

Festivals Cities Conversations - Report

Festivals and Cities joining forces for inclusion and well-being

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This session is co-organised with: EUROCITIES

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1. Connections between arts and health

- We are at a turning point: big institutions as the World Health Organisation are now recognising the role of culture and the possibility to have culture as a complementary medicine. There is a scientific basis in terms of volume and a real dynamic as more and more institutions are involving time in scientific researches.
- For clinical relevance, scientific experiences is needed but these setting ups are too unnatural. Collaborations between artists and scientists is mandatory to build some new tools and measurement – that can then be improved from one project to another - that can be transmissible and validated by the scientific community. Culture can then be implemented in local policies. By becoming more accountable, the sector becomes more credible and likely to receive more fundings.
- The relationship between health and culture can also be frightening because it is instrumentalising the cultural sector.
- For many people culture is seen as a sign of social distinction: people who have enough money attend cultural activities. It takes work to get rid of that belief.
- Many indicators regarding arts and culture deal with prosperity, access to infrastructure but not so much exist to measure how people feel. This is something to bring into the discussions.
- Cultural operators, academics use culture for social transformation and urban development.
- Art can be used for having a break from the everyday noise and activity.
- There are many good research to use for advocacy to increase awareness in audiences but also to contribute to prevention or treatment.
- The city administrations have to use these studies and call the cultural players to make this happen. Culture shouldn't stand alone, other fields must be included: tourism, foreign affairs, education... and find a balance between not instrumentalising culture completely and the pleasure of making things.
- Over the years, more and more people could access culture and take part in different cultural experiences; this has created more awareness on culture and a big opportunity for policy to carve out a niche in order to develop the social function of culture. With the COVID-19 crisis, this is the time to act and find the best ways to capitalise on this. We need to create a momentum. For many people, it is still

a mystery why culture is important. We need to focus on developing the links between arts and other areas.

2. Create spaces for experimentation

- The digital sphere is not an enemy and presents a huge opportunity to develop digital schemes and formats to involve people. Festivals are one of the most challenged actors in the post COVID-19 pandemic because of the wide audience they attract (sometimes up to hundred of thousands of visitors each day). Festivals should happen throughout the year and not at a specific moment of the year. What is true for festivals is true for cities. The integration of the two dimensions – physical and digital experiences – is one of the biggest findings of this crisis for the cultural sector and even more the festivals which can be at the forefront of this. Cities and heritage cities have to spend some funds in the research of these innovations and create spaces for experimentation. We are prepared for this: we have the digital skills, the technology and the experience. The politics need to move forward now and invest funds in hybrid knowledge spaces.
- We are in a moment of change of paradigm: artists and cultural operators also need to change and develop new skills (e.g. digital skills). There are also possibilities to develop new potential figures (e.g. cultural nursing not as an artist but as a professional to bring together different worlds). It would be useful to have training programmes for those who want to work on these practices. If we develop new services such as art nurses, if we can prove that we organise more activities related to arts and culture and that we manage to reduce costs of the aging population, than we re-activate the old people in the society, and also think in terms of business, then we have a good point. We need to turn this into financial terms.
- Resilience! City administration and city council have to be resilient and not block too much in fix regulations and rules. It is important to be inclusive and listen to the others. Things are developing very fast, there are hybrid forms and you need resilience to give space to this and let it develop. Everything which is happening now will have a big impact on culture. We need to be open to all this and see what happens. Research and development is needed in culture.
- Alternatives are developed by festivals to be able to take place and fulfill the need of people to meet and enjoy culture. For example, the Ghent Jazz Festival, an important open air festival taking place in the city of Ghent, has been first cancelled but it will organise the Ghent 1.5 related to 1.5 meter of social distancing. Eau de Gand is another open air festival that has imagined a new programme with small concerts and theater plays.
- A recent initiative in Ghent attributes nine squares in the city center and in the neighborhoods in order to allow residents and cultural players to create cultural initiatives on the squares. After the lockdown people need spaces to recreate a link with neighbors through new things or little concerts, etc.

3. Projects and programmes developed by Centrul Cultural Clujean

- The Centrul Cultural Clujean is a huge cultural center located in Transylvania (Romania) leading several European projects on culture and well-being.
- Inner Space is an interdisciplinary project of the Creative Europe programme (2019-2021) exploring the relation between culture and well-being lead by Centrul Cultural Clujean and connecting artists, scientists, health and psychology experts to explore and experience how art and cultural participation can contribute to the inner well-being of the city’s inhabitants. The project has developed the ‘Culture and Well-being Think Tank’ gathering national and international experts, hosts an annual international forum and pilots design and artistic interventions aimed at individual and community well-being. The aim is to collect research results, make artistic experimentations to include culture and well-being in local policies.
- MESOC – Measuring the Social Dimension of Culture (2020-2022) is a Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Action designed to propose, test and validate an innovative and original approach to measuring the societal value and impacts of culture and cultural policies and practices beyond its economic impact, related to three crossover themes of the new European Agenda for Culture: Health and Wellbeing, Urban and Territorial Renovation, and People’s Engagement and Participation.
- In June 2020, Centrul Cultural Clujean has started a wide survey on personal consumption: the first results show that people connected more to arts during the COVID-19 crisis. People were also more involved in creating: writing, reading, playing instruments, singing, painting...
- Do people have a special connection with the arts? Yes it definitely can. A Spanish female woman aged between 25 and 30 said about Jaamil Olawale Kosoko’s online performance: “*Chameleon – The living installations* made me cry, breathe, relax and feel in sync with myself”.
- Art contributes to people’s well-being through various ways. In conclusion art makes people feel better.

How does ART contributes to people's well-being?



Art makes people feel better

4. Questions for cities and festivals?

- What are the key emotional, mental and health challenges of contemporary urban dwelling? What are the key issues for your city? Certain disease are more prevalent in certain spaces than others.
- How can arts and cultural participation be part of the solution to these challenges?
- How can culture become part of local policies in support of health and well-being? Nordic countries are good examples for integrating arts and culture in local policies.
- What skills do artists need to work with vulnerable groups? How to address the more vulnerable groups without causing more trouble? There is a lot of evidence on the positive impacts but the impact can also be negative.
- What joint actions can cities and festivals take together?
 - Share information on artworks, measure the impact of cultural participation and share the instruments used
 - Ensure access to culture
 - Build a repository of art projects enhancing well-being
 - Consider how to improve the quality of experiences in public space. Festivals and cities should focus on public spaces.
 - Collaborations with researchers and health professionals is needed.
 - Communicate results of your work
- The aim shouldn't be to bring more numbers but rather understand what works with our audiences and what not.
- Activities organised throughout the year is a key of success.

5. Conclusions

- The WHO recognises the role of culture but this can lead to its instrumentalisation.
- Being more accountable, the arts and culture sector becomes more credible.
- Create and develop hybrid knowledge spaces for experimentation.
- People connected more to arts and culture during the lock down, they were engaged in different ways and the activities done made them feel better.
- We need to keep in mind that not everything we do has a positive impact.
- Break the evidence down into financial proof.
- Need for resilience, creating blank spaces and flexible plans.
- Collaborate with other sectors of the city administration: health, education, tourism, infrastructure...
- 3 key words: collaboration, experimentation and alternative culture.
- Ask questions from different point of views: civil society, politics, business partners...
- Come with concrete questions, proposals and suggestions to move forward.

6. Some links on the topic

- EUROCITIES: <http://eurocities.eu/>
- Centrul Cultural Clujean: <https://cccluj.ro/home/>
- The Inner Space project lead by Centrul Cultural Clujean: <https://cccluj.ro/inner-space-en/>
- MESOC Project: <https://www.mesoc-project.eu/about/project>
- City of Ghent: <https://stad.gent/en>
- Publication “European Cultural and Creative Cities in COVID-19 times. Jobs at risk and the policy response.” (Pier Luigi Sacco is one of the contributors)
https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC120876/kjna30249enn_1.pdf
- <https://culturenext.eu/>
- Dr Ben Walmsley is setting up UK’s first Centre for Cultural Value, linking 5 UK Universities' cultural research departments: <https://ahc.leeds.ac.uk/performance/news/article/1308/dr-ben-walmsley-to-lead-on-uk-s-first-centre-for-cultural-value>
- Creative Ireland Programme supports the mainstreaming of culture and creativity in our lives, our communities and our society: www.creativeireland.gov.ie
- Arts Council England initiatives: <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/developing-creativity-and-culture/arts-culture-and-wellbeing>
- The Culture Health & Wellbeing Alliance connects artists, academics and health sector: www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk
- For anyone interested in Creativity and well-being in older people: <https://my.demio.com/ref/xFjCTKjBaWenJcau>