

Porto Santo Charter

Culture and the Promotion of Democracy: Towards a European Cultural Citizenship

Preamble

- a) The *Porto Santo Conference*, a Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union initiative, proposes this *Porto Santo Charter* as a guiding map of principles and recommendations for applying and developing a working paradigm for cultural democracy in Europe.
- b) The *Porto Santo Charter* is addressed to European policy makers at European institutions, national, regional and local levels; to cultural and educational organisations and institutions; and to European citizens to take responsibility for its common cultural landscape.
- c) In accordance with the *Action Plan for European Democracy* (European Commission, 2020), the aim of the *Porto Santo Charter* is to outline and promote the impact of the cultural sector in strengthening democracy and democratic culture.
- d) The programme of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union vowed, in a pandemic context, "to promote recovery, cohesion and European values" (Resilient Europe); "to value and strengthen the European social model" (Social Europe) and "to promote a Europe open to the world" (Global Europe). The cultural sector cannot stay removed from these common objectives; it is a determining part for the fulfilment of these goals, because culture has a transformative power.
- e) The Covid19 pandemic has underscored the importance of culture for the quality of people's lives. Yet it also contributed to raising barriers, including cultural participation. Strengthening democracy in Europe within the cultural sector requires the removal of these barriers to cultural participation and the transformation of culture into an as inclusive platform as possible. The inequalities that the pandemic has exposed, the fragility of the cultural sector and the propensity for social tensions to arise, require that cultural manifestations be valued as part of the sustainable development of the European project.
- f) This Charter is indebted to many authors and previous strategic documents on cultural rights and the social impact of culture¹, starting with Article 27 of the *Declaration of Human Rights* (UN, 1948): "everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community (...)".

¹ Among these documents, we highlight, already from this century, the Faro Convention (Council of Europe, 2005), the Key Competences for life-long learning (European Commission, 2007), the Seoul Declaration (UNESCO, 2010), the Indicator Framework on Culture and Democracy (Council of Europe, 2016), the New European Agenda for Culture (2018) and the Rome Charter (UCLG, 2020).

- g) This Charter is the result of a process of consultation, discussion and collaboration, with the participation of representatives of the EU Member States, and of European Institutions, Associations and Networks in the cultural and educational sectors². The Charter's content (enhancing cultural democracy) and its process (collaborative thought process) thus constitute a unity.
- h) The Charter is presented in Porto Santo³, an ultra-peripheral European region transformed here into an irradiating centre for proposals regarding public cultural and educational policy. We see this Charter be a beacon to guide the cultural and educational policies, discourses and practices, contributing for a more plural, inclusive and safe Europe.

² Representatives from the following countries participated in the discussion of the *Porto Santo Charter*: Austria, Belgium – Government of the Flemish Community, Belgium – Government of the French Community, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Sweden. Representatives from the following organisations also participated: ACEnet, Culture Action Europe, ECCOM – European Centre for Cultural Organisation and Management, EFC – European Foundation Centre, ENCC – European Network of Cultural Centres, ENO – European Network of Observatories in the Field of Arts and Cultural Education, European Cultural Foundation, Europeana, ICOM Europe, ICOM Portugal, ICOMOS Portugal, InSEA – International Society for Education Through Art, Interarts, ITAC – International Teaching Artists Collaborative, Michael Culture, NEMO – The Network of European Museum Organisations, TEH – Trans Europe Halles and WAAE – World Alliance for Arts Education.

³ *Porto Santo Conference. From democratization to cultural democracy: rethinking institutions and practices.* 27 and 28 April 2021, Porto Santo, Madeira – Portugal.

1. The Health of Democracy and the Role of Culture

Democracy and the threats against it are the focus on intense debate in our societies once again. It is essential to critically evaluate the models of democracy that we implement and to think of ways with which to intensify and broaden people's participation in order to legitimise institutions and decision-making processes. Democracy must be continuously evaluated based on its consequences. It is a process, a movement, rather than a static and permanent condition.

Democracy is a dynamic social methodology, a process of operating and sharing power. It values the interests and needs of all people; it gives them a voice and a choice; it respects diversity and values dissent. By definition, it relies on the cooperative intelligence of the community.

It is essential for democracy not to be seen as a specialised dimension of the political sector; it must be a concern that cuts across the various social sectors. We can live in a democratic state and yet the different dimensions and institutions of community life remain authoritarian. In this sense, it is necessary to promote a conception of cultural citizenship based on pluralism: on the recognition of the multiplicity of voices and on the valuing of differences. Reductive and single interpretations of cultural identity in essence deny the democratic, inclusive and open vision of cultures.

How can democracy be consolidated in the cultural sphere? What power relations are at play in cultural and educational institutions and practices? How can cultural participation help to empower people? Cultural institutions, their processes and modes of organisation, what they value and propose, impact for the democratic health of a society.

2. Democratisation of Culture and Cultural Democracy

Words matter. They carry a history and embody ideologies, even subconsciously. It is therefore fundamental to analyse the discourse we use, because new contexts demand new questions and new answers. And when new situations do not find the right answer in the dominant paradigm (the matrix of assumptions shared by a given community, which structures and guides thought and action), it must be reformulated.

Culture

The definition of the culture, in this Charter, eschews too broad a definition, where anything is culture, and a too narrow definition, where only erudite manifestations are considered as such. Culture is, therefore, defined as a set of symbolic systems in which people live and which help give meaning to the personal and collective experience, and apply a human form to the world, determining the horizon of possibilities in which we move. Cultures materialise in the symbolic, artistic and heritage manifestations of communities, involving inherited tradition and contemporary creation. Cultures are a continuous collective creative process, in which all groups of a given society are involved. Cultures are an infinite task that we receive as a legacy and on which we work on (conserving and innovating) in order to transmit it to the following generations (who will continue this process).

When thinking about culture, questions about who makes it, how it is made, and for whom it is made are essential in order to understand what, as a society, we recognise and value as cultural. Public policy support, cultural programming and cultural mediation rest, to a large extent, on this understanding.

Democratisation of Culture

The “Democratisation of Culture” paradigm, structured at the end of the 1950s⁴, proposes to make the masterpieces of humanity, especially within the national context, accessible to as many people as possible; to bring cultural heritage closer to the public and to encourage the creation of works of art to enrich it. “Democratisation of Culture” is thus anchored on top-down, albeit well-intentioned vision that there is only one monolithic Culture. This vision hierarchizes culture into erudite, mass and popular culture, assuming that it is the erudite which deserves to be “democratized”, disseminated “for all”, because it is that which has “quality”. This paradigm, however, does not recognise the arbitrariness and apparent homogeneity of the notion of culture, quality and excellence, ignoring that such criteria are subjective and variable conventions framed in epochal and group dynamics.

In this paradigm, cultural hierarchization devalues not only cultural practices, but people themselves, who are treated as consumers, treated as non-equal, excluded from the role of cultural agents. It is fundamental to understand, in the development of cultural policies, that hierarchizing cultural values always implies forms of power and authority — of which one must be very aware.

Top-down cultural diffusion has not had the expected results. The obstacles to accessing cultural creation, fruition and protection are not only financial, physical, or intellectual. They are symbolic and related to the sense of belonging. Social hierarchies have crystallized in the access to cultural goods. It is necessary to think differently, to design another paradigm.

⁴ This paradigm is usually associated with the creation of the French Ministry of Cultural Affairs in 1959 and the action of André Malraux, who inspired and gave rise to a first wave of cultural policies in many other countries.

Cultural Democracy

"Cultural Democracy" is a cultural model which, having its roots in the 1960s, gained preponderance in the 1980s. It advocates for the creation of conditions for a more active cultural participation, and the recognition of the cultural practices of different social groups. "Cultural Democracy" implies a new relational model between institutions and communities: culture becomes a platform where each person can participate and be responsible. This paradigm implies a change in attitude and a shift from the model of cultural consumption to a model of cultural commitment. It values what each one knows, their traditions, their voice. It does not "bring culture" into a territory, because culture already exists in every territory: it values local culture and complements it with other cultural expressions, opening up local experience to the universal, and stimulating this dialogue.

This will to preserve cultural diversity and to protect cultural rights, asserts itself as an alternative to economic and cultural globalization. It implies the valuing of distinct cultures and publics and recognises the right for emancipation and empowerment of people as active cultural subjects who participate in and decide the cultural life of their communities. To this end, access to the means of cultural creation, fruition and protection and the democratization of decision-making processes are required. Plurality must be guaranteed in the production and dissemination, and not only in the access to cultural creation. Cultural democracy thus favours pluralisation, the territorialisation of decisions and the sharing of power.

3. Difference and Complementarity Between the two Cultural Models: Towards full Cultural Citizenship

These two paradigms give rise to distinct cultural policies and different manners in which cultural institutions can operate. They promote different levels of social awareness and different representations of what is culture and who is enabled to produce it. It is nevertheless possible to articulate the two paradigms in complementarity. Indeed, knowledge and access to the great works of humanity, past or contemporary, should not be presented in opposition to participation in the creative act or to the emergence of different traditions and new narratives. But it is essential to reflect on process in which one model rests on an inequality that the one wants to surpass, a deficit, and the other is operating from a stance of equality, that is full recognised and verified. This equality requires rights and duties, means and resources in order to be achieved. "Cultural citizenship" is the exercise of these cultural rights and duties.

The starting point of Cultural Democracy is the verification of equality between those who hold institutional power and the citizens. To assume, from the outset, that this equality will only be achieved at the end of the process, is to maintain the alleged original inequality. It is fundamental to become aware of the power that is exercised when institutions are created, programming is carried out, funding is distributed, exhibitions and access to them is organised. It is a priority to guarantee accessibility integrated into cultural institutions, both in the relationship with communities and in their internal organisation. It is necessary to deny all uses of culture for practices of social distinction, to refuse stigmatizing hierarchies, which work as symbolic violence of a social group with power over others, who feel displaced, excluded and unrepresented.

Cultural democracy requires a multidimensional attention to audience development, and the abandonment of the notion of the public in the singular form. A fundamental step for the democratisation of institutions is knowledge of audiences — those that exist and those that may exist. Otherwise, illusory ideas and images are formed which exist only as representations of those in charge of the institutions. Cultural organisations will not represent the communities they are meant to serve if they do not know them, just as they cannot invite them to participate without knowing and valuing what they already are, what they know and live. We must transform the "institutions" into "ex-titutions", places of openness and relationships, coming out of their shells; and the audiences into protagonists with a voice.

However, one cannot fall into the error of, when defending cultural democracy, dismissing humanity's past cultural manifestations, or relativizing everything, without criteria. It is a complex exercise, in which easy populism may lead to a hyper valuation of local or specific cultural identities, confirming only expectations and without opening new horizons. Culture is a way of going beyond one's self and to identify ourselves in others.

Self-righteousness is also a danger: the judgement that there is no need for preparation, nor mediation, nor knowledge of the codes of cultural practices and audiences, assuming that all cultural experiences, popular and erudite, are self-explanatory.

Nor can we confuse cultural democracy with physical participation. The relationship between the people and cultural creation, fruition and preservation does not need to be "participatory" from the physical point of view, to be meaningful. To simply enjoy culture is one of the determining aspects of cultural participation.

The possible conflict between the concepts of 'excellence' and 'quality' in the visions of the democratisation of culture and cultural democracy must also be taken into account. It is necessary to understand not only the ambiguity and polysemy of these concepts, but also that excellence or quality are not only in the cultural product, but can be also be found in the cultural process of its creation, in the relationship established between the cultural product and the audience, in the affective and intellectual involvement it allows, in the development of competencies, in changing attitudes and behaviours. We can maintain a goal of excellence, but we must be inclusive and open in the choice of the agents that define such excellence. The quality system cannot be used to maintain a status quo of inequality and social differentiation. The understanding that quality is a cultural construction must be stimulated and debated. Engaging in such a debate is one way of stimulating democratic participation.

If cultural democracy requires the participation of each person in favour of the culture of all people, it also underscores the freedom of expression and the creative and deliberative potential of each individual to make an intervention in the world. Cultural policies must take this creative freedom into account.

4. Cultural Citizenship and Digital Territories

If Cultural Citizenship is the exercise of cultural rights and duties, digital territories should be understood as a pathway, and a pathway with its own possibilities, to broaden cultural participation and production. Like any other means, its use will depend on the paradigm we follow and the objectives we wish to achieve. It may be merely a means of cultural marketing aimed at consumers, or it can go further and present itself as an open space for interaction, appropriation and promotion of cultural democracy, and in the territory of cultural creation, as culture is being created within the digital realm.

The digital approach can also serve as a tool to facilitate collaborative processes within institutions, as well as between them and citizens in their function as collaborators. Digital tools are useful to listen to people and communities, and to involve them in the conceptualisation of cultural policies.

However, the digital territory, as the pandemic situation has shown, is also a space of exclusion, whose access barriers must be mitigated. Enabling cultural citizenship implies developing digital access, inclusion and literacy policies. The phenomena of disinformation, of attacking specific or minority cultural expressions, as well as the privatization of the digital space, must be addressed.

5. Cultural Citizenship and Education

In order to promote cultural citizenship, we must place culture, understood in a plural and participatory manner, at the heart of educational policies, and education at the heart of cultural policies. In order for each one to be able to participate in the culture of all people, in an empowered manner, they must have the conditions to do so.

It is decisive to recognise cultural institutions as educational territories — in the same way that schools work as cultural beacons. With this purpose, cultural institutions strengthen their educational role, assumed in their mission, and mirrored in their structure, resources and practices. With the same purpose, in line with the model of cultural democracy, schools should value individual, cultural and territorial specificities and enable all students to have access to a variety of artistic experiences and cultural manifestations; to have their cultural identity recognised and the cultural expressions of their communities valued; to access heritage and be aware of the need to safeguard it; to develop their creativity and imagination, aesthetic sensitivity and critical thinking throughout their education process; to be aware of their cultural rights and duties; and to discover an environment of self-led cultural participation.

Concern for the future of democracy, and therefore the future of Europe, must lead us to give a voice and listen to the younger generations. They must be enabled to participate in the decision-making process, on the advisory boards of cultural institutions and collective bodies — and to integrate the artistic languages of these generations into institutional practices as equals and without distrust.

The great weapon of democracy is the public debate of issues, opening up discussion, without excluding, without fear of dissent or contradiction. As stated in the Action Plan for European Democracy, “Engaged, informed and empowered citizens are the best guarantee of resilience for our democracies”. Education, whether formal, informal or non-formal, is the laboratory of democracy.

Recommendations

To be able to exercise the right to participation in culture, immaterial and material conditions are necessary to ensure that a substantive freedom exists, so that each person and each community can choose to participate and take responsibility for the cultural horizon of all. In order to develop this cultural citizenship that promotes democracy, we present interconnected proposals addressed to the different agents of the cultural ecosystem, at its different scales, and thought in a systemic way.

To policy-makers:

1. To propose principles and values of cultural democracy to be reinforced into all EU Member States' cultural and educational public policy objectives and measures.
2. To foster the development of cross-sectoral action plans for education and culture, responding to the challenges and creative potential of a more diverse, inclusive and democratic Europe.
3. To reinforce the necessary conditions to create long-term action plans, for all people to be able to exercise their cultural rights and duties: valuing cultural diversity; empowering them and giving them voice and power of decision; involving them in the creation of cultural policies and in the programming of cultural organizations; promoting access and the possibility of participation in cultural production and dissemination; making them accountable for reaching our common cultural goals. Digital tools offer an opportunity to achieve these goals.
4. To design a *Cultural Democracy Index*, as a way to monitor programs for the promotion of cultural democracy and the governance, processes and practices that institutions promote to ensure multicultural diversity, broad social participation and cultural empowerment of all people, valuing other criteria rather than only the quantitative ones — in line with the *Indicator Framework on Culture and Democracy* (Council of Europe, 2016).
5. To fund cultural organizations to create the concrete conditions for promoting cultural democracy.
6. To ensure that the digital space is a public space dedicated to the exercise of cultural democracy.
7. To strengthen public funding aiming at the participation of underrepresented groups. To ensure that the allocation of such funding: i) is decided by a panel composed of diverse representatives from the targeted audience, ii) is guided by quality criteria based on accessibility, inclusion, diversity and equality parameters, iii) values long-term processes and the direct involvement of communities in their implementation.
8. To map public cultural institutions, third sector entities and cultural agents — including informal collectives — that work for the promotion of a participative culture. This mapping aims to: i) disseminate what is already implemented in each territory; ii) build a network, share good practices and learn from one another; iii) identify what can be improved and the most appropriate ways to do so.

9. To create "makerspaces", rehearsal rooms, ateliers, studios, allowing for production and creation in an autonomous and collaborative way.
10. To encourage the emergence of emancipatory projects based on the existence of many environments, empowering local agents.
11. To encourage cultural amateur activities and those promoted by informal and non-professional organizations.
12. To review the curricula of compulsory education, to ensure that they convey inclusive, multiple and diversified cultural perspectives.
13. To support the introduction, in a transdisciplinary and integrated manner, of cultures, arts and heritage into the compulsory education curriculum and into higher education institutions as fundamental areas for the participatory cultural citizenship.
14. To create training programmes on cultural democracy and collaborative processes in the field of mediation, creativity, programming and safeguarding heritage, in vocational education, higher education and lifelong education.
15. To introduce, in the initial and continuous training of educators and teachers more multi and transcultural experiences, courses, subjects, content and pedagogies centred on cultures, arts and heritage, in order to work on the curriculum in a transdisciplinary and creative way and for the understanding and adoption of the paradigm of cultural democracy and thus promoting the acquisition of skills in students for cultural citizenship, respecting the multiplicity of expressions and valuing their cultural identities.
16. To promote digital skills to overcome exclusion and ensure access to digital content of culture, heritage and arts, offering people the opportunity to participate, create and enjoy online cultural experiences, especially considering those living in remote areas.

To cultural and educational organisations:

17. To recognize that cultural institutions are educational territories and that educational institutions are cultural poles, thus articulating actions and projects between cultural and educational institutions in a structuring and continuous way.
18. To rethink cultural and educational organisations, with the purpose of democratic governance: to promote collaborative processes within each organization, to involve its members in discussions and to implement an internal policy of continuous evaluation, in order to measure progress in change processes and power sharing, via the *Cultural Democracy Index*.

19. To create consulting councils within cultural institutions, thus inviting members of the communities, particularly the youngsters, to be part of the advisory boards of the organizations, actively involving them in the daily life of cultural institutions, from programming to mediation, empowering them to be active cultural agents, facilitators of the institution's mission among their peers, promoting collaboration with new groups and deepening the relations of the institutions with those whom they assist.
20. To call in external professionals from different fields of expertise, to promote analysis and change processes, in collaboration with institution's members, making the institution more inclusive and diverse and accessible in a social, economical, intellectual, physical, and sensorial way.
21. To ensure that cultural institutions' staff reflect the cultural diversity of the communities they assist, via the *Cultural Democracy Index*.
22. To promote, on a regular basis, audience analysis in order to adapt strategies in favour of the diversification of audiences.
23. To invest in the accessibility of cultural institutions and programs, considering the specific needs of individuals and communities, their ethnic, religious, social and economic backgrounds, physical, sensorial and intellectual disabilities, and other needs related to travel and transportation.
24. To invite programmers and artists representing community diversity to promote audience diversification.
25. To bring cultural institutions programming into the debate of the social pressing issues in our contemporary society, making them more relevant and becoming the protagonists in the development of more aware, democratic, inclusive, diverse and equal social and cultural consciences.
26. To promote in institutions the plurality of voices, practices, ways to see, interpret and mediate art, culture and heritage and thus multiplying the points of view on assets, collections and programmes.
27. To trust artists and their divergent thinking, to work and learn with them within educational, cultural and heritage environments, to develop creative skills, to innovate practices and methodological perspectives.
28. To go beyond the institution, to work in and with the community, thus reaching excluded audiences.
29. To disseminate the results of cultural democracy projects and processes, to inspire and mobilize people and institutions.
30. To use digital media to promote collaboration within institutions, and between institutions and people, as collaborators and participants.

To all people:

31. To strengthen the sense of belonging and peaceful coexistence between different communities, through the accountability of all towards local heritage, as a "common good" that should not only be known and preserved, but also questioned, reflected upon, discussed, reinterpreted and recontextualized.
32. To know people's cultural rights and duties, in the context of cultural democracy, and welcome their use by the people. This requires being held accountable for the development of their cultural competencies and striving for the conditions necessary for the exercise of people's rights and duties.
33. To recognize local cultural heritage as one's own heritage and to recognize the commitment of being an cultural agent participating in the process of identifying, safeguarding, protecting, communicating, reinterpreting such heritages and cultural traditions.
34. To collaborate with cultural institutions, recognizing that their relevance also depends on the active participation of all people.
35. To engage in associative cultural movements, recognizing their importance for communities and their impact.
36. To participate in public debates and consultations on cultural and educational policies.
37. To be a cultural agent, which implies to be able to express culturally and to allows others to do so.
38. To respect multicultural diversity and its agents. To be resolute against all forms of hate discourse, prejudice and stigmatisation.

We invite all EU Member States and collective organisations to join this Charter.

25 April 2021

The Porto Santo Conference