

## Festivals Cities Conversations: report

### Contributions & responsibilities of festivals and cities towards Europe

Friday, 19 June 2020 – 13.00 PM - Online

**This session is co-organised with:** A Soul for Europe in the framework of the European Festivals Association and A Soul for Europe's "Festival Cities for Europe" Initiative.

**With introductions by:** Nele Hertling (A Soul for Europe), Cécile Finot (Clermont-Ferrand European Capital of Culture), Airan Berg (Festival der Regionen), Monica Urian (European Commission)

**Followed by break out groups**

**And a reaction by:** Luca Jahier (President of the European Economic and Social Committee), Volker Hassemer (Cities for Europe, A Soul for Europe), Damian Boeselager (MEP)

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Europe (and here we always mean a larger Europe, not just the EU), is a continent of festivals. And of cities. Europe is not only a citizens', let alone only an economic or political project. Europe is also a community; a community embedded in and with a responsibility for the world. The development of Europe is citizens' driven. Citizens, and civil society play a key role in the formulation and implementation of Europe's development. Based on these assumptions, we say that a city together with its festivals and citizens has a task to fulfill for Europe.

Nationalism is one of the dangers nowadays. Festivals and cities can work against this, for example in planning to create new manners of awareness, challenge curiosity among the neighbours: "Make people fall in love with their cities".

**So what kind of action/project we can do together, festivals and cities, for Europe?**

#### 1. Luca Jahier

- Arts and Culture are important for the European project. Culture is one of the three priorities he introduced. This was revolutionary: he was the first president to do this in 62 presidents!
- Arts help us to develop ourselves as human beings, define us and go beyond the everyday life. It surrounds us with beauty. Nothing more than culture feeds as well the beauty, the truth and the good.
- Festivals have a huge economic importance on cities.
- It is necessary to bring together civil society and politicians.
- Racism and discrimination are problems we cannot ignore even here in Europe. Our cities are increasingly multicultural and let's see how we can build on this to be more comprehensive and move towards better cities. Europe is based on values.
- Cherishing diversity in arts and creative thinking. Diversity is the real of culture.

## 2. Cécile Finot and Nicolas Bertrand

- In 2019, the city of Clermont-Ferrand has launched its candidacy for the European Capital of Culture (ECOC). The city wrote a laboratory project with various working groups around the visions and partnerships with the local actors, especially festivals. It is an inclusive process to try to include young people and children, to become a European city but also a city of the world. Clermont-Ferrand is a medium size city that wants to transform into a European creative metropolis with more social cohesion, sustainable transformation, rurality. After this crisis, Clermont-Ferrand can be an example of slow life defending culture consumption.
- Various stakeholders have been participating in the process of Clermont-Ferrand's application at ECOC: members of A Soul for Europe (ASfE) were invited to visit the city, a strategic group with citizens has been created in order to engage and start a dialogue with citizens. What is surprising is the notion of well-being. Clermont is well connected to the nature, volcanoes... The city also has an important industry and tries to develop a long term view of the city through culture.
- ECOC can be a good practice to connect the European dimension. This is the most difficult principle to be approached by the candidate cities. It is a two-way dialogue, learning and communication: Europe learning about the city and the city learning about Europe. The European dimension is often there, it is really rooted in our democracy.
- Dialogue between the city and Europe: they build different networks like Culture Next, ASfE, EFA, it is an opportunity to work with experts and collect good practices. They launched in the city a new network with cities that also have an industrial heritage in order to create links between cities.

## 3. Airan Berg

- Festival der Regionen develops projects that bring an important European dimension and participative formats.
  - Orfeo & Majnun is a big participatory project that brings together people from different communities but living in the same area around two myths from our cultural heritage: a European myth with an Arabic myth. It is a multilingual and multi-format project (calligraphy, work with refugees, people with disabilities, so it gathered a very diverse public and participants). All artists became citizen artists. It is about uniting people from different background together through culture heritage, old traditions...
  - Centriphery: bring people from different towns to come together to think about the "social warmth's" theme. Participants were connected with orchestras, dancers... People were asked how they see their future and created together a book of dreams to give to politicians.
- In the future, the formats to suggest is to create a kind of "Europe mon amour" Days with existing festivals taking place in different countries at the same time. It would ensure a large scale participation giving the voice to citizens, and encourage EFFE Festivals to promote European themes and values.

## 4. Monica Urian

- Cities are a very important interlocutory.
- ECOC is the best-known initiative and brand in the European culture policy. The model has been copied on different continents.
- Triangle: Europe, citizens, festivals but the conversations have to take into account all continents.
- 2016 is the starting point of a revolutionary strategy: culture is taken into account in the European Union. It is part of the long-term strategy and deep engagements are taken with partners.
- The European agenda for culture has external relation pillar: well-being, economic pillar stimulate culture...

## 5. Results of the break out groups

### Group 1:

- What could be done sustainably for enlarged regions using the city as a hub, that should be an ideal for the future. A city is never just itself; it is connected to lands and larger regions around it.
- We need to rethink our mobility: with the COVID-19 lockdowns, it is not only about visiting a city, but a city visiting the world with the skills we have learned during this period. It wasn't a matter of tourism anymore but reaching out in a new and different way. We all have new skills, processes of working that didn't exist 6 months before.
- Our attitude to heritage: all cities and festivals should ask themselves what immaterial heritage we want from our time to be left in the future.

### Group 2:

- Traditionally, the language and the conversation between cities and festivals were more addressing tourism and how to attract tourists in the city thanks to festivals BUT we need to change the language by trying to use the creativity of festivals to change it. It is important to find a new narrative, a new message focused and based on European Values, and how festival can help to increase creativity to develop a new form of Festivals.
- We can focus on social movements, protests during which the community is focusing on a specific topic. Before preparing a festival, other actors than the city could join as a way of how we are going to change the city with the festival and try to get everybody involved in the preparation beforehand and everybody is then evolved later on during the festival.
- Produce some guidelines to establish this new conversation between festivals and cities but by taking into account that the audience is changing a lot because of this pandemic. A consequence of the pandemic is that cities are more open, more open to Europe and the whole world.

### **Group 3:**

- We have learned so much during COVID about online festivals, from best practices to do livestream or do add subtitles so that people all over the world can join and celebrate together.
- Outdoor theater, each time taking place in different areas but also to connect with that area and to deal with the identity of each area.
- Develop a new platform on which festival makers can meet regularly and share best practices.

### **Group 4:**

- Interesting question: how can I improve my city in being a cultural hub and my city remain relevant for Europe after ECOC?
- Evolution Film Festival Palma started out from nothing and gained support from the local communities and it is today an international film festival, gathering people from all over the world to network and showcase, transforming Mallorca in a great film spot...
- Hildesheim is an ECOC candidate. It is a very small city with very few tourists, it is different from Palma which has a lot of tourists, so the city starts from a strong base on a local level. They plan many European projects, but there are few festival partners so it's not as easy to foster cocreation, and getting a famous international artist doesn't necessarily build new local connections, which is especially important for a regional ECOC; the bid is built on three principles: on-site, cooperative, explorative, not just in Hildesheim but also in the surroundings.
- Izmir is a transformed and modernized city, with almost no urban memory. The history is gone. Izmir festival tries to fill this void by organising concerts that tries to reconstruct the urban memory and build a new history with the people living there. Some events take place in areas with low income while the audience and the art on offer is more elite, which leads to tension and the question who it is for, and what's the role of tourism.

### **Group 5:**

- Maybe we need to create and have a different vision of Europe in these changing times.
- The pandemic created a bigger challenge along with sustainability, climate change, racism.
- Europe could help us to remain connected and collaborate even more but how can artists work together without being in the same space and produce something at the end of it?
- We have to work with the citizens of the cities and ask them what they want to see and do. Some festivals concentrate on the local and this can be a good way to draw the European internationalization together with the local.
- Looking at the manifestation of plural ideas, multiculturalism and identities.

### **Group 6:**

- Mobility and exchange of artists makes Europe live through residencies, specific projects...
- We need to focus on the youth and young school students.
- How can art be a way to express ideas will they be political, values...
- Opening up to new narratives, new imaginary for citizens.

- A composer could compose a new piece that will travel through Europe to talk about Europe and arts to other people.

#### **Group 7:**

- What if festivals and bordering cities and regions (not the metropolises as Paris, Berlin, Madrid...) collaborate stronger through a network/platform? Differences are slight because they are sharing a river, a forest, a mountain and languages are mixing. In a post COVID world, maybe it's time to less concentrate on the centers but more from the connecting tissues of Europe and the festivals in those cities.

#### **Group 8:**

- Difficulties because of the pandemic because Prespa and Pietrasanta are depending on tourism
- No international artists will be able to come so the festivals will only be for locals.
- It is important to work and cooperate with neighboring countries but with COVID even this is quite complicated.
- Collaboration with cities: the cities can provide festivals a structure, venues, connect them to the artists and galleries, bring students...

#### **Group 9:**

- Festivals are important for territory, not only big cities but also small cities and villages because they are connecting the territory to the cities around (smaller or bigger) but also to the rest of the world.
- What connects those territories are the people. People are important for example a festival is sending young ambassadors to other countries.
- Festivals are about mobilizing the culture of the others.
- The issue of the people between local and global, inventing new forms of networks.

#### **Group 10:**

- Concrete proposal: bring in the citizens from unexpected means who are not artistic experts and representative of the diversity to be part of the curation process or part of the discussion to put up a festival.
- Importance of environmental sustainable cultural practices to implement in large scale events.

## **6. Advocating for culture**

- EECS cannot go against the Traitee to change its name to include culture but EECS can do other things like organising large debates and making propositions.
- The renewal of the members of the committee is in progress: it is important to demand to the other states and the governments to remember to represent the cultural sector because no one among the 350 members is coming from that sector.

- The cultural sector has enormous capacities but it sometimes to kind and they are not able to put up a strong lobby but culture should remain a priority and the Committee will try to put in place a permanent body to work on culture.
- The Commission is trying to present a reduced EU budget which is not in line with what the Parliament wants. The Erasmus budget was announced tripled but actually is decreased. Money has to be spent wisely.
- To be heard from the inside of EU institutions, you have to push as loud as you can from the outside and be as much bottom-up as you can.
- We are first of all citizens and we now have a European community. We need more Europe from the bottom-up. These last years have been more top-down but this has to change in the EU.
- ECOC and the European Film Academy/European Film Award are bottom-up initiatives:
- It is important to make links between different levels.

## 7. Conclusions

- It is necessary to bring together festivals, the civil society and politicians around the table.
- We need to make links between different levels (local, national, regional, European, global).
- Cultural diversity is Europe's main asset. Medium, small-size cities, villages present a potential to explore.
- Get stronger by building and/or joining networks with various actors.
- To be more participative, festivals should bring different stakeholders around the table to prepare or curate the festival: citizens, the business sector... and ask them what they want to see and do to work on new proposals.
- In the future, projects developed must be more participative and include an important European dimension (promoting European themes and values) to ensure large scale participation and hear the voices of citizens and.
- The arts and culture sector is not loud enough in its lobby. The sector as to shout louder and put in place bottom-up initiatives.

## 8. Links

- A Soul for Europe: <https://asoulforeurope.eu>
- Clermont-Ferrand Candidate European Capital of Culture 2028: <https://www.clermont2028.eu/>
- Presentation of Clermont-Ferrand 2028 ECOC candidature : <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XUfzN4QmuDvH1aj9WLk2ov-S-7kXwH7k/view?usp=sharing>
- Festival der Regionen: <https://fdr.at/en/>
- European Economic and Social Committee: <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en>
- Cities for Europe: <https://www.citiesforeurope.eu/>
- FestivalFinder.eu: <https://www.festivalfinder.eu/>
- European Capital of Culture: [https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/capitals-culture\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/capitals-culture_en)
- European Film Academy: <https://www.europeanfilmacademy.org/>
- European Film Award: <https://www.europeanfilmawards.eu/?p=1>