

Advocating Networks Today

Textual context

Ivor Davies

Textual references

- Working Groups: Network Solutions for Cultural Cooperation in Europe (CAE 1996)
- Networking Culture: the Role of European Cultural Networks Gudrun Pehn, (Council of Europe 1999)
- The Value of International Cultural Networks (advocacy document 2016)
- How networking works (Fondazione Fitzcarraldo /Finnish Arts Council 2000)
- Mobility of the Imagination: Dragan Klaic, 2007
- Rhizomes and Networks: blog extracts, Dave Cormier
<http://davecormier.com/edblog/2011/11/05/rhizomatic-learning-why-learn/>

Working Groups: Network Solutions for Cultural Cooperation in Europe

Document aims

- to trace common purposes within the cultural networks sector (acknowledging diversity of membership and working methods)
- to identify issues of common concern and present concrete proposals
- to engage a political consciousness of the need for networks to work with European, national and local government and with each other
- to articulate needs and proposals emerging from the consultation
- to increase understanding and support for this way of working and build a more stable foundation for culture

Working Groups: Network Solutions for Cultural Cooperation in Europe

"The only organisation capable of unprejudiced growth or unguided learning is a network. All other topologies limit what can happen ... a dynamic network is one of the few structures that incorporates the dimension of time. We should expect to see networks wherever we see constant, irregular change, and we do."

KEVIN KELLY

WRITER, SCIENTIST & PHILOSOPHER

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Roles

Broadly, they bring people together to:

- Share information and experiences
- Generate ideas and project partners
- Reflect on the needs of the sector
- Engage in professional development

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Benefits include:

- Intercultural cooperation
- Efficiency and effectiveness
- Professional development
- Productivity
- Innovation

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Common characteristics:

- Diversity
- Cohesion
- Non-representativeness and representativeness
- Individuality

Differences include:

- Maturity, level and scale
- Profile and status
- Intention and priorities
- Allegiance

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All struggle to balance collective needs of members and function as independent structures, meeting requirements of funders and other stakeholders. The budgetary position at every level (European, national, regional local) is also increasingly hard.

Issues include:

- Short-termism
- Inadequate funding criteria
- Information overload

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External Recommendations

- A Network Development Fund (revenue support)
- A European Guarantee Fund for Cultural Networks
- An Integrated Travel Bursary Fund
- Translation and interpretation support
- Support for European networks at national and local level
- Corporate sponsor support - a 'bank of symbolic capital and spare capacity'

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Internal recommendations (within/among networks)

- Devise a valid set of criteria for networks
- Create a well informed Network Dialogue Structure
- Strategic dialogue and exchange across the cultural networks sector (via the Council of Europe)

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Transnational cultural networks are where people are putting Europe into practice. They are achieving these goals every day. Networks are living proof of the determination to create flexible and dynamic structures that can adapt to the changing environment of Europe as it prepares for the 21st century.

BUT...

Networks cannot work alone and are seeking appropriate, well-targeted support from European institutions and other organisations to provide a more secure foundation for their work. This document is intended to be the starting point for discussions on how to achieve the conditions for survival of the transnational cultural networks in Europe. It is hoped that those who read the document will feel encouraged to respond and contribute to the ongoing dialogue.

Networking Culture: the Role of European Cultural Networks

‘The field of cultural cooperation has become multi-dimensional to such an extent that the old structures no longer reflect the needs of the new players. The networks have begun to overturn these old structures by bringing greater identity, communication, links and information. They link individuals in the system, projects and ideas, and introduce new ways and structures.’

Networking Culture: the Role of European Cultural Networks

‘The network is a virtual place of exchange. It does not impose a philosophy but creates one out of the sum of its members’ philosophies, which must be reflected in it... Notions such as rivalry and competition are alien”...

In all cases, the network unfolds in time and space, and ultimately gains ascendancy over its members. One of its fundamental functions, in society as in nature, is to bring about economies by concentrating its resources. Whether it is circulating, transmitting or disseminating, an infrastructure that channels streams and allows general mediation has a logistical advantage.’

Networking Culture: the Role of European Cultural Networks

“The cultural network flows, branches constantly, keeping partly hidden, a fabric of reality and imagination. Things are connected one to another, when they have a meaning or network, when secret exchanges somehow link them, hidden, invisible, underground. The network can thus easily inflate, proliferate its internal links, to the detriment of its effectiveness, thus becoming an absolute plan, a paranoid illusion”

[quoted from 'Absent Structure: Introduction to Semiotic Research', Umberto Eco]

Networking Culture: the Role of European Cultural Networks

‘The idea that the economist attaches to the term network in the first instance is not that of interconnection, but rather intermediation. Networks are complex technical and economic objects whose function is to bring together the suppliers and consumers of certain goods and services. The network is seen as the concrete form of economic intermediation, allocation of resources, whether by the market or a hierarchical organisation.

A company can no longer be just a theoretical structure. It must become involved in the evolution of the environment, activities and attitudes. This means that it cannot be fixed in a formal configuration of roles and procedures but must adapt to technical, economic and social change in its area of operations.’

The Value of International Cultural Networks

'We cultural networks, are proud to promote and facilitate all forms of international collaboration, and improve the access to arts and culture. As networks we build trust and nurture relationships across national borders that support people to overcome local as well as global difficulties and to exchange their ideas, knowledge and expertise'

The Value of International Cultural Networks

- Our 'raison d'être' is to inspire, to be inclusive, to test new ideas and to pilot new projects, to help the culture sector to take risks and meet new challenges.
- Our strength is our members, thousands of organisations and individuals, working together, engaging with communities, learning from each other, sharing experiences and resources.
- Our role is to connect, bridge realities, coordinate joint efforts: we advise, we host, we mediate, inside our respective fields and beyond.'

The Value of International Cultural Networks

- 'Networks share values and ethics: we empower arts organisations to develop and let creative workers grow, we introduce an international dimension and support grassroots players facing difficult political and economical times that threaten to marginalise them.'
- We promote cultural equity, we defend the intrinsic value of the arts and advocate for the best conditions for heritage and contemporary creation to flourish and be accessible.
- We do this because we know arts and heritage play a prominent role to unleash the creative ability of people to shape and imagine their future.'

Mary Ann de Vlieg notes

- ‘We were proud to be ‘different’...: we firmly distanced ourselves from associations or project consortia. Networks, we claimed, were non-hierarchical, dynamic, emergent structures, unpredictable, somehow anarchic and democratic at the same time. Horizontal, and with no ‘centre’, anyone in the network could take a decision on behalf of the whole network (and believe me, it was sometimes hard to manage that!)
- We were proud to have been self-generated from the bottom-up, by the will of our members, and we had a natural distrust for any so-called ‘networks’ that had been formed by institutions or by suddenly getting a big grant.
- We were ‘learning organisations’, learning how to be European, to be international, to be collaborative across the enormous range of cultural differences we identified, the East/West and North/South divide being among them. Learning how to work together, to trust one another enough to make a project together.’

How networking works

‘Democracy

The problem with non-representativeness of members (i.e. they represent only themselves as individuals or at most their organisations, not their country, region, city or sector etc.), with “horizontal” communication, and with the network as a context of “emerging phenomena” creates for some (those who assume an institutional vision) a problem of democracy: who represents whom? who guides the global performance of the network?

... the problem seems insurmountable. Guiding an ecosystem towards a goal or a platform is a politically dangerous operation and generally results in a drastic reduction of interaction and richness of the system.’

How networking works

‘The importance of the network lies in its being the environment, ecosystem, milieu, field of expression of single members...:

- To maintain a process of dialogue and intercultural exchange that magnifies the specificities and differences and at the same time increases understanding of different cultures;
- To stimulate artistic creativity at a transnational level;
- To foster and strengthen collaborative relations and partnerships at the European and international level;
- To enhance the role of the arts and culture through confrontation of national, regional and local cultural heritage;
- To guarantee space for a liberal and independent confrontation and dialogue which is not circumscribed by attempts to fulfil specific objectives determined a priori’

Rhizomes and Networks

‘The rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectible, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight’.

(Deleuze and Guattari 1987, A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia)

- ‘It is that map that I think successful learning looks like. Not a series of remembered ideas, reproduced for testing, and quickly forgotten. But something flexible that is already integrated with the other things a learner knows. Most things that we value are not things that are easily pointed to. Knowing is a long process of becoming (think of it in the sense of ‘becoming an expert’) where you actually change the way you perceive the world based on new understandings. You change and grow as new learning becomes part of the things you know.
- Sounds a bit like networked learning...? The rhizome is, in a manner of speaking, a kind of network. It’s just a very messy, unpredictable network that isn’t bounded and grows and spreads in strange ways. As a model for knowledge, our computer idea of networks, all tidy dots connected to tidy lines, gives us a false sense of completeness.’

Mobility of the Imagination

‘In 1990s.... Network meetings became occasions to exchange information in an informal manner, to reflect on current developments, to overcome one’s sense of loneliness and frustration by sharing it with peers, to learn from the mistakes of others instead of repeating them. Debate, learning, transfer of skills, know-how transfer and mutual inspiration and joint anticipation of the future permeate the discourse of networks...

Network meetings are excellent opportunities to find out what developments and what sort of international cooperation projects are taking place in any single artistic discipline, but also to seek prospective partners...’

Mobility of the Imagination

‘Certainly, to work internationally, individuals and cultural organisations need a critical mass of intercultural competences, developed as a skill, attitude, mentality, strategy and ultimately as a policy. At the same time continuous international engagement builds up intercultural competence, brings about this subtle fusion of curiosity and experience, critical judgement and flexibility, ambition and understanding that enable one to approach the other and build up a relationship through a creative process, without ignoring and mystifying cultural differences’

Dragan Klaic

External influences:

a wider context

External influences

‘The key to a good strategic network is leverage: the ability to marshal information, support, and resources from one sector of a network to achieve results in another. Strategic networkers use indirect influence, convincing one person in the network to get someone else, who is not in the network, to take a needed action. Moreover, strategic networkers don’t just influence their relational environment; they shape it in their own image’

From ‘How Leaders Create and Use Networks’

Hermina Ibarra & Mark Lee Hunter

Harvard Business Review Jan 2007

External influences

‘The word “work” is part of networking, and it is not easy work, because it involves reaching outside the borders of a manager’s comfort zone. How, then, can managers lessen the pain and increase the gain? The trick is to leverage the elements from each domain of networking into the others -to seek out personal contacts who can be objective, strategic counselors, for example, or to transform colleagues in adjacent functions into a constituency. Above all, many managers will need to change their attitudes about the legitimacy and necessity of networking’

*From ‘How Leaders Create and Use Networks’
Hermina Ibarra & Mark Lee Hunter
Harvard Business Review Jan 2007*

External influences

“The cultural and creative sectors have great potential to boost jobs and growth in Europe. EU funding helps thousands of artists and cultural professionals to work across borders and reach new audiences. Without this support, it would be difficult or impossible for them to break into new markets “

Androulla Vassiliou European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth

[Extract from Creative Europe Flyer 2013]

External influences

Creative Europe

‘The Creative Europe programme provides support for European networks to help the cultural and creative sectors to operate transnationally and to strengthen their competitiveness.

This scheme helps fund European networks that carry out:

- Activities strengthening the cultural and creative sectors by providing their workforce with **specific skills and experience**, including adaptation to digital technologies;
- Activities enabling the **cultural and creative workforce to cooperate internationally** and to expand their careers and influence in Europe and beyond;
- Activities strengthening European cultural and creative organisations, as well as international networking that can **create new professional opportunities.**’

External influences

‘Colleagues representing the relevant Commission services and the Agency will be there to exchange with you. We propose to divide the discussion in 3 sessions:

- What contribution from networks to recent initiatives of the Creative Europe Programme?
- Findings and experience by networks on achievement of certain key Creative Europe priorities (such as audience development, digitisation & new business models)
- Practical collaboration with the Agency (such as FPA management, cross-strand synergies, evaluation methodology, use of social media)’

Barbara GESSLER

Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)

Extract from an invitation to a seminar dedicated to Creative Europe funded networks - 21 April 2016

Diverse Roles - Inherent tensions

Diverse Roles

European networks are not all the same, but have one or more diverse roles, including:

- Partnership consortia
- Learning spaces and awareness-builders
- Advocacy agencies
- Meeting spaces
- Communication media
- Special interest mouthpieces
- Special interest ears
- Pressure groups
- Inter/transdisciplinary spaces
- Addressers of connected issues
- Intercultural resources

Inherent tensions

European networks may face one or more of a variety of lines of tension in their aims, structures and activities, including:

- Central / peripheral direction and demands
- 'Upward' / 'downward' representativity
- Established / emerging members
- Closed / open perspectives
- Today- (or maybe yesterday-?) / tomorrow-facing
- Output- / process-driven
- Project-/ relationship-driven
- Efficient / responsive environment
- Intercultural / unicultural voice
- Hierarchy / rhizome
- Officers / members (board)
- Demands / resources
- Innovation / safeguarding
- 'Hammer' / 'nail' / (or maybe 'workbench'??)

And finally... the dangers of mis-typing into Google:



Newtworking

End