workers. The years to come will be decisive to appreciate the direction, the nature and the perspectives of such policy innovation.

Note

1. 'Artist is taken to mean any person who creates or gives creative expression to, or re-creates works of art, who considers his artistic creation to be an essential part of his life, who contributes in this way to the development of art and culture and who is or asks to be recognized as an artist, whether or not he is bound by any relations of employment or association', the Recommendation reads.

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4.2 For culture to address global challenges – The 2022 recommendation of the Council of Europe

PHILIPPE KERN

The film *Don't Look Up* (2021) directed by Adam McKay with Leonardo DiCaprio and Jennifer Lawrence tells the story of two astronomers attempting to warn humanity about an approaching comet that will destroy human civilization. The work aims to alert on our collective indifference to the climate crisis and to criticize government, political and media indifference to scientific warnings. It shows the capacity of art to convey messages in more powerful ways than scientists or environmental advocates because a film has a better capacity to reach out to an international audience in a universal language. This matters as media have an agenda-setting effect with people assigning greater importance to topics that receive more media coverage (known as 'issue attention'). The film's success¹ underscores the meaningful role the arts play in portraying alternative imaginings of the impact of ecological disasters. It contributes to inspire reaction against cynicism, injustice or greed as well as to challenge public disengagement by laying a critical eye on events and by calling for international action against indifference. Moreover, the artistic vision enables the expression of value-based narratives that builds on human's capacity to empathize and behave with altruism.

The new world challenges need a better understanding between its inhabitants to create the conditions of a common future. This adventure requires to overcome national and ethnical prejudices to build a common space where various cultures find their place. The role of culture, and its representatives in cinema, music, literature, fashion is to imagine this future beyond its economic and technological perspectives, to give it humanism, meaning and spirit as well as to trigger forces of changes.

Artistic contribution is essential at a time when unsustainable human activity is threatening the foundations of life on earth. The environmental dangers are well known: climate change due to greenhouse gas emission and less biodiversity with more than 1 million animal and plant species threatened with extinction. Technological progress in genetics, artificial intelligence, data processing and digital communication is challenging human values and ethics, cultural diversity, as well as the democratic model of governance. With the emergence of pandemics, Covid-19 having killed, as of today, millions of people in the world and infecting hundreds of millions, billions of individuals shared a common painful experience, a prelude of more to come.

We know the origin of these global challenges. They encompass our unsustainable industrial, agricultural and economic activities with energy production responsible for 75 per cent of greenhouse emission in Europe but also the misuse of technological progress. They also

stem from a poor appreciation of our interdependence as humans living on a single planet, the lack of collective empathy and solidarity to act together as well as individual behaviours leading to overconsumption, poor waste management and our perception of nature as a disposable good. At the same time war at the heart of Europe, extreme nationalisms and dictatorships are dividing countries and nations in antagonistic blocks threatening further the capacity to act collectively against existential threats.

The Covid-19 crisis has shown that humans across the planet are facing the same issues. Global challenges are the opportunity to confront our ability to cooperate and as a result our capacity to survive.

Culture, notably through rituals, celebrations and performances is a strong trigger of universal emotion (fears, angers, happiness, pride or desire), which in turn drives motivation to do things and guide our thoughts and decisions. Artists and cultural workers can play an important role in generating the collective will to act and the solidarity required to address global challenges. The cultural world is already internationally oriented with its collaborative and networked way of functioning. This paper argues that it should be invited to contribute to fight apathy and to create the foundation for intercultural collaboration.

It should be acknowledged that the capacity of scientific and technological progress to safeguard and improve living conditions is closely related to the parallel development of cultural progress that nourishes humanity's values, aspiration, cohesion and conscience. Culture is of extraordinary importance today, and as necessary as it shapes values. Responding to global challenges requires a new vision whilst we are still looking backwards and using yesterday's terms, prejudices, myths, values and narratives.

This article stems from research work undertaken at the request of the Council of Europe² in summer 2021 to propose and coordinate the work on the drafting of a Recommendation on culture to help address global challenges. **The recommendation, whose text is provided in the Appendix, was adopted on 20 May 2022.**

Culture to impact behavioural changes and technological innovation

Ecological issues, notably climate change and the loss of biodiversity, have strengthened the growing awareness of the need to transform our individual behaviours (less consumerist, greedy, less polluting, more responsible) to support sustainability objectives. The historical root of the biodiversity's tragedy is eminently cultural with the Bible (Genesis 1:28) granting humanity the right to use nature at will. The situation implies a cultural reset acknowledging the interdependency between people and nature with a common understanding of the importance of our individual ecological footprint. It also requires our appreciation of the need to safeguard our cultural and natural heritage and the recognition that culture and the arts are key for the quality of life and well-being.

Innovation and technology advancement play a central role in addressing global challenges such as the research on vaccines to fight pandemics, more energy efficient manufacturing and mobility routines to contain climate change and global warming for instance. Such progress goes hand in hand with cultural and social transformation. In human history the radical invention of the printing press led to the development of the publishing industry (the first of all cultural industries) which changed the dynamics of society in Renaissance time. To the same extent the digital revolution is influencing cultural and social upheavals today by

contributing to connect people throughout the world. Powerful digital networks and media use cultural goods (music, fashion, TV series, games, performing arts and sport) as a main resource to gain precious commercial and political power. The invention of both the printing and the internet led to an explosion in the dissemination of information and ideas (the protestant reformation that would lead to the emergence of early capitalism in Europe, libertarian theories today), networks (fostering global liberalization or populist movements including fake news and manipulation) and money (bitcoins today). Both technological innovations are promoting disintermediation from traditional institutional filters (schools, traditional political parties, churches, financial or art institutions). They contribute to advance on one hand individual freedom of expression enabling user-generated content whilst at the same time on the other hand consolidating the monopolistic positions of a few powerful global digital gatekeepers in the United States (the GAFAN³) and China (such as Tencent, TikTok).

With technology and artificial intelligence, we are gradually evolving in a virtual space, a world in which computers become smarter than humans and take over. Human bodies are promised to mutate with genetic transformation and interventions aimed at augmenting physical capacities to impact on decay. It is predicted that one day humans will design forms of life that do not exist in nature. This will help humans cure some fatal diseases. This is also creating important cultural (legal and ethical) concerns on the future of humanity. A future without culture would be a cause of great concern as nothing would prevent humans from being shaped like machines (a neuronal being) devoid of autonomy, ethics, freedom, values, convictions and consciousness. In such a future, the human species would be denied any specificity, incapable of establishing a distance with 'reality'. Today artificial intelligence is affecting our freedom to decide whilst reinforcing our cultural bias. Ethical questions will determine the balance between machines and biological beings showing the extraordinary importance of culture as it shapes values that determine our future.

Our European ancestors based their cultures on beliefs from the Greek and Roman time, the Bible, the Church, the State and local stories. The digital generation are evolving in a setting influenced by the ease of interacting and traveling. Knowledge and news are available at the speed of an internet connection in a world increasingly virtual shaping social relations, love and friendship. This generation is already living in another spatial dimension, with more freedom to choose their information source, less dependent on traditional institutions whether schools or cultural institutions. It is confronting traditional storytelling because of the latter's cultural bias (gender, ethnic). It is more exposed to international realities notably because of global environmental and migration issues. Youngsters have a larger understanding of the universal and the need to address global challenges through cooperation rather than competition. These changes need to be acknowledged for culture to continue to play a transformative role.

The art of collective mobilization

The importance of collective mobilization and action is a major lesson of the Covid-19 pandemic. Whilst reminding humans about their fragility the crisis also showed our interdependency where national health systems cannot ignore Covid variants whether from Asia, Africa, North America or Europe. Contamination and infections are independent of languages, cultures, religions or skin colours. However, the response to health threats is

dependent on the capacity to exchange information on the origin and the nature of the virus, coordinate life-saving mechanism and discover remedies (vaccines or medication). The Covid pandemic shows that the absence of collective trust and engagement is slowing down the implementation of an efficient global response. This exacerbates inequalities between nations. International tension nourishes suspicion against what is foreign thus justifying the erection of mental and physical frontiers that make the fight against a common enemy more difficult if not impossible. The same is true in relation to climate change. A much-needed global response becomes harder if refusal to transform is grounded on the pretext that others are to blame. Countries pooling resources, like Member States of the European Union, have been more efficient in protecting their population and in addressing the health challenge showing the importance of building solidarities and collaborative practices for a collective well-being.

At an individual level the crisis is a reminder that personal freedom is closely linked to obligations towards the community (the elderly or the less wealthy for instance), society and that personal interest needs to align with the general public's interest. This is the logic of a society based on solidarity: freedom is the freedom of others. As stated by Albert Camus (2006) a freedom that would entail only rights would be a tyranny. This would be life at the expense of others.

Global crises question the role of human beings in relationship with nature, with science and technological progress and with other human beings. This has an impact on the political and economic order, the way governance is organized, decisions are taken and freedom nurtured. Global crises are testing collective sociability, the capacity to accept complexities, differences and contradictions. The world community in its cultural diversity has to develop a global response.

The survival of humanity is largely dependent on human beings' capacity to agree on the roots of such crisis as well as the ability to collaborate across cultures to address those challenges and find solutions as a shared responsibility. The emergence of a collective ambition requires new modes of participation and deliberation, new skills calling on creativity and imagination to overcome (often cultural) divisions, as well as to set the conditions for a more altruistic mindset. The new world order is emerging but we are using yesterday's terms, prejudices, myths and narratives. Artists and cultural stakeholders should have a bigger say on consideration linked to a future society. As put by Professor Yuval Noah Harari (2017): 'in the twenty first century, fiction might thereby become the most potent force on earth, surpassing even wayward asteroids and natural selections. Hence if we want to understand our future, cracking genomes and crunching numbers is hardly enough. We must also decipher the fictions that give meanings to the world'.

Progress and policies cannot do without ideals and values that trigger human imagination and spirit which nourish and inspire actions. By making art cultural workers help us gain a clearer understanding of the world's shortcomings, the upcoming tragedies or the possible futures. They have this capacity to call on values and ideals to trigger collective ambition against barbaric, greedy or technocratic visions. The importance of values and culture is currently being demonstrated in the conflict in Ukraine. The war is foremost a fight for the defense of individual freedom and democratic values. Artists and cultural workers throughout the world (and this includes AV producer and Ukrainian President Zelensky) are playing

an important role in promoting freedom of expression or in contributing to peaceful and brotherhood moments (through concerts, exhibitions and happenings).

The shift towards global sustainability encompasses a cultural shift towards a consciousness of global interdependence. This requires a cultural reset to confront cultural prejudices (racial, religious, national, traditions), to consider our position towards science, progress and logic but also religion, beliefs or emotional choices (love, humour or beauty for instance). A reset whose first objectives would be the respect of differences, recognizing that diversity can unite and that human rights and cultural diversity as essential components of co-existence; the second aim would be to strengthen our commitment to preserve hopes, dreams and illusions whose transcendental power is essential to human existence and its meaning. The building of cultural bridges, not towards securing some form of uniformity but by acknowledging and nurturing differences, is a necessity to action a collective will capable of addressing global challenges.

This implies important cultural changes in the way we communicate, decisions are taken (within an organization or institutions). It requires new sets of values embracing the transnationality of the objective, transcending the familiar, the locally rooted cultural heritage to address the global.

In which way can culture and its stakeholders contribute and be mobilized to bring about the transformation required to address global challenges? How can the power of imagination and creation contribute to save the world?

Develop a new understanding of the contribution of culture

Culture is a social necessity that delivers a wide range of outcomes both socially and economically. Modern economies, still characterized by industrial productivism and the optimization of results, are giving more importance to creative, emotional, aesthetic and intuitive dimensions. In parallel the societal demand for quality of life, meaning and self-enrichment is driving an exponential growth in cultural services, practices and experiences. These trends require a renewed vision of culture and its transformative capacity. Let's first explore the multidimensional impact of culture.

First, the cultural investment is foremost and traditionally a public policy goal:

- to educate on artistic disciplines and achievements,
- to sustain a network of cultural institutions whose mission is to cater for artistic experiences and their dissemination,
- to support artistic creation and innovation,
- to express territorial and cultural identities,
- to promote tolerance and freedom of expression.

Then, cultural investment is increasingly taking a broader policy dimension contributing to a wide area of public interest issues ranging from social cohesion objectives to economic growth. This broader dimension is best represented by the following picture. (Figure 4.2.1.)

Culture, in its various dimension including contemporary creation, heritage and craftsmanship, institutions, creative industries, is an essential resource to address global challenges and to encourage policymakers to confront health, environmental, ethical and societal

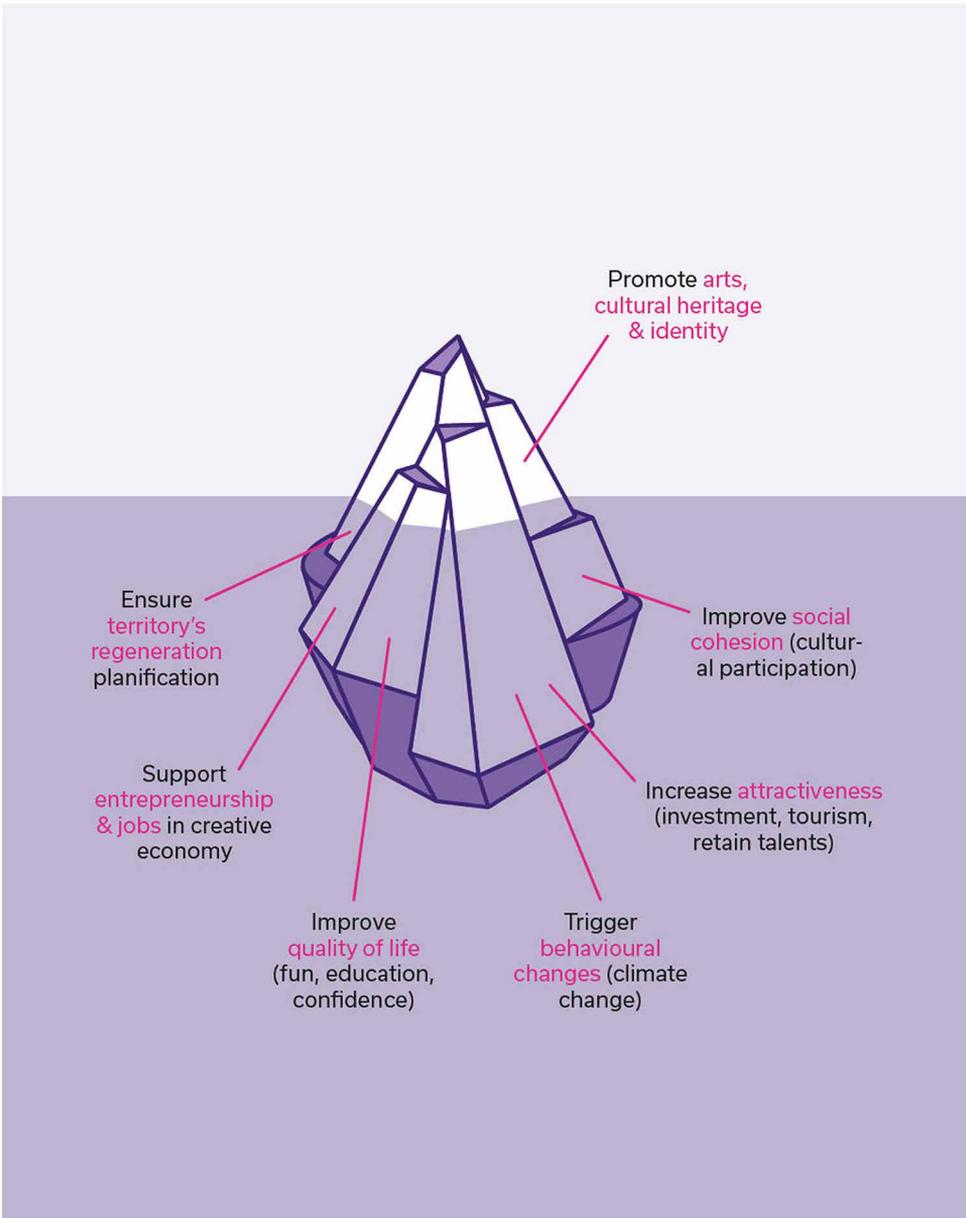


Figure 4.2.1 Iceberg. Courtesy KEA European Affairs.

issues. Contemporary history has shown the extraordinary power of art and artistic movements in triggering political and social changes:

- abstract art and surrealism in the representation of the world,
- modernism, including the Bauhaus Movement, in architecture and design,
- fashion design in the expression of individualism and social concerns,

- heritage in maintaining traditions threatened by ideologies and dictatorships,
- rock, pop, punk and rap music in social emancipation,
- literature, performing arts, Hollywood and New Wave cinema in fictionalizing or interrogating the human condition but also in imagining the future in a universal language.

When life is at risk and models require confronting, artists and cultural workers can contribute through their disruptive skills to confront social determinism, cultural routines, ideological or technological complacencies. Artistic interventions have this capacity to empower people to regain trust in their ability to be actors of change. Considering the various outcomes triggered by culture it is important to consider the role of public authorities in fostering such contribution.

A modern policy for culture to be agent of transformation

This capacity to shape our daily lives requires a reassessment of cultural policy goals originally set for a different world focused on heritage preservation and the management of flagship national cultural institutions. The world then was less globalized, flat and connected, less hierarchical and urban. It was less feminine. Taking into account these radical transformations modern cultural policies (Kern, 2020) should be designed to help culture work as a stimulant, an agent of change steering a new enlightenment and collective ambition. This means the appreciation that culture is a resource requiring

- protection from standardization trends degrading cultural richness and diversity,
- promotion to enrich, to innovate, to challenge, to connect with a view to empower communities as well as individuals,
- elevation to nurture solidarities and empathies across cultures to develop a collective will to confront global challenges.

Societal challenges require new forms of inclusive, empowering and collaborative governance as opposed to top-down decision-making processes characteristic of autocratic and technocratic societies. Cultural workers and organizations have this capacity to engage with communities in all their diversities and to deliver strong societal, political messages.

Policies will have to ensure that technological progress go hand in hand with cultural and social development. This includes mobilizing all forms of innovation including creative innovation stemming from artists and creative professionals (designers, architects). Building on the tradition of humanism and enlightenment geeks, the IT and digital professionals should be encouraged to collaborate with cultural workers to drive changes. Increasingly creative and digital ecosystems (hubs, fablabs, technoparks) associate both competences to generate innovation. This prefigures new forms of work organization, decentralized, capable of engaging resources to address sustainability concerns stimulating a circular economy, better product and service design, digital literacy, improved social interactions and democratic/cultural participation. This multi-disciplinary collaboration, nourished by different perspectives and skills, is increasingly value-driven, oriented to the long term, inclusive and open to dreams and imagination stemming from different technical, cultural and artistic traditions.

A blueprint for cultural policy to address global challenges: The Council of Europe Recommendation

A step towards the global advancement of policymaking in the direction of a more creative and inclusive approach resides in the adoption by the Council of Europe of a Recommendation to its Member States. The Recommendation calls on culture and cultural workers (artists, creative professionals) to be mobilized to address global challenges. The policy document considers the multi-dimensional impact of cultural activities notably in

- promoting citizen's engagement through participation,
- raising awareness on ethical, environmental or political issues,
- inspiring new politics through imagination that is triggered by values and ideals,
- imagining new creative ways to anchor global solidarities and build the necessary collective will needed to address global challenges.

Like the G20 Minister of Cultural Rome Declaration adopted on 30 July 2021,⁴ the Council of Europe Recommendation affirms culture's transformative role in sustainable development and calls for the full recognition and integration of culture into relevant policies. The recommendation also builds on the UN Resolution on Culture and Sustainable Development of 16 January 2020.⁵

The Council of Europe's Recommendation goes a step further by identifying the assets and skills of cultural stakeholders (artists, cultural workers, creative professionals, industries, institutions, associations) to be mobilized to help address global challenges. Notably, the Recommendation identifies the capacity of cultural actors:

- To engage with people through their art across frontiers to help build empathy, trust, mutual understanding and solidarity through social interactions and cultural exchanges, with the aim to foster a conscience of interdependence and to generate a collective ambition to act.
- To empower people and local communities through art practices and participation with a view to trigger emotion and the determination to act.
- To engage with imagination, beauty, design, memories and critical thinking to contribute to the definition of the future and to impose a new ethic on economic and societal development.
- To question progress (scientific, technological, economic) notably its ethical and cultural impact.
- To propose heritage techniques and craftsmanship to find sustainable solutions.

The Recommendation calls on the recognition of artistic and creative skills to support innovation that respects sustainability goals. It recalls that the cultural and creative sector is an essential driver of the digital and creative economy as well as a motor of social, political and technological changes because of the transformative power of art, stories and aesthetic as well as the demand from people for a new ethic to respect freedom, the environment and sustainable development.

The Recommendation also highlights the specific role of public cultural institutions and media to reach out to the largest number, including the socially and economically disadvantaged to act as a lever of communities' engagement.

It stresses the importance of addressing social behaviours, mindsets and new cultural patterns. It calls on governments to entrust cultural stakeholders in enabling and contributing to social transformation. It asks for a new understanding of culture – and hence policies – as a strategic element to address global challenges. It proposes various policy objectives and measures aimed at fostering a local (to engage with people and communities) and global (to encourage international collaboration) approach to generate a collective ambition and international cooperation based on empathy and solidarity.

The policy document suggests ways to ensure the cultural dimension of digital technology. Artificial intelligence and market dominance are addressed as threats to cultural diversity objectives. The Recommendation states that technological progress should not be conceived without considering the cultural and ethical dimension. It also calls on giving better consideration to the social status of artists and cultural workers.

For the first time an international instrument – although acting within the frameworks of 'soft law' – is calling on the arts and humanities to shape tomorrow's world. It is suggesting concrete measures to policymakers to make the most of cultural resources to achieve sustainable goal objectives. It shows ways to generate, with the support of cultural stakeholders, a collective ambition and global cooperation across the Council of Europe's membership to achieve greater unity for the purpose of fostering the ideals and principles of the organization, founded upon respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law, a common European heritage.

Notes

1. The film is Netflix's second most watched film ever with 360 million hours of viewing during its first twenty-eight days on the service.
2. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/about-us/who-we-are?desktop=true>.
3. GAFAN for Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple and Netflix.
4. The text of the Declaration: <http://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2021/210730-culture.html>.
5. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3847705?ln=en>.

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4.3 Imagine! Philanthropy for Europe

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European Cultural Foundation

Humanity's last two-and-half years has been impacted by major crises, teaching us six existential lessons: First, peace can never be taken for granted, even in Europe. Second, a virus is able to put an entire economic system on hold everywhere in the world. Third, accelerated climate action is not an option but a must for humanity to survive. Fourth, our food and energy security can wane within weeks and put millions of people at risk. Fifth, the EU is stronger than one thinks. We stick together thanks to what appears sometimes to be a weakness: the necessity to decide together. Sixth, a European Sentiment is nurtured by positive and coordinated action, in solidarity with the most affected.

The European Cultural Foundation (ECF) has the mission to foster a European Sentiment but how to measure progress, trace successes and failures, and learn from experience which approaches and actions work best? When in 2019 we marked the sixty-fifth anniversary of the European Cultural Foundation, we did not know but could only imagine in which way the foundation's trajectory had influenced Europe. We asked ourselves what difference had we made for Europe and for the people of Europe? So we decided to unpack ECF's archives and found a treasure box of evidence and an abundance of stories, some of which we compiled for *Stories of Europe: 65 years of the European Cultural Foundation* (2019).

We would like to share with you a few highlights from ECF's past and present, as well as to give a hint about the future.

Before being a military alliance or an economic entity, Europe must be a cultural community in the most elevated sense of the term.

Robert Schuman ('For Europe')

With such an idea in mind, Robert Schuman and his collaborators set up in 1954 the European Cultural Foundation (ECF) with the mission to imagine post-war Europe as a cultural project, and 'awaken a common sentiment of the Europeans' (De Rougement, 1955) for next generations to cherish.¹ Our founders envisioned a united Europe where citizens could live, express themselves, work and dream freely, in diversity and respect of European values and fundamental human rights. Ever since, ECF has promoted a European sentiment through developing and supporting cultural and educational initiatives that have let us share, experience and imagine Europe. We believe our mission is as urgent now as it was back then in the 1954. Besides projecting a beautiful vision for Europe's future, they have *de facto* created the first philanthropic foundation *for* Europe.

ECF – Europe’s first and only European-purpose foundation

Through programmes, grants and advocacy, ECF has continuously invested in culture as Europe’s soft power and leveraged political and social change by working with public, private and civic partners. Albeit incomparable in size and scale to today’s EU programmes, it has provided millions in matching funding and generated additional European funding through collaboration with other foundations across Europe. Today, thirty years after the Maastricht Treaty (1992), which extended the EU’s competency to culture, Europe has become more than ever present in citizens’ lives but many still feel disconnected and miss a strong sense of belonging, shared across nations, cultures and generations. For a European Sentiment to unfold, it needs continued investment, nourishment and the creation of opportunities to share, experience and imagine Europe.

With this in mind, ECF designed its multiannual strategy 2020–5 titled ‘Challenge 2025’ around three programmatic clusters: *Share, Experience and Imagine Europe* which we share below as examples of actions pursuing our European mission. In 2022, we initiated, together with the European Council of Foreign Relations (ECFR), the European Sentiment Compass, an annual survey which assesses the correlation between European challenges and citizens’ expectations and sentiments towards Europe.² As an example, the two major crises – the pandemic and the war in Ukraine – have consolidated support behind the European integration project. However, they have also shaken the union’s sense of direction. This is a perfect moment to cement the refoundation of Europe that began in 2019. The EU has a unique opportunity to prove to its citizens that it can satisfy their rising expectations of the bloc. And if successful, it would be a powerful bonding agent for the European sense of belonging.

Share Europe contributes to a European public space as a cultural sphere.

Culture is a key ingredient for recovery but also for democracy and inclusion, and thus for the coming of age of a truly European public sphere.

H.R.H. Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands, President
of the European Cultural Foundation

This area provides online and physical spaces where Europeans across national borders share ideas, experiences and artistic expression or develop inclusive media spaces. The *Europe Challenge* is a flagship programme that aims to create safe public spaces where people can come together and develop solutions for their existing social challenges. For that purpose, we support and mobilize a network of libraries from across Europe. In 2022, through an open call for participation, we selected thirty-two libraries from fourteen countries from the widest range possible: from big central libraries, to small village libraries; from academic and specialized, to school and prison libraries.³ Each with their own challenge to address: social and financial inequalities, migration and integration, loneliness, sustainability and many more.

Experience Europe nourishes a European sense of belonging through cultural and educational exchange of people and practices.

ECF certainly planted the seeds of transnational cultural exchange and cooperation back in the days before the EU’s first cultural framework programme for culture (Culture 2000–4),

and its predecessors Kaleidoscope, Ariane and Raphael. ECF supported culture, trans-national cultural exchange and cooperation already when the EU was all about coal and steel, and a Common market. Many cultural organizations and thousands of individuals have benefited from our exchange programmes from the Baltics to the Balkans, from the UK to the Mediterranean, inducing that feeling of belonging to a larger European community than the actual limits of EU borders.

The goal of our *Experience* programme is to stimulate active cultural exchanges between individuals and groups from across Europe and beyond. Enhancing cross-border exchanges was among ECF's very first endeavours which led to the first Erasmus programme for student exchanges. *Erasmus* was co-developed by the European Commission and ECF as a public-private partnership which ECF then implemented until 1993.

In the 1990s, the foundation was at the origins of an arts and culture travel grant programme, which we ran under different programme names and with different streams and formats from the mid-1990s until 2019. Through long-standing work, close monitoring of data for individual travel exchanges of artists and cultural professionals across over forty countries, we have provided evidence of the value of cultural mobility for Europe: it contributes to professional experience, intercultural awareness, new partnerships, inspires new perspectives. The challenge now is to rethink mobility in the context of a climate crisis and devise mobility programmes which are in harmony with nature, climate-neutral and setting examples for slow and conscious mobility.

The cultural sector, including ECF, has been advocating for years for a 'Cultural Erasmus'. We are delighted that Member States and the European Commission have recognized cultural mobility as a priority, and decided to launch *Culture Moves Europe* (2022). However, the European programme will only be a success if it sustainably reconciles the needs of transnational cultural mobility with climate goals. The job to Experience Europe is not done yet. ECF will continue exploring innovative transnational collaborations and exchanges across Europe and promoting green and sustainable professional travels.

Imagine Europe is the programme cluster supporting initiatives that tell the stories of Europe.

The *Imagine* cluster focuses on culture, heritage and its future, in the most compelling way using all forms of artistic expression. A flagship initiative is the *European Pavilion*, a collaborative artistic platform which facilitates spaces of experimentation and reflection on Europe. Every two years, together with foundation partners, ECF supports arts organizations across Europe which develop new artistic programmes and commissions shedding new light on Europe and imagining our futures. So far projects address burning issues such as democracy, inclusion, waste and sustainability, involving local communities and discussing them trans-locally. A major European Pavilion show is planned from 17 to 19 November 2022 in Rome, in collaboration with Fondazione Studio Rizoma, and generously hosted by our partners Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max Planck Institute for Art History, Goethe-Institut, Villa Massimo, Villa Medici, Istituto Svizzero and Museo delle Civiltà.

The *European Pavilion* is not a fixed concept. It is a method and initiative which can be realized in many places across Europe and in the world, in as many creative and imaginative ways as possible. However, the plan is also to stage Europe's first European Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2024, at the occasion of its sixtieth anniversary. Partners and co-creators of the European Pavilion are three foundations: Fondation Camargo (France), Fondazione

CRT (Italy) and Kultura Nova (Croatia). The European Pavilion is an example of how nationally based foundations can co-create and contribute to an inspiring European cause and horizon.

ECF – An advocate for culture in EU policies

The European Union Institutions seem distant, complex and difficult to reach. Arts and culture have a tiny place among EU policies, and although its *Creative Europe* programme budget has been nearly doubled compared to the previous financial cycle (for the period 2021–7, the programme’s budget is an estimated €2.44 billion, compared to €1.47 billion for 2014–20), it still makes roughly only 0.2 per cent of the EU’s overall budget 2021–7.

How to position culture more centrally in EU and national policy-making? How to involve artists, cultural operators, big and small organizations across Europe in making the case for culture? ECF joined forces with leading cultural networks, representing an array of artistic, cultural and cultural heritage organizations across Europe, calling for culture to be placed at the heart of the European project. ECF, Culture Action Europe and Europa Nostra – representing the European Cultural Alliance – launched in November 2020 ‘A Cultural Deal for Europe’ (#CulturalDealEU). The campaign proposes a new strategic framework for culture mainstreaming it across all relevant policy fields: from the green transition to Europe’s geopolitical ambition and from the digital shift to a value-driven Union. It focuses on both facilitating the contribution of culture to Europe’s sustainable development and securing the sector with the credibility and resources for realizing its full potential. By bundling together both short and long-term objectives, the Cultural Deal for Europe provides a roadmap towards a more balanced, more comprehensive and more inclusive European development model. We promote a perception of culture not as an isolated ‘sector’, but as a ‘vector’, a vital resource for our common future.⁴

ECF’s advocacy aims at influencing policy and mobilizing citizens through culture on European causes. We mobilize vast communities via social media and cultural means, for example in the run-up to the European elections in which we encourage citizens’ participation and political formations to promote culturally aware candidates.

What can philanthropy do for Europe?

On 24 February 2022 the unthinkable happened – war was back in Europe. Since Putin’s aggression on Ukraine and until the end of March 2022, philanthropic actors in Europe mobilized more than €180 million, mostly for humanitarian and emergency relief in Ukraine and its borders. Working with international organizations, partners and grantees on the ground, it helped to provide support to millions of displaced and refugees with the supply of shelters, medicines, food, water, cloths and transportation. It also contributed to actions welcoming several millions of refugees. Key philanthropic partners launched the portal Philanthropy for Ukraine, bringing together initiatives and calls for donations from the European philanthropy sector for Ukraine and its neighbouring countries. Paired with ongoing consultations and needs assessments, these actions allow to quickly respond to needs on the ground and leverage philanthropic funding.

ECF, which had worked with Ukraine for many years, responded immediately to the emergency, as it had done to the Covid-19 crisis two years earlier. In the first days of the pandemic in 2020, ECF launched a Culture of Solidarity Fund as a rapid response mechanism to support cross-border cultural initiatives of solidarity. Equally, in the days following Russia's violation of Ukraine's sovereignty, we opened a special Ukraine edition of the Culture of Solidarity Fund, which provides emergency help for artists, cultural and creative professionals and journalists but also supports cultural resistance against Russia's war and cultural expressions of hope. The Fund has proven agile and flexible, and we are happy that eight more funding partners joined.

The Culture of Solidarity Fund is designed as a rapid response mechanism to future challenges to come, as crisis promises to become the new normal. The European Institutions have acknowledged the Culture of Solidarity Fund as a good example of a philanthropic partnership initiative with a European purpose. But more needs to be done to increase the impact of philanthropy on cross-border solidarity.

We are living in challenging times for solidarity but philanthropy with a European purpose can strengthen the values, rights and principles associated with Europe. Europe must become an integral part of as many foundation agendas as possible, not as a stand-alone Europe programme but as a red thread woven across foundation programmes and actions. Also local rooted foundations should have a say in the making of our European future.

One of the biggest projects of coordinated solidarity is the European project.

Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity.

Robert Schuman

These were the words of Robert Schuman presenting the Schuman Plan on 9 May 1950 – the day which we celebrate each year as Europe Day.⁵ Seventy-two years have passed since then, which resulted in the abolishment of borders, in the creation of the biggest common market, the Euro, a charter on fundamental rights, Erasmus – the world's largest student exchange programme, and even Eurovision and the Champions League but philanthropy with a European purpose remains uncharted territory. The process of European integration seems to have stopped at the doorstep of the European philanthropy sector.

There are a handful of small European foundations, and some national foundations which engage in European exchange and collaboration or dedicate a fraction of their resources to a European programme, project or to European issues, but genuine European philanthropy hardly exists. ECF wanted to know why and together with the Allianz Kulturstiftung commissioned Wider Sense in 2020 the study 'Imagine Philanthropy for Europe'.⁶

Foundations in Europe invest together €60 billion euros annually in the common good but Europe is left out.⁷ The study identifies a number of technical and political hurdles. There are cross-border legal and tax problems as well as language barriers that need to be overcome. The authors also demonstrate that the European Union has so far not really regarded philanthropy as a 'game changer' and thus has not allocated much attention to it yet. However, these factors alone cannot explain the clear lack of a European perspective in the foundation sector. Rather, it is the lack of desire for Europe among philanthropists and foundations that is the greatest barrier. The study aims to inspire how this can change and how philanthropy for Europe can be shaped in the future.

We believe the EU must invest in its preparedness for future crisis to come, and philanthropy can play a critical role in this process. Philanthropy for Europe needs to act internally and externally, push its boundaries and those of the European Institutions. We call on the EU to create the legal, fiscal and political conditions for genuine European public-private partnership instruments to be launched, using effective and impactful examples such as the Culture of Solidarity Fund. As the war on Ukraine continues to ravage, it would make all the more sense to invest in a ready-made fund which has proven its agility, flexibility and rapidness in responding to emergency needs while being able to invest in longer-term projects.

Conclusion

The multitude and scale of crisis situations have proven that cooperation and new alliances matter more than ever to make European solidarity a transforming reality. We need to awaken the desire of European foundations to invest in our common European project, and push the European Institutions to facilitate powerful public-private partnerships for Europe. With this, we wish to invite you to reflect on Philanthropy with a European purpose, and imagine ways for you to contribute to it. We look very much forward to hearing your comments, views and suggestions.

Notes

1. De Rougement, D. *Habeas Animam* (1955a).
2. ECFR, European Sentiment Compass, launched on 9 May 2022.
3. The Europe Challenge: <https://theeuropechallenge.eu/the-europe-challenge-2022/>.
4. <https://culturalfoundation.eu/stories/cultural-deal-for-europe>.
5. Schuman Declaration, 9 May 1950.
6. Wider Sense 2020, *Imagine Philanthropy for Europe*, ECF & Allianz Kulturstiftung.
7. Daphne and European Foundations Centre 2015.

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4.4 The potential of crowdfunding in culture

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The concept of a financing mix

The financial landscape is varied and is composed of different types of finance, ranging from bank loans and microcredits to philanthropic giving and public funding. The combination of different financing sources used to finance activities and operations is called the financing mix of an organization. An example of a financing mix is the simultaneous use of a grant, crowdfunding and own income from, for example, ticket sales. The main advantage of a balanced financing mix is the non-dependence on a single type of financing (and financier). Moreover, it allows an organization to combine the strengths of different types of finance. Also, when a financier commits to financing a project, organization, etc., other financiers also tend to be more willing and motivated to provide funding (PWC, 2021). Another interesting example is **matchfunding**, a combination of crowdfunding and institutional funding to realize ideas and projects together. It is a new way of public-private collaboration in project financing, where additional funds are provided for the financing of (social, cultural, ...) projects by matchfunding partners, such as a regional or city government, on the basis of their criteria (Senabre and Morell, 2018; European Crowdfunding Network, 2018; IDEA Consult et al., 2017).

Typically, a good financing mix is the combination of internal income and external financing sources. While internal income is the money derived from the sales of own products, services or intellectual property rights, external financing sources can come from different so-called-‘financing spheres’ (Klamer, 2005; IDEA Consult, 2020; Loots, Betzler, Bille, Borowiecki and Lee, 2022) such as

- **Government sphere:** policymakers or government agencies manage public funding, and distribute them on the basis of grant applications and in line with the strategic priorities of that government.
- **Market sphere:** here the market relations and business contracts play a central role. In this sphere, we find, for example, bank loans and equity finance. Financiers expect a financial return on investment in line with the financial risks that they take.
- **Social and informal sphere:** in this sphere, financiers provide finance on the basis of a personal belief in a project’s ‘good cause’ and individual commitment, rather than contractual commercial terms or grant applications. Here we find, for example, donation, patronage, volunteer work, etc. Financiers expect a social return rather than a financial return on their investment.

- **Hybrid sphere:** finally, there is also finance where financiers expect a combination of a social and financial return on their investment. For instance, impact investing and venture philanthropy belong to this sphere.

How does crowdfunding fit into this discourse of the four financing spheres? Both the rise of new communication technologies and the increasing interest of individuals in generating impact by directly engaging with and supporting companies led to the rise and evolution of crowdfunding.

The next paragraph briefly presents what crowdfunding is, which crowdfunding models exist and what this implies.

General characteristics of crowdfunding

Crowdfunding is a way of raising money to finance projects, ideas or organizations, by collecting financial contributions from a large number of people via an online platform.

Crowdfunding is not a single indistinct category and a difference must be made between different crowdfunding models. Attributing these different models to the various financing spheres is not only a theoretical exercise, but also has very tangible practical implications. The main crowdfunding models are:

- **Donation-based** (social and informal financing sphere): this model consists of individuals donating to a project or business with the expectation of receiving no financial or material return in exchange.
- **Reward-based** (hybrid financing sphere): contrary to the donation-based model, in reward-based crowdfunding funders expect to receive a tangible (but non-financial) reward or product in return. The rewards range from cultural products (e.g. book, game, etc.), to creator's souvenirs or the promise of being part of the project (e.g. a hero in a book, movie or game).
- **Crowdlending** (market financing sphere): this is a direct alternative to a bank loan with the difference that, instead of borrowing from a single source, companies and individuals borrow directly from tens, sometimes hundreds, of individuals and/or organizations who are ready to lend, but expect a financial return. Although money must still be repaid, the whole process can be more flexible than applying for a bank loan.
- **Crowd-equity** (market financing sphere): it consists of selling a share in the organization to a number of investors. Compared to the traditional equity models, equity crowdfunding gives the possibility of offering shares to a wide range of potential investors, some of whom may also be current or future customers.

While a variety of types of crowdfunding models are available, crowdfunding in cultural and creative sectors (CCS) is predominantly of the reward-based type, as the most comprehensive EU-wide study conducted to date on crowdfunding for culture demonstrates (IDEA Consult et al., 2017).

Some figures on the use of crowdfunding between 2013 and 2016

88 per cent of the estimated 74,000 campaigns launched between January 2013 and October 2016 by stakeholders in the cultural sector in Europe were reward-based. 8 per cent of the CCS campaigns have used donation-based crowdfunding and only 2 per cent have used crowdfunding for loans. The equity crowdfunding model and other models have only been used marginally.

Source: IDEA Consult et al., Reshaping the crowd's engagement in culture, 2017, p. 71.

For the majority of crowdfunding campaigns, a **third-party crowdfunding platform** acts as a matchmaker between fundraiser and the crowd. There is a wide spectrum of crowdfunding platforms working with different business models, fee structures, different degrees of public sector involvement, different geographical coverage, sectors and services offered. Sometimes crowdfunding campaigns also happen without the involvement of a third-party platform, when fundraisers collect funding directly from their own online channels.

The next paragraph explores the use of crowdfunding in the cultural and creative sector.

Crowdfunding for culture and creativity: Benefits and barriers

The use of crowdfunding in culture has ancient roots, when the Internet did not yet exist and crowdfunding campaigns were offline. Mozart used it in 1783, for example (Zghuladze, 2019). However, the use of new (online) communication channels and platforms in the last two decades has boosted access to new channels for financing and co-production of cultural projects. The affirmation of crowdfunding in the twenty-first century as a financing instrument in the cultural and creative sector coincided with the worsening of the economic situation in 2008 and the pressure suffered by public budgets (including for culture). Similarly to professionals in other sectors, cultural and creative actors started exploring the extent to which crowdfunding could be part of their financing mix, next to grants and other types of private financing. More recently, the Covid-19 pandemic and consequent lockdown(s) have also given a further boost to the use of digital technology to raise money from the crowd (Kędzierska-Szczepaniak A. et al., 2021).

From the first moments of its use up to today's affirmation, crowdfunding has proven to be an **interesting financing instrument for cultural and creative professionals** for various reasons (IDEA Consult et al., 2017):

- One of the main financing needs of CCS organizations is represented by **project finance** that often involves smaller amounts of money: these characteristics make crowdfunding more suitable than traditional banking instruments. It is no coincidence that, unlike in many other industries, cultural sectors have a long history of project financing via patronage and public fundraising initiatives.

- CCS actors are very diverse, in terms of type of activities, way of working, position in the value chain and connection to communities. Many are not primarily profit-oriented, but rather **social purpose-oriented**. Some of the actors (e.g. museums) are highly dependent on public funding and donations, while others have more opportunities to generate income from the market. The **different financing needs** of this multitude of actors can be covered by the different crowdfunding models. In fact, crowdfunding is used to finance a large variety of different needs, very often coinciding with the different position of CCS actors in the value chain. For example, in times of increasing self-production of artistic content, crowdfunding represents a pathway towards a more open and diverse cultural production. Crowdfunding is also used to raise money for the restoration and maintenance of cultural heritage, for audience development purposes or to develop skills.
- CCS actors can be in **different stages of development** of their organization (e.g. ideation phase, start-up, growing, established). Also in this case, the various models of crowdfunding provide possibilities suitable for each of these actors. Crowdfunding can support organizations in their ideation and start-up phases. It is also a (relatively new) method to fund start-ups. After its successful implementation in the non-profit and social, it is now innovating in the domain of start-up financing. Crowdfunding is also a suitable tool for those organizations whose growth/expansion goals are satisfied and that want to keep audiences engaged or mobilize new investors.

These various reasons make crowdfunding an interesting choice for CCS actors when it comes to building their own funding mix. Although some risks and challenges are associated with crowdfunding, the literature and a multitude of inspiring cases show that the **benefits** of adopting crowdfunding and setting up a strong crowdfunding campaign in culture very often go **beyond the financial aspect**. First, crowdfunding allows to strengthen stakeholder engagement and community building. Seven forms of value co-creation between campaign creators and prospective fans and backers are identified in literature and valued as relevant: co-ideation, co-design, co-evaluation of ideas, co-financing, co-testing, co-launch and co-consumption (Quero M. et al., 2017). Crowdfunding also helps communicate a strong story or vision to the public, as well as to new investors (outside the crowdfunding sphere). In fact, being able to raise finance through crowdfunding can potentially convince other external financiers to invest.

Zooming in on the power of community (and users) engagement

The benefits of crowdfunding go far beyond just funding as it gives the opportunity to gather and enthuse supporters, but also to (pre-)show a large group a future product or project. A European study on crowdfunding in culture shows that crowdfunding has a leverage effect that can go beyond the funding of one project: CCS actors surveyed highlight that they experienced at least one other benefit from running a crowdfunding campaign beyond the finance, such as:

- (co-)financing a specific creative project, in the absence of other available finance,

- matching other types of finance,
- audience development,
- community building,
- internal strategy and skills development,
- communication and marketing, and
- market research (IDEA Consult et al., 2017).

Creating a community

What makes crowdfunding unique compared to other financing sources, is the presence of a community of individuals and organizations. The crowd might have various motivations to engage in a crowdfunding campaign, such as participating in the creative process or gaining recognition and prestige. In general, the emotional involvement, rather than monetary incentives, tends to lead individuals to crowdfunding participation (Marchegiani, 2018 and Josefy et al., 2016). Every crowdfunding campaign has a relevant audience/community of interested people who identify with the values behind the campaign, might benefit from the project or are just willing to contribute. The correct identification of the nature of this potential community is an important success factor of any crowdfunding campaign. However, the power of the community goes beyond determining the success (or failure) of a campaign. While the campaign may be partially successful in terms of fundraising, it is still an interesting tool for community-building and audience development.

Testing the market

When it comes to raising money from the crowd for a product or service that has not yet been created, the separation between investors and users is subtle (Marchegiani, 2018; IDEA Consult et al., 2017; Handke and Dalla Chiesa, 2022; The MU). In CCS crowdfunding, backers often pledge without a commercial interest but based on the use value of the cultural project or product envisaged in the campaign. Crowdfunding provides creators with a means to test the market before incurring production costs: the success of the campaign provides them with valuable information on the potential demand for the finished product. Moreover, in case the campaign is successful, it can also play the role of market signal (e.g. proof of concept) towards other financiers (outside the crowd). The successful campaign indicates that the fundraiser has a valuable fan-base to build on.

While the benefits to CCS actors are multiple, running a crowdfunding campaign also comes with **some caveats** that need to be carefully considered. There are many reasons why CCS actors tend not to adopt crowdfunding frequently. The main one is the **uncertainty about the final cost-benefit result**. Crowdfunding requires a lot of commitment in the beginning without the certainty of implementation (Kędzierska-Szczepaniak et al., 2021). Although the number of campaigns has increased significantly in recent years, this cannot be said about the success rates, which has remained stable on 49 per cent between 2014 and 2016 in CCS campaigns. Moreover, sometimes crowdfunding might challenge project creators to strike a balance between the economic and socio-cultural value of their project, as well as

between independent expression and co-creation with others. Therefore, sometimes it is difficult not to lose sight of the values of your work.

The main factors affecting the level of trust in crowdfunding by CCS actors are:

- **Information asymmetry.** The relation between the crowd, platforms and project holders, in combination with information asymmetries that exist between policy makers and platforms, as well as between platforms and other providers of finance for the CCS are one of the main barriers. This translates into a lack of trust of the crowd towards crowdfunding in general and towards either the payment system(s) or the project holders themselves.
- **Fragmentation of crowdfunding platforms.** Most platforms specialize in niche markets and operate only in specific regions or cities. Operating in niche markets can limit opportunities for crowdfunding platforms to scale up and this leaves many European platforms in a vulnerable economic situation, because they are unable to upscale to a cost-efficient size and benefit from economies of scale.
- **Need for time and skills.** Communicating the quality of the project is not always easy if marketing skills are lacking. Some elements such as the campaign text length, as well as media richness in terms of number of images, videos and graphics included in the campaign all count in deciding the success or failure of a campaign. Tapping the right niche audiences and developing communities around projects with a sense of belonging is also challenging and time consuming.
- **Visibility on crowdfunding platforms.** Usually, campaigns tend to reach a certain amount of money and then they stop engaging new contributors. The reasons are connected to the fact that campaigns are more visible in the beginning and, over time, they tend to go to the back pages of the platforms. While some platforms adopt manual curation by the staff (e.g. Kickstarter), others automatically sort campaigns (e.g. Indiegogo). The latter work in fact with algorithms that influence campaigns' visibility and outreach, depending on aspects, such as the scope of a campaign's social engagement and global reach. Therefore, fundraisers should consider investing time and resources in a marketing strategy to promote the campaign (Dobрева, 2017).

Some inspiring cases

Inspiring case: Jonny S – Rap Album Tattoo 2.0

In the spring of 2015, the rapper Jonny S had a crowdfunding for his album 'Tattoo' on Startnext. The funding goal was not reached at that time. The rapper then ran a new crowdfunding campaign through his own page. He divided the funding goal of €23,000 EUR into four stages. This case presents his experiences with direct crowdfunding.

Source: Jonny S – Rap Album Tattoo 2.0 | crowdfunding.de

Inspiring case: The City of Sin

This case presents a non-successful campaign of equity crowdfunding. The fundraiser faced key challenges, such as territorial restrictions, poor use of social media and the lack of a pragmatic assessment of the commercial offering to the market.

Source: Equity_Crowdfunding_for_the_Arts_and_Cre.pdf, p. 57

Inspiring case: A good goal

This case shows how the campaign to raise money for a new book, 'A Good Goal' was not only successful, but also allowed the fundraiser to test his ideas here. *'If no one buys my book, maybe I shouldn't publish it'.*

Source: A good goal | crowdfunding.de

Inspiring case: How crowdfunding saved the Sawtell Cinema

This case shows how a well-thought and well-managed campaign led to the mobilization of an entire small local community, thus going beyond the foreseen fundraising target. One of the success factors is the way in which the goals of the campaign aligned with the culture and interests of its focal crowdfunding community.

Source: How Crowdfunding Saved The Sawtell Cinema | The Chuffed.org Academy

Conclusions

Although crowdfunding is a well-known instrument among cultural and creative communities, its potential is not yet fully unleashed due to information asymmetry, lack of skills and technical issues linked to the use of online platforms. Donation and reward-based crowdfunding appear to be the most popular crowdfunding models used by CCS professionals, while investment-based models such as crowdlending and crowd-equity have only marginally been explored so far (Rykkja et al., 2020).

For crowdfunding to become an integral part of the CCS financing mix and for CCS actors to move from project-based finance towards more longer-term organization finance, there is a need for more 'financial literacy' training of CCS actors, as well as skills development to support strong outreach efforts and constant communication with communities. There is in fact a general need for more crowdfunding-oriented training for CCS workers and in particular artists (Rykkja et al., 2020; IDEA Consult et al., 2017: 92). At the same time, policymakers can also effectively contribute to crowdfunding to scale up by experimenting with matchfunding, where institutional funding is matched with crowdfunding on an online platform.

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Web-based resources

Crowdfunding4Culture Resources and Platforms: Resources | Crowdfunding for Culture (crowdfunding4culture.eu) and Platforms Map | Crowdfunding for Culture (crowdfunding4culture.eu).

Music Album Release Using Crowdfunding, article accessible via the following link: Music Album Release Using Crowdfunding | The MU (musiciansunion.org.uk).

10 crowdfunding platforms for financing cultural initiatives: 10 CROWDFUNDING PLATFORMS FOR FINANCING CULTURAL INITIATIVES (culturepartnership.eu).

A new web application called So You Need Money Tool will be released in fall 2022 and will contain an updated overview of crowdfunding platforms accessible by the cultural and creative sectors.

4.5 Cultural entrepreneurship and funding policies in Europe

ANNICK SCHRAMME

Introduction

The first period of the twenty-first century has challenged the world. We see around us huge changes driven by globalization, technological and social developments and more recently the impact of the Corona pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the energy crisis. Collectively these have had significant impact on society, more specifically for our purposes, on the arts and cultural sector.

It is within this context that the public funding systems for arts and culture in Europe are facing increased pressure to change. After the Second World War cultural policies in different West-European countries were developed and seen as part of the welfare state, with the democratization of culture as the main policy goal (Schramme, 2020). However, since the rise of neoliberalism in the 1980s, a more market-oriented approach together with privatization tendencies has intensified.

Consequently, the 'political' decision as to whether to support the arts and cultural sector is no longer an automatic response. Rather, we are living in a period in which questions regarding the value and contribution of the arts and cultural sector are continually being re-visited. Certainly, since the financial crisis of 2008, most European countries (with the exception of the Nordic countries and Germany) have systematically reduced subsidies and are encouraging the arts and cultural sector to look elsewhere for additional funding to subsidies. They want to encourage a context where rather than relying primarily on governmental support, cultural organizations are obliged to find other financial resources in order to survive. In the Netherlands for example, the overall budget for arts and culture in 2012 was reduced by 20 to 25 per cent. Art organizations and museums had to demonstrate that they were entrepreneurial and were able to find income sources other than subsidies from the state or the region. Since then, a number of cultural organizations proved to be very agile and robust, whereas others unfortunately had to stop their activities or had to merge with others. This kind of radical 'cutting budgets' policy confronts us with the key fundamental question regarding the role of government in terms of giving support to the arts and cultural sector.

The traditional system of direct financial support to cultural organizations is now under scrutiny and this is reinforced by the corona pandemic and the energy crisis. While a lot of governments have found extra money to lead the arts and cultural sector through these

crises, this extra support is only temporary (and illusionary) because it is also contributing to increased governmental debt that will need to be repaid in the future. Therefore, it seems inevitable that several European governments will in the future keep calling for arts and cultural organizations to develop a more entrepreneurial attitude and to look for more differentiation in their financial income.

Cultural entrepreneurship

Although entrepreneurship research has gained greater legitimacy and found its rightful place within major management journals over the past two decades (Busenitz et al., 2011), a generally accepted definition of entrepreneurship in the research community is still lacking (Parker, 2009 and Brixy, Sternberg and Stüber, 2012). This is even more true for the field of entrepreneurship within the cultural and creative sectors. However, one can distinguish at least two important definitions. Firstly, entrepreneurship can refer to owning and managing a business on one's own account and at one's own risk (the occupational notion of entrepreneurship). Secondly, entrepreneurship can refer to 'entrepreneurial behaviour', in the sense of incorporating economic opportunities (the behavioural notion of entrepreneurship) (Brixy, Sternberg and Stüber, 2012 and Van Andel, 2020). The latter is the most interesting to investigate in terms of the arts and cultural sector. However, seeing entrepreneurship as the panacea only for economic health of cultural organizations is also limited. Entrepreneurship, seen more widely, as an engine of development, or as a flywheel for innovation in cultural field, had created both profit and non-profit endeavours, that are both important for the creative sector ecosystem (Dragicevic Sestic, 2020).

As mentioned in the introduction, one of the main reasons for the rise of the concept of 'cultural entrepreneurship' is the changing political, social and economic environment since the end of the 1990s, which will be elaborated on below.

Creative industries on the political agenda

Perhaps the first step took place in the UK at the end of the 1990s,¹ with the creative industries coming onto the political agenda. The catalyst was a statement by the then Labour government, which was looking to identify new sectors that could fuel economic prosperity as an alternative to the failing old industrial drivers of employment, steel and finance. They observed that creative activities such as architecture, design, fashion and some art productions were creating new industrial-scale movements. These industries contributed almost 8 per cent of the UK's GDP and employed more than 2 million people. What was even more important was that the figures showed an increasing trend, in stark contrast to the old industry sectors (Department of Culture, Media & Sport, 1998, Pratt, 2005, Garnham, 2005, Galloway and Dunlop, 2007 and Flew, 2012). It was clear that these industries were based on the individual quality of (artistic) creativity and that there was huge potential.

The publications of Richard Florida (2002) and Charles Landry (2006) about 'the creative city' also had a huge impact on city governments. According to Florida, the creative class would foster the local economy and increase the attractiveness of the city. National and local governments became aware of the potential richness of the creative industries and started to develop their own strategies using the creative industries as a catalyzing

sector which attracts other sectors along with a highly qualified workforce (Florida, 2002, Collet, 2007, Pratt, 2010 and Hagoort, 2012).

On a global level, two studies went on to illustrate the global impact of the creative industries: the European Commission Green Paper on the creative industries (2010) and the UN Creative Economy Report (2008), which described the creative economy as one which is led by the potential for creativity and innovation to promote social prosperity worldwide. Since then, almost every European country has developed their own definition of the creative industries over the last ten years and has undertaken their own economic impact analysis (average 3 per cent of GDP).

Despite recognizing this potential, all of the research that has been undertaken in exploring this has come to one similar conclusion: that is, one of the big barriers for the development of the full economic potential of the creative industries is the lack of entrepreneurial skills (Hagoort, 2012).

Education in cultural entrepreneurship

Despite its importance, and bearing in mind that a considerable percentage of those working in the creative sector are self-employed, there is insufficient integration of entrepreneurship education into general curricula and arts education programs (DCMS, 1998). In fact, the tendency for artists to become self-employed (at some point in their career), work on a freelance basis, operate on temporary contracts and work part-time is, it seems, considerably higher than for graduates of other more traditional courses (Roberta Communian, 2014). This is also the situation in other European countries.

Through its Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan and its Communication on 'Rethinking Education', the European Commission has emphasized the need to embed entrepreneurial learning in all sectors of education, including non-formal learning. One of the four strategic objectives of the Commission is: 'enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training' (EU Communication, 'Rethinking education: investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes', November 2012). Both documents call on Member States to provide all young people with practical entrepreneurial experience before completing their compulsory education, highlighting the importance of *learning by doing* within education and training.

Although the Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan of the EC presented some strong arguments in favour of making education more entrepreneurial, civil society criticized its main focus on the economic output of education and on the labour market. In particular, the arts education institutions asked the Commission to offer students also time to learn and to experiment, to think 'outside the box' and to develop their own identity as an artist and /or creator (Rethinking Education, 2013).

However, the main question remains: How can we prepare young cultural entrepreneurs and artists for this dynamic, but at the same time, uncertain modern work sphere? (Leadbeater and Oakley, 1999, Beckman, 2007 and Bridgstock, 2013) It could be argued that the impact of the different crises on cultural education needs to be addressed through a transition regarding content, process and perspective. This would not merely require a new combination of existing experiences and courses, but a fundamentally new way of addressing the entrepreneurial dimension of art and culture. Jacobs and Kooyman (2015)

distinguish a number of dilemmas that teachers in arts schools and in cultural entrepreneurship education today are facing:

Dilemma 1: How do we teach risk-taking?

If traditional art (management) education wants to respond to the challenges, then a new entrepreneurial orientation needs to be developed in order to make artists and arts managers more agile and resilient. Besides the traditional art skills (these remain the most important ones), more entrepreneurial skills need to be developed. Interestingly, some authors like de Bruin and van AnDEL also include the external environment for creative entrepreneurship in their value chain, with the entrepreneur (the individual level), the state (the national level) and the community (the regional level) combining to make up an entrepreneurship continuum (Colette, 2007).

Dilemma 2: How can we develop an intuitive mind?

Many studies show that entrepreneurs are likely to be more intuitive than rational thinkers (Sarasvathy, 2001, Kirby, 2004, Chandler, DeTienne, McKelvie and Mumford, 2011 and Van AnDEL and Schramme, 2015). Van AnDEL and Schramme (2015) observed that the effectuation logic is much more common than the causation logic. To cope with dynamic environment it is also important to have a well-developed sensitivity for the context in which one is working; something Jacobs and Kooyman like to call 'context sensibility'. This acquires a more holistic and syntactical way of looking at the world instead of a sequential reasoned and randomized method of exploration. Techniques like divergent thinking, ethnographic imagination and hermeneutic interpretation could help to enhance this ability.

Dilemma 3: How do we prepare students for an uncertain world?

Certainly, one of the most important learning needs is 'self-awareness'. This asks for personal leadership, the ability to put one-self on the line, being accountable, taking charge and accept failure as inherent to life and work.

Dilemma 4: How do we teach young artists and cultural managers to work together?

A 'cultural entrepreneur' who enters the professional domain will be confronted with the fact that he/she needs to cooperate with others on a small scale, via bottom-up networks. It is of the utmost importance to create a solid network in order to survive and prosper and to create their own 'entrepreneurial identity' (Werthes, 2017). The Cultural and Creative sectors depend highly on cooperation, project-based work and interdisciplinarity and demand a communal way of thinking (Hagoort, 2016). This need for collaboration and sharing resources is even more urgent after the pandemic. More networks and collaborative activities need to be supported (DCMS, 2006: 48). Furthermore, the impact of technology and ICT on the creative sector should not be underestimated. We shall come back to that later.

Dilemma 5: How do we promote a sustainable attitude?

Cultural and Creative Entrepreneurs have to generate their individual earnings in a volatile market, and this might be easy in a context of abundance, but if attitudes change and society now expects a more sustainable future, this demands that entrepreneurs will have to adapt themselves. Therefore, it is important to discuss the social and ecological implications of entrepreneurship. Not by preaching, but by showing them that ethical awareness is part of modern entrepreneurship (Jacobs and Kooyman, 2015). Climate change and environmental degradation are an existential threat to Europe and the world. To overcome these challenges, the European Green Deal (2021) was approved and aims to transform the EU into a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy. How shall the cultural and creative sectors relate to this important European Green Deal and how shall they integrate this in and adapt it to their way of working (Gijs de Vries, 2020).

Public, private and mixed funding

If we believe that society in general, and the creative and cultural sectors in particular, need to become more flexible, digital and entrepreneurial, then the question arises: 'What does the role of the government in supporting the arts and the cultural and creative sectors continue to be?' What are the alternatives to the traditional way of funding and supporting?

Shifts from direct public funding to the indirect support or support for entrepreneurship by governments, accompanied by the rise of new sources of private funding, are leading to a new funding landscape (Klamer, 1996, Throsby, 2010, KEA, 2010 and European Commission, 2018). Certainly, we are witnessing now that the boundaries between public and private funding are starting to blur.

One such perspective is described by Klamer and Petrova in 2006. The study describes the various sources of financing culture in Europe for the period 2000–5, focusing on the State, the market and the non-profit sector. The analysis covers public direct financial support (subsidies, awards and grants, as well as lottery funds provided by central and lower levels of governments); public indirect financial support (tax expenditures); private financial support from non-profit organizations, business organizations and individual donations.

Arjo Klamer argued that cultural organizations can position themselves in three different spheres for attracting external funding (Klamer, 2013):

- 1 The government sphere or the public sphere, which mainly provides grants and evaluates grant applications.
- 2 The market sphere: where the market relationship and business agreements are central.
- 3 The social or informal atmosphere, where 'giving' is central.

In later work, Klamer expanded his conceptual framework of the spheres with a fourth sphere, namely that of the 'oikos'. It consists of the personal environment of the artist or organization. These people are often willing to provide support based on personal considerations (we also include 'fans, friends and family' among them). There are also mixed formats,

such as the emerging social profit sphere with cooperatives, 'philanthropic venturing' and so on (Klamer, 2013 and IDEA Consult, 2015).

Market orientation

This may raise a future fundamental question, will the market sphere or the social sphere eventually replace the public sphere? At this time it is probably too early to answer but certainly for the immediate future public funding will continue to be important because of the European culture policy tradition and the predominant view on the social role of culture. However, research in Belgium also shows that finding additional financing is not yet firmly established in all countries, even though many show an entrepreneurial attitude (Van Doninck and Schramme, 2019). Most cultural actors are much less familiar with the market and/or the social environment and for this area to expand in terms of impact and importance greater awareness and understanding needs to be developed.

It is also important to note that this continuous call from governments for a higher differentiation of financial resources is not always easy for the arts and cultural sector, for if they do not demonstrate parallel advancement in their craft, then they are not fulfilling their own purpose – but likewise, such content might only be of interest to narrower, specialist audiences – thus, producing the challenge of balancing the advancement of their artistic/cultural programme with attracting sufficient income to cover their costs is a difficult and precarious process.

Moreover, not every cultural actor can obtain resources from the market to the same extent, so that it is not useful or feasible for everyone. According to Hesters & van Looy, the variables of scale, genre/artistic discipline and function in the value chain and whether or not they have their own infrastructure together explain a solid 50 per cent of the differences in market orientation within the group of structurally subsidized arts organizations (Van Looy and Hesters, 2013). According to Richard Caves, creative productions are always risky, since artists and (other) producers never know in advance whether their work will be positively received and thus reach a sufficiently large audience (Caves, 2003 and Van Looy and Hesters, 2016: 6; *Ins & Outs van de podiumkunsten*, in: *Kwarts*, Kunstzaken 2016: 6; *zie ook: Ins & Outs van podiumland*, 2011). Regarding the degree of market orientation, another distinction can be made between those industries that are primarily oriented to local markets and other industries that are global winner-take-all markets (like film, gaming, music). National policies are seeking to develop subsidized survival strategies to ensure cultural diversity. These policies were reinforced during the corona pandemic. The CCIs are facing challenges all the time and (Abbing, Menger, 1999) entry barriers are low whereas risks for newcomers can be high (Caves, 2000).

Between social return and financial return

The different values that cultural actors use for attracting financial resources are situated somewhere on the continuum between financial return and social return (IDEA Consult, 2015). Some forms of financing are only possible when a financial return can be expected. This is the case, for example, with traditional bank loans (no loan if there is no security for repayment (with interest)). The other end of the continuum is less about financial return

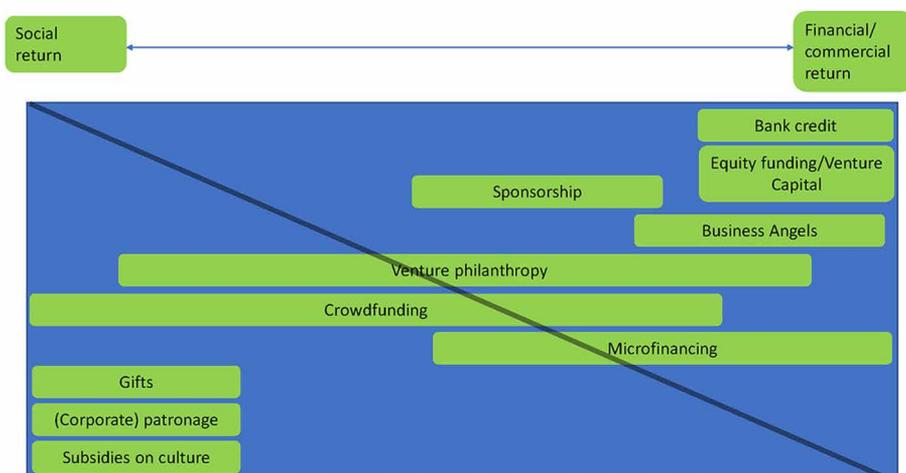


Figure 4.5.1 Different forms of financing and their expected return (IDEA Consult).

and more about social return. Various forms of philanthropy are situated here. Whereas lying in between is a mix of both financial return and social return. Venture philanthropy is an example of this, as are sponsoring and microfinance (Figure 4.5.1). When looking for additional financing, it is important to clearly reflect in advance about which match one wants to make between public and private funding (DevolderE, 2013, IDEA Consult, 2015).

To create greater social support for culture, there is also room for improvement in establishing stronger connections between culture and other domains, such as media, education, youth or care, so that more people come into contact with 'more intense and meaningful relations' with the arts and so that the importance of culture in our society is interpreted more broadly (IDEA Consult, 2015: 21). Examples of public-private funding can also be identified at European level for example, the European Union and the European Investment Fund guarantee banks' loan portfolios to the CCI (Dalle Nogare and Bertacchini, 2015).

In addition to the possibility of approaching other and therefore also private financiers, the possibilities of mixed public-private partnerships are also growing. However, these are still under full exploration, including in the heritage sector. Nor is it a self-evident phenomenon: after all, both poles start from a different logic, with commercial logic often clashing with considerations of general public interest (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006).

Another domain that is not discussed in more detail in this chapter is the civic domain or the domain of the commons. This citizens' movement originated from civil society and we see it emerging in many European cities and regions. Citizens are taking the initiative and reclaiming the public space in their city or region, as a response to an increasing privatization. Cultural actors often take the lead in this process. They often use indirect public and private resources. Ethical banking and crowdfunding are also popular tools for them (Patti and Polyák 2017).

Finally, the coronavirus pandemic crisis provided also a momentum to explore the potential (and limitations) of new forms of finance and funding in the digital space. There are

examples worldwide of ways in which the CCI have experimented with new digital formats of interaction and public participation during the crisis. And also besides digital production and digital distribution technologies, a broad range of 'digital fundraising technologies' are established: from crowdfunding platforms to funding of artistic projects by blockchain technology (Peukert, 2019 and Loots et al., 2022). It remains to be seen which digital formats will be successful in the longer term.

Conclusion

It is clear that due to economic globalization, the financial crisis of 2008 and the Covid pandemic in 2020, the traditional cultural funding system is not sufficient anymore. European governments are calling for more entrepreneurship and more differentiation of financial resources for the cultural and creative sectors. Meanwhile the public authorities are also looking for (indirect) instruments other than direct subsidies to support the CCI, including tax incentives.

It is clear that the relationship between the public, private (profit and not-for-profit) and civil domains in the cultural sector are shifting. The input of private actors (both profit and not-for-profit) in the cultural sector and vice versa is increasingly being looked at. This is even more evident at the local level and within the local cultural ecosystem (Holden, 2015). However, this increase of public-private partnerships may also jeopardize certain public values (based on cultural democracy, diversity, innovation, sustainability and quality control) that previously seemed obvious. In such a volatile context, politicians and public authorities need to be even more aware of the reasons why and to whom they will give support. Therefore, it will remain important that within these new connections the various values are considered and respected by both sides (IDEA Consult, 2015: 42).

According to some academics, we can even observe the emergence of a new funding paradigm, which steps away from a clear demarcation between public and private and embraces collaborative funding mechanisms such as crowdfunding, incubator and accelerator finance, and other pooled investments, as well as digital fundraising technologies (Patrickson, 2021 and Loots et al., 2022).

Successfully supporting the cultural and creative sectors in the future will be a major challenge for governments, not only in Europe but also worldwide. Also, for researchers, there is no doubt that these cultural and creative sectors will continue to present themselves as an interesting topic for research on an international scale, particularly with respect to entrepreneurship and new funding mechanisms.

Note

1. The elaboration of the notion 'Arts Administration' was first carried out by John Pick in 1980.

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Part 5 Culture, the climate emergency and the sustainable development goals

5.1 Senses of purpose

LUCIA PIETROIUSTI

While what I do is generally situated under the curatorial banner, I didn't train as a curator at any point, except while doing the job itself. In university, I studied English and French literature, followed by postgraduate degrees in women and gender studies, and after that, critical and cultural theory. The combination of these multiple paths – all rooted in the humanities – alongside a lifelong fascination with biology, genetics and geology, led me, in the first instance, to dedicate part of my professional career to what was referred to at the time, in many institutions, as 'Public Programming'. Approaches to public programming differ from one art organization to another, but in general, it is a field that can encompass a very wide range of ways of interacting with an art organization's audiences. Oftentimes (certainly more so before the Covid-19 pandemic), these were live, in-person, time-based encounters. Frequently, they would involve contributions by participants from fields of research and disciplines adjacent – but not identical to – art. Sometimes, programmes could take the form of time-based commissions by artists, which by their very nature, bring about the possibility of collaboration between artists and, say, musicians, designers, choreographers and so forth. That is to say, that the discourses that have surrounded me over the years have been as numerous as they have been different from one another. This example comes from real-life experience: put an oceanographer and a theologian in a room, and what will emerge, in the first instance, will be an attempt at translation across disciplinary language divides. This, in itself, will take time.

Specializations are powerful forces; they shape brains as much as they fill the time of our working lives. By virtue of necessity, a specialization requires the refinement of a particular code – a language, a shorthand, a community of practice, a shared paradigm of understanding. They also require forms of selection: as the object of study comes into sharper and sharper focus, the rest dissolves into the blurry background. Signal and noise are established firmly, and every field of specialization makes signal and noise out of different objects. In response to this, and in part owing to a distinctive lack of specialization on my part, my instinct has always been to try to listen out for points of resonance between these languages, these codes: places from which, at a distance, different fields of study or practice appear to be reaching out towards one another: a yearning that never quite reaches the other side, or only rarely. This has also been what has brought me the greatest amount of intellectual fulfilment over the years, and it is only recently that I have come to realize that this activity itself, this habit of mind, plays a big part in my articulating my own 'sense of purpose' as a person – a notion I will try to unpack over the paragraphs that follow, across different scales and structures. There is a particular joy, a jolt of pleasure, in these moments, when

things that are so far away appear to move towards, and sometimes even touch, each other. It feels like a circuit that was always broken finally becomes connected. Or, put another way: it feels like zooming out and realizing the larger weave which connects everything and always did. It is an experience that is a little bit sublime: a sense of *finding sense*, of making sense of the here-and-now. We get a similar feeling, perhaps, in other situations: a work of art connects us to a larger understanding, a sense of something deeper; a sentence in a book strikes a chord within.

Now: these moments are isolated events and very intimate ones, but taken seriously, they point towards something that, I feel, is at the very core of issues around ecology and the environment. In his book-length essay, *The Great Derangement*, author Amitav Ghosh (2017) describes a contemporary crisis of the imagination, found throughout scientific and narrative thought alike, as the greatest obstacle to facing contemporary environmental breakdown. Identifying a trend emerging from the European Enlightenment and its shadow – empire – Ghosh speaks of ‘discontinuities’ as a habit of mind: ‘to break problems into smaller and smaller puzzles until a solution presented itself. This is a way of thinking that deliberately excludes things and forces (“externalities”) that lie beyond the horizon of the matter at hand: it is a perspective that renders the interconnectedness of Gaia unthinkable.’

It is a fairly commonplace statement to make, that the ongoing environmental breakdown that befalls the planet today is infinitely complex, unequally distributed and occurring at scales that are challenging to grasp for a human brain. More challenging still, perhaps, may be the notion that specializations, those ‘smaller and smaller puzzles’ that Ghosh refers to, may be in any position to make a U-turn on all of their inherited principles and embark on a new, holistic journey, one that would resolutely connect them back together, one that might give an apprehension or an intuition of the whole. This is the realm of the spiritual and the philosophical; there are papers to publish, legal cases to argue, endangered species to track, hyper-local social and political issues to resolve. Do we, sometimes, mourn the distance between the ‘smaller and smaller puzzle’ and the whole? In the anxiety and occasional feeling of either hope or hopelessness with which we encounter climate breakdown, I believe hides this sense of something missing – a gap between situated experience and the weave of everything. But the stakes are higher than just an emotional state of being: lives, livelihoods and landscapes are being imperilled or destroyed today, while political will appears stagnant at best – cynical at worst – with regard to any any kind of meaningful transition to a more just, more balanced planet.

Over the past years, but most sharply in the past months, I have come to be convinced that this work of connection, this weaving practice – a kind of cross-disciplinary translation, and tools for mutual understanding – may be so fundamental as to point towards a new field of practice in and of itself. This is an intuition bolstered by witnessing countless meetings, conferences and roundtables on subjects relating to ecology or the climate, in which so many practitioners of different disciplines, even those already engaged with one another, describe coming upon barriers that have less to do with intention, than with trying to make systems fit one another that, put simply, don’t. A recent experience of this was a roundtable between climate litigators and those climate scientists that provide the legal practitioners with the data they need to support arguments made in court. One particularly astute question from the audience reflected on how the burden of proof differs between law and science. A ‘more likely than not likely’ structure in law versus a ‘minimal margin of

uncertainty' in science. This, in numbers, is the difference between, say, 51 per cent and 95 per cent. Another example, which is perhaps more about larger paradigms, might be how to ensure that a scientific analysis of a phenomenon doesn't lose the 'bigger picture' of what that actually means in practice, in peoples' actual, lived experience.

I have no firm answers or solutions to this. Yet, having worked for many years in the expanded field generated by the points of encounter between the 'artistic' and the 'ecological' – in all their declinations, and having found myself holding a particular fascination with how these questions of bridging gaps, or of translation, manifest themselves when we think about a post-anthropocentric, more-than-human paradigm in which species and beings, as well as landscapes, hold vitality, agency and (dare-I-say) consciousness, I have begun to develop a few ideas, or poetic methodologies, to relate to this. A few of these have to do with institutional structures and systems, while others have a lot more to do with curatorial approaches.

Generalizing ecology, and ecology in general

In 2018, I was working as a Public Programmes Curator at Serpentine in London. After a brief break (maternity leave), I returned and began to devise, and subsequently propose, a project for the Galleries that would dedicate itself to the environment. The timing was significant, and also somewhat predictable, as questions around sustainability, climate change and the carbon footprint of the art world were beginning to gain traction across art institutions (they would do so with even greater and renewed energy throughout 2019). My initial intention was inspired by the historical legacy of cybernetics, Gregory Bateson among its most crucial figures, as well as the work of psychoanalyst Felix Guattari. In both, I found a sense that 'ecology' could be a framework to interpret environmental feedback, connections at a distance and mutual effects – but that these principles could equally be helpful in thinking about society, systems, technology and other complex beings of the present moment. The title of the project, General Ecology, was drawn from a publication, edited by Erich Hörl with James Burton, in which essays reflected on much the same lines, in terms of what the publishers referred to as 'the ecologization of existence'.

The aim of the project, in its first instance, was to work 'on ecology, through ecology', namely to connect, across all institutional initiatives, any and all projects that would, whether in their primary aim or tangentially, intersect with ecological and environmental questions – from an audit of the galleries' energy or material consumption, through to an artist's commission focusing on plant medicine and myth, through to working with more intention on the institution's external networks and internal infrastructures, as though these were ecologies themselves. There is, after all, a fairly direct link between doing things with others and doing things with less. So, if drawing connections was its first intention, it was my intuition at the time that a more robust sense of purpose around the environment could be forged out of an effort that could begin by simply noticing what was there. And in drawing these connections, the art institution would perhaps begin to identify with a sense of purpose in the face of environmental breakdown: it would feel empowered to participate in a joined-up, larger effort, and over time, it would become clear that this could be part of its core mission.

The next challenge was to work on and with audiences, to foster a community of interest that would begin to respond to a programmatic, long-term focus on environmental questions.

The field was intentionally vast and non-specific (the idea of General Ecology followed both the ‘ecology in general’ and the ‘generalize ecology’ principles), so many curatorial and systems projects, very distinct from one another, could be related, and provide possible audience journeys through vast, different and multidisciplinary ideas.

The third element had to do with the art institution’s relationship with its ‘outside’: those other organizations, institutions and individuals who share a core environmental sense of purpose, but operate in different fields, from law to policy, from advocacy to science. In this sense, General Ecology was conceived as a space of convening and skill sharing: it has advised and programmed for organizations interested in the role art could play in the environmental effort, and in turn, has received real-life wisdom about fields of agency in which artists and art organizations could, with some guidance, become involved. This network, originally a network of intention, which later grew into one that produced events, artist commissions and moments of knowledge-exchange, isn’t an official one, but it has contributed substantially to the matrix of support of subsequent environmental projects at the Galleries, primarily *Back to Earth*, Serpentine’s fiftieth anniversary project, which invited artists to devise artworks that were simultaneously environmental campaigns or interventions. The advice, collaboration and insights provided by innumerable organizations and individuals we’d been in touch with for several years made it possible for us to make forays into fields that would be very challenging for an art institution or artist to take on in isolation.

The General Ecology project has been a prototype, and, most recently, is evolving into a more resilient infrastructure within the organization that supports and subtends ‘Ecologies’, that is to say, all of the ecosystems that the Galleries belongs to, and those it holds. To be reproduced elsewhere, a project such as this would require attunement, deep knowledge of the inner workings of another context – including its loopholes! – and a slow and meticulous process of self-transformation. With limited resources, General Ecology made the most of connections and conviviality, and supported the solidification of ecology as part of the core mission of the art institution that incubated it, into finally the development of an Ecologies department in mid-2023. In a connected way, another of its aims was to challenge the evident misuse of terms like ‘sustainability’ and ‘resilience’ in organizations’ business plans and mission statements. When observed closely, we can see how often these terms refer not to planetary sustainability or resilience, but to the sustainability, or resilience, of the institution itself. Institutions in crisis build walls; those with a resolute sense of purpose become porous, accept challenges, are more willing to collaborate with others and transform themselves in an agile way in order to attend to longer-term goals. It may appear unrealistic to dedicate a museum to planetary balance or justice – one might argue that the goalposts are too far away. But what if one tried? How would that change the decisions that are made day to day if we began to take into account the 5-minute view, the fifty-year view *and* the 500-year view? Or deep time, even? Would we more consciously work on responsibility, on paradigm shifts, on shared narratives, on deep-time memory and myth? These are hypotheses, but I believe we would.

Cosmologies

I have often returned to a guiding ‘artefact’ of sorts, which has driven much of my curatorial practice over the past years, and particularly since working in a field as messy and

distributed as ecology. This is a brief comment, made by Italian anthropologist Elio Zagami, in a 2020 documentary about the Sicilian island of Alicudi and its myths and cultures. I first came upon this documentary, titled *L'isola analogica*, while discussing with artist Tai Shani her body of work, *The Neon Hieroglyph*, itself inspired by the mythology of Alicudi. Alicudi's mythology is particularly striking in its uniqueness and imagination: the 'majare', central figures in the myths of the island, are women who cover themselves in an ointment and fly at night to Palermo, on the mainland, bringing back riches and foods. It has been hypothesized that this story may be connected to the frequent and historically documented outbreak of ergot fungus in the island's rye fields. With scarce resources on a particularly unforgiving island, the rye, even if contaminated, would have been baked into bread and consumed. As the psychedelic compound of the ergot fungus is very closely related to LSD, it has been suggested that it was a series of collective hallucinations that may have given rise to the stories and myths of the island, and their peculiarity. In commenting on the belief systems of the local population, Zagami, who spent many a year living on Alicudi, proposed the notion of the 'analogic' as the sense-making principle guiding the islanders' beliefs in the animation of statues, the changes in the weather and its mythic figures. This analogical principle, he says, differs from logic in a fundamental way, that is to say that it allows for connections and relationships of causality or relationality to be formed at a distance and through apparently unrelated events, circumstances or objects.

In this brief note, I find something extremely helpful when working through the extended field of ecology as a kind of curatorial method: one that looks askance rather than directly, one that finds instinctive resonances and connections between apparently unrelated things. It's a cosmological approach, too: sense-making from a set of distributed coordinates that are 'just there', in the night sky.

In this spirit, curator and writer Filipa Ramos and I have been working, since 2018, on a long-term research and festival project titled *The Shape of a Circle in the Mind of a Fish*. This series, part of the General Ecology project, has been the key pillar of the General Ecology project's research around more-than-human paradigms and consciousness across species and beings. Over the years, the series has, in some sense, posed challenges to anthropocentrism not by addressing this enormous paradigm head-on, but by picking away, with the help of practitioners from all disciplines, including artists, anthropologists, theologians and scientists, at assumptions that directly follow from an anthropocentric worldview. So in the first instance, and for its first instalment, we considered interspecies communication, seeking to challenge the notion of symbolic language as the pinnacle of – and requisite for – communication, care and responsibility. Any parent of an infant will know that these three elements emerge far earlier than the development of language – and any person with a good attunement to plants, animals or the weather will know that, as well. In late 2019, the second festival and symposium focused on interior multitude and swarm organisms: any notion of an 'individual', separate from other beings and its environment, falls away at multiple scales, in the face of microbial life, species symbiosis and the Gaia hypothesis for the planet. It was then the intelligence of plants, and communication with the vegetal world, that guided the research towards the third instalment, *The Shape of a Circle in the Mind of a Fish with Plants*, and its corollary gathering and publication on botany and erotics, *PLANTSEX*. Some of the learnings from this series, which took place in spring of 2020, pointed towards the usefulness of anthropomorphism versus anthropocentrism. The former, serves not to re-center

a human worlding, but rather to recognize human characteristics as but emergences out of wider, more distributed ones in the larger, more-than-human field. To be a little bit more specific by way of a poetic example: it may perhaps appear wrongly anthropomorphic to suggest that a plant is capable of generosity, or humour. Yet, if we shift that perspective just a fraction, might we be instead suggesting that human generosity, or human humour, is but an emergence out of a wider, planetary generosity or humour which we fail to recognize in day-to-day life, simply because we tend to always shape concepts in our own image? This perspective requires a suspension of disbelief for many, but again, won't be surprising at all from positions of situated knowledge that share greater kinship and entanglement with those more-than-human species. This was followed by *The Shape of a Circle in the Mind of a Fish: The Understory of the Understory*, which took place online in December 2020, which sought to move even further into the realm of the untranslatable, by focusing on soil, fungal and mineral life. Simultaneously, it attempted to weave into the research of the *Fish* series a recognition of the possible avenues by which a more-than-human paradigm may find some points of encounter with social justice efforts. By conceptually expanding the 'soil' into many of the terms used to relate to it (ground, earth, soil, dust, dirt) and inviting participants to relate to those terms, the emergences – from fungal computing through to the racialized, unequal distribution of toxic dust in Johannesburg – revealed something that Dipesh Chakrabarty argues most powerfully in his *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age*, that is to say, that human history and planetary unfoldings occur simultaneously, concurrently and in the same spaces. That the destruction of lives, human and more-than-human, livelihoods and landscapes are part of the same project, and that a project of historiography – just as, I would add, a project of repair – could position itself in this very same place of simultaneity. And finally (for now), following on from *The Shape of a Circle in the Dream of a Fish*, a festival on multispecies dreaming that took place in collaboration with the Galeria Municipal do Porto in November 2022 – we seek to commit the learnings from these first five Fishes to paper as we begin to work on a first volume of contributions.

To return to the question of the 'puzzle pieces' from earlier: it is specialization, as well as the siloing of fields, that brings us to look at a piece of soil and head in one direction or another. Yet, the complex tangle that is this planet holds these things together, connects them to one another, in ways we choose not to see when we distinguish signal and noise. That is not to say that specialization is not useful: it has its purposes and is absolutely necessary. It is only to say that, in an emergent field of interspecies and interdisciplinary communication or translation, we may begin to see the cosmologies, and the patterns, that our current, dominant culture and institutions still obstinately refuse to acknowledge. And that this – who knows – may prove helpful in the long run ...

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5.2 Culture and the sustainable development goals

CHRISTOS CARRAS

Background

Sustainable development was first formulated at the policy-making level in the Brundtland Report (Brundtland, 1987), aiming to set out a global blueprint in which environment and development are interlinked. The basic definition of sustainable development in that report and thereafter is that of 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. The report, importantly, launches an understanding of the interconnected nature of poverty (to which development is the proposed response) and environmental degradation.

Two major milestones in global sustainability policies were reached in 2015: at COP21 better known as the 'Paris Agreement' (UN, 2015) and the proposal to the UN General Assembly for the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),¹ which were ratified in 2016. The SDGs attempt a holistic approach to sustainability, which establishes synergies and trade-offs at the environmental, economic and societal levels and addresses the global community and not primarily the 'developing' world, as the earlier Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) had. For its part, COP21 clearly demonstrated the finite capacity of ecosystems to absorb the impacts of human activity before they reach 'tipping points' with catastrophic consequences. How close to, or beyond, tipping points we are has been highlighted more recently by the sixth report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)² and other UN reports leading up to COP27 in November 2022.

The idea of sustainability, as it is framed by the seventeen UN SDGs, recognizes that human well-being is dependent on a broad range of economic, social and environmental factors that are intimately interlinked. The SDGs articulate 169 specific targets which the global community is supposed to meet by 2030 that render the idea of sustainability more concrete and measurable. This, as well as the fact that an extensive set of tools has evolved to understand, quantify and report on the SDGs, is a key reason why they have become the key framework within which both governments, non-profits and the corporate world engages with sustainability.

The cultural and creative sectors and sustainability

The cultural and creative sectors have also woken up to their responsibility to foster sustainable communities, spurred on by the vociferous demands for equity, justice and environmental action that have obliged them to re-think their roles as producers of cultural

content in ways that connect to these aspirations. There is hardly an arts organization, large or small, that does not at least pay lip service to the ideal of sustainability. Nonetheless, even less so than in the corporate world, not many are equipped (in terms of understanding, strategy, resources and methodology) to make concrete progress in this area.

In the wake of the previously mentioned Sixth Assessment Report of the *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* and of subsequent COP meetings, not to mention recent summers' floods and wildfires, climate action and sustainability are often identified. It has been a key focus of investor action,³ of initiatives in the cultural sector,⁴ is one of the main drivers of EU policy in the form of the European Green Deal,⁵ and is becoming an important element of corporate reporting (e.g. the four pillars developed by the *Task-Force for Climate-Related Financial Disclosures*).⁶

Climate Action is one of the SDGs (SDG 13) and is no doubt the best studied one, with very precise goals and monitoring tools such as the Science-based Targets.⁷ Nonetheless, as noted above, sustainability is a much broader concept, including social, economic and environmental goals. Moreover, these goals are intimately interrelated, suggesting that one cannot try to make progress in one sector while ignoring the others. Finally, the advantage of approaching sustainability through this holistic conception is that it enables the development of coherent strategies that take synergies and trade-offs into account.

It is also evident that significant risks to cultural assets, and to the ability to engage as a creator or a participant in cultural activities also derive from other sources than climate change, however serious the latter may be. To give just a few examples: conflict, bad governance, discrimination and unsustainable development, are all potential sources of risk to culture that relate to other SDGs, for example, SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and strong institutions), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), SDG 1 (No poverty), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and SDG 4 (Quality Education).

Human rights, sustainability and culture

Finally, it is important to remember the intrinsic connection between the SDGs and Human Rights, since 'Over 90 per cent of the goals and targets of the SDGs correspond to human rights obligations'.⁸ Among these is the right 'freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits', as enshrined in article 27.1 of the 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights' (1948).⁹ This right is further articulated in a number of international instruments and Covenants, such as: the 'International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination' (1965) arts. 5 & 7;¹⁰ the 'International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights' (1966) article 15;¹¹ the 'Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities' (2006) article 30;¹² the 'Convention on the Rights of the Child' (1989) article 31.¹³

Since the adoption of the SDGs other conventions and instruments have further strengthened the connection between them and culture, for example: the UN General Assembly Resolution on 'Culture and sustainable development' (2019)¹⁴; the UNESCO publications on 'Culture for the 2030 Agenda' (UNESCO, 2018) on which more below and 'Re|shaping policies for creativity: addressing culture as a global public good' (UNESCO, 2022). An important document preceding the ratification of the SDGs was the UNESCO 'Hangzhou Declaration: Placing Culture at the Heart of Sustainable Development Policies' (2013)¹⁵

which called on governments to integrate culture within development policies, to use its potential to foster peace and reconciliation, to make use of its potential to promote inclusive social and economic development and to harness culture as a resource for sustainable urban development and the promotion of environmental sustainability.

Culture and the SDGs – A paradoxical relationship

Despite the above resolutions, declarations and recommendations, the relationship between the cultural sector and the SDGs is paradoxical. On the one hand, culture is not among the seventeen targets, and is rarely mentioned in a direct and specific way. The idea that culture should be the fourth pillar of sustainable development (alongside the economy, society and environment) has been articulated in many studies and policy proposals. A British Council (2020) study suggests examples of how culture is linked to all SDGs, as does a policy proposal by Culture Action Europe (2019).

Nevertheless, there is a limited number of direct references to culture in the SDGs and their corresponding targets:

SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities, Target 11.4: ‘Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage’. This target has already been mentioned above and is the most direct reference to culture and cultural heritage in the SDGs. As such it has acted as an anchor to the Goals for much work in the cultural sector.

SDG 4 – Quality Education, Target 4.7: ‘By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.’ This target implies a broader contribution of culture to the achievement of the SDGs.

SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth, Target 8.9: ‘By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.’

SDG 12 – Responsible Production and Consumption, Target 12.b: ‘Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.’ This and the preceding target address one of the crucial issues, namely the potential trade-offs involved in balancing economic growth with the strengthening of local cultural elements (tangible and intangible).

The ways in which the CCS’s activities intersect with sustainability is complex, given that the sector encompasses very heterogeneous specific sub-sectors and the field of sustainability is by definition multi-sectoral. Consequently, cultural policies aimed at enhancing sustainability seek various ‘interfaces’ between purely cultural actions and others that touch on broader priorities for society, the economy and the environment.

Many studies and proposals focus on specific effects of culture and cultural actors on specific individual objectives. For example, the study by Gijs De Vries (2020) for the German Institute for International Relations highlights the role of culture in Goals 4, 8, 11, 13 and 16,

while underlining that the relationship is two-way because the SDGs create a framework for a more meaningful involvement of culture in social, economic and environmental policies while culture can contribute to the implementation of the Goals. The Voices of Culture Brainstorming Report reaches the same conclusion, highlighting the contribution of culture to inclusive and lifelong learning, to economic development and job opportunities, and to the creation of sustainable, inclusive and resilient cities (anon, n.d.). The particular importance of culture for sustainable cities is analyzed in the Agenda 21 for Culture study (Duxbury et al., 2016), which concludes that 'A new agenda for sustainable development centered on people and the planet requires cities to launch processes of access, representation and participation in inclusive culture [...] that explicitly integrate culture, heritage and creativity.'

Also worth mentioning, specifically in relation to the operation and policies of cultural sector actors, especially galleries, libraries, archives and museums (GLAMs), is the set of guidelines set out in 'Mainstreaming the Sustainable Development Goals' (McGhie, 2021) that proposes a mapping of SDG targets to seven key activities: Protect and safeguard cultural and natural heritage, both in museums and more generally; support and provide learning opportunities in support of the SDGs; Enable cultural participation for all; support sustainable tourism; Enable research in support of the SDGs; Direct internal leadership, management and operations to support the SDGs; Direct external leadership, collaboration and partnerships towards the SDGs.

Culture and the SDGs in international and national policy

The most consistent tracing of the multiple links between culture and the SDGs has, unsurprisingly, been undertaken by UNESCO. There are two documents in particular that are valuable for grasping these links:

- *Culture for the 2030 Agenda* (UNESCO, 2018) provides a useful mapping of conventions and other milestones on the way to the adoption of the SDGs, as well as a series of thematic chapters, for example, focusing on tangible and intangible heritage, diversity of cultural expressions, gender equality and the risks posed by armed conflict. The brochure underlines that although not a pillar of sustainable development in itself 'As an enabler of sustainable development, culture ensures the effectiveness of actions in other sectors and policy areas. Culture-engaged actions that prioritize participatory processes and local solutions foster community ownership and also contribute indirectly to broader aspirations for peace, social inclusion, fundamental freedoms and cultural diversity' (UNESCO, 2018: 6).
- *Culture 2030 Indicators* (UNESCO n.d.) 'is a framework of thematic indicators whose purpose is to measure and monitor the progress of culture's contribution to the national and local implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and Targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.' The twenty-two indicators grouped into four thematic areas aim to provide methodologies for the quantitative analysis of the contribution of culture to the implementation of the SDGs, using existing data sources wherever possible, with a view not only to making this contribution more visible and hence subject to monitoring, but also to encouraging the evidence-based mainstreaming of culture into social, economic and environmental policies more generally.

National governments are invited to submit Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) which outline their progress in the implementation of the SDGs and indicate the ways in which the latter are reflected in public policy. UNESCO has tracked the place of culture in the VNRs submitted between 2016 and 2020. Although culture appears to have a strong policy link to SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 4 (Quality Education), its inclusion in policies related to other SDGs is much weaker, and only 90 of 205 VNRs analysed directly linked initiatives with a cultural component to SDGs.¹⁶ Furthermore, although culture is very present in multilateral cooperation initiatives, it is only mentioned in a very small number of countries' constitutions or national and regional legislation. It appears therefore, that there is still a way to go in order to really mainstream culture in sustainable development policies at the global level.

Linking culture to the SDGs in practice

Nevertheless, although it is clear that there is a rich and informed public debate on the relationship between culture and SDGs, as well as a growing body of methodologies for mapping it at the policy level, what might it mean in practice for individual CCS organizations? It is worth emphasizing that the connection between culture and the SDGs is operative in both directions. In one direction, cultural sector actors can strengthen the effort to achieve the SDGs; in the other, the Goals (or indeed other structured systems such as the forthcoming *EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive*) provide a universally accepted framework that can help CCS actors formulate concrete actions, with a view to increasing their positive impacts on society, the economy and the environment.

Leading on from this, it is also clear that the SDGs can inform useful and powerful methodologies for refining the objectives and articulating the work of the CCS organizations in terms of sustainability, and that more generally there are powerful reasons for incorporating sustainability into their strategy and management.

Many cultural and creative organizations' activities can be related to sustainability topics. Indeed, over the past years, awareness of cultural institutions' relevance to issues that are of importance to their immediate communities and audiences, but also more widely, is growing and engagement with these issues is more and more frequently expected of them. Issues that are strongly related to sustainability topics, such as Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access, Governance models and Climate action, to name the most obvious, are all seen as areas in which cultural actors can and should play a leading role, not least because of their capacity to bring discussions and actions around them to a broad public, and their perceived role as values-based organizations. Some examples of such frequent intersections of operations, programming and production with the SDGs might be

- Breaking down barriers to access of various kinds
- Programming that explicitly addresses critical environmental or social themes, and engages audiences in reflective or participatory modes
- Production methods that integrate climate-related parameters into the planning and implementation phases
- Operations and processes that aim to maximize circularity, including in the supply-chain

- Supporting local businesses, especially ones that benefit previously underprivileged constituencies
- Encouraging innovation
- Protecting and valorizing tangible and intangible cultural heritage in a way that reflects the diversity of heritages in the community
- Creating a 'safe space' within urban and peri-urban areas

Even though these and other sustainability-related practices may more or less seamlessly intersect with the way cultural organizations operate in any case, there are good reasons for trying to formalize these connections. First of all because developing a sustainability strategy involves processes of understanding the range of impacts of the organization on society, the environment, and the economy followed by a prioritization of these impacts according to well-articulated principles, also involving focused engagement with internal and external stakeholders. Together, these steps lead to the identification of an organization's material topics, defined as 'topics that represent the organization's most significant impacts on the economy, environment, and people, including impacts on their human rights' (GRI, 2022: 26). This reflexive, analytical, but also consultatory process can be extremely useful in focusing an organization's mission and strategy in general, and on an ongoing basis. Moreover, in the course of this process new opportunities for programs, products, and services potentially come into focus.

Secondly, such an approach enables much more robust communication, both internally and externally, regarding the positive impacts of the organization, ideally based on an internal reporting process. Cultural organizations are belatedly beginning to understand that evidence-based strategies are essential. For too long perhaps all of us in the cultural sector have been overly eager to simplistically follow the mantra that 'not everything that counts can be counted'. Which is of course true. However, serious sustainability reporting involves finding assessment methodologies and metrics that are adapted to complex and not easily quantifiable goals and targets. At the end of the day, if one wants to claim something, it must be possible to substantiate this claim in some coherent way. Persuasive and reliable impact assessment and reporting, which clearly sets out both positive and negative impacts, can also be instrumental in securing funding from public, philanthropic or financial sources. Indeed, as more and more organizations make claims about their sustainability it is very likely that to be taken seriously it will be necessary to provide convincing analysis to back them up.

Conclusion

Though there is much room for debate about specific sustainability targets, or indeed more generally about the possibility of radically improving the world's sustainability without addressing key issues related to policies for growth or the more equitable distribution of wealth, the SDGs have the merit of promoting a holistic approach and facilitating an understanding of the links and trade-offs between different targets. For those working in the CCS they offer a framework for situating our activities in relation to globally recognized ambitions for more inclusive societies, life-supporting environments and more equitable economies.

The coming years are likely to present severe challenges at many levels: the climate crisis will impact people's lives more frequently and with greater severity, the economic crisis caused by the pandemic and the war in Ukraine will test public services and will create increased needs within society, and the backlash against liberal values that is visibly spreading will require us to uphold values of inclusiveness and equity with even greater resolve. Culture has a central role to play, not only in shifting attitudes and inspiring change, but in actually contributing through actions to education, health, the deconstruction of discrimination or the support of cohesive communities. Coherent sustainability strategies and the methodologies that can translate them into actionable ideas will be essential tools for developing programs and initiatives that are clear, focused and capable of maximizing the sector's positive impacts.

Notes

1. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals> (Accessed: 6 December 2022).
2. <https://www.ipcc.ch/assessment-report/ar6/>.
3. See, for example, Climate Action 100+.
4. See, for example, Welcome to Julie's Bicycle | Homepage | Culture & Climate Non-Profit (julies-bicycle.com).
5. A European Green Deal | European Commission (europa.eu).
6. Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures | TCFD (fsb-tcfd.org).
7. Ambitious corporate climate action – Science Based Targets.
8. <https://www.undp.org/blog/human-rights-and-sdgs-two-sides-same-coin> see also (Kaltenborn et al., 2020).
9. <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.
10. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-elimination-all-forms-racial>.
11. <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/cescr.pdf>.
12. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities>.
13. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>.
14. Culture and sustainable development: (un.org).
15. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000221238>
16. https://fr.unesco.org/sites/default/files/flyer_on_culture_in_the_voluntary_national_reviews.pdf.

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5.3 Environmental policy frameworks and cultural work

IPHIGENIA TAXOPOULOU

In December 2015 representatives of 197 countries reached consensus to adopt an international treaty committing nations to act collectively to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and hold global warming to well under 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, aiming for 1.5 degrees. Having taken place in Paris at the COP21 summit – in longhand, the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) – the treaty became known as the Paris Agreement, and was a landmark moment for the international community.

The Paris Agreement acknowledges and endorses the stark warnings from decades-long scientific research into the threat posed to humanity from the devastating effects of climate change. Importantly, it is also the first legally binding international agreement on climate change,¹ a global political project which calls on nations to commit to the common goal and deliver measurable results through ‘nationally determined contributions’. The latter are primarily expressed in national climate policy frameworks, the amount, scope and ambition of which have surged in the years following the Agreement.

Climate and environmental policies have burgeoned at the national, regional and local levels across different sectors of society and human activity – even if their ambition, application and impact might be questioned. As of July 2022, more than 2,680 climate laws and policies were in place globally, with at least one climate policy in every country of the world.² The emphasis has been on the sectors mainly responsible for contributing to global greenhouse gas emissions: energy, industry, buildings and construction, transport, agriculture.

However, policymakers have been slow to include the cultural and creative sectors. In 2021, ahead of the COP26 summit in Glasgow, the British Council commissioned the UK-based cultural and environmental charity Julie’s Bicycle to conduct research on how cultural policies internationally have responded to climate change (Julie’s Bicycle, 2021). Disappointingly, the research revealed that the landscape internationally had not changed significantly since the first such study of 2014³ and that, in spite of the Paris Agreement requirements for universal, collective and cross-sectoral action, national cultural policies still very rarely address climate and environmental issues.⁴

The cultural sector may have been overlooked by policymakers to date, but the climate and environmental crises have inspired several artists, cultural practitioners and organizations to look at the world through an ecological lens and to question the dominant narratives of creative expressions (from as far back as the 1960s with the birth and growth of environmental movements, but mainly since the mid-1990s). Some also started to reconsider the way the cultural sector was operating as part of a wider system and to challenge the

underlying assumptions of what was rapidly appearing to be a rather unsustainable framework for creating, producing and distributing cultural work.

By the mid-2000s there was growing consensus in the international scientific community that global warming and climate change were not only dangerously accelerating but are human-induced – theories cemented by the evidence of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and popularized in Al Gore's Academy award-winning documentary *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006). In 2005, Bill McKibben wrote his often-quoted article, *What the Warming World Needs Now Is Art, Sweet Art*,⁵ arguing that we may know about global warming but, oddly, 'we don't know about it. It hasn't registered in our gut; it isn't part of our culture. Where are the books? The poems? The plays? The goddamn operas?'

The call, it seems, was timely. The decade that followed brought the pioneers of environmentally conscious art to the fore, many among them of international renown, and saw many more artists engaging with the topic: writers Ian McEwan, Margaret Atwood, Richard Powers, artists Tomás Saraceno, Eve Mosher, Olafur Eliasson, James Balog, Dan Harvey, Anthony Gormley, Rachel Sussman, Agnes Denes, Paulo Grangeon, John Akomfrah, as well as playwrights and theatre makers Caryl Churchill, Elfriede Jelinek, Katie Mitchell, Benjamin Verdonck, Phantom Limb, Rimini Protokoll – to mention but a few. This body of work also allowed arts and cultural studies to open up to the realm of eco-criticism and helped create a distinctive strand in the field of environmental humanities.

More and more, arts leaders and cultural organizations took the lead in exploring and adopting 'greener' practices in their everyday operations and creative work: Sydney Theatre Company in Australia, the National Theatre in London, the Lyon Opera in France, the Göteborg Opera in Sweden, Portland Center Stage in the United States, among others. This meant looking anew at the places where cultural work was created through an ecological perspective; it involved 'revisiting' the buildings and their operations to address issues of energy and water consumption, the use of resources, supply chains, waste management and to explore greener alternatives (from renewable energy, to ethical sourcing of food, to embedding circular thinking). These pioneering organizations also worked on reducing their impacts from the processes of creating and producing cultural work (regarding the type and volume of materials, the use of chemicals and toxic substances, and so on), but also from its presentation and distribution (i.e. audience travel, touring, international exchange and collaboration).

Most of those outstanding best practice examples, however, even though publicly praised or even hyped in some cases,⁶ remained largely marginal and only known to like-minded practitioners. Until the late-2010s neither cultural policymakers nor the sector itself showed much interest in filling the gap between the climate crisis and an environmental policy framework inclusive of the cultural sector. Meanwhile, for almost two decades, a group of individuals and organizations small in number but highly dedicated had generated an abundance of best practice examples, innovative practices, new aesthetic and ethical principles and a wealth of resources they made freely available for others to use. Theirs was a forward-looking desire to translate the general climate and environmental policy frameworks into the world of culture; they had invented the green wheel, so to speak, that could contribute to a smoother and faster sustainable transition of the cultural sector.

From an international point of view, the UK was at the epicentre of this cultural climate action. As long ago as the early 2000s a significant number of artists, leading figures in

the cultural sector (both subsidized and commercial), grassroots initiatives but also institutions such as the British Council, the Royal Society of Arts and the Theatres Trust, had been working to embed environmental sustainability in their own practice and advocating for wider, urgent climate action.

The UK has also been a global pioneer in climate change legislation. The UK Climate Change Act was voted in by a parliamentary majority in 2008, while, the previous year, the Mayor of London adopted a Climate Action Plan for London. Both policy frameworks foresaw integrating their goals and objectives across ministerial portfolios and sectors of activity – but culture was not included in the plans.

This omission triggered a collective reaction by cultural industry leaders in the UK committed to environmental sustainability which led, after a few years of lobbying and mutual consultations with policymakers, to the first national environmental cultural policy framework, adopted by the Arts Council England in 2012. Through this intervention, the Arts Council embedded environmental reporting into its funding agreements across its National Portfolio Organizations (NPOs), that is, the state-subsidized sector. Crucially, though, the programme was co-designed with the cultural sector. The grassroots charity Julie's Bicycle worked at the intersection of arts and sustainability, building on a kind of 'embodied' sectoral knowledge – best practice, innovation and experimentation, accumulated expertise – thus scaling up climate action-related initiatives of the previous years.

Arts Council England also developed a support system (resources, financial incentives, capacity-building) to facilitate the sector's sustainable transition and has conducted annual surveys to track progress – which also informed future reiterations of its environmental policy. Ten years after its implementation, the programme had helped the majority of NPOs to improve their daily operations and practices, significantly reduce their carbon footprint and energy consumption and by 2018 had already generated savings of around £17 million (Arts Council England, 2018). In addition, the programme helped integrate innovative methodologies and new concepts (circular thinking, sharing economy, product-as-service), nurtured cross-sectoral alliances with the emerging field of the green economy and ultimately promoted a different mindset around how cultural work should be created, produced and distributed, in the context of the climate emergency.⁷

The Arts Council England environmental programme today remains a blueprint for national environmental cultural policy frameworks, not least due to its important (and measurable) effect on the culture and creative industries in the UK.⁸ In fact, though, it was predated by the French Ministry of Culture, which had been the first to adopt a *Sustainable Development Strategy*, in 2011, following publication of the French Government's *National Sustainable Development Strategy* for 2010–13, which called for Inter-Ministerial implementation. The emphasis in France was mainly on the role culture could play in sustainable development, although the Culture Ministry's strategic plan for 2011–13 also encouraged the implementation of environmental practices in the management of cultural buildings, their operations and supply chains. Aligning with the Paris Agreement, the national strategic framework for the years 2015–20, *Ecological Transition towards Sustainable Development*, more explicitly endorsed the global climate agenda and, subsequently, the French Ministry of Culture included a strand exclusively dedicated to 'Environmental Sustainability' in its strategy for the same period. This time round, the policy framework was more detailed, including a proposed action plan, with specific measures and indicators,

while it required public institutions to submit annual reports, recording their initiatives and tracking progress.

However, despite the innovative character of their intentions, both of these French policy frameworks failed to promote environmental sustainability in the cultural sector at scale (with the exception of a few notable initiatives such as the Lyon Opera, the festival d'Aix-en-Provence and the EcoProd network for the audiovisual and film sectors).⁹ These policy interventions were largely the result of a top-down approach, without robust follow-up or support mechanisms to facilitate wider and more effective application. In addition, the policies were conceived and designed at a moment when there was perhaps not enough best practice to build on, or even adequate interest from the sector itself that could form a critical mass for upscaled action.

This situation changed quite dramatically towards the end of the 2010s. Increasingly, voices from the art and cultural sector in France (arts leaders, cultural organizations, professional associations, cultural policy think-tanks) were calling for a collective, systematic and coordinated response to the climate crisis. In late 2021, the French Ministry of Culture presented a *Sustainable Development Charter for Festivals*, its new framework policy for arts festivals of all types across the country, promoting climate and environmental action. The charter had evidently taken into account the shortcomings of the previous policy frameworks: it was sector-specific, results-oriented and offered guidance, support and incentives, while also establishing a system of regular evaluation.

This change in approach is not unrelated to the fact that the climate crisis had been promoted to the first tier of both the international political agenda and the public discourse, especially after 2019, a year which saw the rise of the global Fridays for Future movement, inspired by the campaign of young climate activist Greta Thunberg. In Europe, this was also the year the European Green Deal was introduced and adopted as the EU's flagship strategic plan to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. The EU Green Deal placed climate action at the heart of all the Union's programmes and policies and, in 2020, the European Parliament adopted a resolution for the 'greening' of Creative Europe, the EU Commission's main framework support programme for the cultural and audiovisual sectors. The resolution shifted the focus of climate action from raising public awareness through thematic cultural work, to promoting environmental sustainability in practice, with the aim to improve 'education, awareness-raising and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation and impact reduction'.¹⁰ As an expression of supra-national cultural policy, this resolution seems to have been a catalyst (if not a game-changer), accelerating various initiatives and synergies between policymakers and the cultural sector, not only in France, but also in Ireland, Germany, Austria, Denmark and elsewhere. The work of pioneers – a wealth of existing knowledge and expertise – was rediscovered and re-evaluated as valuable groundwork that would support and expedite the sector's growing commitment for action, in line with the EU's strategic target to achieve carbon-neutrality through cross-sectoral sustainable transition.

It is beyond the scope of this article to examine in detail the reasons behind the delayed synergy between policy and culture, but it could be attributed partly to the different priorities that had informed cultural policy and that had dominated the cultural sphere in the previous years – with cultural work often having been evaluated in regard, for example, to its contribution to economic or touristic development, employment or social cohesion. The momentum

created by major political projects, such as the Paris Agreement and the EU Green Deal, have given new urgency to the climate and environmental crises. The arts and culture are now gradually being recognized as an important ally in the transition, not only in terms of mitigation (reducing impacts, adopting greener practices, and so on), but also as an agent of change and adaptation, upscaling action within the sector itself and in wider society by showcasing tangible examples of alternative paradigms.

It is noteworthy that this surge in climate-related activity and the mobilization of the cultural sector was not in the least curbed by the Covid-19 pandemic and the extreme uncertainty and devastation it caused. In fact, during that time, new alliances were forged among practitioners and organizations and it appears that stronger channels of communication and collaboration were established with policymakers in several countries.

This is a good sign insofar as it constitutes a mutual recognition of the systemic nature of sustainable transition. We can gain interesting insights from a study titled *Future of Arts and Culture: Trajectories of the Next Decade*, carried out in 2021 and based on the responses of 250 participants, leaders in museums, galleries, performing arts, music, funding organizations, curators and producers, from North America, South America, Europe, Asia, the Middle East and Africa. Respondents were asked to evaluate around 500 potential drivers of change and one in particular stood head and shoulders above the others: climate change. According to the report: 'Unique among the many factors explored, it is the one issue that will touch almost all aspects – social demands, economic capacity, technological innovation, political agendas and public values' (Murphy, 2022).

Looking forward: Taking ownership of the sustainable transition

It is already evident that the climate and environmental crises, as well as the relevant general or cultural policy frameworks, will have a significant effect on the cultural sector as a whole and are bound to redefine the operational framework and the values system of the culture and creative industries.

Embedding environmental sustainability can no longer be thought of only in terms of thematic works and projects or promoting new narratives. The material aspects of cultural work – environmental impacts from production and distribution, the use of resources, the mobility of artists and audiences – will need to be addressed; but, also, the dominant aesthetics, the rules of the arts and cultural 'market', will have to be re-examined and adapted to new, more sustainable paradigms.

Sector-specific policy frameworks are of paramount importance for a coordinated and smooth low-carbon transition (first and foremost of the publicly funded sector), but it is important that these policies are co-designed rather than imposed. For this to happen, organizations and cultural practitioners should endeavour to be ahead of policy at all times, questioning their own practices and exploring alternatives, working collectively and joining networks, sharing knowledge, innovation and expertise.

Last but not least, the entire field of arts and cultural education will need to embrace environmental concerns and enlarge their scope to include the skills and transversal competences required for cultural work that aligns with the sustainable transition. Cultivating an ownership mindset at an early stage may well empower younger artists and cultural practitioners to seize an opportunity they cannot afford to miss: rather than fixing what is wrong,

from the outset they can embed sustainable thinking and environmental concerns into their creative processes and their work, becoming co-authors of their futures.

Notes

1. The Paris Agreement built on numerous previous climate summits, meetings and other initiatives, and was the result of a long process of negotiations in various international civil and political fora since the early 1970s. The most notable similar landmark agreement preceding the Paris Agreement was the Kyoto Protocol, which was adopted at COP3 in 1997 and entered into force in 2005. The Kyoto Protocol set binding emissions reduction targets only for developed and industrialized economies, thus applying to only thirty-seven countries across the world and the European Union. https://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol.
2. Climate Change Laws of the World database, Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment and Sabin Center for Climate Change Law, 2022. https://climate-laws.org/legislation_and_policies.
3. In 2014, an international study led by the UK-based cultural and environmental charity Julie's Bicycle on behalf of the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFACCA) found that climate and environmental policy frameworks did not feature significantly in these sectors and were far from being mainstreamed. See Moore and Tickel 2014.
4. Both the 2014 and the 2021 studies identified a small number of policy initiatives supporting environmentally themed work, or energy efficiency and 'greening' projects related to cultural buildings, as part of wider policy frameworks promoting sustainability of the built environment.
5. <https://grist.org/article/mckibben-imagine/>.
6. See, for instance, how Sydney Theatre Company's 'Greening the Wharf' project made headlines and was internationally reported, due also to the fact that it was designed and implemented by Cate Blanchett and Andrew Upton, the company's artistic leaders at the time. <https://www.smh.com.au/environment/sustainability/theatre-project-shines-brightly-20100728-10uwb.html>. <https://www.artsmanagement.net/Articles/Doing-good-and-talking-about-it-Greening-the-Wharf,3538>.
7. For more information see the Arts Council Environmental Programme, including details on the 2020–30 strategy and the Environmental Responsibility Investment Principle. <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/environmental-programme>.
8. See Arts Council England's annual environmental reports, at <https://juliesbicycle.com/?s=Arts+Council+report&x=27&y=20>.
9. Surveys conducted among 126 public cultural institutions showed that, by 2014, only a small number of cultural organizations had adopted environmental sustainability in their building management and operations, while response from the sector as a whole had been very weak. See, Government of France, *Bilan du plan d'actions 2011–2013* (Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, August 2014).
10. European Parliament, European Parliament resolution of 15 September 2020 on effective measures to 'green' Erasmus+, Creative Europe and the European Solidarity Corps (2019/2195(INI)) (2020).

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5.4 Theatre into the Doughnut

CAROLINE BARNEAUD, DARIOUS GHAVAMI, TRISTAN PANNATIER

For the Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne and the Competence Centre in Sustainability of the University of Lausanne

At the end of the year 2019 we decided, together with Katie Mitchell and Jérôme Bel, to devise an ecological theatre project. A project that will not only talk about ecology, but also be as ecological as possible in its modes of production. Through this project, we want to create a life-size laboratory that will allow us to question our usual practices, experiment with new approaches and transform constraint into a reflexive and creative opportunity. We decide to impose one rule on ourselves as a starting point for the experiment: the creation and touring of this international co-production will have to be carried out without any travelling. The rehearsals will be conducted remotely by videoconference. As for the tour, each theatre that will ‘host’ the project will have to recreate it with a local team, from a script prepared by Katie Mitchell and Jérôme Bel. This script is the only element that will travel. This is how the project – which we provisionally title *No travel* – is born.¹

The Competence Centre in Sustainability of the University of Lausanne, with which we already work in close collaboration, joins the project. The multidisciplinary scientific committee it has established challenges our limited understanding of ecology. In contrast to our focus on carbon and the energy question, the scientists take a broader view of sustainability: ‘When we talk about “sustainability”, we are expressing the functioning of human societies in their relationship with the natural environment, which ensures their long-term stability and makes it possible for humans to flourish across generations. This implies keeping the impact of human activities (social and economic) within the ecological limits of the planet, while ensuring the basic needs of all by promoting equity in all its dimensions.’ And to illustrate this definition, the scientific committee presents us with the image of the Doughnut.

The image of the Doughnut was developed by the British economist Kate Raworth as a compass for navigating the field of sustainability (Raworth, 2017). Her model seeks to apprehend this concept through a social as well as an ecological lens, for one cannot exist without the other. The challenge for humanity in the twenty-first century is indeed twofold, as Raworth explains: ‘Humanity’s twenty-first century challenge is to meet the needs of all within the means of the planet. In other words, to ensure that no one falls short on life’s essentials (from food and housing to healthcare and political voice), while ensuring that collectively we do not overshoot our pressure on Earth’s life-supporting systems, on which we fundamentally depend – such as a stable climate, fertile soils, and a protective ozone layer. The Doughnut of social and planetary boundaries is a playfully serious approach to framing that challenge, and it acts as a compass for human progress this century. [...] The

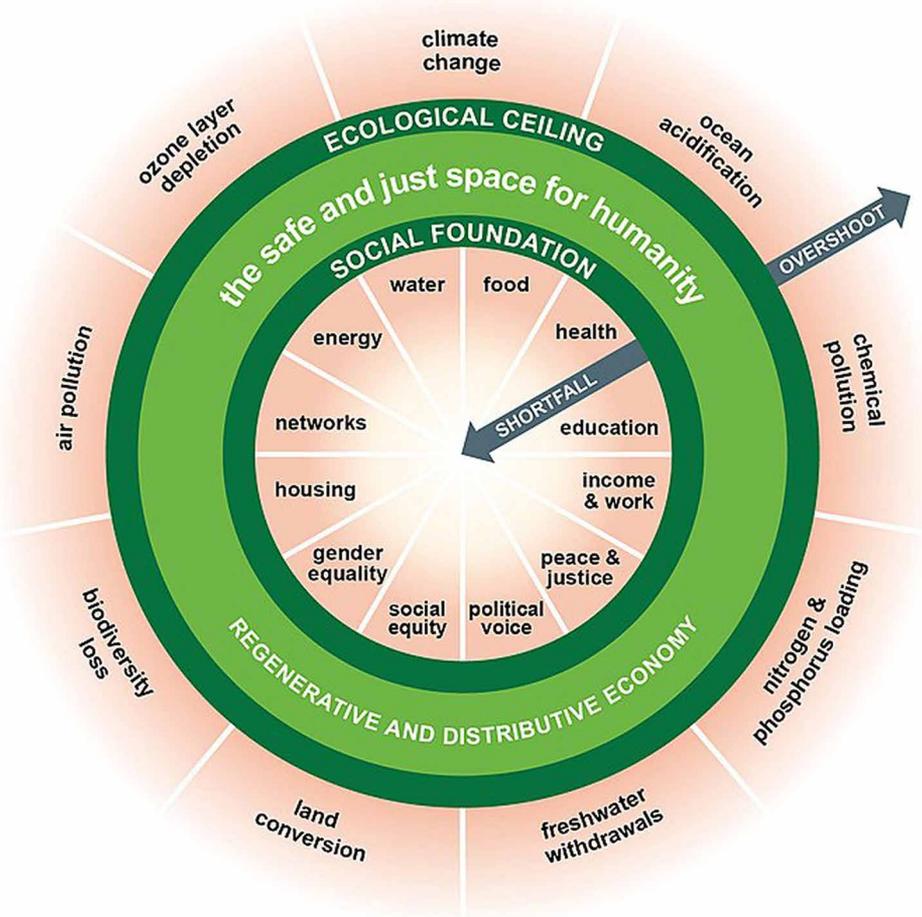


Figure 5.4.1 Doughnut economics: Seven ways to think like a 21st-century economist. Raworth, 2012.

environmental ceiling consists of nine planetary boundaries, beyond which lie unacceptable environmental degradation and potential tipping points in Earth systems. The twelve dimensions of the social foundation are derived from internationally agreed minimum social standards, as identified by the world's governments in the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015. Between social and planetary boundaries lies an environmentally safe and socially just space in which humanity can thrive' (Raworth, 2013).

Thus, in order to be sustainable, our societies and economies must aim to inscribe and maintain themselves within the Doughnut. Only in this way will they be able to promote the minimum social standards essential to human integrity while limiting impact on the environment.

The image of the Doughnut as a representation of sustainability is a major source of inspiration for our artistic project. In order to make our practices more sustainable, we

too, like the rest of society, should seek to inscribe them in the 'just and safe space' of the Doughnut. Indeed, just like those of other players in society and the economy, our activities have both a social and an environmental impact. As economic sites of artistic production, cultural institutions are highly dependent on major industries such as energy, construction, transport, food processing, technological innovation and digital technology. As such, they contribute to the generation of important material and energy flows that impact certain planetary boundaries, such as the climate.² On the other hand, theatres also have an undeniable social impact, with respect to the artists with whom they collaborate, their employees and their audiences.

Seeking to embed our activities, and in particular those related to our project, within the space of the Doughnut thus requires us to adopt a holistic perspective, taking into account both environmental and social issues. However, such an approach requires dealing with a certain amount of complexity, as these two dimensions may come into tension. For example, the 'no travel' rule, which is the starting point for our *No travel* experiment, seems to have a positive environmental effect, to the extent that it reduces the need for travel and its resulting carbon footprint. On the other hand, this same measure may have less desirable social consequences: for example, the lack of touring reduces the duration of the performers' employment on the project, and the obligation for the partner theatres to recreate the show locally incurs higher costs and more work than a conventional tour, which could have a dissuasive effect and thus curtail the circulation of the artistic object. The Doughnut allows us to highlight these tensions and contradictions; it fuels our thinking and our questioning. We decide to abandon the *No travel* title, and rename our project *Sustainable theatre?*,³ thereby reflecting the wider perspective of sustainability within which we aim to situate it. As for the question mark, it underlines the fact that we are not trying to assert this new touring model as a solution, but rather that we wish to open up an experimental space to question our practices.

Yet as much as we are attracted to the model of the Doughnut, we also find ourselves questioning it. We note that art and culture are absent from the Doughnut's social foundation, which partly integrates the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals. But doesn't culture have a fundamental role to play in the necessary socio-ecological transition? (Ribac, 2018).

It seems that the current crisis also has a cultural component, which has to do with the relationship that we, as modern humans, have with our natural environment, that is to say the way in which we represent it, talk about it and give it meaning (Gens, 2018). Artistic and cultural players are generators of emotions, bearers of symbols, narrators of representations of the world, of individual and collective narratives and imaginations; all of which allow us to better feel, understand and experience our world, to question it and to open it up to new possibilities. Through these 'cultural ecosystem services', the cultural sector can therefore contribute to a real paradigm shift within our society⁴: 'If the cultural sector can transform our imaginations, it can also directly transform our reality' (Shift Project, 2021). Moreover, although the topic of ecology is on everyone's lips, the global phenomena of the Anthropocene⁵ are still too imperceptible and intangible for our senses. Most citizens no longer need to be informed of the scientific situation of the state of the planet (which is often too abstract), but rather they need to believe in it.⁶ In this sense, art acts not only as a lens – as a sensory prosthesis – but also as a catalyst that stirs up affects and emotions and touches us in a different way. Finally, theatres offer a public and political space, a veritable

agora where different people and realities can come together, where different world views can be debated and where antagonisms can be expressed.

Fuelled by all these considerations and questions, the two shows resulting from the *Sustainable theatre?* project were staged in Lausanne during the 2021/2022 season. Katie Mitchell directed *A Play for the Living in a Time of Extinction*, an eco-feminist monologue by Miranda Rose Hall which reflects on our responsibility and envisages ways of taking action in the face of the climate crisis; Jérôme Bel wrote an auto-bio-choreography, in which he connects his past choreographies to his encounters, choices, doubts and ethical and aesthetic commitments, from the AIDS epidemic to the global warming crisis. *Sustainable theatre?* is being jointly developed with a dozen theatres in Europe: the Dramaten in Stockholm, the NTGent in Ghent, the Piccolo Teatro di Milano – Teatro d'Europa, the Teatro Nacional D. Maria II in Lisbon, the Théâtre de Liège, the Lithuanian National Drama Theatre in Vilnius, the Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb, the Slovene National Theatre in Maribor, the Trafo in Budapest and the MC93 – Maison de la culture de Seine-Saint-Denis, as well as an extra-European partner, the National Theater & Concert Hall Taipei. These theatres have chosen to place *Sustainable theatre?* at the heart of their STAGES – Sustainable Theatre Alliance for a Green Environmental Shift project, co-financed by the European Union. In accordance with the rule devised as a starting point for the experiment, each of these theatres will, between 2022 and 2024, present Katie Mitchell and Jérôme Bel's shows, re-staging them anew each time with a local artistic team, working from a touring script. The two shows will thus travel throughout Europe and beyond – yet no one involved in their creation will travel.

But how can we share the thinking about sustainability that underpins these two productions with all the collaborators who will be involved in them – from the technical teams to the box office, from the communications department to the restaurant team? How can we also share our considerations with the teams of all our partner theatres? How can we invite all these people – each working within their own sphere of activity and context – to take full advantage of the space for experimentation that *Sustainable theatre?* wants to open up in order to question their practices and imagine new initiatives?

We turn once again to the Doughnut. More precisely, to the *Creating City Portraits* guide. This guide, developed by Kate Raworth herself, aims to apply the Doughnut theory to a city in order to identify and evaluate its ecological and social performance, on both a local and global scale. Together with the Competence Centre in Sustainability, we decide to transpose this methodology to the situation of a theatre, whose social and environmental impacts also take place on both a local and international level, and to give it the form of a workshop, which we call *Getting into the Doughnut*.

Getting into the Doughnut is a methodological guide consisting of a dozen participatory workshops, to be conducted over a period of several months, which invites each *Sustainable theatre?* partner institution to begin its collaboration by exploring the socio-economic and environmental dynamics that determine its internal practices and behaviours. Presented in the manner of a self-analysis, this series of guided workshops engages all of the theatre's interested parties (mainly its internal teams, but also its audience and the artists with whom it collaborates) in a horizontal and circular approach that seeks to stimulate collective reflection and institutional momentum around the issues of sustainability. The approach begins with an invitation to draw up a portrait of the institution through the lens of

the Doughnut criteria, which are both social (well-being, inclusivity, equity, governance, salaries, etc.) and environmental (waste management, pollution, energy consumption, carbon emissions, supporting biodiversity, etc.), by mapping the impact of the theatre's activities on these different criteria. The workshop then invites and helps the participants to imagine improvements that could be implemented. The outcome of the workshop is twofold: firstly, a series of concrete actions and measures that can be tried out, either in the context of the re-creation of the *Sustainable theatre?* shows or in the longer term; secondly, the collective elaboration of a vision for the theatre's sustainable future, and a commonly developed definition of what a sustainable theatre could look like. All these ideas are likely to nourish a fertile ground and to stimulate dynamics of local and global transformations. What's more, the guide is designed so that it can be adapted by each user to their own context and thus best respond to their local specificities.

In *Sustainable theatre?*, the Getting into the Doughnut guide thus accompanies the shows' touring scripts, and the production of shows about ecology becomes an opportunity and a framework for collectively thinking about and experimenting with sustainability within institutions. A team from the Riga Technical University is in charge of compiling and analysing the fruits of the workshop in each of the European STAGES project partners, in order to share them at a later stage.

In practice, at the Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne, this experimental process encouraged everyone to break with their habits and try out new ways of doing things. For example, Katie Mitchell rehearsed her show remotely, and was present in the rehearsal room solely via video; she, Jérôme Bel and their creative teams agreed to give up control over the local recreations of their shows – beyond the indications stipulated in the touring scripts – thus allowing each local team to develop its own artistic vision and to take its own socio-political context into account; the teams set themselves the constraint of a minimal technical set-up (Katie Mitchell designed an off-grid show, in which all the energy used must be produced on stage and in real time, and whose average power must not exceed 150 watts; Jérôme Bel's script stipulates that no costumes, props or technical equipment should be purchased for the show); our technical teams, accustomed to accompanying our productions on tour, had to find a way to share their work with their counterparts in the partner theatres, by means of plans and video tutorials; our communications team learned about the rules of eco-design for digital communication; and as for the theatre's restaurant team, it took on the challenge, for the duration of the shows' runs, of offering a menu created only from ingredients produced within a radius of 15 kilometres. In all, no less than fifty concrete ideas for a sustainable theatre emerged from the teams of each department. All these propositions were either tested during the creation of the *Sustainable theatre?* shows, or will be trialled during future seasons. In order to evaluate the environmental impact of this creation and to be able to compare it with that of a production devised according to more usual methods, we have also worked – under the direction of Pascale Schwab Castella, a member of the project's scientific committee – on the development of an experimental tool for quantifying the carbon impact of a theatrical production.

Nearly three years after the start of the *Sustainable theatre?* adventure, what lessons can we draw from these various experiments? Rather than solutions to the challenges we are facing, we have gained some insights into how to tackle them. The issues at stake are complex. They intertwine multiple issues – social, environmental, economic – that combine

both a local and a global scale. They arise differently depending on the context. To advocate single solutions, such as the all-digital or all-local, and to erect these as models seems to us to deny the complexity of the notion of sustainability and to lead to a kind of formatting that threatens the freedom inherent to artistic creation. On the contrary, it seems important to us to cultivate an attitude of enquiry and to open up spaces for experimentation, so that thinking does not remain merely theoretical, or lead to paralysis, but instead becomes a real invitation to action. Within the framework of these experiments, the task of quantifying our carbon impact has allowed us to correct our sometimes-misguided intuitions and to form a more accurate picture of reality from this angle, thus allowing us to better direct our efforts at reduction. Finally, the spaces of experimentation thus opened are all the richer for being shared widely within the theatrical eco-system, and for bringing together artists, institutions, employees and audiences. They also represent an opportunity to establish collaborations beyond the walls of the theatre, such as with scientists and local associations, and thus to reaffirm the role that theatres can play in society as a place of exchange and encounter with otherness.

Translated from the French by Sarah Jane Moloney.

Notes

1. The genesis and development of the project are recounted in a creation diary, available to read online.
2. According to the first version of the report on the carbon impact of the cultural sector in France by the think tank [The Shift Project], a performing arts institution located on the outskirts of a city and consisting of three auditoriums of 1,000, 500 and 100 seats each, which does not take any particular measures, has an annual carbon footprint of 900 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent, the main sources of which are the energy consumption of the building(s), followed by audience mobility (80% of which travel to the theatre by car). The impact of catering is unknown at this time but could be significant as it is the second largest emission source for the entire performing arts sector (of which festivals are a part). The Shift Project (2021). *Décarbonons la Culture !* <https://theshiftproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/211130-TSP-PTEF-Rapport-final-Culture-v3.pdf>.
3. For more information on the project: <https://vidy.ch/sustainable-theatre>.
4. According to a 2017 study, it is when our individual actions influence wider systems such as changes in norms, narratives or symbols that they have the greatest effect in favour of ecology. (Amel, Manning, Scott and Koger, 2017).
5. The Anthropocene is characterized by the fact that 'the human imprint on the global environment has now become so large and active that it rivals some of the great forces of Nature in its impact on the functioning of the Earth system' (Steffen et al., 2011).
6. As is expressed in this quote by the environmental philosopher Gérald Hess: '*This Emergency Is No Longer to Be Demonstrated, but to Be Lived*' (Hess, 2016).

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5.5 What would it mean to retribute to Earth all we have taken from the Earth?

Decolonial aesthesis and transition in art, design and fashion: A discussion between Hicham Khalidi and Rolando Vázquez

The urgency for more sustainable and just practices in art, design and fashion is grounded in the language of an impending climate catastrophe. Yet there is evidence that we are no longer approaching the collapse of life on Earth as we know it. We are already there. What would it mean to declare, today, a state of ecological and environmental emergency? How might this shift notions of artistic autonomy or institutional neutrality and the modes of representation we have held dear for so long? If we accept that we are indeed out of time, would it be enough to galvanize us to make every conceivable effort to work in concert? How could we transform the ways in which art institutions work and the ways in which contemporary art is practiced?

The climate and social crisis require not only administrative solutions but a profound transformation in our ways of understanding and doing. Using Rolando Vázquez's concept of relational aesthesis (Vázquez, 2020) as a practical framework, we propose putting practices of relationality, positionality and transition at the nexus of cultural production and shifting the current emphases on novelty and contemporaneity towards acts of relating and listening. The question of enduring the climate collapse is, at heart, an ethical one, based on seeking social, environmental and ecological justice grounded in processes of mourning, healing and restitution. In this conversation, we speak about the importance of grasping the deep entanglement between cultural production and the formation of publics and subjectivities. Is it possible to envisage an ethical life or an ethical cultural practice today?

Hicham Khalidi: I would like to begin first with the problem of autonomy in the arts. The world we have built rewards personal accomplishment and personal satisfaction above collective life and the wellbeing of our environment. In art schools we are often taught that every artistic gesture is an expression of radical singularity, yet we are not taught to question the conditions of cultural and institutional production that sustain these acts. How, then, should art, design and fashion be practiced?

*We are grateful for the invaluable support of Amanda Saroff for the writing of this text.

Rolando Vázquez: Thinking through the conditions of cultural production brings to the fore the following questions: **What does cultural practice mean in a world in which the conditions of production are implicated in the destitution and exploitation of others, in the epistemic silencing of other worlds of meaning, and in the continuous economy of ecological devastation and destruction of Earth?** How should art, design and fashion be practiced under the generalized conditions of loss, under the conditions of the loss of Earth: Earthlessness and the loss of the plurality of worlds: worldlessness?

To respond to these challenges, cultural practices first need to acknowledge that they have been implicated in the annihilation of other worlds, in fostering notions of time that undermine relational temporalities, and in reinforcing a metaphysics of western modernity predicated on presentism and subject-centred anthropocentrism. We also need to ask: What type of subjects are practitioners and institutions producing?

Cultural practices can understand themselves and respond to their role in the production and reproduction of the colonial difference. They can help us address the (im)possibility of an ethical life in a world in which our well-being and sense of self are made dependent on the consumption of the lives of others, on worldlessness, on the destruction of Earth and on Earthlessness.

HK: It is important to dig deeper into the role of artists and arts institutions, however unwitting, in the destruction of Earth and life. In this respect, it is revealing to look at how the defence of personal artistic autonomy often goes hand in hand with a defence of institutional neutrality to protect individual expression. How can we puncture these fallacies if we are to rethink art, design and fashion practices?

RV: The notion that institutional cultural practices are neutral can be dangerous. Unlike plurality as the possibility of hosting differences, neutrality pretends to defend an apolitical sphere, a space of indifference. Indifference is a mode of rejection of difference. Pluriversality (Escobar, 2018) is the reverse of indifference in so far as the pluriversal is only possible with and through the difference of the Other.

The pretension of neutrality also corresponds with a denial of how we are implicated in the urgent problems we are all facing. The pretension of neutrality enacts a false innocence, it masquerades as if cultural practices were not part of a history that is implicated in the colonial difference, in the erasure of other worlds, in the consumption of the labour of others, of the life of others and of the life of Earth.

Neutrality, therefore, is a political position, one that is complicit in the denial of accountability towards the Earth and towards each other. It negates the history of modern and contemporary art, design and fashion as a history that is implicated in colonial difference, in the erasure of other worlds and in the consumption of the labour and lives of others and of the life of Earth. We do not call for neutrality to be replaced by ideology. We call instead for positionality (Vázquez, 2020), for a humble positioning that recognizes the partiality of our knowledge and the fullness of our accountability. A positioned humility is neither innocent nor pure.

HK: In art schools we learn about the object, the aura, what objects do, how they are received and how they are disseminated. Yet we learn nothing or little of, for example, the toxic materials we use or the devastating price of bringing them to students' studios. In the context of ecological collapse, what are the consequences of continuing to privilege the individual and anthropocentric *geste* above collective or communal action within our educational and other institutional systems?

RV: In general, to question the presupposed neutrality of western aesthetics is to question the timeless, ahistorical authorship of individual selfhood. An individualized self is constituted in separation. Separated from the world of others, he (and here I am using the masculine in speaking of the dominant self) is separated from other worlds, from time, from the communal, from our relation to those who preceded us and from Earth. **It is a self that, fundamentally, has lost the consciousness that his whole body is made of Earth.** In sustaining a claim to neutrality and individual autonomy, we have lost awareness of our relational existence.

The institutions in which we are both located are structures that produce a way of living in our bodies that is entwined with systems of power. In whose body have we been made to live? Ours is a body that has lost its Earth consciousness, that has lost its communal consciousness, that has lost its temporality. It is a body forcefully separated and individualized, a body that is made to live in the fiction of the separateness of the self.

With whose words do we speak, with whose ideas are we thinking the world? Whose ideas constitute our world views? Where do they originate? With whose eyes are we seeing? What are our ways of sensing the world in which we live? In which ways have we been made to experience reality? If we examine these questions carefully, we begin to realize that we are not sensing and experiencing the world in ways that relate to Earth and to others. Rather, we are living in bodies whose experiences are mediated by the dominant system: by modernity and coloniality, capitalism and contemporaneity. **The epistemic and aesthetic territories of modernity become the limit of what we picture, sense and ultimately comprehend.**

This brings us to the question of the subjects our cultural and academic institutions produce and reproduce, both as those who have the power of enunciation – as authors or researchers – and those who consume that enunciation. What publics are we producing? What students are we producing?

HK: In a world in which the conditions of the production of art precipitate the destitution and silencing of others and the devastation of Earth, is it still possible to think of a transition towards ethical art making? Can we practice art ethically?

RV: We cannot live an ethical life in a world in which our well-being and sense of self is dependent on the destruction of others. We must first acknowledge our drastic impoverishment – what we are losing and we have lost – in modernity's extractive system of life and monoculture that has reduced us to a single experience of self. Some of these losses are irretrievable. In genocide, as in the destruction of rainforests, no amount of recycling or retribution can bring back the dead or restore our primeval forests. In this sense, the call for positionality is also a call for a politics of mourning. We must first grieve the past and the loss of all the possible futures that have been erased or eradicated.

From a politics of mourning we can move towards a politics of transition, away from claims to abstraction and the false innocence of supposed neutrality, into a position that is capable of being responsible, of re-membering our relation to Earth in relation to others, cognizant that everything we eat, everything we wear or dress with, every electronic we use, is in relation to Earth and to others, in relation to other earth-worlds.

Positionality is a necessary condition for this transition. A decolonial positionality should not be confused with identity. 'My positionality is not my identity', it is not what I think I am. Rather, positionality is a consciousness of our social-historical and Earth being, of how we are sustained by Earth, how we are sustained by the work of others, of our debt to the lives of the human and non-human others who preceded us. Any artwork is always already positioned on Earth and in a historical world; it is related to Earth and other worlds, to geo-genealogies that inform and enable whatever is done. Every single word we are using now in this conversation comes from somewhere. We did not invent it. Temporality exceeds the realm of the contemporary, what sustains us in time exceeds the empty present of modernity. Language and form, movement and thought, do not originate in the empty now, they do not originate in individuality. They come from a reservoir that is communal and which does not belong to us.

HK: I had a great conversation with the artist Nithya Iyer, who said we should not be preoccupied with anticipating climate collapse but with building the tools and means necessary to endure it. I think she nudged me over the fence to conclude for myself that collapse is already here and that the transition we need to make is how we will live with and through it, and what world we will build on its ruins. What the idea of enduring collapse omits, however, is the loss of futures or, as you have called it elsewhere, defuturing (Vázquez, 2017). Decolonial discourse looks to the past to discern what is needed for the future. Your politics of mourning acknowledges that the past is still moving, that the erasure of other worlds of being has meant the erasure of possibilities into the future and the possibility of other futures. As we endure collapse, how do we cope with this loss of future?

RV: What is at stake in the word 'climate' in 'climate collapse' or 'climate crisis' is Earth, the forgetting or the loss of Earth: the condition of Earthlessness. What is at stake in critiques of Eurocentrism, of Universality, is the loss of worlds, the loss of the plurality of ways of being in and of becoming the world: the condition of worldlessness.

Earthlessness and worldlessness speak to the radical impoverishment of experience under the spread of global modernity. We are losing possibilities into the future because the future is constructed by the diversity that we hold in our pasts: the diversity of languages, of ways of sensing and experiencing, the diversity of epistemologies of aesthesis and the diversity of earth, of beings on earth of Earth. It is this plurality and its preservation where the hope for alternative futures lies.

The loss of the future does not have to do with a lack of speculation or fiction, it has to do with the loss that is produced by a system that extracts life and reduces the plurality of Earth-worlds to the single experience of the self, the consumer self. It has to do with the spread of oblivion. Today the consumer self is perilously setting the standard of humanity, of what it means to have a good and developed life.

HK: If the politics of mourning is a process of grieving irrevocable loss it is also a deep acknowledgement of our responsibility towards seeking a positionality and a politics of transition that offers a path for communities and institutions to move away from the oblivion that is Earthlessness and worldlessness. What role does restitution have in recuperating our rooted futures?

RV: Restitution becomes one of the urgent tasks to meet the dangers of defuturing. Restitution cannot be limited to notions of property or ownership or to the restitution of material objects. Of course, the restitution of material heritage and of Land are fundamental matters because they provide the material support for alternative worlds to become historical, to wrestle against their historical erasure, but restitution is also, importantly, about the restitution of epistemologies and aesthesis, of world-making practices, of weavings of relations. Restituting the possibility of undoing separations, of weaving-back what has been severed by the dominant system can enable the futures that have been negated.

The question of restitution has to do with confronting that politics of defuturing, that loss of hope. Defuturing is leading us towards cynicism and resignation or indifference. Restitution is a move towards enabling the futures that have been negated by the modern/colonial system. But optimism for the future cannot derive from speculative fictions. It must derive from the restitution of epistemologies and of ethics, of relations and weavings between humans and the Earth, that have been severed by dominant systems of power.

A question I bring to my classes, to students or cultural practitioners, is: What would it mean to retribute to Earth all that we have taken from Earth in our single life? For each of us, this is a question that is painful but important to bear. Even as an exercise, it makes us more conscious of all we take and have taken from Earth. It can help us overcome our false innocence and realize how deeply we are implicated. What does it mean to retribute, to give back to Earth? We have been made to enjoy the loss of Earth and the loss of worlds without retributing and holding ourselves accountable.

That is why we have the urgent task of remembering, of re-membering and membering back, how to be a person beyond that individual self that is so ignorant and arrogant in its pretended autonomy and neutrality. We need to transition from personhood, the state of being a single person, towards forms of earth-hood and communal-hood. **Restitution is the process of remembering how to be 'human' beyond the self, in relation. It is a chance to recuperate truncated pasts and to enable possible futures. Restitution is our act of hope.**

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5.6 Ecological sensing of 'aquaforming' in the age of Aquatocene

ROBERTINA ŠEBJANIČ

We live in a time when we are aware that the human footprint is having a profound impact on the environment we share with many other species. We also know for a fact that human-kind is to blame for changing future ecologies. Over the last decade, **my projects have explored aquatic habitats** from the perspective of the Anthropocene era, because of our widespread impact on the oceans, seas and rivers and on creatures living in these environments.

My research is driven by my curiosity and enthusiasm for exploration, and the exchange of knowledge in the context of interdisciplinary practice. I am interested in how we can cultivate **ethical awareness** and **accessibility of science** on the one hand, and how to create a more empathetic space for multi-species coexistence and a geostrategy for multi-species ecologies on the other hand, as both fail us time and time again – the recent pandemic is a good example of this.

My artistic and research practice **focuses on the aquatic environments of the last decade**. Empathy, solidarity and consideration of coexistence with beings other-than-human, and 'thinking together' are the paradigms of the future that I keep at the heart of my work. Ecology is a complex subject whose parameters are variable. I noticed in the last few years that there is a growing public interest in understanding the current ecological situation. I think we humans are becoming increasingly aware that a shift towards a more ecologically stable future will only be possible through interdisciplinary collaboration and persistence. This is a **great opportunity to inform the public about where we are and where we are heading**.

I emphasize the principles of compassion and environmental justice for aquatic entities and try to find the **right balance between artistic expression and scientific narrative** in order to open up new perspectives for the viewer. I often work with bigger interdisciplinary teams, where the different points of view are enriching the content of projects. One of the scientific advisors who have been collaborating with me is Dr Alenka Malej¹ who I had been working with since the series of works *Aurelia 1+Hz (2012–2015²)* and was crucial for me and my 'dive' into the water environments and getting to know the underwater dwellers better.

The perception of the marine environment and the (in)visible human impact on it is central to my artistic research. On a symbolic level, I sometimes present pollution and the power it holds over the environment, as an image of old sea maps from the fifteenth century (Waters, 2013). They show monsters – creatures that lurk in the oceans and seas – pointing to

water currents to identify dangerous areas of navigation. I often compare these mythological monsters to modern-day monsters: the chemical pollutants caused by human-made remains we dispose in the world's waters.

The Anthropocene², which marks the end of the Holocene climate, is strongly defined by human presence. The rapid environmental changes and problems we are facing are a direct result of a complex interplay of socio-geopolitical and economic factors. It is impossible to identify all of these issues in the present text, as they are numerous and alarming and require the attention of all of us in order to find a sustainable future reality. I will therefore focus on methodologies and ecology-related topics I have been working on in the last decade of my artistic research.

Aquatocene & aquaforming

In the last decades, there has been a strong change in the basic composition of aquatic habitats (such as microplastics and chemical pollution). In my analysis of the theoretical framework of the Anthropocene, **I use the terms 'Aquatocene' and 'aquaforming'** to refer to the impact of humans on aquatic environments. I coined both terms because I was missing more exact terminology related to water entities and the pollution footprints we leave behind. I use **'aquaforming'** as a framework to describe the state of water entities in the Anthropocene epoch. With **'Aquatocene'** I refer primarily to the impact of underwater sound (noise) pollution on water environments. *The Aquatocene/The subaquatic quest for serenity* (Figure 5.6.1.) is also the title of one of the sound projects that I have been working on since 2016,³ in which I record underwater sounds in different locations worldwide and develop them into compositions that present the uncomfortable sound situation of a certain water environment. The audio compositions of the subaquatic soundscapes encourage us to reflect upon the anthropogenic sonic impact on underwater life, as well as illuminate the awareness and underline the importance of maintaining safe sound environments for



Figure 5.6.1 Aquatocene. Courtesy Robertina Šebjanič.

animals living in the world's oceans, seas, lakes and rivers. In his book *'La Haine de la musique'*, Pascal Quignard et al. (2016) writes about how people can close their eyes, but they cannot close their ears. In aquatic habitats, hearing is one of the key sensors for the communication of marine life, as their vision is very limited in the dark depths.

Our physical limitations and the limitations of the technology we use for our research may be the reason why we still do not understand the vibrant soundscapes of underwater worlds. Sound is the main and most important way of communication/sensing for marine life: the underwater acoustic environment is as rich and colourful as the terrestrial world, which is perhaps a little more familiar to us.

With the Aquatocene, I want to raise awareness and highlight the importance of maintaining a safe soundscape for animals living in the world's waters. Deep introspection and a better understanding of life beneath the waves should eventually lead to more environmentally friendly marine technologies; as the main environmental problems humankind is facing today are a complex combination of socio-political, economic and scientific developments.

'Even if you never have the chance to see or touch the ocean, the ocean touches you with every breath you take, every drop of water you drink, every bite you consume. Everyone, everywhere is inextricably connected to and utterly dependent upon the existence of the sea' (Earle, 2010).

Empathic strategies

In recent years I developed a **frame for working on the topic of empathic strategies**. I conducted several academic workshops and lectures emphasizing ecological issues and interspecies relationships, and it always interesting to see how students react. During the discussions, they often ask: 'Do you think we can do something about it?' This is a very simple but important question. How do we navigate our feelings and grief over ecological loss, and degradation of the power of individuals?

When developing this methodology, I was inspired by the **concept of care** and what it means: *'Care is everything that is done (rather than everything that "we" do) to maintain, continue, and re-pair "the world" so that all (rather than "we") can live in it as well as possible. That world includes ... all that we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web'* (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017).

I first started developing the emphatic strategies framework in 2018 in **workshops and masterclasses at universities** with students and interested audiences. These kinds of meetings open topics and ideas about which we discuss more intensively. I can reflect on my work and also see how the participants think about these issues. When I talk or write about empathic strategies, I think about how to go beyond the norm and how we might use both scientific knowledge and our creativity to imagine different solutions for co-existence. Together with participants we experience the environment beyond our empirical understanding and acknowledge that we are an active part of it, not just observers (and exploiters). We also realize that we are not the only ones reacting to the environment, but that the environment – as well as its whole ecosystem – is always reacting to us too.

How the ocean perceives us.

How the river perceives us.

How fish perceive us.

How everything other-than-human perceives us.

In this way, I am trying to encourage a shift in the way people observe and perceive nature, and it is the same shift that I want to trigger with my projects.

Riología/Empathic strategies in deep time (2019)⁴ is one of the biggest citizen science projects I have worked on, involving more than 500 volunteers and a huge organizational team. It is an interdisciplinary project combining art, science and DIY principles. I was intrigued when Amanda Masha Caminals invited me to collaborate with the Mutant Institute of Environmental Narratives at Matadero in Madrid.⁵ The project's main focus was the Manzanares river in Madrid, characterized by a very low water flow with many sand deposits. I had the opportunity to develop a new methodology format for a one-day citizen science workshop commissioned by the institute and involving volunteers from the L'Oreal company. Within the research/work on the *Riología* project we got to know the project *Madrid Río*⁶ very well and also deeply connect with it. This project was initiated by the local authorities some years before, with the aim to re-naturalize the Manzanares River, returning it to its natural course as a home for many species of birds, plants and fish. It was refreshing to see how this re-naturalization project could contribute to the quality of life of the creatures living in and around the river and the people living in the city, and it was inspirational for our project *Riología*.

As the starting point of *Riología*'s research phase, I came up with a simple question: How does the river 'feel us' in an empathic sense? Through the frame of citizen science activities, we developed a conceptual framework for a booklet: '*Riología: Empathic Strategies in Deep Time*'. We included different protocols and measurements (pH scale, temperature, heavy metals). Furthermore, we also had some other art initiatives that worked within a similar discourse of art – science. Along with mapping the river, in the second part of the project, we collected sediments from the riverbed and its 8-metre-deep geological core. We took samples and, with the help of the Ernesto Ventós laboratory in Barcelona, developed an odour derived from the riverbed itself. With *Riología*, I was hoping to create an installation and conduct a workshop through which I would develop a strategy to encourage empathy among people to rethink the co-existence of animals, plants and humans who live by and in the river. I wanted to show the Manzanares ecosystem in the perspective of deep time, to draw attention to what was present a hundred or more years ago, and how we can connect to this past time with our invisible, sensory senses. Smell is a key sense for recalling memories, and the smell of the riverbed allowed for a poetic journey into the past.

Water projects – Aquatic sensing

If I had to highlight some of my projects, then I would mention ***Aurelia 1+Hz*** which was one of the first research-based works that I developed between 2012 and 2015, and ***Atlantic Tales*** (2019–21),⁷ a project developed during the pandemic years when the world was rethinking the concept of biodiversity.

In ***Aurelia 1+Hz*** (2012–15), the main protagonists are the moon jellyfish (*Aurelia Aurita*). Jellyfish are one of the oldest species on Earth. They are 650 million years old and composed mainly of water. Lately they have been expanding faster due to the rising temperatures and chemical changes in the world's oceans and seas. In order to understand their



Figure 5.6.2 *Aurelia 1+Hz proto viva generator* by Robertina Šebjanič. Courtesy Miha Godec (Archive Beep collection).

communication system, I started observing their sensory organs and their response to their surroundings. I developed the project between 2012 and 2014, when I was in residence at **Deep blue** in Izmir, Turkey (for PORTIZMIR International Contemporary Art Triennial). I made most of the sound recordings at the Izmir Institute of Marine Science and Technology, with sonic and seismic devices and hydrophones. These organisms communicate with each other using chemical signals through polyps. However, it is still unknown whether they also communicate by sound. This unanswered question became the main focus of the development of the project.

Aurelia 1+Hz is divided into two parts: an installation *Aurelia 1+Hz/proto viva generator* (Figure 5.6.2.) and the audiovisual performance *Aurelia 1+Hz/proto viva sonification* (premiered at Le Cube in Paris in 2015). During the performance an audience listens to the sound that jellyfish make in tanks and that I make on stage. At the end I leave the stage and the sound is performed by jellyfish alone. I thus enter into a complex and superficial path of interspecies communication, and I like to explain the main idea of the project in the words of the poet Paul Celan (2000 [1968]): ‘There are/still songs to sing, beyond humankind’. The project can be understood as a kind of biocybernetics experiment that seeks to propose a future where animals and machines coexist.

Working with living organisms is an important responsibility, as it requires the researcher to have an in-depth understanding and knowledge of the organisms involved. Maintaining living systems in confined environments is very complex, so it is important to understand how animals behave and to create a safe environment that provides the best possible conditions for these organisms. I see this as the main challenge in showing works involving living organisms. The *Aurelia 1+Hz* project is demanding, especially in terms of

maintaining the jellyfish, so I really try to make sure that during my exhibitions and performances the moon jellyfish are not in a stressful environment and that their needs are taken care of.

For *Atlantic tales* (2019–21) I decided to use a different strategy, combining cultural patterns and the perception of animals as industrial and cultural emblems. The main characters of the story are a shark (*Cetorhinus maximus*) and a flamingo (*Limaria hians*), a small endemic species that I encountered during my stay on the RV Celtic Explorer, a research science vessel, on an expedition in the North Atlantic Ocean in 2019. I wanted to translate my impressions while on the boat into a more dynamic narrative through a song/sound-based installation.

I was on board with a multidisciplinary team of scientists as part of the Backscatter and Biodiversity on Shelf Marine Habitats (BaBioSSH) research, led by Chris McGonigle from the University of Ulster, which focused on the use of non-invasive new technologies to improve our knowledge of species diversity in marine ecosystems, particularly in protected and special conservation areas. Spending time on the ocean, being part of a research team and having the privilege to think collectively about the sea has definitely given me a new insight into underwater life. It was specially exciting when we were collecting samples from the seabed.

Every day we had wonderful company alongside the ship, including giant basking sharks. In the audio story *Atlantic Tales*, which is divided into six chapters, I speak about the mythological stories associated with sharks, which – despite being a migratory species – are closely linked to Irish life, mythology and industry. Today, they are a protected species and people love to meet them: gentle giants that feed by filtering water, as they mostly eat plankton. In the past, specifically in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they were hunted extensively for liver oil. This is where the stories of a mythical animal, an ‘industrialized animal’ and a cultural symbol of today meet, and it is therefore about the impact of the meaning of this animal for the local people, both in the past and in a possible future. The audio narrative alternates between the narrator of the text and the Irish sean-nós singers Cairtríone Ní Cheannabháin and Róisín Seoighe, accompanied by recordings of the underwater spheres of the Atlantic Ocean that I made with hydrophones during my stay on the ship.

The main questions I ask in the text are: How do the oceans feel the action of humans?

In what ways do human actions affect the inhabitants of the oceans and seas, and what could marine creatures tell us about this if we understood them or wanted to understand them⁸?

Research process and interdisciplinary collaborations

My work involves **frequent travels and intensive fieldwork**. I spend a lot of time on research residencies, where I work on certain key studies, often at marine institutes – like the Roscoff Marine Institute and the Izmir Marine Institute, or at organizations such as Arte+Ciencia in Mexico City, Ars electronica in Linz, Ur Institute in Dubrovnik, Pina/HEKA in Koper and others. My favourite trips are those on the boats such as Celtic Explorer (for the *Atlantic Tales* work mentioned above). In September 2022, I spent a wonderful time on the Endeavour II – a National Geographic ship – as part of the Galapagos Voyage for Art and Science project, organized by the Quo Artis Foundation (Barcelona).

When I develop ideas, I usually **start on my own**, but once I've dug deeper and have questions and a research framework, my second step is to **look for collaborators and advisors**. If the work is commissioned, the process may be slightly different, but I try to be transparent and clear with everyone involved so that together we can define the red thread of the project and establish a good flow as the research moves into the stages of intensive development. I try to give a project the time it needs to iterate scientific experiments (those in vitro for example). I want to go through the whole process – from the idea, setting up a draft and laboratory work with scientists, to making the artwork in the studio together with engineers and craftsmen (e.g. glass or metal designers/ artisans) – to present the concept with a scientifically solid background and a visually stunning aesthetic.

As an associate artist, I worked with fellow scientist and media artist Gjino Šutić on the project *Aqua_Forensic* (2018), in which we researched the presence of pharmaceutical pollution in oceans and rivers. We worked on this project in the frame of the EMARE/EMAP residency programme.⁹ At Ars Electronica in Linz we researched the Danube River, and in Dubrovnik we researched the Adriatic Sea. In both cases, we specifically focused on chemical contaminants such as drug residues. Our aim was to open the debate on invisible anthropogenic pollution in the world's aquatic habitats. Our research process focused on chemical pollutants resulting from human overconsumption of licit and illicit medicines such as mood regulators, antibiotics, antimicrobials, painkillers and hormone pills. They eventually end up in rivers, lakes, seas and oceans due to the insufficient filtering capacity of sewage systems; they are also incorporated into aquatic and marine habitats and consequently inevitably end up back in animal and human bodies through the food chain. The project was quite complex. In vitro experiments were carried out with different micro-organisms and microalgae (marine and freshwater organisms) to see if their behaviour changes when they come into contact with chemical pollutants. After a certain period of time, we observed that a number of changes occurred, such as slowed activity or irregular movements; moreover, some of them were even completely diluted after exposure to microdoses of pharmaceutical substances. The project resulted in a white paper, a scientific poster and a work of art, and can thus be presented as an installation, a workshop or a public debate to highlight pressing ecological issues.

This kind of collaboration also happened during my collaboration with the Arte+Ciencia community at UNAM (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México) in Mexico City, which supported me and facilitated meetings with a wonderful network of microbiologists, ecologists, ethnobiologist and philosophers working on the axolotl. *Lygophilia* series (2017 – ongoing)¹⁰ comprises four works and combines a transdisciplinary approach, with storytelling designed to explore the relationships between mythologies, cultures and sciences. It unfolds the stories of fascinating creatures like the Mexican axolotl and the Slovene proteus. Hiding from the sun and daylight, both animals are in love with darkness (lygophilia, from Greek lúgē – twilight and philēō – to love). Both animals are also in a state of 'eternal youth' (neoteny), showing extraordinary longevity and regenerative abilities that put them at the centre of ancient myths as well as current cutting-edge scientific research. Both are endangered species in their natural environment and have found habitats in very specific places, like the swamps of the lakes around the Mexico City (axolotl) and Dinaric karst caves in Europe (proteus), showing an example of parallel evolution and endemism. The project has also been produced as a digital video capsule/online book edited by Annick Bureaud on MemoRekall.¹¹

Conclusion

Within my projects the visitors, listeners to my stories and compositions are confronted with the immense human impact on the bioacoustics of underwater habitats, but they can also experience the sounds of marine life and natural aquatic acoustics. During the concerts, installations and exhibitions the audience is immersed in my personal interpretation of the recorded soundscapes – a mix of all the sounds I have recorded in specific locations of different seas and oceans.

One approach that can promote change is to open ourselves up to greater empathy and promoting solidarity. I believe that inter-species relations and communication are just that – to understand something that is different from ourselves. We should appreciate them even more precisely because they are different, even though they may not be within our comfort zone. I think that accepting something so different in this field of discourse can be a true challenge.

In line with my growing knowledge of the philosophical, cultural, anthropological, economic and scientific aspects of the relationship between human beings and ecology, I strive for a synthesis that persistently tackles difficult questions, fully aware of the complexity and demanding nature of this work. Nevertheless, I believe that this kind of interdisciplinary artistic research transcends individual interpretations and contributes to a new understanding and vision of coexistence.

Acknowledgements

For this text, I tried to focus on a decade of my personal work and research, but it goes without saying that along the way it has been inspired and supported by, and developed with, a group of excellent minds to whom I would like to express my deepest gratitude: Annick Bureaud from Leonardo/Olafs, Tatiana Kourochkina from Quo Artist Foundation, Margherita Pevere, Kat Austen, Lena Ortega, Victoria Vesna, dr. Alenka Malej, Eduardo Castillo Vinuesa, Gregor Aljančič and Magdalena Năpăruș-Aljančič from Tular laboratory, Alenka Trebušak, Cukrarna Gallery, Victoria Vesna, Bunker, Uroš Veber, Project Atol Institute, Sektor Institute, Gjino Šutič, UR Institute, Miha Godec, Ewen Chardronnet, Ars Electronica team, Vicente Matalana, .BEEP {collection;}_ Electronic Art Collection, Maja Lozić, Blanca de la Torre, Mariantonia González Valerio, Arte+Ciencia team, Bacteria, Theremidi orchestra ... and many many more.

It takes a global village to shape a person's perspective, which is why I think a supportive community works as a safety net, because being an independent artist and researcher requires energy, hard work and a lot of dedication to the process and its realization.

Notes

1. <http://www.nib.si/eng/index.php/component/directory/?view=details&id=38>.
2. https://robertina.net/aurelia-1hz_proto-viva-generator/.
3. <https://robertina.net/aquatocene/>.
4. <https://robertina.net/riologia-empathic-strategies-in-deep-time/>.

5. [https://issuu.com/mataderomadrid/docs/dossier_inma_eng_def8#:~:text=The%20Mutant%20Institute%20of%20Environmental%20Narratives%20\(IMNA\)%20is%20the%20Matadero,urban%20natures%20or%20environmental%20justice.](https://issuu.com/mataderomadrid/docs/dossier_inma_eng_def8#:~:text=The%20Mutant%20Institute%20of%20Environmental%20Narratives%20(IMNA)%20is%20the%20Matadero,urban%20natures%20or%20environmental%20justice.)
6. <https://use.metropolis.org/case-studies/the-madrid-rio-project>.
7. <https://robertina.net/atlantic-tales-selachophilia-cetorhinus-maximus-limaria-hians/>.
8. A 7 minutes excerpt from *Atlantic Tales* can be found on: <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/675619899>.
9. The European Media Art Platform (EMAP), initiated by werkleitz and co-funded by Creative Europe since 2018, is a consortium of fifteen leading European media art organizations specialized in Digital and Media Art, Bio Art and Robotic Art. <https://emare.eu/>.
10. <https://robertina.net/lygophilia/>.
11. *Neotenous dark dwellers | Lygophilia* on MemoRekall: <https://project.memorekall.com/en/capsule/preview/neotenous-dark-dwellers—lygophilia?w=1>.

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CLOT: A magazine dedicated to Art explorations into Science and Technology. <https://www.clotmag.com/>.

Interaliomag: An online magazine dedicated to the interactions between the arts, sciences and consciousness. <https://www.interaliomag.org/>.

Makery.info: A media for DiYers and creative communities, full on info on labs, those of open tinkering, circular economy, as well as those of university fablabs. A website based on experimentation. Makery is a project in perpetual beta testing, operating in DIY mode, brick by brick. <https://www.makery.info/en/we-make-money-not-art>: <https://we-make-money-not-art.com/>.

NEURAL magazine: <http://neural.it/>.

Part 6 The digital transformation of cultural practice

6.1 The digital transformation of cultural practice

OONAGH MURPHY

Introduction

Cultural organizations and those that work in them are involved in an emerging praxis that is both an externally focussed critique of society and technology, and an inwardly focussed critique of institutions through technology, artists and commissions. This chapter draws on the work of cultural professionals and artists who have engaged with emerging technologies to create provocations that engage patrons, audiences and visitors in the wider debates that exist around these technologies, and their use in society. The primary focus of this chapter is on museums, galleries and wider visual arts organizations, however much of the thinking on leadership is applicable to wider cultural leadership.

In many ways this chapter is rooted in the academic traditions of theatre, dance, art, musicology and museum studies, and examines the social impact, the political challenge and economic reality of cultural practice today. This chapter argues that while social and technological changes are not a new concept for arts organizations, what is new is the depth and reach of these technologies in terms of art form development, data creation, manipulation and interpretation. It is a rallying cry for value-led leadership from cultural professionals, and platform more critically engaged practice within the arena of digital technologies and digital culture from the cultural sector in Europe.

Digital context

When it comes to discussing digital technologies the conversation often turns to contradictory narratives, utopian dreams where work is carried out by machines as we enjoy a constant life of leisure. Or, a more science fiction-led narrative of dystopian disasters where freedom, and creativity have vanished, and a robot state has taken over. The reality is and will likely continue to be more nuanced and exist somewhere between the utopian and dystopian fiction that prevail in popular culture. Indeed today, neither utopian nor dystopian narratives fully depict the use of digital technologies in our everyday lives. If we think about how we engage with technology at a mundane and everyday level, we can create a foundation from which to begin to think about the space for digital leadership. Machine learning helps to filter spam in our inbox, and attempts to help us structure emails by suggesting ways to complete sentences (Dada, Bassi and Chiroma, 2019). City mapper and Google maps help us to travel in the most efficient way possible,

responding to live conditions and recalibrating our journeys as we move (Tavmen, 2020). On the web our search results are ‘improved’ – meaning that we find what we are looking for quickly – but limiting any serendipitous opportunities for discovery whether that’s to find an article about an unknown female scientist (Wade and Zaringhalam, 2018), or a local hairdresser who doesn’t pay to advertise online (Noble, 2018). The thousands of photos we take on our phones on a monthly basis are neatly tagged and categorized using machine vision technologies so we can search for pictures of our birthday, or family BBQ (Lee, 2020). Alexa is always listening but she/it/Alexa can’t understand regional accents, and our arguments with ‘her’ often seem to outway any useful ‘assistance’ it provides. Digital technologies filter our lives and our experience is more efficient for it, but the trade-off for an efficient life is less opportunity for discovery, and a life viewed through the prism of those that programmed the machine. It’s fair to say the landscape is complicated.

Cultural context

When it comes to understanding a cultural organization's relationship with technology, motivation is key. If we look across existing research, policy and practice we find three core motivations for engaging with digital technology platforms and wider digital culture. These can be defined as

- 1 To improve visitor experience
- 2 To increase sales
- 3 To develop art and art form

While motivation has provided a helpful prism from which to view the adoption of technology in cultural organizations to date, this chapter advances this discussion by moving beyond operational intent to examining the potential for arts organizations to become agents of change. This chapter argues that for cultural organizations to be agents of change within this arena they must look beyond operational intent, and take a wider social, political and economic view. In doing so it introduces a fourth motivation for engaging with emerging technologies, and wider digital culture, namely:

- 4 To facilitate critical technology discourse

This motivation can be described as engaging with digital technologies to develop the digital literacies of visitors and to shape technology discourse. In other words, rather than simply using digital platforms, collecting or showing these technologies, cultural leaders can engage with their wider impact on art and society through critical conversations, commissions and programming. I first developed the concept of critical digital literacy when developing the Museums + AI toolkit, the toolkit provides a framework for the strategic development of Artificial Intelligence projects in museums. The term critical technology discourse provides a theoretical concept from which to frame how cultural organizations critically engage with technology, the impact these organizations can have by being open and accountable about the technologies they are using, and through public programmes and contemporary collecting to develop the digital literacy of visitors (Murphy and Villaespesa, 2020).

Early foundations (digital) enlightenment

Museums as data-centric institutions that focus on collection, cataloguing, search and retrieval, serve as a helpful foundation for thinking about the wider challenge of digital leadership across the cultural sector. If we look at museums as we know them today we can see that in many ways they are defined by the enlightenment ideals of the late 1800s and early 1900s. This period saw a shift from private ownership towards national collections, and public access. This shift was motivated by a changing purpose, gone were the days that large internationally significant collections were presented solely to demonstrate wealth and status, and instead we began to see collections presented to the public in the widest sense. This new more accessible model of exhibition was however not altruistic in motive, instead it was premised on the instrumental vision that education would create a more productive workforce, and a more cohesive society. Iwona Blazwick, director of The Whitechapel Gallery, goes a step further in describing the motivations of the founder of The Whitechapel Gallery, London as ‘Evangelical’ (Blazwick, 2006: 119). Admittedly the founder of The Whitechapel gallery was a priest, although this was not the case for most museums and public galleries founded around this time, it does give us some indication of the wider discourse of the revolutionary potential that museums could have. As Blazwick frames it, the gallery ‘embraced a belief in the democratising and civilising power of contact with culture’ (Blazwick, 2006: 121). Around the same period in America, John Cotton Dana, founding director of Newark Museum, was advocating for a new model of a public museum that was both useful and beneficial to the city and its people (John Cotton Dana, 1920; Murphy, 2019). His instrumentalist vision centred on the ideals of enlightenment, and positioned the museum as a space where culture and society is not only collected and observed, but that the museum also serves as an important place of world building, of social, educational and personal development. The opening of public museums, particularly in the UK and United States at this time, went hand in hand with a drive towards education for the working classes, the idea of the museum as an active rather than passive institution, that shapes rather than simply collects culture became prevalent. The arts as a catalyst for developing how society functions, rather than simply providing a stage to showcase society as it stands, is a helpful analogy for thinking about how arts organizations and cultural professionals can support digital literacy, shape digital culture and facilitate digital enlightenment.

Agents of change

Today it is not uncommon for museums, and museum professionals to be engaged in conversations around activism, social justice, homelessness, gentrification, politics, decolonization, racism, sexism, homophobia and poverty. These conversations take many forms, such as articles in professional publications, namely *Museums Journal* published by the Museums Association (UK), *Museum* (magazine published by the American Alliance of Museums) and *Museum International* published by the International Council of Museums (ICOM). For examples of current debates see Williams (2017), Chantraine and Soares (2020), Stahlmann (2020) Kendall Adams (n.d.) Janeen Bryant, Cohen-Stratynner, Mann and Williams (2021). Museums studies as an academic discipline has also engaged in this new

model of instrumental ideals, under the contemporary moniker of activism, with seminal books on the topic written by Maura Reilly, *Curatorial Activism towards and ethics of curating* (2018); and *Museum Activism* an edited volume by Robert R. Janes and Richard Sandell (2019) which both clearly define the museum as a space where ideas are made (rather than simply displayed). What all of this tells us, is that as Autry and Murwaski termed it 'museums are not neutral', and they are becoming more comfortable having difficult conversations in public ('Museums Are Not Neutral' n.d.). However, whilst museums might be more comfortable having difficult conversations (in relation to social justice issues) in public, we are yet to truly see a similarly confident, and 'activist' approach to debates around the use of technology.

Digital activism

Technology is not simply a mechanism for processing data, or assisting with operational tasks in a museum, the use of emerging search-based technologies in particular intersects with and at times rallies against wider social justice conversations that are being led by museums. However it is this very gap that offers a possible, progressive way forward for museums and museum professionals to respond to the increasing use of technologies both within the museum, and within wider society. By accepting that museums are not neutral, and neither is technology, we can create a unique and valuable platform for critical technology discourse. We as cultural leaders can support our visitors towards a path to what the museologists of the Victorian era may have defined as (digital) enlightenment. However, perhaps today a less colonial model may be digital citizenship, digital literacy or even digital activism. Museums are in a unique position to provide a platform for this dialogue, to showcase, to engage, but also to educate visitors on how technologies are not only shaping their visitor experience, but also their wider experience beyond the museum, from healthcare to education, to criminal justice, politics and spending behaviours.

Amaro argues that categorization models which are commonly used across different facets of society demonstrate that the boundary between scientific ordering, and socially constructed pseudoscience is often malleable. 'From astrological data and amateur interests to public administration, eugenics, and colonial schematics, data has been thought to provide the most objective measures of complex social phenomenon and relations' (Amaro 2019: 125). History has shown us that categorization and ordering can create a range of biases, and discriminations which can have a negative impact on those that have been categorized, Amaro frames the negative impact of categorization around lived experiences and 'reduction[s] of life chances' which are created as a result of problematic schematics (Amaro 2019: 126). Amaro's essay reflects upon how these known flaws in categorization models or schematics are further heightened by algorithmic decision-making. Livingstone also notes that technology not only mirrors existing biases but can also 'hideously amplify it' (Livingston, 2019: 14). Amaro and Livingstone are not writing about the use of digital technologies in a museum context, but their observations are clearly applicable.

As the web, and associated technologies, have been colonized by commercial providers, profit rather than purpose has been a key driver in the design of these new technology spaces, places and processes. Zuboff argues that technology companies often conflate 'commercial imperatives and technology necessity' (2019: 15). This is an important point

for museums, and the artists that they work with. We must first acknowledge that it is near impossible for either humans or machines to make objective decisions. In machine terms we see this subjective constraint being defined as ‘coded bias’ in humans we increasingly see these subjective constraints and the systems that host these decisions as ‘structural inequality’ or ‘unconscious bias’. Whilst it may be near impossible to create bias free systems, we can go some way in developing these systems by engaging with more diverse training data, more diverse design perspectives and a greater acknowledgement of bias. As such we can shape what is technologically possible, and the application of those technologies by broadening the conversation and those involved in the development of these technologies, to include new voices and perspectives not only in the design of the systems but also in the contextualization of data at all stages of the system, what Jo and Gebru term the ‘sociocultural data’ (Jo and Gebru, 2020).

In practice

Serpentine Galleries

In a guest lecture to students at Goldsmiths, University of London (which was later posted on YouTube), Ben Vickers, Chief Technology Officer at Serpentine Galleries, spoke about the positive impact that galleries, art and artists can have on the wider technology sector, and indeed on the development of technology itself. Vickers argued there is a value to artists and arts organizations being in the room when technology is being developed. This is a model of collaboration that Vickers has advocated at The Serpentine Galleries, and moves the galleries’ relationship with big tech from that of user, to collaborator. ‘What we have been trying to develop is not to ... acquiesce to that agenda but to attempt to build a bridge where you know your position could be taken seriously without you kind of neutering it on the way’ (*Victoria Ivanova + Ben Vickers (Serpentine) – All Tomorrows Parties. Goldsmiths MFA Lecture 2020*). What Vickers describes is the co-creative model of working that many museums now aspire to when it comes to their relationship with visitors. However, it is not as evident when it comes to technology projects, but it does serve as a helpful model of partnership, which moves away from technology companies seeking to launch their latest tools through a partnership with a museum, and towards developing these technologies with artists, in galleries and with visitors. This model of partnership values the museum as a platform of digital activism, rather than a showroom for new technology. Could this model also support the development of more equitable modes of digital innovation? Or is this a utopian aspiration?

Cooper-Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum

The exhibition *Face Values: Exploring Artificial Intelligence*, which was initially shown at the 2018 Design Biennale in London, and later at Cooper Hewitt, New York, examined facial recognition technology through the work of artists and designers, the exhibition’s description does not present a position on these technologies; however, it clearly situates their use as being covert, and prolific, thereby creating a point of resonance for visitors.

This high-tech, provocative response investigates the human face as a living data source used by governments and businesses to track, measure and monetize emotions. Using their own faces to control cameras and software, viewers experience the power and limitations of emotion recognition technologies through playful interactions that encourage awareness of these often hidden tools. *Face Values* speaks to the growing fascination around facial detection technology, particularly in the United States, where major companies continue to experiment and push boundaries with this controversial software ('Face Values: Exploring Artificial Intelligence | Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum' 2016).

In discussing this exhibition, Curator of Contemporary Design, Andrea Lipps explains 'What we are able to do is really poke and probe the technology to raise questions with our visitors' (*Design Talk | Curator, Computer, Creator: A Discussion on Museums and A.I. in the Twenty first Century* 2019). Then director of Cooper Hewitt, Caroline Baumann related the exhibition to the museum's mission in saying that the exhibition served as a site for experimentation, and a mechanism for the museum to seek answers to a wide range of questions, that include

- How might we engage with technology to empower people through design?
- What are our opportunities to make meaning with AI?
- How might we design equitable and ethical applications with AI in our sector and well beyond the museum sector?

These questions are important ones given the broad social impact that AI technologies have, and indeed can or will have on society. Lipps frames this emerging challenge of how we use, but also critique technologies within the context of how museums collect, and asks: 'Just as museums employ a level of criticality in acquiring works for our collections, for developing exhibitions, for our galleries, how can we maintain that same level of criticality in the development of digital technologies for the museum experience?'

For Lipps the way in which museums use technologies echoes her understanding of design itself, 'Design is the externalisation of our values. It is the manifestation. It is the tangible form of our priorities'. The idea that the technologies we use in our museums, regardless of intent, are a tangible manifestation of our priorities is perhaps a helpful provocation, but crucially, Lipps recognizes that the role of museums in the operational use of AI technologies, and in their collection and exhibition through the work of artists and designers, is not about providing the 'answer' but instead is about providing space for the discussion.

Whitney Museum of American Art

The curators of the 2019 Whitney Biennale reflected upon the political, social and environmental conflict they witnessed in the work of artists when they were developing this particular edition of this long-standing biennale of contemporary art, of and about the Americas. In the introduction to the exhibition catalogue they cite controversy as a central and indeed important component to the biennale, 'On occasion, the Museum itself has become the site and subject of protest. We strive to be a space for open dialogue, a role that is fundamental to our institutional identity' (Panetta et al. 2019: 96).

For the Whitney Biennial 2019, Forensic Architecture (FA) and Praxis Films presented an investigation into Warren B. Kanders, vice chair of the board of trustees of the Whitney Museum of American Art and CEO of the Safariland Group—one of the world’s major manufacturers of so-called ‘less-lethal’ munitions (‘Forensic Architecture, Tripple Chaser’, n.d.). Whitney commissioned Forensic Architecture to produce work that examined how ‘less lethal munitions’ such as tear gas were discharged in protests on the Mexican/US border. This work linked Kanders (Vice Chair) to the sale of weapons that were used by US Border Agents. As a result of their findings a number of artists withdrew their work from the 2019 Biennale. This case study raises a number of prescient questions: How do we respond to artists who are using technologies to ask big and challenging questions of governments and stakeholders? How can we as cultural leaders support critical engagement with and through digital technologies?

The Photographers Gallery

In 2019 The Photographers Gallery commissioned ‘Operation Earnest Voice’ a performance piece by artist Jonas Lund. The work sought to shine a light on how political lobbies had engaged algorithms, bots and misinformation in the run-up to the 2016 Brexit referendum (when UK Citizens were asked whether they wanted to remain a member of the European Union or Not). ‘The campaign involves deploying false identities, or “sockpuppet” accounts, to comment on and derail online conversations in an effort to sway public attitude (Rea, 2019).’ The performance took the form of an active influencing agency, with temporary staff recruited to make content, generate conversations and influence online communities. The work sought to shine a light on the mechanisms behind online misinformation, manipulation and fake news. The projects website which is still live today would easily pass as a political campaign agency rather than that of a piece of performance art <https://operationearnestvoice.co.uk/>. Such was the shock at this commission, a political lobbying group lodged a complaint with the Charity Commission (UK) and argued that the gallery should lose its charitable status because this was not an art commission but a political campaign. When technology is politically divisive how can arts organizations provide a platform to debate the power and influence of technology on our democracies? How can arts organizations develop their own critical digital literacy so they can commission challenging art works, but also defend those art works from political pressure? Should arts organizations question the power of technology platforms and companies?

Conclusion

As cultural managers we should think about the impact that our work with digital technologies and digital culture can have beyond our immediate motivation.

- 1 To improve visitor experience
- 2 To increase sales
- 3 To develop art and art form
- 4 To facilitate critical technology discourse

The link between what happens in the digital team, public programmes and collecting could become more reflective and engaged through organization wide transparency, dialogue and development. The role of cultural leaders is to be critical and curious, to think of technology as an art form. Technology and its application must change and respond to society in the way the culture we manage does, but for technology to be responsive we as cultural leaders need to be critical and creative adopters rather than passive enablers. What is the motivation for using this technology? What impact will it have? How can we refine our adoption of this technology? These are the questions that cultural leaders need to ask themselves and their colleagues as a matter of routine. By asking these questions we create a culture of critical technology discourse that benefits visitor experience, sales, artists and art forms.

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6.2 The interdependence of networked archives

ALESSANDRO LUDOVICO

Archives, in the form of institutional collections of cultural artefacts, follow rigorous methods to enable the storage and retrieval of both objects and their associated information. Since digital media literally shape our perception and understanding of these institutions and their collections more than their physical structures and arrangements, and since their collections are usually their most important economic assets, the conceptual and technical investment in adequate digital representation essentially affects their public acknowledgement, but not necessarily their accessibility.

Digital assets vs. universal human knowledge

The digital presence of institutional collections has become increasingly important to the identity of institutions. If the public can access the representation of the valuable physical infrastructure and preserved artefacts from anywhere, this is a mechanism that can be directly translated into a potential reinforcement of the institutional brand and its holdings, increasing interest, reputation and audience. When we analyse the core structure of these collections, we can abstract it to the materiality of the objects in relation to the associated information. The digital representation of the materiality in any single or combined dimension (pictorial, photographic, sculptural, cinematic, etc.) allows for a comprehensive and virtual access.

This digital extension opens up the institutional space to the outside world indefinitely. The collection in its visual dimension, possibly including the stored or borrowed elements, is then structured as an asset within the institutional framework, together with all the verified information that confirms it.

However, there is a different perspective on these institutional assets as they are part of the culture produced worldwide and are not necessarily preserved by a single institution. Single items are often present in different collections, which in turn are connected to other objects, forming a vast network of cultural relations with countless possible pathways of knowledge and research.

This perspective is embedded in the networked structure that is at the core of the online digital medium, which in turn implies relationships and direct connections between representations of artefacts as a technical part of databases within the same infrastructure. This vision was already very present in the utopian early years of the web. The concept of building a horizontal infrastructure for free access to human knowledge was part of various collective efforts. In particular, the incredible opportunity of a medium with cheap access

to publishing and advanced visual possibilities triggered collective efforts. Websites like Discogs¹ and the Internet Movie Database,² for example, were born out of an enthusiasm to create the definitive and public global reference for certain cultural fields, and were often built and verified through crowdsourcing. This information, intended to be consistent and shared, gradually built a comprehensive online database for, respectively, (electronic) music and films. Having such a freely accessible resource, without the material content of what was presented, meant realizing a constantly expanding catalogue of productions that, thanks to its structure as a database, could connect records or films through search keywords and internal links. This structure enabled both the preservation of verified data on releases and the possibility of discovering new links and thus new perspectives on the registered items. In a way, they were a kind of test bed for an ambitious idea like Wikipedia, which was trying to build the idea of a free, crowdsourced and reliable online encyclopaedia that would extend the model of particular modes of cultural production to human knowledge as a whole.

These enormous editorial efforts would have been impossible without the commitment of legions of volunteers who give their free labour to build and maintain the content of the databases. Discogs claims 628,000 contributors,³ while Wikipedia claims 34 million contributors (though only about 100,000 of these contribute regularly)⁴.

While these important databases refer to entire cultural domains, they remain purely virtual, as the detailed information they provide is usually not directly related to an object housed in a specific space, like artefacts in a museum.

A slightly different concept has been developed over the years by Worldcat,⁵ a huge database of hundreds of millions of books, scores and maps held in tens of thousands of institutions, mostly libraries, around the world. Here, the connection between the cultural product and the physical place where it can be retrieved is explicit, creating a global map of free printed culture that can be activated both to retrieve and use physical material, and viewed from above to discover a web of paths, patterns and unexpected connections.

It defines a different, freely accessible cultural space that is truly global through all the participating institutions and the interconnected catalogues of their cultural collections, where different cultures meet. This structure enables the global perspective mentioned above and radically changes the concept of institutional space.

Reconceiving institutional space

Institutional space, augmented by its digital representation, becomes a hybrid space that expands access to the physical site of culture through multiple representations of information. Furthermore, we can imagine such a space that does not focus on the institution, but on the content of the collection, which is connected to other institutional collections and forms a searchable global space of artefacts.

This hybrid space is collaborative rather than competitive in nature, connecting and contextualizing different materials rather than their institutional owners. It brings everything together and enables access through the equality of different internetworked connections. The network itself is collaborative by default, as it is the result of different sub-networks that support each other to function as a whole. The network as a concept is thus meant to enable and expand access.

Since the mid-1990s, museums' outreach practices have been central to engaging audiences on a deeper level interfacing with different social groups to broaden the acknowledgement and understanding of art and culture. In other words, they also create and expand access. Mediation in this context is a human process of giving colloquial metadata to the public. The task of providing the public with contextualized access to the collection can easily escalate in this hybrid space if we consider the totality of collected artefacts as a possible whole and the interested public as a possible single community.

Moreover, this hybrid space, enabled by the constant proximity to personal screens, leads to a different ecology of the physical objects represented. Their representation is taken and mirrored everywhere, while their physicality, which used to be the only reliable and referential information, remains within the museum walls.

For example, if we think of the very limited physical space around artworks, it is not possible to present much information. Instead, this is available online in vast quantities that, once curated, can create a comprehensive context. Hybrid space can liquefy and allow for a rhizomatic expansion of knowledge, focusing on valuable, preserved artefacts, which is a formidable opportunity to improve knowledge. If 'the world has become a data construct' [Sean Cubitt, *Anecdotal Evidence*] before our distracted eyes, then metadata and the gateways to wider related knowledge that it opens are of fundamental importance.

For example, if, when we change metadata it means that we change 'the way objects are connected to the rest of the world' (Crabbe, 2018), then 'they are never neutral' and we should ask ourselves for whom exactly we are choosing metadata.

Hybrid space has two different perspectives: One focuses on the physical space in which objects are located, typically a specialized perspective such as that of researchers. The other perspective is based on the knowledge network that focuses on these objects and extends throughout the digital space. There are some elements that are essential for such a system to work: the compatibility of metadata between collections to ensure the right connections between them; the curation of these connections to reduce the potentially overwhelming amount of related information; and the reliability of sources, which requires the involvement of editors and curators.

We should then imagine the constellations of different, compatible and independent archives having the capacity to develop spontaneous and organized practices that connect different of these collections and their elements, realizing expanded configurations and a potentially more diverse context. The enhanced possibilities to connect elements and subsets of these collections have been further improved through targeted digital tools and platforms. These practices can clearly benefit from being freer from strict institutional codified practices and based on the concept of the network, where collections and their elements become different 'nodes' sharing the same infrastructure and supporting each other.

Distributed and interdependent infrastructures

Based on the consideration that there are small but important libraries and archives on marginal topics, built and maintained by journalists and small institutions, I have personally experimented with the concept of a distributed archival infrastructure that can be realized with libraries, and call it a Distributed Library. Very specialized knowledge, like punk, new media

art or experimental theatre, is often archived and preserved through publications scattered in different places and by different entities (curators, journalists, artists, etc.) and subjects.

It is also a fact that these publications, especially the self-produced ones, are hardly or not at all available in institutional libraries.

So, we can think about a 'distributed library' which should simply manifest the presence of compatible subject libraries through a single organized network. The first step should be the online publication of catalogues of the compatible collections of such private libraries and small institutions that make the index of their contents available as a resource. In addition, a vertical search engine should search these catalogues, which could be extended to include the relevant digital files after explicit agreement with the author and publishers. Metadata can play a pivotal role here in guiding the search and indicating possible paths within this small archipelago of knowledge.

It is also important to circumstantiate the intention and nature of the materials at stake in such a project. The main task of a distributed library is to assemble material and share its location. And the material collected should not be taken for granted. For example, some of the participating libraries might have copies that were printed in very limited editions and whose fate is to become rare over time, donated to them because of their authoritativeness and commitment. The network of participating libraries strengthens its members/nodes, multiplies their importance and then potentially attracts valuable further donations that reinforce their role as preservers to be publicly recognized. Another relevant aspect of this structure is that once each institution publishes collection data online, it inevitably takes responsibility for its own collection before the public, leading to what Maderuelo defines as 'definitive accumulation' (Maderuelo, 2016), or a form of preservation of a specific field and, in particular, documentation of its history and memory.

As publishers of the magazine *Neural*, we have initiated such a project with a web platform that implements the first stage of these processes. The *Neural Archive*⁶ is a textual and visual interface to a database developed in a highly transparent way: The code is publicly available and only free software has been used, together with the most common IT standards. The technological infrastructure is designed to store, display and search any collection of publications (but it can easily be adapted to other static media) and essentially has extended bibliographic data and an image of the cover. It houses the library of publications that *Neural* has accumulated since its inception in 1993, most of which were simply donated. It offers the opportunity to create an expanded and curated bibliography on media arts and, in particular, to build partnerships with other similar media arts libraries and archives, encouraging them to adopt and adapt the technological infrastructure and possibly develop similar catalogues for their collections.

The vertical search engine mentioned above could then search all the catalogues and create a useful tool based on expert knowledge and sometimes productions rarely found in the field, reflecting the physically preserved collections. Since the institutions involved do not usually allow public access to their collections (and this is also true for much of the collections of large institutions), this digital interface to databases guarantees consistent indexing and recording of the preserved publications of these specialized cultures. The main problem with such systems is the compatibility of the data between different libraries/archives and even more so with standards such as the Dewey Decimal Classification System for libraries, for example. Nevertheless, in a searchable and potentially compatible structure, these

systems fulfil what institutional collections usually lack, the missing half of them, so to speak. It is possible that at some point these systems will be integrated into the large institutional collections to provide an expanded and comprehensive representation of specific cultural areas.

Furthermore, as a concept, distributed libraries and archives can dynamically add and reconfigure nodes and data to expand at will. These structures offer a new perspective on the preservation and sharing of knowledge: they can be both self-organized and networked, promoting the dissemination of knowledge as a collective and public good. Moreover, this system is based on two fundamental aspects: transmission and storage. Kittler (1993) discussed their respective roles and values in the media, but in a distributed library or archive they are complementary. Indeed, storage is functional to the transfer of data, and the transfer of metadata supports proper preservation and thus storage. The physical and the virtual here support each other rather than compete. And sharing in the outer networks promotes recognition and further support.

Finally, the different institutions of a distributed archive or library share the same network, and being part of it implies an underlying cultural interdependence, as they also share the same cultural domains and form a richer view of them overall. These two combined qualities create the conditions for dynamic preservation of physical artefacts, supported by extensive and flexible online access to their representation and references.

If we consider these archives not as competitors in terms of audience (as is common in the competitive web and especially in the social media paradigm), but as complementary cultural ventures, we can note some remarkable features.

These collaborative practices are potentially scalable, as they are based on a networked structure that encompasses both the physical and digital dimensions. They represent a potential new model for collecting, documenting, maintaining and making accessible relevant and targeted cultural collections. The widely recognized and reliable information created by online linked databases of physical materials is an act of stewardship for the preservation of these artefacts. The consistent creation of an independent global map of artefacts becomes a methodological challenge.

Conclusions

Applying networked infrastructure to interconnected cultural assets instead of computer servers could open up a new democratic perspective on culture, with greater impact and accessibility.

Networked information can map culture through its physical artefacts, creating a different space that legitimizes each physical element through proper contextualization and localization. Thus, a distributed archive can be defined, which is the result of an appropriate connection between the different individual archives, offering a wider perspective and a much better contextualization.

This distributed archive, like the distributed library, enhances each of its parts by the whole it can create, as vision, as representation and as system.

Its physical location remains essential as the ultimate proof of its existence, and its interconnected, contextualized digital representation creates a mutual acknowledgement and interdependence through an expanded and richer vision of a specialized cultural sector.

Notes

1. <https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Discogs>.
2. https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_Movie_Database.
3. Ibid.
4. https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/magazine/meet-the-most-prolific-contributor-to-the-english-version-of-wikipedia/2018/10/02/a6497a74-9411-11e8-a679-b09212fb69c2_story.html.
5. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WorldCat>.
6. neural.it The Neural Archive. Archive.neural.it. <http://archive.neural.it> (accessed 1 January 2018).

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6.3 How to communicate, collaborate and distribute – Canal180’s decade-long learnings, case studies and contributions from our network

JOÃO VASCONCELOS

Introduction

The new media ecology

*The digital has impacted every industry in similar ways: in the 90s appeared the necessity to have a website, in the 2000s the need to have social media channels and start to communicate in a different way, establishing a (somewhat) direct conversation with the audience, then came digital marketing, because traditional advertising is (almost) obsolete, and so on and so forth. New communication channels are appearing as audiences get tired of the existing ones, or new generations appear with different behaviours and communication needs. **We observe, and adapt accordingly.***

Antónia Folguera, Curator at Sónar+D¹

This essay goes beyond the conceptualization of the digital transformation that occurred at a fantastic pace, challenging the notion of ‘being connected’, ‘community’, ‘network’, ‘engagement’, ‘sharing’, ‘reach’ and ‘like’. Trying to offer practical tools to understand the New media ecology and how to communicate, collaborate and distribute.

Eleven years ago, we launched an experimental Television Channel to capture the unstoppable rise of a new generation of creative talent. It was the early days of a media revolution and the beginning of the digital age.

Since then, only a decade ago, almost everything has changed.

When Canal180 was founded and started broadcasting in Portugal via cable tv operators, social media were beginning but there was no dependence on algorithms and all the difficulties that we are facing nowadays.

We navigated from long tail promises, infinite options and possibilities, to echo Chambers, memes, repetition, noise and the distraction economy as we went from starting a TV Broadcasting experiment to becoming digital media experts with a platform of new ideas, and new voices.

During this process, organizations had no idea how to manage these new communication challenges – How to organize communication teams? How to develop this new type of content? What are the new skills? What kind of talent do we need to relate with? How do we

understand the formats in the context of the constant change in social media outlets? How to redefine the processes to create, produce and distribute content?

Canal180 became a media outlet that works as a platform for new topics, people, ideas and discussions as we morphed into an ecosystem of broadcasts, events, screenings and social media communication, delivering a multi-layered discourse about worldwide cultural topics.

Instead of imposing our views, we choose to amplify new voices that create a discourse as we shift our focus from individualities to social issues.

Right now, we are facing different important challenges. How to involve your community? How to spread your message and the content that you produce? How to not be a hostage to the big tech companies? How do we manage our relationship with Instagram and Facebook to spread our message and the things we produce?²

Amateurs on Youtube (now called Influencers) and aspiring pros on Vimeo shaped a new generation of content that transformed the media landscape in which we live today, from TikTok to Netflix.

We're exploring this context by making connections between artists and thinkers, musicians and activists, as we aim to transform our areas of interest into specific themes, trying to find the pivotal questions in society and offering a clear and alternative point of view.

As the collaborative process has always been the core of Canal180's identity, to produce this essay with greater consistency and depth we're supporting our ideas with a series of insights and quotes from some strategic partners we've been collaborating with.

In summary: this toolkit is based on Canal180's unique experience (on content creation throughout this revolutionary decade-long experiment), combined with contributions from the network we developed, plus a handy set of case studies.

This tool kit is presented by João Vasconcelos (founder of Canal180) with the contribution of Luis Fernandes (former Executive Producer), Andres Colmenares (Co-director, IAM³), Antónia Folguera (Curator at Sónar+D⁴), Barry Spooen (Head of Marketing & Communication, Le Guess Who?⁵) and David Bola (Editor at We are Europe Media⁶)

Media landscape

Information is an ecosystem where everyone can play a different role.

Whether you're a writer, a filmmaker, a journalist, a video creator:

when you're facing a white page, the question stays the same:

What can I say that others can't?

The answer is defined by many things: position, experience, information, insight, tone ...

We haven't quite figured out what we want to say in every scenario.

We know what we don't want to say, which is a start.

David Bola, Editor at We are Europe Media⁷

When Canal180 started operating, we were living in the early days of the digital revolution, the emergence of social media and the disruption of every industry beginning with communication.

We started as an ‘open-source’ platform, where we were curating relevant content we had been searching for online and developing relevant partnerships with other talent and content producers.

This idea connected people and worked as a promise of infinite knowledge and information. It had a lot of impact on artistic creation as we realized there was a new generation of artists eager to have a platform on which to show their creations.⁸

Our motto ‘no studio, no cameras’ was quickly surpassed by our team’s willingness to produce our own content, and not just curate, edit or remix it.

We were aiming to challenge standards of curation, programming, production and distribution with an idea to cross audiences and creative interests – music, film, design, architecture, dance, street art and installation.

We started to look at a new generation of talents as the ones that could work as a counter-culture and produce an influential effect on the creative scene. In times of digital echo chambers,⁹ where everyone can easily be a hostage of their own ideas, connecting and collaborating with new ways of thinking is what keeps us thriving.

The story of our flagship series 180 ID – a series that looks into the work of creatives worldwide, offering a unique point of view on their process – is a powerful demonstration of how the shortage of means, ultimately becomes the coolest feature of the film.

Start looking at your own media platforms (website, Instagram account, LinkedIn) and tell your story – know who you are and share your dreams and ambitions.

Find your tone before you mass produce, or even before deciding on your communications plan – It will attract the right people and talent.

Case Study 01 – Production Paradigms

Director ID

After a few years of producing a relevant amount of episodes, with the focus on documenting a real community of filmmakers, in 2014, 180ID branched out as the Director ID series – a series that profiles the best directors working in music videos today.

In each episode of Directors ID, we invite directors to be a part of the process, in a creative collaboration where the director has full control over the way he chooses to record his interview. The result is always different and unexpected. Each episode is an expression of individuality and the whole series is a document of a generation of filmmakers in the digital age.

The process of making such a series was quite honest and ambitious:

We had no budget to support production costs so we couldn’t fly to meet the directors, but we had a sense of urgency to tell these stories.

We started sending emails to the directors, asking the questions, waiting for their answers, receiving the footage and editing it into a video – the rest was done by the directors we were interviewing.

We made more than fifteen episodes with directors from all over the world, from which we can highlight directors such as David Wilson,¹⁰ who has created work for artists such as Tame Impala, Metronomy, Royal Blood, Arctic Monkeys and Arcade Fire. David Wilson’s episode gave us our first Vimeo Staff Pick. We also interviewed the filmmaker Hiro Murai,¹¹

who directed music videos for Frank Ocean, Queens of the Stone Age, and recently Childish Gambino's 'This is America'. Besides the music videos, Hiro Murai also directed the award-winning series 'Atlanta' and 'Barry'. Kristoffer Borgli,¹² the Norwegian director behind music videos for Todd Terje, Serena-Maneesh, Casiokids and Young Dreams. Alex Courtès,¹³ who made videos for many acclaimed artists like Air, The White Stripes, U2 and Justice.

The importance of producing this series can be measured in different layers:

On one hand, it became the motive for us to open conversations with directors we admire and opened connection points with bands, musicians and other creators. At the same time we became recognized among our peers, gained respect within our community and ultimately Directors started to approach us directly asking us to make an episode about their work.

On the other hand, it became one of the most important assets for Canal180 to navigate in a complex media landscape. It allowed us to develop a partnership with Pitchfork¹⁴ to premiere the series on their media platforms and one episode was recognized with a Vimeo Staff Pick¹⁵ – which opened a door to a global audience.

Looking back at it, we can conclude that no matter what the latest feature or social network, the new filter or video trick, the essential is what you have to say. Formats and production will follow, and they are not necessarily hard or expensive.

Audience and community

The tensions between reaching an audience, activating our networks and cultivating a community have been one of the most challenging and stressful aspects of our work in recent years.

On the audience side, for ethical reasons, we decided to quit Facebook and not to pay for ads or reach. We rely on so-called organic ways of reaching and growing our audience. Essentially we depend on our networks to reach and grow our audience, but nowadays reaching our networks without passing by platforms such as Instagram is almost impossible.

We believe that true communities emerge from networks with a shared context, values and purpose.

Andres Colmenares, Co-director, IAM¹⁶

In the period when the significance of building a community and connecting on a physical level gained a different layer of importance, one of the biggest challenges we've been facing is how we manage the expectation of reaching anyone connected anywhere.

But for us, talking about Audience & Community also raises new questions related to 'the language barrier' as an interesting topic to discuss and understand whether it is slowing down the growth of our media platform.

Even for videos or more visual work, you have to use language and it's a big challenge to keep your identity. When we launched Canal180 every content had Portuguese subtitles. But for the content that we released outside of the TV broadcast, we decided to make it always available in English. What's very difficult is to keep connected with our audience. As our audience is mostly from Portugal (maybe 80 per cent), it's very hard to find this balance of making something that connects with the people that follow us, but at the same time, keeping our identity.

Our audiences on cable Tv were limited to our national context so we decided to develop our focus on digital platforms and the production of content that could reach a broader audience.

Sometimes we've indeed struggled to separate content creation, reach and promotion, but *our strategy was clear: By partnering with international events, platforms and other editorial platforms we could have access to their networks, their audiences, get involved in the production of innovative formats and develop our reach and visibility.*

Collaboration with cultural entities, European networks, international media platforms and Music festivals such as IAM,¹⁷ Le Guess Who?¹⁸ Sónar,¹⁹ Semibreve²⁰ Primavera Sound, Pitchfork MidWinter, became great opportunities to establish our discourse and have access to an already identified cultural audience.

For us, building an audience is something that follows some old rules and basic premises: it is never about the technology per se, it is about who masters its craft.

Case Study 02 – Publishing and Distribution

Pitchfork, Primavera Sound, Shutterstock, 180 Creative Camp

The collaborative process has always been the core of Canal180's identity and we can easily highlight a series of strategic and successful partnerships that enable us to develop our audience, increase our reach and amplify our stories, editorial approach and brand awareness.

Canal180 x Pitchfork²¹

In 2014, we made a partnership with Chicago's leading music publication Pitchfork, to develop and present our flagship series 180 ID.

This partnership allowed the series to jump from a limited audience to a global audience and get recognition from other directors which led to their interest in getting involved.

Canal180 x Primavera Sound²²

Our knowledge of broadcasting and our regular focus on music led us to partner with Primavera Sound to produce a strategic platform for their 2018 and 2019 editions. 'Relive Primavera Sound' was a platform with global impact that became a unique destination to follow festival concerts, interviews, press conferences, radio shows and other exclusive content.

Canal180 x Shutterstock²³

In 2015 we partnered with Shutterstock to produce 'Analógico Humano Digital' – a web series and exhibition that presents ten successful design studios based in Portugal and Brazil, which represent the zeitgeist of contemporary design and the status quo of human life in its intersection with a world that is getting less and less analogue and more digital.

180 Creative Camp has been an important opportunity to gather around our online community and broaden our network of partners. Across the years, we developed new creative partnerships with Media Partners such as Booooooom,²⁵ It's Nice That²⁶ and Intern Magazine²⁷ which allowed us to place and distribute our content on major editorial platforms.

Looking back at our process of publishing and distribution we can conclude that if you don't have the financial means to amplify your message via traditional communication channels, your approach should involve the development of media strategies that provide access to your partners' creative network, reach, audiences and visibility.

For Publishing & Distribution, Partnerships are the answer.

Online and offline

*We have discussed multiple times leaving some of the platforms we use because overall, we could just focus our activity on one. We don't always feel comfortable participating in the cacophony of information that you can feel on social media, but **we also have a duty and ambition to disseminate the stories we cover.** It's a conundrum really.*

David Bola, Editor at We are Europe Media²⁸

Rapid digitization shook up production and distribution, transformed us into broadcasters, radically altered our relationship with audiences and communities, conferred new weight on understanding rights and value chains, and raised new issues of engagement and exclusion.²⁹

This tension has been impacting us across the years on how to navigate in this hybrid context, how to tell stories and how to offer a transdisciplinary and wide-reaching perspective for the discussion of new themes, discourses and trends that are marking the world – and will continue to do so through the next decade.

We were aware that the best ideas came from sharing perspectives, and at a time of an increasing abundance of content, we've been focusing on imagining the future of new digital content.

We are standing in the eye of a global change: a format revolution. New formats are being born, rising exponentially, and storytellers are turning the page on traditional narratives and reforming how the public views content. This, in a way, is not surprising, as artistic manifestations have been a consistent variant over the years, never failing to make a stand during unusual and uneasy times.

The role of youth in message spreading and creating meaningful content is brought to the table. The traditional gates of narratives are being opened, letting free disruptive new storylines pass. The state of content is shifting. Brand new opinions and perspectives are invading the content space and so is the process of getting used to consuming content differently.

We explored this topic by producing a series of episodes as 'Thoughts on': 'Thoughts on the Future(s) of the Internet(s)!',³⁰ 'Thoughts on New Media Formats',³¹ 'Thoughts on artificial intelligence'³² and 'What's Next'.³³

Why is this time any different? What topics have most impacted the online world? Is it becoming easier to tell stories nowadays? Which are the most culturally and socially active voices? How can we use this diverse media to raise awareness?

During our path, we've experienced different models and formats and used our events (180 Creative Camp, 180 Media Academy³⁴ and 180 Media Lab³⁵) as true laboratories to experiment new ideas and approaches.

But how do we link the two different landscapes – pursuing a global audience and reaching communities, specific niches and areas of interest?

We created 180 Creative Camp as an event aimed to provide the time and space for young participants to share ideas and experiences and learn from each other and from the most inspiring artists we invite to join us.

Since its creation, it has been an important opportunity to gather around our online community and expand it through networking that flourishes during the creative week.

We call 180 Creative Camp a physical extension of Canal180 as we always tried to produce a small-scale event that was able to attract some of the most aspiring artists and creators and by this, we could broaden our network of partners, draw attention to some local and national projects, and discover new ones.

Technology allowed us to connect the online and offline space not as an opposition but as a complement and after the Pandemic and the post-digital revolution, we rediscovered the need for physical warmth combined with the potentialities of network expansion through technology.

The idea of 'share' is well documented in 'Some of us were looking at the stars'.³⁶

Case Study 03 – Collaboration

180 Media Lab³⁷

Under the motto of '*New ideas for old formats*'³⁸ the event questions what happens when artists come together to create a hybrid event that tries to imagine the future of creativity.

Later in 2021, in a time where digital prevailed and blended in with real life, questions arose as to how one can continue to showcase creativity off and on the screens. The 180 Media Lab emerged from a desire to embrace improvisation and experimentation and to birth original ideas.

In November 2021 we gathered disruptive talent from multiple worlds in a programme that aimed to rethink culture both in real life and online as it offered a multidisciplinary and wide-ranging perspective on the creation of new cultural forms and means of expression for the future.

We gave form to the idea of making a hybrid online and physical event with space for all artistic expressions that would make us think about the world to come, in a post-pandemic context.

The programme included an Artistic Circuit that came from the attempt to extend the content exhibited on Canal180 to the city of Porto (Portugal), to create a 'different way to navigate the city'.

And then we were LIVE at Canal180 (broadcast via cable TV in Portugal) as a way to bring the physical experience that had happened in the artistic circuit to the digital and

their audiences. We created two special broadcasts on television (Canal180) and online, on Twitch.³⁹

This first experience allowed us to reach new artists who were able to collaborate, without knowing each other, but combining their techniques and creating something fresh. Every day there was something new, and both artists and audiences were challenged to adapt to it.

With 180 Media Lab, by breaking predefined structures and concepts and through collaboration, we saw the emergence of space for new ideas and a new generation of creators.

Editorial approach

A big part of the festival program, whether programmed by ourselves or by our yearly guest curators, is formed by what we see happening around us and throughout the world.

Through sharing their stories, perspectives, and work, we also try to share different points of view regarding current important topics. That way, it's also not just our own perspective and ideas we're sending out, but offers a more diverse range of standpoints and ideas.

Barry Spooren, Head of Marketing & Communication, Le Guess Who?⁴⁰

Major socio-political dynamics obliged us to take a new look at our field and rethink our practices concerning the communities we serve and our roles within our societies more broadly.

Our editorial strategy was based on identifying new and established artists through the 180ID and Director ID⁴¹ series. Making a clear moment of gathering with 180 Creative Camp, where off-the-wall connections were made, promoting working partnerships and laying foundations for the next generation of creators.

But in 2017, we decided to shift its focus from individualities to society issues – and the collaboration with We Are Europe⁴² had a huge role in this process.

It naturally came from our sense of urgency to have a perspective about the world that surrounds us as we understood that the responsibility of a media platform is higher than just working as a content producer.

This curious attitude became a key element of our editorial approach as we never wanted to impose our view, but chose to amplify new voices that create a discourse.

By making connections between artists and thinkers, musicians and activists, we aimed to transform our areas of interest into specific themes, trying to find the pivotal questions in society and offering a clear and alternative point of view.

It became clear that our role goes beyond artist's matters and our editorial approach should be about having access, promoting conversations, discovering new perspectives and identifying emerging trends.

Case Study 04 – Network

New activists of European culture⁴³

During 2017 and 2018 we got on over sixteen different flights, that in between snowy mountains and sunny beaches, took us to seven different cities to produce 'New Activists of

European Culture' as we attended seven of We Are Europe's festivals, and activists were invited to discuss pressing issues we currently face as part of Europe.

We started looking at music festivals from another perspective and used our privileged access to its figures to spark social-political discussions.

How can a music event trigger a discussion about activism? We travelled to Graz, Lyon, Barcelona, Cologne, Thessaloniki, The Hague and Tromsø to find that out. There, we met up with people from all over Europe and talked about how to be an activist in the most varied fields of work.

The result was a seven-episode documental series about the future of European Culture.

We gathered filmmakers, music composers, producers, journalists, activists, political commentators, publishers, artists and politics to discuss seven main subjects:

What makes us humans? Is the political society able to change politics? How important is art in times of conflict? Can dancing lead to change? How can common citizens take back public space? How important is the night culture for cities? What makes a culture?

This series was a game-changer element for us as it helped us shift from a light approach to art, culture and creativity into something that makes the artistic discourse the centre of socio-cultural and socio-political discussions.

By partnering with institutions like We Are Europe, we became part of a bigger discourse, with access to a network of independent thinkers that shape the European discourse of the future.⁴⁴

Our curiosity about the world challenged our perspective and knowledge and provoked Canal180's editorial inflexion on social and political issues.

Final considerations

We launched Canal180 in 2011 as an experimental television channel that reacted to the unstoppable rise of a new generation of creative talent.

We started a Tv Broadcasting experiment that has been morphing into an ecosystem of broadcast, events, screenings and digital media communication, delivering a multi-layered discourse about worldwide cultural topics.

At that time, organizations had no idea how to approach the new challenges and opportunities related to content, formats, skills and talent. The media landscape was being challenged and we wanted to understand the context and how to redefine the process of creating, producing and distributing content.

A new generation of creators were influencing the creative senses with a counter-cultural effect, promoting unexpected connections, collaborations and new ways of thinking.

For a platform based in Portugal founded after the 2009 financial crises, the shortage of means, budget and local audience obliged us to look for new approaches to production, distribution and reach.

We started to look at international music festivals and recognized editorial media platforms as potential partnerships opportunities to give us access to forward-thinking topics, talent, new networks and opportunities to explore new formats.

Through events and other experiences we approached technology with all the potentialities of network expansion and as an opportunity to blur the boundaries between online and offline experiences.

We used our curiosity and the privileged access to the cultural industry to instigate social political discussions as we provoked an editorial inflexion on canal180 to become a platform focused on giving insight on social topics by amplifying creative and independent new voices.

Rapid digitalization, digital transformation, technological evolution and socio-political changes made it clear that our editorial approach should go beyond artistic matters and promote plural conversations about new perspectives.

'What can I say that others can't?'

We've been lucky enough to remain outsiders and move freely between networks of designers, artists, policy researchers, futurists, journalists, and architects while connecting them.

We like to think about this approach as a form of curatorial design, creating conditions for intentional contaminations of ways of thinking-doing while setting a context where reality can be digested from different perspectives.

Andres Colmenares, Co-director, IAM

Notes

1. Sónar+D is Sónar Festival's Creative Technologies Conference, it takes place in Barcelona every June and it also has editions in Istanbul and Lisbon. SónaR+D puts the R+D into Sónar, it's the experimental side of the festival, where we keep track of how technologies impact creativity, society and business as well. It's a big conversation around digital culture where artists of all kinds, scientists, journalists, thinkers, activists, designers and technologists.
2. Watch 'What's Next', produced by Canal180 (2022). A collection of thoughts about the future of art in a post-pandemic world. <https://www.canal180.pt/article/whatsnextnewbeginning/>.
3. IAM is a creative research lab that is helping creative professionals and organizations make more responsible decisions by using futures as tools, while exploring the socio-ecological impacts of digital technologies and the internet(s) through collective learning initiatives, partnerships and commissioned projects.
4. Sónar+D is Sónar Festival's Creative Technologies Conference, it takes place in Barcelona every June and it also has editions in Istanbul and Lisbon. SónaR+D puts the R+D into Sónar, it's the experimental side of the festival, where we keep track of how technologies impact creativity, society and business as well. It's a big conversation around digital culture in which artists of all kinds, scientists, journalists, thinkers, activists, designers and technologists take part.
5. With 'A Celebration of Sound' as our subtitle, Le Guess Who? aims to platform boundary-crossing and underrepresented music & culture from all over the world.
6. 'We are Europe' is a creative Europe programme supported by the European Commission. It's a cooperation of eight festivals and forums including c/o pop Festival & Convention, Elevate, Insomnia, Nuits sonores & European Lab, Reworks Festival & Reworks Agora, Sónar & Sónar+D, TodaysArt and Unsound.
7. 'We are Europe' is a creative Europe programme supported by the European Commission. It's a cooperation of eight festivals and forums including c/o pop Festival & Convention, Elevate, Insomnia, Nuits sonores & European Lab, Reworks Festival & Reworks Agora, Sónar & Sónar+D, TodaysArt and Unsound.

8. Watch 'From Freedom to Freedom', produced by Canal180 (2020). A collection of 10 perspectives on what freedom means now. <https://www.canal180.pt/article/from-freedom-to-freedom/>.
9. Watch 'Thoughts on Collectivism', produced by Canal180 (2017). A film shot in The Hague (NL) during Today's Art, in collaboration with We are Europe. It reflects on our social political rights, demands and behaviours, as users of digital platforms and services. Ethical questions are aroused when we are both the products and the producers of that. https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=1rcsAci6_Ps&ab_channel=WeareEurope.
10. Watch Director ID – David Wilson, produced by Canal180 (2014). <https://vimeo.com/channels/180iddirector/84969499>.
11. Watch Director ID – Hiro Murai, produced by Canal180 (2014). <https://vimeo.com/channels/180iddirector/79484038>.
12. Watch Director ID – Kristoffer Borgli, produced by Canal180 (2015). <https://vimeo.com/channels/180iddirector/114567284>.
13. Watch Director ID – Alex Courtès, produced by Canal180 (2016). <https://vimeo.com/channels/180iddirector/190067878>.
14. Pitchfork is the most trusted voice in music. Pitchfork.com is the pre-eminent resource for highly engaged fans looking to discover and experience new music in a thought-provoking way. Its comprehensive reviews and analyses of the people, trends and events shaping the industry have defined music journalism for more than twenty years.
15. A Vimeo Staff Pick is exactly what the name implies, a selection of videos featured on Vimeo that have been curated by the staff at Vimeo.
16. IAM as a creative research lab that is helping creative professionals and organizations makes more responsible decisions by using futures as tools, while exploring the socio-ecological impacts of digital technologies and the internet(s) through collective learning initiatives, partnerships and commissioned projects.
17. Watch 'Thoughts on the Future(s) of the Internet(s)', produced by Canal180 (2019). <https://www.canal180.pt/article/how-will-the-futures-of-the-internets-be/>.
18. Watch 'Representing the Underrepresented', produced by Canal180 (2018). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ehwLg0jylgg&ab_channel=Canal180.
19. Watch 'Montjuïc: A Future Odyssey', produced by Canal180 (2017). https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL7_y5sxDalGBDZ4u7qnljH7Ohs0f8glT3.
20. Watch the four commissioned films by SEMIBREVE in collaboration with FACT Mag. <https://www.canal180.pt/article/how-does-a-festival-reinvent-itself/>.
21. Pitchfork is the most trusted voice in music and the preeminent resource for highly engaged fans looking to discover and experience new music in a thought-provoking way. www.pitchfork.com.
22. It has now been twenty years since Primavera Sound started to build its unflinching commitment to live music with Barcelona as the epicentre of an event that is international, multidisciplinary and can be enjoyed all year round. www.primaverasound.com.
23. Shutterstock helps creative professionals from all backgrounds produce their best work with content and innovative tools. www.shutterstock.com.
24. 180 Creative Camp is a full-week bootcamp curated by Canal180. www.180.camp.
25. Booooooom is Canada's highest traffic art platform, and one of the largest on the Internet. www.booooooom.com.

26. Founded in 2007, It's Nice That has grown across many platforms and now reaches over two million people each month. These platforms include the It's Nice That website, our social channels and our monthly talks series Nicer Tuesdays. www.itsnicethat.com.
27. Intern is a platform that empowers the next generation of creatives to build their dream careers. www.intern-mag.com.
28. 'We are Europe' is a creative Europe programme supported by the European Commission. It's a cooperation of eight festivals and forums including c/o pop Festival & Convention, Elevate, Insomnia, Nuits sonores & European Lab, Reworks Festival & Reworks Agora, Sónar & Sónar+D, Today'sArt and Unsound.
29. Watch 'What's Next', produced by Canal180 (2020). A series with self-isolation perspectives on freedom, art and the future. <https://www.canal180.pt/article/whats-next/>.
30. Watch 'Thoughts on the Future(s) of the Internet(s)', produced by Canal180 (2019). <https://www.canal180.pt/article/how-will-the-futures-of-the-internets-be/>.
31. Watch 'Thoughts on New Media Formats', produced by Canal180 (2020). <https://vimeo.com/511065259>.
32. Watch 'Thoughts on Artificial Intelligence', produced by Canal180 (2019). <https://www.canal180.pt/article/how-are-we-going-to-live-with-artificial-intelligence/>.
33. Watch 'What's Next', produced by Canal180 (2020). <https://www.canal180.pt/article/whats-next/>.
34. Watch 'Thoughts on New Media Formats' produced by Canal180 (2020). A collection of thoughts on 180 Media Academy that gathered non-conformist talents in a programme that aimed to rethink media formats and subjects. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7x8FnThp9CU&ab_channel=Canal180.
35. Watch '180 Media Lab – Aftermovie' produced by Canal180 (2021). An event that gathered disruptive talent from multiple worlds in a programme that aims to rethink culture both in real life and online. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJ9gZYiINv4&ab_channel=Canal180.
36. Watch 'Some of Us Were Looking at the Stars', produced by Canal180 (2018). A story about creativity, the importance of collaboration in arts and the meaning of small cities and offline connections. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mfPBWwBuGtY&t=59s&ab_channel=Canal180.
37. Search for www.medialab.180.pt for more info.
38. Watch 'New Ideas for Old Formats', produced by Canal180 (2021). <https://www.canal180.pt/article/new-ideas-for-old-formats/>.
39. Twitch is an interactive livestreaming service for content spanning gaming, entertainment, sports, music, and more. www.twitch.tv.
40. With 'A Celebration of Sound' as our subtitle, Le Guess Who? aims to platform boundary-crossing and underrepresented music & culture from all over the world.
41. Watch 180 ID, produced by Canal180 (2014-2022). The 180ID series is Canal180's flagship content. A series that looks into the work of creatives worldwide, offering an unique point of view on their process. <https://www.canal180.pt/cat/180id/>.
42. 'We are Europe' is a creative Europe programme supported by the European Commission. It's a cooperation of eight festivals and forums including c/o pop Festival & Convention, Elevate, Insomnia, Nuits sonores & European Lab, Reworks Festival & Reworks Agora, Sónar & Sónar+D, Today'sArt and Unsound.

43. Watch 'New Activists of European Culture', produced by Canal180 (2018). <https://www.canal180.pt/article/new-activists-of-european-culture/>.
44. Watch 'What Else Europe', produced by Canal180 (2018). <https://www.canal180.pt/article/a-new-flag-for-europe/>.

6.4 Platform fever: Cultural organizations and the algos of the big other

PRODROMOS TSIAVOS

Introduction

The question of the role and boundaries of a cultural organization seems to be constantly re-emerging, annoying in its persistence and elusive in its protean nature (Alexander and Alexander, 2008; Simmons, 2016). The various institutional forms of cultural organizations, particularly the ones still requiring physical presence of an audience, from the museum and the gallery, to the theatre, the music hall, the conservatory or the opera, are as important for understanding key dimensions of modernity, as is the factory, the corporation, the school or the health system (Habermas, 1987; Foucault, 1991; Law, 1993; Matteo Pasquinelli, 2015). More frequently than not, these institutions share common characteristics, from their organizational structure, the fundamentals of their legal form or the production and bureaucratic archetypes they encompass in their various incarnations (Schubert, 2009).

It is for these reasons that the advent of media, communication and computational technologies has fundamentally affected the operation, and even the very nature, of such institutions. It is, nevertheless, the emergence of a particular class of technologies, those that we could call Algorithmic platforms (Srnicsek and De Sutter, 2017; Zuboff, 2019), that has not only affected cultural institutions, but, as we argue here, it is eating them up, literally hollowing them out and turning them into a new species: one that retains the form of a cultural institution, almost as a facade, yet one that is something entirely different; a collocation of data, bodies and symbolic value that feeds the algorithmic platforms that were initially to be used by the cultural institution. In this reversed reality, the algo-platforms are not a device to be used by the cultural institutions, but rather the cultural institutions become one of the key feeders of the algo-platforms and are gradually tuned to their needs, specifications and inclinations (C. U. Ciborra, 1998; Hanseth, 2004). Algo-platforms are in an analogy to Derrida's Archive Fever, the new custodians, and *loci* not just of information that (re)defines the past in the image of the present but also reflects an emergent power class that transcends the human-non-human divisions: The new *archons*, those that command, coincide with the *arkheion*, the place, device and political technology where culture is being developed (Derrida and Prenowitz, 1995).

What we describe here is neither a completed process, nor an isolated event. It is rather an ongoing project of datafication and algorithmication of life that is in its turn part of a

broader phenomenon of almost tectonic dimensions. Such a phenomenon involves much more than cultural institutions. It has its roots in the bureaucratic structures of the technologies, legal and technical, of the industrial era, and has accelerated to such an extent in the last decade that it requires almost a different language for describing its essence and function (Kallinikos, 2006).

Orthodoxy machines

Cultural organizations, particularly museums, libraries and archives, are children of modernity (Simmons, 2016). They draw their origins from the industrial and colonial eras (Hicks, 2020). Nevertheless – or precisely for that reason – cultural organizations have followed the transformations of modernity being themselves the subject of a process of constant re-conceptualization: from manifestations of dominant state narratives, they have gradually grown to present multi-centred, plural and post-colonial narratives, supporting and giving voice to multiple and diverse communities, dealing with collective trauma and supporting open and public discussion (Raicovich, 2021; Smith and Madoff, 2021; Cameron, 2022). The symbolic nature of the content they present and the narratives they construct have rendered cultural organizations more sensitive to issues of cultural representation, identity, cultural equity and social equality. Cultural organizations are increasingly called on to combine multiple and sometimes conflicting narratives, to shelter different identities and to nurture innovation (Petrovich, White, and Paper Monument (Organization), 2018).

While this process invites an eradication of the single-narrative model, it remains by and large the fruit of an institution expressing the dominant – if not hegemonical – position regarding what is the orthodoxy of a cultural discourse. Cultural organizations are extremely sensitive mirrors of our collective vision of what or who we are and would like to be and, in their multiple variations, they consistently operate as producers of such identities, existing or desired (Green and Gardner, 2016).

Along with this transformation of cultural organizations stemming from a deeper apprehension of the state as a manifestation of polities ranging from representative democracy to autocracies comes the increasingly important placing of cultural organizations within a global market environment. The receding of the state in the Global North, the emergence of global markets post the 1990s Soviet Union collapse, the late 1990s participation of China in the World Trade Organisation, as well as the emergence of the World Wide Web, signified a more globalized and market driven institutional environment that also affected the nature of cultural organizations (Giddens, 2003; Latham, 2016). From manifestations of imperial or – later – nation-state narratives, cultural organizations have progressively morphed into participants in a global market that had to communicate and sell to a global and diverse audience. This gradual positioning of cultural institutions in a global market along with the realization and explication of the power structures inherent in their existence have made a double move possible: on the one hand, once the classification schemes and narrative construction have been revealed, the magic or naivety of the ‘neutral’ space collapsed. Cultural institutions need to take a political position and as such one that conforms to the cultural normativity of the moment; on the other hand, the placement of the cultural product in an intensely competitive global market required a different type of magic or illusion: the cultural institution needs to develop increasingly sophisticated strategies regarding the

symbolic dimensions of its cultural product, from the way it is classified and illustrated, to its communication wrapping and the experience that becomes almost part of it (La Tanya Autry and Mike Murawski, 2019). The commodification of the cultural product has accelerated the commodification of the cultural institution itself, gradually remodelling it from a device of state rhetoric into a factory of symbolic products that need to find their place in a global marketplace.

Waves of digital transformation

This gradual transformation of the cultural institution reflects the transition of its environment: cultural, economic and regulatory. It is a shift that has been accompanied by successive waves of digitalization that are equally important for understanding the gradual, yet constant, mutations of the cultural organization (Brownsword, 2008a; Bratton, 2016; Pasquinelli, 2017).

First wave: Classification and documentation

The first wave of digital transformation comes with the advent of classification and documentation systems, as well as the infrastructure they require to operate. In this first wave, we may, broadly speaking, identify the following key characteristics: (a) the intense reification of the cultural artefacts, through their classification, documentation and manipulation on different information systems. While classification has always been part of the modern cultural institution, when the same process occurred on digital systems it allowed a far greater, systematic and to a degree interoperable representation and hence manageability of the cultural artefacts (Bowker and Star, 1999); (b) the information systems in place were mostly standalone systems that required technical support by external partners, but had the digital surrogates mostly controlled – at least in principle – by the cultural institutions themselves. This situation led either to the emergence of information systems/digital departments or the reliance of the organization on similar types of external partners. In any case, cultural institutions had to change their organizational structures and bureaucracies in such a way as to accommodate the emergence of their storage, classification and retrieval systems (C. Ciborra, 2002).

Second wave: The web

The second wave of digital transformation comes with the advent of the World Wide Web (WWW) in the mid to late 1990s. In this second wave of digitalization, the emphasis is on the extrovert side of the cultural institution that needs to have a web presence and at the same time face the realities of protecting its intellectual property on the internet, while increasing access to its collections or content through digital means. The key characteristic of this era is (a) the intense digitization of digital assets of all sorts in order to be delivered online; (b) the active investigation of different modes of accessing cultural content, the first discussions regarding the boundaries between digital and physical presence with an emphasis on the question of whether physical audiences will abandon traditional cultural spaces, such as museums; (c) questions of long and short-term digital storage and preservation; and (d) early

questions of e-commerce and digital marketing. In this second wave, the various digital roles within cultural organizations are solidified and understood in terms both of capital and operational expenses. It is in this era that the first public digital policies appear, whereas the hybrid, digital-physical, nature of the cultural institution is solidified (Drahos and Braithwaite, 2002).

Third wave: Platformization

The third wave of digital transformation comes with the emergence of different forms of digital platforms and social media and the omnipresence of the Internet in its disappearance in body related devices, other technologies and the built environment (Steyerl, 2013). This is the period where algorithmic capitalism emerges as a major force both in the organizational structuring and in the day to day business of cultural institutions (Gawer, 2009; Tsiavos, 2020). This occurs not merely at the level of infrastructure, but gradually at the core of their business, that is, the construction of symbolic identity and the definition of their business models and institutional role. A first key characteristic of this era is the emergence of Software as a Service (SaaS) as the dominant model for running all Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)-related operations in the organization, effectively rendering all operations of cultural institutions dependent upon the key functional characteristics of the software platforms they use. The regulatory effects of the use of software in the creative sector are something that has been discussed at length and was present as an issue even in the second wave of digitalization. What is qualitatively and quantitatively different in the case of the use of Software as a Services (SaaS) is the transition from capital to operational expenses in the ICT budget. As a result, ICT departments inside the cultural organizations are transformed into departments that still handle elements of infrastructure, but mostly deal with contracts and licences. This transition of ICT cost types from Capital to Operational Expenses entailed a greater and deeper dependency on external, global, providers and the logic embedded in their services (Han, 2017).

Moreover, this third wave of digitalization has been accompanied by a new role, that of the digital community and communications manager, responsible for search engine optimization for the web and the social media presence of the cultural institutions. These new roles combined the capacity to create content with that of creating in a way that would interact with the search algorithms in such a way so that the cultural content would feature at a higher ranking and thus reach broader and more relevant audiences. What is critical in this transition is that cultural content in order to reach its intended audience would have to be processed and presented in a way that would increase its visibility in accordance with the instructions provided in each instance by the platform owner. This would gradually mean that cultural content would become not only formatted in a particular way or would acquire the aesthetics that would reach the greatest or most relevant audience, but also that the mechanisms of its production would have to take into account its algorithmic dissemination channels gradually altering the very mechanisms of its production: the experts skills, the mixture between communication, technical and curatorial skills and of course the ways in which the narrative around the cultural artefacts would have to be formed (Georgios Papaioannou and Eleni Sfyridou, 2020).

The combination of the techno-bureaucratic, documentation and symbolic effects that algorithmic platforms have had upon cultural institutions was and is massive: it is not only

the organizational structure and curatorial style that have to be social media- and algorithmic-friendly; it is more than anything else that the internalization of the norms that social media and search engines impose upon the artists and creative contributors themselves that define the boundaries of their style and sometimes nudge them towards specific paths in the formation of their creative content itself (Manovich, 2001; 2008; 2020).

Fourth wave: The rise of the algorithms

While the third wave of digitalization has affected the infrastructural, organizational and curatorial dimensions of a cultural institution and touched the creative process, it is the fourth wave of digital transformation that has really dug its teeth deep into the flesh of the creative body. The rise of the algorithms has been seen initially in the optimization of office applications, the operation of search engines and the segmentation and targeting of audiences on social media. When the first general use language models, such as GPT, or deep learning models for the generation of images, such as DALL-E, were introduced to a general mass audience, the shift of their usage as a general creative tool has made the increasingly more substantial consequences of automation of creative and intellectual jobs obvious. The fourth wave of digitalization of the cultural institutions is marked by the automation of at least some or parts of creative jobs: the implementation of AI features in digital design tools such as the Adobe suite is expected to have a decisive effect as to how the workflows and the very aesthetics of art and creativity are formed. If digital tools have already had a substantial effect in an era when these would not necessarily be disseminated over algorithmic platforms or – even more – would not have AI mediation as a key part of their creation process, it is safe to say that the fourth wave of digital transformation will leave unaffected only the artistic and creative individuals, practices and institutions that actively make an effort to remain unaffected. As the algorithmic processing of data is embedded in applications, devices and artefacts from our word-processors to our creative tools, mobile phones, cars, houses and appliances, it is hardly conceivable that a creative individual will even comprehend how a work that does not have a digital presence of some kind will exist in the near future (Lessig, 2006; Murray, 2007; Brownsword, 2008b; Diver, 2022).

This does not necessarily entail cultural uniformity or even a single creative global style, but rather self-reinforcing segments of individuals, creatives and users, that will keep producing and reproducing their creative content, guided, assisted and regulated by algorithmic mechanisms embedded in their environment. These algo-environments will essentially decide how and when different creative segments will be created, altered or terminated. In this environment human creatives and algorithms will increasingly be difficult to separate, as the latter will require the humans to be constantly producing data for them to exist and reproduce themselves, while humans will need them in order to create and disseminate the produce of their creativity (Manovich, 2020).

Algorithmicization of life and the cultural organization

While there are many parts of the current organizational and social environment that are void of algorithmic presence, it is likely that this is not going to be the case for much longer due to the efficiencies of automation and the exponential 'platformization' of both work and

socio-political interactions. As the algorithmicization of life accelerates, the question of the nature and boundaries of the cultural institution returns with a vengeance: it seems that the whole stack of the creative process is – if not regulated then at least – heavily mediated by algo-driven techno-bureaucratic, creative and dissemination devices. The more humans and their institutions make use of such algorithmic devices, the more they rely on them at all levels (organizational, procedural, creative, dissemination, communication); and the more the algos are used, the better they can serve their subservient masters (Smyrnaioi and Baisnée, 2023).

In this seemingly endless dance, the cultural institution seems to be vanishing: is it nothing more than a space or instance where humans and their algos meet in order to mate and produce their cyborg descendants? While such a vision, dystopian or utopian, of the future – if not present – of the cultural organization is appealing in its descriptive capacity, it may not be adequate as an explanatory model. The emergence of algo-human constellations is not confined to any particular realm of human activity or institution, let alone culture. Settings of cultural production play a crucial role as they constitute loci of symbolic value production, yet they are not the only or most important ones: symbolic value is produced in almost all human interactions, and in some of them, such as political speech, with direct consequences in terms of choice of government or, more fundamentally, the formation of our polity and modes of governance.

Algo-humans as subjects defying the strict human-non-human distinction have been present in social studies of technology since the previous century (Haraway, 1990; Braidotti, 1994; 2013). What has happened, however, only recently, particularly with the massive introduction of visible AI technologies in our daily interactions, is that these techno-human imbrolios have moved from the realms of critical theory to the banality of our daily interactions. This internalization of the cyborg nature of our being both entails and requires a different understanding of the cultural organization as an institution: in the algo-platform society, the cultural organization is one that is collectively built and operated both by humans and non-humans. It retains its shell, but its boundaries exceed these of the formal organization; and it operates as a normative institution that serves the programme of action neither of the state nor of the market, but rather of the algo-platforms and their encoded biases (Zuboff, 2019; Benjamin, 2019).

If we understand cultural organizations as conduits of power, machines of symbolic reproduction, then the gradual transformation of their masters entails their own transformation: If in the colonial era they operated as means of glorifications of the empire, in the nation state era they were tools for creating national narrative and identities, and in the post-colonial times they are used to allow for diversification and plurality of expression, what sort of devices are they to be in the times of algo-platform constellations? The question becomes both more pertinent and complex if we consider the increasingly intense effort by state actors to control algo-platforms in terms of ownership, operation and boundaries. Whether we talk about the EU AI Act (European Parliament, 2023), the Blueprint of the US AI Bill of rights (The White House, 2022) or the Chinese Interim Measures for the Management of Generative AI Services (State Internet Information Office et al. 2023), there is a clear trend towards trying to regulate these technologies in order to maintain state or supra-state control. These efforts are likely to be undermined by the constantly expanding and self-reinforcing internal logic of the algo-platforms that seem to colonize a steadily growing part of

activities through the gifts of effectiveness and efficiency they offer, almost like a Pandora's box that keeps being offered to the mortals with an unclear end result.

The engulfment of cultural institutions by AI-enabled technologies and platforms brings them to the heart of a rhizomatic war: one that includes the fights of the different incarnations of the state in the context of techno-geopolitics; the fight between the state as the sole or primary form of regulation and the algo-platforms as techno-economic mega-bureaucracies that reproduce themselves (Kallinikos, 1996) and constantly seek a greater share in the regulatory oligopoly and its enforcement (Diver, 2022); and the myriad identity wars that are the constitutional forces of the politics of our times. In this multi-layered war-like zone (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986), cultural institutions are both the locus and the outcome of the symbolic and material dimensions of our culture. Their boundaries are becoming increasingly contested, porous and sometimes impossible to define. Fashion houses and their foundations, maker spaces and hackerspaces, crypto-enabled galleries and VR spaces, are examples of new institutional forms of cultural institutions or new dimensions of existing ones (Matthew Velasco, 2021). They seem to be fundamentally different to each other. Yet, they share the same algorithmic premises and, as such, a digital *lingua franca* that shapes the universe of the means – and sometimes ends – of their expression.

Whether the fourth wave of digitalization marks the end of cultural institutions as we know them or not, remains yet to be seen. As the fight over different sources of sovereignty intensifies, cultural institutions may be the canary in the coal-mine of an algorithmic reality, which may be the only reality we are left with.

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Appendix to Chapter 4.2

Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)15 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the role of culture, cultural heritage and landscape in helping to address global challenges

(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 20 May 2022 at the 132nd Session of the Committee of Ministers)

Considering that one of the aims of the Council of Europe is to achieve greater unity between its members for the purpose of safeguarding and realising the ideals and principles, founded upon respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law, which are their common heritage;

Emphasising the need to recognise culture's contribution to a democratic society and the importance of culture, cultural heritage and landscape to the three dimensions of sustainable development goals for economic, social and environmental development of societies, as well as their essential role in the creative economy and the attractiveness of territories;

Recalling that culture is an element of civilisation that acts as a guardian of memories, values, traditions, in close interaction with heritage and landscape, but whose creative dimension (through the transformative power of art, stories and aesthetics) at the same time brings about political, social and technological transformations;

Recalling, as highlighted in the Declaration on the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine adopted by the 11th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers of Culture (Strasbourg, France, 1 April 2022) that, in the context of an armed conflict, culture is often a deliberate target and that erasing cultural traces of the past equates to destroying people's memory, causing a permanent damage to peoples' identity;

Recognising that the emancipatory potential of culture and creativity, awakening the imagination and critical thinking and encouraging freedom of expression, can strengthen democratic participation and social cohesion, foster recognition and mutual trust, encourage social interactions and empathy, stimulate public debate and intercultural dialogue and thus contribute to changing behaviour, creating peace and promoting democracy and human rights;

Considering its capacity to encourage social interaction, emotion, empathy, international collaboration and intercultural dialogue, the cultural world can significantly contribute to define collective goals and trigger collaboration to achieve them;

Recalling the power of culture and creativity to spark lateral and critical thinking, encourage freedom of expression, raise awareness, stimulate public debate and hence contribute to supporting a collective ambition at addressing global challenges and global co-operation, engaging young people, changing behaviour and thus furthering democracy and human rights;

Emphasising the value and potential of culture, cultural heritage and landscape in helping to address global challenges (democratic, economic, health, climate and technological challenges and those due

to the loss of biodiversity and to social inequality) and enhance the quality of life in a constantly evolving society that is marked, among other things, by the accelerating impact of digital technologies, and in particular artificial intelligence (AI), in all sectors;

Considering that cultural policy can help now, more than ever, to address these challenges by ensuring that the arts and humanities play a vital role in shaping the future of societies and that empathy, imagination and appreciation of beauty are mobilised in parallel with the driving force that culture can play to reduce social, health-related and economic inequalities;

Considering that unsustainable human activities threaten life on earth and that transformative changes are required to address the global challenges, prominently those brought about by the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution;

Aware that cultural resources are intrinsically interlinked and form – together with natural resources – the environment in which people live, face common challenges and strive to find solutions to these challenges;

Recalling that artists as well as cultural workers, organisations and institutions play an important role in generating the collective will and solidarity required to address global challenges;

Recalling that, in general, little progress has been made in fundamentally changing everyday behaviour to stop pressure due to human activities that cause climate change and loss of biodiversity;

Recalling the positive contributions made by the cultural, cultural heritage and landscape sectors to public health, and especially physical and psychological well-being, as demonstrated in particular during the Covid-19 pandemic;

Considering that the pandemic has exposed the differences between member States regarding the legal status of, and support systems and social benefits for, artists and cultural professionals and the importance of sustainable conditions in this field in order for creators and cultural professionals to contribute their full potential to cultural development;

Considering the ability of digital technologies to affect cultural and creative production and distribution models, as well as access to cultural services and media, together with the potential for artificial intelligence and data curation to influence accessibility to media and content that could be misused to the detriment of democratic values and cultural diversity;

Considering that cultural and ethical dimensions should be taken into account in the design of technological innovations, in a spirit of freedom of expression and democratic principles;

Recalling the essential role of public cultural institutions such as museums, libraries, cultural and film centres, live performance venues and public media services in reaching out to the general public, including young people, and in enhancing cultural participation and cultural activities, regardless of levels of income and education;

Underlining the pioneering role played by the Council of Europe as regards policies on culture, cultural heritage and landscape, and the development of legal frameworks reflecting the above-mentioned ideas in Council of Europe conventions and programmes;

Recalling the European Cultural Convention (ETS No. 18, 1954), the Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (ETS No. 121, Granada, 1985), the European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (revised, ETS No. 143, Valletta, 1992), the Council of Europe Landscape Convention (ETS No. 176, Florence, 2000), the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (CETS No. 199, Faro, 2005), the Council of Europe Convention on Cinematographic Co-Production (revised, CETS No. 220, Rotterdam, 2017) and the Council of Europe Convention on Offences relating to Cultural Property (CETS No. 221, Nicosia, 2017) and Resolution CM/Res(2013)66 confirming the establishment of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes (EPA);

Recalling the common aim to protect and promote the cultural, cultural heritage and landscape resources of the continent and encourage intergovernmental exchange, dialogue and co-operation around this aim, which led to recommendations by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in the area of culture, cultural heritage and landscape, such as Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)2 on the Internet of citizens, Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)8 on Big Data for culture, literacy and democracy, Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)10 on culture's contribution to strengthening the internet as an

emancipatory force, Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)1 on the European Cultural Heritage Strategy for the 21st century, Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)3 on cultural heritage facing climate change: increasing resilience and promoting adaptation, Recommendation CM/Rec(2020)7 on promoting the continuous prevention of risks in the day-to-day management of cultural heritage: co-operation with States, specialists and citizens, Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)7 with a view to the implementation of the European Landscape Convention of the Council of Europe – Landscape integration in policies relating to rural territories in agricultural and forestry, energy and demographic transition, Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)8 with a view to the implementation of the European Landscape Convention of the Council of Europe – Landscape and democracy: public participation, Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)9 on contributing to the implementation of the European Landscape Convention of the Council of Europe: creation of public funds for landscape and Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)8 on the implementation of Article 9 of the European Landscape Convention on Transfrontier Landscapes;

Recalling the inspiration, results and recommendations derived from ministerial conferences (culture, Moscow, 2013; cultural heritage, Namur, 2015; culture, Strasbourg, 2022) in line with Committee of Ministers' decisions on Council of Europe activities;

Noting the conclusions of recent relevant events held and texts issued by the Council of Europe (Council of Europe High-level Conference – Environmental Protection and Human Rights, held under the Georgian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers, 27 February 2020, Strasbourg; the High-level International Conference on Human Rights and Environmental Protection: “Human rights for the Planet”, held under the Greek Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, 5 October 2020, Strasbourg; work by the Steering Committee for Human Rights to update its Manual on human rights and the environment (3rd edition) and to draft a Committee of Ministers' recommendation on human rights and the environment), the European Union (New European Bauhaus), UNESCO-IPCC-ICOMOS, ICOMOS (Climate Change and Cultural Heritage Working Group, “The Future of Our Pasts: Engaging Cultural Heritage in Climate Action”, 1 July 2019, Paris), the OECD, the G20 (Rome Declaration of the G20 Ministers of Culture) and Europa Nostra (European Cultural Heritage Green Paper),

I. Recommends that the governments of member States:

- 1.** take forward actions at governmental level aiming at further development of a new understanding of cultural, cultural heritage and landscape resources – and hence new policies – as strategic elements to help address global challenges and as drivers of social transformation, with the aim of creating an open and diverse cultural space and a safe and sustainable environment, accessible to all, as a basis for democratic societies;
- 2.** acknowledge the importance of developing cultural empathy, engaging in dialogue and building mutual understanding and solidarity to ensure that cultural and environmental diversity are considered as essential common values and further develop collaboration between people and institutions as part of a comprehensive response;
- 3.** assist Ukraine as necessary in dealing with the threats to its cultural heritage and its urgent preservation by using all possibilities offered by the Council of Europe's conventions and legal and technical framework in the area of culture and cultural heritage, as well as in future action plans for Ukraine;
- 4.** call upon the creative skills of artists and cultural workers to encourage the behavioural changes required to address global challenges and to encourage relevant stakeholders, institutions and organisations to support sustainable development goals. This involves adopting a new perspective on human beings' relationship with nature to ensure the latter's conservation and sustainability;
- 5.** promote the importance of cultural, cultural heritage and landscape resources, and the use of traditional knowledge and practices, with a view to contributing to the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the goals of the Paris Agreement, and map the threats posed by climate change to these resources;

6. orient sustainable development policies, whether at financial or regulatory levels, to:

Mobilise actors in the fields of culture, heritage and landscape:

- by promoting the use of artistic and creative skills to contribute to innovations that respect sustainable development goals;
- by prioritising public and private investment in cultural, cultural heritage and landscape projects in order to achieve sustainable development goals;
- by developing incentives to encourage owners to make heritage buildings more energy efficient;
- by addressing unfair practices by dominant global businesses and encourage the latter to contribute to the development and dissemination of local culture in all its diversity;

Engage with local communities:

- by stimulating participatory activities and democratic governance for cultural institutions and organisations to connect with local communities and encourage civic dialogue and engagement, notably with socially and economically disadvantaged groups;
- by promoting projects that are participatory and supportive of cultural coexistence and inclusion, raise awareness of how to address societal challenges and encourage collective action to work towards sustainable development and peace;
- by adapting conservation standards and guidelines for heritage and landscape and engage communities in preserving them;

Encourage new partnerships:

- by establishing partnerships between stakeholders in culture, heritage and landscape and environmental actors;
- by encouraging international collaboration, co-production and distribution in cultural and creative sectors;

Make the best of digital technologies and in particular artificial intelligence:

- by considering the cultural dimension when addressing the impact of digital technology, in particular AI;
- by embracing an ethical framework regarding the use of digital technologies, and in particular AI, that protects human values and supports cultural diversity;
- by fostering collaboration and exchanges between professional and institutional actors (at local, national and European levels) to make better use of digital technologies, in particular AI, in the cultural and creative sectors through joint projects, training and awareness-raising activities, and to promote digital and AI-based services and content, notably in the audiovisual and cultural heritage sectors, also in support of plurilingualism;

7. support initiatives and projects that work to eliminate gender disparities in the cultural and creative sectors;

8. acknowledge the global dimension and relevance of the cultural and creative sectors in promoting diversity, freedom of expression and mutual understanding;

9. consider culture, heritage and landscape as basic necessities to generate the greatest possible benefits from their multidimensional impact and avoid further precarity in these sectors by including them in relevant post-Covid-19 recovery and resilience funding schemes;

10. address the working conditions of artists and cultural professionals by considering, as appropriate, a framework for their legal status and working conditions and minimum standards that will foster collaboration, entrepreneurial skills and mobility across the continent;

11. promote the widest possible digital access to and participation in cultural, cultural heritage and landscape resources through the digitalisation of related content, enhanced by media and information literacy;

- 12.** seek to reinforce the capacities of, and facilitate training and awareness raising for, relevant stakeholders in the areas of culture, cultural heritage and landscape, as agents of change, and promote the inclusion of learning related to culture, cultural heritage and landscape in formal and informal educational settings when working to address global challenges;
 - 13.** further strengthen international co-operation and the sharing of knowledge, including the dissemination of good practices that illustrate the multidimensional impact of cultural, cultural heritage and landscape resources in helping to address global challenges and value the importance of cultural research and statistics as indispensable elements in defining cultural policies;
- II.** Invites the Council of Europe to contribute to the implementation of this recommendation by means of all the tools at its disposal within the framework of its conventions and non-binding standards, projects and programmes – including the collection of good practices – through stepping up co-operation on this subject with relevant organisations.

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