

## Towards the Berlin Conference 2020

### Festival Cities Workshop n°1

Friday, 25 September 2020, 13.00 – 14.30 PM CEST

*Facilitated by:* Cristina Farinha (Cultural and Creative Sector Policy Expert)

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#### 1. Summary

- Jurriaan Cooman (CULTURESCAPES) helpfully began and ended the session. He started by pointing to the problems of social polarisation, xenophobia and nationalism as the three negative effects we have been suffering over the last couple of years, but then at the end of the meeting suggested that the present disruption opens the opportunity for local diversity; perhaps we should be working towards that is a plan the opposite of the ECOC idea - not driven by self-promotion but regions of crisis places to heal, to create a new sense of we, of community.
- Djordje Mojić from Serbia (Interart) talked about the shutdown reintroducing borders and how dangerous this was. Europe was fracturing again, so we want to see the idea of art cities and digital tools to bring people back together.
- Nele Hertling (A Soul for Europe) said that at the moment we have responsibility but, so far, no answers. We know what the problems are, but we have to decide what we need to do about it.
- Thorsten Schlenger (Kulturnetzwerk Neukölln e.V) said we are in a panic situation; we need to have a period where artists stop talking about corona and start talking about the other issues that they have on the agenda; that we need the 'corona free' arts for a while.
- Sindre Sætre (Bergen kommune) said that the festival has to take a greater responsibility than usual to work more closely with the authorities to find solutions to so that they can be creative themselves. Oddly enough there are closer connections now between the authorities and festivals than there were before the pandemic.
- Joshua Alabi from Nigeria (Kininso Koncepts) said we hadn't actually thought of any of this happening so we hadn't prepared; we didn't have the tools in place for festivals to be enjoyed from people's homes. We didn't anticipate the advances and technology that we would need. As cultural curators we owe it to our communities to come up with more innovative solutions.
- Kathrin Deventer (European Festivals Association) talked about the shift down from local programmes to process within society; that cities need to forget about ruling people and need to understand more about how to represent them.
- Mateja Demsic (Municipality of Ljubljana) said that the pandemic helped us to rediscover the idea of community; that the smaller communities started to organise themselves again and rediscover the power of the public space, whether it be for art or protests. The challenge now is how to counter the inability to move and to demonstrate that Europe is not an island.

- Nicolas Bertrand (Clermont-Ferrand European Capital of Culture 2028 and also representing other cities and festivals), said he was impressed by the feeling of fragility both personal and group that had been revealed through the pandemic process; that our usual machinery was broken and that it is not just about programming artists any longer, we need to take care of them. We mustn't regard our populations just as a source of subsidy but as a sources of partnership.
- Sheila Deegan (Culture Department at Creative Ireland, Heritage and the Gaeltacht) wrote in the chat box about Limerick trying to recognise what "belonging" actually means to every citizen now, especially when they can't meet physically.
- Bernadette Quinn (Technological University Dublin) said the cities need to be more responsive in freeing up their public spaces for us all to use.
- Petra Terzi (Greece and Cyprus film festival) said that there was no European platform to help festivals go online, only US ones at the moment, and that this seems a shame.
- Deborah Semel Demirtas (Artist near Izmir/Turkey) said that, "of course the trouble is that we can see Europe but we can't get to it". This posed an interesting problem about peripheries; that we were at the mercy of our internet connections and our digital infrastructure to be able to participate - just as much as in the past we had been the victims of our physical infrastructure. The social distancing means that our sense of community can be diminished as well. It also signals a change in attitude; city policy should no longer be only about cultural tourism and visiting, the vanity of economic progress, it had to be something about much deeper.

*Summary by Simon Mundy*

## 2. Abstracts of the chat

- Jurriaan Cooman: polarisation-nationalism-xenophobia: vs. diversity-inclusion and decolonisation (un-learning towards a NEW WE)
- Sheila Deegan: What has changed for festivals - on a very basic level mobility, especially here in Ireland as an Island! But we are being upbeat and responding innovatively and have a new project launching next week on International Day of Older Persons [www.festivalinavan.com](http://www.festivalinavan.com)
- Carmen Mehnert: I hope for a Europe which looks beyond Europe and is aware of its responsibility towards the world beyond Europe and not fall back into eurocentristic patterns
- Joshua Alabi: I would like to see a Europe that takes on the platform of technology in transforming its artistic and cultural values through moderating societal issues that concerns regions and cities directly.
- Petra Terzi -Greece & Cyprus Intl Film Festivals: We always work with the municipalities in Greece and Cyprus but during Covid era we get advice for them to have no activities this year at physical venues... But the Festivals have to be done somehow... What is the support from Europe on this issue?
- Sheila Deegan: Sharing the work I was involved in for Limerick who bid to be European Capital of Culture 2020 and even then we tried to recognise what it meant to BELONG. Belonging was our

theme where we set out to rise to the challenge and our understanding of 'belonging' in Europe. Bid Book here - [https://issuu.com/limerick2020/docs/lmk\\_2020](https://issuu.com/limerick2020/docs/lmk_2020)

- Bernadette Quinn: I appreciate Mateja's point about how the pandemic has made us appreciate more fully the importance of public space. But not every city facilitates the use of public space for the staging or festivals. Urban public space can be overtaken with other uses. How can we encourage knowledge sharing and learning between cities on this point? (I am a festival researcher, based in Dublin)
- Djordje Mojić : What we have done to connect the people even in this time of Covid, is draw out our 2-day festival to a month. We are using a city bookstore/cafe workplace and including the diverse people that are already interested in the cultural development of our city and country. This team of young people are using their relational groups to connect talented people to the festival. 5 days a week we are holding workshops and events where a small number of people can come while the rest of the audience can tune in online. Guests are still coming from other cities to present, as they normally would, but just on this smaller physical level.

### 3. Questions and results of the poll

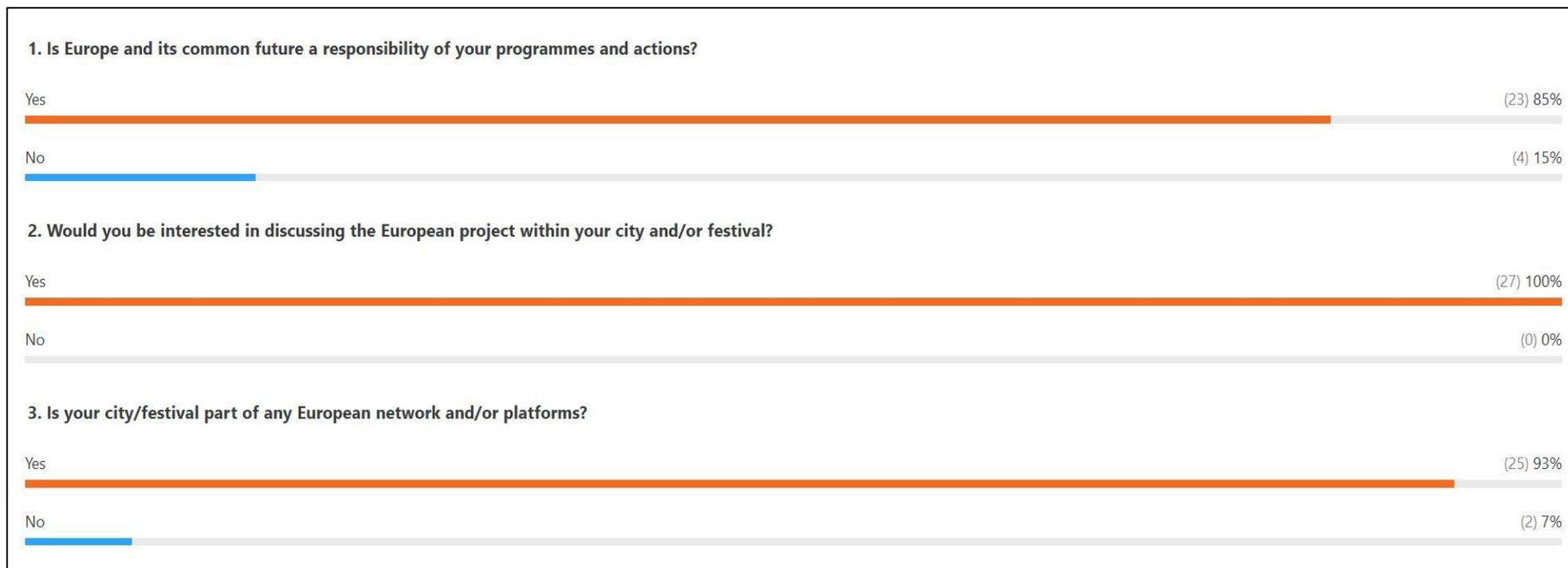
#### QUESTION & RESULT 1



#### QUESTION & RESULT 2



### QUESTION & RESULT 3



## QUESTION & RESULT 4

