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# Beyond the Obvious 2015

CULTURE ACTION EUROPE • ANNUAL CONFERENCE & AGM  
GOTHENBURG | VÄSTRA GÖTALAND (SE)  
15-17 OCTOBER 2015

## concept

EMPOWERED BY





Without a global revolution in the sphere of human consciousness,  
nothing will change for the better in the sphere of our being as humans,  
and the catastrophe toward which this world is headed  
—be it ecological, social, demographic or a general breakdown of  
civilization—will be unavoidable.

*Václav Havel, Poet and President of Czechoslovakia*

The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. [...] We cannot solve our problems with the same level of thinking that created them.

*Albert Einstein, Physicist and Nobel laureate*

# ABOUT Beyond the Obvious

For twenty years Culture Action Europe (CAE) has organized annual conferences with its members giving voice to over 80,000 cultural organisations from all over Europe, and engaging thinkers and decision-makers from different backgrounds to discuss and challenge the role of culture in the future of Europe, its people and its democracy.

In 2013 CAE designed a brand new concept for its annual gathering: Beyond the Obvious (BtO). The concept was conceived to allow for privileged and inspirational exchange between the European cultural community, civil society, researchers, thinkers, institutional and political representatives.

BtO explores the future borders and edges of culture and moves beyond those conventional assumptions, beliefs and practices that impede the contribution of culture to social and economic regeneration at a local, national and European level. It allows the discourse to embrace broader political challenges - and not only policy ones.

BtO challenges the classical elements of a conference to spark inspiration and new dialogues

- by proposing different formats for speeches and conversations,
- by tailoring unusual rhythms between institutional moments and uncommon dialogues,

- by engaging its participants in hands-on working sessions in a "laboratory-style",

- by allowing direct exchange and connections throughout the whole gathering.

BtO enables and facilitates collaboration between actors from different sectors of our societies seeking answers to common challenges by putting culture at the heart of the public decision-making and debate.

Each year, BtO connects the European cultural community with the one of the hosting city in a mutual exchange beneficial to the empowerment of both communities and individuals.



# ABOUT the 2015 edition

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*Everyone has the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits\*.*

So states the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at article 27: because the arts and science are fundamental to people's emancipation and citizenship, everywhere; because the arts and science powerfully contribute to the quality our lives.

They provide us with the knowledge, abilities and aptitudes needed to live together, to progress together, to meet the opportunities and challenges of the future and the necessary revolutions that are yet to come.

Our systems and regulations should foster, facilitate this.

We should also aim for that in our daily professional lives.

But our systems and regulations are falling short, too short.

The clashes of ideologies, the fears for the future magnified by the absence of credible visions of our tomorrow, the priority given to the economic interests over the need of human development, the reactions to the migration of millions of desperate women and men, the combination of which hinders any further progress in the fulfilment of the most fundamental of human rights. On the contrary, they trigger regression.

Fundamental rights such as those to *freedom of opinion and expression, to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and not to be subjected to arbitrary interference with our privacy, seem to clash with the right to life, liberty and security.*

In the digital world, *the right to own property*, as we implemented through the existing legal frameworks, often conflicts with both the right to *the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from scientific, literary or artistic production and the right to not be arbitrarily deprived of his (her) property.*

Moreover, the right to *own property* is increasingly interpreted in ways that conflict with the rights of all, as members of society, [...] *to the realization, through national effort and international co-operation [...], of social and cultural rights indispensable for his (her) dignity and the free development of his (her) personality.*

Many of the systems and legal frameworks we have developed to implement and preserve precious values and their embodiment - such as those stated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in most of our constitutions - fail to strike the right balance between the individual/private and the collective/public-common side of those rights.

\* in this text, in Italic: cites from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The 2015 Beyond the Obvious Conference calls on its participants to learn, reflect, and debate on what balance shall be sought between the condition for a functional public/common sphere on one side, and private and commercial interests on the other, in order to:

- Ensure the enjoyment of fundamental cultural rights such as participation in cultural life and the right to freely express oneself;
- Guarantee a fair remuneration to creation together with the conditions to create and exchange in the digital world;
- Fulfil people's right to take part in governance and to shape their community, at local/regional level.

All rights come with related duties among which those to *the community in which alone the free and full development of his (her) personality is possible.*

Among these, for "the people of culture", is to bear the responsibility to strive for the cultural development of every child and adult to be recognized and supported as an essential public good. The alternative – we are already witnessing it - is to see culture losing ground in a shrinking public sphere and being marginalised to the domain of entertainment and leisure.

The historical period we live brings new and old and challenges that demand innovative answers, creative thinking, disposition to change and to commit, to strive, to coalesce with others. More in general, our fast changing times demand that "the people of culture" embrace and truly enact a broader "civic footprint" approach to their relation with society and to advocacy.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights ends saying that nobody holds *the right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.*

The real world shows that, on the contrary, many attempt to do this and often sadly succeed.

BtO will gather many who, instead, engage in enhancing those rights in their professional and private lives.

*All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of solidarity.*

BtO invests in the empathy, reason and conscience of the "people of culture" because only this forms people's direct engagement in developing adequate solutions to today's challenges, daring to bring these considerations to light and guiding us through the transition we are in.

#### CULTURE ACTION EUROPE

is the widest and leading network of the European cultural sector.

It aims at putting culture at the heart of the public opinion and decision-making.

Through its over 120 networks members, it reaches and give voice to approximately 80.000 organisations.

[www.cultureactioneurope.org](http://www.cultureactioneurope.org)

