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Cross-Sectoral Collaboration in Culture and Beyond

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Abstract

Cross-sectoral collaboration in culture, crafts and creative industries is more widely referenced since the COVID-19 pandemic. When addressing the topic of collaboration, some key features have to be analysed in the first step—especially answering the question of why new policies or actions in culture should (re-)focus on cross-sectoral collaboration.

The current period, mainly dominated by crisis narratives including in the areas of culture, crafts and creative industries, should be understood in another manner. In fact, a crisis would only be the moment of disruptive rapid change, so the debate on permanent transformation would be the more accurate one. In order to design future culture (policy) frameworks, positive transformation narratives are required with culture being an enabler of positive change.

Further investment is also required to understand a wider range of transformation contexts of which the pandemic is only one example. Cross-sectoral frameworks might generate positive effects like job generation or negative spillovers like energy shortages. Cultural action is not cross-sectoral by choice but embedded in a wider ecosystem which goes beyond the cultural sphere.

The main question is how to improve cross-sectoral collaboration in and with culture. Some main areas of consideration have to be addressed including the actors of collaboration, the related governance settings and methodologies. The cross-sectoral topic of climate change, cities and culture provides a related illustrative example.

Keywords: Cross-sectoral, pandemic, narratives, transformation, culture policy, creative industries, crafts, climate change, cities, European Union

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The (post-)pandemic phase as well as other major (global) disruptions at the beginning of the 2020s are perceived as being disruptive by a wide range of stakeholders in the cultural and creative sectors and a related discourse of crisis is dominating in the area of policies and cultural organisations.

In the European Union, the Member States have reacted on the negative impacts of the pandemic which experienced the creative industries, crafts and cultural venues by the means of considerable emergency support programmes (IDEA Consult et al. 2021).

While these support actions were crucially needed and without a real alternative in order to ensure the survival of the sectors including related employment, these programmes also bound a considerable number of human resources and diverted the (cultural) policy options and concentration from other pressing topics like the ecological transformation of and with the cultural sectors.

From Crisis and Emergency to Transformation Readiness

One of the related lessons learnt for future-proof cultural policies is to better prepare for potential crisis-scenarios in advance, in order to prevent emergency situations including considerable collateral damage. A first related scenario would be to use emergency frameworks at the same time as moments for innovation by developing related support instruments.

However, when analysing the longer-term policy and support frameworks in the European Union in year two of the pandemic, a considerable number of (policy) challenges persisted: “The shift from emergency programme to innovation relaunch programme is slow, with considerable hesitation on the part of policy makers.” Furthermore, “large parts of non-cultural decision makers still lack a deeper understanding of the crucial benefits that the cultural and creative sectors provide to the (post-pandemic) European societies and economies.” In addition, “huge territorial differences in the use of innovation support instruments as crisis response measures were further accentuated inside the EU.” On the positive side it can be observed that large budgets could be mobilised, experimental settings were tested and, in

some countries, private foundations continued to engage in CCS innovation funding (Amann et al. 2021, 4–5).

Beyond Static Ecosystems and Frameworks

A second scenario in order to avoid disruptive effects is to change the viewpoint on the pandemic and other areas of (global) concern. If (cultural) policy makers and stakeholders perceive the context of their actions as being dynamic based on the notion of permanent transformation, the cultural and creative ecosystems could be better prepared for all kinds of (potential) future developments.

At the level of the European Union, a major foresight exercise has provided information on those priority topics and future transformation scenarios which are most probable to be faced and to be prepared for (European Union 2021). These range from climate change to endangered democratic systems, the digital revolution and new geopolitical frameworks. All these developments have impacts on culture, crafts and creative industries, and can generate challenges as well as new opportunities.

The framework of permanent change requires a broader attention of policy makers and actors in the field of culture in order to have an early warning related to potential disruptive negative effects and to plan for mitigation actions on the one side. On the other side, these transformations also open (new) opportunities for cultural actors, including the potential of co-designing (positive, better) futures. Addressing these scenarios will require cross-sectoral cooperation as they all concern culture and other thematic areas.

Cross-sectoral Cooperation as a Necessity and Not a Choice

Developing these new cross-sectoral policies can also be built on previously successful initiatives like the implementation of creative industries policies and action plans. A policy focus with a large uptake on the whole globe.

Based on priorities of the past 20 years, the narrative of the creative industries fits perfectly the needs of a global and mainly urban society that is able to use considerable resources for a high-quality lifestyle.

The creative industries were able to provide unique experiences with their special design, crafts, architecture and fashion, constructing the (concept of the) creative city, a place for global trendsetters as well as masses of (cultural) tourists. The creative industries were also already addressing a cross-sectoral logic, societal issues like new work styles (remote, co-working, digital) as well as the innovation of the digital sector (games, apps) as one example and many others more.

The creative industries generated considerable economic impact, growth as well as jobs. In the European Union, the cultural and creative sectors counted for 7.6 million jobs in 2019 with an increase of 700,000 between 2013 and 2019 (Alvarez et al. 2021).

Creative Industries—A Cross-sectoral Reference Example

The concept of the creative industries is deeply cross-sectoral, whether it is at the level of policy making involving, for example, both the ministry of economy and the ministry of culture, or at the territorial level when co-developing creative quarters in the cities.

While priorities and value-sets might change considerably in the upcoming years, the concept of cross-sectoral cooperation will remain valid and should gain considerable importance in order to well address the future transformation scenarios. Related to the cultural and creative sectors (as any other field of activity), the interaction with other thematic fields can be in different directions comprising inbound and outbound effects as well as positive or negative impacts.

Therefore, positive change is another important notion related to cross-sectoral cultural policies and implies the attempt to arrive at a definition. We can, for example, distinguish planned and emergent changes, episodic or continuous ones (Dunphy 1996; Munduate and Gravenhorst 2003; Weick and Quinn 1999; Nonås 2005). The notion of positive is based on the

prevailing value-sets of those in charge of making decisions (e. g. economic development versus nature protection). In the case of cross-sectoral cultural policies, one of the related main actors will be cultural ministers, cultural councilors as well as the cultural administration at the different levels of governance. In addition, addressing the (desired, undesired) change can or cannot be part of the competences of these stakeholders. A cross-sectoral policy or initiative will per definition include partners from other thematic areas and a related collaboration ecosystem needs to be operational.

An Ecosystemic Approach of Collaborative Governance, Institutions and Individuals

A collaborative ecosystem will involve the governance, organisations and administrations as well as individuals, and should be based on methods of collaboration like participative processes and open access to information. Installing a collaborative governance requires a change of mindsets as most of the policies are still developed and implemented in thematic silos. Furthermore, cross-sectoral strategies and action plans are required.

Many organisations and administrations in the field of culture are—so far—only weakly connected to their counterparts in other sectors, and organisational missions are most often not developed in a wider thematic context. Individuals acting as bridge builders between different sectors are rather the exception than the rule, and compensation systems (financial, recognition) are not focusing on cross-sectoral cooperation. This leads to the fact that cross-sectoral cultural projects or research is often much more difficult to be financed, implemented, and published.

An Enabling Framework to Cope with Negative Impact and Potential for Positive Change

We can come to the first conclusion that cross-sectoral cooperation is crucial for addressing a dynamic framework of transformation which is

impacting and impacted by the cultural and creative sectors. Many future scenarios are well analysed and the cultural and creative sectors can start to prepare for the related potential negative impacts as well as enhance their role as enablers of positive change. The narrative of crisis and the related emergency actions should be overcome and a longer-term perspective (re-) established.

In order to be able to better address future transformation, the ecosystem of the cultural and creative sectors needs to become collaborative which implies a modernisation of governance, public and private institutions as well as new skills and motivations for the individuals working in these sectors based on a societal agreement on the features of positive change and related (updated) value-sets. We need a new collaborative policy of transformation.

Collaborative Cultural (Policies of) Transformation and Climate Change

This new concept of collaborative policies of transformation can be well-illustrated with the major future transformation(s) by the climate change as well as related impacts on culture and cities. Such policy implies the need of collaborating between those in charge of culture and those in charge of the wide range of different thematic areas related to the ecological transformation and climate change.

Furthermore, it must be understood that cities count for around 70 percent of all CO² emissions and consequently, urban areas will need to considerably contribute to climate change mitigation actions. In view of the 2030 targets and the required achievement of considerable reduction of CO² emissions, urgent action is needed in these cross-sectoral frameworks.

Conflicting Value-Sets Related to Climate Change and Other Objectives

In the first step, we have to understand the underlying value-sets for a collaborative transformation to a “green” culture which also includes the craft sectors and cultural actors in the cities.

The ecological cultural policy goes beyond a ‘classic’ innovation policy. This implies unpopular debates as new policies would have to be clear about which activities still justify the (possibly intensive) use of resources for society and/or the economy. The even more serious question behind this is what activities—including cultural and artistic activities—should no longer justify the intensive use of resources and thus possibly no longer benefit from public cultural funding or even be restricted in terms of regulatory policy. This becomes particularly clear with regard to international cultural exchange, and also with one of the central questions of who should still be allowed to fly to the Far East or Africa for cultural cooperation or which cultural workers should come to Europe for which activities from non-European countries? (Amann 2021, 2).

This context implies a reflection that is related to cultural rights and cultural participation, but refers also to the wider context of mobility policy by the States and cities and which kind of mobilities societies and related policy will still allow in the future and at which price.

Cultural Policy Is Also Deeply Affected by these Transformations of Values

A similar discussion can also be held with regard to new cultural buildings, to cite a second example. Which cultural buildings justify the further sealing of (cultivable) soil? In this regard, it could also be argued that architecture, in the sense of ecological buildings, especially in cultural buildings, could clearly show how resource-minimizing building projects

are implemented. The EU initiative New European Bauhaus (European Commission 2021) follows this line of arguments. These, however, are not yet a value-based frame of reference, and neither sufficiently debated and defined for the society as a whole, nor for the economy as a whole, nor for a future ecological cultural ecosystem (Amann 2021, 3).

This second example is also closely related to cultural policies of cities and related future scenarios on the cultural development of quarters and the more rural parts often surrounding the city center. It implies overarching topics like access to culture and climate justice, balanced cultural territorial development, and public transport.

The two examples show not only the interconnectivity of culture with a wide range of other thematic areas in the field of climate change, but also the conflicting options which are very often implied with this transformation agenda and for which related value systems play an important role. This raises the question of how to start the cross-sectoral endeavour of making the culture and craft sectors more ecological and which areas to be addressed.

The Building Blocks of an Ecological Transformation of the Cultural Ecosystems¹

Ecological transformation is a transversal agenda for the whole cultural sector as for any other thematic area in society and economy. It has implications far beyond the management of cultural venues and the way of how festivals or crafts fairs are organised. Therefore, the notion of ecological transformation of a whole cultural ecosystem is important and should be prioritized over alternative notions like ecological management.

The stakeholders in the cultural ecosystem comprise first those at the governance level, defining their policy agendas and priorities as well as the available budget based on their value system and political orientations.

1. See Sylvia Amann (2022).

Further players in the ecosystem are the administrations (like the city cultural department) and cultural institutions whose missions and implementation plans define their priorities. In addition, each individual in the cultural ecosystem can propose, implement, co-finance, recommend or disseminate actions which are oriented towards a better ecological framework in their professional and private contexts.

We are all actors of (positive) change and when working in culture and at the same time addressing climate change in a city, we are well-advised to work cross-sectoral with those being active for CO² reduction in our city—namely the departments in charge of climate change mitigation strategies, energy and water supply, sustainable economic and urban development, tourism, etc.

All Can Be Actors of Ecological Change for the Better

These actors of change (meant in a cross-sectoral understanding) should act together on three different intervention areas comprising the state-of-the-art ecological modernisation, the ecological transformation of the cultural ecosystems, and the contribution to the updated narratives of change.

The state-of-the-art ecological modernisation, based on the technical opportunities and for which science and common practice have already provided a proof of concept, is the starting point for a substantial transformation in view of climate change. Related to the craft sectors, this could imply a support programme for changing the method of heating craftsmen's and craftswomen's workshops, from fuel-based to wood-based alternatives. Such support programmes for exchanging the heating systems are already available from those departments in charge of ecological transformation and environmental issues, but not (yet) very often used for cultural infrastructures.

The related challenges—from a European perspective—might rather concern the lack of companies with sufficient workforce and components—for example, the available photovoltaic panels that are related to the disruptions in global value chains in the years 2021–2022. Furthermore, the

ecological interventions in protected buildings might raise further concerns and specific questions in view of diverging protection objectives: While the protection of the built cultural heritage for future generations is part of cultural sustainability, the ecological sustainability can only be achieved by exchanging the systems that cause CO² emissions. The latter could imply substantial interventions in the protected building structures which are undesirable collaterals.

Again, from a European perspective, favourable frameworks for the ecological transition comprise also the considerable financial support available in the European Union for these endeavours in view of the implementation of the European Green Deal including in the area of culture.

A System-Change Is Required to Ensure Full CO² Reduction

While exchanging the heating system in a cultural building is a more technical question which normally does not interfere (considerably) with the overall missions and strategies of an organisation, the ecological transformation of policies and organisations is a broader concept which goes far beyond some technical adaptations.

Such CO² reduction strategies for whole systems such as the working fields covered from a cultural ministry or a whole cultural organisation are much more complex. We have to understand that CO² emissions are caused by literally all actions which are taken. As a consequence, ecological transformation is a transversal task that already begins from the very decision to start this cross-sectoral process.

This fact relates to the overarching political objectives and underlying values. A minister of culture or political parties can be convinced that ecological transformation is a necessity, but the political leaders could also defend other opinions. An organisational modernisation process (NEMO 2021), in a State museum for example, in order to develop a new mission statement could include or not the transversal topic of ecological engagement, depending on the positions and power of those defending these topics. Furthermore, private actors in the cultural ecosystem might also have

very different concepts and convictions related to the need of ecological transformation.

How to achieve an ecological transformation process of the cultural ecosystem in cities is a similar question. It requires political commitment and at least a group of engaged stakeholders to start the related transformation processes. Once a decision is made, related strategies and action plans have to be elaborated. These plans can only be developed in a meaningful manner when working cross-sectoral (Inforelais 2021).

This need for cross-sectoral strategies and action plans can be illustrated with the change of mobility patterns of the employees and the audiences in the cultural field. This implies the need of accessible public transport that requires cooperation from the department of transport and the facility managers of cultural venues in order to build for example parking slots for bikes, and the need for the marketing and tourism department to inform about the new accessibility opportunities for local and international guests. Furthermore, the human resources department might be able to generate monetary and non-monetary incentives in order to motivate the staff to use public transport or might be ready to make modifications related to working hours to adapt to the schedules of buses. As such, many elements of cross-sectoral cooperation and common initiatives can be imagined.

Furthermore, a whole set of rules and regulations might need adaptation, in order to cope with CO² reduction targets—for example, to avoid public support for those activities causing too much emissions. This, for instance, implies a reflection on the public support programmes for culture in view of ecological needs. In addition, rules and regulations might be part of the competence of a city that is aiming to transform its cultural ecosystem to be more ecological and climate friendly. Some rules might be rather decided on other governance levels, such as at the State level. In any case, building up an ecological cultural system is a systemic change, including technology, organisational innovation, as well as change of individual behaviours.

A Cultural Change for Sustainable Development

Changing ways of doing is a deeply cultural endeavour. The protection of the climate requires a considerable change of how we are doing things, which attitudes are admired and estimated by our peers and in the society as a whole, and the reasons why our friends maybe like us. The underlying value-sets of Western societies are very often based on a strong dichotomy between nature and culture. If human-beings feeling apart, the answer to identified challenges will be different than in a context where human-nature relationship is different.

Nature is often set in opposition to culture or the other way around, invoking the ideal of intact nature, which must not be further destroyed (or shaped) by human interventions and activities. Interesting further considerations by the French philosopher Baptiste Morizot include the self-image of humans, who in turn should understand themselves as an integral part of nature. A “we” (again) would emerge from the opposition between man and nature (Morizot 2020). Furthermore, the understanding should be developed that the very largest green spaces that surround us are not untouched nature but man-made cultural landscapes—and have been for thousands of years. This applies, for example, to the European mountain pastures as well as the overgrown cattle pastures, where some of the most famous African national parks were created (Pearce 2016; Amann 2021).

Art, culture, the creative industries and crafts have the potential to help contemporary societies to reflect their position and their current value-set(s), to challenge current attitudes, and to provide playgrounds for experimenting alternatives ways of doing in safe spaces. The French initiative COAL, for example, “mobilizes artists and cultural actors on societal and environmental issues and supports the emergence of a culture of ecology through its actions such as the COAL Art & Environment Prize, curation of exhibitions, consultancy services for institutions and communities, European cooperation, and the animation of conferences, workshops and resource website.”² Cross-sectoral cooperation is fundamental in order to find new

2. <http://www.projetcoal.org/coal/en/le-prix-coal-art-et-environnement/>.

answers to new challenges in culture, crafts and beyond. European policies have a strong focus on these questions.

The European Union Policies and Agendas Reflecting Cross-sectoral Challenges

With the Green Deal,³ the European Union (EU) aims to address the climate change challenges in a broad transversal approach. A related initiative is the New European Bauhaus,⁴ with the objective to find ways for a just transition involving the citizens in a participative approach, the wider range of stakeholders from different sectors like building and architecture to interlink (again) functionality and aesthetics as well as ecological sustainability. Major related projects concern also the roles of cities for transformation to the better.

Beyond ecological questions, the European Union continues the efforts to modernise the cultural and creative sectors with the large and multiannual initiative of the Knowledge and Innovation Community for the Cultural and Creative Industries and Sectors, which is linked to the EU research programme Horizon.⁵ The triple helix approach involving research, corporations and the public sector will allow for broad Europe-wide engagement to develop the full potential of creative innovation and the most upgraded skill-sets.

Further in the area of cities, the EU Urban Innovative Actions Programme provides a framework for experimental innovations in the areas of culture and heritage. The Greek city of Halandri⁶ implements a cross-sectoral multi-annual project related to the overarching concepts of water and heritage commons involving the citizens, as the creative sectors and water management companies are linked to an ancient aqueduct that goes far

3. https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en.

4. https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/index_en.

5. <https://eit.europa.eu/eit-community/eit-culture-creativity>.

6. <https://uia-initiative.eu/en/uia-cities/halandri>.

beyond the pure renovation of heritage sites.

These and many other examples are illustrative of the wide range of cross-sectoral challenges which are addressed with forward looking policies and actions involving stakeholders and implementers from very diverse backgrounds. Collaborative policies and practices addressing future transformation scenarios have the potential to generate the most meaningful impacts.

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