

**A**t first glance, participation appears to be a constant goal throughout the history of cultural policies, adapting itself to very diverse configurations in time and space. However, some see it as a lever for social and cultural innovation that marks a breakthrough in several areas of public policy.

This book brings together some of Europe's leading specialists in this field and seeks to clarify the meaning, potentialities and limits of the participatory experience in cultural policies. It explores the transformative potential of participation and its relations with several issues faced by democracies.

It also examines the role played by participation in responding to social, territorial, and intercultural challenges. Finally, it offers a preliminary analysis of the impact of the Covid-19 health crisis on the cultural field, specifically through the lens of participatory issues. In doing so, this book incorporates both theoretical reflections and empirical research results in Europe.

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Cultural Policies in Europe: a Participatory Turn ?

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Edited by Félix Dupin-Meynard & Emmanuel Négrier

In coordination with Lluís Bonet, Giada Calvano, Luisella Carnelli & Elettra Zuliani



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# Introduction

Emmanuel Négrier

Participation is not a new idea in Europe. However, in many areas of European social life, it now appears to be the main tool for innovation in collective practices and for individual emancipation. It can be found in demands for urban innovation, with the notions of participative housing and participative urban planning (Visković, Hawlina, Gračner & Ramšak, 2020). It is perceived as a factor in the renewal of educational practices and training (IIED, 2004). It is identified as a lever for transforming political practices, as can be seen in participatory budgets, participatory political programs, and even participatory parties (Zittel & Fuchs, 2007). If we consider public policies as ideas in action (Muller, 2005), that is, a more or less coherent set of values, norms, algorithms, and instruments (both material and symbolic), we can begin by questioning the place that should be accorded to participation. In fact, it is a notion that cuts across all these dimensions. It is a value, in the sense that participation can be said to be intrinsically at the heart of all politics in a democratic society. No one has demonstrated this better than José Saramago in his novel "Ensaio sobre a lucidez" (2004, "Seeing" 2006 for the English translation) in which more than 80% of the population decides not to participate in elections. It is easy to see, by its negation, how much the lack of participation penetrates the very substance of society.

It is also a norm, in the sense that the participation of the greatest number of people is enshrined in a large number of public policies - "participation" in the broader sense of action and/or expression of opinion. It is a desired end, and it is an end desired in and of itself. It is also a frequent algorithm in public policies: participation is expected to contribute to the improvement of public action, in the sense of the democratic quality it is assumed to have, or in the sense of efficiency linked to increased legitimacy. The participatory algorithm ("if participation is important, then the policy will be better") is at the heart of public policy, far beyond just cultural policies. Finally, participation is a tool, both symbolic and material in nature, that has been distinguished by most innovators in the field of public action, be it the New Public Management inspired by neoliberalism (Christensen & Lagreid, 2001), or the various forms of basism or municipalism (Bookchin, 2015, Gourgues & Mabi, 2020). From this, one could draw the conclusion that participation is everywhere - and has been so for a long time - and is neither a relevant or coherent object, nor a particularly contemporary issue. This would be an error of perspective. Indeed, the theme of participation, by its universality and

imprecision, deserves an in-depth analysis. It is to this that we have dedicated this book. Secondly, beyond scientific quarrels over the meaning of participation, it is undeniable that it is one of the most central themes in questions of public policy reform in general and cultural policies in particular.

If it is central, it is because it corresponds to a new way of understanding the relationship between decisions and their justifications on the one hand and citizenship undergoing metamorphosis on the other. However, it also faces a number of obstacles which we will describe below. The history of participation in the cultural field deserves attention because there are many ways of approaching it that have implications for the way it is confronted with current cultural policy issues.

## The extension of democratic passion

The first paradox of participatory innovation is that, in all these areas, it is the absence or crisis of participation that is at the origin of the desire to put new practices on the agenda. In political matters, it is the growth of abstention and its particular and unequal sociology that explains the call for new forms of the mobilization of public opinion (Bacqué & Sintomer, 2011). In urban planning, it is the observation of an excessive domination of professional concerns over the social logic of housing that justifies a new participatory register likely to prove more efficient and more suitable to social needs (Bonoli, 2005). In the environmental sector, its enlistment in the fight against social apathy has opened a domain in which new participatory tools are seeking their legitimacy and effectiveness (Abelson & Gauvin, 2006). Examples of the revival of participatory discourse could be multiplied in realms where social demand was hitherto considered receptive, beneficial but not active, or even absent.

Generally speaking, the revival of the discourse on participation is part of the positive goal of strengthening the democratic character of European societies. A greater diversity of profiles associated with public decision-making is expected, while classical social organizations (political parties, trade unions) are both increasingly limited in membership and homogeneous in their social composition. Participation is the way to refound a democratic forum the cuts against the trend towards the neo-corporatist organization of social and political dialogue.

At the same time, the citizen who we would like to be participatory has changed. In their political expression, and more generally in their social behavior, passion has emerged

alongside traditional civic rationality. This is the birth of the "sentimental citizen" (Marcus, 2002). The sentimental citizen expresses first of all the disarray of rationalist theories that bet only on easily "objectifiable social facts" (strategic interests, class, gender or territorial identities, income or education levels) to explain electoral behavior, attitudes toward political leaders, cultural or educational practices, etc. (Faure, Négrier, 2018). The use of these explanations remains statistically demonstrable, but one of the most dynamic springs of the relationship between the individual and society is missing: passion.

Let us leave aside sad passions, which can explain in their own way the development of the populist vote in Europe (Dubet, 2019) and which correspond to a global crisis of confidence within European societies, as Giuliana Ciancio will explain later in this book. Spinozian joyful passion (Sullivan, 2011), that which makes one glimpse the relationship with the other as an extension of one's own capabilities and horizons, is the driving force behind many social behaviors. Among these, culture-related behaviors are obviously concerned at the highest level. The sharing of tastes and cultural experiences is part of this civic socialization that escapes the strict empire of reason. To explain it, one has to resort to the induced effects, to the transgressive potential of passion. In the general picture of cultural participation that we are going to draw, we must not forget that we are talking about dynamics of capital, capabilities, and transmission that are always a combination of reason and passion. Thus, the call for greater participation in public policies is not only the result of conscious strategies or an extension of instrumental rationality. It is also the translation of a better understanding of passion in the civic and political fields.

## Three major obstacles

Of course, in every area where it appears to be a solution to all ills, participation faces obstacles that are themselves already well known (Blondiaux, 2009) and which can be grouped into three main axes.

### **Giving the lie to Bourdieu**

The first obstacle is the structural disappointment linked to the hope of broadening, through participation, the circle of citizens active in public action (whether cultural or not). In reality, the sociological renewal of (new) participants is always weaker than hoped for. In the BeSpectACTive! experiment, we have seen this both in the most determined, experienced organizations, such as the Royal Theatre in York or the

Kilowatt Festival in San Sepolcro: the participants always belong overwhelmingly to the educated, hierarchically higher classes within the local society, the ones for whom learning the values of the programming is the least problematic, so much so that they are already internalized by the participants. The same is true - more often than not - in public commissioning schemes for works of the New Patrons type, and, to leave the cultural sector behind, in participatory budget decision-making processes, even in the case of drawing lots among the participants (Sintomer, 2010). Participatory innovations always have the secret dream of giving the lie to Pierre Bourdieu and of inventing mechanisms that strengthen the dominated sectors of society. However, if we come across participants with modest social and cultural profiles, this is most often the case for only a few individuals. It is possible to contradict Bourdieu through individual example, but it is much more difficult on a collective or statistical scale. The promoters of these participatory processes are therefore frequently disappointed by the low level of representation of the participants vis-à-vis local societies when they put a lot of hope into such sociological renewal, even if this is not always the case.

### **The paradox of "instrumentalization"**

The second obstacle indeed involves the real intentions of the person through whom the decision, formerly unilateral, becomes shared. Observation of participatory processes, in the cultural sector as elsewhere, shows that these arrangements are, paradoxically, not always intended to share power. There are two reasons for this. The first is that the discourse of participation (as we shall see below) is based on a very wide variety of meanings, which Félix Dupin-Meynard and Anna Villaroya study in their European panorama. Some of these interpretations can even be seen as a real way of co-opting this idea in favor of the autocratic management of the sectors concerned. In this book, we will carefully read the chapter by Lluís Bonet and Mariano Martín Zamorano on the use of culture and participation in illiberal "democratic" regimes. In these cases, the promotion of participation has more of a rhetorical function of breaking with one government elite and installing another than the objective of delegating power. Thus, support for participation may be the result of currents critical of democracy as a political regime and as a social procedure. Less dramatically but just as problematic for participation, enthusiasm for it is more often found among outsiders to public policy than among the actors dominant in this domain. And it is not uncommon for the arrival of outsiders in power to result in the dormant participatory ideals previously supported in times of opposition being put to rest. Participation: always talk about it, but practice it as little as possible!

## **The return of the repressed**

Finally, the third obstacle lies in the concrete observation of participatory social processes. While the initial democratic promise is one of sharing, other phenomena like the horizontality of decision-making, formal and real equality among participating members, and conceptions of leadership are particularly numerous over time. We have observed, particularly in the New Patrons projects, how the formation of a group of participating citizens began with the assumption of the equality and diversity of individuals but always had to face a two-pronged phenomenon of motivation and leadership. Over time, these groups have objectively valued the position (social and cultural) of some of their members. There is a frequent defection of those among the least endowed in social and cultural capital. To curb this trend, an offensive mediation strategy is required. Otherwise, self-designated leaders (a surgeon participating alongside nurses in a participatory art project commissioned for a hospital setting; a wealthy art enthusiast merchant working alongside neighbors on an art commission in a public space, etc.) take over. In these cases, the participatory promise is shaped into the mold of hierarchical decision-making. This criticism is not confused with the first obstacle because the bias here does not stem from the sociological properties of the members but from the game they are allowed - or not allowed - to play. It is therefore more of an experimental than a principled obstacle. It thus gives a glimpse of the possibilities of reacting against a drift that is, as a result, in no way fatal.

In the cultural field, the emergence of participatory discourse brings together two major hypotheses. The first is the emphasis on the invariable character of participation as a practical and philosophical dimension of any cultural policy and, in essence, of any social relationship to culture. The second focuses instead on what may explain the emergence of participation as a new value in contemporary cultural policies.

# A social history of artistic and cultural participation

The first vision may seem tautological. If we go back to forms of performance found in the ancient world, the audience is not only at the origin of the very notion of theatre (theatron, in Greek: the place from which one looks) but is also represented by the choir. The history of the performing arts is therefore necessarily also the history of audience participation, as Franco Bianchini confirms in this book. But it is more concerned with cultural participation than with artistic participation. While it is therefore indisputable that audience participation is an ontological dimension of any cultural action, it is still unclear what such participation means and what it can mean (Jancovic & Bianchini, 2013).

As for artistic participation, more often approached from the perspective of participatory art, it also has a history that François Matarasso, interviewed in a recent book, reveals. In "A Restless Art: How Participation Won and Why It Matters," published in 2019, the author returns to the origin, in the 18th century, of a social and political separation between the tradition of fine arts and that of a community art rooted in social reality. His long perspective on participatory art, essentially in England, insists firstly on the fact that there are no fine arts and, secondly, an attempt at democratization leads to community art. From this separation, there is a parallel evolution in which a "purist" or elitist vision of art periodically encounters its social or popular roots, often with dismal results.

These key moments are, for example, the first forms of public cultural action in favor of culture itself, situated in the 19th century, which Matarasso sees as an attempt at social pacification. Civilizing the people through the development of libraries or museums or through philanthropic societies is to guard against the specter of revolution that industrial England dreaded. This cultural policy of pacification has its limits: the social and political structures of popular support can recover this instrument of emancipation that is culture. This time period is also marked by the emergence of the pioneers of community art, specifically those who reject the division between elite and popular art. In this sense, Matarasso contests the idea that the latter would be a social exploitation of art from which its elitist dimension would escape. Likewise, cultural participation here ceases to be just a lever of the social order but is also the means to contest it.

Another pivotal moment, and another failed encounter, was at the end of the Second World War and the Beveridge Report. In 1942, the Beveridge Report laid the foundations for a welfare state that insisted on the cultural dimension and created new institutions, such as the Art Council. But this institutionalization was essentially done for the benefit of an elitist vision without consideration for amateur practices. However, just as in the 19th century, the division between arts and crafts, between popular and elite cultures, and between art and society was called into question by the rise of community art. Community art, which originated in the working-class outskirts of large cities as well as in more rural areas, experienced a golden age in the 1960's. It proposed an alternative model of production and dissemination, but also a revolutionary perspective through the use of culture. The struggle for artistic recognition is thus not detachable from its social and political dimension. The mistake, however, would be to see it as a phenomenon foreign to the history of art itself. If, Matarasso asserts, community art does have represent a political singularity, it is part of the evolution of aesthetic codes and innovations (posterism, constructivism, abstraction, performance) specific to the art world as a whole.

There is thus a particular aesthetic and political intentionality that is based on what Estelle Zhong-Mengual and Baptiste Morizot call an "availability of art," an ability to make art available to society, instead of extracting itself from society in the name of its incommunicability to the profane (Morizot & Zhong-Mengual, 2019). It is this social availability of art, its rootedness in people's lives, that is the hallmark of community art, but it is the structural problem of its institutional articulation that is its weak point. The crisis and then the end of community art as a movement in the 1980's expresses this difficulty in its own way. Is this the triumph of art for art's sake, centered on aesthetic criteria and indifferent to its social roots? The social history of art continues its march. On the ruins of community art was born participative art. It is expressed through the public policies of local authorities and urban renewal programs which Pedro Costa analyzes in his chapter in the second part of this book. But this reconnection of participatory art to social and urban institutions does not at all resolve the division between social art and institutional art. Quite the contrary.

It requires a strong political impetus, which the arrival in power of New Labour in 1997 represents. François Matarasso testifies to this in his famous report *Use or Ornament* (1997) based on his experience as a community artist in the East Midlands. In this report, he demonstrates eight benefits of the relationship to art for society:

- Participation in arts activities brings with it social benefits,
- The experience of participation is unique and significant,
- Relationship is more significant than form,
- The social impacts of the arts are complex,
- Social impacts are inevitable but not necessarily positive,
- Participating in the arts brings risks and costs,
- Arts projects can provide cost-effective solutions,
- Social impacts are demonstrable (Matarasso, 1997: 85-87)

The recognition of the positive externalities of artistic participation, however, is not without difficulties. On the one hand, the new public discourse has to take into account the power relations between artistic institutions and their influence on power as well as new actors in participatory art whose means are beyond measure. On the other hand, the political context is also illuminated by a more frontal criticism of the institutions themselves, which no longer have the same ability to despise the social roots of art as they did in the 1960's. Artistic participation has become fashionable even for those institutions seeking to renew their audience and shore up their legitimacy. In other words, while the separation between participatory art and institutional art has become blurred, the tools of cultural democracy have been placed at the service of classical cultural democratization, with a permanent risk of their subservience to other incompatible ends.

In England, but also in France, Holland, Germany, and the countries of Southern Europe, participatory art is appearing on the agenda in two very different contexts. The first is that of the new social movements that make art not only a lever of expression and emancipation but also of personal development. The actors involved in these movements are specifically dedicated to these ends. The second context is that of more classical artistic institutions that are opening up to the use of participatory art as a new tool in their tool box. In both versions, participatory art is part of the culture of the 21st century, taking advantage of public resources, social involvement, and more or less commercial forms of art. On the one hand, it assimilates and loses its politically radical nature, and on the other hand, it multiplies artistic experiences linked to a cause that can be defined through the notion of cultural rights.

This first vision of artistic and cultural participation is that of a social and political history in which the conflicting and intertwined relationships of participatory art and classical institutions punctuate periods of boom, crisis, and recomposition. It is a cyclical vision, both critical and enthusiastic, of the permanence of an artistic vocation in social life in spite of the difficulties that it has encountered to flourish, especially in the most

disadvantaged social sectors. It has little interest in the diversity of meanings and forms that participation can take on in cultural policies and in the concrete projects that are inspired by them. On the contrary, it is to this diversity that another vision is attached, one that takes cultural policies as its starting point and envisages the emergence of participatory dynamics.

## Participation and cultural policy change

This new perspective encourages us to consider two aspects in particular. The first is to show the diversity of what we mean by "participation" with regard to cultural policies and their dominant paradigms. The second is to show that, while participation is intimately linked with cultural and artistic action, it is nonetheless a new challenge to be found within the framework of contemporary public cultural policies. This novelty is itself explained by the involvement of several factors.

One of the particularities of the field of cultural policy is that paradigms(1), rather than substituting one another, tend to be cumulative. Indeed, the emergence of a new paradigm does not eliminate the previous ones. Rather, they live together, with greater or lesser predominance in each of the plural landscapes of cultural projects and venues. In contemporary cultural policies, distinct overlapping paradigms thus coexist: cultural excellence, cultural democratization, cultural democracy, and the creative economy. Each one emerged within a distinct time period as a means to lend global coherence to the content of cultural policy, from its discourse to its institutional instruments and management tools. In most Western democratic societies, the cultural welfare state came into being during the 1950's and 1960's, and its paradigms were the result of the evolution of social values over the course of these last six decades. During this period, the very concept of culture (as a field of public policy) has changed, just as industrial society has been transformed into a postmodern society based on a service economy (Castells, 1996; Rifkin, 2000). Each one of the four paradigms holds its specific vision of participation.

The paradigm of excellence was the first to appear since it resolved two important challenges in cultural policies following World War II (Lewis & Miller, 2003; Poirrier, 2011). Firstly, it allowed for the application of a criterion independent from direct

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1 A previous version of this section has already been published in Lluís Bonet & Emmanuel Négrier, « The Participative Turn in Cultural Policy: Paradigms, Models, Contexts. » *Poetics* n°66, 2018, p.64-73

political pressure that respected freedom of expression (held in check by totalitarian systems) and incorporated the support of avant-garde creation as a goal of governmental intervention (pre-existing cultural policies did not include avant-garde arts given their lack of academic legitimacy). Moreover, the demand for excellence fits in well with support for non-commercial artistic expressions which, due to the difficulties they experience in surviving in the free market, require philanthropic patronage or governmental support (Throsby, 2001). Yet the major role is held by the expert, through his/her ability to identify and support a creation of quality, sometimes with complex codes of access. Under this paradigm, the participatory dimension of audiences is ultimately subordinate to quality, a controversial criterion due to its aesthetic, social, and political subjectivity. Programmers and the decision-makers of public policies join critics and the majority of those seeking governmental support in belonging to the same endogamous group of professionals (Urfalino, 2004; Alexander & Rueschemeyer, 2005) that excludes those who do not share the dominant hierarchy of values. Nevertheless, the system of excellence, facing criticism for self-referentiality or subjectivity, did not die as it is still supported by dominant institutions and cultural actors. Moreover, the paradigm of excellence has extended its influence towards new cultural fields, tastes, and cultural practices.

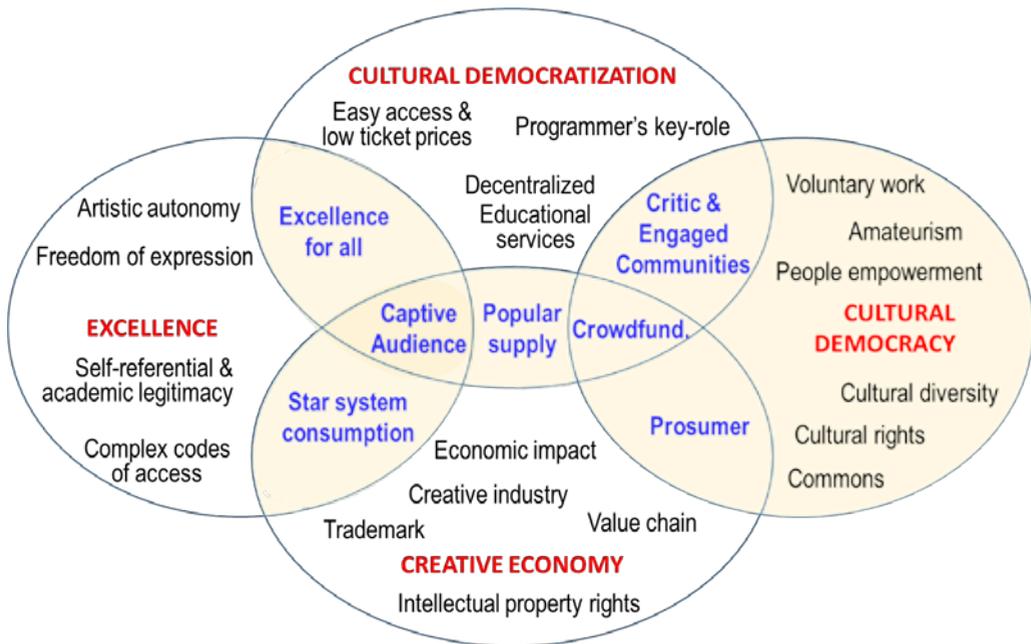
The second paradigm implemented was cultural democratization, the main justification behind most arts and heritage venues and projects. Its main purpose is to facilitate access to the broadest number of people to high-quality cultural goods and services that, without government support, would not be supplied by the market. Under this paradigm, most cultural policies increased their budgets and territorial presence during the period from the 1960's until the beginning of the current economic and public budgetary crisis (Psychogiopoulou, 2015). The correlation between the socio-economic level, accumulated cultural capital, and cultural consumption practices is responsible for the failure of many cultural democratization policies and for the scant social equity of a large number of the cultural programs funded with public resources. From the point of view of audience participation, its main criticism targets the separation between the producer's proposal (assisted by governmental decision-makers) and consumer demand. Audiences consume and passively participate in whatever artistic directors, editors, or curators propose without any other alternative besides leaving the event. The intermediary mission is to transmit in the most effective way possible content that remains intangible across the social space. Nevertheless, in many Western countries, the attendance figures for cultural production have remained quite stable over time (Donnat, 2011; Zorba, 2009). They have even exhibited a tendency towards reduction, as the population of many countries becomes more diverse and holds more heterogeneous interests.

The next paradigm to emerge chronologically was cultural democracy. Even if its roots are much older, it emerged as a paradigm in the 1970's. Socio-cultural operators and some independent curators led the charge for cultural democracy as an alternative to what they perceived as the failure of the two preceding paradigms. Cultural democracy postulates the possibility of each social group obtaining recognition for its own cultural practices (considered illegitimate under models of cultural excellence and cultural democratization and/or unprofitable by the economic system) and gaining support for them (Pyykkonen, Simanainen & Sokka, 2009). It assumes that there is no coherent and hierarchically superior cultural product or expression that is necessary to be transmitted widely among an undifferentiated set of citizens. It was in this context that participatory discourse was mainly developed, especially in the case of art forms for which recognition remained at this time controversial among conventional citizens and cultural policy officials. Under this paradigm, the divorce between supply and demand would theoretically become meaningless. The UNESCO World Decade for Cultural Development (1988-1997) and the discussion around the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions indicate the incorporation of these paradigms into the rhetoric of international cultural policies (Unesco, 1995; Unesco 2005) and the difficulty of their being implemented (Vlassis 2011; Unesco, 2015). In recent years, cultural democracy has found a new advocate with the rise of the cultural commons approach (Bertacchini, Bravo, Marrelli & Santagata, 2012; Barbieri, Fina & Subirats, 2012). Its original purpose was to emphasize the empowerment of citizens as active subjects and stakeholders in public policies (Polityczna, 2015) by giving value to assembly decisions taken by active collectives and citizens. In the second part of this book, Pascal Gielen and Hanka Otte make a major contribution to this debate, illustrated by several empirical studies.

The cultural economy paradigm emerged in the 1970's as an academic field but slowly gained visibility during the 1980's with the legitimization of the previously stigmatized (notably by the Frankfurt School) term 'cultural industries' (Girard, 1978). It focuses on the direct economic impact and externalities of the cultural sector, traditionally considered more as a domain of expenditure. This cultural economy paradigm is also an attempt to justify governmental support for cultural practices with low attendance. But it was at the end of the 1990's and the beginning of the 21st century, when it was strongly reinforced by the rise of the creative economy and the worldwide development of the Creative Cities strategy (Byrne, 2012). The creative economy is a new formulation of the cultural economy paradigm. Many countries, led by the UK, have diverted their approach from the support for core arts and heritage activities to those outcomes of human talent that generate intellectual property rights. In doing so, the sector has

expanded to a large set of creative industries that were not necessarily considered as legitimate objects from the previous standpoint of cultural democratization and cultural development (O'Brien, 2014). In this paradigm, the participatory dimension is linked to the roles of consumers or users who make the business financially viable, whether directly or indirectly.

**Figure 1.** Participation in cultural policy paradigms



The simultaneous coexistence, in one way or another, of all these paradigms results in cultural policies that are complex from an interpretative standpoint. Each paradigm considers citizen participation from a different perspective. At the same time, it is in its practical application that the contradictions (and the convergences among paradigms) shine, as can be seen in the overlapping sections in the Venn diagram above. In any case, cultural democracy plays a central role in active citizen participation, even if – in the overlapping sections – we can see how contrasted the pallet of participative orientations is (from standard consumption to prosuming, and from captive audiences to crowdfunding engagement).

The paradigm of excellence is rarely interested in participation, except when the artistic proposal needs it as part of the artistic experiment. Cultural democratization, with its mission of delivering excellence for all, tries to attract not only larger audiences but a growing diversity of them, mainly via education and marketing campaigns (as long- and short-term strategies). It looks for passive consumers of predefined cultural offerings, but due to the difficulty of attracting new audiences, the result is captive and endogamous audiences. These are preferred by projects of excellence, since professionals and audiences share the same interpretative codes. At the same time, these captive audiences guarantee the economic viability of many of the business models driven by the paradigm of the creative economy. Yet, faced with the difficulty of attracting different audiences, many facilities built to respond to the objectives of cultural democratization end up offering popular programming, not far removed from the most economic of models. Nevertheless, the creative economy paradigm does not just look for these passive consumers but for interactive prosumers of the latest technological tools, as participation is crucial to competing in immaterial markets as well as to giving new space to co-creation and co-production practices.

Another space of convergence between these diverse paradigms is the revitalization provided by crowdfunding. From the perspective of cultural democracy, it gives voice to a plurality of expressions, nourishing their basic communities. As for cultural economics, it is possible to expand financial sustainability, mainly in small-sized projects given the predominance of rewards-based crowdfunding over equity- or pure donation-based crowdfunding (Bonet & Sastre, 2016). It is also possible to test its market potential and transform local initiatives into much larger virtual communities. Finally, in terms of the strategy of cultural democratization, it allows for wider audiences.

On the other hand, in terms of the promotion of prosumer behavior, the paradigms of cultural democracy and of the creative economy coincide. The possibility of transforming a creative yearning into a tangible reality gives individuals and communities independence while expanding the range of cultural expressions. This is possible thanks to technological applications resulting from the creative economy where interaction and participation are at the center of the new value chains.

So, even though participation is crucial to achieving cultural democracy goals, the different meanings of participation (from support given to critical audiences or prosumer behavior to more passive and captive consumers) and its use by each of the cultural policy paradigms show the hybridization of contemporary processes. The tension between ideological approaches, without any one model in a clear position

of dominance, explains the contradictions in the battle to set the political agenda.

Participation thus has several possible meanings and intensities, the nature of which is inherently political. But what gives a more obvious contemporary meaning to participation, in both cultural and artistic terms, is the result of two other dimensions that we have already developed elsewhere (Bonet & Négrier, 2018). The first is innovation in communication technologies. With a better ability to know audiences and to stimulate individual expression, however, it brings with it the risk of a new form of conformism (Hindman 2009) and social selectivity in accessing these new tools. Beyond that, new technologies contribute to the aesthetics of cultural projects. This is the case for interactive performances via digital tools.

The other dimension is sociological. It corresponds to two trends. The first is more on the audience side, in relation to Bourdieu's model, and emphasizes the ability to sustain the autonomy or interdependence of individuals in a multiplicity of relational circles. The spectator can less and less be seen as the "programmer's ventriloquist," made up of cultural good will and symbolic inferiority, even if certain "hard variables" (age, social category, gender, habitat, etc.) retain considerable weight. The second social dimension of the participatory turn is on the side of artistic production. It lies in the project of reintegrating the question of art into a new social dynamic by proposing a new social use of art, as we indicated above (Négrier, 2013) and which Jean-Damien Collin returns to in the debate that concludes the first part of the book. Numerous initiatives are emerging today in the form of spectator collectives, citizen commissions of works, and co-creation through artistic and participatory residencies. The BeSpectACTive! program is one among these initiatives that have given rise to a publication program (Bonet, Calvano, Carnelli, Dupin-Meynard & Négrier, 2018).

To analyze this diversity, it is perhaps necessary to go beyond the most familiar idea (which also arouses the most fear) of debates over participation: the question of power. Indeed, a participatory process can be very much oriented towards transmitting new capabilities to citizens without granting them power, or, conversely, entrusting them with power without giving them access to these new capabilities. This is what we wanted to demonstrate when carrying out a collective and inter-regional survey between France and Spain (Bonet, Carreño, Colomer, Godard & Négrier, 2018) by classifying participatory mechanisms according to two axes: that of power, which affects decision-making on the one hand, and that of capabilities, which affect the development of participants' skills without necessarily giving them power in the artistic field. The lesson to be drawn from these examples, whether theoretical or empirical, is that entrusting

power to citizens through a specific modality is not enough to strengthen people's artistic capabilities. Here, the procedure is crucial, through its organization and through interactions between individuals. It determines, on a case-by-case basis, the boundary between democracy and demagoguery. This classification into groups of modalities therefore gives us keys to understanding how the growing participatory current among cultural and artistic operators is organized. We can see that the most established boundaries are ultimately debatable when we observe them closely. A task that calls only for technical skills can prove to be a source of cultural development and power in the organization. It also illustrates how porous the boundary distinguishing between the utilitarian and symbolic aspects of participatory exchange can be.

## Presentation of the book

The project for this book was born from a three-pronged question: 1. Through what processes is participation in art and culture developing in Europe today?; 2. What contrasts does it give rise to in terms of intensity, models, and national or sectoral cultures?; and 3. How does this participation place cultural issues at the heart of the democratic dilemmas of the 21st century? To this end, we brought together the best specialists at an international colloquium held in Montpellier in May 2019. The overwhelming majority of them are the same people who are contributing today through their writings, after having ensured the success of the symposium. Naturally, the ups and downs of academic life have meant that the project has been slightly transformed. Some speakers were unable to join the written project. But we would like to thank them here for their participation. Let us mention Estelle Zhong-Mengual, Leila Jancovic, Luca Ricci, and Jaroslava Tomanova, all of whom enlightened our exchanges during the spring of 2019. Other colleagues have been able to join this book project. Here, Franco Bianchini, Jean-Damien Collin, Milena DragićevićŠešić, Pascal Gielen, and Mariano Martín-Zamorano are welcomed with great interest.

This book, which displays its comparative ambition through the diversity of its authors and the cases it studies, is divided into two parts. In the first part, the theories and methods of participation are put to the test of territories (national and European), history, and politics. It aims to answer the question of what is at stake in participation in different national contexts. These issues are both examined in detail and are the subject of a first empirical comparison between countries, thanks to the chapter by Félix Dupin-Meynard and Anna Villaroya. Giuliana Ciancio examines the way in which the

European Union redefines, through participation, the purpose of its cultural action as a response to a society undergoing a crisis of confidence. Lluís Bonet and Mariano Martín-Zamorano look closely at a paradox: while participation is often perceived as a spearhead of democracy, it can perfectly well be co-opted by authoritarian or illiberal regimes. Finally, using the French case, Loup Wolff attempts to show how participation appears at the heart of contemporary transformations in cultural practices, based on a study of a new survey on the cultural practices of the French. At the end of this part, we wanted to give the floor to other specialists in these issues, to ask them three questions about participation: its history, its influence on cultural policies, and the way the 2020 health crisis affects these issues: Franco Bianchini, Jean-Damien Collin, Luca Dal Pozzolo, and François Matarasso have agreed to share their thoughts on this subject, thereby providing us with a rich exchange ranging from a long historical period to the most topical issues of cultural action and artistic creation.

In the second part, we address, again through international comparison, the question of participation as an issue articulating cultural policy and other public policy issues. The aim is thus to gauge participation through the links between cultural policy and territorial development, accompanied by Pedro Costa. Then, with Hanka Otte and Pascal Gielen, we will relate participation to the cultural commons. With Sandrine Teixido, we will tackle a singular field, artistic participation in the realm of music. She supports the idea that this participation only achieves its objectives in a constant negotiation between, on the one hand, artistic references and, on the other, the objectives and values borne by other fields of action: social, educational, and urban planning, for example. Finally, Niels Righolt addresses the question of the links between participation in the civic sense of the term and artistic and cultural participation, particularly with regard to Denmark. All in all, this second part demonstrates that the question of participation in culture cannot be approached as a mere function of cultural policies. It is the borders of cultural policies that are constantly being crossed, and it is these borders, these material and symbolic interactions, that are among the most exciting objects (of both study and action). In its own way, this is how the second major interview, with Milena DragičevićŠešić, focuses on participation: less an end in itself than an opportunity to support a transformation of cultural policies oriented towards interculturality and cultural rights as well as opening up to a plurality of levels of intervention, from municipalities to states.

Last but not least, we wished to carry out an original survey on the transformations of participation in the context of the pandemic we experienced in 2020. What experiences, recipes, threats, and new opportunities have marked the cultural field on this occasion?

What can be said about the transfer to the Internet of certain activities generally associated with a physical presence? These are some of the questions that motivated the work of Luisella Carnelli and Elettra Zuliani, which precedes the conclusion of this book. It is thus a participatory work, as it should be, and now open to the widest possible discussion.



PART ONE

# What participatory turn? Participation dynamics and policies



## 1.1

# Participation(s)? Typologies, uses and perceptions in the European landscape of cultural policies

Félix Dupin-Meynard and Anna Villarroya

## Introduction

Citizen participation has emerged recently as an important contemporary issue in cultural policies (Bonet and Négrier, 2018b). In the framework of the New European Agenda for Culture, adopted in 2018, the European Commission has continued to call on member states to promote cultural participation in harnessing the power of culture and cultural diversity for social cohesion and well-being (European Commission, 2018). At present, many cultural policy documents and discourses in Western societies refer to “participation.” Initiatives, networks, and debates on opening up participation to citizens and fostering the “active involvement” of spectators are multiplying. But knowing what they are specifically referring to, which kind of participation they describe, how different types of “participation” are included in their aims, programs, projects, and budgets are still underexplored questions.

Frequently, terms such as “participatory arts,” “active involvement in the arts,” “amateur arts,” “active cultural participation,” “active arts participation,” “voluntary arts,” “creative participation,” or “arts engagement” are used indiscriminately to describe the same activities. This inadequate conceptual framework is also apparent in the various national and international surveys that group together different examples of arts expression under the same or similar concepts (Villarroya, 2015). Confusion also stems from the polysemy of the word “participation” itself, which is often used to describe cultural practices.

Within this context, the focus of our research is to contribute to existing knowledge on how participation is promoted, included and implemented in European cultural policies. While trying to elaborate a cartography, we faced semantic confusion, and a preliminary need to clarify terms and to build typologies emerged. To what form of “participation” are cultural policies of different countries referring? Does the increasingly frequent use of the word “participation” reflect changes in action or only in discourse? Beyond its definition as a “cultural practice,” is participation only a buzzword to legitimize or upgrade classic cultural policies of democratization? Is it a specific set of tools and relationships implemented in isolated projects? Or is it perhaps a potential change of paradigm towards cultural democracy, profoundly questioning the place of citizens in cultural institutions and policies?

With the aim of approaching this complexity, we have used different methods. In addition to the literature review (scientific journals, bibliography and websites) that provided secondary sources of data, diverse techniques were applied to collect the primary data. On the one hand, we compiled and analyzed information on policies on cultural participation provided by the Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends ([www.culturalpolicies.net](http://www.culturalpolicies.net)). On the other hand, we drew information from a participatory action research project within the Be SpectACTive! 1 (2014-2018) project whose main objective was to experiment with active audience participation in the field of performing arts. Finally, a survey was conducted among a selection of European academics and experts on cultural policies.

## Methods

As a first step, documentary research was carried out which drew upon relevant literature, official policy documents, and other reports on the ways cultural participation is currently understood and promoted by public authorities in different national, regional and local settings.

**Action-research.** This research also draws information from participatory action research within the Be SpectACTive! 1 (2014-2018) project, a European network of venues and festivals whose main objective is to experiment with active audience participation in the field of the performing arts. It refers to a participatory approach where spectators and/or citizens collaborate on programming (participatory programming groups) and artistic creation (participatory residences, involving participation at different stages or levels of the artistic process) - and sometimes even

in other decision-making processes. Through this action-research, numerous field surveys have been carried out in approximately ten countries, on the practices, limits and impacts of different types of participation, in constant exchange with partner institutions, artists and participants.

**Compendium analysis.** As a complement to this participatory action research, we compiled and analysed information on cultural participation provided by the Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends ([www.culturalpolicies.net](http://www.culturalpolicies.net)). This transnational project was initiated in 1998 by the Council of Europe's (CoE) Steering Committee for Culture and managed and edited as a joint venture by the CoE with the European Institute for Comparative Cultural Research (ERICarts) until 2017. On the 1st of April 2018, the Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends transitioned into a multi-stakeholder association which has its seat at the Boekman Foundation, the institute for arts, culture and related policy in the Netherlands. Currently a community of practice of over 100 independent cultural policy researchers from 43 different countries collaborate on the Compendium. This paper focuses on those countries that are located in Europe and presenting the most up-to-date data. Despite the limitations of comparative analyses among countries with different institutional systems, welfare state models and levels of economic and social development, data included in the Compendium permit a first approach to the way in which cultural participation is implemented by a large group of European countries. The descriptive policy analysis will concentrate, on the one hand, on the inclusion of cultural participation promotion as one of the main cultural policy aims and, on the other hand, on the type of cultural participation encouraged by public authorities.

**Exploratory survey.** Finally and in order to deepen the understanding and knowledge of new conceptualizations of cultural participation and how this topic is entering (or not) the agendas of cultural policies in Europe (at national, regional and/or local levels), an e-mail survey was conducted using the Google Forms platform among a selection of European academics and experts on cultural policies. A total of 51 individuals from 12 different countries (Austria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Spain, and the United Kingdom) received the survey. The survey, conducted in April 2019, was designed to obtain information about how the reconfiguration of cultural participation is embedded in current aims, instruments, and practices of governments and cultural organizations in the respective countries.

# Different approaches to participation

Since the introduction of contemporary cultural policies, participation has been placed among the primary goals of cultural policy (Tomka, 2013). Looking at policy discourses and documents in many European countries, participation seems to be everywhere. In this section, we explore different definitions and typologies surrounding participation in cultural policies.

## Concepts and definitions

### From cultural participation...

Cultural participation has changed during the last decades, just as society and cultural products and institutions have also changed (Balling and Kann-Christensen 2013; Ateca-Amestoy and Villarroya 2017). Several international instances have proposed coordinated frameworks of conceptualization and measurement. It is the case of UNESCO. In 2006, it stated that cultural participation is “not limited to the consumption of products that belong to the so-called “elite” culture but is part of daily life and contributes strongly to the quality of life of a given community” (Morrone, 2006). Some years later, the 2009 UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics (FCS) reiterated that participation mainly refers to taking part in amateur or unpaid activity, as opposed to the term consumption, normally used when referring to “an activity for which the consumer has given some monetary payment” UNESCO-UIS (2009). In 2012, UNESCO stated that the commonly accepted meaning of “participation” covers both “attendance” (passive) and “participation” (active).

The analysis of participation has also drawn the attention of researchers. Participation has traditionally been classified in terms of how it takes place (McCarthy et al. 2001 or Morrone 2006), so cultural practices have been included in any one of the following three dimensions: going out, home-based participation, and identity building. Novak-Leonard and Brown (2011) suggested a multi-modal framework for understanding arts participation that accounts for participation through: attendance of a broader range of activities, arts engagement through media, and arts creation or performance. The degree of involvement and creative control of the individual in cultural practices is the criterion used by Brown (2004), whereby participation can be classified into any one of the following five categories: inventive, participative, interpretative, observational and ambient participation, as well as curatorial arts.

Some other measurements have considered the key role played by technologies and media as modes of participation, which allow extending, rather than replacing, the field for cultural participation, especially for certain sectors of the population (MTM, 2010; NEA 2011, 2012). The traditional interest of cultural policies, focused mainly on counting visits to museums, galleries and various types of performances, has changed over the years (Throsby, 2010). Digital cultural engagement in the UK, for example, is classified in terms of its aim (a classification closely related to an individual's degree of digital and creative literacy), with accessing information being the simplest and most popular way of digital engagement, followed by learning, experiencing, sharing and creating (MTM, 2010).

In sum, cultural participation policies initiated within the framework of the 'democratization of culture' approach of the 1960s, as (non-neutral) tools to measure progress in the democratization of (elite) culture as a consequence of public intervention (Pronovost, 2002), have evolved towards more "active" dimensions of audience involvement, which seek to catch up with rapidly changing societies (Tomka, 2013). Consequently, the interest of research has shifted from access to elite arts facilities towards active participation in local community events and everyday practices (Ateca-Amestoy and Villarroja, 2014).

### **... to exchange, involvement and power-sharing**

The crisis of legitimacy of political and cultural institutions, the increase of discourses and claims for a "participatory democracy," and the relative failures of cultural democratization in terms of diversifying audiences, have gradually given new dimensions to the term "participation," embracing, beyond attendance, the involvement of audiences in cultural and artistic projects.

Therefore, we need to deepen our understanding of this particular form of participation beyond cultural practices. We propose to utilize four sources of a very different nature to construct a multidimensional definition of participation.

1. Joëlle Zask (2011) proposes a definition of participation involving the concomitant presence of three conditions, which must find a balance - and which could be summarized as follows:
  - "to take part in" (a relationship in which individuals are not restricted to the group)
  - "to contribute to" (the result would not have been the same without the contribution)
  - "to benefit from" (according to the participant's experience: material, ideal, relational...).

2. François Matarasso (2019) defines, very simply, “participatory art” - and not “participation” - as “the creation of art by professional artists and non-professional artists”.
3. Different “scales of citizen participation”, such as that of Sherry Arnstein (1969), supplemented by Roger Hart (1992), focus on degrees of effective power sharing. At the bottom of the scale is manipulation, or symbolic participation; at the top of the scale is the delegation of power and citizen control.
4. Brown (2004) proposes five modes of participation, based on the level of creative control by the participant. Moving from total control to no control, he describes these modes as follows:
  - *Inventive Participation* engages the mind, body and spirit in an act of artistic creation that is unique and idiosyncratic, regardless of skill level.
  - *Interpretive Participation* is a creative act of self-expression that brings alive and adds value to pre-existing works of art, either individually or collaboratively.
  - *Curatorial Participation* is the creative act of purposefully selecting, organizing and collecting art to the satisfaction of one’s own artistic sensibility.
  - *Observational Participation* occurs when you see or hear arts programs or works of art created, curated or performed by other people.
  - *Ambient Participation* involves experiencing art, consciously or unconsciously, that you did not select.

Based on these four definitions, we can imagine a definition of participation as “a mutual exchange involving a share of power between cultural institutions and non-professionals.” Participation defined as such seems very rarely the one used in most official cultural policy documents, as we shall see. As this definition encompasses very different forms, we will propose to establish a typology that can specify many factors (such as the content of the exchange, the persons involved, the form and level of power sharing, and the objectives pursued).

## Conceptualizing participation in European cultural policy documents

The analysis of the Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends shows that around 80% of the 24 European countries analyzed in our study include promoting “cultural participation” as a main cultural policy objective. The occurrence of terms such as “participatory actions,” “active involvement of citizens,” “participative activities,” “civic commitment and involvement,” or “community arts projects” is less common, but many countries display these forms of participation as cultural policy objectives.

**Cultural participation.** Frequently, this objective is related to the accessibility of cultural services, opting for a more traditional conceptualization of the term linked to the cultural policy paradigm of cultural democratization. Encouraging access to culture for everyone is a major issue in Austria, the French-speaking community of Belgium, Finland, France, FYR of Macedonia, Georgia, Germany, Italy,

Latvia, Lithuania, Monaco, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the Ukraine. The most commonly used terms to refer to the aim of participation in arts and culture are: audiences, cultural practices, and spectatorship. Accordingly, policies are mainly addressed to audience development, either through deepening existing relationships with audiences or diversifying them. Over time, many countries have implemented provisions and formats to open up specific target groups, such as children and young people (Austria, the French-speaking community of Belgium, Croatia, Finland, France, FYR of Macedonia, Georgia, Germany, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom), the elderly (the French-speaking community of Belgium, Croatia), the socially more disadvantaged sections of society (Austria, FYR of Macedonia, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom), students (the French-speaking community of Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Lithuania, Norway), prisoners (the Flemish community), persons with disabilities (the Flemish community, Croatia, Latvia, the Netherlands), people with an “ethnic-cultural diversified background” (Flemish community, Georgia, Italy), people with lower income (the Flemish community, the French-speaking community of Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom), people who live outside the city center or in rural areas (Bulgaria) or families with children (the Flemish community, the French-speaking community of Belgium, Latvia).

Some countries also refer to active cultural participation or amateur arts as a key objective in cultural policy. It is the case of Azerbaijan, the Flemish and French-speaking communities of Belgium and the Netherlands.

**Participation as active involvement.** It is also worth mentioning the case of countries such as Austria, the Flemish and French-speaking communities of Belgium, Germany, Spain or the Netherlands that go a step further by mentioning in their respective Compendium reports terms such as participatory actions, active involvement of citizens, participative activities, civic commitment and involvement, or community arts projects. Specifically, the Austrian report refers to the launching of the Cultural City Laboratories in the city of Vienna. This initiative builds on an existing network of cultural initiatives and cultural actors and focuses on cooperation and synergies. In the coming years, cooperative projects between people, districts, artists and cultural institutions are to be realized. The city laboratories use art to deal with the individual districts and their population and are intended to create social spaces and invite involvement and participation (Lungstraß and Ratzenböck, 2019). The Flemish community in Belgium has paid specific attention to “socio-artistic practices” which offers possibilities for the reinforcement of city and communal patterns of cohabitation. In this context, “socio-artistic work” is conceptualized as process-like-activities which focus both on the artistic aspect and the involvement of the participants. However, it should be noted that since 2017, the term “socio-artistic practice” is no longer used in the Flemish Parliament Act on the Arts. These are now arts organisations which take up this element: participation. Flemish cultural policies are also careful to value the cultural expression developed by associations not just in terms of the ‘products’ which result from their work with the various sectors of the public, but also the participative process which, in particular, allows groups and participants to produce and gain public appreciation for a cultural expression that belongs to them (Janssens, Hester and Wellens, 2018). In the French-speaking community of Belgium, cultural centers, youth cultural organizations, organizations involved with continuing education and cultural leisure, centers of expression and creativity, and youth centers essentially focus on participation and the active involvement of citizens in cultural projects. The conditions for subsidies to these associations include a critical analysis of society, the stimulation of democratic and collective initiatives, the development of active citizenship and the exercise of social, cultural, environmental and economic rights. New forms of organization (networks) and new artistic practices being explored by non-professional people or groups, such as writing workshops and urban cultural practices, are emerging in the French-speaking community (Lebon and De Vriendt, 2018). One example of the development of an urban leadership project being managed artistically and involving citizen and creative participation is the Zinneke parade, a biennial event in Brussels featuring a procession of over 1 000 participants and attended by over 200 000 people. In the cultural policy debate in Germany, a direct link has, for some time, been established between the subject of cultural participation and issues of citizen involvement and of social cohesion. Many

citizen initiatives claim a more meaningful role in shaping the cultural infrastructure and urban space (e.g. as in Cologne where there was an initiative against an expensive new building for the municipal theatre and a request for a less expensive reconstruction of the old Riphian theatre), developing culture concepts or cultural development plans (e.g. Freiburg) or participatory budgets (in spring 2010, this included more than 65 German cities) (Blumenreich, 2020). In the case of Spain, many community artistic projects have taken place at the district level in the last ten years. Many of them aim to foster collaborative artistic creations in neighborhoods using diverse, hybrid and experimental languages, ranging from the performing and visual arts to audiovisual and new technologies. Some of these initiatives are promoted by the city councils (such as the Art i Part [Art and Part] by the City Council of Barcelona or CiudaDistrito by the City Council of Madrid) or by the third sector (such as the program Art for Change of the “la Caixa” Foundation) to help to run art projects involving active participation by people in situations of vulnerability. The aim of these projects is to give these people a voice, equal conditions and opportunities, and make them visible in society through participation in a creative process (Villarroya and Ateca-Amestoy, 2019). Finally, in the Netherlands there are also national and local programs and measures for community arts projects that aim to improve the viability of neighborhoods and support artistic projects targeting the inclusion of refugees, people with disabilities or migrant communities (Brom, 2019).

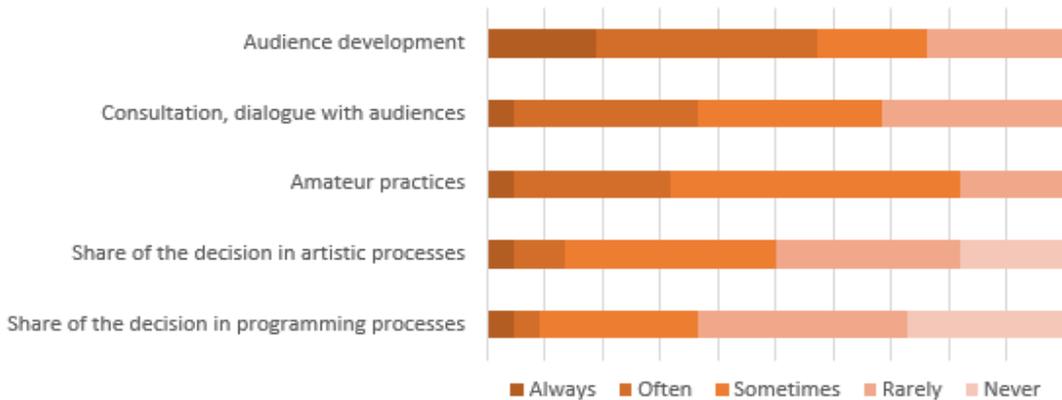
Without overlooking the limitations of this source of information, the previous evidence suggests a smooth movement towards new forms of engagement of citizens across Europe.

## Trends from the survey

The exploratory survey conducted among academics and experts on cultural policies shows that the use of the word “participation” included in cultural policy documents, speeches of key public representatives, artists and cultural producers most often describes the classic activities of cultural institutions, such as attendance, audiences, and cultural practices; the development and diversification of audiences; or deepening the relationship with audiences. To a lesser extent, the word refers to participatory art and amateur practices; finally, it very rarely describes a sharing of decision-making processes with non-professionals (such as co-creation, co-programming, or co-governance). As this book focuses on these latter dimensions - encompassing forms of participation that we propose to define as “a mutual exchange involving a share of power between cultural

institutions and non-professionals,” we will now present several possible typologies that could clarify their different expressions.

**Graph n. 1.** To what is “participation” mainly referring within cultural policy documents, speeches of key public representatives, artists and cultural producers?



(Source : Exploratory survey)

## Building typologies

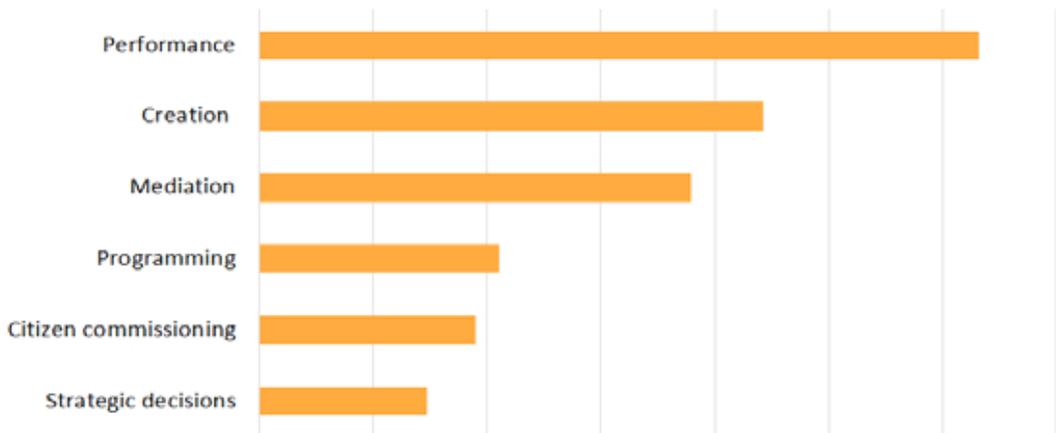
It follows from the above that definitions of participation rarely distinguish different types of interactions between cultural institutions and non-professional artists. In this context, we propose several indicators from which typologies can be built. It is clear that “something” is shared between professionals and non-professionals... but what? how? why? with whom? and to what extent? By exploring these five questions, we will approach different dimensions of participation.

### What is shared?

What is the object, the practice or the pretext, and what is the subject of the exchange? We propose to schematize three different dimensions: cultural practices, professional artistic creation, and decision-making in artistic institutions. On the one hand, cultural practices cover the classic objects of “cultural participation,” where the

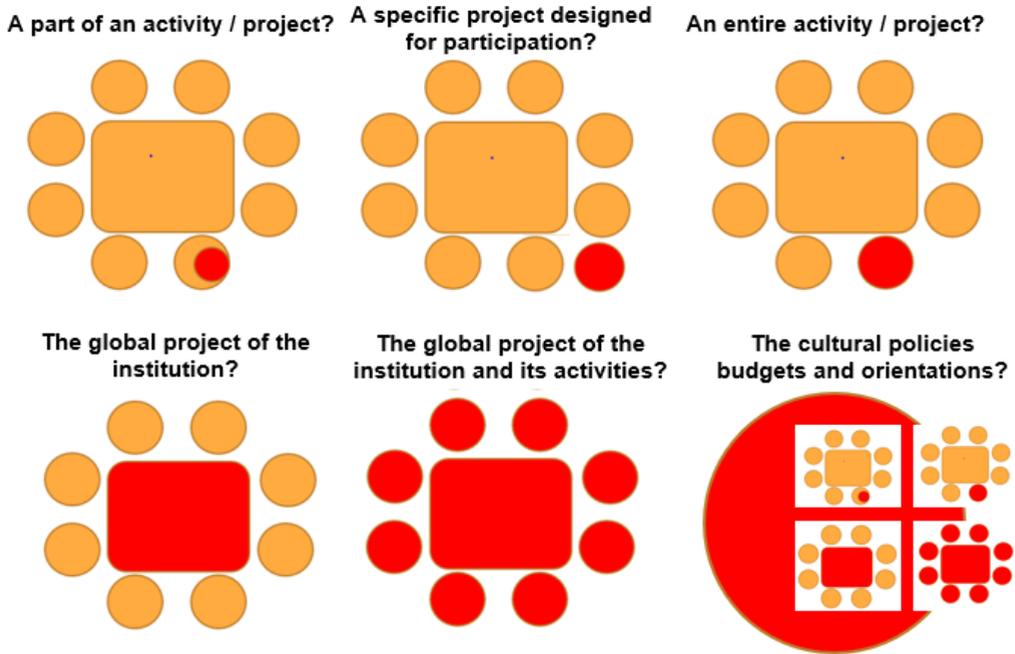
sharing concerns cultural products; singular shows, moments, pieces, exhibitions; and meeting with artists, as well as amateur artistic practices. On the other hand, the sharing of professional artistic creation covers co-creation with professional artists, and participatory performances. Finally, the sharing of decision-making in artistic institutions can concern the choice and implementation of projects, activities, events, programming, budgets -- in short, any strategic issue in which decisions are normally made only by professionals. This participation as “sharing of the decision-making” can have very different scales and implications (Figure 1). Our exploratory survey shows that these three dimensions of sharing are not as common: non professionals more frequently participate in the creative part of the process, through performance and taking part in the creation. At the lower extreme, participation of citizens is less frequent in decisive decision-making activities such as programming, commissioning and strategic decisions (Graph 2).

**Graph n. 2.** Types of activities or decisions in which the participants are invited to contribute.



(Source : Exploratory survey)

**Figure n. 1.** Different scopes of participatory sharing in cultural institutions and policies.



### How is it shared, and to what extent?

How do citizens or non-professionals interact with professionals in these cultural and artistic activities? What are the frameworks, methods and rules of the game for these interactions? The participatory framework will determine the conditions of interaction between professionals and non-professionals, and ultimately, a particular form of power-sharing. But what is the freedom, the influence, the level of control of participants on the object of their participation?

The BeSpectACTIVE! project allows for an illustration of the different types of frameworks and conditions through observing two examples: creative residencies to produce performing arts co-productions and participatory programming by different groups of spectators.

**Participatory creation.** Without going into detail, some questions capable of illustrating the different kinds of frameworks can be found in the context of participatory residences: what is the composition of the team, and what are the roles for each participant? Are there performers or only directors and choreographers? What is the place given to participants? Who can participate? What are the time scales of the creation? Which part of the creation is open to transformation? And above all, what is the participatory method, or, what are the rules of the game? According to these rules, participants will have more or less influence on the final result of the creation.

It is from this perspective that Brown (2004) distinguishes between different degrees of creative control by the participant, three of which (inventive, interpretive and curatorial participation) can be applied to participatory creation. By observing participative residences within Be SpectACTive!, we propose a more precise scale based on the degree of creative control, in relation to ideal-typical roles (Figure 2). These roles are often mixed, concomitant, successive and evolving, depending on the degree of rigidity of the framework defined by the artists. However, these scales should not make us forget that a persistent asymmetry exists between professional artists and participants. Often, the rules of the game are predefined while differences of status, legitimacy, and recognition are not effaced. Some borderline cases still call into question the boundary more deeply: for instance, when participants are paid, or in cases of citizen commissioning, which can potentially reverse the roles.

**Figure n. 2.** Ladder of participants' roles and levels of creative control within participatory residences.

TYPE OF CONTRIBUTION / EXCHANGE	ROLE	CREATIVE CONTROL
Reception, experience, interpretation...	"Spectator"	
Concertation, expression, dialogue, feedback...	"Active spectator"	
... on an existing creation	"Inspirer"	
Performance, act...	"Performer"	
... without freedoms of execution	"Active performer"	
... with freedoms of execution		
Experimentation, collaboration, research...		
... without power over the purpose / process	"Experimenter"	
... with shared decision over the purpose / process	"Co-researcher"	
Sharing of the artistic decision...		
... about the sense, the writing	"Co-writer"	
... about the forms, the staging, the acting direction	"Co-director"	
Writing, script, direction...	"Director"	High

(Source : Be SpectACTive ! Action-research)

**Participatory programming.** The example of different participatory programming approaches within Be SpectACTive! is also interesting as a way to question the methods and degrees of power sharing. Here, the object of sharing is programming. But, does this cover the entire programming of a venue or a festival? Is it only a part of it? Is it an assumed programming, or is it detached from the usual programming? In which democratic modalities are decisions made? Are the participants only advisors, or do they have the last word? What are the methods of debate, deliberation, and decision making? What are the constraints on their choices? Is there a pre-selection? Can they make suggestions? Are there imposed criteria? What is the influence of the programmers? Depending on the method chosen, to what extent is the power over programming choices transferred or shared beyond the realm of professionals?

Among many examples observed, it can be mentioned that significant transfers of power are rare. Most often, participants have only limited influence in proposing programming; their cultural proximity to institutions does not imply big changes. In some cases, however, the opening of the debate is gradually spreading the idea of a broadening of the “programming collective” rather than the maintenance of a single, all-powerful programmer.

### **With whom is it shared?**

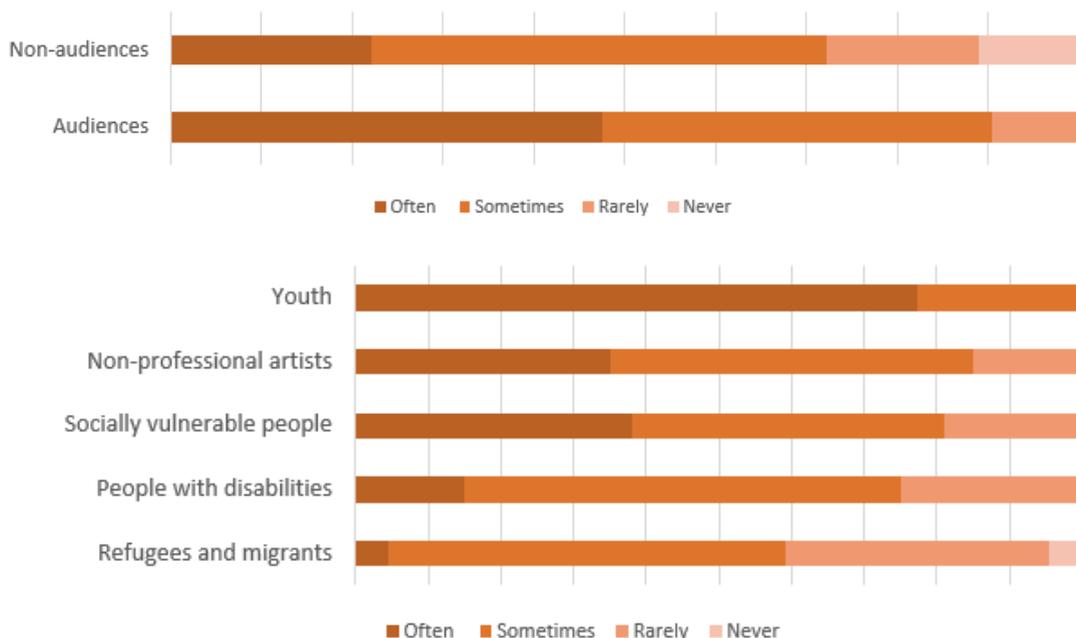
In the definitions set forth in the text, “participant” is reduced to its negative quality of “non-professional”. But this status covers very different realities. Are they existing audiences, or are they non-audiences? What are their social and cultural characteristics, their relationship to the art world, their tastes and cultural capital? What are their motivations and expectations?

Desk and action research have shown that participants are more often audiences than non-audiences (Graph 3). This participation of existing audiences is less risky for cultural actors, as social and cultural proximity reduces the chances that these participants will profoundly transform the institution’s choices. It also requires less effort, because audiences are easier to mobilize. It can be an opportunity to transform and deepen the relationship with spectators, creating a sense of belonging, fostering collective ownership, but it also presents the risk of reinforcing an existing elite of spectators, confirming the choices already made - and thus reducing the value of participation.

Other participatory approaches are dedicated to “non-audiences,” referring to specific targets: most often “the young,” amateur artists, people with social problems

or disabilities, and finally refugees or migrants. Most often, this type of participatory approach is linked to the goals of audience development (diversification of audiences) or social transformation through artistic participation.

**Graph n. 3.** Participation as “the share of power with non-professionals: who are the “participants”?”



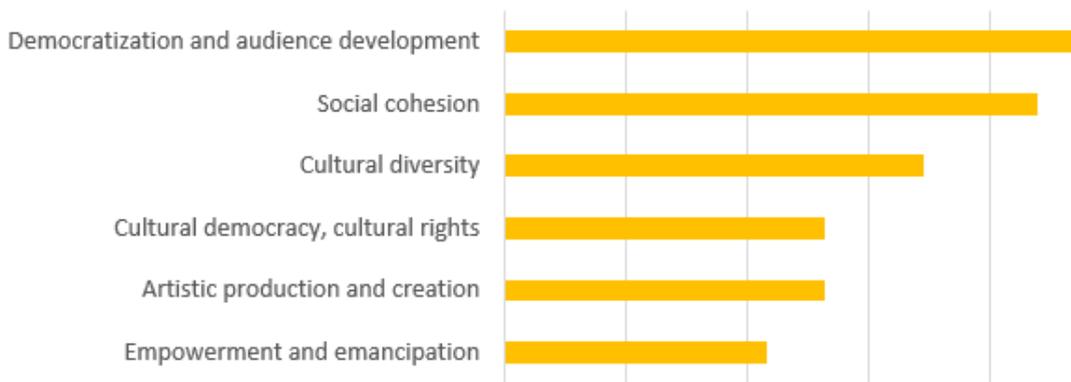
(Source : Exploratory survey)

### Why is it shared?

Why is participation promoted or implemented? To what cultural policy objectives is it assigned? Does it have the same meaning according to its purpose? These central questions can help us to better define the different types of participation promoted by cultural actors and policies, and to learn more about how it can be harnessed for potential social, cultural and political impacts.

The results of the exploratory survey with academics and cultural policy experts highlight that the most common cultural policy aims justifying participatory projects are, firstly, democratization and audience development, followed by social cohesion and cultural diversity. Less frequently cited are cultural democracy, artistic creation and production, and empowerment and emancipation (Graph 4). It should be noted here that a form of participation could be articulated very differently, depending on the paradigm in which it is expressed (Bonet and Négrier, 2018b).

**Graph n. 4.** Most frequent cultural policy objectives justifying participatory policies and projects



(Source : Exploratory survey)

**Cultural democratization.** Participation is most often used to pursue the objectives of cultural democratization and audience development. This includes, on one side, the increase or diversification of audiences, with an approach emphasizing specific targets or non-audiences, creating a “first link” through participation and improving the symbolic perception that citizens have about artistic institutions or particular artists. On another side, it also includes the intensification and deepening of the relationship with existing audiences (building a sense of belonging, offering a more important and rewarding place within the project, including them in the decisions that concern them, tightening the links with the most involved audiences, leaving room for their initiatives...).

We can also consider, with Estelle Zhong-Mengual and Baptiste Morizot, that participative art strongly favors the conditions of “individual encounters” between arts

and audiences (Zhong-Mengual and Morizot, 2018): the appropriation of art pieces is facilitated when spectators have been linked, in one way or another, to the process of selection or creation. Finally, participation often contributes to the objectives of developing amateur practices as well as arts and cultural education, fostering an active relationship of learning and practice, which may concern all the competences of the cultural sector, depending on the objects of participation.

**Social impacts.** Participation can also be justified by social objectives. Many studies have been published on the personal and social impacts of arts and cultural participation. Since Matarasso's long-term study on the social impact of participatory arts projects in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Finland and the US (Matarasso, 1997), a considerable body of research has been conducted on the social impact of participation in the arts. The evidence suggests that arts participation has a positive effect on social cohesion (bringing people together, developing networks and understanding), on community empowerment (building the local capacity for organization and self-determination), on personal development (leading to enhanced confidence, skill-building and educational developments which can improve people's social contacts and employability), on local image and identity (celebrating local culture and traditions or strengthening cultural life) and also on health and well-being (enhancing physical and mental health as well as the quality of life).

**Social transformation.** Beyond these social impacts, participation is sometimes part of more political objectives of social transformation. This has long existed, for example through the practices of the "theatre of the oppressed," "forum theatre," or popular education. Particularly when participation seeks to "give a voice to the voiceless," to use artistic creation as a relay for invisible social problems or situations, or when it explicitly aims at objectives of empowerment. Some argue that questioning the boundary between "artists" and "non-artists" modifies the inequalities of legitimacy, transforming the possible representations that are allowed and expressed. However, these are debates on the contribution of participation to empowerment which overlap with those on the contribution of art to political transformation.

**Cultural democracy.** Some cultural actors also consider that participation can contribute to cultural democracy. If it includes groups that are more diverse than the usual audiences, and if these groups have a real influence on the cultural institution choices, participation can make their propositions more diverse and socially relevant, contributing to an increasing plurality. It can foster the recognition of minority cultures and contribute to cultural rights such as the right of each person to express his or her

own culture as well as to have access to the cultural products of his or her own culture, mentioned in the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001), or the Fribourg Declaration on Cultural Rights (2007). Finally, participation can strengthen internal democracy in cultural institutions and policies, broadening the number and qualities of decision-makers, opening up decisions, sometimes challenging centralized, hierarchical and non-renewed powers.

**Artistic quality.** Other cultural actors consider that participation must, above all, be put to the service of creation and artistic quality. They insist on the impacts of participation on the content of the pieces themselves: participation nourishes artistic work, transforms its content and form, challenges artists and their creative processes. Thus, participation can foster experimentation, inspiration and artistic innovation. Participation could also be an important dimension in the debate over definitions of artistic quality. Among artists and producers who promote participatory art, some consider that participation increases quality, which they redefine in multiple ways, through authenticity or social relevance, rather than technical excellence alone.

**Hidden goals.** Finally, we must also admit that the use of participation in cultural policies and actions sometimes pursues “hidden” objectives. Thus, it can allow a political re-legitimization, through the mobilization of “popular,” “democratic” credibility, potentially to be manipulated in power relations. This re-legitimization through participation can serve different forces: a theatre wishing to strengthen its position vis-à-vis elected officials, elected officials wishing to strengthen their position with the management of a theatre, or a team wishing to strengthen its position with its management, for example. Moreover, faced with the multiplication of participatory injunctions in calls for projects and funding for artistic actions and creations, some artistic teams or institutions use participation only for financial opportunism, in order to “tick the right box” or to use the “magic word.”

## Participation as power sharing: risks or opportunities?

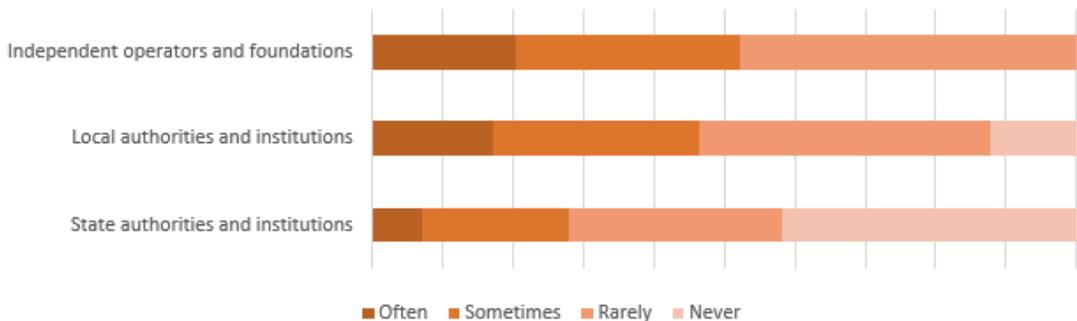
After discussing the different forms and typologies of participation, we will analyze in more detail participation as “sharing power with non-professional” - thus excluding the classical forms of “cultural participation.” We present trends on the cultural actors and sectors that frequently implement this specific kind of participation, as well as on the reasons that led them to perceive it as an opportunity or as a risk.

## Actors and sectors involved

The results of the survey provide us with indications and trends that deserve to be studied in much greater detail, with broader studies, differentiated by country - but they seem to be consistent with the various observations and literature on the topic.

Regarding cultural actors, the results of the exploratory survey show that independent operators implement these forms of participation the most; they are followed by foundations - and local authorities and institutions - that are closer to citizens. State authorities and institutions seem to implement this type of participation to a lesser extent (Graph 5). The survey reveals similar trends regarding the risk/opportunity perception of participation as power-sharing with non-professionals: the more independent and local cultural institutions are, the more they perceive participation as an opportunity.

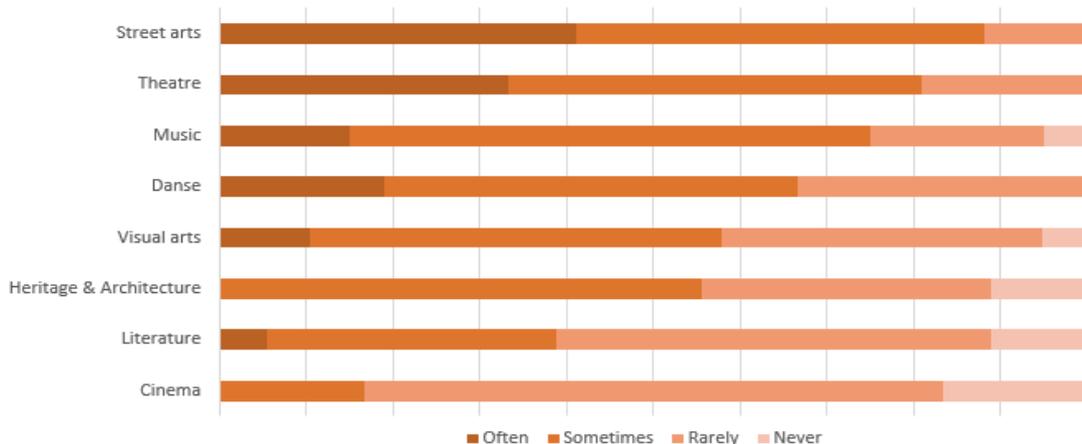
**Graph n. 5.** What type of cultural actors are implementing participation as the share of power with non-professional?



(Source : Exploratory survey)

Regarding cultural sectors, our survey shows that participatory projects occur more frequently in the performing art sector, particularly in street arts, theatre and dance and less frequently in cinema and literature (Graph 6).

**Graph n. 6.** What type of cultural sectors are implementing participation as the share of power with non-professional?

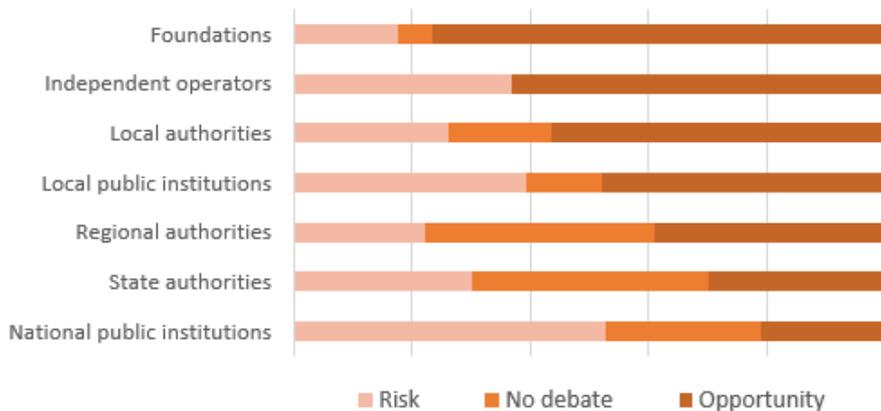


(Source : Exploratory survey)

### Risks and opportunities

The differentiated perception of participation as a risk or an opportunity observed in our exploratory survey reveals the main arguments mobilized in the current debates on the place given to participation.

**Graph 7.** Perception of participation “as the share of power with non-professionals”



(Source : Exploratory survey)

When participation is seen as an “opportunity,” we first find the cultural policy objectives that are most often assigned to participation: diversification of audiences, development of links with local communities, building a feeling of belonging among audiences, and improving the relationships between artists and society. At the other extreme, objectives linked to social transformation and cultural democracy are very rarely mentioned by survey participants (the contribution to political and artistic empowerment or the improvement of internal and/or external democracy). These trends argue for the overwhelming use of participation as a tool for audience development rather than as a profound dynamic of cultural democracy.

In those cases in which participation is seen as a “risk,” a number of arguments can be found that Rancière sums up as “fear” or even “hatred” of democracy (Rancière, 2005). The field work within BeSpectACTive! has also evidenced these fears - fears that are not only confined to the cultural sector but take a specific form within it.

**A loss of artistic quality?** The most commonly mentioned risk is that the influence of non-professionals could lead to a loss of artistic quality. In this perspective, quality is defined by criteria of excellence and professionalism - while participation could be an opportunity to achieve other criteria for quality control (audience reception, the quality of individual encounters, social accuracy, and authenticity). Behind this risk of diminishing quality are also the fears of disappointing “audience expectations” with unexpected proposals - fears that are based on a static definition of audiences and their tastes and that do not envisage the recruitment of new audiences with different tastes.

**A threat to artistic expertise?** The second most expressed risk of participation is its potential threat to artistic expertise. Indeed, the intervention of non-professionals in decision-making areas usually reserved for a particular skill set can threaten the value of those skills - and therefore, threaten the professions and positions based on those skills. Beyond the material issues in a precarious sector, the question of expertise is also confronted with different conceptions of democracy. Some, like Jacques Rancière, consider that democracy is “the government of anyone, the principle that de-legitimizes any form of power based on the ‘qualities’ of those who govern” - thus calling into question power based on expertise, while others claim the need for expertise to guarantee the autonomy and the quality of art.

**Towards “Market-oriented” cultural policies?** In the third place is mentioned the risk of “market-oriented” or “demand-oriented” cultural policies. Here we can recall arguments that are often heard: “if we ask people what they want, we will get Michael

Jackson everywhere." These arguments may be a fantasized representation of popular tastes, but above all, consider that democracy can be summed up in the practice of a referendum. However, most participatory practices are rather long-term processes than quick polls.

**A loss of independence?** Finally, another risk, expressed to a lesser extent, is that of a loss of independence and autonomy for artistic institutions. This depends on how participation is used in the context of political and institutional power relations; whether participation is used by the artistic institutions themselves, participation could make them more independent insofar as their choices could be legitimized by a contradictory debate with citizens rather than by prescriptions of experts and elected officials.

## Conclusions

The evidence presented in this chapter suggests that participation has a complex and multi-faceted nature in cultural policies. Being aware of its limitations, information provided by the *Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends* shows that participation keeps being placed among the primary goals of cultural policy in 19 out of the 24 countries analyzed. Although traditional modes of participation (audiences) are the most common, new forms of citizen involvement are emerging within the local, regional, and national milieus.

Building on the survey and action-research findings, existing definitions of participation are too diverse to be satisfactory. On the one hand, they include what is assimilated to cultural participation, and on the other hand, what is assimilated to exchanges with non-professionals, including power transfers. Progress needs to be made to understand typologies of participation that will permit us to grasp the very diverse types of exchanges that might exist. The objects, individuals involved, participatory methods, degrees of power-sharing and objectives pursued need to be more clearly defined in order to grasp what cultural policies are referring to under the term "participation." In particular, it seems necessary to distinguish classical cultural participation from participation as the sharing of power with non-professionals, sometimes called "citizen participation" or "active involvement," in order to be able to analyze more precisely its realities in different countries and sectors.

Building on the definition of participation as a "mutual exchange involving the share of power with non-professionals", the exploratory survey conducted among academics

and cultural policy experts has shown that this kind of participation is not the most common; it is more frequent in the independent sector and at the local level as well as in the performing arts sector and is often linked to audiences. To a lesser extent, it involves non-audiences, primarily young people and socially vulnerable groups. This type of participation seems to remain a minority in the largest institutions and authorities, and when it is implemented, it is more often used to strengthen links with existing audiences than to take risks with non-audiences. When it concerns non-audiences, it often remains within objectives that are more social than artistic.

If participation as power sharing with non-professionals is seen as an opportunity, it is most often seen as a simple tool serving goals of audience development rather than as a profound dynamic of cultural democracy. Indeed, there are still many risks associated with this type of participation: a potential threat to the classical definitions of artistic quality based on excellence in the technical and professional sense, a potential threat to certain definitions of expertise and artistic independence, which make professionals of the arts sector fear that their status and power could be questioned. There are, however, many hopes and expectations regarding participation as power sharing, and the current multiplication of debates and experiments on this issue suggests that risk aversion could be transformed through the dissemination of practices and learning about a rather new conception that confronts traditional cultural policies.



## 1.2

# Between cultural participation, trust and policy perspectives: the case of the Creative Europe programme

Experimenting success and failures of co-imaginative politics

Giuliana Ciancio

### **The ‘Crisis of Trust’**

Since its origins, the European Union - with its myriad offices, representatives, and policy programs - represents the place where many contradictions take place and where the local and the global push factors meet and collide. While on the one hand, nation-states obstinately place localistic concerns at the center of their political programs, on the other hand, financial and commercial interests, drug and arms trafficking, crime and terrorism are the expressions of broader global interconnections. It is within this slippage that Zygmunt Bauman (2019) places a ‘crisis of trust’ -- referring to the difficult relationship between citizens and their political representation simultaneously at the local,

national, and European level. He has observed how the different dynamics of the global market, perceived by the citizenry as an abstract but imperative entity, have impacted the credibility of national governments. This was also the feeling generated by the austerity programs enacted in response to the 2008 crisis, or, the love-hate relationship with the EU currency that is constantly exposed to the pressures of local political temperatures and to the programs of supranational political institutions, often moving in opposite directions.

The abstract notion of Europe represents the place where facts and their irrational perceptions have overlapped. The name of European representatives and their functions are unknown to us; we are not aware of the advantages in mobility that we have gained in the past years or the limitations and benefits of the EU policy programs that regulate our lives; we are not taking advantage of the cultural and economic interdependencies that hold out the possibility of forms of cultural resistance. The disillusionment generated by the distance between civil society and the political context (at the local and European level) have allowed for widespread public disengagement. The feeling of inequality - nourished by the diffusion of neoliberal forms based on privatization, competitiveness, and the direct regulation of the market and of our lives - has resulted in feelings of fear, rage, or astonishment. These feelings have opened the way for political leaders to give easy answers to complex problems, as we have learned from Gramsci (2014), or to the forms of (right-wing) populism that Ernesto Laclau (Mouffe 2005) has defined "as a discursive strategy for the construction of a political frontier that operates through the division of the society into two fields (...) the 'derelicts' represented by who is scared or feels excluded by the political order against 'who is in power'."

On the other hand, since 2011, we have seen how bottom-up forms of political action in Europe (and elsewhere) have grown, bringing to the center the need for civic engagement. Commons, civic participation, and forms of mutualism have generated (through their failures and successes) a map of new political forms generated from the relationships among policymakers, jurists, activists, artists, and the civil society at large.

## **But what is it Europe?**

It's a constellation of communities, cities, and governments. It's defined as a supranational organism based on the distribution of executive and legislative power between different bodies (the Council, the Parliament, and the Commission) to guarantee a democratic form of political management. It's where the push of the Member-States and the values

of our democracies have converged. The latter finds its origins in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals where gender equality, climate action, the right to research, education, health and diversity, and the fight against poverty are at its base.

As observed by many theorists, artists, political analysts and economists alike, what is missing in Europe is a broader construction of the notion of European Culture. This is a very old debate that has still not found concrete political and policy answers. After the 2008 crisis (and also in light of the recent Covid-19 emergency), culture appears to be central to a renovated concept of cooperation in which forms of political solidarity are opposed to protectionist policies. The anthropologist Franz Boas (1995) defined culture as the context that influences the social dynamics of a community and, in that way, he was defining culture as a plurality of 'cultures.' Pascal Gielen (2015) has reinforced this concept by defining culture as something that 'gives meaning to life' and to human existence. It is not seen as a superstructure but, on the contrary, as the very foundation or substructure of any society. This is a 'territory for understanding and experimenting social and political changes' and where forms of socialization can be enacted in favor of more inclusive societies.

But how is cultural cooperation contributing to this scenario? Is cultural participation helping to renovate the notion of a European space? How can we foster democratic processes through our cultural actions? How are EU cultural policy programs responding to this scenario? And the Creative Europe program?

## **Creative Europe: the origins of the program between top-down policy-making and bottom-up needs**

In 2014, the Creative Europe program was launched. Designed to answer the needs of the cultural and creative sectors, it finds its reference points in previous policy documents and programs such as the White Paper in 2011, the Agenda for Culture, or the former Culture, MEDIA and MEDIA Mundus programs (2007-2013) -- now merged into one entity and which have aimed to foster European cultural exchanges and the mobility of professionals and products. Representing 0.14% of the entire EU budget, through its overarching Audience Development (AD) and Audience Engagement (AE) priorities, Creative Europe has impacted the DNA of many cultural institutions. In the name of 'creating together with the audience' rather than 'for the audience,' it has fostered creative participatory practices across Europe that have placed forms of civic engagement at their center.

These priorities can also find a reference point in the global turmoil that, since 2011, has been characterized by the spread of bottom-up civil protests that arose in opposition to the post-2008 austerity measures and the consequent reduction of democratic spaces. Successes and failures were experienced by these movements and, even if they are no longer overtly mentioned in our debates, they have become crucial pillars in our political discourses. Firstly, they have positioned Culture as a concrete political arena in which forms of civil coexistence can be experimented with. To mention but one, the Italian Occupy movement started in Rome in the Teatro Valle Occupato with the occupation of a beautiful historical theatre, a symbol of the corruption and the abuses of a given power. From there, the rising of the workers of the immaterial labor market in Italy began generating a new cultural map of occupied spaces (and neo-institutions characterized by a bottom-up push) based on participatory political forms of cultural activism born hand-in-hand with the participation of activists, artists, jurists, policymakers, scholars, and citizens.

Secondly, we have seen how the collaboration between top-down and bottom-up forces, even if in conflictual territory, was an opportunity to give life to new political adventures. The notion of the Commons has represented a concrete political strategy to give the entire community access to common resources. To mention the Italian context again, the experiments based on the notion of civic use of public properties gave birth to the Fondazione Valle Bene Comune in Rome that unfortunately ended before becoming a real possibility due to difficult negotiations between the cultural activists and the local administration. Other examples include the system of freed spaces in Naples that in 2015, on the contrary, were legally defined as spaces managed by the citizenry after long negotiations between the cultural activists of l'Asilo and the city administration, or the Common Code in Bologna.

Thirdly, these assemblies and participatory political discussions have given us techniques (online and offline) to enact horizontal decision-making processes. These have entered our current narratives as can be seen in the 'leaderless' forms of profit and not-for-profit cultural organizations or in the spread of creative participatory practices which are the basis for the management of some cultural institutions in Europe (and elsewhere) where citizens are involved in some crucial artistic or organizational spheres.

Horizontal decision-making practices have also found a place in the rise in forms of municipalism in Europe. Commons, bottom-up culture, and civic engagement are at the base of the political adventure of some cities in which a global network of peer municipalities has upheld human rights and humanitarian standards (ECF, 2018). This

experience was an invitation to cultural policy to reflect upon a new paradigm based on the encounter of different actors and of the validation of grass-roots cultural and political adventures.

Since 2011, all of these have underlined the need to acquire a global perspective that cannot be consumed only in the city territories or among the frontiers of the national governments. They have demonstrated that trans-local connections are crucial for nourishing multi-focal and pluralistic cultural and democratic perspectives that are locally anchored but globally interconnected.

In 2014, while participatory counter-culture political expressions arose in opposition to a hegemonic order, the Audience Development (AD) and Audience Engagement (AE) priorities were launched. The Creative Europe program, on the one hand, fostered trans-local collaborations between some cultural initiatives across the EU, and, on the other hand, constituted a policy program aiming to relocate the agonistic (Mouffe, 2007) dimension of those expressions. In re-proposing counter-culture and counter-hegemonic forms, consciously or unconsciously, this has enabled what Gramsci (Boltansky & Chiapiello, 2005) defines as *détournement*, where the system tends to incorporate rising democratic and radical political affirmations in order to reformulate their potentiality of creating a new order.

In this contradiction between counter-cultural forms and the normalization of bottom-up processes, we have witnessed the reorganization of power relations within the framework of Creative Europe. Neoliberal forms may have found a place within the general framework; nevertheless, through the use of quantitative standards of evaluation and competitive processes with a project-based approach, cooperative forms have been fostered, cultural civic engagement legitimized, and a variety of decision-making practices tested.

## The cooperative perspective

Creative Europe is organized into two independent sub-programs (Media and Culture) and the cross-sectoral strand. While Media focuses on the audio-visual industry and the digital sphere, the Culture sub-program covers cultural sector initiatives such as promoting cross-border cooperation, platforms, networking, or the translation of literature, while the cross-sectoral strand addresses all cultural and creative sectors that merge different forms of cultural experimentation. Below, being focused mainly on the

Culture sub-program and the Cultural Cooperation Projects in particular, I will observe the different approaches that coexist within the program.

The expression “doing something together with the audience,” as announced in the AD and AE priorities, has fostered cultural cooperation across communities and cities, impacted the governance of festivals, theatres, and cultural institutions of different scales, and contributed to a pan-European space (Gielen and Lijster, 2017). The active involvement of different segments of civil society was at the foundation of the cultural architecture of many projects. Asylum-seekers were at the center of artistic practices, gender equality and the needs of LGBTQ+ communities were placed in innovative cultural cooperation programs, and citizens with different backgrounds contributed to the development of co-creative performances. In some cases, shared decision-making forms have been experienced and bottom-up cultural policy experimentation implemented. On the other hand, conservative expressions have used participatory practices to legitimize their functions.

In a period where the lack of resources has changed the way in which we produce art, cultural cooperation has helped this sector to share financing, knowledge, and skills - and thus to build more sustainable procedures. This can be seen in the forms produced by the EACEA that need to be filled out by the beneficiaries to apply to the program set forth by the EU. Here, the applicants have to design shared project-budgets, detailed timetables, and a virtuous system where responsibilities in the framework of the project are distributed. This cooperative approach is also at the base of EU consortia which are often composed of organizations of different scales and vocations. Valorizing the variety of the network, involving EU partners from north to south and from east to west, promoting their strengths and trying to shore up their weakness -- these are also part of what goes under the term ‘EU added value.’ This cooperative attitude, built through negotiations and exchanges, has also encouraged us to enlarge our cultural viewpoints, to feel that many possibilities are at our disposal for producing art, and to see that novelties can be found in the collaboration between artists, citizens, cultural institutions, local administrations, and different segments of our societies (as we saw during the 2011 movements).

In some cases, the mechanism of cooperation has also contributed to building trust between partners across Europe and, in so doing, while it has supported the organizations in overcoming cultural autoreferential and nationalistic rhetoric, it has also given voice to local expressions that are not often visible.

In an interview conducted in 2017, Karel Bartak, the former Head of the Culture Program Unit at the DGEAC and General Director of the EACEA, underlined the importance of this direct relationship between the beneficiaries (theatres, festivals, municipalities) and the Commission and directly between the beneficiaries themselves, indicating that he sees an important ‘EU added value’ created by a program like this. This trans-local connection is also, at least partially, providing political and economic independence from the Member-States of the cultural beneficiaries. This is also an opportunity to find possible conditions for creating seasons, festivals, events, or shows that could not otherwise have been realized under the restrictions of some local policy programs. Bartak (Ciancio, 2018) has also underlined the role that participation could play in bringing Europeans together: “To overcome current populist tendencies it is necessary that people travel and see how other people live in other countries, broadening their horizons and perspectives.”

Interviews with EU civil servants in 2019 have also revealed that the cultural field is atypical with respect to other sectors. For example, the DGEAC acts in a ‘privileged condition’ (as was stated by my informants). While other DGs are strongly influenced by lobbies and are constantly under pressure from major economic interests, the DGEAC and its policy officers, on the contrary, could be seen as closer to the cultural field and its representatives. They can be informed, participate in, and understand (or misunderstand!) the concrete expressions that are arising from the sector. It has emerged from my interviews that there is space for negotiation between different segments and thus for the implementation of the Creative Europe program. As suggested by the interviewees, in the last two or three years the number of Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions (part of the general negotiation between the Commission and Parliament) have increased. They represent the space given to personal initiatives to indicate priorities that can be addressed in the sector in light of the urgency of the moment. For example, following the global crisis of migrants and the strong political positions of the conservative member-states to erect walls instead of creating mechanisms for inclusion, a concrete economic chapter in the framework of the cross-sectoral strand found enough political space to call for the integration of refugees, albeit with a small budget of 2 million €.

## The quantitative limits

Despite the cooperative approach fostered by the Creative Europe program, there are limits that need to be dealt with. For example, the cultural participatory practices

in a trans-local cooperative context, especially when characterized by a strong audience-centric approach, need to base their actions on long-term strategies. These practices are often based on qualitative one-to-one relationships. Citizens, artists, and project partners need time to build those relationships of trust that can favor a European Culture. Time is needed to grow together and do research, for the cultural organizations to be equipped to tackle the changes, and to experiment with practices and establish a political legacy in the territories in which they act.

The high level of competition and the scarcity of economic resources that have been allocated have given limited access to this program, especially to small organizations or to newcomers to the EU. This is a considerable weakness that Bartak identifies in the huge difference between the quantity of applications and the very small number of projects selected. Only about 15% of the applicants get funding per year, which is a pity for the applicants that put a lot of energy (and resources!) into applying, “but also for this Agency, it is not really rewarding to evaluate hundreds of projects which will never be funded” (ibid).

Creative Europe evaluates the applications and the results achieved by the projects they have financed by making use of quantitative measures. This means counting the number of activities produced, people reached, promotional events, publications, advertisements, and so on. Even if we are aware that a quantitative approach is part of the overarching rhetoric that often characterizes policy programs, unfortunately our concern is that quantitative parameters cannot demonstrate the social changes that have been introduced or the progress in research done within the framework of complex cultural architectures.

Quantitative criteria are also used to regulate the selection of projects on an annual basis. With regard to the Culture sub-program, cooperative projects are divided into small- and large-scale units which differ in terms of the number of partners (small-scale meaning a minimum of 3 partners in different countries, while 6 from different countries are the minimum to be classified as large-scale) and co-financing (a small-scale project receives a maximum of 200 000 €, while large-scale projects receive 2 million €). The need for the Parliament to demonstrate numbers was translated into a preference in the last years for more small-scale projects to the detriment of large-scale projects. This was confirmed in our interview with Karel Bartak (ibid) “(...) we are under pressure to find as many small ones as possible.”

In our view, even if the small-scale category is crucial for a EU cooperative dimension, a longer period of collaboration is needed to foster cooperative approaches, to establish a legacy within the territories, and to develop a mechanism supporting growth, trust, and that notion of European culture so often mentioned.

This logic reminds us of Gramsci's notion of *détournement*, referring to the fact that even if crucial elements are introduced, unfortunately, they cannot be effective due to the parameters that limit their ability to produce social transformations. The same logic can be attributed to the bank guarantees requested by the EU, especially for small-scale organizations (large numbers of which have been seen accessing EU funding, representing over 70% of the beneficiaries). While this is an understandable measure in light of EU investments, at the same time it has created huge limitations -- especially among those fragile organizations that have seen an increase in the costs to guarantee the implementation of their actions. In some cases, the consequence is that some of these organizations have refused to rely on this funding to implement their activities (with evident difficulties), or in the worst cases, they have completely refused Creative Europe funding.

Another issue is the recognition of working conditions. Parameters have been introduced to define the range of per diems according to local cost of living factors, which is an important reference for all the beneficiaries. On the contrary, no parameters have been introduced (with the same logic) for the costs associated with the work of the artists or of the cultural professionals (as was clearly suggested by Roberto Casarotto - artistic director of B-Motion Festival, Italy). This approach could protect salaries that, unfortunately, are the first to be cut within these projects in order to satisfy quantitative parameters.

Finally, if we only look at the numbers, we have to underline the fact that, in the period from 2014 to 2020, funding for Creative Europe only represented 0.14% of the total EU budget. To get necessary support, co-financing is needed. For our reference, other programs receive financial support for the entire amount (or at least 80%) of the budget requested or, in other cases, there are not these stringent parameters to demonstrate performance and credibility. According to the Monitoring Report published in 2018, 1.46 billion € were allocated in the 2014 – 2020 period. Since 2014, only the Culture Sub-program has funded about 395 cooperative projects. These have connected more than 2500 organizations and, in 2018, about 15 platforms (aimed at helping young artists and creators to find audiences outside their home countries) involving more than 230 organizations in 37 countries received funding. These numbers can demonstrate

how cooperative processes have had a multiplier effect originating from the EU sphere but radiating outward to local contexts.

But how should we observe all these contradictions within the framework of a cooperation project? What is the impact of cultural participation?

## **Be SpectACTive**

Be SpectACTive! is a large-scale cooperative project which I have co-conceived and currently co-curate and manage. Started in 2014, it is today in its second season. 19 partners spread through theatres, cirque nouveau, international theatre and dance festivals, and universities and research centers in 15 EU countries are collaborating to produce a project involving spectators of diverse ages and social and cultural backgrounds. Producing new cultural initiatives, the partners cooperate in a program bringing together actions involving co-programming, where citizens participate in the artistic programming of cultural venues, co-creation processes based on the collaboration between artists and citizens in an extensive EU residency program, co-producing new shows among the various partners, co-commissioning new artworks with the local communities, and an action-research process aiming to establish a qualitative analysis of the practices performed.

Like many cooperative projects, Be SpectACTive! has also experienced how difficult it is to manage a bank guarantee that has increased our costs, the need to address quantitative results to demonstrate the credibility of our actions, or the cultural misunderstandings inherent to a process where different cultural viewpoints must mesh cooperatively. On the contrary, we have also tasted the joy of creating new cultural mechanisms that are nourished by the mobility of and the exchanges between all the network's members as well as by an open dialogue with emerging artists and local communities to develop new creative spaces.

In light of both its successful initiatives and constructive failures, the second season of Be SpectACTive! started by highlighting some milestones. The need for time is central. For example, given the results achieved in our first four-year journey, we have reduced the number of new shows (from 19 to 15), but we have increased the number of creative residencies (which come to around 60 over a 4-year period). We have also introduced a small fee for the artists to finance preparatory research and touring. Moreover, we have devoted about 8 months of time to implementing a new bottom-up art process, the

European Art Commissioner, which is based on the collaboration of two communities (in two countries) who will be the commissioners of a new art project.

In the tension between local culture and cooperative approaches, we have observed varying reactions to the notion of leadership. The co-programming process has offered new opportunities for some cultural institutions to challenge the way they design a theatre or a festival program. They have opened their doors to groups of citizens by sharing power and allowing them to enter their intimate creative sphere: in some venues new social groups were also reached, and they have shed new light on cultural programs. On the other hand, the need to establish the legitimacy of a cultural institution within its territory (in order to receive funds or to be approved by local authorities) has brought some partners to reinforce their leadership in reproducing conservative cultural and political elements. The use of participatory actions has been conducted involving a homogeneous social group of spectators (mostly the white middle class) to interact in a given and framed cultural space and thus according the power to indicate the aesthetics for the entire community to this social group.

The creation of relationships of trust between the partners, the artists and the local communities was an issue explored in the participatory practices enacted in the production of the shows. Each production is the result of 3 residencies in 3 different cities which are conceived not only as a pure moment of creation but also as a place of interaction with the local networks of a given territory. On certain occasions this nourished artistic content while in other cases it was a stressful journey for the artists due to the urgency of producing finalized works.

The notion of process was stressed and fully experienced. We observed that novelties can be introduced when: artists accept the challenge and open their processes in favor of a closer collaboration with the local networks, the cultural institutions facilitate dialogue between the artists and the citizens, thus fostering 'cultural civil action' (Gielen, Lijster, 2015), when art can let people experience their surroundings differently, and when both cultural institutions and artists overcome the urgency of a delivery date of a pure product but experiment with a process-oriented approach. For this reason, the notion of process, as we are observing in some artistic productions with a bottom-up push in Europe, becomes itself an artistic product and therefore no less enjoyable or artistically measurable. In this relational exchange, the spectator / citizen assumes the role of *prosumer* or creative user (Bishop, 2012, Carnelli, 2018), no longer restricted to being a passive consumer of content but empowered to be an active actor who adds value and collaborates in the creation with her/his interests, desires, and stories.

Now in its second season, Be SpectACTIVE! has been defined as a peer-learning network characterized by a process of the continuous exchange of visions, skills, and practices. To make this additional dimension effective we have: 1) identified a professional figure, the community manager, who is a privileged interlocutor for artists in residence and a facilitator in creative exchanges between citizens, spectators, artists, and the network itself; 2) introduced an internal qualitative assessment system to observe globally the various actions carried out between the partners; and 3) strengthened the action-research process with the aim of gaining a critical understanding of the processes in progress.

In all these experiences, the artists served as a link between several communities, the citizens brought their ideas, stories, and ideologies to the participatory table, and the cultural institutions functioned as safe harbors where desires were hosted and mistakes experienced. The AD and AE priorities have allowed for these collaborative forms, and, from a top-down perspective, they have introduced the need for participation, this now being also part of the rhetoric of many cultural institutions in Europe, including those that have reinforced conservative perspectives.

Therefore, Be SpectACTIVE! is the result of a long journey: since 2014 we have had the opportunity to experiment, to fail, and then to build more conscious activities with a strong audience-centric approach. A budget of about 4 million € (50% of which was co-financed by our partners) distributed among 19 partners over a four-year period is not an appropriate amount of funding to deliver the quantity of activities that have been requested. On the one hand, cultural organizations in this context have strengthened their knowledge, but they have also suffered from the lack of space necessary to provide professionals with stable conditions, nor have they been able to offer adequate artistic fees. We have understood that a failure can be constructive when a longer-term perspective is provided to allow us to learn and transform these failures into concrete new cultural and political experiments as well as adequate processes. This cannot be only an understanding of a single project but needs a broader policy discussion.

## Conclusions

Now more than ever, the European space appears to be riddled with contradictions. While neoliberal conservative pressure is reducing spaces for freedom and expression, a cultural civil experience enacted by policymakers, civil servants, artists, researchers, cultural activists, and civil society at large can, on the other hand, breathe life into new forms of democratic engagement that I like to define as co-imaginative politics.

The latter takes place, as we have learned from the experiences of 2011 and from participatory cultural practices, when cooperative approaches are part of cultural architectures and when, even in conflictual terrain, a political community is constituted. Habermas (in Bauman 2019) suggests that this is not created by the national flags in which citizens recognize themselves but, on the contrary, by a collective political aim (which acts in defence of democratic pillars) capable of overcoming national borders. As we have learned from Gramsci, culture is the space where civil and political societies meet and where individuals are not only messengers of identities and traditions but also vectors of transformation.

Cultural cooperation can have multiplier effects, and cultural participation is a possible way to enact these transformations and social changes (mentioned above by Gramsci), especially when a cooperative approach is being tested. We have witnessed that this is possible, and we are also experiencing how hard - but meaningful - this is. Programs such as Creative Europe, with all its paradoxes, can still be a space allowing us to grow together, providing us with the opportunity to create safe spaces to build our cultural identities and where we can give shape to new forms of coexistence that challenge a pre-existing order in favor of more equal cultural access and that can question a given state of privileges.

But, is cultural cooperation in Europe (and I would say not only in Europe) a possible space in which we can tackle the 'crisis of trust' mentioned by Bauman at the opening of our analysis?

The performance and the results of the first seven-year journey of Creative Europe are currently under evaluation. The structure and the budget to be allocated for the next period (2021 – 2027) have been under negotiation since 2018. The Creative Europe 2018 Monitoring Report proposed to increase the budget to 1.85 billion, meaning a 34% increase. Since 2018, many negotiations have been brought to the table. While Creative Europe is under attack with a possible reduction of its economic resources from some member states, new proposals have come from other Parliamentarians and EU networks who consider the program crucial for the development of the EU community. The Intermediate Monitoring Report (2018) has also highlighted the fact that the budget is limited when contrasted with the scale of the sector: 'In fact, Creative Europe funds for the period 2014-2020 are equivalent to an average of EUR 209 million per year, which represents only 0.07% of the value of the sector in Europe.'

In any case, the limited budget (compared to other sectors) still poses a crucial question about the perception of this field as strategic for the development of the EU. The strong

budgetary control of the organizations, the fixed quantitative parameters and the lack of attention to artistic labor has revealed, from our viewpoint, that the culture sector is still not perceived as a strategic place for the implementation of a complex society. While the notion of best practices could inspire us, it is still the place where nationalistic concepts provide the basis for at least some cultural representations.

For that reason, political democratic instances have to be nourished trans-locally. Contradictions have to be understood. We need to act at the intersection of the latter, between global forces and local needs, to recreate real relationships of trust. From our viewpoint, the future Creative Europe program could favor this form of cooperative democratic environment by introducing within its parameters: investments that insist more on processes than on quantitative results, encouraging cultural research that is needed now more than ever for small- and medium-sized organizations to face political and economic changes (and the huge crisis that is emerging from the pandemic crisis); fostering strategic long-term perspectives rather than one-off events (even for small-scale cooperative projects); favoring the creation of those cultural architectures that are fighting inequalities (and also taking into account cultural working conditions) and that are helping fragile organizations to participate in the program; and also, as previously mentioned, implementing the budget devoted to the program itself.

In the last decade, we have learned that, to enact a cooperative approach, we need cultural participation. Cooperation has to be understood as a space where social, cultural, and political pluralities and diversities have to coexist and where, also in light of constructive failures, it can contribute to building a European Culture. This pluralistic approach could help us to shore up the widespread public disengagement that is fueling right-wing populism. As Chantal Mouffe (2005) said, the only possibility for our democracies is not neoliberalism but, on the contrary, a pluralistic approach based on a distribution of power that can create agonistic forms of democratic coexistence and where we are all called to contribute through our co-imaginative political actions.

## 1.3

# Citizen participation in liberal and illiberal European cultural policies

Mariano Martín Zamorano & Lluís Bonet

## Introduction

The promotion of cultural participation became a central goal of cultural policies in most Western democracies after the Second World War. This goal has been mainly developed under the dominant paradigm of cultural democratization, with the aim of spreading arts and cultural heritage to increasing layers of the population (Urfalino 1996). A later approach to cultural participation, starting in the 1970's, was slowly developed through the prism of the "cultural democracy" paradigm as a bottom-up factor for citizen empowerment that concerned a more diversified repertoire of cultural assets and forms of artistic expression (Wimmer 2016). Since then, democratic cultural policies have oscillated between a more patronized understanding of social and artistic intervention (the dominant layer) and a more communitarian and bottom-up models of cultural participation.

Although both approaches use the term "participation," their nature differs in the typology and degree of intensity of this participation. It should be borne in mind that totalitarian regimes also seek the mass participation of the population in the cultural events they organize (Grochowina, S. & Kačka 2014; Kulbok-Lattik 2015). Mechanisms were institutionalized by the Nazi regime for endorsing amateur or popular arts while greatly limiting the scope of what could be considered National Socialist art (Steinweis 1993). Thus, the promotion of cultural participation is not exclusive to liberal democratic cultural policies. Yet, the intentions and strategies of audience development and the very concept of cultural participation differ significantly between these two political regimes.

The forms expressing how social actors intervene in the design and implementation of cultural policies greatly vary even within democratic governments, which themselves present a broad range of models and ideological options, and this despite the growing level of international isomorphism experienced by cultural policies. However, what happens in the cases of cultural policies development by governments that can be described as illiberal democracies (from Erdogan's Turkey, Bolsonaro's Brazil or Orbán's Hungary)?

This chapter addresses the following two questions: how does the promotion of cultural participation policies differ between traditional liberal democracies and the new systems labeled as illiberal democracies? And, similarly to totalitarian regimes, do illiberal democracies focus their support on those forms of cultural participation that retain audiences but do not empower them? Our analysis will focus on strategies developed in European Union countries during the period 2009-2019, to center the debate on regimes inscribed in welfare states and liberal democracies. The theoretical examination proposed within this chapter is based on existing literature and previous empirical work by the authors aimed at the conceptual framing of illiberal cultural policies.

## **Cultural policies and political regimes: between liberal and illiberal democracies**

Gray (2012) has examined the relations between cultural policy orientations and political systems, distinguishing between direct, representative and deliberative democracies. Democratic -- whether national or continental -- traditions, partially explain cultural-policy intervention approaches. In the last decades, cultural policies have been increasingly characterized by the hybridization of their original national model (Zimmer, A., Toepler 1996). Current hybrid models are also shaped by specific national factors such as territorial organization, governance values, or the relative importance of different cultural sectors (e.g. cultural heritage or festivals).

However, beyond the forms of the intervention of social and institutional actors in cultural policy fields, cultural policies in liberal democracies share some normative elements. First, they involve an open definition of culture, requiring respect for the rights of minorities to participate in their own culture and avail themselves of freedom of speech. Second, these policies develop competitive systems of public support, where artists and citizens should be supported based on public and legal criteria. Third, they have governance models ideally based on professional and efficacy criteria, involving aspects such as a tendency of ensuring the autonomy of librarians, curators or artistic directors (Bonet, Zamorano, 2020).

Illiberal cultural policies, on the other hand, whether deployed by left-wing or right-wing parties, combine the formal aspects of liberal democracy with many of the goals and instruments of totalitarian or authoritarian regimes. Firstly, they are characterized by the using a homogeneous understanding of national identity as a mechanism for reaching and legitimizing power. This monolithic definition of culture put to the service of nationalistic claims is “constructed” as a discourse that can integrate certain social groups or traditions and explicitly exclude others. Along these lines, many of these policies share a rhetoric disdain for elitist definitions of national culture, give folk expressions value within a nationalistic framework, promote monumentalization, and reject foreign and/or some domestic minorities’ cultures (Dragičević Šešić 2011). Secondly, these cultural policies develop different expressions of censorship and direct control over artists and art institutions based on ideological prejudices (Bozóki 2017). These forms of repression of dissident actors are based on framing them as enemies of the “people” or the nation. Since the concepts of people and nationhood have an intrinsically cultural character, cultural policies assume the role of controlling the exclusion-inclusion dynamics. Thirdly, these processes may be characterized by administrative centralization in order to facilitate political control (Dubois 2013, 4). However, the above variables are not always reflected in statist approaches to cultural management. In this regard, illiberal cultural policies inscribed in contemporary democracies, led by far-right parties, often seek to construct public-private alliances under liberal patronage. This form of construction of power might be legitimated under pro-market and “creativity” discourses.

Lastly, illiberal tendencies in cultural policies have adopted a specific form due to contemporary populist processes (Zuvela, A., Vidovic 2018). Democratic cultural policies are increasingly marked by populist strategies aimed at symbolically associating specific cultural manifestations with a legitimate definition of the “people” that is then to be opposed to the elite. This political approach is crucial in an era of mass communication where the representational dimension of cultural policies is increasingly targeted to boost xenophobic and antidemocratic agendas (Jagers, J., Walgrave 2007). Before the fall of the Berlin Wall, some authors framed “populist cultural policies” as being marked by their emphasis on a more anthropological definition of culture, their lack of differentiation between professional and amateur arts and culture, and their particular effort to legitimate subaltern cultural groups (Wyszomirski 1982; Mulcahy 2006). According to this approach, populist cultural policies would also be in opposition to more elitist ones. Both perspectives would respectively be aligned with the opposition between more interventionist and more laissez-faire cultural policies. Populism would, therefore, be a factor leading to more state-centric cultural policies. However, public-private corporate alliances and economic (trans)national liberalism can also be behind populist strategies in cultural policies (Zamorano, M.M., Bonet 2018).

**Table 1.** Comparison of cultural policy frameworks, models of governance, and strategies in liberal and illiberal democracies

	LIBERAL DEMOCRACY	ILLIBERAL DEMOCRACY
<b>Cultural framework</b>	Support of national culture(s)	Support of a homogeneous national culture; nativism (historical revisionism, ethnocentrism)
	Relative support of multiculturalism while marginalizing certain cultural minorities	Rejection of multiculturalism and cultural relativism; open stigmatization of some minority cultures (e.g. Muslims, Jews, Roma, LGBT+)
	Support of a diversity of cultural expressions (with a bias in favor of high culture or cultural excellence)	Support of popular culture (folk and mass) opposed to elite culture
	Support of free creativity - from academic to avant-garde arts - based on institutionally framed professional merit	Support for arts and cultural heritage expressions linked to the ideology in power via corporatism and clientelism
<b>Governance Model</b>	Autonomy granted to the officials and peer-reviewers according to professional criteria	Staff appointment according to fidelity criteria; clientele relations to supportive intellectuals, artists, and providers
	Support of independent cultural enterprises and professionals (cooperation and conflict)	Non-aligned cultural actors disdained by political power and subsidies
<b>Cultural strategies</b>	Non-ideological direct imposition	Indirect persecution of dissident intellectuals and artists favoring self-censorship
	Free private media and ideologically open public media	Ideological control of public media, alliance with some large private media providers and intensive use of social media and fake news
	Autonomy of cultural mediators dependent on public money (curators, artistic directors, librarians ...)	Pressure on and delegated censorship of cultural mediators dependent on public money
	Support of cultural heritage in line with professional criteria	Exaltation of certain authors/stories and monumentalization based on historical revisionism
	Support of arts education and citizen empowerment through culture	Some support of arts education but not of citizen empowerment through culture
	Support for community activities and events (organized by the government or the communities themselves)	Organization of large multitudinous events targeted at their political clients

## Citizen participation in liberal and illiberal cultural policies

Political participation rights have been defined as one of the critical democratic components distinguishing liberal democracy from other forms of government (Bogaards 2009; Crouch 2004). However, many democratic political systems are characterized by the lack of meaningful political participation and widespread demobilization of the population. While in the “representative democracy” approach, participation has often been more circumscribed to the freedom of speech and the right to vote (Sartori 1993), other interpretations and schools of thought have underlined that full democracy might only be achieved by the active promotion of public participation, citizen empowerment, and rational deliberation leading to policy design and implementation (Rosenberg 2007; Dryzek 2009). Therefore, even if social engagement is one of the factors defining the characteristics of democratic regimes, its forms and inscription within a political system should be considered when analyzing the latter and their boundaries.

In the same vein, in the field of cultural policies, we can find many approaches to participation. On the one hand, we have the different understandings of citizen participation in culture, which are often framed as a collective and subjective right and a political process partaken of by social movements or NGOs (Bonet, Négrier 2018). On the other hand, there is a narrower definition of participation, restricted to sectorial intervention by the public and communities. Here forms of social or individual intervention range from audience engagement (Liikkanen 2006), visitors to cultural institutions, or other types of cultural participation that are generated on the basis of the public definition of legitimate domains for participation (Stevenson 2013). Inequality in these different forms of engagement has been a matter of sociological analysis for decades (Bourdieu 1984; Coulangeon 2013). Both dimensions of citizen participation in cultural policy are relatively determined by the political regime in which they are inscribed.

Historically, cultural and social participation were considered as an essential goal of welfare-state cultural policies. Initially, access to participation was focused on the redistribution of assets and services to allow the lower classes to access high culture. In this way, the tastes and interests of less privileged segments in society were somehow assimilated to the those of the elite (Miles, A; Sullivan 2010). Later, this relation between participation and the value of culture was reframed so that a more diverse understanding of legitimate culture could be integrated into different forms of cultural participation.

At present, social participation is a topic of increasing interest in the field of cultural policies. When analyzing cultural policies in Western democratic systems, many scholars have considered that the local and entrepreneurial turn in this domain that have occurred in the last few decades have fostered the demobilization of social organizations and local communities (Bonet, Négrier 2018; Palacios González 2017; Barbieri, Fina, Subirats 2012; Hadley, Belfiore 2018; Rius-Ulldemolins, Hernández i Martí, Torres 2016). The hypothesis behind many of these analyses is that while cultural policies became administratively closer to local actors, its new orientation towards market-based outcomes under the Creative City Project led to their relegation. For instance, it has been suggested that the Creative City projects involves mechanisms excluding collectives such as the LGBT+ or non-aesthetically aligned groups (Levin, Solga 2009; Da Costa 2016). In this scenario, the issue of cultural participation in cultural policies has also become an essential variable for understanding the nature and democratic reach of a certain regime.

While cultural democracy is being questioned within liberal political systems on the basis of the above considerations concerning its bottom-up mechanisms, “illiberal cultural policies” are also reorienting classical forms of social engagement. The rise of far-right cultural policy projects around the world is somehow reframing the traditional totalitarian understanding of social participation in the arts or the heritage domain, by introducing new administrative and discursive strategies (Bozóki 2017; Pappas 2014). After the 2008 financial crisis, several pre-established far-right movements, with nativist and racist political programs, gained further power in many countries worldwide. In Europe, this process had consequences at the national level with the advance of the Front National in France, the People’s Party in the Netherlands, in Hungary with Fidesz, Law and Justice in Poland, the Lega Nord in Italy or Vox in Spain, just to mention some examples. Three elements have characterized cultural policies developed by these local, regional and national governments in the last decade. Firstly, there is the definition of an exclusionary discourse around cultural policies often based on a conservative definition of the nation. Secondly, there is the limitation of arms-length mechanisms within cultural governance strategies. Lastly, there is the establishment of systematic - be it direct or delegated - censorship in cultural policies (Bonet, Zamorano, 2020).

Cultural participation and audience building has also adopted new forms within this neo-authoritarian cultural policy framework (Tomba 2017; Poprawski 2020). In most of the cases studied, involvement in cultural policies is restricted to the mobilization of adherents in spectacular events, such as in Hungary. These events are often used to associate cultural heritage or cultural expressions with the ideals of the party in power.

However, the dominant understanding of social participation within cultural policies relates to the establishment of a corporate structure that allows for the exclusion of actors non-aligned with the party from the different cultural sectors. This has been observed in the cases of theatre and museums in Hungary and Poland (Kristóf 2017; Poprawski 2020). The cultural policy system in Hungary has been characterized by the institutionalization of an elite, composed mostly by artists and intellectuals, white men who legitimize the cultural repertoires to be offered to the public (Kristóf 2017). Participation in policy-making is, therefore, often understood as the intervention of allies in cultural institutions, such as the clientele network structured by Fidesz around the Hungarian Academy of Art (MMA) (Basthy 2017; Kristóf 2017).

Another dynamic in this line is the stigmatization of artists and the relegation of artistic participatory projects by local governments in the hands of the far-right in France (Almeida 2017) or Italy (Borchi 2019). Similarly, calls to participate in the heritage domain in the Nordic countries have been found to be couched within exclusionary discourse by public authorities (Niklasson, E, Hølleland 2018, 18). Although many differences exist between the cultural policies deployed by these forces, there is a general trend towards a patronizing and narrow view of art repertoires and cultural participation.

Expressing the illiberal character or inclination of the above political systems, citizen participation in the cultural domain has been boosted in many cases as a reaction to the censorship or limitation of liberties in these countries. Different forms of artistic and political response to these regimes involving new participatory processes have been identified, ranging from “*artivism*” to the establishment of new organizations or discursive strategies that can be framed as counterpublic, namely discourses developed by grass-roots movements disputing the hegemony of radical governments (Fraser 1990). For instance, “*artivism*” adopted many forms against these regimes, including the involvement of street artists and performers in protests against the Front National in some France towns (Dapporto, E.; Duvauroux 2000) and also across Belgium (De Cleen 2016). Recently, policies carried out by these forces have led to the production of several manifestos, mass events, or protests organized by artists and institutions against censorship, legal changes reducing cultural rights, and against nationalist governments in Hungary (Babarczy 2017; Basthy 2017) and Poland (Batycka 2019), or local policies in France (Almeida 2017). In some cases, resistance to public measures has resulted in the emergence of “counterpublic” spheres and their institutionalization in the form of organizations and unions of artists and cultural managers. Along these lines, self-organization has acquired new relevancy within the cultural fields of many of the most

important cities in Poland and Hungary, such as Warsaw or Budapest (Lis 2017; Tompa 2017).

## **Audience development and cultural participation strategies in liberal and illiberal cultural policies**

As can be observed below in Table 2, the support of cultural participation in liberal democracies has traditionally wavered between two major paradigms of cultural policy, the well-established paradigm of ‘cultural democratization’ and the less consolidated one of ‘cultural democracy.’ Under the paradigm of cultural democratization, the development of cultural participation has sought to strengthen audience loyalty in order to ensure higher income and social prestige, and from a more open perspective, it has attempted to achieve a certain generational and social renewal of the public. Both strategies see participation as audience attendance to an event or activity previously designed by professional curators or artistic directors from the cultural institution involved. In this regard, the degree of empowerment of participants is low, and outcomes are mostly conceived from a pragmatic standpoint (maximization of sales, revenue and / or space occupancy, consumer satisfaction, social and political legitimization, for example) (Bonet, Négrier 2019).

Under the paradigm of cultural democracy, cultural participation became a stronger bottom-up challenge. Developing audiences is done with the aim of empowering citizens, sharing decision-making power with them, making visible traditionally marginalized cultural expressions and communities, and ultimately, with the aim of encouraging volunteering, connecting more plural and generative practices and critical thinking with cultural participants. Under these premises, policy design can better capture the interests and needs of different layers of citizens, and therefore provide more targeted services. Outcomes, therefore, are more associated with the process of policy-making (civic participation) and the satisfaction and empowerment of participants and local communities.

**Table 2.** Cultural policy paradigms and audience strategies in liberal and illiberal democracies

	Goals	Explicit Aims of Liberal Democracy Cult. Policies	Implicit Aims of Illiberal Democracy Cult. Policies
CULTURAL DEMOCRATIZATION	LOYALTY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Satisfaction of the dominant social milieu</li> <li>- Lower risk: programming and marketing focus on regular audience taste and expectations</li> <li>- Higher revenues (cultural project sustainability)</li> <li>- Income raised before starting (subscription)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensuring growing audiences among political clientele</li> <li>- Strengthening the feeling of clan membership among groups of loyal followers and clientele</li> <li>- Fostering the interests and prestige of artists and intellectuals associated with the regime</li> </ul>
	TO RENEW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attraction of larger audiences of the whole social spectrum (but in practice mostly from established cultural milieus)</li> <li>- Rejuvenation and captivation of active audiences</li> <li>- Social and political legitimization</li> <li>- Casual audience attraction through scheduling prestigious events</li> <li>- Better knowledge of audience trends</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increasing the number of new social and political followers through attractive free mass events or other activities that foster collective emotions and a shared sense of national pride</li> </ul>
CULTURAL DEMOCRACY	TO DEVELOP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Active involvement of larger layers of population, including marginalized people</li> <li>- Attraction of more demanding or engaged audiences</li> <li>- Inducing alternative cultural practices</li> <li>- Greater development and personal learning</li> <li>- Joint strategies with other cultural institutions</li> <li>- Incorporation of external or hidden talent (which could generate tensions with the establishment)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Contained prevention of, and in some cases clear aversion to, the development of active audiences</li> </ul>
	TO EMPOWER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Encouraging committed volunteering</li> <li>- Encouraging critical thinking</li> <li>- Sharing power with a committed citizenry</li> <li>- Greater community legitimacy and impact</li> <li>- Visibility and empowerment of marginalized community expressions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Obstruction of any empowerment action or critical thinking strategy outside their dominant ideological framework</li> </ul>

As it can be seen above, top-down control over cultural policy decreases when power is more amenable to active citizen participation in its governance model and strategy. In liberal democratic systems, this has different implications. On the one hand, such tensions have been couched within the dynamics of efficacy, which claims that more participatory cultural programs and policies could lead to less well-organized,

accountable and assessable policies. On the other hand, this may be seen as a handicap for those cultural policies which give preponderance to the expressions and practices of high culture.

Illiberal cultural policies tend to restrict the instruments of cultural participation to the ones inscribed in top-down cultural democratization. Their cultural policies focus on enforcing nationalist discourses and on ensuring the loyalty of those groups identified with their ideological approach. From a formal point of view, most explicit aims and strategies used by these governments do not differ essentially from liberal democracy paradigm of cultural democratization (using mostly the same funding and programming instruments). For instance, the Hungarian cultural policy towards an “elite” democracy promoted by Fidesz (Kristóf 2017) has some associations with the classical paradigm of cultural democratization, but there is an essential difference. The support of audience participation in illiberal democracies could be both a form of legitimization and a form of segregation and stigmatization -- the legitimization of a recreated national people’s culture set in opposition to stigmatized identities and expressions from unpleasant minorities and, in some cases but not always, also against foreign cultural and elitist cultural expressions (the latter opposed to the people’s *right* tastes). Cultural participation is also a tool to strengthen the feeling of tribalism and to ensure growing loyal clienteles, hence the importance of organizing large mass events in which collective emotions and the sharing of values and a sentiment of belonging among large fervent audiences is central. The strategy differs from the goal of the liberal cultural democratization paradigm when the latter seeks to expand cultural consumption to include growing layers of society. In liberal regimes, a mostly high culture repertoire is endorsed by the state as legitimate and as a “cultural status” symbol to be reached by all citizens. In illiberal regimes, a recreated national repertoire is designed and understood as a mechanism of ideological inclusion and exclusion, in addition to being a tool to support faithful artists and intellectuals.

The underlying policy objectives are not the same, although the same audience development strategies may be used. It should still be noted that while deploying their populist strategies far-right and illiberal left-wing governments can hide their culturally exclusionary policies under a “direct democracy” argument (Wimmer 2016). Leaders who directly appeal to the “people” can argue that there is a need to overcome the weaknesses of a democratic system which is kidnapped by “liberal elites” so as to recover the legitimacy of cultural policies. In this sense, there are parallels with the

strategy of previous totalitarian regimes, for example, in the organization of cultural events designed to bring together the masses while generating shared feelings.

“Active participation in the cultural arts by broad segments of the population was a well-established fact of German life. Official constraints upon such broad-based participation were bound to create practical problems of enforcement and contribute to popular alienation from the regime. Moreover, excessive constraints on artistic activity would not be consistent with the populist cultural component of National Socialist ideology and propaganda. Thus, although genuine and important reforms were indeed instituted by the chambers, in many cases the actual achievements fell far short of the expectations engendered by the enthusiasm that had accompanied the 1933 founding of the chamber system.”(Steinweis 1993, 83).

Obviously, the differences between political regimes increase considerably when it comes to implementing the bottom-up paradigm of cultural democracy. Illiberal democratic governments see it with a high degree of prejudice as an obstacle to achieving their goals. Two main reasons could explain this attitude: first, it empowers and strengthens the critical capacity of all layers of the population, and second, this paradigm supports and makes visible the cultural expressions of unwanted marginalized communities like Muslim immigrants, the Roma or LGBTQ+ groups. The reaction of illiberal governments towards the development of active audiences is mainly a contained prevention of their development and, in some cases, clear aversion, but when it comes to favoring real empowerment of action or the development of critical thinking outside their dominant ideological framework, an explicit obstruction occurs. However, some practices linked to those strategies can be developed when they favor the regime's interests, such as voluntary work for addicts to the cause.

It should be noted that, in contrast to totalitarian regimes, marginalized community members and other kinds of alternative groups have the opportunity to develop bottom-up strategies - spaces of freedom and citizen opposition - despite obvious political or financial difficulties. Sometimes this happens in alliance with political opposition to local or regional governments (e.g. Poland). So, there is an important role played by independent civil society and voluntary workers in the field of cultural participation.

## Final remarks

The growing number of democratically elected governments defending ideological postulates that question the fundamental political values of liberal democracies raises questions about the application of the paradigms and strategies that shape most cultural policies in Europe. One of the most controversial areas is the promotion of cultural participation -- mainly because even in the most established liberal democracies, the concept has different dimensions. In liberal democracies, the top-down approach can have effects on how social actors engage with the cultural domain since it requires marginalized groups, such as migrants, to align with definitions presented as legitimate (Escafré-Dublet 2019). Alternatively, bottom-up engagement of social actors in policy design and implementation is therefore essential for interpreting these legitimate and evolving domains and goals for participation. These mechanisms are framed within different cultural policy models, from the more interventionist to the more laissez-faire. They range from more proactive tools such as participatory community processes promoted by the state to the establishment of institutional mechanisms allowing citizens to urge change in public policies.

Under the paradigm of cultural democratization, encouraging participation implies increasing consumption and cultural practices, in particular those driven by a top-down logic from the most recognized artistic and heritage facilities and projects. This is done both through loyalty to existing audiences and through strategies of rejuvenation and expansion of audiences. A second paradigm, that of cultural democracy, seeks to go further by fostering bottom-up strategies for more active cultural participation. It is not enough to expand the volume of cultural consumers, but it puts the citizenry, their identities, and their cultural expressions at the center of supportive governmental measures. The aim is to foster a society that is more respectful of reality of multiculturalism, with a greater critical spirit and with citizens who are involved and empowered to make decisions.

To what extent are these two conceptions of cultural participation also part of the political-cultural agenda of the new governments we call illiberal democracies? Apparently, many of these governments advocate the continuity of top-down strategies related to cultural democratization. However, the experiences of recent Hungarian and Polish national governments show how the instruments can be similar, but the intentions are different. Cultural participation strategies are designed as a mechanism of ideological inclusion and exclusion, in addition to serving as a tool to support faithful artists and intellectuals. However, it is in the realm of strategies linked to the paradigm

of cultural democracy that aversion to -- or clear obstruction of -- its principles is at their clearest. They do not have any interest in favoring real strategies of empowerment or the development of critical thinking outside their dominant ideological framework.

In both cases we can conclude that the promotion of cultural participation policies clearly differs between traditional liberal democracies and the new systems listed as illiberal democracies. Those forms of cultural participation that retain audiences but do not empower them could be seen as similar, but anything that is not in the service of empowering their ideological project and a Eurocentric conception of culture is marginalized. Leaving in the hands of citizens, particularly in diverse societies with complex conceptions of identity, the decision of which cultural expressions should be supported with public resources is seen with an extraordinary degree of caution. Cultural policy is a field fertilized by political forces that focus their discourse on identity, national pride, and populist interests. That is why countries such as Hungary and Poland lead cultural policy spending per capita at the level of the European Union (Eurostat 2020).

Direct and delegated censorship as well as the exclusion of certain artists or cultural collectives from the legitimate definition of culture – or their stigmatization as members of the elite - have created the conditions within different cultural fields for the emergence of various subaltern movements or forms of expression. These political projects articulate both limitations to artists' access to public support and public programs and the establishment of an opposition at the ideological and discursive levels of cultural policies favored by the new configuration of the political system. While similar transformations concerning cultural participation have occurred in other historical moments, such as the mobilization of vanguards during the 1920's, the current scenario expresses the deployment of new political strategies that combine the public promotion of cultural manifestations and heritage belonging to high culture with the claim of their association with the people -- while simultaneously excluding and minimizing cultural participation within other forms of popular expression that are stigmatized as amoral, anti-national or elitist in nature.



## 1.4

# Participation in cultural practices : which statistical trends?

Loup Wolff

In the French-speaking field of the sociology of culture, the word "pratique" retains an ambiguity to which the so-called enquête sur les pratiques culturelles ("survey of cultural practices") is no stranger. The term refers just as much to the behavior of visiting or frequenting cultural places as it does to the consumption of audiovisual content or the artistic and leisure activities that people enjoy engaging in. In this sense, a "pratique" can mean the reception of an artistic and cultural proposal as well as referring to more active or participative forms, such as amateur practices. The translation of "pratique" into English therefore often hesitates between "practice" and "participation" since these two registers are indeed contained within this term. The aim of this chapter is to clarify the findings of surveys on the most diverse cultural practices in order to consider the opportunities, as well as the possible limits, of cultural participation policy.

This need to balance both meanings is equally reflected in the way in which the survey of cultural participation practices, a central historical device for French sociology, is constructed. The initial context of its conception at the end of the 1960s "sought to reconcile two sociological traditions that were in many ways opposed, that of Joffre Dumazedier's pioneering work in the field of leisure and that of Pierre Bourdieu's early investigations in the field of culture" (Donnat 2003). The first version of this series follows the publication in 1962 of J. Dumazedier's work on the "leisure society" (Dumazedier 1962) and, above all, the publication in 1966 of *L'Amour de l'art* (Bourdieu and Darbel 1966) - a work that drew on numerous results from surveys conducted with the support of the Studies and Statistics Department of the Ministry of Culture, then called the Studies and Research Department (directed by Augustin Girard), all of which foreshadowed what was to become the survey of cultural participation practices (Girard 1994). In 1979, the continuation of this work led Pierre Bourdieu, then a member of

the Centre de sociologie de l'éducation et de la culture, to set out in *La Distinction* his innovative analysis of social structure, bringing to light the social conditions of taste production (Bourdieu 1979). Describing the role played by culture - accumulated in the form of symbolic capital unequally held by individuals - in structuring social relations, this analysis had a major impact on the social sciences, in France and abroad, and resonated well beyond the academic world (Coulangeon and Duval 2013).

It is this long accumulation of theories and empirical studies on culture and social structures that has led to the conception in France of visiting, frequenting, or consuming as acts of participation in their own right. Indeed, according to the principles of structural homology, going to the theatre and the cinema, turning on the television, and other such practices are socially meaningful acts -- charged with significance and closely linked to the whole range of people's social behavior. They make manifest in a powerful way the social ethos of individuals and are in close resonance with individuals' overall behavior.

The survey of cultural participation practices describes over a long period of time social realities that may seem ordinary and meaningless but which are interpreted - in this sociological tradition - as strong signals, including of participation, as a frame of reference for political transformations. A systematic examination of the information gathered in these six surveys on cultural participation practices, as well as a more particular focus on the last ten years, confirms the relevance of this theoretical and empirical framework: despite the public objectives of democratization, despite the participatory promises of the digital turn, cultural practices in France remain largely conditioned by "generational dynamics" and a certain "social weight" (terms used to title the reference publication by O. Donnat, 2011). However, there are nuances to this general observation: while practices remain socially and territorially differentiated in 2018, certain points of convergence are emerging in various cultural fields.

### **The Survey of Cultural Participation Practices (1973-2018)**

*A unique system of observation in France that approaches cultural practices in a transversal way across the entire field (performing arts, cultural industries, heritage, etc.) at the national level and with a high degree of historical depth, this series of surveys on cultural participation practices plays a central role. Since its inception, it has indeed remained faithful to the four objectives set forth at its origins:*

- > To observe the cultural behaviors and practices of the population living in France - while maintaining a broad understanding of what constitutes culture - in order to better apprehend the diversity of relationships to culture;*

- > *To provide detailed analyses of the evolution of these behaviors and practices;*
- > *To target the enquiry at emerging behaviors and practices (particularly those related to new technologies and new modes of access to culture);*
- > *To better identify the factors influencing access to or, on the contrary, the distancing from cultural practices.*

*This system, despite some notable changes, has remained remarkably stable since its inception in terms of its methodology, its objectives, and the formulation of its questions. The successive surveys thus constitute a coherent corpus of data which has given rise to longitudinal analyses (in repeated and quasi-panel sections). This corpus now makes it possible to update our knowledge of the structural transformations that have been taking place for nearly half a century in behaviors that can be described as "cultural" in the broadest sense - including both "cultivated culture" (reading books, museum attendance, theatre, cinema, etc.) and leisure practices (gardening, knitting, sports shows, etc.).*

*The analyses presented here are in line with two publications published in 2011: "Cultural practices 1973-2008 - Generational dynamics and social burdens" (Olivier Donnat, CE-2011-7) and "Cultural practices 1973-2008 - Questions of measurement and interpretation of results" (Olivier Donnat, CM-2011-2).*

## **A growing place for culture in the daily life of the French people**

In most cultural fields, the historical data provided by nearly fifty years of surveys on cultural participation practices confirms the development and diversification of practices independently of age, social background, and type of territory.

Beyond television viewing, which is very widespread among the population, all audiovisual practices occupy a central place in the daily lives of the French. In 2018, 70% of the French exhibit cultural practices that go beyond television consumption alone, compared to 55% in 2008 (and 47% in 1973). Audiovisual practices (television, radio) remain central, even if they have been in sharp decline over the last 10 years: in 2018, 78% of French people watch television daily (87% in 2008) and 60% listen to the radio daily (67% in 2008). Although still very present in the daily lives of the French, television and, to a greater extent, radio have nevertheless experienced a slight decline in the recent period that is linked to increased competition from digital content, particularly for the under 35 group.

Listening to music is experiencing a historic boom, on various platforms: 57% of French people listened to music every day in 2018, compared to 34% in 2008. This growth is based on greater access to digital devices in households and among different categories of the population, a distribution that is increasingly broad among demographic groups, particularly when it comes to music listening. For example, 36% of people aged 15 and over use online digital technologies (streaming) to listen to music. The youngest are the most frequent users (73% of the 15-24 age bracket), although older populations are not excluded: more than a third of the 40-59 age category (34%) and 12% of those over 60 use these technologies. The differences in practice are even less significant depending on the territory, confirming a certain convergence of digital practices on a national scale: 30% of the inhabitants of small municipalities (those with fewer than 2 000 residents as well as municipalities with fewer than 20 000 inhabitants) use streaming, compared to 45% of the inhabitants in municipalities with more than 200 000 residents. Daily music listening is thus gradually becoming a widely shared practice, regardless of age, social status, or territory. Its once distinctive character (the practice has long remained more widespread among the young, the most educated, and urban dwellers) had begun to fade away prior to the arrival of digital technologies, but the latter have ultimately amplified the presence of recorded music in the daily lives of the French.

This success of audiovisual and digital consumption is combined with a marked increase in the number of people visiting cultural venues. Going to the cinema or the theatre, visiting museums, exhibitions, or historical monuments are becoming increasingly frequent in ever more diverse categories of the public. In 2018, 63% of French people went to the cinema at some point during the previous year (57% in 2008); 44% visited a heritage site - a museum, exhibition or historical monument (39% in 2008); and 43% attended at least one show (42% in 2008).

## **The considerable growth of digital cultural practices in the last ten years**

Over the past decade, listening to recorded music has become a common practice among the 15+ age group, and this growth owes much to the increasing spread of digital use within the population. Likewise, online video viewing and social networking, still uncommon in 2008, have become an integral part of the daily lives of many French people over the past 10 years: 20% of the 15+ age group view online videos daily and 41% use social networks, also on a daily basis - practices that were virtually non-existent in 2008. For young people, listening to music and watching videos online are now

majority practices: 73% of the 15-24 age group listen to music online, and 59% watch videos online every day.

As for video games, they have gradually imposed themselves on the French population, reaching an ever-wider audience with the aging of the first generations of gamers. 44% of the French say they play video games (compared to 36% in 2008). This practice characterizes an overwhelming majority of young people (83% of 15-24 age bracket are gamers) and is increasing in other age groups: 63% of 25-39 group (compared to 56% in 2008), 39% of the 40-59 age group (24% in 2008), and 17% of the 60+ age group (6% in 2008) play video games.

Playing video games, listening to music and consulting videos online are now firmly established practices in young people's daily lives, although the more traditional audiovisual practices, especially television, have not declined much. Has the development of these practices been to the detriment of outings and visits to cultural sites?

## **More people frequenting cultural venues, especially among the 40+ age group**

More and more, people aged 15 and over are going out and at least occasionally visiting cultural venues, whether they be cinemas, theatres, or heritage sites. This increase in attendance is mainly due to the growth of these practices for the 40+ age group - throughout the same period, the under-30s exhibit behaviors of visiting and going out that are, on average, more marked than their elders but without displaying any growth.

While going to the movies was long reserved for the youngest, these practices have now become common at middle and especially older ages. More and more people over the age of 40 are going to movie theatres: 65% went to a movie theatre in 2018, compared to 55% in 2008 and 37% in 1981. This increase is even more visible for those aged 60 and over: 42% went to a movie theatre in 2018, compared to 31% in 2008 and only 13% in 1981.

Similarly, the performing arts and heritage sectors (museums, historical monuments) have benefited from the growing propensity of older people to go on cultural outings. Between 2008 and 2018, heritage visits intensified for the following age groups: 47% of the 40-59 age bracket visited a museum, exhibition, or historical monument in 2018 (40% in 2008), as did 37% of those aged 60 and over (30% in 2008). Finally, the performing arts are also benefiting from these increasing outings: 49% of the 40-59 age group attended a show in 2018, compared to 41% in 2008 and 27% in 1981; 35% of

the 60+ age group did so in 2018, compared to 29% in 2008 and 16% in 1981. While dance and theatre are attractive to young audiences, performing arts are struggling to attract the 25-39 age group in particular: while this age group goes to the cinema more frequently (74% in 2018, compared to 68% in 2008) or visits heritage sites (46%, compared to 42% in 2008), it goes significantly less to shows (47%, compared to 49% in 2008).

## **The reduction of certain territorial and, in some cases, social gaps**

The massive spread of certain practices, particularly those of an audiovisual, digital, or even cinematographic nature, goes hand in hand with a significant reduction in the differences in practices that could exist between large cities and rural areas or even between social groups. Thus, daily music listening has increased even in categories that have long remained excluded from this practice: the 40-59 age group (57%, compared to 25% in 2008), rural areas (58%, compared to 27% in 2008) and popular categories (64% for workers and employees, compared to 36% in 2008). Once displaying important territorial and social divisions, the daily listening to music has bridged these gaps: in 2018, this practice was as common as it had ever been, whether in large conurbations (here defined as urban spaces with more than 100,000 inhabitants) or in rural areas (58% in both cases); it was 1.4 times more common in large conurbations in 2008 and 3 times more common in 1973.

Particularly striking in the case of listening to recorded music, this historical dynamic of the reduction of gaps between population categories can also be observed with regard to visits to libraries and performing arts venues, particularly theatres. Going to shows has become more democratic at the territorial level: 46% of the inhabitants of large conurbations have attended a show (49% in 2008), with 39% in rural areas (35% in 2008). However, despite this significant reduction, gaps still remain in 2018: the most qualified and higher socio-professional categories continue to visit these venues more often. Within the performing arts sector, the theatre has been particularly involved in this dynamic of gap reduction: in 2018, going to the theatre was 1.5 times more common in large conurbations than in rural areas; it was 1.7 times more common in 2008 and nearly 7 times more common in 1973. Cinemas and libraries are also experiencing a reduction in territorial differences in practice. Library use in large urban areas is 1.4 times more common in both 2018 and 2008 and 2 times more common in 1988; movie theatre use is 2 times more common in 2018, while it was 3 times more common in 2008.

While certain dynamics of gap reduction among social backgrounds are appearing for the most widespread practices (listening to music, cinema attendance) or for those that have experienced the specific development of a young public (libraries), attendance at heritage sites (museums, exhibitions, monuments) is experiencing a widening of these gaps: the most qualified and higher socio-professional categories are today even more likely than in the past to devote themselves to the arts.

## The cultural singularity of recent generations

The last decade has seen the rise of digital uses that have become massively popular among the French population. This new situation is profoundly redefining the cultural landscape of the most recent generations.

As a phenomenon of the last decade that is emerging on a massive scale, digital use has in effect become over a 10-year period a majority practice in the daily lives of young people, whether it concerns consuming online music or videos on a daily basis, using social networks, or playing video games. 73% of the 15-24 age group listen to music online, 59% consult online videos daily, and 83% play video games. For this generation, content from traditional media sources, especially the radio, is losing its centrality, while social networks have rapidly become a primary source of information. 58% of the 15-24 age group watched television daily in 2018, down from 79% in 2008; and 35% listened to the radio daily in 2018, down from 56% in 2008. On the other hand, social networks have become an unavoidable source of information in the space of 10 years: 65% of the 15-24 age group prefer using social media to stay informed. However, 66% also mention television as a preferred source of information and 44% the press. Radio is only mentioned by 28% of this age group.

This explosion of digital use does not, however, erase young people's taste for going out: in 2018, as was the case earlier, young people (15-24 years old) are frequent visitors to cultural venues, whether these be cinemas, theatres, libraries, or even heritage sites (museums, exhibitions, or historical monuments). 84% of this age group went to the movies in 2018 and 29% assiduously so (12 films or more); 73% attended a performance (concert, theatre, dance, or circus); 47% visited a museum, exhibition, or historical monument; 44% went to a library. Indeed, although the increase in attendance presented above is mainly driven by older audiences, levels of youth participation in these cultural offerings are structurally high throughout this period.

## **The decline in practices associated with the baby boom generation**

The second notable generational phenomenon is, after the one commented on above for the most recent generations, the cultural trajectory of the baby boomers (born between 1945 and 1955), which appears to be a structuring factor in the cultural landscape of the last fifty years. This generation is in fact distinguished by particularly developed cultural behaviors, unlike previous generations as well as later ones: the members of this generation have in particular read a lot of books and continue to do so, they have been particularly numerous in frequenting cultural places, especially the most patrimonial ones (museums and classical music concert halls in particular). This generation, which is also very populous, has thus long contributed to ensuring a well-stocked public for these cultural forms. But with the aging of this generation, and the lower frequency of these practices among the following generations, participation in certain cultural activities has been eroded.

Continuing a movement observed since the early 1990s (Donnat 2011), book reading is declining steadily among the population. In 2018, only 19% of the 15-28 age group can be defined as regular readers (20 or more books per year), while at the same age, this described 35% of baby boomers and is still at 20% for this group in 2018. Similarly, while 2% of the 15-28 age group attended a classical music concert, this was the case for 8% of boomers at the same age and 9% in 2018. Classical music audiences are struggling to renew themselves and a risk of a decline in attendance at heritage sites (museums and historical monuments) has emerged in the last 10 years.

This generation, less and less able to maintain its cultural participation, is only partially replaced by the next generations. This demographic phenomenon is making several cultural fields permanently fragile, which raises the question of audience renewal in an important way.

## **Scarcity of amateur practices between 2008 and 2018**

In the historical series of surveys on cultural participation practices, several aspects describing amateur practices complement those related to viewing, listening to music, reading, or going out: the idea was to measure the propensity of people aged 15 and over to produce artistic content themselves. The questions, which have remained almost unchanged from the 1973 survey to the 2018 survey, cover music and singing (known as amateur musical practices), writing (of poems and short stories), the graphic arts

(painting, sculpture, drawing), arts and crafts (pottery, ceramics, etc.), the performing arts (theatre and dance), and photography.

Photography, music, dance, theatre, drawing, painting, and writing ("poems, short stories, or a novel") are activities practiced by 41% of those aged 15 or over in 2018. The practice of these activities has tended to increase since the 1970's, when only one-third of those aged 15 or over reported having been involved in one of these activities - until 2008, when a peak seems to have been reached at 51% of this age bracket. This relative scarcity of amateur practitioners over the last 10 years should be considered with caution, as the range of artistic activities has been transformed, with the development of digital practices and the appearance of new practices, adding to and competing with those observed in the six previous surveys held from 1973 to 2018. A more detailed examination of these activities reveals contrasting developments: some are in fact becoming less common (in particular musical practice), while others are being maintained (the graphic arts, theatre, writing) or showing growth (dance, photography).

Thus, while musical practice - alone or in groups, including on computers - had clearly progressed from the 1970's to the end of the 1990's, it has since experienced a decline which has accelerated over the last decade: in 2018, 11% of those aged 15 and over had a musical artistic activity during the previous twelve months, compared with 16% in 2008 and 20% in 1988; however, this figure was only at 9% in 1973. Continuing a phenomenon that has been observable since the end of the 1990's, the practice of music is becoming rarer in France. The graphic arts are practiced by a relatively stable proportion of the population and are among the preferred activities for artistic expression as an amateur. Even if they have each lost a few participants proportionally over the last ten years, drawing or painting and sculpture have retained a definite appeal: 12% and 8% respectively of those aged 15 and over practiced them in 2018, compared with 14% and 9% in 2008. Despite a sharp decline among the youngest age group (29% of the 15-19 age group drew in 2018, compared with 41% in 2008), drawing remains their favorite amateur activity. Pottery and ceramics, on the other hand, have relatively few practitioners (between 2 and 4% of those aged 15 and over, depending on the years observed), certainly due to the complexity of the activity, which requires both a precise technique and many tools, facts that make it potentially less easily accessible than other amateur practices.

Another practice that remains relatively confidential, writing - i.e. personal expression through poetry or short stories, apart from keeping a personal diary - is a rather rare activity throughout the period covered by the surveys: historically between 3 and 6%, the proportion of those aged 15 and over who write is 4% in 2018. And even if young people have massively abandoned this practice (-8 points between 2008 and 2018 for the 15-24 age bracket), they are still more likely than their elders to engage in writing in

2018: 9%, compared to 3% among those over 25. Similarly, theatre remains a low-level activity: 1% of those aged 15 and over practiced it in 2018 - this share being 1 or 2% over the entire period observed. For the first time in 2018, the practice of the circus arts as an amateur also concerns only 1% of those aged 15 and over. Within the performing arts, only dance has become increasingly popular since the beginning of the period covered by the surveys: whereas 2% of the population aged 15 and over practiced it in the early 1970's, this share has almost quadrupled in fifty years, reaching 7% in 2018.

Along with dance, photography is the artistic activity that has gained the most new practitioners over the period. Since the beginning of the 1970's, this practice has always attracted the most amateurs: nearly one-fifth of those aged 15 and over have been amateurs.

This share had even reached one quarter of this population in 2008 and, by 2018, had returned to its previous level (19% in 2018). While younger people have had a constant interest in photography, as with other practices, at the beginning of the period observed this interest has not waned in recent years, as opposed to their attraction to drawing, for example. Remarkably, photography is in fact the only amateur artistic practice for which the share of young amateurs has remained stable and even increased slightly over the last decade, so that it is becoming almost as popular as drawing among young people: 23% of the 15-19 age bracket practiced it in 2008 and 24% in 2018.

This renewed appetite for image production has not, however, been able to counteract a certain scarcity of artistic practices among young people. This is mainly due to the fact that many young amateur photographers use other media to express their creativity: three-quarters of amateur photographers aged 15-19 are involved in at least one other artistic activity as amateurs.

## **Digital tools for previously demonstrated practices**

In a context of strong technological innovation over the past several decades, and with the development of powerful new tools for the production of content, one might have thought that artistic practices for which the use of digital tools was possible - be it writing, drawing, music, photography, or video - would become increasingly popular, or even that new practices would take over from existing ones. However, they have not necessarily experienced such momentum, -- indeed, the opposite can even obtain -- and a sometimes very marked lack of interest has been shown in particular by the youngest members of society. But even if digital tools have not been sufficient to maintain a stable percentage of amateurs or to encourage artistic impulses, they are nevertheless

very important for amateurs who are increasingly inclined to use them, particularly to facilitate the sharing of personal creations and especially because of the emergence of platforms that encourage this sharing and the exchange of ideas.

Since 2008, it has been possible to measure the use of digital tools to practice an artistic activity, whether it concerns content production, composition or dissemination. Thus, if we consider among the practices previously described writing, drawing, music, photography, and video, we can see that the share of digital tool users among those aged 15 and over who practice artistic activities as amateurs has increased significantly: adopted by a third of practitioners in 2008, the use of digital tools will, in 2018, concern half of the amateurs of an artistic activity where the use of digital tools is possible. This increase in the share of digital tool users concerns on average more men, the younger segments of the population, and Parisians.

A new amateur practice, which has found favor thanks to digital tools and which does not figure among the practices as defined above, was the subject of a new question in the 2008 and 2018 surveys on cultural participation practices: audio and video editing. In 2018, audio and video editing appealed to 9 percent of the population aged 15 and over, particularly the youngest (19 percent of the 15-19 age group versus 4 percent of the 60+ age category), compared to 4 percent in 2008. As with photography, this practice is often associated with other amateur practices (musical and non-musical): members of the 15-19 age group who made video montages practiced an average of 2.8 artistic activities in addition to this first amateur activity (compared to an average of 2 additional activities for the entire population of the 15+ age category). Audio and video editing is a practice that rarely manifests itself autonomously: it accompanies, for the most part, the more traditional artistic activities described above. Integrating them in no way upsets the socio-demographic composition of amateurs.

The use of social networks in the context of amateur artistic activity has not followed the same dynamic as that of consulting social networks. While the latter has increased by a spectacular 40 points in ten years (13% in 2008 versus 53% in 2018 of the 15+ age bracket consulted social networks - an increase that can be explained by the emergence of social network platforms during this decade), the use of social networks as a means of public dissemination of amateur-produced content (images, writing, videos, music) has remained perfectly stable since it concerns 7% of the 15+ age category in both 2008 and 2018. Thus, it would seem that there are more and more spectators (the "followers") of a smaller number of amateurs active in these spheres ("bloggers," "Instagrammers," or "YouTubers"). This phenomenon would constitute the emergence of a new artistic practice in itself, that of the art of staging one's own creations, certainly difficult to measure as such through a statistical concept due to its protean nature. On the other hand, the fact of disseminating one's creations after having made them concerns more

amateurs in 2018: 15% of amateurs in the 15+ age bracket used social networks to share their productions, compared to 10% in 2008, perhaps a sign that the consultation of social networks encourages more people to reproduce the behavior of influencers by sharing their own online universe.

Practicing a musical activity is highly contrasted according to the socio-demographic characteristics of individuals. Over the period, the practice of singing in a group or playing a musical instrument alone or in a group has gradually become more frequent in the more affluent social environments. In fact, differences in practice according to socio-professional category have increased markedly since the 1970's: while the share of practitioners among managers was at its lowest in 1973, it is conversely at its highest in 2018, and the gap with employees (those who practice this activity least as amateurs over the entire period) increases from 0.8 to 2.8. In 2018, blue-collar and white-collar workers and employees still count the fewest number of amateur musicians and singers, and it is among them that the decline in the share of practitioners is the greatest: it is halved between 2008 and 2018, amounting to only 6% of amateurs within this group in 2018.

The most striking evolution in terms of the gap in amateur musical practices concerns the age of amateurs, which is less and less differentiated. From a ratio of around 10 in the 1970's and the early 1980's, the practice gap ratio between the 15-19 age group and those aged 60 and over comes to 3 in 2018. And as for the practice of an artistic activity in general, the reduction of this gap ratio is due to a two-fold effect of more practitioners among the older age group (an extension of a commitment on the part of younger generations already involved in amateur musical activities) and a net decrease in practice among the younger age group. While amateur musical activity has remained linked to the level of qualifications since the end of the 1990's, with the most qualified being more inclined to practice than the least qualified, it has on the other hand become more evenly distributed over the territory (excluding Paris), so that it now joins most amateur artistic practices for which this has already been the case for a long time. In fact, for the first time in 2018, with the exception of Paris, which has more and more amateur singers and musicians, the share of amateur music and singing is the same everywhere else, from rural to more urbanized areas, hovering around 10%.

## **Cultural participation as seen through the prism of the transformation of profiles of practice over the last fifty years**

A Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) was conducted on the 2018 Cultural Practices Survey data using a set of variables to describe a wide variety of cultural practices - physical and digital, scholarly and popular. These include listening to recorded music, watching television, listening to the radio, consulting online videos and social networks, playing video games, reading books (including comic books), going to the cinema and theatre, attending dance events, the circus, classical, rock or jazz concerts, and visiting heritage sites (museums or historical monuments).

An analysis of the correlations between these multiple variables reveals that they respond above all to a logic of accumulation (Wolff, Lombardo, 2020; Donnat, 2011). In the variety of cultural behaviors and their configurations, what predominates is the distinction between people who display a large number of practices and those who display few of them (or even only one: watching television). The analysis then puts forward a second structuring axis, shown in order, which contrasts audiovisual and digital practices with the practices of going out and visiting, as well as reading. An ascending hierarchical classification carried out on the first three factorial axes leads us to distinguish six distinct profiles of practices within the population aged 15 and over, which we propose to name as follows: the television, audiovisual, all-digital, heritage culture, classical eclecticism and extended eclecticism profiles. These profiles correspond to the most frequently encountered configurations associated to varying degrees with digital output and practices, audiovisual and media consumption, and reading habits. They offer a synthetic vision of the way in which the space of cultural practices is structured in 2018, and they also make it possible - by retropolation consisting of reproducing the results obtained from the 2018 survey on each of the previous iterations of the survey on cultural participation practices - to observe what this analytical grid reveals about evolving trends between 1973 and 2018. The retropolation is carried out by attributing to each respondent of each survey conducted since 1973 the profile of practice that corresponds to him or her among the six possible profiles, according to the various combinations of his or her individual practices

Configuration of practice	1973	1981	1988	1997	2008	2018
Television	53	52	52	47	45	30
Audio-visual	2	4	4	10	18	22
All-digital	0	0	0	0	1	15
Heritage culture	36	34	32	30	23	15
Classical Eclectism	9	10	11	13	12	9
Extended Eclectism	0	0	0	0	1	9
All	100	100	100	100	100	100

**Field:** Metropolitan France, 15 years of age and older

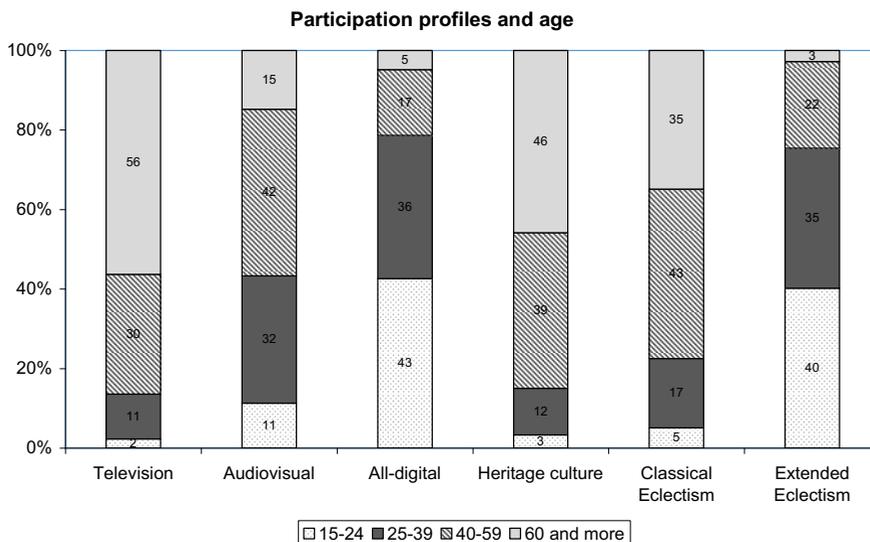
Source: 2018 Survey of Cultural Participation Practices, DEPS-Ministry of Culture

## The historical importance, undeniable until today, of television and audiovisual profiles

On average, 78% of people aged 15 and over will watch television daily in 2018. This practice is the main cultural modality in the two profiles labeled 'television' and 'audiovisual.' In the first of the two profiles, with the exception of television (watched daily by 91% of people), all the cultural practices mobilized in this analysis are at particularly low levels of participation, whether it be other audiovisual practices (including radio), digital practices, reading, cinema attendance or even going out to performing arts or heritage sites.

The audiovisual profile is close to the previous profile, with high television consumption (also 91% daily viewing), but also a daily consumption of radio (92%) and recorded music (86%). For people in this group, occasional outings to the cinema are more common, as well as attendance at circuses. On the other hand, other forms of performing arts, and visits to museums and historical monuments are still rare. The socio-demographic data of people belonging to these two profiles are similar, except that in the television category, the majority are 60 years old and over (56%), whereas the audiovisual profile

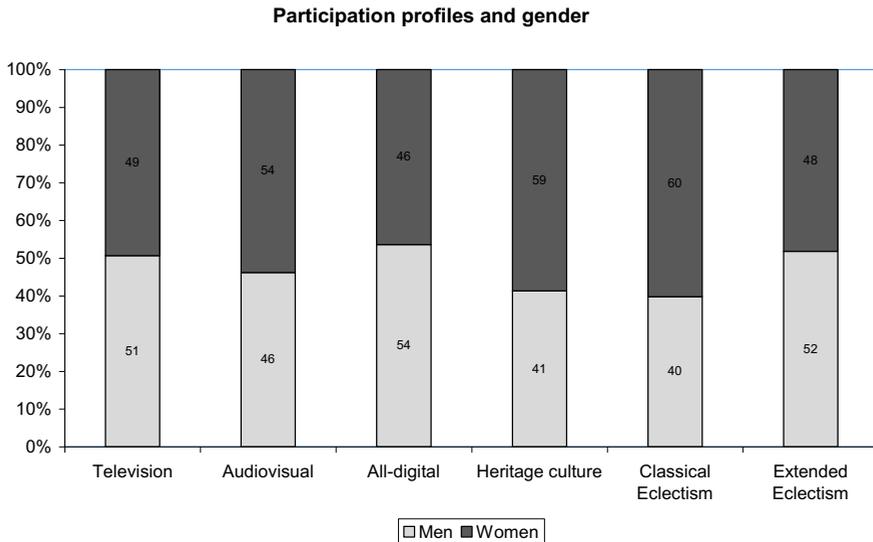
over-represents the intermediate age groups (74% are between 25 and 59 years old). In both cases, these are populations with less education than the average and from more modest social backgrounds (workers, employees). These populations are fairly evenly distributed, whether in urban or rural areas or according to the size of the urban area.



**Field:** Metropolitan France, 15 years of age and older

Source: 2018 Survey of Cultural Participation Practices, DEPS-Ministry of Culture

By comparing the typology with previous versions of the Practical Cultural Survey on cultural participation, it appears that, since 1973, both television and audiovisual profiles have brought together more than half of the population aged 15 and over, but with a recomposition effect at work: the television profile is becoming less significant (it brought together 53% of the population in 1973, contrasting with 30% in 2018), while the audiovisual profile is undergoing rapid development (from 2% in 1973 to 22% in 2018).



**Field:** Metropolitan France, 15 years of age and older

Source: 2018 Survey on Cultural Participation Practices, DEPS-Ministry of Culture

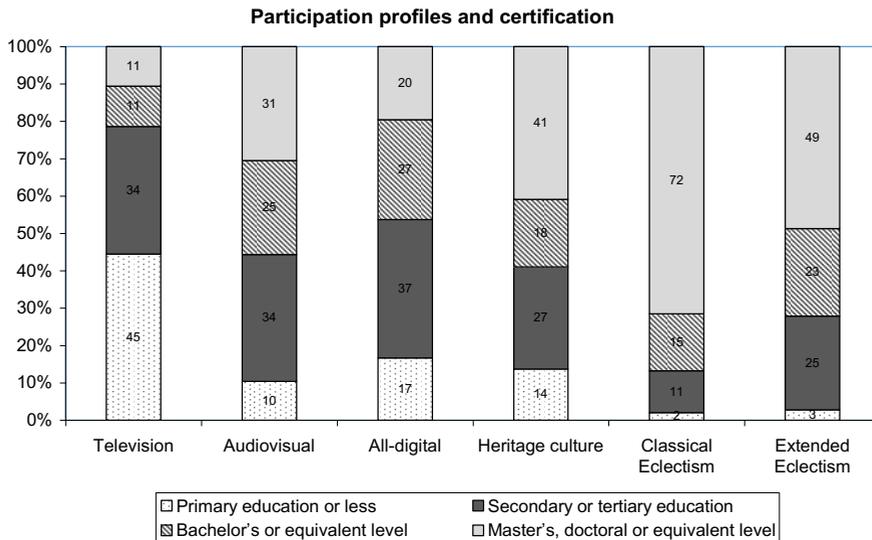
These historical developments are linked to powerful generational dynamics. As one generation succeeds another, the proportion of the population aged 15 and over falling within the television profile is shrinking at a steady pace. Thus, within the 33 to 48 age bracket, 58% of people born between 1925 and 1934 belonged to this profile; they represent only 19% of the generation born between 1975 and 1984, however. For the younger generations, this profile has become very rare (coming to 5% for the generation born between 1995 and 2004). As the rate of membership to this category does not progress with age, we can expect its gradual disappearance, while it described the majority in the 1970's and is still very present in 2018. The audiovisual profile has, for its part, experienced a positive generational dynamic up to the most recent generations, notably as an effect of the spread of daily practices of listening to recorded music, as well as an increasing use of social networks - attesting to the relative familiarity of the members of this profile with digital practices. In both profiles, cultural participation remains low, and artistic practices -- whether individual or collective -- are rare. These profiles are, in fact, characterized by a passive

relationship to cultural content, mainly audiovisual, consumed without inducing a surge of participation in the production of similar content.

## **Digital practices, to the exclusion of others**

The all-digital profile, almost non-existent before the 2000's and still very rare in 2008, has become a very significant category in 2018, amounting to nearly one person in six (15%) in the 15+ age group. The members of this group are characterized by an intensive use of digital technologies: they consume online videos (on a daily basis for 71% of them), consult social networks (84%), and play video games (39%). On the other hand, they read significantly less, go to the cinema occasionally and rarely visit cultural venues - particularly theatres and concert halls. For this category of the population, digital practices - numerous and diversified - seem to compete with the practices of attending cultural venues.

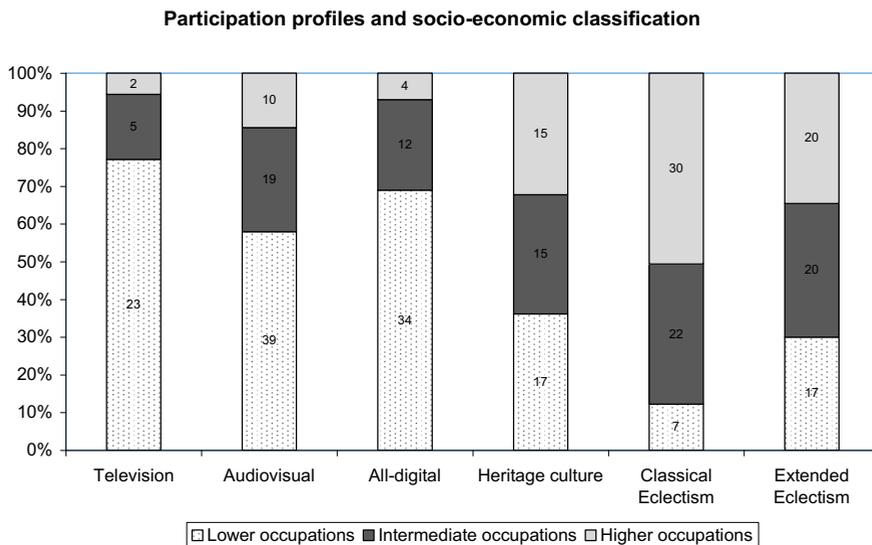
The all-digital profile has no territorial particularity and is found in both urban and rural areas. On the other hand, the members of this profile are more masculine and younger: nearly half (43%) are under 25 years old and 79% are under the age of 39. As this profile has recently emerged along with the spread of online practices, temporal hindsight is not sufficient to analyze the underlying generational and age dynamics. Will this profile remain youthful in the long term, or, on the contrary, will these configurations of practices be permanently established in their cultural behaviors throughout their lives?



**Field:** Metropolitan France, 15 years of age and older

Source: 2018 Survey of Cultural Participation Practices, DEPS-Ministry of Culture

Concerning their artistic activities, the members of this profile are characterized by a low average rate of participation, even if higher than that observed in the realms of the small screen and the audiovisual environment. As we can see, the development of digital consumption practices does not necessarily go hand in hand with a creative and participatory relationship with this content. The decline observed between 2008 and 2018 in the development of amateur artistic practices can be explained in particular by the importance taken on by this all-digital world, especially among the youngest, in which there is strong competition in terms of availability between the time devoted to the consumption of content (whether recorded music, films, series, or video games) and that devoted to artistic activities. Alongside the world of the small screen, this world - characterized by cultural behavior geared more towards less diversified and more digital practices - is an obvious challenge for cultural policies: it runs the risk of a gradual rarefaction of audiences in cultural venues. It also raises the question of participation, if the consumption of digital content proves to create a paradoxically more distant, more passive relationship with creation.

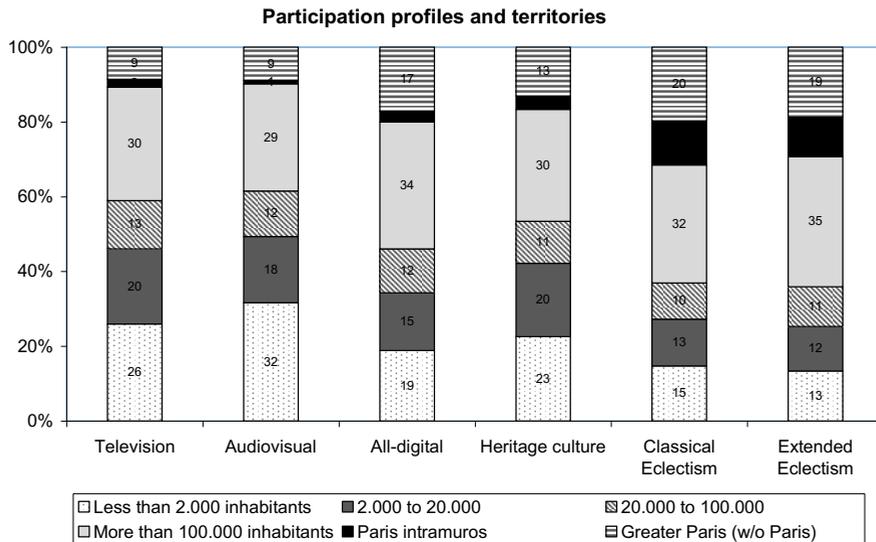


**Field:** Metropolitan France, 15 years of age and older

Source: 2018 Survey of Cultural Participation Practices, LIFODEPS-Department Ministry of Culture

## The historic decline of the heritage culture profile

The cultural heritage profile brings together another sixth (15%) of the population aged 15 and over in 2018. This profile is characterized by the participation of its members in a large number of the cultural practices observed, but always at an average level. Without distinguishing themselves by particularly high or low rates of practice, they consume television, radio, video games, and recorded music. At a slightly higher rate than the average, they read and go to the cinema as well as to theatres and heritage sites. More than in the three preceding profiles, but less than in the two that follow, they report amateur artistic activities, with a slightly more marked taste for musical practices. The only exception to this rule of average participation is that they consume a small amount of online video and make little use of social networks.



**Field:** Metropolitan France, 15 years of age and older

Source: 2018 Survey of Cultural Participation Practices, DEPS-Ministry of Culture

As with the world of the small screen, it is a world in serious decline, probably destined to disappear in the coming decades, since 36% of the population aged 15 and over were in this category in 1973 (compared with 15% in 2018). This decline can be explained by the combination of two factors. First, generational analysis reveals that this profile of practices is more often associated with younger ages, with a tendency - verifiable for all generations - to move progressively into another profile as people get older. Second, membership to the profile of heritage culture becomes rarer with each passing generation, particularly after 1975. Membership to this profile is more common among women as well as among white-collar workers with relatively few qualifications, in both urban and rural areas.

## The classical and extended eclectic profile: a reconfiguration of the most regular audiences of culture

The last two profiles of practice, described as classical and extended eclecticism, represent a minority -- but growing -- share of the 15+ age group over the last 50 years. They bring together the people who, within the population, accumulate the greatest number of cultural practices. These people are avid readers (50% and 31% of these respective profiles are regular readers), frequently go to the cinema and to cultural venues, whether they are in the performing arts or heritage sector.

These two profiles of practices differ only in terms of audiovisual and digital practices. In addition to the practices listed above, extended eclecticism also includes a strong association with online videos, social networks, and video games - in contrast to the profile of classical eclecticism, which largely dispenses with them. Conversely, the profile of classical eclecticism is characterized by an even higher intensity of attendance practices, especially for classical music concerts (48%, compared to 6% on average for the population as a whole).

Highly qualified, often executives or in mid-range professions, members of these profiles of practice are more common in large conurbations, and even more typically in Paris. The profile of increased eclecticism is moreover characterized by a particularly young membership.

As for the all-digital world, the profile of increased eclecticism appears in 2018 alongside the generalization of digital tools in homes. Coming to 9% of the population aged 15 and over, this profile is still in the minority, but will be decisive in the coming decades for understanding how cultural practices are now being reconfigured in France. The world of classical eclecticism is closely linked to the baby-boom generation, which is the most inclined to present this singular configuration of practices, combining a high level of attendance at cultural venues and assiduous reading behavior. But this profile, after having experienced a positive generational dynamic up to the generation born between 1945 and 1954, is now regressing with the arrival of successive generations, to the point that it has become rare for the most recent generations to fall within this configuration of practices. In fine, after having grown until the end of the 1990's (13%), the proportion of the population aged 15 and over belonging to this profile fell to 9% in 2018.

It is in these two profiles that artistic and cultural practices are by far the most developed. The profile of increased eclecticism is characterized by a particularly intensive use of digital technologies to nurture artistic practices, whose achievements are often

shared on the Internet, particularly via social networks. In this profile, and contrary to the all-digital profile, digital technologies thus appear as catalysts of more classical practices, around music in particular, but also including photography or graphic arts.

## Conclusion

The demands on a consumer's available time, highlighted in particular by the development of digital audiovisual practices in the population as a whole, find in the case of the profile of increased eclecticism an original resolution, and not to the detriment of participation. Quite the contrary. But this relationship to digital technology, as we can see, is built primarily within specific configurations, often associated with more favorable school curricula, more privileged social categories, and large urban centers. In this respect, and in spite of the historical tendency toward a reduction in the gaps of cultural practices between social classes, the greater spontaneous familiarity of the higher social categories with culture also seems to play a role in their closer, more participatory relationship with digital culture.

These statistical analyses confirm the observation, which was made rather late in the day, that digital technologies will not have succeeded in revolutionizing the social conditions of participation (Cardon, 2015). Despite the promises held forth by the digital age of increasing openness and accessibility as well as the enhancement of all expressions, cultural practices in the digital age remain largely conditioned by people's social, economic, and territorial environments - whether in terms of consumption practices, attendance at cultural venues, or artistic activities. An approach that seeks to develop participation cannot, as we have seen, rely solely on the digital spring to transform practices: in this case, the risk lies rather in aggravating inequalities of access. The analysis of these results over the entire 1973-2018 period seems, nevertheless, to reveal the effects, albeit very gradual and modest, of a national and/or local policy for the development of cultural venues: this strategy has clearly reinforced the development of audiences for cinema, libraries, and a segment of the performing arts - since in these fields, the gaps in practices are regressing between urban and rural areas. We must therefore be careful not to abandon these axes of transformation; on the contrary, we should reexamine them in light of the ways in which the French population has come to participate in culture.

## 1.5

# What's new about participation ?

Joint interview with Franco Bianchini, Jean Damien Collin, Luca Dal Pozzolo and François Matarasso

## 1) In your opinion, what is the place of the concept of participation in the history of the arts? Does it represent a deviation in art history, an outcome, or a revolution?

*In other words, is participation a tool at the disposal of traditional cultural policies (in relation to the concepts of democratisation, cultural participation, audience development...) or does it represent a turning point in the history of the arts and of cultural policies allowing for the development of original aesthetics, new processes of creation, and the assignment of a new social role to arts?*

**François Matarasso:** Cultural participation has been the norm in most places and times. There have often been distinctions of roles and status assigned to different kinds of participation, and some people have been excluded from participation because of their social beliefs. For example, theatre in Classical Athens involved mass participation as part of a socio-religious ritual with political aspects, but women, slaves and foreigners were excluded from participation, as they were from most of the city-state's democratic life. What art theorists and historians sometimes call 'the participatory turn' is less significant than they suggest, combining as it does a belated recognition of existing but unofficial artistic practices with a new territory of artistic exploitation.

The invention of the Fine Arts during the European Enlightenment automatically created a series of not-fine arts, for which a succession of names and sub-categories had to be invented: craft, folk art, traditional art, popular art, entertainment, amateur art

and so on. Among the unwritten histories of art in Europe is one that traces artistic and cultural activity as a struggle for legitimacy between the cultural institutions aligned with power and the artists and cultural associations of working people. There is a case for believing that this fissure has been slowly closing since the middle of the last century, partly because of the diminishing creative energy of Fine Art but principally because of massive socio-economic and political change. Prosperity, security, education, health and leisure are all much more evenly distributed than they were a century ago (although equity remains a distant prospect and actions taken to contain the Covid-19 pandemic are likely to have negative effects on this development).

The rise of participation is therefore neither deviation nor revolution, but the gradual ending of one artificial, if historic, distinction of class and power in culture. Its consequences cannot be known, but much depends on whether, and if so how, the dominant forces of culture and society share their cultural authority with the population as a whole. It is possible that a more democratic artistic and cultural life will emerge, but there is also a risk of appropriation and manipulation, so that only an illusion of participation is offered while control over cultural value, legitimacy and power remains where it has largely been in the past.

**Luca Dal Pozzolo:** The concept of participation as we understand it today is relatively recent. In the course of history, artistic production has always been set in relation with the layers of the population that shared its premises, feelings and languages. After post-war cultural policies, this relation had become increasingly elitist and was typically shared by more cultured and wealthy layers of society.

Only from then on, governments started to pose the problem of the democratization of culture and cultural democracy. The concept of cultural, scientific and artistic communication begins to change and the aim is oriented toward allowing a larger part of the public to access the knowledge necessary for understanding the internal processes of artistic production. If before, participating meant being spectators of a cultural offering, now everything is re-articulated according to cultural policies. Basic sharing is no longer automatic but must be sought in another way, starting by allowing people to equip themselves with interpretative tools. All this takes place through a renovated concept of participation: the artistic product is no longer an empty box, but it is necessary to offer the public the opportunity to understand and know what the box contains.

**Franco Bianchini:** In 500 BC, Athens was a very limited democracy, although people who were actual citizens (meaning neither women nor slaves nor foreigners) experienced a variety of forms of “cultural participation”. Art was integrated into society in a very strong way, unlike in our contemporary liberal democracies.

In the 14th century in Siena (Italy), there were also forms of public participation concerning cultural matters; for example, questions about aesthetic decisions in urban development were often decided through participatory processes involving different local guilds and leading families within the city.

After the Enlightenment, the idea of making the arts more accessible to people was paradoxically accompanied by the rise of the status of the artist as a special person and with a special sensitivity, whereas, before this period, there was often no distinction between artisans, artists, inventors, scientists, writers, architects, and urban planners (Leonardo Da Vinci and Giorgio Vasari being two examples in the 15th and 16th centuries).

This idea of the artist as a special person grew rapidly in the late 18th century and through the 19th century and created a clear separation between the arts and ordinary people. Moreover, the Industrial Revolution gave rise to a new kind of bourgeoisie that saw art as cultural capital, meaning that knowing about the arts increasingly became a factor of social distinction. Partly as a result of this, working class people started to see the arts as something accessible only for the rich and the well-educated.

From the late 1960s onwards, many different progressive protest movements (anti-Vietnam war, student movements, feminist, gay rights and ethnic minority activism) tried to remove the barriers between ordinary people and the arts; community arts practices in the UK and similar participatory cultural movements in other countries (like *Sozio-Kultur* in Germany and socio-cultural animation in France) were conceived in this period, even if aspects of their philosophy can be found in experiments in the 1930s and 1940s (such as the Federal Art Project in the USA from 1935-1943).

One of the consequences of the 2007-2008 financial crash and of the austerity policies adopted in response by many governments in Europe and North America was the crisis of legitimacy of institutions including academia (economists in particular), centre left and centre right political elites, and publicly funded cultural organisations. Part of the response to this crisis by the latter was the use and promotion of participatory arts activities. Leila Jancovich (University of Leeds, UK) thinks that these attempts were largely symbolic, while the power structures and fundamental principles of cultural policies remained largely intact.

The coronavirus crisis could present the opportunity to strengthen participatory strategies (also within the arts and wellbeing agenda). But there is also the ominous possibility that the crisis could further erode the political status of culture, and divert public, private and foundation funding to priority areas such as health and social care, and the relief of poverty and mass unemployment.

**Jean-Damien Collin:** The question of participation in art and in art history is entirely defined by the question of politics and the history of politics. It is therefore a cultural marker and a marker of power. And for us today, this marker poses questions about our democracy and its history. It is therefore an element of analysis within the history of art that we add to understand our political springs.

Art is an element of culture. We can unfortunately confuse them, because art gives form, transmits, creates dialogue, but the difference between the two notions is crucial, even more so when it comes to defining participation. We must therefore not confuse the issues of participation in art with those of participation in culture. On the other hand, looking at what binds them together is instructive. Moreover, if we take the history of culture and cultural policies, we must take into account the notion of "contribution" associated with that of participation. For the French, debates on participation mix these two notions. I can quite easily make people participate and prevent them from contributing. It is therefore essential to separate these two notions in cultural action and to take into account the place of each person in what constitutes culture in society. From a political point of view, if we are facing the question of everyone's right to participate and to contribute, we must therefore analyze the right to participate and the right to contribute in parallel. We must also shift from the question of these rights for artists to those of everyone.

Concerning this report in the history of art, I would start with the example of the Bundschuh at the beginning of the 16th century and its flag. The history of this revolt on the banks of the Rhine, also known as the Uprising of the Ordinary Man, ended with a massacre of the working classes and tells us of Joß Fritz's impossible quest to have the emblem of this revolt made by one of the artists of his time. He tried to get this drawing from the best artists in the tradition of Rhineland art, and to my knowledge he did not get a response. As for the artists who supported their demands, they paid a very high price for their support, both with their careers and with their bodies. Just think of Tilman Riemenschneider. But this initiative says a lot about the question of commission in art, about who can commission, and Joß Fritz embodies a real claim to participate both in a political demand and in obtaining a work of art to embody this quest for emancipation.

Afterwards, concerning art, to make it quick, because otherwise I'm going to mention Géricault and Courbet, I think you have to go through Dada to understand the political aspect of this question in the twentieth century. In my opinion, these artists took full possession of their right to contribute and participate! And they challenged society with their practices and their demands at the heart of the industrialized violence against ordinary people in the First World War. The path for artists in the twentieth century is then marked out.

These two examples are temporally distant, which goes to say that I really don't think there is a turning point in the history of art.

I can complete this with two other examples. I'm thinking of John Sinclair and MC5. By creating the White Panther Party, which dedicated its energy to creating a counter-culture movement, and by managing the MC5s, he paved the way for many artistic initiatives where the rights to participate and contribute speak for themselves. The DIY of the punk years is, among others, an heir to this. But we must not forget that John Sinclair was considered by the CIA as very, very dangerous... It's funny and shocking in retrospect. Poor sound poet...

Finally, on this issue of participation in art, I want to mention Jonas Mekas. Obviously, the link with Dada is there, since we know the importance of Hans Richter in his formative years in cinema. But Jonas Mekas is a complete artist who was a fundamental cultural player. With the Anthology Films Archives in New York, he allowed artists to participate as they wished in an art of moving images and poetry. Robert Breer had explained to me at length their challenges as artists to retain ownership of their work, their economy and the need to create, to participate in art, as they wanted. They have therefore jointly built their own tools so that everyone can make their works exist, so that the economy serves their artistic and cultural values. This is not a simple matter! And I often use this phrase by Jonas Mekas about their meetings between artists to manage the Anthology, which simply embodies the difference in thinking between the question of organizing cultural action and artistic issues: "Here we only discuss material issues, if someone wants to talk about aesthetics - we meet in the bar and discuss after the meeting." His journey represents one of the most interesting forms on the democratic appropriation of art and its economy.

All this to indicate that the figure of the "organizing artist," the essential figure of the artist in the twentieth century, says a lot about the question of participation and contribution in art and culture. I used this notion of the organizing artist in a text about Yann Beauvais and to demonstrate that the artist acts as a cultural actor, which today corresponds to a paradigmatic form of behavior in the field of the arts. And of course it also refers to certain notions of participatory art like those of Theaster Gates but that we can also find in the field of music with, for example, artists such as Calvin Johnson or Rodolphe Burger.

These examples illustrate the idea of a marker on the question of democracy in art history. And they say that from the point of view of cultural policies, the question of participation is not about the question of art and the process of the artist. It is about cultural procedure, cultural organization, the powers within that organization, and the negotiation of the place of art in everyday life. The focus should not be on the question of participation in the artistic work and the artistic response, but rather on all

that surrounds it, in the definition of its necessity, its commission, the accompanying engineering and its realization. It could be said that the institutional cultural actors of our democracy do not know their Dada (or else, let's say, they only care about their own) and that they do not listen to their Joß Fritz! This is why the question of commissioning the work is certainly the nodal point for analyzing this issue. The story of Joß Fritz tells us a lot about what François Hers highlighted about artistic commissioning in a democracy with the protocol of new patrons. It is therefore between commissioning, production, and social interaction that the stakes on participation for cultural policies are situated. The commission always emanates from a power, and in the history of art this power is religious, political, administrative, economic. In a democracy based on fundamental rights, who has the power of this commission? How is this power negotiated and articulated? It is a question of integrating the achievements of this thinking in order to implement a new engineering of cultural action, which goes beyond the question of art. And it is vital to question it within our cultural institutions.

Finally, I would say that in order to understand participation in our cultural policy issues, we should analyze the arts and the sciences, and the history of the arts and the sciences in parallel. Indeed, our democracy is based on fundamental rights, which enshrine our cultural rights in both the arts and the sciences. Looking at these issues of participation and contribution in the sciences, distinct from the question of access, helps us to understand more fully our cultural policy issues and cultural hierarchies.

## **2) Would you say that the idea of participation, with its many nuances, has an influence on the way cultural policies are defined today?**

**Jean-Damien Collin:** I think that what is being discussed in cultural policies on the subject of participation points mainly to a poor definition of the object. Cultural policies are looking for ways to address this issue, and as they often seek to communicate, we will go as easy as possible on them. To say to citizens, "I understand you! We are going to make art participative by asking artists to include the work of the local inhabitants, amateurs, etc." It is an injunction to the artist to do what the cultural administration in the broadest sense of the term - public authorities, institutional management of cultural "places" - does not do! We shift the responsibility... The participation is on stage, at the most extreme point between "public" and artist, but not backstage! And this model will expand according to the context. As for questions of governance and transparency, we tend to forget them.

Conversely, if it is initiated by the artist, it poses other problems. I have kept in mind examples of choreographic works conceived by the artist with a place for the inhabitant or the amateur. When inspected by the Ministry, these works posed problems. The inspectors did not want to take them into account, to include them in the broadcasts, for reasons involving definitions of the interpretation of art, of the notion of artistic creation in the field, of what constitutes audiences. Yet, in this case, the artist was saying something about the situation with his creation. Here we remain closed in by the cultural administration in the dichotomy between the stakes of Constantin Brancusi's *The Bird in Space* trial and Nicolas Mahler's description of art according to Madame Goldgruber! ... In the first case, it is simply a question of justice to have the work recognized with regard to an administration that wants to tax a simple stone that has a stake in aesthetic recognition in its historical period, while in the second, it describes the dependence of an artist on the good will of Mrs. Goldgruber, an employee of the Austrian Tax Service, as to her social recognition as an artist in her practice and her time.

Yet at no time, and I confess today that it drove me mad, were these choreographic proposals taken to analyze what they say about the negotiation between the artist and society. Whether the artist's response is ultimately analyzed as good or bad from an artistic point of view, it doesn't matter for an analysis of this type (at best we can meet in the bar to talk about it). From the point of view of the cultural question, no one wanted to point out what this means for society and its relationship to art or to a territory, apart from a balance sheet of communication and "opening to the public - [add here the adjective that interests you]." It was preferable to say that it is necessary to put aside this enquiry and above all to evacuate the meaning of the question and the relevance of its answer -- in other words, what this says about the social stakes of art.

In another case, I mentioned Theaster Gates earlier, can you tell me what cultural policies, with their urban and social facets, have learned from a project like the Stony Island Arts Bank or Greater Grand Crossing and the work of this artist? Earlier, I quoted François Hers. With his New Patrons protocol, he has clearly defined the simplicity and respect of each person according to their role and their expertise for a policy of creation. It seems to me that the challenge today is to transform this by translation, by homothety, into the cultural field to make it the principle of cultural action. It is quite possible to think of tools for cultural engineering and interventions that take up these principles and go beyond the question of the creation of the work, but to resolve many cultural situations and above all to build peaceful solutions to tensions or situations of cultural fissures. I have experienced this with a cultural intervention system in secondary schools, and the results are astonishing! But to go further, there is a need for conceptualization and for the training of professionals. This is a challenge for the future of cultural policies in a democracy.

I think that in order to solve this problem of participation and contribution with regard to everyone, we must focus on questions of dialogue, necessity and desire. Above all, it means thinking of cultural policies that function according to terms of "investment in capacities," those of artists and scientists but also of each professional, and it means living through the experiences felt by different stakeholders in their creative process, both in work and in daily life. This can be done with a cultural policy that allows us to make connections, to play the role of a constructive facilitator, and not one that seeks an event-driven and consumerist effect. And therefore, we are speaking of investment in the capacities of the inhabitants in the broadest sense and of their own expertise brought into interaction. The biggest cultural capital of a territory is its inhabitants! Not a cultural offering that responds to a predetermined need. This intermingling through the work, through artistic experience, only makes sense if it develops this capital of capacities, an endless resource. It is a shift in the paradigm of a policy "from a response to a cultural need" to one of "the (cross) implementation of capacities."

In this sense, debates on cultural supply and demand policies are a dead end on the issue of participation. Supply and demand policies are only two points in a dichotomy that constitutes a policy of need. A demand policy is not the implementation of a capacity policy. Debates on a policy of demand in the practices of cultural institutions are ultimately only the expression of a debate on a cultural hierarchy, therefore of a form of knowledge that is only thought of in one direction and points to how ill-adapted the functioning of professional modes is to our society. And it is not a question of a hierarchy of dependent parties moving from a vertical to a horizontal plane because it is a question of thinking in a multilateral relationship of stakeholders. This is the meaning of a capacity policy.

**François Matarasso:** The modern claims of participation, in art and culture and more importantly in the determination of its value, began in the 1960's, though their roots stretch back to the early 19th century. The language is important: participation is an idea, but it is also a claim, and it has been recognised as such by the wiser of politicians and cultural policy makers since 1968. The Oslo conference of ministers of culture organised in 1976 by the Council of Europe admitted as much when it set its first theme as 'The Challenge to Cultural Policy in our changing society.' The reports prepared for and after that conference established a new body of thinking and an alternative to the dominant idea of democratisation that had guided cultural policy in the post-war welfare states. In the years that immediately followed, those ideas were developed, and there was new debate about the goals of cultural policy in liberal democratic societies.

That was stifled a few years later by the rightward turn in Western politics, in the USA, the UK, Australia and elsewhere. With the collapse of the USSR at the end of

the 1980s, what has come to be known, not always usefully, as neoliberalism achieved its global ascendancy. In a polity focused almost exclusively on money, the creative industries became the central domain of cultural policy, with missed results. Cultural democratisation clung on by its fingertips: cultural democracy interested few people.

In recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in the idea of cultural democracy, especially in the UK, but there is the same uncertainty – or disagreement – about what it actually means. For some, it is a fashionable way of updating traditional democratisation policies with added participation. At the other end of the spectrum, cultural democracy is presented as the cultural arm of the socialist revolution. The central weakness of the term – already evident in the arguments that undermined the first generation of British community arts – is that it is so difficult to define. It can, and often does, mean whatever people choose, which makes it a weak opponent to the simpler ideas of access advocated by cultural democratisation. The world has changed since the 1950's and the 1970's, and it is about to change again. There is an urgent need to rethink the foundations of cultural policy to meet the very real challenges that are coming.

**Franco Bianchini:** A change took place after the financial crisis of 2007-2008. From 2010 onwards austerity policies started to be adopted in many Western liberal democracies. This increased economic and social inequalities and made it more difficult for cultural institutions to claim that they are for everybody. Partly for this reason, a great deal of attention is now given to audience development, participation and co-creation, and it is unthinkable for any large cultural institution not to have outreach and creative learning programmes. These initiatives are laudable, but do they make a substantial difference?

If we look at the European Capitals of Culture (ECoCs), many of them use strong narratives of cultural participation, even though in some cases the budgets allocated to these activities are small.

Arts Council England has shifted a lot towards participation, with the Creative People and Places national scheme, for example. Nonetheless, in the UK there are fewer and fewer arts programmes in schools due largely to the fact that the Conservative party has been in power since 2010. Conservative education policies have given more importance to maths, science and technology than to arts and humanities subjects. Inequalities in access to cultural and creative jobs were exacerbated during the 2010s. Many people who work in the cultural sector are from privileged backgrounds. If we do not deal with the basics, by making sure that working class people can find employment in the cultural and creative industries and that a systematic programme of participatory cultural activities is on offer in every school, then cultural participation will certainly continue to be severely limited. With the coronavirus crisis, creativity in the school

curriculum is needed more than ever. People (especially the young trying to enter the labour market) will have to be very adaptable, resilient and creative in times of radical economic change and mass unemployment.

The problem is particularly acute in countries with populist and/or authoritarian governments. These (for instance in Poland, Hungary, Turkey, Russia, India, Brazil and the US) in some cases have deprioritised support for independent arts activities and cultural participation, perhaps because they are afraid that the latter makes people more critical and ambitious, and less keen to believe populist simplifications.

In conclusion, as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, there could be at least two different political scenarios for the future (or a confused mixture incorporating elements of both):

**A)** towards authoritarian, right wing populist surveillance societies, whose cultural policies would include censorship, making life more difficult for independent media organisations, and the marginalisation of critical artists. Under this scenario there would be more or less permanent confrontation between governments and grassroots groups (mobilising for action to tackle the climate emergency and campaigning for the rights of women and LGBTQ+ people, and against racial discrimination).

**B)** A post-pandemic settlement, influenced by the ideas of the green movement of the social democratic and radical left. This settlement would involve the adoption of a sustainable model of development, focused on mutuality, resilience, 'proximity tourism', the introduction of a basic income, the strong development of cultural activities in schools and the adoption of holistic health and social care policies, in which the arts could play an important role.

**Luca Dal Pozzolo:** I'm not sure that politics really comes to terms with the topic of cultural participation, but it certainly relates to the more quantitative and immediate dimension of it. If we think of the post-war cultural policies, the approach was to promote cultural activities regardless of public participation, accepting that culture could be interesting only for some portions of the population.

Only recently, with the welfare state being progressively questioned and with the neoliberal wave, cultural policies have begun to focus on quantitative data referring to cultural participation as a primary indicator that justifies public intervention for the sustainability of cultural production and organisations. In other words, cultural activities for the few and for privileged elites no longer make sense in this context. This is obviously also justified by other needs of public action, such as cultural democracy and the creation of a sense of citizenship and active citizenship.

In this sense, audience development is seen as one of the tools that can justify public investment in culture.

### **3) In light of the previous two questions, what kind of impact may the Covid-19 crisis have on both cultural and artistic organisations that are based on participative processes and on the social role of arts?**

**Luca Dal Pozzolo:** As paradigms are changing, even ideas need to adapt. For example, in recent years the world of culture has continued to reason in terms of audience development without realizing that there is an objective and quantitative limit in the ability to host spectators and audiences as well as in terms of the mere capacity of rooms and spaces available. It is impossible to think that, for example, every Italian citizen can visit a large number of museums in Italy every year: they would not fit!

Starting to make these arguments means realizing that the cultural offer cannot rely only on physical presence, something that with the Covid emergency is increasingly evident.

The world of culture should realize that, in addition to talking to visitors and spectators who continue to participate while physically present, it should and could begin to address, with the same emphasis, the potentially infinite audience that can access the cultural content in alternative ways, primarily through digital media. Therefore, the offer can no longer be distributed only on the basis of physical presence but on a much more articulated and fragmented presence, in which online interaction is absolutely fundamental. Even more, the measures that must be taken by each cultural space to promote social distancing (for example, by providing two empty seats in the audience between each spectator) make the limit of participation while physically present even more evident. Quantities begin to count: the maximum quantities and not the minimum quantities count now!

It is therefore necessary to completely rethink the business model of the cultural organizations which could, for example, open themselves up to different services that had not previously been imagined.

In this sense, fruition in presence must necessarily become a privilege; it will be increasingly reserved for a portion of the population and not for everyone.

Participation while physically present obviously offers the spectator a richer spectrum of sensations and experiences than the online version. The important thing is to find

the right mix between the two different means of access that can work for the cultural organization and for the content it wants to make available. Therefore, the discussion on the difference between offline and online products will no longer be interesting because we will inevitably end up living in a world in which these two ways coexist.

The crisis will allow us to read critically what we have been doing up to this moment. Reviewing one's business models means rethinking one's position in the world and the ways we interact, and to do this, we need to start with the needs of people and society. It is the cultural operators, or the intermediaries who act as the fulcrum between the artists and the public, who will have to adapt and respond to the new needs of society.

In addition to this, I expect that interaction between the different sectors that populate the world of culture and creativity can benefit from and accelerate urgent processes of innovation.

The problem obviously lies in the fact that previous structural problems still exist and have not yet been resolved, for which government action is also needed. But the emergency measures should be used precisely to invest in change and innovation of cultural practices and products and not only to tackle the immediate emergency.

**François Matarasso:** The Covid-19 crisis will change everything, not only because we are far from having found ways to live safely with a new virus that cannot be eradicated, but because the measures taken in almost every country since March 2020 will have profound consequences on prosperity, security, and development. It is impossible to foresee what that might be with any confidence but some things can be guessed at. The first is that we may have passed the high-water mark of cultural production and consumption. The business models of many arts organisation will be unsustainable without the steady flow of sales that are unlikely to materialise in future. How is it possible to run an 800-seat theatre, cinema or concert hall in the age of social distancing? There are likely to be bankruptcies and closures, while those organisations that survive will contract and have to change how they work. It is likely that many people who have earned a precarious living as artists will be forced into other parts of the economy. Most of us are likely to be poorer, and this for a long time to come. In such circumstances, the market for cultural consumption will shrink – though the desire for cultural participation may not.

Participatory arts activities are likely to be hit especially hard because they are underfunded and have few reserves on which to fall back. This is doubly unfortunate because traumatised societies who have rediscovered the value of community, culture and personal creativity during lock-down may be the hungriest for that type of work. There will also be huge practical difficulties for a sector whose nature is to bring people together. The physical contact of drama and dance workshops will be impossible – and

may, in any case, bring anxiety rather than joy. Finally, it is not at all clear what people in the art community want as they try to create meaning out of experiences that have shaken their worlds to their core. Artists and cultural organisations will need considerable humility and empathy if they are to be heard in this context. Each will need to rebuild an relationship with their audience.

**Franco Bianchini:** it will be very important to maintain social interaction, a public sphere where people can meet, because this is an indispensable component of life in towns and cities, and we need to find a way of restarting public social life -- of course, not exactly as it was before. For instance, the city council in Vilnius have announced that urban planning in the city will be changed to give many of the city's public spaces to restaurants and cafes. Many other cities across the world are turning streets into cycle lanes, widening pavements to allow for social distancing and converting public spaces into open air retail areas. We could have new hybrid cultural spaces where cultural institutions could provide a much more significant and sophisticated online offer. That digital offer before the pandemic was often an additional element to widen audiences, but now it is central because in some cases there is nothing else. The pandemic could also be an opportunity to move away from cultural tourism strategies which have led to overtourism (in cities ranging from Barcelona to Florence, Venice, Dubrovnik and Prague) with very damaging effects in terms of environmental and cultural sustainability, the local cost of living, access to affordable housing and to shops aimed at residents. It is likely that the concepts and practices of 'proximity tourism' and 'slow tourism' will become more mainstream, possibly leading to cultural experiences which could be more local and fewer in numerical terms, but longer and deeper in terms of time and attention respectively.

It is very difficult to make predictions, but it is likely that the economic effects of the pandemic will be more profound than those of the 2007-2008 financial crash, leading to a depression and very significant rises in unemployment and poverty, which could limit access to advanced digital technologies (which will be more and more central for participation in cultural activities) among the most disadvantaged social groups.

There is therefore a considerable risk of growing cultural exclusion. If the amount of seating in theatres is severely reduced, for example, ticket prices could increase, thus making theatre going even less accessible than it is now.

Many doubts remain also about the international dimension of participatory cultural activities. The key challenge, identified by the Fitzcarraldo Foundation in its *Culture and the Future* document (June 2020) is as follows: "how can we be international and global, reducing the need to travel while maintaining a strong capacity to bring back to the local level the awareness, experience and creative potential conveyed by a network of international connections?".

A great deal of attention is now given by governments to the question of how to support cultural organisations through the crisis. Individual artists – especially those with lower fixed costs and considerable adaptability - will probably be able to survive. It is also likely that many of the larger publicly funded cultural institutions will continue to be supported and will avoid closure. I think one of the priorities is to develop a financial strategy to support the middle- to small-sized organisations, many of which carry out important co-creation and participatory activities that could be at risk. Fitzcarraldo's *Culture and the Future* paper asks this central question: “how can we maintain a cultural eco-system that is still based on a high rate of diversity (in terms of sizes, styles of operation and business models)...?”.

One of the risks is that private sector sponsors and the foundations that are supporting participatory cultural activities could now start to direct resources to other areas, like anti-poverty or public health initiatives. The *Culture and the Future* document mentioned above says that “an essential future policy function and challenge” will be “how we support the increasingly dense interweaving between culture and other fields of policy (including health, education, tourism and economic development), and how we make such diverse fields work together”.

We cannot underestimate the big mental health crisis that the coronavirus has caused or exacerbated. There is a need to absorb the collective traumas caused by deaths and illness, not to mention the growth of anxiety, depression, suicides and domestic violence. Artists and cultural managers who work on post-trauma recovery could have many opportunities to develop projects and to access a wider range of funds (provided by health services, for example).

The lockdown periods also brought about a huge explosion of creativity in different countries, involving many people who had never done artistic work before. There should be in each country a strategy to support and build on this mushrooming of creative expressions and talent.

**Jean-Damien Collin:** Already, in March and April 2020, we can observe that art has by no means disappeared in this period! And neither has the relationship to it. Some artists have taken advantage of this moment to reclaim their time and their interactions. I saw it as the application of a space-time research project that we had discussed with Éric Lacascade and Daria Lippi in the 2000's and which I regularly discuss with Rodolphe Burger. It is a way to get out of the time imposed on the artist by the "highway of creation," to breathe in the exploded time imposed on the artist. At the same time, society has never put so much light on the artist's creativity and the need for creativity. Indeed, we can say that its need has been amplified, through subjects that are being undermined by confinement. Firstly, on the subject of death and dying, or the

social link, which is still the basis of culture. Those who are naked in this period are the so-called cultural structures. Museums and art centres are wondering when to reopen and, above all, for whom. The facilities and organisations related to live performances focus on their programming and performance issues for their reopening later...

I completely agree with Philippe Bischoff when he said, at the beginning of the confinement, that "in the public and private sphere, we will now see clearly what cultural values we are prepared to live by as a society or societies, and to what extent ethical ideals are reconcilable with legal and financial requirements." Similarly, among Germans, I find that having immediately put on the table the idea of closing stadiums and theatres until the end of December 2021 is healthier, in terms of public debate and questions of responsibility, when one thinks about one's activity as an artistic actor. In France, the professional sector was squirming and saying, "Oh no, you can't possibly say that..."

Now in this new context, it would be a mistake for cultural actors not to rethink their mode of action, their role in the social negotiation of culture and its relationship to the arts and sciences.

The merit of the crisis, as you call it, is that, like any crisis, it points out the ruptures, the salient points. And this crisis obliges us to do so: we would be irresponsible and, indeed, guilty of not questioning our cultural action in the eyes of the people. *Die Zeit*, a German newspaper of political analysis that is both tolerant and liberal, published an article stating that the French style of confinement put into effect in March 2020 was a purely bourgeois conception of confinement. I cannot say the contrary, my intellectual and physical conditions were more than acceptable while I identified the unacceptable in all this hysteria in determining how to intervene. But I think that this illustrates what March 2020 has to say about our democratic and administrative management and how it is challenged by this particular context. But the solution-building and the courage to stand firm was impressive among those who were in a position to act... I think many would want to be part of that response in the future, if need be: acting through small collectives and small communities but in collective research. It is often from this source that the energy to respond to the crisis and the understanding of different perspectives has come. But in order to give meaning and a sense of scale, trusted intermediaries are necessary. Participation and contribution cannot exist without them. The cultural field must think and work on this. It must assess whether it is a trusted intermediary, not for one public, but for all its stakeholders and in particular the local inhabitants, whatever their status may be. We should ask, with a view to strengthening it, what a trustworthy intermediary is within the cultural field of a democracy.



PART TWO:

# Participation and cultural policy challenges



## 2.1

# Cultural participation and territorial development: some insights from the Portuguese case

Pedro Costa

## 1. Introduction

The juncture between cultural participation, territorial development, and urban planning represents a wide and stimulating field, both for research and for practice, as territory unquestionably functions as an important driver for enabling and fostering participation in cultural policies. It is from that specific point of view that cultural participation will be discussed in this chapter, drawing upon a set of issues and challenges which can be seen through an analysis of the Portuguese experience in this field in recent years.

As is discussed in general in this book, new conceptualizations of "participation" have been gaining centrality in cultural policies over the last decades, cultural participation being seen much more through concepts such as "active spectatorship," "co-creation," "co-decision," "citizen participation," "cultural democracy," and "empowerment" rather than by terms such as "cultural practices," "audiences," "amateur arts," and other terms that are linked to more traditional approaches.

Naturally, the proliferation of these forms of "participation" is appearing in the agendas of cultural policies, particularly in Europe (at national, regional, and/or local levels), though at quite diverse levels and degrees of intensity, being embedded in very different ways in the current aims, instruments, and practices of governments and cultural organizations. Acknowledging this general background, it is clear that this

reconfiguration of the notion of cultural participation is also visible (and gains particular importance) from a perspective of territorial development. In fact, whether through the territorial permutations of cultural policies and the assumption of multi-scale forms of governance in cultural policy, or through the increasing role played by cultural and creative activities in territorial development policies and urban planning, “participation” has become an increasingly important and visible feature in many cultural projects and policy initiatives related to territorial development.

Therefore, our aim in this text is to explore this relation between cultural participation and territorially based initiatives (some of which relate to territorial development policies and urban planning), assuming the diversity of institutional solutions and governance mechanisms for the forms of cultural participation observed (national cultural policies, local cultural policies, and cultural networks, among others). Drawing upon a diversity of cases and experiences seen in Portugal during recent years, a set of issues are brought to the debate, exploring internal differentiations regarding the levels of governance and types of institutions and particularly the role of territory (and communities) in these processes.

This analysis is based on vast experience with research on culture and territorial development, and a significant amount of work with city councils, networks, and cultural agents working in the field over the last decades, as well as on collaboration with local and sectoral policy-makers in the structuring and assessment of development strategies related to culture and creative activities.

In the next section, we will look at cultural policy challenges raised through citizen participation from the point of view of territorial development. The subsequent section will bring us some examples of these experiences in practice, in the framework of a broader discussion on how cultural policies are fostering or limiting participation in Portugal from a territorial development perspective. Section 4 deals briefly with the additional challenges brought by a post-pandemic reality, in the changing times we are currently facing, and a concluding note wraps up the discussion highlighting the main issues in debate on this relation between cultural participation and territorial development.

## 2. Cultural policy challenges through citizen participation: from the standpoint of territorial development

The concept of participation is admittedly diffuse, and even limiting it to the context of cultural policies does not improve this situation. When the term “participation” is

used (in cultural policy documents, speeches of key public representatives, artists, and cultural producers, etc.), it can refer to a multitude of aspects that are not always clear, drawing as it does upon a diversity (national, sectoral, institutional, etc.) of practices and reflecting a variety of “cultures” (in the wider sense) itself. Among other definitions, it can refer to the idea of fostering audience development, to the nurture of amateur practices, to the enhancement of consultation processes and the promotion of dialogues with audiences, and to sharing decisions in artistic processes or in programming processes, for instance (Dupin-Meynard and Villarroya, 2019).

Even if we only consider the forms of participation that relate to sharing the “power” of cultural practitioners and policy-makers with non-professionals, within the activities and decisions of artistic institutions (the influence of participants on creations, programming, mediation, other artistic decisions, etc.), diversity is the norm, and participation can depend on a variety of factors.

Naturally, it will depend on the country, its cultural practices and its cultural policies tradition – ranging from the most centralized states to the most decentralized ones, from the most empowered audiences to those with feeble participatory habits or tools, from those for whom this has always been a tradition to those that have only recently developed this practice. The scope and intensity of participation will also depend on the kind(s) of operators who are the drivers of these participation processes - ranging from the public authorities at the national, regional or local level to the big “institutional” cultural institutions, national or local, to the cultural or socially-centered foundations that move within those spaces, to the more mainstream or, inversely, the more independent cultural actors, and to a variety of local development agencies, NGOs or firms using culture as a “tool” for territorial development. It certainly will also depend on the cultural subsectors or activities that are in play, from the performing arts (which have been quite easily mobilized as a vehicle of participatory practices in recent years in multiple contexts, e.g. theatre, dance, music, and particularly through activities in public space), to visual arts (also both indoors and in public spaces, including site-specific and community-oriented work), literature (immersive residencies, community work), cinema and the audio-visual domain (participatory videos, documentaries, etc.) or heritage (e.g. involving local communities in the decoding on in the mobilization of immaterial assets for material heritage animation), for instance. But we could also add to these other domains such as street art, crafts, amateur practices (for all the sectors listed above), and a multitude of activities lying along the diffuse “border” shared with intangible heritage preservation/dynamization, tourism, and the promotion of a variety of “experiences” (more or less creative), both for people who visit a place and those who share their place with those visitors. Creative tourism, for instance, is a good illustration

of this (Duxbury and Richards, 2019; Cruz et al., 2019), but also, in many cases, simply the creative processes related to artistic residencies.

The level and mechanisms of participation differ significantly depending on the kind of activities or decisions in which the participants are invited to contribute. These participants can be involved in creation, more actively or more passively; they can perform; they can participate in production or programming processes; they can be engaged as mediators working with the local community or with broader audiences; they can be involved in coordinated strategies for audience development, or citizen commissioning programs, or even take part in the strategic decisions made by local policy-makers, community leaders, or cultural institutions.

On many occasions, participatory projects and policies promoting participation may target specific groups, and this is not unusual at all in the field of cultural participatory practices - whether these projects focus on the promotion of audiences for these cultural activities (e.g. targeting specific existing audiences or broadening their audiences to non-“habitueés”), when they aim to involve non-professionals (non-artists, community members, etc.) in the activities, or because they want to - or many times they frame themselves in policy programs aiming to - achieve a social or cultural objective for a specific segment of the population (most frequently, for instance, the youth; elderly people; social, cultural, ethnic or gender minorities; migrant communities; refugees, people with disabilities; etc.). Particularly interesting examples from the standpoint of territorial development are those that are designed as socially engaged art projects (e.g. those contributing to innovative ways of promoting/creating the “value of art” in social fabric – see for instance, the RESHAPE project on this), and more generally, those in which territorial embeddedness or work with local communities is a central aspect.

Participation processes and citizen engagement in the arts can therefore be seen in a variety of issues (cf. Bonet and Négrier, 2018; Bonet et al., 2018; Duxbury 2011; Markusen and Gadwa, 2010a; Matarasso, 2019), nurturing the complex relations among creators, producers, programmers, and audiences (always dependent on technology, society, and politics). These include aspects such as those related to democratization and audiences empowerment, emancipation, artistic quality, creative residencies, active spectatorship and participatory programming, involvement in creative processes, prosumer processes, co-creation, digital participation forms, participatory cultural management, the involvement of audiences with diverse cultural capitals, etc. It is here fundamental to manage tensions such as those linked to the disjunctions between spectator/creator, consumption/production, work/leisure, private/public sphere, individual/collective, etc. Moreover, from a territorial point of view, it is particularly interesting to inquire into the role played by participation in the “governance” of cultural ecosystems, be it in the definition of public policies or the blurring of the roles

of cultural creator/producer/gatekeeper/user, for instance, in DIY practices or elsewhere (e.g. exploring diverse forms of organizing work or multiple crossovers – cf. Caves, 2002; Markusen et al., 2006; Hesters, 2019).

All these issues also relate to a wide diversity of justifications for the development of these participatory projects as well as for the development of policies designed with that objective in mind. Among others, the most frequent reasons include aspects such as (i) Democratization and audience development, (ii) Artistic production and creation, (iii) Cultural democracy, cultural rights, (iv) Cultural diversity, (v) Social cohesion, (vi) Empowerment and emancipation, (vii) The creative economy (Dupin-Meynard and Villarroya, 2019). As can be seen, several of these objectives assume, implicitly or explicitly, the role of culture as (mere) instrument for other aims in terms of development; by the same token, most of them can also be easily seen as objectives that are remarkable in territorial development strategies, both by local/regional authorities or by other governance mechanisms that are more community-based.

Indeed, these participatory projects can be seen as opportunities to promote and express cultural diversity within a community, to contribute to the social, artistic or political empowerment within that community, or to improve and test democratic processes in the community or its institutions (regardless of the symbolic gains and legitimacy they may or may not confer to their promoters). Again, socially engaged cultural and creative practices are often central here, and the value of participation, in its diverse forms, is clearly demonstrating the value art holds for the social fabric, even if, in some cases, this implies facing some risks - including, among others, the loss of artistic autonomy or even artistic quality, the threat to artistic expertise, or giving in to pressure from the market or populism (Dupin-Meynard and Villarroya, 2019). At another level, participatory processes involving the main territorial stakeholders can be fundamental for the definition and execution of consequential cultural based territorial development strategies which would not be feasible or effective without territorially and community-embedded inclusive master plans (see, for instance, the role of Local Agenda 21 for Culture, promoted by the World Organisation of United Cities and Local Governments – UCLG, 2015).

The relation between cultural participation and territorial development has to be framed within the wider context of the relation of cultural and creative practices to territorial development which - even if structurally marked by wider-range contributions (Scott, 2000; Throsby, 2001; Hall, 2000) - was in recent decades marked by creativity and creative cities rhetoric as well as the role of culture in urban regeneration (Scott, 2006, 2014; Flew and Cunningham, 2010; Pratt and Hutton, 2013; Banks and O'Connor, 2017). Even if some of the main initial influences came from planning and urban studies (Landry, Bianchini, Kunzmann, etc.), they (as well as others, as Florida notices) were

soon mobilized by private and public agents (and also frequently by academic discourse) to engage in a more straightforward and less critical (also often less problematized) perspective on the role of culture in territorial development. The centrality of culture in these approaches was often branded (even if in several arenas for unrelated purposes) as a tool for the promotion of the project of the “neoliberal city,” as many argue. Despite all the controversies and disputations, and notwithstanding the intrinsic value of the diversity of approaches that are the basis of the recognition of the crucial importance held by culture in territorial development in all its dimensions (Costa, 2007), the fact remains that participatory practices were not in general the main focus of these analyses.

On the other hand, we can admit that despite this, from a more pragmatic perspective, this participatory turn has in effect continued on its way during this period, which was also, due to this evolution in rhetoric, marked by the need for a multi-layer governance and articulation of policies that fostered, on its side, cultural participation and the involvement of communities in cultural strategic planning. At least three levels can be identified on this.

A first layer in which we can observe the territorial dimension of this cultural participatory turn is the use of cultural strategies (e.g. cultural master plans) by territorial entities, at diverse scales, materializing what Negrier and Teillet (2019) designate as a “cultural project for a territory.” In fact, it is the embodiment of a territorially based project, positioned within an organization of collective action and transformed into a formal institutionalization, that results from a (tendentially) continuous negotiation of interests, combining multi-scale and multi-sector levels, distributing agents over a common territorial good, and manifesting an intention of territorial development based on culture and the arts. To a certain extent, this has some similarities with Franco Bianchini’s old notion of “cultural planning” (Bianchini, 1999) or even with some of the approaches to the creative city concept on the planning side (Bianchini and Landry, 1995; Landry, 2000; Kunzmann, 2004; Healey, 2004), although in the latter cases this process could be seen (or put into operation) as much less institutional and often less participatory.

A second (and quite broader) layer relates to all the action that can be understood, more generally, to lie within the relation of culture to territorial development (e.g. Throsby, 2000; Duxbury, 2011; Duxbury et al., 2016; Costa, 2007, 2015; Dessein et al., 2015) and the way we can assume notions such as well-being, diversity and participation to be essential vectors for the accomplishment of plain sustainable development. It is within this framework that we can understand the multiple contributions that almost all international organizations (the European Union, the Council of Europe, the European Cultural Foundation, UNESCO, OCDE, UNCTAD, etc.) have made, through the last decades, to the relation between culture and territorial development. Most of them acknowledge the importance of participative processes -- the fundamental nature

of working for, in, and with the community -- to understand the locally embedded mechanisms and act according to territorial specificities, and naturally to involve local communities in actions undertaken in the cultural field. Some interesting examples in this area can be found in the development of Local Agenda 21 for Culture (e.g. UCLG, 2015) or the incentives and compromises enabling action by European institutions (e.g. EU, 2018 or other international agencies, e.g. UNESCO, 2019).

Finally, a third layer, which leads us to more organic and intangible (but eventually more self-sustainable) participatory dynamics, is composed of situations that we can group around the notion of “territorialized production complexes” in the cultural field (Scott, 2000). These include a diversity of cases, generally based on more flexible territorially based forms of governance (Storper and Harrison, 1992) which have been diversely categorized as cultural systems, creative ecosystems, creative milieus, local productive systems, and creative clusters, among other terms, ranging from creative districts in central urban areas to redeveloped brownfield lands, hi-tech complexes, or bohemian and hipster neighbourhoods (for a wide diversity of examples and of concepts, see O’Connor and Wynne, 1996; Camagni et al., 2004; Bell and Jayne, 2004; Cooke and Lazzarretti, 2008; Lazzarretti, 2013; Costa and Lopes, 2013, 2015). Regardless of their variety and especially the diversity of their regulatory mechanisms (Costa and Lopes, 2015), many of these situations create an interesting arena for participatory dynamics, drawing upon informality, liminality, conflict, and specific regulatory mechanisms which facilitate the expression of diversity and often the inclusion of less “mainstream” voices. They are usually strongly embedded in specific territories, though anchoring these territories within global cultural, economic and social dynamics (Kebir et al., 2017), which is a key competitive advantage in the development of contemporary cognitive-cultural capitalism (Scott, 2008, 2014).

In accepting this context and the diversity of conceptual and operative frameworks that are inherent to it, cultural participation can be seen in practice at different levels and leads us to a set of specific issues that will need to be further disentangled. We will illustrate some of these in the next section.

### 3. Participatory experiences in practice: lessons from the Portuguese case

Keeping in mind the general framework presented in the previous section, we will now discuss some of the challenges that are faced in practice, in the cultural participation dynamics in Portugal, from a territorial development point of view, positioning this

debate within a broader discussion on how the evolution of cultural policies is fostering, limiting, or formatting the participation mechanisms and how we can observe their inclusion in cultural and development policies at the local, regional and national levels.

This analysis draws upon the personal empirical practice of the author over more than two decades, working on the relation between cultural activities and territorial development. In addition to several research projects on the subject, with specific empirical work in Portugal and abroad, it is also worth mentioning involvement in several planning projects for national and local authorities in Portugal, such as cultural master plans; developing strategies for culture-based development, both for local authorities and networks; and the participation in several projects developing and assessing cultural policies -- all of which result in a vast array of empirical information encapsulated within this personal experience and mobilized in this text.

First, a general finding that we would like to state is that, in Portugal, participatory dynamics have been allowed a growing amount of space at various levels, particularly in recent years. In the first two decades of the 21st century, a considerable improvement of participation can be observed in certain domains (keeping in mind that we are using a broader notion of participation, not restricted to audiences development and the empowerment of specific segments, although also including these), including a movement fostering participation in cultural policies and, more broadly, throughout the level of local development policies and more decentralized territorially based development initiatives (Silva et al., 2013, 2015; Costa, 2015; Quintela and Ferreira, 2018).

On the one hand, this participatory turn (and the “participatory rhetoric” that accompanies it) is visible in the layer of public policies in their various levels and dimensions. Firstly, it has been extremely prominent in the incentive systems of EU funding mechanisms, in particular the application of EU structural funds (but also European Commission initiatives), used both in cultural and territorially-based public policies and in direct funding to agents and their consortia/networks. This has been the result, for instance, of combining funding criteria with incentives to collaborate (promoting mixing different kinds of activities, different kinds of policy objectives, etc.), particularly after the QCA III, QREN, and Portugal 2020 programs. In practice, this has been done essentially through the crossing of cultural action (and cultural policies) with territorial development policies and regional/local development mechanisms, including specific funding mechanisms covering this intersection – there are several examples, one of the most interesting and influential of which being the “Vale da Amoreira” experience, within the “Bairros Críticos” initiative, crossing social and cultural action in an innovative way and testing innovative forms of governance in underprivileged neighborhoods.

Secondly, it has been fostered, in a more conventional manner, via national cultural policies, through support programs for the arts at the level of national cultural policies,

for instance. The several revisions of funding schemes for the agents of cultural sector (for creation, production, internationalization, residencies, etc.), particularly in fields such as the performing arts (e.g. DGArtes - Direcção Geral das Artes), but also in other domains (for instance, ICA - Instituto do Cinema e Audiovisual), have been promoting a broad openness to participation via their objectives and eligibility criteria as well as valuation methods and assessment criteria, for instance valuing the involvement of communities in artistic processes, audience engagement, expanding inclusiveness to specific target audience, or developing specific funding mechanisms tied to mandatory collaboration with local authorities and local communities (e.g. “Programa de apoios tripartidos” from DGArtes).

Thirdly, this participatory turn has been enhanced via local policies, including a diversity of policy streams, such as local cultural policies, local development policies, intermunicipal actions, etc. Among these, diversity is naturally the rule, as a wide array of participatory mechanisms are here brought together (audience development, the promotion of amateur practices, the enhancement of consultation processes, the promotion of dialogue with audiences, and sharing decision-making in artistic and programming processes, etc.), and this can be seen both in the daily processes of several institutions (e.g. municipal theatres, like Maria Matos in Lisbon, with several audience development programs working with specific communities), as well as when the same kind of activities are offered in the context of networks of municipalities (e.g. Artemrede, with many participatory projects in different communities) or some special events (e.g. European Cultural Capitals of Porto 2011 and Guimaraes 2012).

Fourthly, by the development and spread of broader and more inclusive participation mechanisms, particularly at the local level, by many city councils, although not exclusively. For instance, OPs (“Orçamentos Participativos” - participatory budgeting) have progressively spread throughout the country over the past two decades, and the expression of cultural activities and cultural interests in these participative mechanisms has been clear in recent years (after an initial moment in which other fields, such as the environment or social mobility, were clearly predominant – or more organized - in these participatory processes).

On the other hand, a second layer for this participatory turn can be identified, not in the field of public policies, but in the very action of creative agents and cultural institutions. The promotion of participation and the opening to co-creation of cultural projects can be seen spreading in the practices of many agents, as well as in the initiatives of many cultural institutions. A good example, promoted by one of the main Portuguese foundations (Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian), is the PARTIS Program which, among others, aimed to support, through grants and training initiatives, organizations that develop projects whose central methodology puts artistic practices at the service of social

inclusion objectives (in the fields of audio-visual and the performing and visual arts).

Relying on a diversity of governance mechanisms (often combining market, public intervention, and other regulation mechanisms), many other situations are setting in place, broadly speaking, what we identified above as creative ecosystems (territorially based creative complexes, creative milieus, etc.), enabling a diversity of participative practices related to co-creative processes, the involvement of the local community in artistic projects, and territorially embedded creation practices. These can be frequent in some of the main territorialized “clusters” of cultural activities and the more organic forms of cultural milieus in the city centers (such as cultural quarters like the Bairro Alto/Chiado/Bica/Cais do Sodré area in Lisbon or other “new” “hipster” areas popping up such as Almirante Reis/Mouraria/Intendente, Alcantara, Beato-Marvila, also in Lisbon) as well as other dense areas in terms of cultural participative dynamics in the outskirts of the Lisbon metropolitan area, such as Almada or Barreiro (e.g. Costa and Lopes, 2018; Costa et al., 2019).

Summing up, we can admit that this participatory turn, driven both by public policies and other kinds of actions, is expressed in a wide diversity of forms and situations. It can be based on different governance models (relying on public or private institutions, networks, foundations, local development agencies, etc.) and does not necessarily only result from actions related to intentional cultural policies. Interesting examples of cooperative mechanisms, relying on a more organic interaction between cultural and social sectors, and activist practices can be found for instance in Lisbon, as in many other places around the world, as shown in the exploratory mappings of these dynamics developed in the most recent cultural strategies for this city (for the areas of Almirante Reis e Alta de Lisboa – cf. Costa et al., 2017). By the same token, it also takes on more conventional or unconventional formats through different sectoral contexts (e.g. theatre and other performing arts, graffiti and street art, etc.). For instance, the reality of specific branches of music creation (e.g. rap crioulo, electronic music, etc.) is quite vibrant, marked by very informal collaborative practices, quite organic and decentralized, in multiple peripheral areas of the Lisbon Metropolitan area during the 2010’s.

Artistic work within the community (see the examples of several of the projects developed by Artemrede network or many of the projects promoted by several institutions funded by the aforementioned PARTIS program) is one of the outstanding aspects of this participatory turn in Portugal, usually aiming to empower and engage both specific communities and municipalities in general, as well as creating audiences, particularly in territories or social segments where those audiences or cultural practices are scarce. However, like in other countries, the reality of participative projects is very diverse, and there is also space for more “traditional” involvement of populations, for instance through collaborative art, or participative projects (e.g. in visual arts), with the

involvement of communities in the co-creation of artwork (e.g. participative sculptures, in projects such as Almada or Lousal – Gato et al., 2013).

Having said this, we would like to complete this section regarding the general panorama of the evolution of cultural participatory practices in Portugal by indicating four main issues that are worthy of a deeper discussion.

A first question we would like to raise relates to the relation between cultural participation and the period of crisis (and austerity-based policies) which Portugal was facing during a large part of this period (at least from 2008 to 2015). In fact, the crisis played an important role in the shift to participative practices (showing that they are not necessarily encouraged for the right reasons), as was abundantly evident in the profusion, during this period, of performing arts or architecture collectives (facing the closure of their market), turning to work with(in) the communities and participative (and sometimes pro bono or volunteer-based) practice. Many creative agents (e.g. in performing arts, at least those dependent upon public funding) saw themselves “required” to work with deprived communities, reacting to the incentive of several funding initiatives that targeted social inclusion or the empowerment of specific communities. On the other hand, it can also be seen as a consequence of the constructive reaction of cultural agents to a situation in which they face a narrowing diversity of funding sources (from culture, social programs, territorial development, etc.), often bringing with it the positive effect of requiring the coordination of different types of actors, thus demanding new creative solutions designed for each specific situation and which foster the cooperation and the involvement of local institutions and local communities in the projects -- if they want to be successful in matching those funding opportunities.

A second issue we would like to draw attention to relates to the problem of the diversity of policy objectives and the potential subsuming these participation processes to other goals. In fact, participation in cultural policy is often driven by the necessity of meeting policy objectives (e.g. integration, social inclusion, community expression) outside of the cultural or artistic spheres. That is no problem in itself, and can even be fruitful in terms of boosting participatory practices, as seen above, but there is always the risk of being exploited -- something agents should be aware of -- which is quite common in this field of participation, as well as, more broadly, in cultural policies and in cultural activity in general (including by artists themselves).

These risks are present in the relation between cultural policy and other policies (including the recurrent need to negotiate the legitimization of cultural action within governance structures) as well as in other kinds of “self-instrumentalization” (by targeting economic, social, or urban regeneration objectives rather than the intrinsic cultural value brought forth by the policy – e.g. the many artistic participatory processes reinforcing

social cohesion). This tendency can also be strengthened by intermediate agents (e.g. local development agencies, cultural producers, cultural intermediaries) in search of the “best” or “brand-new” funding opportunities. Choices of who should participate in these processes and the way in which participatory mechanisms are designed and implemented are often decisive when it comes to the degree of independence in following culturally coherent objectives, and policy-makers and practitioners have their share of responsibility on it.

A third issue that needs to be highlighted regards the limits of cultural participation. In a time when we can easily argue about the need to impose limits on growth and to ease the spiral of capitalist work practices (also present in the spheres of culture), degrowth (or at least plainly sustainable growth in all its dimensions) is often brought into discussion. A clear sign of this relates to all the negative implications for society (and also for the environment) of the excess of cultural supply and cultural participation, particularly in public space. In recent years, the various negative impacts and externalities related to cultural activities (and the related “excesses” of “participation”) have been increasingly brought into the debate, as the effects of these activities, particularly in urban historical centers, heritage sites, or increasingly touristified or commodified places has increased to an unprecedented and unsustainable degree. Public space has often been the subject of overexploitation and overexposure to cultural “creation” / “production”; in addition to the commodification of this public space by cultural consumption processes (including tourism, touristification, gentrification, massification processes, etc.), other situations occur in which the excesses of the unregulated, volunteer-based, and often non-mercantile appropriation of public space for cultural practices and artistic expression in the public sphere collides with the other dimensions of sustainable development. In Portugal, many examples can be found of this – for decades now, we had the opportunity to analyse, for instance, the situation in the Bairro Alto cultural quarter in Lisbon (e.g. Costa, 2007, 2017; Costa and Lopes, 2013,2017) which has today reached unbearable levels for the local community. We need to balance quality with quantity in these activities, and we need to balance the rights to participation or expression in public space (and the importance of freedom: the ability to go to a public space to express publicly for anyone who wants to listen or see whatever artistic gifts may be on display) with the “right to enjoy the city” in a broader perspective (including the right to enjoy quietude or silence, not to be bothered by anyone no matter how artistically interesting that person may be, the need to respect decorum and appropriateness).

Finally, a fourth topic we would like to bring to the discussion is related to participation in the very formulation of cultural policies (and, incidentally, also in territorial-based policies). Here, it is fundamental to go beyond the “symbolic” and merely “nominative” forms of public participation, which has been the rule in most cases (for example, most

of the so-called participation we can see in master plans, reduced to a discrete form of public consultation, often during summer breaks, and under-communicated within the community). The effective involvement of citizens and communities in the construction of a commonly shared strategy -- for a territory, for example -- will only be possible if they are involved from the very beginning in these participative processes, including in the diagnosis of the situation before coming to policy action. Some interesting examples related to culture that have been spreading in Portugal are the city council's (or regional) cultural strategies (in cities like Lisbon or others – cf. Costa et al., 2009, 2017). Many of these have been able to promote, on the one hand, the cultural involvement of citizens and cultural agents (in participative processes and methodologies, for example), and on the other hand, the coordination of culture with other areas of action (the integration of policies) for specific territories. Another interesting example which has been able to include and enhance the centrality of culture in community-based policies is linked to all the territorially centred policy mechanisms, often mobilizing the “specific” and distinctive assets of a territory (where cultural assets naturally play an important role), which put participation mechanisms into play. Examples such as OPs (there is a significant expression of cultural activities in the participative mechanisms such as participative budgets throughout the country) or BIPZIPs and other collaborative programs (sometimes also linked to urban design and public space management) are signs of these. Even if, in many cases, these actions are much more directed toward “problematic areas” (primarily addressing social, urban, or educational issues), they have represented an opportunity to increase space for cultural-based participatory actions in these communities.

Summing up, we can admit that cultural policies both foster and limit participation. Naturally, this happens in a dialectic process which is always navigating between co-opting the culture sector, seen as a tool for a multitude of objectives -- even if inadvertently so, as can be seen in many recent cases in Lisbon like Maria Matos, Casa Conveniente, or GAU action in Marvila (Lopes and Costa, 2019). No matter how well-intentioned these actions may be, they often end up using the community or the creative process for another set of objectives and an effective change to a new paradigm based on cultural democracy (e.g. participatory budgets or more organic forms of cultural participation such as those observed in ADAO or other cultural institutions in Barreiro, for instance – Costa and Lopes, 2018; Costa et al., 2019 – even though in these cases some distortions and tensions also arise naturally).

Even if there is some tendency toward the control of these processes by public policies (creating a lack of autonomy at the level of political and artistic decision-making), there are also examples of much more genuine and robust, often bottom-up and territorially embedded, participatory processes involving both the community and the cultural agents.

An essential aspect of these may be the involvement of policy-makers in conjunction with the participation of the community in strategic planning processes that identify common problems and establish common interests and goals for collective action. Naturally, sharing decisions in the formulation of policy also challenges other dimensions of the equation of cultural action, such as the role of mediators, the importance of communities' cultural capital and education, or the importance of time scales to present results and monitor and evaluate the policies developed with a modicum of stability.

## 4. The post-pandemic crisis: signs of change

The troubled times we are going through at the moment this chapter is being written, still in the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis raging throughout the world, raise important questions for the issue in discussion in this article, questions which not should be left behind, even if prudence and our lack of critical distance from the reality we are experiencing caution against including them.

In effect, these challenging times seem to open up some possibilities for the reinvention of participation in what can be broadly defined as the cultural sector. There are several kinds of encouraging signs that can be observed in different countries: the spread of a multitude of mechanisms to shore up exchanges, solidarity, and community, in which culture plays a key role in the promotion of solutions to urgent problems at the local level. Alongside the development of new forms of participation for audiences and advances in new intermediation and distribution mechanisms (fueled by digital technologies and online platforms), we can observe the enhancement of participation, in all its different fields, despite the need to practice “social distancing” and to respect confinement guidelines, both at virtual and physical community-based levels. In parallel to these quite “organic” developments, what is the role of cultural policies? In most countries, new forms of support to the cultural sector were set in motion, but essentially with a welfare-based profile (e.g. ensuring the payment of contracts, guaranteeing advances, and, in some countries, maintaining a minimum level of income to cultural workers). At the same time (as eventually would be required, in any event), a certain tendency has been noticed that prioritizes broader policy proposals (the protection of employment for precarious or intermittent workers, an interest in working conditions, etc.), as cultural and other closely related activities such as tourism, leisure or entertainment in all its forms were severely affected by the crisis, in terms of both the physical

consumption/experience and the conditions for their production or preparation.

In a nutshell, we can consider that if, on the one hand, the pandemic crisis has highlighted the centrality of culture as a human and social need (since the role artistic and entertainment activities have played during confinement was vital for the mental and social well-being of families and individuals in lockdown, and the awareness of this has been recognized far and wide), on the other hand, we can observe some devaluation of cultural activities and cultural policies in these same societies. This can be seen in the weak response of cultural policies to the crisis (an inability to reinvent themselves and centered, in the best cases, on employment protection and subsidies within the sector). It can be also observed in the inability of the sector to invent new forms and dynamics of work, perpetuating former ways of creating, producing, and experiencing rather than seizing this temporary social change for cultural and institutional breakthroughs, with a few rare exceptions. Finally, and probably more worrying, it can also be seen in the way the practice and the rhetoric of “social distancing” leads to longer-term effects in social practices and representations. The wake of mythicized “safe” spaces will certainly affect entertainment, tourism, and many artistic practices for a long time to come, affecting the behavior of artists, audiences, and cultural providers, and this is even more aggravated by all the problems related to the dangers of a new authoritarianism, an increase of collective social control, and the deepening of algorithmic societies marked by the threat of “invisible” control mechanisms.

In parallel to all these, the issue of the territorial inequality of these dynamics, during and after this pandemic period, is naturally another layer that will bring additional challenges to cultural participation. If, on the one hand, we see the considerable strength of community-based mechanisms and territorially embedded responses to the crisis (in many neighborhoods, in urban areas, in deprived communities, but also in rural territories), mobilizing activists and social and cultural agents to face the economic, social, environmental, and cultural effects of lockdown and its ramifications, on the other hand, we have deeper challenges that can have a long-term effect on the inequalities between territories and even the basis on which communities and urban spaces are organized (for instance, undermining the depth, density, and heterogeneity of social practices which are still the basis for cosmopolitanism and “urbanism as a way of life” – Wirth, 1938).

In conclusion, despite all the potential that the COVID-19 crisis seems to have unlocked for cultural participatory practices (e.g. all the solidarity mechanisms and community-based movements that have spread in many cities, or the digital potential of remote work that was explored by many artists and cultural providers, streaming or programming on platforms such as Zoom, Skype, and YouTube, among others), we can admit that additional risks and challenges have been added to those that have

already been identified for participation in culture. We can identify at least three main challenges, all of them visible also in the Portuguese reality today.

A first risk is the rather well-known one of assuming that culture is superfluous and not essential in the ensuing period of economic recovery, predictably marked by budget cuts and predictable financial restrictions. The question of whether culture will be considered as a political priority or not is thus essential, particularly when we think of the feebleness of the positive dynamics generated during this period of period: for instance, we have witnessed an engagement in collaborative processes but not new organizational models for the sector; there is improvement of participation through digital media, but it is generally based on volunteer work, rarely thinking of or developing new business models that could provide sustainability and new forms of post-Covid participation.

Secondly comes what we can call the risk of “safety paranoia” or of “control freaks.” As the situation evolves and lockdown is being relaxed, a set of social-distancing rules and habits take over from regular social practices. The freedom to participate and to be involved in cultural projects does not prove a desire to participate in a society ruled by fear (and where fear may last – and may also be fed – for many years). This is particularly serious when we talk about people with fewer cultural habits, who are more distant from or less engaged in regular cultural practices, which were the main target of many cultural-based participatory processes.

Finally, a third set of challenges relates to the ability of maintaining artistic freedom and cultural diversity. This is particularly relevant in times of growing social intrusion into personal freedoms, from increasing social control (whether it is by the state, service providers, the community, or other social structures or individuals) and the scrutiny of the cultural practices (including the very social value of art, and the “policing” of people who go out for work or leisure, for instance) to the very content at the artistic level (e.g. what should be held worthy of artistic attention or not). On the one hand, the “cultural participant” faces new control pressures related to the conformity to the social norm in a time of growing movements spreading radicalism, intolerance, closed-mindedness, and all shades of neo-obscurantism; on the other hand, he/she faces self-censorship and the tyranny of the politically correct. Artistic freedom, cultural openness, creative diversity, and cosmopolitanism are essential values for cultural and creative processes and for cultural participation, and unfortunately, they surely cannot be taken for granted in the age that we are now entering.

## 5. Conclusion

In recent decades, cultural policy has been repeatedly challenged throughout the world by citizen participation, and this has naturally contaminated the relationship of cultural policies to other areas of public action and with society. In this text, we have tried to address this participatory turn in policies, from the point of view of territorially based action, drawing upon the Portuguese case.

Acknowledging the diversity of participative processes and the complexity of their relation to territory, we have identified three main “layers” defining the relation between cultural participation and territorial development, all of which are often interrelated: (i) the implementation of a collective cultural project for a territory, constituted as an organizer of collective action; (ii) the understanding of cultural participation, well-being, and the expression of diversity as essential vectors for the accomplishment of an effective mode of sustainable development and thus the inevitable acknowledgement of the crucial role played by culture in territorial development processes; and (iii) the occurrence of more organic and intangible territorially embedded participatory dynamics, usually based on specific and flexible territorially grounded governance mechanisms in which the participatory dimension is fundamental to the vitality of creativity and cultural life in these territories.

Specifically in the Portuguese case, we can unquestionably observe an increasing participatory dynamic in the cultural sector in recent decades. On the one hand, this participatory turn can be observed at the level of public policies in their various scales and dimensions - including the incentive system embedded in EU funding mechanisms, national cultural policies, and local policies, as well as broader and more inclusive participation mechanisms at local level in particular. On the other hand, it can be identified in the very action of creative agents and cultural institutions, with the promotion of participation and an openness to co-creation in cultural projects being more widely practiced by many agents, as well as in the initiatives of many cultural institutions. Relying on a diversity of governance mechanisms (often combining market, public intervention, and other regulatory mechanisms), some situations take on more organic forms, much like local creative ecosystems, enabling a diversity of participative practices related to co-creative processes which include the involvement of the local community in artistic projects as well as territorially embedded creation practices.

The importance of specific issues in a panoramic study of the evolution of cultural participatory practices in Portugal (such as its relation with the pandemic, the use of participation processes to achieve non-cultural objectives, the limits to participation in culture, or the involvement in the formulation of policies) has been discussed in

this text, as well as the challenges they bring about. By the same token, and despite all the potential that the COVID-19 pandemic crisis seems to have unlocked for cultural participatory practices, a set of additional risks and challenges have been added to the ones already identified for participation in culture. These include the need to deal with potential budget cuts, the risks associated with the desire to participate in a society ruled by fear, or the capacity of maintaining artistic freedom and cultural diversity in a post-Covid world.

Looking at cultural participation from the standpoints of territorial development and urban planning implies taking in consideration all these risks and challenges with the pragmatic understanding that the centrality of culture in territorial development strategies, however unquestionable it may be on a conceptual basis, is not guaranteed, and that conscious and consequential action on the part cultural agents and public policies to align the dynamics of cultural participation with sustainable development goals will be fundamental for maintaining their relevance in pursuing the development of territories.

## 2.2

# Commoning art as political companion. On the issue of participatory democracy

Hanka Otte & Pascal Gielen

## Participative Democracy: A Tautology?

In the past decade, it is notable that artists as well as cultural organizations have embraced participation in society once more. This renewed attention can be partly explained by the fact that government programs encourage such cultural initiatives, for example in the hope that cultural activities may contribute to a more inclusive society, stimulate active citizenship, or, more broadly speaking, benefit participative democracy. This latter notion is, however, a somewhat peculiar concept. Etymologically, ‘democracy’ means ‘government by or sovereignty of the people,’ so this already includes participation. Indeed, democracy ideally means the absolute participation by citizens in the governing of their society, or, in other words, *total* participation. ‘Participative democracy’ is therefore in fact a tautology. That the term nevertheless crops up frequently these days may indicate that not all is right with the form of participation that is inherent in a democracy. At the very least, it gives rise to the suspicion that there can be different degrees of participation within a democratic system and that multiple forms of participation are possible. Therefore, the call for a participative democracy in the first place expresses the hope for more - or more meaningful - participation in decision-making processes. The deployment of and the political appeal to artists and cultural organizations to contribute to a participative democracy consequently raises the question: to what form of participation might they contribute? We thought it would be useful to see what forms of participation can be traced in political science and political philosophy, and then, by discussing three case studies, look at how art and cultural projects relate to these forms.

## Representation, Deliberation, and Agonism

In the scientific literature of the past two decades, three forms of democratic participation can be roughly distinguished. The first one is the well-known representative democracy as studied by scholars such as Alexis de Tocqueville (Tocqueville, de, 2011) and Max Weber (Weber, 1988). This type of political participation occurred in still-young nation states in the nineteenth century, together with the political emancipation of the bourgeoisie. It therefore fits well into the liberal philosophy that places the individual at its center. It is a system that is founded on the representation of the people through elections that are held every four or five years. When in such a democratic order a cultural policy is developed, this policy on the one hand serves to strengthen the identity and legitimacy of the nation state (with, for example, national museums, theatres, libraries, and an official national language, statues and paintings of national heroes or of events that give the nation state historical foundation – in short, the national canon) and on the other hand to legitimize the—individualistic—bourgeois culture. The civil struggle here takes place around the issue of suffrage, mainly for the lower social classes or for women. Culture is primarily seen as ‘high’ culture, or as the only acceptable culture that can lead to the edification of the masses and *Bildung*. This is why this culture is often promoted in top-down fashion through, for example, a national historical or art-historical canon. That the postman should also be able to listen to Bach is the idea behind a policy that assumes that there can be only one good or legitimate culture (Bourdieu, 1974).

By the end of the 1960s, this notion becomes contentious. Workers, artists, and students take to the streets to demand the democratization of overly rigid and overly hierarchical state institutions and other institutes (parliament, university, museums). Debates, discussions, and negotiations are the basic ingredients of this second wave of participation, also referred to as deliberative democracy. Strongly influenced by Jürgen Habermas’ ‘communicative action’ (Habermas, 1981) and his analysis of the origin of the public space (Habermas, 1962), this form of democracy assumes that consensus can be arrived at on the basis of debate and rational arguments. Whereas in a representative democracy the civil struggle focuses on the quantitative vote (the number of votes being what counts), in a deliberative democracy the struggle is about the quality of that vote (what counts is what one says). Thus, the attention shifts from political democracy to cultural democracy. Education, language, well-substantiated knowledge, and arguments determine the democratic clout of citizens. The civil struggle now revolves around cultural themes, such as the recognition of folk culture, and other ethnic cultures. The second feminist wave also claims the right to an equal—cultural—treatment of men

and women in society, in education, and job opportunities. One could say that parallel to the interest of a deliberative democracy a so-called ‘cultural turn’ takes place. This is also expressed by the post-modernist debate, which, at least in theory, places high and low culture on equal footing. However, by its emphasis on empowerment, education, and expertise, this form of democracy has its own privileged class. This is no longer the bourgeois, but a white middle-class, which—thanks to the democratization of education and to social mobility—defines both the political and cultural landscape. With regard to the latter this means that the various platforms and stages are primarily taken up by white middle-class art. From then on, cultural taste is not so much determined by the eccentric bourgeois and individualistic artist, but by the teacher, the art mediator, or the art educator (Bourdieu, 1979). In other words, just like a representative democracy, a deliberative democracy also has its exclusion mechanisms.

The riots with so-called ‘random violence’ that have broken out in American and European cities since the 1990’s are often explained as being a reaction to these exclusion mechanisms (Gielen, 2014). Up to and including the Occupy Movement, these protests are often seen by both politicians and mainstream media as ‘random’ or ‘senseless’, either because the ‘rioters’ simply pose no political demands or because these demands cannot be understood unequivocally (such as in the case of the Indignados). Such eruptions can however be seen as symptoms of the fact that—both within a representative and a deliberative democracy—certain segments of the population are not being heard. These are primarily groups with little education, or immigrants who do not speak the national language or don’t use the ‘proper’ (i.e. white middle-class) vocabulary. It is one of the reasons why political philosophers and sociologists such as Chantal Mouffe, Ernesto Laclau, Jacques Rancière, and Manuel Castells point out the civil and political importance of affects and emotion for a democracy. This brings us to a third form of participation, which, inspired by Mouffe, we call ‘agonistic’ (Mouffe, 2013). An agonistic democracy assumes—in line with Oliver Marchart (Marchart, 2007)—that democratic politics is ‘post-foundational’. This means that there is no foundation for power, like God is in a theocracy, like the majority is in a representative democracy, or ratio in a deliberative democracy. There can be consensus in a democracy about who can be in power and how this power can be obtained, but an agonistic model assumes that this consensus is the product of hegemony. This means that the consensus arrived at is always that of a specific, privileged group that has obtained the power in a society. By suggesting that this consensus is not that of a certain power faction but of society as a whole, the opinions and cultures of subaltern groups and other alleged minorities are obscured and excluded. And this is the core of an agonistic democracy: it assumes that consensus never applies to the whole of society and that it can therefore always be contested. In other words, dissensus is always possible.

Characteristic of the civil struggle after this ‘affective turn’ is that it focuses on *doing*, on performance. The third feminist wave, for example, does not so much aspire to a typical male career or role pattern but rather tries to form and claim its own identity in a performative manner (Butler, 1990; Honig, 1995) in order to give its own (feminine) meaning to a profession, organizational structure, or politics. Performance also expresses itself in so-called pre-figurative politics (Boggs, 1977) whereby citizens organize themselves in a different way and thereby effectively realize and test alternative political models of organization or, in a broader sense, social models. In other words, an agonistic political model assumes that in addition to the vote—either quantitatively or qualitatively—there are also other forms of democratic participation. Democracy is therefore not limited to a proper debate in public or civic space, but translates itself in *acting* in civil space (Gielen, 2017). And it is exactly here that art and cultural codes may play a crucial part. After all, artists have the talent and training to express themselves in other ways than through rational arguments. Expression in visual language, dance, music, but also using an idiosyncratic vocabulary or presenting an alternative narrative are part of the core business of the arts. An agonistic cultural policy will therefore primarily create the conditions (cf. Rancière) for making (as yet) invisible, inaudible, and unutterable democratic demands visible and audible. One of the demands and practices that, for the past thirty years, has remained unseen, and has also been repressed and suppressed, is that of the commons.

## Commoning Politics

Like ‘participative democracy,’ ‘commoning politics’ is in fact a tautology. After all, commoning practices mean giving form to your own (social) environment by the collective self-management of material resources (such as water, electricity, buildings) or immaterial resources (such as language, codes, ideas, knowledge, in short: culture). It is this ‘shaping of living together’ that Rancière calls ‘politics’ (Rancière, 2015). To achieve this, commoners use competencies that are requirements in both a deliberative and an agonistic democracy. In addition to ‘doing’ - for example setting up an organization, a blog, a platform, or developing rules - a lot of discussing and negotiating also takes place (like in assemblies) among commoners. Although commoners will vote every once in a while, in order to arrive at a decision (representation), the emphasis is on deliberation and on what Mouffe calls ‘agonistics’. The development of common initiatives in particular rests on this participative model. Commoning practices tend to develop especially in domains for which governments show no interest or where they fail to act and where

market parties do not as of yet see potential for profit. This third space between state and market is that of the civil initiative where citizens take matters into their own hands. And, as we have learned from Castells (Castells, 2015), such civil actions originate in emotions. Also, passions generate the energy and drive for such actions.

However, for commoning practices to develop sustainably, rules, forms of management, and structures need to be developed. Commoning politics then means (1) agreeing on rules for the collective self-management of resources, (2) designing strategies to safeguard the commons from interference by the government or the market and to realize an expansion of the commons, by which (3) exchange and community bonds are developed in alternative ways. We have already written elsewhere how culture in the anthropological sense as the source of ‘giving meaning to ourselves and to the society in which we live’ (Gielen, 2015) forms the basis for these commoning politics. Whereas both communism and (neo)liberalism see the economy as the foundation of society, so-called ‘commonism’ regards economy, politics, but also ecology as the outcome of processes of giving meaning. This is why commonism is able to propose alternative forms of economy, politics, and living together in a broader sense on the basis of culture. In the cases discussed below we therefore see art and culture as critical allies that influence a democracy and, in a broader sense, a society, mainly through deliberative and agonistic participation. In other words, artists and cultural organizations relate to the three outlined forms of participation, which, to be clear, can exist in parallel with each other within a democracy, albeit with varying degrees of tension.

How they (can) do this exactly, we will try to make clear by providing three case studies in which artists and/or cultural organizations try to change the management of common resources by the government or market parties into a management style structured according to commoning principles. The *Montaña Verde* project was about a public square in the city of Antwerp that was to be ‘given back to its residents and users.’ With the *Tower of Babel*, built a year later in the same city, it was multilingualism that was the communal resource being reimagined. And with ‘De Grond der Dingen’ (The Ground of Things), an attempt was made to redistribute, following commoning principles, part of the land on which the city of Mechelen is built.

But before setting out on our journey into these colorful cultural initiatives, we must stress that we will only analyze their commoning politics and the interplay of the three outlined participative forms of democracy from their relationship to and negotiation with government agencies. For example, we will not make an analysis of the forms of participation relating to internal operation and organization (for example, the organization of initiative-taking artists and volunteers among themselves). Internal forms of participation can be very different from the ‘external’ forms entered into with government agencies or market parties.

## Montaña Verde

During the spring and summer of 2018, the Spanish architect collective Recetas Urbanas realized the artwork *Montaña Verde* in the De Coninck Square in Antwerp. The idea was to ‘give back this part of the city to its residents and make it grow to serve the wishes of residents and users’ (City of Antwerp, 2018). The Middelheim Museum and the Green Department, acting on behalf of the city government, were enthusiastic about the agonistic work methods of Recetas Urbanas, which can be described as:

Citizen actions that engender a civil space emancipated from the state ..., as the emancipation of a group that constitutes itself as an active subject capable of engaging with the authorities and disputing their power as a conscious and proactive purposeful citizen. (Bonet, 2017, p. 166)

The slope of the green mountain turned out to be a steep one to climb. This had everything to do with the setting: the project took place in what was for the Spaniards unfamiliar public space, and the commissioning partner strictly adhered to its civic character, whereas Recetas Urbanas is used to making such a public or civic space civil again. They do so by working in what they themselves call an ‘alegal’ manner. Taking human rights as their starting point, they often build works because there is a need for them, because people ask for these works, often without official permission. Part of the building process is building a new relationship with representatives of the representative democracy. This is why, in every building project, Recetas Urbanas bargains for a ‘social protocol,’ often drawn up with the aid of lawyers. These protocols stipulate the right of use by the groups involved according to commoning principles, in an agreement with governments. Through *doing*, especially by starting to build immediately, the group of architects thus manages to manoeuvre themselves into a negotiating position with respect to politicians and policymakers. Civil action or agonistic acting thus triggers a process of deliberation. However, in Antwerp this tactic of commoning politics failed and that is what makes this case so interesting, as it shows when the political game between the various forms of participation starts to falter.

The reason for this project was the wish of the city administration to realize another flower carpet, like the artist Annemie van Kerckhoven had done in 2015. For 2018, Tourism Flanders devised a touristic program around the theme of the Baroque and the Antwerp Green Department was once more asked to pull off this difficult feat. As in 2015, the city’s Middelheim Museum would assist. The project fitted in perfectly with

the planned summer exhibition ‘Experience Traps’. The two city services soon found common ground: one of the 16 artworks for the exposition of the Year of the Baroque would be a green sculpture somewhere in the city. Not a flower carpet this time, but something a little more sustainable. In order to answer the question of how to involve residents in the project and sensitize them to ‘green,’ the experts of the Middelheim Museum and the Green Department saw potential in the agonistic and deliberative work methods of *Recetas Urbanas*. However, it wasn’t long before this method was at odds with the representative mode of operation of the city services. This already began during the decision-making stage. Together with *Recetas Urbanas*, the organizers selected a suitable place in the city. It was to be a ‘grey’ (i.e. not-green) public space, accessible to tourists, but one that was, at the request of *Recetas Urbanas* and the Middelheim Museum, mainly in use by residents living in the margins of society and whose voice—in a representative democracy—was hardly being heard. Eventually the De Coninck Square was chosen, infamous for its drugs-related crime which the city had been trying for years to combat with measures ranging from 24-hour camera surveillance and strict police controls to attempts at gentrification. The agonistic proposal by *Recetas Urbanas* was to establish new social connections through the metaphor of ill or ‘bad’ weeds:

The huge challenge for cities is to bring extremely different people to live in and share the same environment and to design this environment for all. Obviously, there will be some left behind. Because they are too different, not ‘adapted’ or integrated’, sick or lost... they are considered as the ‘bad weed’ of urban life. Yet, everyone has a right to the city, to participate in city life and the city’s development. ... If we want to rethink how we build and live in our cities, it is crucial to include those who are excluded now. Let’s use this moment to grow social links as much as green; to re-introduce bad weed and wild weed, by changing the way we look at them. (*Recetas Urbanas*, 2017)

This proposal didn’t make it, however. It was decided to remain close to the theme of the Baroque by using herbs and fruit trees ‘that were cultivated during the Baroque era for their nutritious or healing qualities’ (Hermans and Boons, 2018, p. 91). During these first negotiations on behalf of the citizens who frequently used the De Coninck Square but whose voices were not being heard, *Recetas Urbanas* came away empty-handed. This is hardly surprising, since civil action is the trademark strategy of *Recetas Urbanas* to give them a strong negotiating position vis-à-vis authorities. But in this case, all the negotiations had already taken place, this time at the negotiating table. It was only after everything for the project had been thought out, up to the activities that could take place in and around the artwork, and after all the required materials (such as the herbs,

fruit trees, building material, and tools) had been ordered, that the residents and users of the square were involved in the project. This is in line with a representative logic, in which everything is well-considered, thought-out, and prepared in advance. Those who thought out the project, with the exception of the architects of Recetas Urbanas, were all employees of the city: the people from the Green Department and the Middelheim Museum, from the local Permeke Library, Citizen Participation, and Neighbourhood Sports. In short, representatives of the representative democracy. The local residents did have a part in constructing the work and its use. However, during the production stage, the green sculpture's design would hardly be altered and during its use there would be little deviation from the planning. This is not because there were no wishes or ideas, but because there was no more room for them. Commoning attempts by Recetas Urbanas to create some empowerment for those who have no voice—such as the residents' wish to create a temporary safe playground for children or have a debate about the design of the square—all failed. It was not just Recetas Urbanas' request to the city services to deviate from the planned work and materials that caused tension. The leader of Recetas Urbanas, architect Santiago Cirugeda, was clearly frustrated because he was unable to get in touch with responsible politicians: 'I don't even know where the building of the district of Antwerp is' (Cirugeda, 2018). All discussions were mediated by the city services or by freelancers appointed by them. Therefore, Cirugeda was unable to initiate a deliberative process. Recetas Urbanas had gone along with the logic of a representative democracy and were now unable to turn the tide. The plans were too far advanced and political issues underrepresented. The work was constructed in a top-down manner according to the image of the square held the representatives: a sculpture that would be appealing to tourists and that would refer to the Baroque in an artful way, while at the same time making the inhabitants of the square more sensitive to green. As a consequence, there was no 'giving back this piece of the city.' An agonistic approach did not work: residents and users of the square could participate in the plans conceived by others but could no longer contest or change these plans with the help of Recetas Urbanas.

## The Tower of Babel

*Montaña Verde* was dismantled when the 'Experience Traps' exhibition ended. The wood and the tools were distributed among the people of Antwerp. Much of the wood was collected by Rooftoptigter, an artist collective that is temporarily housed on the site of a former slaughterhouse in the north of Antwerp. The city service Antwerp Book City, which supports and organizes all kinds of literary activities, had introduced them

to Antwerp's city poet 2018-2019, Maud Vanhauwaert. Vanhauwaert wanted to build a Tower of Babel, as a monument to the confusion of tongues in a superdiverse city where more than four hundred languages are spoken and social, economic and ideological differences exist. It so happened that Rooftoptigter had been wanting to build such a tower for long time. By reversing the legend of the tower, the artists wanted to find out how this multilingualism could be shared as a common pool resource, unlike in representative democracy, which foregrounds only one language, Dutch. Legend has it that the Tower of Babel was never finished because God punished the people who tried to reach up to heaven by "afflicting" them with multilingualism: no longer able to understand each other, they thus had to abandon their ambitious scheme. By contrast, Vanhauwaert says: 'It is in our speechlessness that we understand each other best' (Vanhauwaert, 2018).

As with *Montaña Verde*, a suitable location still had to be found during the conceptual phase of the project. Attempts were made to erect a tower somewhere in the city center, but this always brought with it too many problems in terms of permits and regulations. Eventually, Rooftoptigter decided to use the slaughterhouse site where their workshop was located. In effect, Rooftoptigter was allowed to use an old shed owned by a project developer in exchange for participation projects in the neighbourhood - a private site, then. With permission of the owner, it gave the artists the freedom to design everything according to their own ideas. In order to make the site accessible to the public, they only needed an event permit from the city, and the fire brigade checked whether the Tower would be built according to safety regulations. Thanks to the collaboration of Antwerp Book City, the permit was given without problems. The city only provided services and did not interfere with the content of the project. For four months, the site became a semi-public space where artists, together with citizens, could shape a multilingual and diverse community. The idea was to erect a high tower from bamboo and other natural materials and to do this together with a great diversity of people from the neighbourhood and elsewhere in Antwerp. It was to be a tower from which as many languages as possible would be heard through a sound system and where people with various mother tongues could meet. The space was imagined by the artists as one of possibilities, thanks to multilingualism and cultural diversity - two elements that are so often seen as problematic by politics and the media. By starting from the wishes and dreams of local residents who had trouble getting their voices heard and by involving as many other languages, artists, volunteers, and sometimes illegal immigrants as possible in the construction and the activities in and around the tower, an agonistic process was initiated. The *Tower of Babel* was eventually shaped by this heterogeneous gang. The whole period of building, weaving, making, organizing, talking, cooking, caring, eating,

living, in short *doing* together, defined the project of the *Tower of Babel*. Throughout this process, many languages were spoken, including Arabic, French, Wolof, English, Dutch, and Russian, among others. Some people came to learn better Dutch, others found out that English gave them more opportunities. But people could understand each other, not just by speaking different languages and helping each other along the way, but especially by the doing: by pointing, by demonstrating things, reading each other's faces.

... it is actually through a process and because you are really working with other people [that] you don't really need to know the same language, and I like that very much. That was really my experience: 'it's not because you don't know a language that you can't work together'. And, actually, this language simply disappears. Just by holding something and saying 'give me a glass' and then saying 'this is a glass', then you have a language ... (Rombouts, 2020)

The form of participation in this project is deliberative because the use of the space was negotiated with the owner in the preparatory stage and the city services gave it their blessing. However, it also becomes agonistic when it gives a stage and voice to citizens who have difficulty being heard in a representative democracy and who also do not speak the right language to be able to reach their goals in a deliberative model. With the *Tower of Babel*, many people were given the chance to help design an urban space and a community: DJ Pierre, who is in a wheelchair, Ukrainian Maryna, who wants to become a social worker but is not yet allowed to obtain her diplomas, local resident Valentina, who sits at home out of necessity but loves to cook for others, Ousman from Gambia who has no papers but wishes to learn from others and get to know other people.

However, the civil action—building a multilingual and diverse community—was only temporary and the commoning politics took place on a site for which future plans had already been made.

In the near future, the project developer will turn this site into a road that will run through a completely renovated neighbourhood with high-rise apartments. So, the site already has a destination that is being structured top-down: the project developer, together with city planners and other stakeholders, makes a plan for what the space will look like, will build according to the design, and then the residents can move in. The *Tower of Babel* happened independently from these plans, meaning that in its conception, the project did not have a direct influence on the designs or building plans that are already in place. It was a cultural event in a fictional space, just like *Montaña Verde* was, and remained part of a visual arts exhibition. In the latter case, the city services did what they could to keep it that way, by reining in the agonistic attempts by

Recetas Urbanas as much as possible, in accordance with their representative logic. In the case of the *Tower of Babel*, they did not have to make this effort, as the project was done entirely outside public space. On the one hand this gives Rooftoptiger and the city poet a lot of space to have a place for an agonistic form of democracy, but on the other hand it raises the question of the extent to which it will actually have a place in society. In other words: can the initiated deliberation be continued and thus also make real political claims from this fictitious site?

The project developer was interested in the *Tower of Babel* because it allowed him to promote the new neighbourhood as a diverse one. Such enthusiasm is however ambivalent in the eyes of Rooftoptiger. It is a dilemma. Can the *Tower of Babel* really change the neighbourhood and the city or are they being used in the logic of representative participation by a project developer to maintain the status quo? It is by now a well-known and also infamous phenomenon of gentrification: to have artists temporarily give a positive image to a building or site, so that more houses can be sold. In short, are both agonistic and deliberative processes temporarily permitted here because they serve as the ideal relief valve within a representative hegemony? The artists of Rooftoptiger told us that on the one hand the Tower of Babel opened up the site for the public: even after the event, people from the neighbourhood are still making use of the space, organizing all kinds of activities. Rooftoptiger have also indicated a very small opening made by the project developer in cautiously approaching them for a more sustainable form of involvement in shaping the space in the long term. (Dandois, 2020). Whatever the case may be, in the Belgian city of Mechelen, cultural organizations took a different approach.

## The Ground of Things

The Theatre Arsenaal/Lazarus and municipal museum Hof van Busleyden started the project ‘The Ground of Things’ in 2019. The goal was to address inequality by claiming one square metre of ground for each inhabitant of Mechelen. After all, the main cause of socio-economic inequality has less to do with income than with inheritance, the organizers concluded. To everyone’s surprise, the city administration quickly took a liking to the project and immediately made 20,000 square metres available. This started a commoning dynamics in which all residents were invited to come up with ideas for (re) designing the urban space. So, in this project the people of Mechelen took the lead. This means that they are sketching the future image of the city. Arsenaal and the museum collected all the proposals, brought the ideas and the people behind them together, organized negotiations, meetings, and debates to discuss the plans, and provided a large

underground park, an exhibition designed by scenographer Jozef Wouters and by Barry Ahmad Talib. In this 'Neverending Park' the eighty proposals that were selected after a deliberative day of negotiations were exhibited. Each idea was visualized in a scale model made by the artist Benjamin Verdonck.

As this is an ongoing project, we can only look at the deliberative and agonistic elements of the preparation phase (of which the exhibition is a part). The initial claim by the artist Willy Thomas, who requested one square metre from the Arsenaal per resident of Mecheler, can certainly be called agonistic. But the positive reaction of the mayor to immediately make 20,000 square metres available soon led him into a deliberative logic. Also, civil servants and politicians were willing to negotiate with citizens and the intention has been to realize at least some of the proposals in collaboration with the city services. One proposal was even immediately realized, as it was very feasible. One point of attention that remains is: who are the citizens that come to negotiate about proposals? Are they not again mainly the white, empowered, and skilled middle-class people who feel at home in a deliberative model?

The initiators therefore, on a bicycle caravan, consciously visited the more disenfranchised neighbourhoods, the care centers and charity organizations, or, in other words, the people who find it difficult to make themselves heard. This tour resulted, among other things, in the project 'Unheard.' It was a platform for the voices of people who feel that they are not being heard. This 'chair' has meanwhile been realized and has become the subject of a process, in collaboration with a charity organization, in which the chair will tour Mechelen for two years to collect all those unheard voices.

Still, it remains difficult to reach subaltern groups, the organizers freely admitted. Many of the proposals did however focus on ideas to benefit people without voices, ranging from inserting low stimulus pauses at events for those who cannot tolerate a high intensity of sound and light, to a project where pet owners who cannot afford a veterinarian can get free consultations for their sick animals. There are now road signs listing the countries of origin of all Mechelen residents in recognition of the various cultures in the city, improved pathways for wheelchair users, and a public refrigerator (a "throw-away fridge") in which food can be placed for residents who have nothing to eat. The project is deliberative in that it organizes debates and rounds of negotiations and thus perhaps mainly attracts a white middle class population, but those same people—also because of encouragement by the organizers—do feel challenged to submit proposals on behalf of and for the benefit of citizens who usually are less seen and heard. By transforming these proposals into images and showing these in a large exhibition space that by its very design invites people to roam, meet people, and engage in conversation, the image, the doing and the experiencing are added to the deliberative process. In other words, the deliberative process results in

concrete projects and in ‘doing’ in such a way that agonistic proposals can be realized.

In this, ‘The Ground of Things’ is different from projects such as the participatory budgeting in Antwerp or Ghent, which are often managed by the government in conformity with representative logic. ‘The Ground of Things’, by contrast, was initiated and completely organized by two cultural organizations. The local government in no way interfered with the content, but did take an interest. The council member for Culture even spent a few nights in the park to talk with visitors and thus familiarized himself with the various associated ideas. Civil servants, too, came to the Neverending Park to learn about the concerns of the Mechelen residents who are or have participated in the project. In the final phase, negotiations will be held between them and the local government about the realization of the plans that surfaced in the deliberative process. And that is when it becomes exciting: eventually, it is still the government that decides whether plans will go through or not and in the form they will take. At that point, it will become clear to what extent these commoning politics will succeed and how far ‘The Ground of Things’ can cross over from the fictional space of the exhibition into the fabric of a real urban space. Thanks to the mediation of the cultural organizations, politicians and civil servants are already making preparations to effectively realize proposals and dreams. But for now, with the exception of a few completed works, the project is still mainly, both literally and figuratively, in the imaginary phase in a museum where everything can still be dreamt and said. As soon as the city makes good on its promise to execute the plans, the distinction will be gone and it will display how the imagination can really shape the city and, with it, society. Agonistic voices can then find their way within a representative order through artistic and deliberative mediation.

## Culture as a Critical Ally

In all three art projects, artists and cultural organizations proposed a common, in which a communal resource—a public square, language, and public ground, respectively—was to be managed, organized, and (re)produced by residents. The ‘success’ of this turned out to also depend on the role and attitude of the local government vis-a-vis the projects. According to Elinor Ostrom, an important condition for a common is that it is by its nature independent from the government but that the latter recognizes the right of citizens to organize themselves as a common (Ostrom, 1990). However, for a cultural commons, this recognition in itself is not enough. Such commons always relate to politics, as politics have a direct effect on society. At least such is the pitfall for artists and cultural organizations that are sympathetic to real participative democracy because,

as is evident from all three projects, the government can quite easily seal the agonistic movements of the artist within the realm of fiction.

Thus, *Montaña Verde* remained part of the 'Experience Traps' exhibition and was constantly held in that fictional space, by avoiding the deliberation between the agonistic manoeuvres of Recetas Urbanas and the organs of representative democracy. The *Tower of Babel*, since it was built on private property, was able to completely avoid the agents of representative democracy, thereby creating the freedom to thematize multilingualism in an agonistic move. But the distance from the government simply remained too large: agony was permitted within the poetic and artistic licence, but remained far from the politically charged debate on multilingualism. The poet Verhauwaert, by the way, has on many occasions publicly declared that she does not wish to make political art, which is quite different from the case of 'The Ground of Things,' where the dialogue with politicians and civil servants is deliberately entertained. For now, it seems like the city is willing to allow agonistic forms of participation through deliberation. A city allowing commoning politics and the local government acting as a facilitator would mark a first. Artists, as critical allies, can play a meaningful role in this because they, of all people, are capable of bringing out the voices of those who cannot speak or are not being heard. By imagining, performing, expressing, playing, they expand the possibilities of making, planting, building, and creating together - in short, of *doing* democracy.

## 2.3

# What music worlds do to participation: a cross-sectoral perspective.

Sandrine Teixido

The French history of world music has been accompanied by the growth of cultural diversity and multiculturalism, which have given rise to specific forms of participation. World music was created in France at the crossroads of various public policies, be they cultural, economic, social, or diplomatic in nature. Negotiations to exclude culture from the GATT treaty (1993) contributed, with the insistence of France, to the creation of the World Trade Organization in 1994. This phenomenon can also be found within the actions of UNESCO bodies from the 1970's to the present day regarding questions of intangible heritage, notably with the Convention on Cultural Diversity (2003). This position was strengthened by the cultural policy of the French Socialist Party from as early as 1977 and then, from 1981 onward, by the articulation of cultural diversity through a certain idea of national identity (Martigny, 2016). Paradoxically, it is accompanied by making culture a leading economic force.

The 1990's marked a period of professionalization of the world music community and an institutionalization of the sector. It was also a time when politicians and the scientific community took the lead in formulating the problems facing the sector -- a formulation that had hitherto been the prerogative of the industry, the media, and militants and activists who saw traditional music as a means of pleading for the recognition of other forms of music. Finally, starting in the 2000's, world music has been positioned at the nexus of intersectoral strategies bringing together urban policies, territorial development, and socio-economic policies. These strategies have also signaled increased investment by local authorities in culture.

We hypothesize that it is through modalities of participation that diversity within

world music is produced. These modalities of participation are constituted at the intersection of various public policies (cultural, social, economic, diplomatic), private policies, and militant counter-powers. Through several examples (the Africolor Festival, Etats Généraux des musiques du monde, action undertaken by the New Patrons, Mulhouse Capitale du Monde), we will identify the specific modalities of participation and determine the sectors involved in their definition. Finally, we will analyze what these participatory experiences produce.

## Music and Sectoral Policies

Since the Greeks, music has been associated with the city-state and political order. We know the extent to which music has been used to strengthen national cohesion, to establish order, or to educate and socialize the working classes. The contagious emotional power of music has led to openness toward others as well as inward-looking attitudes. Its supposed benefits (therapeutic or educational) would have music making plants grow as well as encouraging success in math. The immense gatherings around mega shows as well as the existence of identity-based micro-communities highlight the power of music for self-construction. Participation and music have been able to make themselves felt at various historical moments around crucial political issues, even if cultural institutions have reduced this dynamic to relations with the public. It is therefore surprising that music is hardly ever the focus of citizen consultations, hybrid forums or consensus conferences with the objective of discussing the place of music in our societies.

The completeness of the musical offering, enhanced since the Lang Ministry (1981), has been accompanied by a movement in the opposite direction. On the one hand, the exponential public demand for local music education, the increase in funding by local authorities, and the use of music by various sectoral policy-making bodies (cultural, territorial, social, etc.). On the other hand, the disappearance of a sectoral entry within the General Directorate for Artistic Creation (DGCA) has given way to new thematic entries focused on specific audiences (Cueillel, Ravet, 2017).

With the advent of the Ministry of Culture in 1959, the creation of and encounters with artwork are encouraged. In parallel with this vision, several alternative positions marked the beginnings of a reflection on participation: the cultural policy developed by the FNCC, popular education, and a whole constellation of journalists and activists working for the recognition of popular cultural expressions (traditional music, world

music, youth cultures). They speak of emancipation rather than participation, and they cultivate distrust of the centralizing state and its bottom-up cultural vision.

National education, which ceded its cultural aspect at the creation of the Ministry of Culture, gradually regained momentum in this sector to the point of developing cultural departments. The social aspect assumed by popular education is gradually being taken over by a number of social policies designed to combat exclusion and poverty. Popular education and the Ministry of Culture are once again coming together with an institutional rapprochement initiated with the creation in 1995 of a "National Council for Culture and Popular Education" followed by the signing of an inter-ministerial protocol on "artistic practices, culture and popular education" involving the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Youth and Sport in 2001. The same is true in the health sector, with a public action initiated by the Ministry of Culture in 1999 to conduct a joint policy with the State Secretariat for Health to support cultural projects carried out by professional artists in hospitals. This policy was developed at the regional level with the signing of an agreement between the Regional Directorates for Cultural Action (DRAC) and the Regional Hospitalization Agencies (ARH) in the mid-2000's.

On the activist side, institutional recognition was soon achieved for traditional music whose music and dance centers were officially approved by the Ministry of Culture. University research has involved musician-activists in amateur practices to constitute a methodology of professional collection. World music, for its part, was caught in the crossfire between diplomatic policies and cultural industries, both representing vectors of France's hold on UNESCO negotiations and consumer goods captured by globalized industries.

With the transition from the notion of diversity to that of cultural rights, we are moving from French diplomatic policies (and cultural policies aimed at immigrants) to an international law whose applicability and constraints can be questioned. The anthropological acceptance of culture is gradually leading to the idea that there are vital and necessary links between cultural action and the needs of people and society as a whole, including the jurisdictions of other ministries such as those governing education or the economy. With cultural democratization under attack for its failure to reach all segments of the population, the idea of the accessibility of works is being supported by mediation programs. This idea of encounter continues to evolve towards expanding accessibility to non-European cultures via instruments such as festivals, which allow a whole world of music to be presented. We are moving incrementally from dedicated cultural facilities to an equitable distribution of these facilities throughout

the territory. Their accessibility, both physical and social, implies the intersection of cultural, social, and territorial policies and leads to a plurality of uses of these same facilities. We are thus moving from a sectoralization of culture via the MCC (dedicated facilities, sectoralization of aesthetics) towards a movement of desectoralization. The idea is emerging that sectorality is detrimental to public action because it does not allow for the construction of meaning intended for citizens through the lens of contributory democracy and cultural rights.

Finally, under the influence of the latest territorial public policies and the evolution of city policies, the metropolis is becoming the level at which the effects of these intersectoral policies are best observed. At the juncture of policies for international cultural promotion (creative cities, etc.), territorial transformation (NOTRE and LCAP laws of 2015), and Agenda 21 for a cultural policy that integrates cultural rights and concern for the environment, the city is becoming the laboratory where human rights are negotiated, where the fight against exclusion and integration into an enlarged community is being played out. The tensions between a capitalistic and individualistic reading (Harvey, 2015) of the city and the return to social functions of inclusion for all within the city can be seen there.

## “Le Noël mandingue” of the Africolor festival

The Mandinka Christmas (Noël mandingue) of the Africolor Festival is an example from a time when the notion of participation had not yet dominated the agendas of public cultural policies. Philippe Conrath, then a journalist, created the Africolor Festival in 1989 at the Théâtre Gérard Philipe in Saint-Denis at the request of its director Jean-Claude Fall and with a network of contacts in the AFAA circuit. Africolor then lasted only for the two days centered around Christmas. Positioned as an alternative to the bourgeois and Catholic conception of Christmas, which excludes the large number of Muslim immigrants within the territory, Mandinka Christmas carries on the militancy of its former creator, a member of the radical left, and his mistrust of political tutelage.

The existence of Mandinka Christmas and its success is based on the participation of a number of actors, including the Malian community and more particularly the association Soninké Guidimakajike, a tontine intended to finance the burial costs and

the return of Malian citizens to the Kayes Region. The alliance between the association, the theater, and Philippe Conrath made it possible to invite the griot Nahawa Doumbia. The story goes that Nahawa Doumbia arrived in Saint-Denis and called a number of Malian relays from a phone booth to assure them that she was there and at the same time to ensure the immediate success of this first Christmas concert. Due to the lack of public transportation after midnight, Mandinka Christmas became a nocturnal event, making public what many women were organizing in their private domestic space.

The success was dazzling, and the night became the meeting point of a white public eager to get away from bourgeois family codes. Public attendance at Mandinka Christmas continued to grow until it achieved a first level of political recognition -- at the time of the occupation of the Saint-Bernard Church by undocumented migrants, led in part by Malian associations, including Guidimakajike, in 1994. The second level of recognition would take place five years later when the explosion of attendance rates made it impossible to fit the entire audience in the theatre. From the 2000's onward, a movement to develop this event has been gaining traction within the territory of Seine Saint-Denis at the request of the department's General Council. It was a question of involving a certain number of actors from the area in the cultural efforts of a department that was short on funding.

What can we infer about participation? First of all, we have here a successful example of attendance to a cultural institution by a very large audience, even what we could term the meeting of diverse audiences. However, this attendance does not concern access to consecrated artworks (cultural democratization) but the visibility of musical and cultural expressions unknown to the public (cultural democracy). On the other hand, making such an event possible required not only the alliance of three groups of individuals with dissimilar backgrounds (a journalist, a Malian association, and a theater team) but also "tinkering" with the way of doing things. It is also the participation of skills that are not then "professionalized" that this example shows: Malian griots, public relations, volunteers, etc. These skills learned on the job are experienced in the form of inventiveness and activism urging a wider cultural offering and are not yet a sign of the precarious nature of cultural professions.

Finally, for Africolor, now a festival, it is a question of participating in the making of a cultural territory, that of the Seine Saint-Denis, still called the "red suburbs" due to its working-class past but which is in the process of mutating into a laboratory of multiculturalism. The example of "Mandinka Christmas" shows that participation can be based on a certain vagueness of the statuses involved and on a series of skills

built up and mobilized on the job and according to the needs and imperatives of the project. At the beginning of the experience, everyone is a novice, including the Malians who are learning to become spectators of familiar musical expressions they have never seen on a theatre stage. Each of the actors, the team, and the spectator develops a career (Djakouane, 2011). This collective learning has also had repercussions on the Guidimakajike association. Created to help with the return of Malian nationals to their country, it gradually redirected its activity towards the organization of cultural events, schooling assistance, etc., especially as third and fourth generation children turn away from the idea of returning to a land they have never known.

The development of Africolor into an itinerant festival throughout the department implies a concern for the public that had been overshadowed by the success of Mandinka Christmas. Everything has had to be built with each of the partner cities, all of which have varying degrees of dedicated cultural facilities and experience with the public. Africolor thus offers its know-how with immigrant communities, while the cities propose to work with different sectors of the municipality such as primary schools (national education), retirement homes, social centers (the social sector), the creation of night buses (transportation policy). This intersectorality is new for the festival, which requires it to hire a person dedicated to public relations and to develop "cultural actions" in schools.

The evolution of the festival also marks the end of the great collective and militant narratives which placed multicultural issues at the heart of public policy. The history between Africolor and Seine Saint-Denis reveals the evolution of cultural policies aimed at immigrants (Esafré-Dublet, 2014): from workers to immigrants, from cultural programs with a view to returning to home countries to the idea of national integration, from associations being taken over by the children of second-generation immigrants to anti-racist struggles. The history of Africolor also reveals the evolution of international politics, from France's cultural influence abroad to the need to be open to welcoming foreign cultures on the territory. Other festivals specializing in the dissemination of world music are growing and a network of world music professionals is being set up, the "Zone Franche" network.

## Etats généraux des musiques du monde

The organization of the "Etats généraux" (national forum) of World Music at the initiative of the "Zone Franche" network in 2009 allows us to explore how participation works at the heart of technical democracy (Callon, Lascoumes, Barthe, 2001). It

explicitly refers to another, previously organized event, the colloquium on World Music organized in 1999 at the Grande Halle de la Villette (Paris). This colloquium is not an isolated case. In 1997, the first prospective contractual system on the performing arts was published. In 1998, the National Commission for "les musiques actuelles" (modern music) submitted its report to Catherine Trautmann, then Minister of Culture. The same year, the First Meeting of Urban Cultures took place at the Grande Halle de la Villette. World music, "musiques actuelles," performing arts, urban cultures -- all these terms have been used sporadically, often controversially, and, at the end of the 1990's, have found levers and arenas that make them categories of cultural action and arbitration. At the same time, this recognition is accompanied by a number of public service missions such as the attention paid to territorial populations, to young people attending school, and to remote audiences with the "Chart of public service missions of performing arts establishments" (Circular of 2 October 1998).

An analysis of the period from 1999 to 2009 shows an increase in the number of missions regarding regulation, guidance, advice, and expertise. We are witnessing a resurgence of politicians and scientists in controlling and, soon, monopolizing the formulation of problems to the detriment of the actors who had been advocating for the cause of world music (independent actors, activists, journalists). If world music still held a significant political charge in 1999, in 2009 and despite the controversies that still stir the milieu, world music is on the verge of becoming simply a part of the action of cultural policies and losing its ability as a sector to raise questions that are strictly political. Institutionalization, professionalization, and the rise of expertise have taken over from the activists, volunteers, and artists of diverse backgrounds who took part in the creation of this heterogeneous sector, imposing a common grammar of cultural action on them.

Between 1999 and 2009, the issue of cultural diversity as set out in the UNESCO conventions of 2003 and 2005 also emerged. These conventions, ratified by France in 2007, pose problems of implementation. The members of the network are invited to contribute by monitoring cultural policies at all territorial levels. If the 1999 symposium marks the birth of a professional world music sector, what the actors seem to want to institute in 2009 is the recognition of the "world music sector" as an operative figure on the political, administrative, and economic levels through the use of the term "instrument" in the titles of the debates. We then slide towards a figure of world music as an alternative to cultural action. Through and with world music, we could better accomplish what social or urban policies are trying to achieve in order to promote harmony in a pluralistic community. World music "obligates" the pursuit of certain

actions more than others; similarly, it is assumed to have beneficial "influences" on certain sectors. In what way? Through sensitive human "encounters." It is because the notion of diversity (cultural, linguistic, representational) is seen as essential in the fight against the negative effects of globalization that the encounter has become necessary.

How do we make this new type of encounter happen? It would seem that for this to happen, it is necessary to be accompanied. However, the porosity between roles and statuses, positions and professions, as well as the interweaving of the professional and career paths of spectators, leads to competition among the actors (programmer, journalist, volunteer, activist, spectator, ethnomusicologist, tourist) likely to take on the role of mediator and represent the voice of emerging collectives. While the citizen's voice is still largely absent from these "Etats Généraux," the diversification of representatives has enabled the emergence of new identities that were not previously taken into account. We must now assess how these new identities have been identified.

Cultural democracy and openness to new aesthetics has the disadvantage of presenting a state of the world where specialists would have to "spot" collectives and aesthetics that have up to this point been invisible (due to cultural policies or historical mechanisms). The transition towards a participatory and contributory democracy takes into account the possibility of a joint construction of knowledge and collectives. The ordinary citizen gives way to emerging groups, to singular collectives whose identity, composition, and boundaries are difficult to define. For Callon, Lascoumes and Barthe (2001: 190), what is at stake is the ability offered by the procedures of contributory democracy to delay for as long as possible the negotiation of emerging identities with the goal of reinforcing the composition of the collective. One may ask to what extent the intersectorality of public policies, through the diversity of justification mechanisms they employ, contribute to delaying this process and therefore to contributing to a better composition of the collective.

## Mulhouse Capitale du Monde

"Mulhouse, capital of the world" is an action supported by the Fondation de France since 2014 and is intended to support musicians from Mulhouse whose aesthetics are related to world music. It is part of a cultural program initiated in 1998 by the same foundation in partnership with the Parc de la Villette, which aims to develop the artistic and professional support of artists dedicated to aesthetics and mediums that lack institutional recognition. The action in favor of world music has not always

been called "Mulhouse, capital of the world": the evolution of the way in which the targeted demographics of the program has been categorized makes it possible to explore the juncture between private and public cultural policy. The program is similar to participatory action as an instrument in favor of groups that are usually under-represented in the political and cultural field. It works for greater musical justice in favor of the inclusion of musicians from immigrant backgrounds within the mechanisms that professionalize music. It postulates their remoteness, their ignorance of conventions, and their non-recognition by local cultural institutions. It questions how these "musicians" will be identified as well as in what contexts and to whom they are invisible.

There are instances where their musical practice is particularly visible: the different social centers of the city, the associative network, forms of neighborhood sociability. This point raises questions about the way in which cultural policies produce categorizations that authorize rights and, in return, benefits: a "musician" is someone who makes a living from his or her music by joining a system of unemployment benefits called "intermittence" by joining a subsidized orchestra or by giving music lessons. The remainder refers to the vast circle of amateurs ranging from the simple music fan to those who produce the harmonies that can be heard so often in Alsace. But what about, for example, the Algerian singer who lives from his art by performing in weddings and concerts financed by the community and the many cabarets spread across the German and Swiss borders? This music economy is based entirely on the practice of his music. Conversely, what about the Gnawa group, whose members work during the week and serve the community at weekends as precious bearers of a lively musical culture? An attempt to solve this first difficulty of identification was based on the help supplied by the social services of the city, allowing for a redefinition of the target group as "musicians from immigrant communities." However, this qualification quickly proved to be unsatisfactory, as the musicians moved between different spaces (domestic, cultural, social, etc.) within the city of Mulhouse itself.

The city itself provides an interesting observation trail through the exchanges it allows. It is the idea of a more or less loose core of musicians who meet and play with each other. Within this circle, a number of musicians who are not related to world music or to specific communities prove to be bridge builders because of their willingness to learn other musical languages. The phrase "Mulhouse musicians interested in aesthetics related to world music" seems to correspond better to the target of a system of social welfare accompaniment. But we still need to ask ourselves about the term "Mulhouse." Are we talking about citizens or inhabitants with all that this may exclude (migrants) or attributing meaning linked to city policies. The city of Mulhouse has a strong migratory

and industrial history, for both employer and worker, as the cradle of the first stages of textile and chemical industrialization. At the height of the rise of the far right party at the municipal level in 1995, local elected officials published surveys to enhance the value of this migratory contribution.

The Fondation de France's support resonates with this long history of enhancing the city's migratory contribution and its industrial heritage. It also crosses paths with another segment of history, that of the militants of the 1970's promoting the recognition of a youth culture, which led to the opening in 1992 of the second "salle de musiques actuelles" (SMAC) in France. Some continue to play the local scratch music, notably with the association Old School which decided in 2012 to create the label "Mulhouse capitale du monde" as a way to thumb its nose at the rejection that the city inspires as well as to highlight the diversity of its immigrant communities or its proximity to the almighty city of Basel in Switzerland or the eco-friendly Freiburg-en-Brisgau in Germany. Many participants in the program quickly adopted this label, and "Mulhouse, capital du monde" became the common denominator, even generating competition over who would be best placed to embody this label.

This support mechanism aims to help musicians to structure their project on a professional basis. Paradoxically, it has resulted in an insistence on autonomy and responsibility. The notion of entrepreneurship is valued, the aim being to increase employability and the ability to be self-employed. This is not without its misunderstandings: how can we claim integration into a cultural employment system that overvalues the performance of concerts to the detriment of ancillary activities such as workshops or teaching, while maintaining what has enabled the recognition of music that features both musical production and specific social skills? The recognition of a balance between these two poles seems difficult and systematically refers back to the amateur-social organizer side of the equation or, on the contrary, forces them to protect themselves behind the intermittency contracts. Artistic and professional support systems at the juncture of cultural, social, and economic policies generate tensions between the valorization of non-visible practices and the call to entrepreneurship, which is sometimes difficult for individuals to manage. The over-valuation of the autonomy and responsibility of the individual for his or her successes and failures, which is characteristic of neo-liberal thinking, can lead to the possibility of denouncing the political mechanisms at work to neutralize them.

A third pole of public economic and territorial policies has been brought to bear on the program: a whole network of actors developing an experiment around cultural

cooperatives encourages the administrative leader of the "Mulhouse capital du monde" action to develop a cooperative in order to bring together the musicians and people involved in the system. Moreover, the reorganization of the regions will allow a movement towards a revaluation of the city by including it in its links with the rest of the region as well as in the heart of the cross-border space that brings together Mulhouse, Basel, and Freiburg-en-Brisgau. The Drac Grand Est thus proposes to draw together under the same label several centers for the dissemination of "musiques actuelles" in which "Mulhouse, capitale du monde" will also find its place. Nevertheless, these policies to revitalize the region do not always succeed in breaking the cycle of artistic recognition, which above all requires recognition outside the province of origin.

Taking the environment into account as the meeting point of cultural and territorial policies has two consequences. The territorial perspective questions not the culture of origin of individuals but the environment to which people react and from which they will build skills. In the same way, the issue of territory questions cultural actions having the sole aim of accompanying the careers of new spectators in order to challenge the territory in terms of its resources. Mediation becomes an ecosystem whose objective is to compose collectives with divergent cultural interests. The social and cultural fields are resources among others that rely on the vitality of the citizenry. It is then a matter of increasing the variety of opportunities to contribute to the world rather than to meet needs. The recognition of the "capability" and competence of anyone, whether individual or collective, to assess their own interests, needs, and goals becomes the purpose of participation. The dependent relationship the cultural sector has had with the social field has changed. With cultural democratization, this relationship was necessary in order to reach remote audiences. With cultural democracy, this relationship made it possible to pluralize the aesthetic offer and audiences. With participatory democracy, the social field becomes a resource among others in a territorial dynamic.

## New Patrons: when the artistic initiative comes from the citizen

What about artistic projects in the public space that spring from the citizen initiative. "Les Nouveaux commanditaires," an action supported by the Fondation de France and created in 1992 by the Belgian artist François Hers, aims to renew the reflection on the place of art in society by means of a protocol for distributing roles and responsibilities

among citizens, artists, and mediators-producers. Every citizen can demonstrate "the ability of each and every one not only to recognize and express a need to create but also to respond to it by assuming the share of responsibility that belongs to him or her in order to work together." This program is part of the long history of commissioning works, first "done by the Prince," later the prerogative of the state and local authorities, to make them accessible to citizens. It challenges the autonomy of the contemporary artist and the conditions of his or her "reconnection" with society. The implementation of this program raises the question of adequate procedures for participation. The strict distribution of responsibilities among citizens, artists, and mediators even seems to imply that "successful" participation is a question of procedures. Finally, the program raises the question of the links between initiative and participation at a time of porous statutes and shifting or evolving expertise.

In this context, why do the New Patrons advocate a strict distinction of roles? The strict distribution of roles responds to the needs of citizens to have access to the experience of artists who are inaccessible in contemporary art. It is not a question of "doing" things together but of promoting dialogue between citizens and an experienced artist, a dialogue that will have the virtue of transforming a citizen into a patron and an idolized artist into an artist responsible to society through the work of an accredited mediator. However, the application of this protocol to music is not simple. On the one hand, contemporary music is criticized because of the subsidies it receives, which are out of all proportion to its public reception. On the other hand, public commissions seem to be reserved for certain aesthetics that value the position of the creative and innovative author, pushing other models, such as borrowing or imitation as creative processes, into the shadows.

The action of the New Patrons avoids the shock of an abrupt meeting with artwork by creating a space for the common construction of the demand. The writing of the specifications and the negotiations with the artist -- not as an ordinary citizen, nor as a spectator, but as a future patron -- allows for the formation of a point of view. This work, first elaborated with the mediator and then in discussion with the artist, opens a space for the articulation of public problems (Dewey, 2005). The time and autonomy guaranteed by the support granted by the Fondation de France, in contrast to the short turn-over of projects in the musical worlds, makes it possible to postpone the necessity of defining what makes music. Nevertheless, this autonomy from the different realms of art (Becker, 2010) can be expensive and the feedback difficult to accept for professional actors who have not been involved since the beginning. We can therefore legitimately ask ourselves whether the action amounts to producing "more" artwork or whether

it has an impact on the usual ways of functioning? Is the program part of a desire to pluralize ways of doing or does it make it possible to hide the withdrawal of public funds through private funding? The action has been slow to be accepted and has for a long time been seen as competitive or contrary to the ethics of the artist's choice by the vote of a committee of peers, as is the case for public commissions. Studies have shown that this difference in procedure had no bearing on the choice of artists who turn out to be the same in both cases (Négrier, Michel, Yaouanc, 2006).

*Ultimo Cielo* was commissioned from 2012 to 2017 to take place in Paris, Turin, and Bordeaux at the request of an amateur orchestra and at the juncture of public policies aimed at amateurs, the private policy of the Fondation de France with the New Patrons program, policies to encourage cultural projects in high schools, and to a lesser extent economic policies to structure "les musiques actuelles." What difference does it make to take into account the expertise of the citizen-amateur from the moment the request is made? To delegate to them the initiative that presides over the birth of the work and not to presume what should please them? It is a question of reversing the ways of doing things accepted by the institution: developing an artistic and cultural project and then looking at the audiences that could participate in it to fill in the boxes and the funding quotas. *Ultimo Cielo* proposed to change the register of experience -- emphasizing the experience of "doing work" rather than a planned work.

The trust placed in the artist's hands and the time allotted for negotiation and creation make it possible to suspend judgment and to delay categorization. The work is considered as a journey without immediately transforming it into a project. Duration is essential here. Using the notion of the laboratory is a good way of describing this time that has been "granted," which is also time that is not subject to broadcasting deadlines and which, through this economic immunity, makes it possible to establish a real feeling of freedom. If this confidence allows the work to create the space for a commons, it does so not without imposing on the artist a duty to find the right form.

With *Ultimo Cielo*, the commons is anchored on a proposal by the artist, Battista Lena, who used a biographical anecdote involving her mother, Carla Lonzi, an Italian art critic and spearhead of Italian feminism, and Pinot Gallizio, a self-taught artist and situationist. Carla Lonzi maintained a correspondence with Pinot Gallizio in which the principal subjects involved experimentation and participation. For Lonzi, participation is not a result or an objective that is framed and evaluated but an experiment with the complexity and intensity of life itself. This anecdote, although linked to Battista Lena's past, is in a way foreign to him because it concerns a time when he was very

young. Everyone can project their own relationship to experimentation in this figure. Amateurs had to answer collectively for this work which both "resists and obligates" the participants to support the responsibility of the chosen form. If the protocol of the New Patrons requires the distinction of roles, it leads to a shared responsibility to defend together the chosen form when it returns to the world.

The journey of the work has not been without conflict and controversy. It even led to the association splitting into factions at the start of the work's commission by revealing and deepening latent divergences that would prove irreconcilable. Nor did the protocol prevent the renewal of borders between amateurs and professionals and between recognized professionals and professionals-teachers; it shifted and moved them back in time but did not abolish them. Finally, after four years of autonomy and working "outside" the conventions of the "art world", obtaining the recognition of the artwork by the milieu proved to be laborious: it was difficult to connect the project to the time frames of programming and a reduction in income within the recording industry. The legibility of the "demand" also proved difficult to reconcile to an industry and a cultural world where attentional capital is a rare commodity. The long duration of the project, if it allows for work and delays the categorization of what is being created, does not fit well with the demand for new and newly full venues.

However, it is in the long term that we must judge whether this type of experience can change cultural ways of doing things. Thus, after a creative phase in Paris that lasted until 2014, it was in Turin that the work was performed and consecrated by peers on a festival stage (Jazz Torino Festival). Then it was in Bordeaux in 2017 that the work was again taken up thanks to an unprecedented confluence of circumstances: the relocation of some members of the orchestra to the area ; a municipality interested in promoting its associative structures; a high school seeing in this project the opportunity to respond to the cultural mission imposed on it, and the availability of financing for music due to the implementation of the above-mentioned contractual system allowing project leaders to collect additional funding. Here again, the recognition and attribution of value to the work is still on its way. These are built not only within the world of music but at the crossroads of several worlds (cultural, economic, educational, associative and social) where sectoral public policies can directly or indirectly play a role.

## Conclusion

These examples allow us to make an historical assessment of how participation has been apprehended in the various worlds of music. The Africolor Festival, created in 1989, marks a time when world music was not yet considered to be a sector of cultural action. It was only from the 2000's onward that world music became a "sector" with economic weight to bear and, at the same time, an "instrument" for territorial and cultural development. Gradually integrated into the cultural action of the Ministry of Culture and Communication, which favors a cross-sectoral approach, "world music" -- operational for leveraging resources -- is losing its political potential and giving way to two other tendencies: cultural rights on the one hand, and the participation and identification of minorities and "invisible" populations on the other.

In light of these developments, one may ask what effects cross-sectorality within music projects have in terms of the artistic value attributed to them? Intersectoral policies seem to produce common interests, contribute to the construction and progressive negotiation of a common value of art, but they can also be used reductively as instruments for achieving other aims. In this context, it seems that intersectoral policies favor procedures in which the role of the individual collectively takes on definition, but they come up against the conventions of the various art worlds and the different time frames that these procedures can impose. The cross-sectoral nature of public policies, through the diversity of the justification mechanisms they employ, contributes to delaying the process of qualifying what makes music and consequently to a better composition of the collective. The process of "valuation" (Dewey, 2011) of artistic projects takes place over a long period of time and at the meeting points of several different qualification systems. It requires a process that will allow space for discussion and for the negotiation of emerging identities in order to produce a commonly accepted qualification. This process does not fit well with the solidified ways of doing things in the cultural world and the speed of project renewal unless an external event forces us to rethink our ways of "doing" music together.

It would seem, at the end of this study, that the renegotiation of the value of art and the politics of recognition encounter an obstacle that is difficult to overcome: while intersectoral policies and participatory democracy work for the extension and inclusion of more and more collectives within a framework of democratic rights and a better acceptance of the political value of art, the economic provisions that allow the viability of this political project constantly thwart the possibility of its realization.

The paradox could be expressed in the following way, in line with the recent work of Pierre Charbonnier (2020): the possibility of the political project of a democratic and participatory society depends on the conditions necessary for the advent of a society of abundance. However, the increasingly real limits of our thermodynamic economies encourage us to select and sort out the collectives that have the right to participate in the abundance and well-being offered by this society. To put it another way, the political will to recognize the rights of increasingly diverse collectives (through music, for example) has not taken into account the economic conditions of this project. In short, we lack economic behavior that is in line with our political project. How can we ensure the political aspect of art and the participation of a greater number of individuals (even non-humans) in this democratic project without it being captured by the economic mechanisms (on the whole neo-liberal) that structure our society of abundance?

In concrete terms, there is regularly a discrepancy between the values displayed by these projects (participation, recognition, etc.) and the implementation of these projects, where there is often a return (presented as inevitable) to mechanisms of selection, efficiency, and speed, producing an impression that cultural projects will always be subsumed in a set of larger policy goals. If thinking of new forms of economic behavior that are calibrated to this political project necessarily exceeds the scope of this article, perhaps we can state some methodological concerns. First of all, it would be necessary to keep in mind this mismatch between the political project and economic behavior in order to avoid normalizing certain mechanisms at work in the worlds of art and culture (the exceptionalism of the artist, camouflaging neo-liberal entrepreneurship as a call to autonomy, locking in administrative and political innovations making it impossible to think of institutional and organizational alternatives). On the other hand, it seems to us essential to put in place mechanisms of "delay" within these projects in order to give ourselves the truly political means necessary to make room for the participation of more entities and to redefine the value of art. Intersectoral policies are not enough if they do not contribute to redefining economic behavior in line with the political project they set out. In this sense, participation must not only involve the recognition and integration of more and more collectives, but it must allow these same collectives to participate in the redefinition of economic behaviors corresponding to a political project where the value of art is not defined solely by an economic logic of scarcity disconnected from subsistence needs and whose biases are to be corrected by the "redistributive" action of the welfare state.

## 2.4

# Perspectives from a kitchen table

## The rediscovery of Cultural Democracy post-Coronavirus as opportunity and value

Niels Righolt

I'm sitting at my kitchen table writing this article at what has become my primary work space during these last few months. Outside the window, the seasons have shifted from winter to spring, green leaves unfold by the hour and the sky seems brighter than ever before ...

This could be a classic in *medias res* poetic start to an article about the potential impact of cultural institutions and organizations working with an audience focus, a perspective on how to become relevant to a more diverse group of people and how to strengthen cultural participation at large. And in a way it is. This is an article about cultural democracy and participation, about civic participation and partnerships, about opportunities for new citizens to really anchor themselves in their new countries through using cultural participation as a way to define citizenship.

But my sitting here at the kitchen table writing is just partly a result of my own choice. The main reason is the effective lockdown of Denmark as a strategy and immediate response to the emergence of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) crisis. I'm working from home as a direct consequence of this. Like millions of people in Denmark, in Scandinavia, and in Europe, I'm practicing social distancing, doing my share to minimize the spread of

the virus. And as the weeks pass, more countries across the globe have done likewise and more or less dramatically locked down their societies.

At this point - in the final days of April 2020 - the premise for this article, for the cultural life I was going to write about, and for the communities that culture is part of has fundamentally changed. Instead of an article on the implications of cultural democracy and participation in a prospering and growing sector, my article will be about a sector in disarray and how experiences with participatory practices might show a path forward out of this crisis.

## A structural earthquake

There is but little doubt that the cultural and creative sectors are among the most affected by the Corona crisis. Empty theatres, museums, concert halls, heritage sites and venues, cancelled cultural events, closed cultural institutions -- this is the immediate result of the virus crisis causing a structural earthquake for an already vulnerable sector.

For some cultural operators, the crisis has already been a devastating encounter. We have witnessed the first bankruptcies and involuntary closures. And for many institutions and festivals, the crisis has led to an unexpected and massive loss of revenue opportunities, of funding support, and even to some extent project funding. For all players in the cultural and creative sectors alike, this is a hard blow. But it's especially hard for the more fragile cultural operators. For all the small independent or privately funded venues, theatres, and exhibitions spaces, for all the many small companies and freelance professionals, the crisis poses a structural threat to their survival. And if that happens, the 'supply chain' and interconnected logic the whole sector is built upon will break, causing irreparable economic and social damage to the sector and - as I claim - to our societies.

In March and April, the estimated loss of revenue for the Danish cultural sector alone is some 15 billion DKK - a little more than EUR 2 billion. It is more than 10% of the sector's annual turnover and in Copenhagen, for example, it affects a fair share of the 60 000 employees in the experience and tourism economy.

So, even publicly owned and funded institutions and events are experiencing severe budget shortfalls, museums and major performing arts institutions are giving

notice to their employees, and we can see how they too are closing down activities and re-orientating their focus to their core missions. In the face of bankruptcy and unemployment for many culture workers, the coming months and years will be largely about their survival, but of equal importance will be the value of arts and culture in all their aspects to our societies.

## Early impact assessments

There is a broad understanding across European countries that the impact of the crisis on the cultural sector is simultaneously social, economic, and political and that it affects the fundamental right of access to culture. In reality the full consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic on the cultural sector are just becoming apparent, and it will be months - maybe years - until the overall impact is known.

European governments, arts councils and national agencies, culture sector organizations, research centers, and civil society organizations are trying to understand and assess the full scale of disruption to the cultural sector. At the national level in some countries, sector-specific associations and civil society groups started to monitor the impact, often through online surveys, quite early on. At a trans-national level, the General Directorate for Education, Arts and Culture under the European Union, UNESCO, OECD, and civil society NGOs like Culture Action Europe have followed up with efforts to translate these early impact assessments into recommendations for actions and support to the sector, both in terms of financial aid programs and political frameworks adequate to the emergency caused by the crisis.

## Responses and questions

As a first response, we have seen vulnerable small- and medium-sized cultural institutions and enterprises being included in measures targeting the whole economy, which some governments established early in the process, especially in the Nordic countries. The second stage was the enactment of policy measures specific to the cultural sector as an effort to cushion the economic impact on this sector. A great many countries across Europe have now launched or announced overall support packages for the sector at large or more targeted support funding initiatives by sub-sectors. In some countries,

loans and low interest rates have been made available, and municipalities and regional authorities are developing support structures for freelance workers and small businesses in the cultural sector.

These first steps are obviously about how we can design adequate and sufficiently strong support mechanisms that can meet and alleviate the negative impacts in a short-term perspective. In the medium term, it will be about identifying new opportunities for different public, private, and non-profit players engaged in cultural and creative production. This represents an immediate recognition of the vulnerability of the culture and creative sectors that has been revealed by the crisis.

In the longer term, the key questions will most likely turn around the impact the crisis has on the existing structures and value systems within the cultural sectors and how this impacts what the role - or potential role - of culture in our democracies might be.

If anything, the crisis has shown the value of culture to our residents. Millions of people are finding a source of connection, comfort, and well-being through culture and cultural participation. Many institutions and organizations have provided online and free content during the Covid-19 lockdowns for that purpose. For many organizations, the ability to act digitally during the initial crisis has shown a path towards the development of new and potentially more sustainable and resilient business models.

## From here to ...

So where are we now? What can we learn from this crisis? In what ways can we rethink and reposition the cultural sectors in our societies on the basis of the lessons we have learned? The answers to these and similar questions are both many and diverse in nature. When my colleagues and I speak with cultural managers and directors, they express a longing for the crisis to pass so that they can start working again and go back to a reality that resembles the one they experienced before the crisis hit.

This is understandable. It is focused, being based on a *modus operandi* they master and incorporating concrete strategies, plans, and projects that just need to be implemented to get their businesses rolling again. And it is rooted in the firm belief that this crisis, however tough it may seem, is just one among so many of the crises that preceded it. And they might be right -- at least to a certain extent. What we will probably see is the

survival of the fittest, with the fittest being understood as those who either are perceived to be the most significant to our respective national cultural heritage, those with the sharpest profile, or those with the highest numbers of visitors.

In the Nordic countries, there already seems to be a relatively clear pattern. The publicly owned institutions and the private or independent organizations with considerable long-term support from public funding bodies and structures are the most likely to survive. They are weakened, and they have lost a fair share of their financial revenue, but their organizational structure is intact, as is their core funding. For them it will probably take quite a while to get back to the level of activities and visitors they had before the crisis set in. Nevertheless, the opportunity to achieve this goal does exist.

For the rest of the cultural operators, the future looks more problematic and insecure. Their core funding is often closely tied to other measures such as box office sales, result-based project funding, and content revenues. For them, the loss of income as well as the number of exempt and dismissed employees, collaborative relationships that have lapsed, bankrupted collegial partners, and challenges to find adequate additional funding opportunities is a clear warning of a whole new reality. To many of these midsize and small-scale cultural operators, the crisis has in effect been a structural earthquake of unprecedented dimensions in our time. They will have to rethink their operations and purpose in order to survive.

In such a new reality, out-of-the-box thinking will be needed to find the necessary footholds and tools to move forward. And here, their relationships with the audience and the surrounding community will be absolutely crucial.

## A digital parachute

One positive thing coming out of this crisis is the innovative force and drive we have witnessed across the continent. This can be seen in how arts and cultural institutions, artists and culture workers at large have tried to meet the remarkable quest for online cultural content during the crisis - from the heavily extended streaming of films and TV series and the availability of participatory events with community choirs via social media to virtual visits to museums and galleries, live streamed performances from opera houses, theatres and concert halls, as well as music events where the artists perform from their living rooms via social media platforms.

Without prior preparation the sector has done its best to meet the need and demand for connectivity, context and experiences and, at the same time, to invest energy and creativity into the development of new formats and expressions. The acceleration in the digitization of culture as a first response to the crisis and as a way to maintain their relations with the audience and society by creating access to culture online is also unprecedented.

In some European countries, digital initiatives are being supported and embraced by the authorities because of the connectivity included. Some countries have even created platforms to frame the many various resources that artists and cultural institutions have made available.

The extraordinary situation our societies have found themselves in has highlighted the social need for art and culture. I cannot say I am surprised that cultural life has responded to this by reaching out and quickly changing focus, inventing new digital cultural experiences. Nor am I surprised that so many have accepted delivering these experiences and content for free. Across disciplines, there is a profound understanding in the sector that, when in crisis, artists and institutions should make themselves available when there is a strong need for all they represent.

Through creating as much digital access as possible, the sector has unfurled a parachute to protect the meeting points between art, culture, and the audience in the absence of direct, physical meetings. In a sense, the arts and culture have become a way to maintain our intellectual and emotional sanity, and therefore, it is important that the offerings are accessible to everyone free of charge.

## A cultural and digital divide

In a short-term perspective, it is an interesting response to this crisis. It is focused, communicative, engaging, and accessible. However, it's not without its problems. One aspect is obvious: artists and cultural institutions cannot survive off of the likes or shares of a social media post. Cultural institutions cannot pay salaries to their employees with digital hearts, and an artist's personal costs cannot be settled with a thousand shares on Facebook or Instagram.

Another aspect to consider is the relation to different audiences. Digital content is

not necessarily adapted to meet the needs of all audiences, and questions of inclusion, community, representation, diversity, and democracy are as relevant to digital content as they are to cultural offerings presented under normal circumstances. This needs to be addressed in the longer term.

More importantly, the crisis has emphasized the digital and cultural divide. Over the last few years, we have seen a difference between those who master the creation of new digital content and formats and those who merely use digital platforms as ways to present the “same old wine in new bottles.” Instead of rethinking their strategies, the latter limit themselves to communicating the same type of narratives to the same kind of people. It is fair to say that, up until now, digitization has not really been embraced as a potential game-changer in terms of programming, recruitment, community interaction, and democratic representation within the cultural sector. But in a post-crisis perspective, the most recent experiences might have opened up many institutions and cultural players to recognizing the opportunities offered by a more advanced use of these digital means -- in terms of establishing relations with new and more diverse audiences, embracing the possibilities presented by new ways of producing and collaborating, elaborating new narratives, and finding a new way of engaging audiences through participatory and co-creative methods.

## A need for change

Coming out of the crisis as financially vulnerable, with a fragmented and partially ruined cultural infrastructure, and potentially with collaborative relationships that have been put on pause indefinitely due to massive unemployment in the sector, many cultural institutions will have to rethink how they will meet public and democratic demands. In that perspective, a heightened digital approach and the opportunities it presents roughly fits with an already well-anchored tradition in cultural politics, in Nordic countries for example, ensuring the right to participate and be included in the cultural offerings and the right to express oneself, both perceived as important cornerstones in the citizens’ ability to interact with and influence the communities in which they live.

The shared focus on this democratic aspect in the Nordic countries has increasingly been articulated as a desire by publicly funded cultural institutions for new ways of interacting with potential audiences, above and beyond regular visitors. Driven by changes in demographic composition, a long-lasting period of urbanization and

technological developments, many institutions and culture operators already felt pressure to review their practices even before the Corona crisis. This has meant reinterpreting their role in creating spaces for participation while also undergoing a transitional period during which traditional power structures have been softened and their social function changed. In a Danish context, there seems to be a fairly broad and common understanding that new thinking is needed and that the main challenge is to create the conditions necessary for reaching more diverse groups of citizens, especially reaching groups that currently do not visit institutions or other publicly funded cultural offerings.

## A plethora of initiatives

Over the past 15 years, we have witnessed a plethora of different audience and outreach initiatives, mostly aimed at increasing institutional awareness of the needs and preferences of different user groups. Many of these initiatives have also intended to produce new knowledge concerning the parameters that influence people's choice of experiences. We have solid knowledge about what culture users define as important to them through large national surveys on cultural habits and more sector-specific or local user surveys. Many cultural institutions already employ a nuanced communication system, conduct quite extensive user surveys, and establish long-term collaborative projects with other types of partners, including housing associations, minority associations, local subcultural environments, primary schools, cultural schools, and others. So in a way, the framework is already in place to enter into an even more nuanced and deepened approach to the relationship between institutions and their potential audiences.

In 2012, a large report on Danish cultural habits was released, including for the first time a survey of immigrants and new Danes' cultural habits. The report revealed that the needs and preferences of these groups, confused as they are within the general population, are left behind when it comes to making use of traditional arts and culture, such as going to theaters, museums and concerts. Their use of cultural offerings was twenty percent lower than the average. Of course, parameters such as price, time, and lack of interest play a role in their rejection of the cultural offerings, but the main reason was their perception of not being invited, that the content presented was aimed at others and not at them. The conclusion in the study was that the cultural offerings at large do not resonate with new Danes who do not know the "codes" and cannot find themselves in the "narratives" being put on display.

The findings in the national study resonate well with CKI's own studies of the institutions' experiences with nuanced audience work, and it underscores the fact that cultural institutions still have quite a way to go in establishing long-term and sustainable relationships with these new citizens and new user groups. From an institutional point of view, the question becomes political and strategic. Two-thirds of the Danes that regularly go to the theater, visit a museum, or attend a concert, a festival or another cultural event are determinant for the large mainstream and culturally active avant-garde audiences that represent institutions' primary sources of income after public funding. Working towards creating approaches and relationships with the last third of the population is demanding in terms of effort, time, and money.

## The democratic expectation

It has long been a political expectation in Denmark and the other Nordic countries that cultural institutions receiving their core funding from public sources at least show an interest in serving all groups of society. Many cultural leaders and artists have understood that expanding the existing audience also involves a potential increase in revenue and - not insignificantly - greater legitimacy in relation to their policy makers. But there is more to it than that. The digital and technological opportunities and changes in people's behavior when it comes to engagement with arts and culture has opened up new ways of interaction, where terms and concepts such as 'participation,' 'co-creation,' 'co-curation,' and 'collaboration' challenge traditional forms of work and hierarchies both within the institutions themselves and in their relation to the audience groups they reach out to.

In a sense, the institutions are on a path toward change, transforming spaces for a specific field of expression or study from being hallmarks of experience, excellence and / or knowledge to becoming co-producing laboratories or dynamic knowledge spaces where context and relevance arise in the meeting between the user, the work and the ability of the institution to facilitate this encounter. This transformation depends greatly on the institutions' willingness to experiment with forms, settings, modes of conduct, and, last but not least, a broadening of their repertoire.

Developing new formats and initiatives to reach new audiences and anchor the institutions within this process is clearly a matter of management -- artistic as well as structural and institutional management, that is. Management must promote both

increased participation and greater diversity in repertoire and programming choices as well as establish a framework in which the curators, programmers, and artistic directors are stimulated and challenged to think outside the box and across existing boundaries and structural constraints. It is about injecting a greater number of different narratives into the institutions and thus creating greater resonance with the potential audience. It is about developing new and innovative methods of inclusion that can contribute to increased diversity. It is about developing and using appropriate forms of communication and partnerships. And it is about delegating power or perhaps rather delegating influence over what is to be shown and for whom - in order to make room for new stories, new perspectives, and new skills.

In short, it is about creating the framework for new stories that are to be told together with users, about seeking renewal through new partnerships, new skills and - not least of all - new networks of people and environments that can add knowledge and perspective to the institutions.

Naturally, the institutions themselves have a great responsibility to push for this development, but there is also a need for some very clear overall political incentives, demands for greater dissemination, and broader goals in relation to users. Cultural democracy becomes possible only when the institutions enter into a real dialogue with the users, especially those who do not see the institutions as being relevant to them. Institutions and users must be part of a mutual 'educational' and social practice, and they must feel themselves to be an equal part of the process.

## Not without friction

The transformation represented in this process is not without friction and a number of questions arise. How does it affect society when cultural institutions go from being "about something" to becoming "for" or "with" someone, and what happens to the relationship between experience and knowledge "for" the users and for those who produce and disseminate, as we are increasingly invited to co-produce the experiences and knowledge we consume ourselves? These are complex questions that demand equally complex answers and, maybe, even a new set of skills to enable the institutions to act in relation to these social developments.

When taking digital development into consideration, it becomes clear that this

necessary transition has been on its way for a while now. Although digital technologies are often understood as tools that need to be used and shaped to a purpose, they have also completely changed the nature of their users' behavior - digital tools offer us a multitude of opportunities for sharing and participation, and through social media platforms, we can all be a part of creating a greater narrative. Art and cultural institutions no longer monopolize their own story.

Through our gadgets, technology provides us with access to information on the move. We can easily access information that allows us to prepare the visit in advance, communicate, change our mind as we go, share the experience afterwards, and like or dislike it through SoMe channels, thus influencing the choices made by others. This change creates a tension between the traditional gatekeepers and curators and those who master these new opportunities. Institutions that have really opened up their infrastructure and exposed themselves to new groups of users and collaborators tell stories about how their staff composition has changed and new competencies have entered the institution as well as new ways of relating to the audience, new partners, and a need to bring in a new kind of leadership to the organization.

## A complex, diverse, and disparate reality

The anxiety of employees who are losing their jobs because they do not master these newly needed skills and a reluctance to share power and influence -- these are the most commonly identified reasons for institutions to hesitate in their choice to transition. The digital shift is still not fully embraced by institutions, nor have the possible connections between digital presence and analogue action become an operational mode beyond web-based communication and SoMe interactions.

Therefore, it is interesting to see how institutions that have taken the lead in bringing digital solutions and tools into all aspects of their work are also able to renew and develop their relationship with their users in original and interesting ways. They seem able to contextualize a more complex, diverse, and disparate reality and thus connect more directly with their potential audience. We see an increase in cultural institutions across genres experimenting with combining the worlds and dynamics of digital and analogue practice, and we also see the first documented research on participatory processes that ease the connection between the institutions and new audiences.

In the Nordic countries, digital development has happened alongside the most significant period of urbanization in more than a century. The cities' multifaceted complexity, their cultural and demographic diversity, and their disparate and nuanced richness of cultural preferences have generated many discussions on 'identity' and 'values' across Scandinavia. In the aftermath of the refugee crisis in 2015, cultural-political discussions about which and whose culture should be supported emerged in the Nordic countries just as it did in other European liberal democracies.

## Promoting social and cultural equality

Reports and user surveys show that people with different backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives are not always taken into account in publicly supported and funded cultural life. Not everyone participates on an equal footing. For the sector, it raises questions about how culture and art can help promote a socially and culturally more equal society in a time that, paradoxically, is proving simultaneously to be more globalized and more marginalized than before. How are minorities protected and represented? How can they position themselves and offer new perspectives within the cultural and social debate? In a democratic context, it becomes an issue of how our societies can protect minorities' cultural preferences and rights and, at the same time, bridge the gap to reach the majority.

The cultural sector holds great potential in becoming an arena that is able to embrace, meet, and develop solutions to the increasing social, cultural, economic, and political fragmentation of society. The possibilities of diversity have already been made visible over the last years through a wealth of artistic expressions, broad interdisciplinary partnerships, cultural analyses, as well as local, regional, and transnational political strategies.

The pluralistic, intercultural and ethnically composed society is predominantly an urban phenomenon in the Nordic countries. In Denmark, for instance, 90 percent of all foreign-born citizens live in and around the six largest urban communities in the country, creating nuanced heterogeneous communities including citizens with many different cultural preconditions and preferences. For art and culture institutions in these urban settings, it is a daily challenge to understand how the concept of participation as a cultural and sociological path can ease the way in for citizens and facilitate their ability to participate in cultural events.

## Cross-sectoral collaboration

Over the last few years, we have seen how new formats and initiatives have emerged from an increased understanding of the diversity in interests and preferences of users as well as from an increased use of digital tools and dynamics to support the participation of diverse groups in arts and culture. In a way, the dynamics of migration, urbanization and digitization have created a huge ongoing transnational laboratory, where organizations and culture workers have engaged in the exploration, exchange, and development of new “cultural products” and experiences for audiences in a highly collaborative way, setting the stage for the interplay of new competencies.

One such example is the CULINN project in Denmark where seven museums worked closely together with universities, independent research and knowledge-producing partners, language programs for migrants, refugee organizations, and creative and digital actors in the formation and development of new, adequate, co-created offers and opportunities to newly arrived refugees from Iraq and Syria. This three-year initiative became an extraordinarily good example of the enormous learning potential that lies in a cross-sectoral collaboration between the cultural sector and civil society actors.

The collaboration with 'unusual suspects' in the form of language centers and teachers, civil society organizations and, of course, the involvement of the refugees themselves in designing the participating museums' offerings proved to have great potential. This was expressed in a significant qualification of the teaching offers at the museums and especially in the innovative features, opportunities, and formats that came out of the museums' collaboration with the more non-traditional partners.

The project shows how innovative approaches to participation, user involvement, digital outreach, and collaboration across cultural traditions and norms, language, religion and gender can set new standards for arts and cultural offerings as catalysts for a more equal cultural sector. The CULINN project also shows the importance of being able to anchor the project within management culture in order to give the project the legitimacy needed within the organization. The project is inscribed within a practice in which more and more cultural institutions act to create a kind of shifting reflection of the ongoing process of societal fragmentation.

With this example in mind and in the context of the current global epidemic caused by the Coronavirus, it shall be interesting to see to what extent arts and culture

organizations and artists will be able to make use of available knowledge and experience in the near future -- both as pure survival strategies and as paths towards a change of behavior, of modes of operation, and of anchorage within the local community. Will the first phase of opening up be a search to return to pre-crisis dynamics? Or will it rather be a search for new and more sustainable ways of working and relating to our societies, ways that can become a better protection against collapse, bankruptcy, and unemployment in the future? Will the lessons and opportunities gained through digitization, intercultural encounters, and new project design influence the way the sector develops post Covid-19? Or will we see a closure, where the arts and culture sector regresses into a mirror image of the same dynamics that brought it to the point of collapse?

When we emerge - hopefully sooner rather than later -- on the other side of the first truly global crisis since World War II, we will know more, and, in due time, we will see the full effects of the crisis on the sector. Sitting here in my kitchen, looking out of the window, I hope we will see local and global influences come together in a search for new ways and ideas rather than trends toward a dystopic de-globalization of a sector that delivers so much value to society.

## 2.5

# The turn of the screw of the digital: from an exceptional time to a new temporary reality

Luisella Carnelli and Elettra Zuliani

## Introduction

The pandemic has thrown us into an unthinkable situation. It is a condition that we are just beginning to comprehend and, insofar as we can understand it, represents a place that forbids us to turn back the clock: those who think of returning to the previous situation, forcing their way past the constraints that are emerging, risk bitter disillusionment. As Matarasso argues, “This is not a crisis: it’s apocalyptic. There is no one to turn to for support because the whole cultural sector is fighting their own fires. And beyond the cultural sector it’s the same. We’re all in it together, but each of us has to deal with their own problems.” Likewise, Daniel Bangla Gubbay – Artistic Director of the *Kunstenfestivaldesart* – in an informal intervention during an online workshop underlines “there is no post-Covid time; but we need to co-habit the situation.” It seems impossible that life will pick up again where it stopped. This means we need to think how to reframe our actions and activities from an exceptional time within a new temporary reality.

This is a tsunami that the world of cultural operators is looking at with concern and anxiety; that deeply shakes the foundations of institutions, companies, and individual professionals; and that is seriously questioning the meaning and the possibility of cooperative projects. Today’s leaders are under the weight of a great responsibility.

It might be a long time before the attention of those who run our great institutions can shift their focus from rescue to recovery, but before then, they might need to question what it is that they are saving and why.

We have gone through more than two months of lockdown, with closed and empty cultural spaces, drastically reduced mobility, and the impossibility for artists not only to perform but also to research and to continue in their paths of artistic and professional empowerment, not to mention practicing with their colleagues. The reopening is surrounded by uncertainties and constraints that will seriously put to the test the models of sustainability of the performing arts sector -- a sector that is already structurally fragmented, with a weak economy and critical conditions, with employment suffering from widespread precarity.

We must see the cultural ecosystem in which every person, every organization, and every cultural expression has a legitimate place. We must prize mutuality and solidarity above sectarian interest. We must use what resources we still have, whether we lead a great institution or a neighborhood arts group, to protect the most vulnerable. Those with the broadest shoulders should take on more of this burden, and that might mean some redistribution to help those with freelance contracts and earning minimum wages, those on the margins whose voices have not been heard, those who have always had less easy paths to access the work, the internships, and the funding. Let's live up to art's inclusive values. We have one shot. Let's be our best.

In the very first phases of the Covid emergency, culture and the performing arts were called upon to help people live through the lockdown and eventually recover from the pandemic. The cultural sector has been asked to imagine new ways of connecting in a world of social distancing as well as to overcome the social inequalities that the crisis has already aggravated.

In this storm, many artists and cultural operators have seen an opportunity, the chance to do things differently and to regain a central role in society and for communities. Nonetheless, it seems quite unlikely that people will continue to be interested in the stories and ideas that held their attention before the world changed, primarily since the ways of experiencing arts and culture is radically changing. A common awareness is emerging: the only way to communicate with people locked in their homes is to invent new creative processes and expressive modes capable of moving nimbly between the real and the virtual, in a new area that enables the expression of the individual but puts him/her immediately in relation to otherness. Artists have started to interweave live and

remote performances, merging technologies and physical presences, promoting sociality through technological modes of access.

Some key questions arise with renewed intensity: what is the role of art at a time of social transformation? Why do we make art, for whom, and does it make sense to continue using the same formats and materials? What should art be focusing on and what difference can it make? How far can artists go in social transformation without renouncing their role as creators and curators? Can the art world provoke and drive social transformation, a shift in values, or a broad rethinking of our relationship to material culture? Can it reveal new definitions of what progress means? Without a doubt, the current situation leads artists and cultural operators to question, rethink, and reimagine the way art institutions, art practices, and artists operate, for whom and with whom.

The cultural sector has shown an incredible proactive attitude, putting in the foreground the transformative power of art as a space of intimacy and inspiration but also as a terrain propitious for the expression of civic power -- because art can transform not only the physical spaces it occupies but also the people it comes into contact with. This proceeds from the belief that art should not only be understood as an act of creating, producing, and exhibiting material objects and/or digital experiences, but also as the way in which individuals approach, organize, and structure life.

If, at the beginning, artists were wondering how to be present and not simply to disappear, how a performing arts audience is compatible with the social distancing principles and what will happen when people start to leave their homes again, artists then moved to stressing the social and civic value of art, placing the emphasis on ideas, values, the exchange of knowledge, and tools for change. This has rapidly led to shifting the focus from the work of art to the practice of art and from the artists to the communities. Moreover, some artists have adopted a more activist attitude, fostering those approaches specifically developed to help nurture human values and positive counter-narratives, and rethinking the role of culture and art to rekindle values of caring, kindness, compassion, initiative, social justice, and cooperation.

Moving content online and commissioning artists and cultural practitioners to create new digital content and activities has been the main initial reaction. For many, going digital meant transforming the limits of a context deprived of physical contacts into an opportunity for experimenting with an “enhanced” environment that feeds on inputs, intersections, and the different forms of embodiment between the physical realm and

the digital one. The digital world also becomes the place to create think tanks, work groups, transversal and multidisciplinary informal groups (which involves institutions, artists, funders, governments, and citizens) to discuss structural problems and design solid and long-lasting strategies.

This rapidly led to an oversaturation of digital content, activities, and performances. In response, very soon the sector started to question the digital sphere as a suitable context to enable, condition, emphasize, or depower artistic and professional dynamics. At the same time, even the role of cultural institutions started to be under debate, along with ways of ensuring sustainability while maintaining an ethical approach.

## The digital sphere between hope and disenchantment

According to the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) more people turned to digital media as the lockdown progressed. The primary motivator to use social media -- across markets, gender, and income -- was the need to be informed about the spread of the pandemic and the lockdown measures as well as maintaining relationships. Moreover, the Global Web Index(2) found that over 80% of consumers in the U.S. and the UK have said they consume more content since the outbreak and that there is a stronger appetite to pay for more media subscriptions.

The acceleration in the digitization of culture as a first response to the crisis to maintain the relations with the audience and society is unprecedented, too. In some European countries, digital initiatives are being supported and embraced by the authorities because of the connectivity involved. Some countries have even created platforms to frame the many, highly diverse resources artists and cultural institutions have made available (e.g. the Italian Ministry of Culture created the web platform “Io resto a casa”(3) where one can find virtual initiatives organized by public cultural institutions, classified into six sections - Museums, Books, Cinema, Music, Education and Theater).

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2 GWI Coronavirus Research. April, 2020. Series 4: Media Consumption and Sport. Retrieved from: [https://www.globalwebindex.com/hubfs/1.%20Coronavirus%20Research%20PDFs/GWI%20coronavirus%20findings%20April%202020%20-%20Media%20Consumption%20\(Release%204\).pdf](https://www.globalwebindex.com/hubfs/1.%20Coronavirus%20Research%20PDFs/GWI%20coronavirus%20findings%20April%202020%20-%20Media%20Consumption%20(Release%204).pdf)

3 <https://ioresto.a.casa/>

The pandemic crisis came suddenly, unexpectedly, violently and radically shook the cultural world, which immediately revealed a remarkably reactive and proactive ability.

Creating digital access to as many sources as possible has represented a parachute when describing the meeting point between art, culture, and audience in the absence of direct and physical contact in a solidaristic and supportive approach. It is precisely at this early stage that we can see a massive creative output that has generated an overproduction of digital content.

Everywhere, museums, libraries, theatres, cinemas, and archives were among the first to close down, being popular social places for the local communities. Quite rapidly, many institutions have taken the opportunity to implement new languages and forms of communication that are able to cross physical boundaries to reach the audience in lockdown – showing its fundamental role as a source of resilience for communities. Cultural institutions all over the world have started to make available their digital content and programming, whether created from scratch or pre-existing. Museums and galleries digitized their collections or made their archival materials available on the Internet, either with the help of tech giants like Google Arts and Culture<sup>(4)</sup> or by setting up their social media channels and implementing their websites -- all this through virtual tours, behind-the-scenes scoops, interviews with directors or curators, and educational or recreational laboratories and workshops. The performing arts sector responded similarly by digitally transposing some archival materials and by making their shows available online.

In parallel with the big institutions, individual professionals and artists also reacted through the screen: actors, musicians and visual artists started to showcase their works online by proposing both a cultural content and a form of entertainment. Actors and musicians experimented with content that recalled the current emergency situation, revitalizing texts drawn from the periods of the black plague in Europe in the 14th century and pestilential contagions during the Elizabethan period. In other cases, they have emphasized the more playful and entertaining aspects of life and creativity to instill hope and courage, or they have simply drawn on their own personal poetics and practices. These initiatives promoted by independent artists are certainly the result of an emotional impulse in favor of solidarity, an empathetic and generous reaction to a moment of extreme difficulty that, through artistic expression, finds a common ground of unity and community. But they are also the narcissistic expression of a sector that

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4 <https://artsandculture.google.com/>

raises its war cry, as if to affirm its right to existence and visibility -- a selfish impulse of generosity that clings with all its strength to a past that no longer belongs to us and that in its genuine generosity does not take into account a long-term vision. This approach soon clashes with the concrete problem of sustainability and renewal, necessary to construct a different way of imagining a present that is ethical for artists and sustainable for organizations.

Many big festivals and exhibitions were cancelled or postponed while many others opted instead to experiment with digital channels. Santarcangelo Festival (Italy) decided not to cancel or postpone its 50th season but to prolong it in three acts reaching their conclusion in 2021: in the summer of 2020, the first experimental act will take place in public space: "an experiment and a pilot project that embraces safety regulations and social solidarity as leverage points to invent possible forms of togetherness with a 1 meter (or more) distance limit" involving mainly national artists, opening a hybrid space where physical offline presence coexists with a digital online dimension, with the aim of engaging citizens in the hope of leaving a record behind it and invigorating the local economies and communities. Santarcangelo also created the Facebook group Dream Suq (market of dreams), to collect stimuli and feedback to imagine possible futures.

For many, accessibility to everyone and the value of inclusivity were at the core of the choice to go online with free content, with the aim of contributing to everyone's mental and emotional health and well-being. Arts organizations increasingly shaped their cultural contents into the form of a social service to ease people's feeling of isolation, taking over the functions and services usually under the purview of the state and the public sphere, to give the cultural offering new legitimacy. During the lockdown, museums, theatres and cinemas started to aim their activities especially at the most fragile layers of society: those who could no longer access public and social services, especially the young, the elderly, and people with disabilities. But this could not always happen online because of the digital divide. Moreover, it is well known that the digital divide is not only linked to the gap in real access to technologies and bandwidth but also - and above all - to disparities in the acquisition of the resources or skills needed to participate in the information society: important variables include economic conditions, educational background, age or gender differences, ethnicity, and geographical origin. By way of example, in Italy, compared to the 3% of families that we could define as "pioneers of change" - i.e. that have double or triple the technological endowments and benefits of the rest of the country - more than a third of Italian families are in the lower income brackets, with fewer technological endowments or even no technological endowments at all (14.7% of families do not have digital devices of any kind, including smartphones).

Indeed, the race to the digital risks accentuating social inequalities that have already grown out of all proportion over the last twenty years, and this could lead to an even more intense phenomenon of the "concentration" of decision-making systems, of economic and productive capacity, of information and of cultural and educational control. If we want to fight these inequalities, we need to find different ways to connect with those people, even if in a mediated way.

For example, Museum Catharijneconvent in Utrecht created a telephone hotline to offer the chance to hear about 'All Wonders,' a temporary exhibition on the topic of miracles, by listening to one of the gallery's staff members.

The Municipality of Bassano del Grappa (Italy), with its Centro per la Scena Contemporanea (CSC), decided to continue its "Dance Well" classes, classes intended for people with Parkinson's disease that normally took place free of charge and open to all in the Musei Civici of Bassano del Grappa. The dance classes were transposed to a recorded track which was then sent to all the participants via Whatsapp on a weekly basis. This approach was strictly related to the ambition of "Dance Well," a research movement for Parkinson's that was born from the desire to include people with Parkinson's disease through contemporary dance in the artistic and social life of their territories: a soundtrack was the easiest and simplest way to maintain the link and to give participants simple and easy tasks to accomplish. The weekly appointment allowed the Parkinsonian community not to feel abandoned and let them continue benefiting from the positive effects of the practice, albeit within the walls of their own home.

Springing from an idea developed by a doctor and her fellow musician, the Presbyterian Allen Hospital in Manhattan offered its patients the possibility of listening to music performances by accomplished performers from all over the US simply by using their phones.

Another solidaristic action was developed by the informal network of Belgian artists called State of the Arts which implemented an online tool that connects people with financial stability to people faced with precarity directly as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.

Bookshops have activated home delivery services, bypassing what Amazon already does but offering the intellectual and human support of a trusted bookseller to select the right book.

Many more initiatives have been developed to give relief to the cultural sector and to

art professionals, for example by giving the possibility to gift the cultural institution a pre-purchased ticket for a cancelled show instead of asking to be reimbursed. The CSS Theatre of Udine (Italy) created an online platform where the audience could still experience the artwork of pre-contracted artists while using an instrument called “Artbonus” offering a ‘pay-what-you-decide’ donation that would go directly into the artists’ pockets.

As a way of providing continuity to the work of artists, many art organizations and theatres have committed to digital residencies, giving work grants for artist residencies that take place in the artist's own home (Kilowatt Festival – Italy, Kone Foundation – Norway).

The new Covid scenario also breathed life into new forms of experimentation of artistic digital production, as is the case for the Manchester arts venue HOME which commissioned theatre and live art creators to produce new works at home which were subsequently to be made available on a ‘pay-what-you-decide’ basis.

Another remunerative opportunity for artists came from the National Theatre of Scotland, which implemented Scenes for Survival, a new season of digital short artwork during quarantine.

But engaging with audiences online requires access, skills, and investment. Now more than ever, the digital mode seems to widen the gap between urban and regional entities, between big art institutions and smaller and independent producers and organizations. Cultural organizations that cannot easily produce digital contents risk being left behind, and the same goes for those families and citizens that live in remote regions and usually have access to low-quality internet connections or are not used to using digital technology, as is the case for the elderly. Small and local cultural organizations rarely can count on the expertise or ability to create detailed and high-quality online catalogues for audiences, and in this period, they have often relied on their social media pages, by offering small live performances, interviews, and creative laboratories.

On the other hand, in the UK the Royal Opera House had already invested much of its budget in digital and internet-based technologies -- such as augmented reality, 360 VR, open data, app-based services, and the Internet of Things -- with the aim of driving forward a change in business practices. In its case, going online and offering high-quality content for free was not much of an effort. With the support of the Digital Research and Development Fund for the Arts, the Royal Opera House has also shared project

documents and processes, a user experience toolkit and open source and open data initiatives to help inform future developments in the arts sector.

The same goes for the Berliner Philharmoniker which, in the first phase, offered live chamber music concerts and archive recordings of orchestral works already available in their Digital Concert hall free of charge -- but, more recently, it has limited these contents only to subscribers.

With different speeds and intensities, correlated to the different phases of the spread of the virus and the uneven responses from different governments, in many areas the emergency was perceived as a temporary condition. Probably, for this very reason, the first wave of responses from the cultural sector, though enthusiastic and very interesting in the short term, was blind to the scope and future development of the public health crisis. Many artists and cultural workers offered their time, skills, and creative abilities to commit themselves to produce ad hoc contents probably motivated by their sense of civic obligation and the aim of regaining a central role in society, but they did it mostly free of charge and without a safety net.

Moreover, transposing contents online possibly means getting into contact with new audiences and with those who have never had the chance to visit a museum or a theatre. But apart from the numbers, the simple digital transposition of pre-conceived cultural contents has meant limiting the audience to a passive and receptive role. Nonetheless, it is fair to say that up until now, digitization has not really been embraced as a potential game-changer in terms of revitalizing the relationship with the audience. In the phase we are entering now, cultural institutions need to overcome the receptive concept of spectating - understood as the act of fruition - and to find new approaches to generate an environment of co-creation, co-imagination and co-design animated by relational leadership logic.

Only in this way can cultural organizations lay the foundations for the creation of fluid alliances and collaborative forms between artists, curators, and institutions. This is the time to experiment and to test the potentialities, limits, and peculiarities of the digital environment, to open up new questions of meaning and to generate new creative processes and products. The digital sphere can become the space in which to question how the role of the prosumer can be further expanded and how digital platforms can open up to new relational possibilities between those who create and those who produce, implementing new forms of participation and new modes of artistic expression.

From an artistic perspective, some questions arise: how can one develop an imaginary dimension around a physical practice? How can one create a sense of belonging in a group regardless of physical presence? How can the body be active without contact? How to invite and involve people in artists' spaces? How can one strengthen a physical presence in a virtual space? How can the virtual and the real be integrated without conflicting with one another? How can what artists are now learning in their practices be embodied?

Within the framework of the BeSpectACTive! project, a group of artists have accepted this challenge. The performance of *The Kreisky Test* broadcast live and online presented itself as one of many possible ways to experiment with creative digital opportunities and an interesting sample to experiment with the different languages and experiences of active participation.

## Nesterval and The Kreisky test

Like an executioner's axe, the pandemic crisis also hit European cooperative projects, including BeSpectactive!2, its participatory programs, its creative residences and its co-productions. The Austrian company Nesterval was no exception: the company had just completed its creative residencies and was ready to take to the stage at Brut in Wien to make its debut with *The Kreisky Test*.

When the lockdown became a reality, and after meeting with the artistic direction, the artists decided to suspend their decision on whether to cancel the project for one night. The next morning, the director's response was lightning fast: Nesterval decided to accept the challenge of re-thinking the performance from scratch and going digital with the piece. For the first time, a Nesterval production took place entirely online while retaining its immersive and interactive goals: participants were connected together and with the actors at home on their computers through Zoom.

The starting point of the performance echoes a familiar situation, that of a virus that struck the entire globe. The story then moves on to the figure of Gertrude Nesterval - collaborator of the former Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky – who had elaborated a test useful to strengthen the principles of social democracy. The participants, grouped into teams that were active simultaneously in different

Zoom breakout rooms, received via chat a list of questions that would serve as a cue to entertain a sort of conversation with aspiring political leaders. Rather than spectators in the strict sense, therefore, The Kreisky Test involves people participating in a game, making decisions, and taking sides with the help of strangers.

This performance is interesting not only as a testimony of the generative potential of the virtual environment to launch new ways of participation and to involve audiences, but also for the positive results obtained from the point of view of sales and participants' feedback. Indeed, the show was a success, selling almost 700 tickets, possibly exceeding the number of people that could have participated physically. It is also surprising that almost 25% of the tickets sold were solidarity tickets: with double the cost of the regular ticket, the audience could pre-purchase an advance ticket for Nesterval's Goodbye Kreisky show in autumn 2020.

Additionally, the audience response has been very positive. The audience sample that responded to the survey was enthusiastic about the experience, giving the highest scorers to the storytelling, the quality of the content and the level of interaction: the experience was worth the ticket and almost everyone would have recommended it. Nevertheless, the emotional response has been perceived as being weaker than other of Nesterval's productions. In fact, two-thirds of the sample are fans of Nesterval and are very familiar with past productions by the theatre company. Moreover, they are also from Wien which, in this case, reveals that going digital does not necessarily mean reaching new and wider audiences. On top of that, one of the main reasons for attending, other than as a form of entertainment and an occasion to escape from everyday life, was trying live performances online, an experience they had never had before. The sample identified an innovative format and content, the possibility of interacting, and the opportunity to attend from everywhere as the most important reasons to watch live performances online in the future.

Nesterval has independently identified its way and path to digitally transpose its activities and its modes of artistic expression, but the road has hardly been opened and there is so much still to explore. Many more experiments in the field of performing arts are needed to find new ways to create interactive and trust-inspiring environments that can lead the way to authentic dialogues, to inventing new creative processes and expressive modes, and to rethinking critically the paradigms of creative and expressive processes in dialogue with communities.

## Towards possible futures

There is animated debate about how to navigate the complexity of the current environment but much less about what world we want, what we say no to, what we no longer accept. In this, the cultural sector is a microcosm of the wider society and can easily become a kind of privileged arena in which to tackle this debate and launch a more radical approach going against the current.

The die is cast, it is clear enough that ‘back to normal’ is not the way, nor is it what many people want, even if at the heart of the emergency actions and policies of many governments there is a wish to get back to normal that fails to admit that this is not possible. The pandemic is offering us the chance to make a radical change of direction. For cultural actors, it means rethinking their role and how they are understood in society in a sustainable and meaningful way. Why do artists, curators, leaders of cultural institutions, and cultural operators do what they do? For whom and with whom? What is the cultural value? How can culture become a strategic asset to rebuilding a common future together with citizens?

Simply reopening the cultural institutions as they were without seizing the opportunity to reset the whole sector on the basis of a renovated society is not renewal. Going back to the past could possibly mean reestablishing a situation in which the big cultural institutions that absorb most of the resources and status are the very ones that reach a small segment of the population. Continuing to feed these big entities could lead to forms of nationalistic protectionism to the detriment of an inclusive society. On the top of that, we cannot forget that the new normal for cultural organizations and venues implies social distancing measures that limit audience sizes and the number of spectators: potentially, in the long run, this could lead to privileged forms of participation.

Nevertheless, if cultural institutions want to continue to play a direct role in their own sector, they will have to equip themselves with additional skills and social contacts to be able to handle situations that have not only to do with the world of creativity, arts, and culture but increasingly with the world of education, welfare, and health. Doing so means opening up institutions to cooperation and collaboration, involving citizens and audiences whose needs have now changed.

In the past months, the debate has moved mainly online, and the digital sphere has been the space in which to imagine and trace out the path to a radical paradigm

shift. In this new era, it is paramount to fight culturally against prejudices that define inequality and economic, cultural, and educational poverty as both ineluctable and socially deleterious. This does not mean that it is the digital world per se that nourishes the debate, but the digital sphere can enable a space and a time for dialogue and debate, giving voice to new approaches based on collective thinking and with a more horizontal kind of internal governance or decision-making process. Online, potentially, the invisible ones -- the smaller cultural organizations and institutions, the expression of subcultures -- could find a space in which they could make their voices heard.

The digital, by its very nature, can be the platform where dialogues can be initiated with those worlds that are contiguous to the cultural sector, giving life to processes of cross-pollination and hybridization that serve not so much to find solutions in the short and medium term, but to animate a debate on the society of the future. We have already witnessed the fact that online debates - which are taking place at different and many levels - often represent vital and dynamic spaces for collective thinking running in opposition to right-wing populist and nationalist movements, and prefigure resilient societies animated by those values that privilege a more sustainable balance with the environment. In these debates, what usually emerges is the importance of community, solidarity, and collaboration, prioritizing public services and social enterprise ahead of under-taxed profit.

In this period, many more cross-sectoral think tanks, work groups, transversal and multidisciplinary informal groups (involving institutions, artists, funders, governments, and citizens) have come together to discuss structural problems and design solid and long-lasting strategies. Online brainstorming sessions have been aimed at outlining collective decision-making processes in response to political, social and climatic pressures -- accentuated by the pandemic -- with the aim of suggesting hypotheses for a sustainable future for live cultural participation.

If 'Back to Normal' is the aspiration of those who were satisfied with what normal was, living through the chance that the pandemic is offering us requires the involvement of the whole of society, including artists, in moving towards a common goal. Creativity and culture are not only an integral and ontological part of the human being as an individual but also of the human being as a social animal and, therefore, of the systems it has developed. This vision needs courage and a certain predisposition to act in synergy with the economic, social, and educational world.

So far, for many institutions and cultural players the lockdown has underlined the necessity of recognizing the opportunities offered by a more advanced use of digital

means. For many, in the past months, the digital has been the place where we can find innovative ways of entering into relation with new and more diverse audiences or of enhancing the relations entertained with existing audiences, of embracing the possibility of alternative ways of producing and collaborating, and of exploring new narratives and a new way of engaging the audience through participatory and co-creative digital approaches. Likewise, many people have had the opportunity of rediscovering their creativity, of testing it and taking it to the extreme: never before have cultural consumption and creativity entered our lives in such an overwhelming way.

If artistic creation is the place in which new terminology, postures, and aesthetics are created, then now artists need to go beyond the boundaries of digital art by connecting with the dynamics of physical presence, by gaining a new understanding of the border between the physical and the digital spheres. What has been experimented digitally and online in the past months could give new lifeblood to artistic processes.

The digital world is seen as an additional and amplified touchstone for reaching audiences, an unimaginable possibility if designed for physical presence only at a time of social distancing. Nevertheless, cultural organizations should start problematizing once again the issue of access to culture: in a world where only a small portion of citizens are given the possibility to participate physically in cultural experiences while a potentially large portion of people can access these same experiences online, participation can become the privilege of the few.

At one point, moreover, cultural organizations will need to explore different financial and structural models that are more adapted to a changed world. Although the digital sphere may not be sufficient in and of itself to bring cultural work to the public, the online world could represent a place where new forms of sustainability are built up by seizing the opportunity to connect with other realities contingent on the cultural world. Cross-fertilization with other sectors in this dynamic could be the fuel to re-imagining the cultural sector and its potential in other spheres of life and society such as education, social issues, and the economy.

Last but not least, the digital realm can become the space within which a balance can be struck between the local and global dimensions, reducing physical movement while maintaining a strong ability to bring back to the local level the awareness, experience and creative potential conveyed by visual connections.

What we have expressed up to this point is not to be understood as a defense of the digital sphere but as a sort of *zibaldone* (a hotchpotch). It is a call to explore the possibility that - in the Anthropocene era - the digital realm can be opened up if the artistic, cultural, and creative worlds take possession of an ecological vision. But the democratic potential of the Internet clashes with the fact that its infrastructure is not democratically distributed across all territories -- let alone globally -- and that there remains the question of the digital divide.

Of course, all these reflections are not new but are taking to a new extreme those implications that have emerged in recent years but that today have become more urgent. This new perspective is intended for a rethinking of the meaning, modalities, and practices capable of binding together the dynamics of physical gestures, not only as a personal poetic and aesthetic, but also into a space in which the civic and social dynamics of interrelation can form a community.

What we understand is that the constraints, limitations, and conditions that the pandemic is imposing on us will provide us with the resources with which we will have to build our future, the raw material employed to transform our business into innovative practices that were not on the horizon of our forecasts.

We are challenged to demonstrate the creativity that we have been discussing so much. It should be a homecoming; if it is not, it means that we were distracted and drifting off onto other routes. Let us not lose our sense of this challenge by giving bureaucratic answers; we have an important responsibility not only to ourselves, but to a recovery of a dense and rich sociality. Let's try to live up to it.

## 2.6

# Participation(s) and the Intercultural Challenge

Interview with Milena Dragičević Šešić

### **1) Would you say that the idea of participation, in its multiple shades, has an influence on the way cultural policies are defined today?**

Yes, but I would like to go beyond this mainstream concept that claims that the idea of participation started to be introduced in different public policies during the 1960's. That, of course, is true from the Western, or Global North, dominant point of view, where it started especially within urban planning, when citizens of one neighborhood could contribute their ideas as being linked to their "right to the city" (Lefebvre H, 1968). Thus, after presenting how this concept is seen in cultural policy theory today, I would like to add a few points concerning the European semi-peripheries - the North and the Southeast, although stories from the North are more known - but still not part of the global theoretical paradigm - while southern perspectives are not yet part of the "official" cultural policy body of knowledge.

Thus, to start with the generally accepted concept: the idea of citizen participation came to cultural policy through activist cultural practices that were developed in different ways in different European countries after WWII. The associations "Peuple et culture" and "Travail et culture" in France inspired the whole movement of "animation socio-culturelle" that was later partially recuperated by the state, so that Malraux's first Maison de la culture initially had the status of a citizens' association, which means to lead, in a participative manner, programming and cultural policy and in which socio-cultural activities were an obligatory part of MC practices.

On the European level, the big "push" for more democratic, participative policy-making came with the Council of Europe's efforts to replace "cultural democratization" (coming from above) with cultural democracy (movement from below) - but those processes have been conceptualized very differently in different countries. In the UK, in accordance with Thatcherist neoliberal policies, every city and every cultural organization was supposed to develop a "strategic plan" - and this strategic planning process was often conceptualized as a dialogue between cultural policy experts and different stakeholders, including some community interest groups. Thus, the idea of participative policies first came from expert circles, especially in countries with "arm's length" systems of cultural policies while, in others, they were linked to bottom-up leftist civil society movements to allow the voices of citizens to not only be heard but also listened to.

It is interesting to say here something that is less known in cultural policy history and theory, as it came from the European peripheries. That is the case for the historical participative nature of cultural policies in Southeast Europe. Paradoxically, in Southeast Europe, since the 19th century, cultural policy was led in a bottom-up manner, both in "occupied territories" and in the newly liberated countries of the Ottoman Empire. Thus, within the Austro-Hungarian empire, where official cultural policies centralized arts and culture in Vienna and Budapest, thus Germanizing and Hungarianizing different ethnic groups, citizens of Slavic origin (Czechs, Slovaks, Croats, Slovenians, Serbs...) created several committees and boards to design and implement their own "nation" - "narod" (also meaning "populaire" or policy of the people) - through organizations called Matica that still exist today alongside numerous institutions: theaters, museums, or libraries, for example. They created boards, collected funds and led programming and activities in order to stimulate the development of a "national, people's" culture which would survive and flourish. Sometimes these would be abolished, as in case of Matica slovenská which was created in 1863 and eliminated by the Austro-Hungarian government in 1875 as "the Government here in Hungary has never heard of the existence of the Slovak people, and the activities of Matica slovenská, are anti-governmental and anti-patriotic." Matica slovenská was recreated only after WWI, when the new state of Czechoslovakia was formed.

Thus, in occupied territories, the only possibility to have a cultural policy was a participative, citizen-lead bottom-up policy, creating its own institutions and programs as a form of a cultural and political resistance.

At the same time, in countries such as Bulgaria and Serbia, as well as Greece, that liberated themselves from Turkish rule but had not had any cultural institutions, this

was happening too, although on a smaller scale, as the state (or rulers, such as kings), helped in the creation of some of the "national" institutions (national museums, national theatres, etc.), but as states had other priorities such as education, educated or rich citizens even here had to act "for its people" (the end of Ottoman rule meant that more than 90% of the population was illiterate, so the development of the basic school system, the first hospitals and the first political organizations / parliaments etc. were priorities). Numerous donors of cultural institutions had themselves been uneducated, such as Kapetan Miša Anastasijević, who designated his estates for the creation of Belgrade University (which is where the first visual art exhibitions were held), or Ilija Milosavljević Kolarac, who willed his fortune for the creation of the "People's University" together with a concert hall. This "Kolarac foundation" is still operated as a civil society organization, keeping its autonomy and right to make programs without any governmental influence.

Thus, in newly liberated countries, even before their European approval at the Berlin congress in 1878, citizens also had to organize themselves to create cultural institutions, to collect funds (in a crowdfunding manner), and to build or to rent spaces for them. Thus, the "čitalište" (local library) in Bulgaria up to this day represents a civic organization that has kept this bottom-up approach in cultural policies, while numerous citizens' "kasinas," libraries, choirs, and artistic societies lead cultural policy on both the micro and macro level (the choir Obilić represented Serbianhood, just as the Sokol movement represented the sense of the repressed Slavic cultures and was quickly co-opted in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia during the interwar period - as the only citizens' movement going beyond "tribal origins" - thus very convenient for a king who wanted to pacify the different interests of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes within one kingdom).

A similar approach can be found in Scandinavia with the *kulturkampf* movement that created a network of "people's universities" (*Folkehøjskole, Folkhögskola, Folkehøgskole, folkeuniversitet*), fighting for the use of national languages in education and for popular education and culture as such. Very quickly it was linked with ethnic (i.e. Danish, Norwegian) consciousness and nationalism, thus folk music, art, writing and many other important issues replaced a kind of more general education, farming, or other more generic issues.

These different traditions of involving citizens in defense of public (national) interest in culture, have had certain repercussions to this day in the development of different modalities of participative public policies. In many Central European countries, institutions that were leaders of national cultural emancipation or created by citizens' initiatives - like *Matica srpska* - and sometimes as co-operatives (the Serbian literary co-operative

*Srpska književna zadruga*) became conservative nationalistic institutions, showing that a "participative" manner is not always the guarantee of vision, development, or new horizons.

In Europe, the end of the 20th century brought with it "expert" cultural policies termed "evidence-based cultural policies" in order to avoid politically (ideologically) motivated decision-making processes. However, this process often neglected the citizens' right to participate in the decision-making process, as "facts" and data were collected by research agencies and experts, allowing for a certain number of public debates (in focus groups) but not endorsing a real participative manner in policy making. Very often it was supported by the fact that culture as a common good is not perceived by the majority of citizens as being on the same level as "sport facilities" as a common good, and if asked, most of the citizens would vote for a swimming pool and not for a concert hall. So, the role of expert-power in cultural policy-making was defended by public interest, as it used to be said that often citizens cannot easily perceive the real reasons for funding culture in public interest, even if a small portion of audiences were using it.

Paradoxically, the transition period in the 1990's, even in Yugoslavia which used to have self-governance in cultural field, welcomed expert-power - but expert power backed up by political parties - as the ultimate form of democratic governance in culture. This could be easily justified in the former countries of Eastern bloc, as they used to have heavily centralized and censored cultural systems under the strict control of the Communist party, but it was also applied in former Yugoslav countries where most of the newly created political parties opted for a nationalistic agenda and used expert-power to re-nationalize the cultural system, often at the expense of minorities and minority cultural voices.

The Covid-19 crisis has shown both of these aspects - how easily citizens might give up their rights (fearing pandemics as something unknown), but also to what extent they are ready to defend or to endorse the right to return to the sports arena, as it seems that sport has become a key element in the "return to normality."

The predominance of populist policies in Europe - policies that are claiming that they are listening to and following "the voice of the people" - are also showing the extent to which it is easy to claim "citizen participation" in the decision-making process when power wants to reject everything progressive, contemporary, European or universal. Emotions, that are easily aroused with "ethnic appeals," with displays against migrants, foreigners, and foreign cultures, usually are working against democratic cultural policies, although the "majority" might sign up for them.

## **2) In your opinion, what is the role of local/regional/national cultural policies in supporting citizen empowerment through cultural participation in intercultural contexts?**

The crucial level for citizen participation in cultural policy-making is at the local one, whether the environment is officially acknowledged as intercultural or not. This is the level where people can know each other's needs and have a real platform for discussions, while on the level of the regional authorities or the state level it has to be done through representatives who are rarely elected democratically. Last year, I participated in the research project 'Investigating city cultural policies in order to promote citizen participation' in Serbia (we explored 15 Serbian cities). Now, with my colleague Nina Mihaljinac, we are researching the involvement of national minorities and other diverse groups of citizens in cultural policy-making on all levels. As of this moment, we have conducted dozens of interviews, and we have four national minority councils that have responded to our questionnaire (the Croatian Minority Council, the Bunjevci Minority Council, the Routhenian Minority Councils, and the Russian Minority Council), as well as several activists from the Roma, Jewish, Slovakian and Romanian minority communities and a few cultural policy experts and administrators in this domain.

In reality, every city, every local environment in the Europe of today is intercultural – but, in many cases - hegemonic. The voices of the subaltern are not heard – the voices of women, of the LGBTQ+ community, of persons with seeing or hearing problems, of persons with limited mobility, of traditional minorities such as the Roma and of new minorities such as migrant workers both inside and outside the European Union -- that make every local setting diverse and multicultural. However, public policies mostly reflect a hegemonic "cultural concept" developed as a national cultural canon by the male majority of the national center, added with a few elements of traditional "local color." (This was clearly represented in our research on the cultural policies of 15 cities in Serbia in which museum narratives, a policy of remembrance, celebrations, public namings, and other acts are clearly forgetting the contributions of all the subaltern parts of the population.)

The most recent achievements in intercultural environments in Europe is the fact that minorities have finally obtained some rights in making decisions about their own development: from the Sami population in Finland and Sweden to minorities in

Southeast Europe. But, giving rights to national minorities to "rule" themselves is not yet a standard in cultural policies. Russians in Estonia and Latvia or the Basque population in France are not among those that might say how empowered they are. France is the only European country that has not signed all the clauses of the the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (which only pertains to "traditional minorities," in itself a discriminatory difference as the term "traditional" might be applied to groups consolidated in the 18th century, the 20th century, or even WWII – it is completely arbitrary).

Thus, in the state of Serbia and Montenegro, for example, the charter for the protection of human and minority rights from 2003 had been very open and favorable to all minorities, regardless of when they may have settled in Serbia (Germans and Slovaks arrived in the 18th century, Czechs in the 19th century, while the Russian minority came only after the October Revolution in the 1920's), but later changes following the division of the two countries contributed to the creation of new constitutions and laws that were more backwards and conservative. Thus, Serbia was proclaimed in 2006 as the State of the Serbs and other citizens, while Serbia was throughout the Socialist and the transition periods defined as the state of citizens that live in Serbia. By a separate law concerning the creation of National Councils of National Minorities, the state offered only ONE formula describing how National Councils should be created, leaving in only one case - regarding the Jewish minority - the right to autonomously create the "Community of Jewish municipalities" (as it was the form of self-organization that historically existed throughout the 20th century, as the Jewish minority was spread throughout numerous cities).

Although several other minorities have a similarly dispersed territorial distribution (the Roma live in many cities, usually on their outskirts, while the Slovak minority is spread throughout different "Slovak" villages in the Voivodina region, often far away from one another), all minorities have imposed on them the same type of elections for national councils as was conceived for those minorities that are living in "compact" areas (Hungarians in North Serbia, Romanians in the Northeast, Bulgarians in East Serbia, Bosnians in West Serbia), not taking into account any other cultural particularities nor the needs of minorities. Most of the cultural leaders of minorities think that this model is imposed on them, that it is imitating political electoral processes, and in most cases it ends up as a "political" fact. Different models have been proposed: for example, the Ruthenian minority (although its roots are in Uzgorod in Ukraine, the Ukrainian government does not recognize this minority) suggested that its National Council should be created with 5 experts from culture, 5 from education, 5 from media, and 3 representatives from the Greek Catholic church, as for them, belonging to this

unique church was the reason to come settle in Voivodine, and even today this is, with language, the key difference of this minority dividing them from Ukrainians; few other minorities had proposed the election of their council the same way the Serbian Council for Culture is elected (with delegates from different arts associations, creative industries professionals, networks of cultural institutions, and others.)

The system that is presently practiced can easily be used by the political parties that are ruling the country (and that was the practice implemented from the moment of the creation of national councils, but in different manners). Today, the major ruling party - the Serbian Progressive Party - has its "satellite minority parties," and candidates for National Councils mostly come from those parties and not from the cultural and educational elites of the minorities in question, a fact which further contributes to the isolation of minority cultural elites (as most of them have to work in cultural and educational institutions that belong to the "majority" and to live in cities, while most minorities still live in villages).

Many of the critiques and comments coming from minority cultural councils are related to the official strategy of cultural development as well as to the programs of the "national institutions" (museums, theaters, etc.) and especially the Radio-Television of Serbia with its public service, and these critiques indicate that they keep information and content related to minorities ghettoized, not as a real part of the cultural life of the country. Thus, the 2nd program of the regional TV channel Voivodine is devoted mostly to minority programs, but, when it comes to programs in Romanian, only Romanian issues are debated. Likewise, in Hungarian, only those issues related to them are discussed, and so forth. Thus, there is no intercultural dialogue, no possibility for transcultural crossings and mutual synergy, either between minority groups or with the majority population.

It is not specific only to Serbia. If we analyze the presence of Roma culture within the public cultural system of different European countries, both in the East and in the West, we see the same exclusion or even rejection. Public radio and television rarely have programs in the Roma language (which exists in Serbia, even on regular news reports on the primary radio station). The only Roma theater in Yugoslavia, theatre Pralipe from Skopje, emigrated to Germany at the beginning of the war. There are no Roma theatres in the EU and few museums, created recently, but without a real integration of Roma history into city museums. As I was involved both times in the organization of the Roma Pavilion for the Venice Biennial (in 2007 and 2011), I have witnessed the (non)behavior of officials from countries from which Roma artists were selected. NONE of them came

to the opening of the Pavilion, neither in 2007, nor in 2011, although ALL of them were in Venice for the opening of the national pavilions. However, the representatives of the EU, the Council of Europe, the European Cultural Foundation and UNESCO were there, as it was the "politically correct" thing to do.

Rare are city museums that represent the history of the Roma people, while the Jewish population has entered (a few) museums in Eastern Europe during the transition period, but mostly in special holocaust museums. Art museums, like the one in Timisoara (RO), present Romanian, Hungarian and German art, without even mentioning Jewish, Roma or Serbian minority artists (although in the 18th century Serbians could be considered to belong to the "majority" - as the Serbian churches in city centers can testify to).

Thus, the role of cultural policy in an intercultural context should be to preserve and represent diversity, but even more to arouse interest, curiosity and respect for the other, especially minority cultures, to find a way to integrate their contributions into local narratives, and to introduce them within a collective cultural memory, as well as to incorporate their contemporary cultural practices into everyday cultural programming so as to avoid relegating them to a folkloric, touristic (and often exotic) cultural offering. It seems today that popular culture (such as Eurovision song contests) is more culturally diverse than the mainstream system of cultural institutions (repertory theaters, for example) that will rarely host content coming from local minorities.

### **3) May you provide us with some examples of good practices in cultural policy that support active citizen participation in the field of culture?**

It seems to me that there is one paradox: good leadership is heading toward shared leadership and, from there, to participative policies and practices in the public and civil cultural sectors. Shared leadership might be considered as a formula for the development of participative cultural policies. It means according an equal voice to cultural professionals in all three sectors – those that are creating a cultural offering, but usually, if they are creating conjointly cultural policy, this leads to the involvement, in different ways, of citizens as "users" or co-creators of cultural content. All of this is much more possible on local and regional levels than on the national level where more evidence-based cultural policy is promoted, meaning policy based on research and analysis or expert-based cultural policy.

I will here offer one historical experiment in self-governance that was fairly successful in Yugoslavia but abolished along with the silent disappearance of socialism. In the 1970's in Yugoslavia, a system was established that disempowered the ministries of culture of every republic and all city secretariats as money was directly transferred in different percentages from every enterprise to "self-governing communities of interest" in every field (public health, education, culture, sports, etc.) – and there, two types of councils were created on all levels: councils of creators of offerings, and councils of users of services. Culture received 0.36% of tax revenues. Interestingly enough, every cultural institution delegated members to different councils of creators of offerings (at the level of the Republic, the city, and municipalities), to different boards of cultural institutions, but also to councils of users of services. I remember that a significant portion of our employee meetings at the Faculty of Drama was occupied with suggesting who would be the best representative of the faculty in different councils and boards (cultural institutions had the right to address other organizations to ask them to delegate someone to their board). Similarly, our faculty tried to determine which organizations we would ask to send us delegates for our board – from the National Theater or Radio-Television Belgrade to the Yugoslav Film Archive, etc. We could not ask for a specific person – so I still remember how employees of the Theater Museum had been disappointed when I, as a young teaching assistant, was the delegate from the Faculty of Drama in their Board. They said openly that they wanted someone with more political weight as they needed to lobby for a new building... It was at the beginning of the 1980's. They still do not have a new building. That is just to say that yes, we, as a board, could influence programs, could discuss and evaluate projects, but major infrastructural decisions were made in a system that preceded self-governance... or after the 1990's, when re-nationalization had happened and ministers once again were endowed with a budget. Indeed, self-governing communities of interest had distributed money to everyone, to top-level professionals and to amateurs, on the basis of both merit and need, and thus no money would be left for huge infrastructural projects, unless it was conceptualized by the highest levels of government and backed by the Communist Party.

A leftist form of populism had been a tradition in Serbia since the early 19th century, when the rural population led the battle for liberation and succeeded in obtaining an independent state. It continued throughout the 20th century, as even in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the Communist Party won the elections in 1920, then was prohibited, and was finally resurrected during WWII. It succeeded in winning the war, liberating the country, and establishing its own government, fighting, at least in words, against representative democracy by maintaining that democracy should be direct, involving all the people, all citizens. Thus, referendums were used and misused during socialism (to

justify tough decisions, to contribute 1% of salary to different investments, for example), or, in recent periods, they leaned more toward right-wing populism in order to stimulate nationalistic feelings and encourage gatherings ("sabornost") and to raise emotions of fear and concern for national (ethnic) survival, thus enabling the government to introduce any measure (austerity measures, mobilization, long-term embargoes, etc.) while contending that they are just following the will of the people.

Today, direct participation in decision-making is used and misused by different governing structures, as in many of these new democracies we have a partocratic system of governance – where political parties that have obtained the majority take all decisions into their hands. It is very visible when governments are “coalition” governments, where ministries are “distributed” among coalition members – and often the Ministry of Culture is “given” to a minority partner who then rules by nominating its members for key positions in the cultural field. So, often this is not governmental cultural policy but the policy of one party that received this area within its supervisory duties.

However, there is a very good example of democratic and participative cultural policy in one of Serbia's medium-sized cities, the city of Šabac, which has also established social justice as a factor in decision-making in all fields that are related to the public interest and public good. Thus, numerous consultation processes are organized so that the voices of citizens can be heard, with regard to more general policy questions as well as to questions related to the work and activities of public cultural institutions. Thus, community involvement in and audience development of the City Theatre and City Museum resulted in new content production in a participative manner, new collaborative practices with civil society organizations and educational institutions, among others.

However, there were some negative examples, when “public voting” was introduced as a stimulation of the competitive spirit – which was named as a form of “direct democracy.” Thus, in Belgrade the American embassy announced a public competition for the usage of a one million dollar grant (USD), offering citizens the possibility to vote for and choose – by internet and text messaging -- between two suggestions: the renovation of the House of Youth (in the interest of younger segments of the population) or the purchase of emergency health vehicles (a key need for the elderly). The voting system, limited to digital means, had enabled an easy win for the cultural institution for the young. At the same time, the American embassy achieved its goal in prioritizing values of neo-liberal society – competitiveness, PR campaigns and viral marketing (that health workers were never taught in our system of public health care).

The debate about this “competition” allowed different strands of argumentation - pro et cons - to be confronted. Yes, this action gave visibility to the cultural project and once again put the House of Youth into the spotlight, but for many it was just a populist, promotional measure that the American embassy needed in a country whose people have strong anti-American feelings. Their explanation, that those actions promote a feeling of community and ownership (as in "I stood for that"), was not accepted, as this kind of competition devalued and even destroyed a professional, analytical approach.

A similar process was introduced in Tallinn, Estonia – “vote one out” -- in which the city government used a voting system taken from popular reality TV shows and that cultural operators found completely inappropriate and unethical.

#### **4) How can cultural participation strategies be incorporated within a context of interculturality (in unbalanced societies)? What are the particularities of this process? May you suggest examples of good practice in different kinds of cultural organizations and formats (theatres, festivals, artistic residencies, etc.)? What kind of specific strategies could be developed with respect to cultural minorities?**

In numerous intercultural cities of the Global North, there are different examples of efforts by cultural institution to make inclusive cultural policies, with mixed results. Thus, I will start with one negative example, such as the effort by the Birmingham Repertory Theatre. The theatre had launched a call for a play that relates to minority ethnic communities that live in Birmingham. The text of the young Sikh author Gurpreet Khaur Batt was selected (with a depiction of murder and sex abuse in a temple) and the premier was rehearsed, but on the day of the premier, the Sikh community led by its religious leader surrounded the theater and prevented the audience from entering the building. The performance was cancelled, and the play was never brought to the public. This event destabilized both city theatre and cultural operators within minority communities, and artistic practice as an agent of sustainability was questioned (Balta & Dragičević Šešić, 2017). The Birmingham Repertory Theatre’s new programming policy of inclusiveness was postponed and effectively abolished, and thus its new mission and the values of the theatre were questioned. In that sense it was clear that policies of minority communities that are ‘controlling’ cultural rights lead to the curtailment of the

freedom of expression and shook a community which, after these events, felt divided and polarized. This event revealed that, although it was said to have been inoffensive to many younger Sikhs, all religious leaders, including the Roman Catholic Diocese of Birmingham, had urged a boycott of the play. The theatre said some protesters managed to get backstage, where they smashed equipment and destroyed a foyer door.

The theatre said it had refused to censor the work and finally was abandoning it purely on health and safety grounds. Stuart Rogers, the executive director of the Repertory theatre said: “the decision had been taken after discussions with police and Sikh community leaders.”

Mohan Singh welcomed this decision which “came too late” -- “Free speech can go so far. Maybe 5,000 people would have seen this play over the run, but are you going to upset 600,000 thousands Sikhs in Britain and maybe 20 million outside the UK for that?”

The play's author has revealed that threats had been made against her, and she has been advised by police not to say anything publicly.

In spite of the words of Neal Foster, actor-manager of the Birmingham Stage Company, who said that “[t]he story cannot end here. I think freedom of expression is more important than health and safety,” the play was never performed. “Official organisations need to be involved to help theatres make the right decision. The staging of Behzti is the first thing that needs to happen - we lost the battle and we are now suffering the effects. The artistic community put up its white flag - now we need to support whatever organisations are suffering the consequences.” He also added: “the industry needs to make a stand in the face of increasingly militant opposition from both religious and secular groups.”

But the industry did not make a stand, unfortunately. Only the voice of the PEN center was heard in relation to this, but it does not have the strength to contribute to more courageous local policies where freedom of expression cannot be prevented by the “right” of every minority to prevent any other expression of opinion under pretext of safeguarding their own cultural rights. It is extremely dangerous that, in many cases, minority cultures gather around their religious leaders and its religious institutional structures, preventing them as citizens from having their own individual opinion. Blasphemy laws thus are used and misused – but in general, they are preventing critical opinion from being expressed.

The author, Gurpreet Khaur Bhatt, said: “I believe that drama should be provocative and relevant. I wrote Behzti because I passionately oppose injustice and hypocrisy. And

because writing drama allows me to create characters, stories, a world in which I, as an artist, can play and entertain and generate debate. The writers who I admire are courageous. They present their truths and dare to take risks whilst living with their fears. They tell us life is ferocious and terrifying, that we are imperfect and only when we embrace our imperfections honestly, can we have hope. Over the years there have been many robust dramas about world religions. Sikhism is a relatively new entrant to this arena and I am aware of the sensitivity around such discussion."

## **But, we should speak also about positive examples.**

The Council of Europe has developed a network of intercultural cities in Europe – and yes, in those cities (139 up to now, many of them outside the Europe), citizens are encouraged to see cultural diversity as a richness and not an obstacle for development. When the Swiss government held a popular referendum in 2009 to prevent mosques in Switzerland from having a minaret, the intercultural city of Neuchâtel (and the canton of Neuchâtel as one of only three cantons out of the 20) voted differently than most other Swiss cities – in favor of the right of citizens of the Islamic faith to build mosques with or without minarets, according to their wishes and traditions.

It is interesting that many of these 139 cities in reality are NOT multicultural cities, like the city of Coimbra whose non-majority population accounts for less than 5% of the total population. Why is it difficult for the real multicultural cities to join the network of intercultural cities? Maybe because membership requires an active policy of intercultural dialogue, while many multicultural cities prefer the option of a “cosmopolitan” city of ghettoized ethnic communities living separately from one another. Thus, membership in this network might be considered important – in order to sensitize the population of the city to pressing needs in the future – a multicultural situation in urban settings will become more and more a new status quo. If it comes without preparation, the majority population might develop fear, xenophobia and prejudices (according to the words of Dominique Moisi (2009) – “the culture of fear”), while newcomers – minority groups -- will feel rejection, condescension, and segregation (the culture of humiliation). So, it would seem, although it was long ago, that 2008 was the year of intercultural dialogue in Europe and that, in times of the populist policies that have prevailed in the last decade, we need more and more policies and

practices targeting intercultural dialogue and the active involvement of minority populations in policy-making and general public debate about questions that are not limited only to issues related to their own minority community.



# CONCLUSION

The background of the slide is a solid light yellow color. It is decorated with several large, overlapping, organic shapes in a slightly darker shade of yellow. These shapes are reminiscent of stylized leaves or petals, with smooth, curved edges. They are scattered across the page, with some appearing in the upper left, middle right, and lower right areas, creating a layered, artistic effect.



# Conclusion

Lluís Bonet, Luisella Carnelli, Giada Calvano,  
Félix Dupin-Meynard, Emmanuel Négrier and Elettra Zuliani

It is often said in public policy circles that the success of a word is paradoxically linked to its imprecision, to its adaptability to various contexts and sometimes to different or even opposing causes. This can be said of the terms ‘subsidiarity’ and ‘identity’ - both successful but fuzzy concepts. In this respect, with participation, this dish has been served on a silver platter! And that in itself well justifies the existence of a book on the subject.

The contributions made in this book concern several levels of reading: theoretical, historical, and political reflections, as well as practical examples. From these contributions, we propose to highlight three main questions as a conclusion. The first concerns the political and democratic values of participation: is participation necessarily linked to democracy or can it be anti-democratic? How can participation be a democratic tool, and to what democratic models could it contribute? The second concerns the uses of participation as a response to social, territorial, and intercultural challenges: how can cultural participation help build inclusive societies? What forms of participation promote this process? How are the participatory processes of cultural policies anchored in territorial development? Finally, the third question, suggested by current events, examines participation in light of the COVID-19 crisis: to what extent does this crisis reveal new dynamics and questions of participation in the cultural field? What are the opportunities and limits of digital participation? How are the relationships of cultural organizations and artists with their audience changing?

## Questioning the democratic values of participation

How can "participation" in cultural policies contribute to the achievement of democratic goals? Is "participation" necessarily linked to "democracy" - and if so, which form of democracy? This is an important issue within the cultural and artistic field itself: what kind of democracy is planned, implemented, or attained in the organization of

cultural institutions? Is it through access to artistic contents and experiences? Through access to the means of creation and distribution? Through the public representation of different cultural expressions? But it is also an important issue in a broader political framework. Indeed, culture is a medium of expression, creation, identification, recognition, and social representations which “shapes the space of the visible and the invisible, of the speakable and the unspeakable” (Rancière, 2009) - the political scope of culture is therefore a global democratic and political issue.

As several authors have pointed out, participation is supposed to be an inherent part of democracy in the sense that democracy implies citizen participation in collective decisions, in various forms and degrees (representative, direct, deliberative, etc.). Others, like Bonet and Zamonaro, also point out that participation is not the preserve of liberal democracies alone and can also be attributed other meanings and uses in authoritarian regimes; the “participation-democracy” link is not self-evident. The ambivalence of the term “participation” can be read in this book through the multiple interpretations made by the authors. Some focus on cultural participation as spectatorship or amateur practices; others on participation as engagement, as co-creation, or as the sharing of decision-making power; still others see participation as an instrument of deliberation or social transformation. These different meanings partly overlap with different conceptions of democracy in the cultural field, summarized as follows: cultural democratization; cultural democracy and cultural rights; deliberative or participatory democracy; and empowerment and social transformation. These four sets are typical ideals with blurred and coinciding boundaries, but they could help to clarify the ways in which participation can be - or not be - a tool in the service of democracy - and of which kind of democracy.

Much of the use of participation in cultural policies is part of the dominant paradigm of cultural democratization. This is evident from reading the documents and discourses of cultural policies as well as those of independent cultural actors, but also from the interpretation of the term by the authors of this book. In the paradigm of “democratization,” democracy is seen through the lens of equal access to arts or “culture”... but not equal access to the means of creation and the choice of artistic pieces or references. Participation is therefore reduced to its classic form, as attendance, spectatorship, or the consumption of artistic pieces and experiences. The aim is to diversify, increase, or improve the quality of the relationship with audiences - in short, participation is one of the modalities and instruments of “audience development,” with varying degrees of innovation and involvement of audiences in the artistic experience. Experts choose the artistic contents, and the result of their choice is shared, not the

choice itself: this conception of participation corresponds to a 'representative' democracy (the difference, however, being that professionals are not necessarily elected) - or a form of "democratic elitism through stakeholders" (Gray, 2012). This classic paradigm carries with it many problems. The most commonly identified one is the unequal access to culture (the well-documented "failure of cultural democratization" - whose relative persistence is recalled in this book by both Négrier and Wolff). But it can also lead to the hierarchization of cultures, which excludes certain cultural forms from the public sphere, and finally, it can contribute to the disconnection between cultural institutions and communities, isolating the artistic field or rendering it ineffective through its lack of inclusion. It is difficult, therefore, to link these types of participation with "democracy" in the sense of cultural equality and cultural rights.

Responding to these criticisms, supporters of this paradigm of "cultural democracy" advocate for bottom-up policies and for a recognition of cultural diversity, in particular through the promotion of cultural rights (UNESCO, 2001). Democracy is broadened to include access to creation and programming, implying changes in power sharing and questioning the legitimacy of cultural and artistic hierarchies. In this framework, participation takes other meanings: the recognition and integration of all cultures as well as a modality of power-sharing between professionals and non-professionals. It is the democratization, not of culture, but of cultural institutions themselves, and of the access to resources of expression. Forms of participation associated with this paradigm seem to be rare, and mainly restricted to the most local and independent institutions, as shown by Félix Dupin-Meynard and Anna Villaroya. There are many examples of opening up the decision-making arena to non-professionals, but these experiences are extremely limited. They are limited in number, in scope (only relating to a small percentage of available actions and budgets), in the sociology of the participants (most of the time they are an "elite group of spectators" who are already close to the institutions), and above all, in the degree of decision-making power to be transferred (which is often closer to consultation or dialogue than to co-decision). Despite the profusion of related discourses, most cultural actors seem reluctant to implement these types of participation. Indeed, "participation as power-sharing" may be seen as a risk for established cultural actors because it questions the legitimacy and power of their expertise. Thus, cultural democracy and its associated forms of participation are often criticized for "relativism," "communitarianism," "populism," and "individualism" (Teillet, 2017) or, as indicated in the exploratory survey by Dupin-Meynard and Villaroya, they are perceived as risks of a "loss of artistic quality," "demand-oriented policies," or a "loss of independence." These arguments are partly based on an ambiguous representation of democracy, as if it were possible to restrict it to dynamics of individualism and commodification

or to tools such as referendums or polls (Rancière, 2005). Some of these arguments constitute a healthy form of vigilance against falsely democratic manipulation, but most of them seem to reveal the persistence of elitist and conservative ideologies in cultural policies and institutions in addition to expressing a fear of daring to "take the risk of democracy" when it implies real power sharing. Nevertheless, these fears can also be explained by current threats hanging over the cultural sector: austerity and precarity, loss of independence, heightened competition.

"Participation" is also used or advocated in the context of "deliberative democracy" or "participatory democracy" - a tautology, as some have pointed out. In this case, participation is a tool for stimulating a form "active citizenship" through extending an invitation to communities to join the debate, discussion, deliberation, or even for making co-decisions, but for other purposes than the artistic outcome itself - like regulating local social conflicts, the orientations of local cultural or social policies, or choices of urban planning and territorial development, as Pedro Costa has described. Unlike the cultural democracy paradigm, it is therefore a modality of deliberation, "using discursive techniques to identify appropriate policy choices for given circumstances" (Gray, 2012) more than goals of securing an effective form of equality or power-sharing. These types of initiatives seem to be multiplying, attempting to respond to the crisis of legitimacy of representative democracy, in particular at the municipal level, as reported by Giuliana Ciancio. Some authors are critical of these participatory uses, which can become instruments of political re-legitimation or prolong the status quo by relegating citizen expression to its artistic dimension alone - thus avoiding conflict over more material interests. Others argue that these approaches are part of an effective redistribution of expression through the artistic medium. As Hanka Otte and Pascal Guielen optimistically express it: "artists, as critical allies, can play a meaningful role (...) because they are capable of bringing out the voices of those who cannot speak or are not being heard. By imagining, performing, expressing, playing, they expand the possibilities of making, planting, building, creating together. In short, of doing democracy."

Finally, some conceptions of participation are related to the goals and practices of "social transformation" or "empowerment." Participation is used to allow for a greater autonomy for groups and individuals that have been dominated in the social space - this autonomy being seen as indispensable for the achievement of real democracy. In this framework, participation can be a political tool for empowering citizens, through cultural practices and productions or for fostering critical expression and effective counter-powers. Art and culture are seen as collective areas of participation for achieving global political objectives, at the level of individuals, communities, or society at large.

The power transfer does not take place over cultural decision-making but rather as a transfer of resources to cultural expression and representation or access to a public voice : it is a transfer of potentialities more than a transfer of power. As Bonet and Zamorano explain, this type of participation is avoided by the cultural policies of illiberal regimes. Yet, in liberal regimes, it remains rare in the institutional and professional artistic field and is more frequently implemented through amateur practices by militant or associative groups in the independent, social, or socio-cultural field - still suffering from a lower degree of legitimacy in the artistic hierarchy. However, it seems that this division is sometimes less marked within inter-sectoral approaches and partnerships, for which participation may be a pretext, like in the world music sector, as shown by Sandrine Teixeira.

In these four types of democratic goals, the scope of participation in terms of democracy seems always to be limited. It also carries with it, beyond these limits, the real risk of being reduced to a mere tool for accomplishing other objectives, which may itself even be a threat to democracy. In some cases, participation can be used to burnish the image of cultural policies that remain very top-down and allows for a re-legitimization of existing hierarchies through the exploitation of pseudo-participatory devices. Indeed, as François Matarasso writes, an "illusion of participation is offered while control over cultural value, legitimacy and power remains where it has largely been in the past." In other cases, "participation" can relegate the political and social debate to an artistic debate in order to avoid political conflicts. Beyond this, "participation" can also be carried out within the framework of authoritarian regimes in order to achieve objectives of manipulation and exclusion that can be considered otherwise "anti-democratic." But the boundaries of this manipulation are tenuous, even in liberal regimes, hence the importance of questioning the crucial issue of power-sharing and power transfers as a compass for untangling the political stakes of participation.

However, the multiplication of debates, experiences, and participatory innovations and trial runs, beyond its discursive dimensions, may lead to a profound questioning of cultural institutions with regard to their legitimacy, their links with various communities, and their role in a democratic society. Involving audiences in decision-making can, by extension, question the sharing of power and the separation of functions within an institution or slowly shift its strategic directions. Attempting a participatory partnership on the pretext of an urban planning dilemma can decompartmentalize and open an artistic institution to the dynamics of its neighborhood and, in the end, diversify its audiences. This opening up of creative or programming processes can generate ripple effects - notably with participants staking out a larger role to be played in the decision-making arena. In short, today's participatory initiatives might only function as tools to adjust cultural

democratization, but they might also be signs of a longer-term transformation of cultural policies, as well as of their impact on democracy “in action” in European societies.

## Cultural participation and the quest for inclusive societies

Throughout the pages of this book, many social and cultural issues arise when analyzing the subject of cultural participation. How can cultural participation help build inclusive societies? What do we mean by inclusive societies? What forms of participation favor this process? How are participatory processes in cultural policies embedded within territorial development?

The Council of Europe recognizes “inclusive societies” as one of five fundamental pillars of democratic security, alongside efficient and independent judiciaries, a free media, the freedom of expression, the freedom of assembly with its concomitant vibrant civil society, and legitimate democratic institutions (Council of Europe 2016: 6). Nevertheless, no agreement has been reached concerning what specifically characterizes or contributes to building inclusive societies and related concepts such as social inclusion and social cohesion. A way to understand inclusive societies is as societies where individuals with several different identities live together and peacefully resolve conflicts on the basis of fundamental common values and practices. According to this perspective, it is clear that inclusive societies are diverse societies where individuals maintain their identities while respecting each other’s differences, thus recalling the values of social inclusion and social cohesion. However, if we observe our contemporary realities, it is also true that diversity may hinder social cohesion, leading to distrust and social isolation. It is thus important to introduce another issue strictly related to the question of inclusiveness, which is that of inequality, best declined in its plural form. Inequalities are evident in our societies in the presence of various forms of social, economic, cultural, and environmental inequalities. We face disparities in terms of income, of gender, of race, of sexual orientation, of origin, of ethnicity, and this despite recurrent demands for equal access to fundamental rights. The unequal distribution of wealth and uneven distribution of rights as well as social and natural resources bring about insecurities and concerns which threaten the concept of democracy itself.

In this context, cultural participation may play a crucial role: as Nussbaum (2012) states, participation in cultural activity is not only desirable in itself, but is an essential prerequisite for democracy. However, the relationship and multiple interactions between cultural participation and democracy do not come without criticism and risks. Indeed, even though participatory processes are supposedly aimed at enhancing the representation and representativeness of all different members of communities, including the most marginalized, in practice hegemonic discourses are still present and reiterated.

This idea is expressed in the chapter by Otte and Gielen, who explore disruptive experimentations within the framework of “commonism” as an alternative model with which to observe “economy, politics, but also ecology as the outcome of processes of giving meaning.” In their analysis of the different degrees and forms of democratic participation, they present the model of agonistic democracy, which assumes that consensus never applies to the whole of society, since it is the product of hegemony and can therefore always be contested. Even in the presentation of the cultural commons initiatives that try to provide a space for changing “the management of common resources by the government or market parties into a management according to commoning principles,” a basic concern regarding hegemonic representation is still present: “who are the citizens that come to negotiate about proposals? Are they not again mainly the white, empowered, and skilled middle-class people who feel at home in a deliberative model?”

Similarly, this hegemonic threat crops up in the interview with Milena Dragićević. In her reflections on the role played by civic engagement in cultural activity in fostering cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue and that of cultural policies in supporting citizen empowerment through cultural participation, especially in intercultural contexts, she states that “public policies mostly reflect hegemonic cultural concepts developed as a national cultural canon by the male majority of the national center, added with a few elements of traditional *couleur locale*.” She claims that the voices of minorities are still unheard, even though they represent an essential part of multicultural societies.

In order to tackle the lack of intercultural dialogue and the issue of non-hegemonic representations, she suggests that the role of cultural policies in intercultural contexts should not be just to preserve and represent diversity, but to raise interest and respect towards minorities and integrate them in the construction of the collective memory of the community. Attempts to create inclusive cultural policies have produced both positive and negative results; still there is a growing need for policies and practices of intercultural dialogue. From this perspective, the civic engagement of minorities both in policy-making and public debate as well as in cultural activity represents a powerful

vehicle to give visibility to and integrate a plurality of points of view and to guarantee a fair representation of silenced and marginalized groups.

Discussions about cultural participation as a means of fostering inclusive societies also require a reflection about the territories in which the communities involved in participatory processes interact. Where is cultural participation being developed? According to several perspectives collected in this book (for instance Costa and Dragičević), the ideal territorial arena and dimension for citizen participation in cultural policy-making is to be found at the local level, and particularly the municipal level, where the voices of citizens are more likely to be heard, without or with only limited recourse to representatives.

Every territory is a “container” of a diversity of communities with different interests - communities that are not always organized, since the role of individuality, ever more present in European post-industrial societies, creates a situation in which not everyone feels able to identify with prefigured communities or societies. How do public administrations establish channels of dialogue in this context of uneven participation? What should be the strategy of a library, a theatre, a museum, or a youth center that seeks to implement models of citizen participation?

Cultural tradition was and still is, in many parts of the continent, one of the main drivers behind associations, participation, and the use of public space. Participation is inherent but does not necessarily encompass all residents within a territory since it has been populated by citizens with diverse interests, values, and perspectives. Public space - meant here not only as squares and streets but also as public cultural facilities - plays a substantial role in the expressions and the continued vitality of popular cultural traditions. Certain urban developments do not take this point sufficiently into account, especially when the uses of public space come into conflict with other interests (housing, traffic, etc.). In this sense, it is interesting to analyze the compatibility between these new urban layouts and planned social and cultural uses. When urban development is at the service of community life and cultural expressions, and not of speculation or communication networks, it is fundamental to establish spaces for dialogue and negotiation. This has to be done between public representatives, urbanists, culture specialists, the cultural entities that use the different public spaces, and general citizens. However, who does represent the collective interest in complex and heterogeneous societies? It is quite hard for those who bestow upon themselves a status of citizen representativeness to defend the whole of social interests, since these are wide and often contradictory. In traditional societies, much more homogeneous than those of our present day, negotiation for public space was established on the basis of the ability to influence and the power of the different groups involved (the Church, the representatives of different associations or fraternities,

etc.). Agreements depended on the correlation of existing forces. This is still happening nowadays, but with a more predominant role of experts and the legal framework. In increasingly heterogeneous societies, new citizens have greater difficulties in making their voices and demands heard due to a lack of social legitimacy, whether externally granted or self-granted. To what extent is the ever-unstable pre-existing balance among stakeholders capable of accepting the claims of these new citizens?

In his chapter, Costa recalls the contradictions emerging from the relation between cultural participation and territorial development. Even though he recognizes territories as enablers of cultural participation, he warns about the “participatory rhetoric,” visible in all layers of public policies and in various levels and dimensions, and urges us “to go beyond the ‘symbolic’ and merely ‘nominative’ forms of public participation, which have been the rule in most cases.” He also addresses the risks of artists and agents themselves reducing cultural participatory processes to mere policy tools, which is related particularly (but not exclusively) to the problem of the diversity of policy objectives.

We will return to these risks in Teixido’s chapter, which recognizes the opportunities and threats of intersectoral policies which “seem to produce common interests and to contribute to the construction and progressive negotiation of a common value of art, but they can also be reduced to instrumental aims.” Indeed, on the one hand, she presents the limits of sectorality, which is considered “detrimental to public action because it does not allow for the construction of meaning intended for citizens through the aim of contributory democracy and cultural rights.” The intersectionality of cultural policies instead requires a longer evaluation process which allows “for discussion and the negotiation of the emergence of new identities in order to produce a common qualification.” Nevertheless, she recognizes as well the risk of harnessing cultural projects to larger policy goals since the former are obliged to respond to “mechanisms of selection, efficiency, and speed” dictated by the logic of neo-liberal societies.

Finally, from this emerges a need to align the dynamics of cultural participation with the principles of sustainable development. If considering cultural participation through the lens of a triple bottom-line approach - considering at the very least the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainability and taking an ecocentric perspective - our actions should privilege social and ecological aspects over purely economic ones. In this sense, the model of “commonism” presented by Otte and Gielen may represent an alternative that is more aligned with these values than current capitalism since it considers social relationships and environmental issues more relevant than economic interactions.

These views on sustainable development are also closely intertwined with the concept of cultural justice, which should be central to every cultural participation process aimed at fostering inclusiveness. In fact, this vision aims at maintaining harmony among various cultures by promoting equitable interactions and protects a subordinate group of people situated within a dominant culture from prejudice and discriminatory practices. In this sense, we may pave the way for what Clammer (2019: 3) defines as “holistic development,” which is characterized by “forms of development that far exceed the purely economic or material and involve the development of culture, the pursuit of social and cultural justice, concern for the environment as the essential context for the maintenance and flourishing of both human and non-human life forms and ideas of both material and cultural sustainability and the links between all of these.”

## How the COVID-19 crisis challenges cultural participation

In writing of this book, it took us some time to realize that what we were experiencing, confined in our homes, was not temporary but, instead, that the residues left by the Covid emergency were actually laying the foundations for our new reality. After many of the chapters of this book were already completed, the decision was made to interview some key experts to respond to brief questions on the concept of participation and on the possible impacts of the Covid-19 crisis on cultural and artistic organizations. In parallel, we decided to monitor the reactions to the pandemic of the cultural and creative sector at the European level with a specific focus on digital initiatives.

What have been the main actions undertaken and the strategies implemented by cultural and creative organizations and professionals to face the challenges of the lockdown in a time of profound social

transformation and economic crisis? What is the place of cultural participation within the digital revolution embraced during the lockdown? Have cultural organizations succeeded in practicing online forms of participation that go beyond the “cultural democratization” approach? What kind of power dynamics are enacted online and are they different from the ones promoted offline? To what extent have cultural organizations and institutions taken advantage of the possibilities offered by the digital realm? What kind of impact is the digital environment having on the ways cultural organizations

and institutions relate to their audience and to societies in general? And, in conclusion, what are the upcoming challenges awaiting the cultural and creative ecosystem during the recovery phase?

Very little can be said about the future of the cultural ecosystem beyond the pandemic. The Covid-19 emergency has affected all sectors and societies, and the arts and cultural sectors are particularly under pressure. As stated in a recent call to EU leaders made by network organizations from across Europe's cultural and creative sectors, "cultural actors are gradually resuming their activities, but all have to implement strict safety rules which means they won't be operating at full capacity for the foreseeable future and are therefore facing challenging economic decisions. From individual creators and creative workers all the way to big production and media companies, the whole value chain is impacted."

All authors agree that it is unthinkable to foresee with any confidence what the future of the cultural sector might be, let alone the possibility of providing direction and intuitions to read the present in a comprehensive way and to react to the challenges springing from this global crisis. The place where we have all recently landed seems to represent a point of no return, and those who think they can go back to the previous situation, forcing their way past the constraints that are emerging, risk bitter disillusionment. Moreover, the current situation is slowly encouraging artists and cultural operators to question the way art institutions operate and the meaning of art practices in today's societies: cultural participation is now in question. What is the impact of the lockdown on the concept of cultural participation? Has the lockdown created new needs, urgencies, and approaches that may influence the very foundation of the concept of cultural participation? Have cultural organizations and artists started to rethink ways of reaching and dialoguing with their beneficiaries and to review their power dynamics with their audiences? How can we participate in a time of social distancing?

As François Matarasso stated in his interview, if it is not possible to have a tidy view of the future of culture organizations, it is clear enough that "we may have passed the high-water mark of cultural production and consumption. The business models of many arts organisations will be unsustainable." From the perspective he provides, participatory arts activities are those which will be hit the hardest "because they have few reserves on which to fall back." At the same time, though, as was underlined by all the interviewees, there is a need on the part of today's societies for reconnecting and to overcome the recent traumas. From this point of view, seeing cultural participation as a tool for social transformation, civic empowerment, and recovery could be the way

to ensure that a leap in perspective takes place. The rubble of a sector pierced through by the economic effects of the pandemic could provide the basis for new forms of relations between those who create and produce and those who have been conceived of till now as simple consumers. But this shift needs steeled courage as well as a different approach in the way cultural organizations perceive themselves and their role in society in order to co-imagine with the citizens a new meaning and a new significance.

The current situation requires forcing one's thinking and possibilities of action within spaces defined by certain structural limits linked to the security constraints of social distancing: following this logic, the use of digital technology seemed to be the immediate and ready-made solution to keep relational, social, and participatory dynamics alive. How can a sense of belonging be created regardless of physical presence? How can the body be active without contact? How can artists invite people into artists' spaces and involve them meaningfully? How can physical presence be strengthened within a virtual space? How can virtuality and reality be integrated together without conflict?

When analyzing the ways in which cultural organizations have "inhabited" the digital environment during the lockdown period, the "cultural democratization" approach emerges: the main aim was to make the contents created by artists accessible to the widest possible number of people. The initiatives we have analyzed resemble the mind-sets and the top-down approaches that have characterized offline and online cultural strategies in the past and eventually run into the same obstacles outlined by Emmanuel Négrier in the introduction to this volume: the unequal access to culture, the hierarchization of cultures, the Western approach of defining contents and forms of expression, the passive role assigned to audiences, and the absence of an organic relationship between cultural institutions and some layers of society which can still be isolated or excluded.

The limitations linked to unequal access springing from the restriction imposed by this health emergency to favor social distancing may cause participation through physical presence to become a privilege of the few. In parallel to this lies the problem of the digital divide, bringing with it the risk of accentuating elitist forms of consumption and content production. The digital divide entails certain consequences: on the one hand, it is the cultural institutions that need skills and resources to invest in digital techniques, and this is often the case for both urban and large institutions at the expense of regional and independent producers; on the other hand, the uneven distribution in the access and use of digital and online means discriminates against a large portion of the population in terms of participating in a knowledge-based society and economy. The digital divide

limits social development, creating barriers and aggravating forms of social exclusion and under-representation for minorities and disadvantaged groups. Moreover, as Niels Righolt underlines in his chapter, digital content is not necessarily suitable to meeting the needs of different audiences and “matters of inclusion, community, representation, diversity, and democracy are as relevant to digital content as they are to cultural offerings under normal circumstances.” During the lockdown, we observed that the cultural proposal, though spread via digital means, still resembles that of an elitist environment, where the right to access is still limited to some social strata and the contents that are delivered often reflect a Western colonialist approach to culture.

It is not enough to be present in the digital realm to be relevant: the pertinence of digital positioning has to be put into relation with a strategic approach and a willingness to share power with beneficiaries in more engaged, inclusive and co-creative ways, opening spaces for authentic and genuine dialogue with all audiences, visitors, and communities. Simply digitally transposing cultural contents and products created for the pre-crisis society may not be enough. Little has been done within the realm of “cultural democracy” when experimenting with and enhancing the potentiality related to the prosumer, a neologism introduced by Alvin Toffler specifically to designate a person who uses commons-based peer production. It seems that many organizations have not been veritably interested in sharing real power, but more so in the idea of widening and diversifying audiences or nourishing and deepening the relations they entertain with an existing public. In other words, the digital environment has been seen as a channel or a medium (indeed, the only one possible) to pursue audience development strategies and approaches.

Although naturally designed to develop rhizomatic and horizontal relationships, facilitating the possibilities of sharing and taking on shared responsibilities, the digital experience during the pandemic does not seem to have led to a renewal in approaches and in a mindset regarding who is leading cultural organizations. A clear set of intentions needs to be focused and expressed; it is not possible to take advantage of all the possibilities offered by the digital realm without a proper mindset and a keen awareness springing from clear and shared rules related to the role and the mission of the cultural organizations.

The digital realm was presented in this book as a means that can enable a space and a time for dialogue, debate, and a way to ease participation by overcoming social distancing. Moreover, the digital world could also become the basis for allowing active participation that connects professionals and organizations which otherwise

would never have thought about cooperating with each other to design and imagine possible futures. In this perspective, during our observations, we have witnessed the rise of numerous online think-tanks and work groups that came together online to discuss possible common strategies of intervention and advocate for the sector. Nevertheless, what can be underlined is that the protagonists of these movements did not involve all layers of society let alone other sectors, but decided in favor of a “safe” space by including solely cultural operators, artists, and policy-makers.

As Niels Righolt points out in his chapter, “If anything, the crisis has shown the value of culture to our populations. Millions of people are finding a source of connection, comfort, and well-being through culture and cultural participation.” Nevertheless, cultural organizations and even some artists have made little use of this forced pause to think about how to unhinge the mechanisms of vertical content offers. Few spaces have been dedicated to listening; a sort of horror vacui seems to have fed an overproduction of content, without starting from the assumption of how this forced inactivity could be translated into an effective listening space, a porous and permeable environment in which the boundaries between creators and beneficiaries can be forced open to allow for more active roles to be played.

As underlined by Franco Bianchini, “there is a need to absorb the collective trauma caused by deaths and mourning, not to mention anxiety, depression, suicides, and domestic violence. Artists and cultural producers that work on post-trauma recovery could have a lot of work and could access a wider range of funds (from health services, for example).” François Matarasso follows this line of reasoning by reminding us that “traumatized societies who have rediscovered the value of community, culture and personal creativity during lock-down may be the hungriest for that type of work.” This means that in the recovery phase, the cultural and creative ecosystem is challenged to explore the possibilities of “social transformation,” equipping a traumatized society with creative and artistic expressions. This shift needs to be regulated by a sharing of power among the creative world and society at large, a step which constitutes the precondition for social and civic empowerment. Although we have witnessed many initiatives that offered digital contents free of charge to ease people’s feeling of isolation, taking over functions and services usually within the purview of the state and the public sphere, this challenge does not seem to have been completely addressed by both cultural organizations and by the cultural policies that can create the conditions necessary for enabling this. Working in this way does not mean adopting the participative approach but rather embracing the logic of a necessary cultural presidium.

To conclude, if arts organizations want to continue to be relevant to their audiences, whose needs and interests may have now changed, they will need to equip themselves

with the skills and flexibility to handle instances that have not only to do with the world of creativity but increasingly with the worlds of education, welfare, and health.

When seeing cultural participation through the lens of potential social transformation, new questions emerge: what is the role of art in a time of social transformation? Why do we make art, for and with whom, and does it make sense to continue using the same formats and materials? What should art be focusing on, and what difference can art make? How far can artists go in terms of social transformation without renouncing their roles as creators and curators? Can the art world provoke and drive social transformation and a shift in values, making us rethink our relationship to material culture? Can all this happen without a proper set of policies?

As Niels Righolt points out, cultural organizations need to “start thinking out of the box and find the necessary footholds and tools to move forward,” and the one way to do this should be to start from the relationship with the audience and the surrounding community, in particular at the local level. As Jean-Damien Collin notes, participation cannot exist without trusted intermediaries, and “it would be a mistake for cultural actors not to rethink their mode of action, their role in the social negotiation of culture and its relationship to the arts and sciences.”

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What is participation? Is this a new paradigm of cultural policies, or is it just a simple instrument at the service of radically different cultural policies, both historically and in the European political space? At the end of this book, we have made progress on these questions. We know that participation is not a paradigm in itself, since the history of successive cultural policy paradigms (excellence, democratization, creative economy, and cultural democracy) have their own vision of what constitutes participation. However, several contributions underline the idea of a “participatory turning point,” a global shift in understanding that is contradictory to the one above: if an instrument crosses through different paradigm changes, it cannot be considered as a paradigm itself. Nor can it be considered a motor of history, since it is only a tool at its service. In reality, it is necessary to find its proper place within history and to say that the current era is precisely one that represents a discontinuity in the status of participation. It is because we give it another meaning (situated between capacity development and power sharing) that participation

ceases to be just one tool among others. It gains in power, in intensity of meaning. Operating somewhere between being a simple tool and a paradigm, we can say that participation has become a norm, a principle that informs our way of defining a desirable cultural policy. A norm indeed defines a desirable perspective, at halfway point between an objective and a means. A paradigm, on the other hand, embraces the whole of our vision of the world. It is an autotelic and self-defining value. If participation is not, therefore, a new paradigm, its scope is greater than that of a tool, and its influence touches on several issues and sectors, as evidenced by this book.

What are the next steps that should be included in the political agenda for participation? After this book, which brings together the contributions of specialists engaged in reflection but also in participatory action, there is a clear need for an orientation towards methods. As many scholars and professionals have pointed out, the importance of procedures, guides, and empirical models is all the greater when we face social innovations. The BeSpectACTive! Project constitutes in this respect a platform open to all experiments and will soon be offering a handbook on this subject. It is not enough to say that participation is a lever for transformation, that new professional profiles and new professions are emerging, or that a cultural revolution must take place within the sector of culture. We must also equip these transformations with the appropriate tools, less to direct them and more so to continue the debate on-site, in the field itself.

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The background of the page is a solid, bright yellow color. It is decorated with several large, overlapping, organic shapes in a slightly darker shade of yellow. These shapes are reminiscent of stylized leaves or petals, with smooth, curved edges and some internal shading that gives them a three-dimensional appearance. They are scattered across the page, with some appearing in the upper half and others in the lower half, creating a sense of movement and depth.



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