CULTURAL NETWORKING IN EUROPE

TODAY & TOMORROW

A READER

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Preface

Process

I was approached in March 2016 by Katherine Heid, Head of Political Development at Culture Action Europe about a possible commission to take a new look at networking. The idea was to revisit and renew the work that led to a document commissioned 20 years previously by EFAH (forerunner of Culture Action Europe), and written by Judith Staines: Working Groups: Network Solutions for Cultural Cooperation in Europe. I felt that I could bring to this project my own engagement over many years in cultural networking across Europe. And more particularly it has allowed space to reflect on the fact that in particular since 2010 I have, as an independent actor, operated entirely in this networking environment.

The brief also chimed with a particular strand of interest over this period in trying to understand more fully the mutual interconnections between culture and major contextual questions that surround it: economic, social, political, environmental, demographic and so on. The world seems to have become an increasingly complex environment to live in and understand, and it is natural that we may at times choose to try to shut out this complexity, if only as a 'survival mechanism' to help us make some sense of who we are and what we do.

Ultimately then, as cultural actors in a public sphere, we have a responsibility not only towards our own specialist practice, but also towards seeking a better understanding of its relationship with a wider context. And, in this regard, networking can be an important vehicle for crossover thinking and practice – not only within our own specialist fields but, crucially, between these and others.

Our first step was to invite to Brussels for a one day workshop representatives of cultural networks in Europe. This experience provided much material that was both formative and challenging for the project. In particular, it underlined how this is a subject that can be addressed from many angles – all perfectly valid, but not all necessarily mutually coherent. For example:

- we might approach the subject of cultural networking in terms of advocacy for our own practice – for example, persuading others of its value and significance
- we could seek to break open the question of networks today, how they operate and what this tells us about cultural networking in Europe
- we might seek to analyse the technical workings of networks
- we might look at networks within other fields, to see if these shed any new light on how we might work
- and so on

The workshop led in turn to lengthy consideration of the form and content of this paper. Its outcome was to 'go broad': to research and produce some kind of 'reader' that would seek to 'open up' our subject from several quite diverse perspectives. At the possible risk of a

certain internal disconnect within the paper as a whole, the potential benefit of this rather less than linear approach was seen to be to offer a store of material that could both at once stimulate reflection and offer the potential to be further explored and exploited.

So that is the intended nature of this reader: to provide a resource that can be at once thought-provoking and of practical use.

It just remains to add that, in the period between March and October 2016, Europe and the 'wider' world around us has been subjected to a continuing series of shocks, including: the Brussels bombings (on the day after our joint networks meeting), the UK Referendum Brexit vote, raise of populism and nationalistic sentiments, further social and economic turbulence, the continuing wave of Mediterranean migrant deaths, the Nice massacre and bombings and political upheavals, in Turkey and elsewhere. And to this picture we must add the continuing wave of violence in the Middle East and the angry rumble emanating from the US Presidential election campaign. We raise this because, while it is impossible to ignore the immediate impact of each of these shocks, it also seems important to try to retain our own particular equilibrium and sense of responsibility, along with a longer term perspective. To some extent we find ourselves caught in a tension between the need, on the one hand, to come to terms with the impact of these shocks and, on the other, to give weight to networking as an important subject in its own right. In practice, while we have predominantly focused on the latter, the former has strongly influenced our work.

And, last but not least, it would be remiss not to acknowledge everyone who has networked in and through culture in Europe in the past, and/or who does so today. Much of what we achieve in this field can seem somewhat intangible and largely invisible to others; however it seems today more important than ever. If I appear to be advocating quite strongly in this reader for change, it is because I recognise how important networking behaviours are, what they can achieve but, most importantly, what they could yet achieve in what seems like a darkening world. We must keep going!

Ivor Davies

31 October 2016

Summary

The Introduction to this reader moves immediately to the broad level, exploring some of the wider influences on the subject, in particular some new forms of networking and association that have sprung up in the wake of the digital revolution. It asks whether our typical behaviours towards issues of public concern today are effectively mirroring those that feature in digital social networking. It then explores a proposition that we may be moving towards an era of personalised action and reaction, in which radical attitudes increasingly combine with behaviours adopted from a digital environment. Finally, it examines some implications of such a shift for broader approaches to networking.

Chapter 1 presents something of a literature review of past publications that have dealt directly with the subject of international cultural networking. It classifies these broadly in three ways: in-depth studies of its nature, purpose, evolution and practices, along with challenges these face; contextual guides that seek to locate practice within a broader framework of contemporary European culture; and advocacy resource tools. Organised thematically, the chapter seeks to identify some common strands and particular approaches.

Chapter 2 posits some basic definitions of culture and cultural rights, before going on to explore questions of European cultural networks today, how widespread these are, the many roles they play, their significance, and the grounds for advocating the work they accomplish. It then offers some specific examples that illustrate the general case, and calls for more detailed overall quantitative research into the range and extent of this trans-disciplinary field: across Europe and at all levels.

Chapter 3 takes us directly into questions about Europe, how it has evolved since 1945, where it is today and what role culture plays (or should play) in it. This inevitably takes us into further European considerations: what narrative? a common space for experimentation and co-creation? or, conversely, one for the re-emergence of destructive forces. Finally this chapter identifies a number of ways in which cultural networks can and do contribute positively to a reimagining of the European 'project'.

Chapter 4 echoes, and to some extent broadens, the questioning of past publications on networks. It turns to an internal consideration of networks themselves and, more broadly, what networking means today, and touches on some core questions about the nature and purposes of networking, and some ways in which these play out in other fields, such as business and social activism. The chapter then considers how networks handle multiple priorities - both internally and externally driven -, and some tensions that this can create.

Chapter 5 provides us with a brief historical perspective on the evolution of the European Union, the relevance of networking to its core principles, and how over the past 10-15 years the Union's attitude towards culture and cultural networking has slowly evolved to where it stands today. It tackles some rather contradictory pressures that bear down on networks:

to focus their outputs in line with current EU agendas; to be a broad and imaginative force towards a reshaping of contemporary Europe. The chapter concludes with some specific examples of ways in which networks today are tackling their more creative and future-thinking challenges.

Chapter 6 drills down into ways in which networking behaviours and practices are changing in Europe - and indeed globally -, not only in the cultural sphere but also, with regard to contemporary social, political and commercial practices. It looks at the way that individual choice and personalisation have a progressively increasing influence on the way we relate to the world: the exponential growth of digital social networking; its potential and inherent risks; and the challenges this all poses for more traditional institutional structures and attitudes – including well-established cultural networks. Finally this chapter explores some experimental approaches by cultural networks to addressing aspects of this evolving context.

Chapter 7 is a an experimental section of the paper that we explores a methodology for a comparative analysis of the income budgets of European cultural networks – based on a small sample, taken over a 2-3 year time frame. This modestly-scaled project that was designed to explore what insights might be gleaned by horizontal analysis of this kind. The period chosen (2013-3015) represents a moment when European funding of cultural networks underwent major change, so the analysis deals in part with possible implications of that shift. Over and above that asks whether such a methodology could, if developed further, have wider potential significance as a further means of interpreting understanding how networks are evolving in the face of change.

The Conclusion returns to the wider challenge for networks to retain their potency and relevance in a changing landscape. It is about possible repositioning to face up to an increasingly complex external landscape, and about how to operate in a world among an extraordinarily wide and diverse tapestry of players, disciplines and contexts. There are no easy answers to this conundrum, and indeed we do not propose any; there are though many questions, some quite difficult. We may need to be in a position to work alongside those with whom we may feel we have little in common; we certainly will need to: ask difficult questions, explore, experiment, co-imagine and co-create. This is not easy; but nor is it a lost cause, and we urgently need to grasp this challenge.

Introduction

Active networking today

A number of factors contribute to the personalization of large-scale political action, particularly changes commonly associated with economic globalization in the post-industrial democracies of Europe and North America. Dramatic changes affected many societies, both north and south, over a period dating roughly from the 1970s and punctuated, if not bounded, by the economic crisis of the early 21st century. This time of transformation witnessed the fraying of modern social, economic, and political structures, buffered differently, of course, in different societies. One fairly common result was a shift in political identifications of younger generations away from the broad group and institutional affiliations of unions, parties, churches, social class, established movement organizations, and the press – all of which had shaped the heart of 20th-century democratic politics.
W.L. Bennett and A. Segerberg The Logic of Connective Action, 2013

It may seem surprising that we introduce a paper on cultural networking in Europe, with an analysis of wider social and political changes. Indeed, as we move on, we will explore various other entry points into our subject. We do this here, however, because we feel a strong need to contextualise and position this work in the real, the contemporary, and the performative. This is partly because of the uncomfortable and, in many ways, troubling times in which many of us feel that we live. As cultural actors, we each have our own roles to play in our various contexts of time and place; but equally we play these within a wider context - social, political, environmental, cultural and economic and so on. And it is in this wider context that it seems difficult for many of us to hold on to what may in the past have seemed common certainties, to rely on structures and truths that previously reassured us and legitimised our practice.

We may each feel and respond quite differently to the changes around us according to our particular living and working experiences. This is normal; indeed, maybe it is part of a new 'normal'? In this paper, we do not seek to be normative or categorical. We aim to 'open up' our subject for renewed, contemporary consideration. It seems as though many of us in Europe today have reached a common recognition that something has gone badly 'wrong'; on the other hand we also seem to share the perception that we do not yet know - collectively or individually - what is to be done to put things 'right'.

But we should not just leave things there. This could be an important moment to explore opportunities and challenges that this wider context presents: for the practice of networking in general, and that of cultural networking in Europe in particular. Networks can be seen as common 'spaces' where diverse ideas can be aired, leading to mutual challenging and (ideally) a range of transformations. We may though ask ourselves whether such an emerging world context represents an important new challenge: not only to our attitudes, policies and behaviours, but also to the very nature of networks as we have known them.

Of course, such a sweeping assertion needs itself to be challenged and tested, and we hope that our paper will make a useful contribution to that. Nevertheless, what is certainly the case is that the speed of change around us can be variously both invigorating and troubling. This may be partly a question of our own particular backgrounds: for example, whether we were born into, or had to come to terms with, a revolution in personal and global interconnectivity that was unimaginable 30, 20, even 10 years ago. The two figures below (already outdated) represent aspects of this 'revolution':

Malone Media Group: History of the Internet Timeline – An Ever-Evolving Digital World, 2014
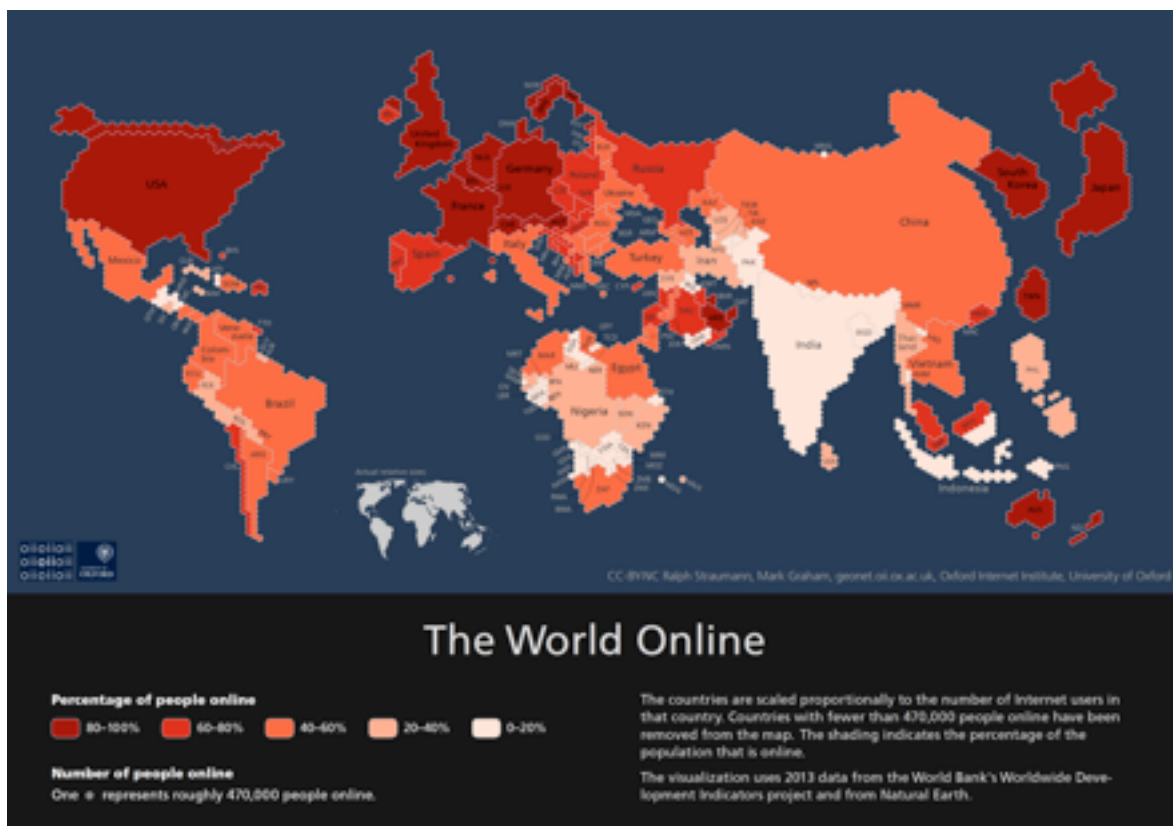
Graham, De Sabbata, and Zook, Towards a study of information geographies, Oxford Internet Institute University of Oxford, 2015

However, tempting though it may be to view this 'interconnectivity' narrative purely from a digital perspective, there is also a much broader one to be explored: that of changing relationships:

- between people (human/human)
- between people and a world that seems increasingly uncertain and threatening (human/environment)
- between people and formerly influential institutional structures that appear everywhere to be losing legitimacy (human/authority)

A stark example of this phenomenon can be seen in the roots of a wide range of protest movements that have emerged in the past five years across Europe. What seems to be emerging is a rejection not only of the policies and practices of longstanding representative democratic structures, but of their relevance and legitimacy in a contemporary world context. We seem to be moving beyond a critical, oppositional stance that, indirectly, also confirms a status quo to a wider questioning of the status quo itself – and a search for new answers: democratic or undemocratic.

But, as shown in the quotation below from Bennett and Segerberg, this type of questioning or representation does not stop at a critical analysis of government: it potentially applies far more widely: to approaches to representative institutional structure of all kinds, including those of civil society. As such, they seem to pose a direct threat or potential alternative to centrally managed, linear or hierarchical frameworks.

> *While conventional politics is in a state of drift, the world of issue politics aimed at mobilizing people around things they care about personally is exploding with the growth of issue advocacy NGOs, volunteer associations, and online communities. However, it is not always clear how to involve people effectively in these causes, even though they may have common concerns or problems. The conventional models for aggregating support and mobilizing participation stemming from the modern society that dominated much of the 20th century were predicated on joining groups, adopting identifications, and marching under common banners. Citizens coming of age in the current era tend to seek personally expressive modes of action about problems they share with others. The trouble is that those others are less likely than they were in past eras to be assembled via connections to party, union, church, or club. Rather, they are more often joined through social networks, friend circles, trusted recommendations, media sharing (photos, videos, mashups), and technologies that match demographic and lifestyle qualities so that political partners and activities align across loosely tied, opt-in/ opt-out networks.*
> **W.L. Bennett and A. Segerberg op.cit.**

In other words, the behaviours of increasing numbers of citizens towards issues of public concern appear to be mirroring social networking behaviours in the digital sphere. We seem to be in the throes of a revolution towards personalised political action, that combines often radical attitudes of protest with behaviours learned in a digitalising world: what Bennett and Segerberg term 'connectivism', as an emerging alternative to 'collectivism'.

Of course, such a dichotomy between 'collective' and 'connective' behaviours is an oversimplification, and we can point to many examples where the demarcation between the two is, to say the least, blurred. On the other hand, the distinction is a useful one, as we attempt to understand more about how networks have worked up to now, how they are working today, and how they may work in the future.

Networks in general, and cultural networks in particular, are an interesting area to consider, in relation to these questions. We will explore in the chapters that follow how networks have been amounted to 'laboratories of connectivity': innovative spaces for interaction amongst and between particular interests and disciplines. And yet it is at the same time difficult to avoid noting that some networks themselves (particularly larger ones) risk becoming institutionalised: for example, by engaging in linear fields of representative behaviour, that could indeed be deemed *'conventional models for aggregating support and mobilizing participation stemming from the modern society that dominated much of the 20th century'.'*

The unique characteristic – and simultaneously, the challenge – of an analysis of networks is that we may tend to overlay questions of form and purpose. More specifically, networks can, as we have seen, act as innovative shared spaces, horizontally aligned, open in methodology and inclusive in their values; yet at the same time networks may be seen in terms of their higher societal goals, aims and objectives, their contribution to a specific or wider movement of empowerment or change, and so on. These two questions are however not necessarily mutually connected. Form does not necessarily presuppose content; and vice versa. Of course, we may identify many networks that qualify on both fronts, but that is not the point. We cannot, if we really want to explore the significance and potential of our cultural networks, avoid asking ourselves fundamental questions, such as:

[Content]

- what are we for?
- what do we/can we achieve?

[Form]

- whom do we represent (and how)?
- whom do we serve (and how)?

[and then, maybe]

- what is particular and relevant about the way we combine form with content?

The logic of the analysis that has emerged in this chapter suggests increasingly complex alignments between form and content, connected with questions of personalisation, digitalisation, interconnectivity and globalisation, along with a significant contemporary challenge to today's networks:

Digitally networked action [DNA] is emerging during a historic shift in late modern democracies in which, most notably, younger citizens are moving away from parties, broad reform movements, and ideologies. Individuals are relating differently to organized politics, and many organizations are finding they must engage people differently. They are developing relationships to publics as affiliates rather than as members and offering them personal options for engaging and expressing themselves. Thus, they are giving them a greater choice as to the content they contribute and introducing micro-organizational resources in terms of personal networks, content creation, and technology development skills. Collective action based on exclusive collective identifications and strongly tied networks continues to play a role in this political landscape, but it has been joined by,

interspersed with, and in some cases supplanted by personalized collective action formations in which digital media become integral organizational parts. Some of the resulting DNA networks turn out to be surprisingly nimble, demonstrating intriguing flexibility across various conditions, issues, and scale. Others… dissolve.
W.L. Bennett and A. Segerberg op.cit.

This can be a tough message to digest, from the perspective of same well-established cultural networks that have long:

- taken pride in the shared, open space they provide (the human/human spectrum)
- committed themselves to coordinated mobilisation of members and affiliates
- undertaken programmes of communication and education - both internally and towards outside influencers

It is not necessary to argue that centrally-led, linear or hierarchical networks have lost their relevance in networking; what is open to question, however, is the capacity today of this kind of networking approach to:

- reopen an inclusive and broad democratic debate
- explore challenging new ideas and influences
- garner engagement and support from beyond its own field
- forge connections and alliances across disciplines and interests

It may not, in short, be the case that open values and intentions always connect causally (in either direction) with open engagement and ideas.

These are broad and complex questions, but necessary and important if, as networks, we are to retain and refresh our relevance, and at the same time respond to changing, more personalised, patterns of thought and behaviour. For example, while several emerging political movements of recent years, such as **Los Indignados** (Spain), **Put People First** (London) and **Austurvöllur** (Voices of the People) (Iceland) have clearly been vehicles of protest, typically fuelled by major public concerns, they have at the same time been testbeds of new methodological and thematic approaches to 'connective' personalised networking. They have inspired both widespread enthusiasm (e.g. in terms of their values, breadth of content and dynamic advances) and a degree of scepticism (e.g. in terms of a perceived shallowness of content, incoherent systems and weak ability to deliver measurable outcomes). Neither of these perceptions seems entirely true or fair, as Bennett and Segerberg again point out:

All of these trends suggest that the personalization of political action presents protest organizers with a set of fundamental challenges, chief among which concerns negotiating what they perceive as a trade-off between flexibility and effectiveness. For organizations trying to mobilize the type of participants who seek greater personalization in affiliation, definition, and expression, the associated demands of flexibility may challenge the standard models for achieving effective collective action (e.g., organizational coalitions based on shared political agendas expressed through ideological or solidarity-based collective action frames). The problem is that personalized communication would seem to be at odds with the emphasis on unity and alignment conventionally associated with the communication processes of effective collective

action. The puzzle we address here is how large-scale and effective political action can be achieved under conditions of digitally enabled personalization.
W.L. Bennett and A. Segerberg op.cit.

Whatever our perspective on this somewhat confusing (even contradictory) analysis, we cannot avoid evidence all around us of a Europe where populist movements seem to be at the rise, with people feeling left behind by 'elites', an 'us' that has too long been excluded or ignored by a 'them', and where large numbers of people live in precarity, with little hope of betterment. This is a challenge to all of us active in cultural networks, both in our professional practice and, more broadly, in terms of our citizenship:

The new democratic practices emerge in the midst of a recurrent and climactic crisis of representative democracy that has turned itself into a neo-liberal governing through precarisation and indebtedness. For the precarious, the connection with the past has been broken off in manifold ways, and the future cannot be planned. In the midst of this temporality broken open, there emerges a break with the notion that political action must be tied to representation, and at the same time a revolutionary desire for a new form of democracy that does not offer an empty promise of a permanently postponed future, but one that is already being experimented with in the now-time
Lorey, An Untimely Present in Europe, in 'No Culture, No Europe'

Such a theme is taken up in the draft 'Charter for Europe':

Representative democracy is in crisis. A crisis produced from above, by international financial markets, rating agencies, private think tanks and corporate media. But the credibility of democracy is also questioned from below. To talk about democracy is to (re)appropriate and to (re)invent a common sense of democracy. The guarantee of rights to the commons, of the transformation of citizenship, of equality, freedom, peace, autonomy and collectivity.
'El nuevo rapto de Europa' op.cit.

This paper is about cultural networking in Europe, while in this chapter we have largely focused on contemporary questions of political networking. It should though become increasingly clear in the chapters that follow how cultural networks operate today within wider contexts. Already in 1996 McAdam, McCarthy and Zeld explored a distinguishing typology of what they called Social Movement and related organisations. This seems to apply well to cultural networks:

Social movement organizations (SMOs) constitute crucial building blocks of the mobilizing structures of a social movement. But... they are by no means the only components of a movement's mobilizing structures. Other elements of these structures include kinship and friendship networks, informal networks among activists, movement communities, as well as a host of more formal organizations which contribute to the movement's cause without being directly engaged in the process of mobilization for collective action. In conceptualizing the more formal side of the mobilizing structure of a given movement, I would like to suggest that we distinguish between at least four types of formal organizations: "SMOs," "supportive organizations," "movement associations," and "parties and interest groups".

SMOs are distinguished from the other types of formal organizations by two criteria: (1) they mobilize their constituency for collective action, and (2) they do so with a political

goal, that is, to obtain some collective good (avoid some collective ill) from authorities. By contrast, supportive organizations are service organizations such as friendly media, churches, restaurants, print shops, or educational institutions, which contribute to the social organization of the constituency of a given movement without directly taking part in the mobilization for collective action. "Supportive organizations" may work on behalf of the movement, their personnel may sympathize with the movement, but their participation in the movement's mobilization for action is at best indirect or accidental.
McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Framing Processes – Toward a Synthetic, Comparative Perspective on Social Movements, 1996

It seems to us that contemporary cultural networks in Europe operate on such levels and probably on many more. This is not simply a game of definition, but a recognition that we approach our study with an open attitude to a subject that is complex, not fully understood and (probably) rife with internal tensions and contradictions. At the same time, the sheer richness, achievement and potential of networking activity in the cultural sector will also shine strongly through. It is for the reader to take her or his own position in relation to these questions, but we hope, along the way, to throw up some new or less recognised insights into how cultural networking works, its potency and potential for European transformation.

Chapter 1

We have been here before: an overview of past work

Artists can contribute content to the debate and they can do what they are experts at: create images and tell stories…"In our reflection Group, we kept coming back to the same point: that without meeting places and coffee houses, any further political process will be left hanging in the air. Without such debate, Europe will continue to be just a flow of catchphrases, a democracy in name only, but in reality a grand ennui, with no stories to tell, no discussion, and no public drama. The lack of shared attitudes to life creates an intellectual inertia which ultimately could bring down the entire European Union. This makes democratic and cultural dialogue – I intentionally avoid the word 'unification' – a matter of the greatest urgency. In the current situation, European 'culture' is no longer the icing on the cake, but rather a vital condition for survival.
Kurt de Boodt quoting Geert Mak, Europe as a Cultural Project (2004) in No Culture, No Europe, Pascal Gielen (ed.), 2015

We start with this relatively recent perspective because it places our subject firmly within the broader and more urgent question of Europe, how it has evolved and where it is going. We will return to this question repeatedly, but it is important to contextualise ourselves. We are not working in Europe's past but in its present and future, and in a time of great uncertainty and instability.

In this chapter we revisit, build on and reposition a wealth of research, that has informed a number of previous documents dealing with the subject of cultural networking. Our aim here is a contemporary one: to emphasise some areas that seem to be just as relevant today as they were, at various points over the past 20 years, when these documents were produced; at the same time, we will also address some areas that have, up to now, been less well covered, along with a number of circumstances that have changed – particularly those of recent years.

To be more specific, among previous documents and publications that have dealt directly with this subject are:

- Working Groups: Network Solutions for Cultural Cooperation in Europe: Judith Staines CAE 1996
- Networking Culture: the Role of European Cultural Networks: Gudrun Pehn, Council of Europe, 1999
- How networking works: Fondazione Fitzcarraldo Finnish Arts Council, 2000
- Mobility of the Imagination: Dragan Klaic, CAC, Central European University, 2007
- Networks: The Evolving Aspects of Culture in the 21st Century Edited by Biserka Cvjetičanin Institute for International Relations Culturelink Network Zagreb, 2011
- Anna Steinkamp Network Governance: Governance Models of International Networks of Cultural Cooperation, (Masters Thesis) Berlin, 2013
- The Value of International Cultural Networks, Malta Group, 2016

- D'Art Report 48: International Cultural Networks, Annamari Laaksonen (Ed.) IFACCA Sydney, 2016

Into this rich mix of reference material we will also add a prepared contribution by Mary Ann DeVlieg to a preparatory meeting for this work in Brussels in March 2016. All of these documents merit further reading in their own right. In this section, we will prepare the way for our study, by just touching on some of their main arguments and analysis.

Collectively, they can be broadly categorised as:

A   in-depth studies of the: nature, purpose, evolution and practices, along with challenges faced by European cultural networks
B   contextual guides, seeking to locate cultural networking within a broader framework of culture in the Europe of their time
C   resource tools for advocacy, seeking to develop awareness of the value of networks and encouraging further public support and investment in this field

There is no ideologically pure, 'model' cultural network. All true networks are in a continuous process of change and adaptation. Networks embody that elusive principle which most successful companies and institutions aspire to: that of being a learning organisation. They make constant readjustments to their working methods as the world in which they operate throws up new challenges and conflicts'
J. Staines Working Groups: Network Solutions for Cultural Cooperation in Europe, EFAH 1996

Judith Staines 1996 report for EFAH (forerunner to Culture Action Europe) was the initial catalyst for this paper. Importantly, it focused on cultural networks that were transnational (while recognising that the field is much wider and more complex than this). It provided an important and comprehensive analysis both of internal definitions and of questions about networks and their wider importance.

Its aim was to:

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

Staines' work clearly grasped the universal value, values and functionalities of physical European cultural networks. For example, she showed how networks bring people together to:

- share information and experiences
- generate ideas and project partners
- reflect on the needs of the sector
- engage in professional development

More specifically, Staines further suggested that networks contribute to important areas, such as:

- intercultural cooperation
- efficiency and effectiveness
- professional development
- productivity
- innovation

Over and above this analysis, Staines explored several commonalities and distinctions that can be identified among cultural networks as a 'community' or sector, for example, in their shared:

- diversity
- cohesion
- non-representativeness and representativeness
- individuality

She then went on to underline their distinctive qualities with regard to their:

- relative maturity, and levels and scales of operation
- profiles and wider status
- purposes and priorities
- particular allegiances

Overall, the picture that emerges strongly from the report is of a growing movement that is dynamic, flexible and full of potential as a driver of understanding, collaboration and change. Equally though a particularly idiosyncratic quality emerges of networks (maybe because of their peculiarly human qualities?) that defy tight definition or conventional structuring. This may at times render networks hard to read, drive or manoeuvre; but on the other hand, their often messy, testy, even combative qualities may be precisely what makes them so important as a model laboratory for innovation.

Staines saw though that networks face a two-way problem of translation:

- *by others*, in terms of how they work and what they do
- *towards others*, to turn the outcomes of their work into the useable raw material of transformation.

This phenomenon was evident in 1996; it is certainly so today.

> *'The benefits of networking are described and perceived differently by different stakeholders. Like the gaining of wisdom and expertise through age, networking benefits develop slowly.*
> **J Staines op.cit.**

Before leaving Staines' Report, we should note that it also focuses on questions of network sustainability, including a series of recommendations for building funding streams for under-resourced transnational networks: an ongoing challenge in 2016, as it was in 1996.

Meanwhile, Gudrun Pehn's 1999 report, Networking culture: the Role of Cultural Networks, extends this analysis into more general questions of networking theory and practice:

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 all be reflected in it. A network exists through the motivation of its members to give it life. It must of necessity be built around a strong theme that can arouse solid common motivations. Each contributes selflessly to the whole, for the sake of the common cause, and accepts others in the same spirit. Notions such as rivalry and competition are alien.
G. Pehn, Networking culture: the Role of Cultural Networks, Council of Europe, 1999

Interestingly, this seems a broadly accurate, albeit rather idealistic description of not only of the environment in which networks operate, but also the fundamental post-war ethos and basis for the European project. Things do not always turn out as intended!

Pehn's analysis (perhaps unconsciously?) evokes one of the inherent lines of tension in the emergence and evolution of networks

Experience shows that a network grows through direct contact between people who respect and appreciate each other. It is this aspect which facilitates the emergence of group projects and makes very delicate structures so effective.
G. Pehn op.cit.

This points to one of the strengths of networks that is invariably recognised by those of us who engage in them; on the other hand it also indirectly raises one of the major challenges that they invariably face: how to couple this blend of direct contact, mutual respect and 'delicate structure' with an evident need for longevity, sustainability and robust structure?

The field of cultural co-operation 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.
G. Pehn op.cit.

This is an inspiring vision that suggests great potential for cultural networking in Europe today, not only as a vehicle for collaboration within the sector but also, more widely, as an ethos and methodology for adopting trans-disciplinary, shared approaches to common European issues. But in considering its implications, the question also somehow arises: at what point do networks themselves risk becoming stuck: 'old structures' that may 'no longer reflect the needs of the new players'. This question is uncomfortable but, I feel, important to be faced by established networks today - as it is for established institutions everywhere, in the face of a fast-changing and uncertain Europe.

That in turn, however, introduces a further challenge for networks in a world where targets, indicators and defined outcomes play such an important role, in both the public and private sphere. Networks may consider that their 'DNA' belongs far from this world; however they are not, and cannot be, totally independent from it. Networks fulfil roles that are not just internally driven but also externally influenced, and such external influences

can be strong. The second point is touched upon in the 2000 Fondazione Fitcarraldo study:

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.

Fondazione Fitzcarraldo: How networking works, Finnish Arts Council, 2000

It is too easy though to criticise cultural networks for a lack of 'efficiency' (in strategic terms), while ignoring the reality that strategic efficiency never was - and, in all probability, never will be - their primary purpose or strength. What they bring to the strategic environment is more indirect, imaginative, human (thus, messy) and rich. Or, as Mary Ann DeVlieg puts it (speaking of networking today but seen through the prism of the early years of European networks):

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.

Mary Ann DeVlieg: presentation to Cultural Networks today meeting, Brussels 2016

If we transpose this phrase across the long span from the narrow context of a group of small networks of yesterday to wider questions and challenges of contemporary Europe, it quickly becomes clear, that networks today need to be allowed more space to work to their particular strengths, rather than pressurised to dance to too many externally driven agendas. But, over and above this call for more space to breathe, there is a strong case for what we might call 'institutional Europe' to switch its attention towards what is being discussed in these 'non-hierarchical, dynamic, emergent structures, unpredictable, somehow anarchic and democratic spaces' (Mary Ann De Vlieg's words again); or, failing that, at least to listen to how these discussions are being conducted.

The major implication of all this is that Europe today urgently needs the contribution of 'laboratories of imaginative thinking' from outside tight, hierarchical and institutional frameworks. Networks are an important potential vehicle for this. They should be widely recognised as such; but, at the same time, they should both recognise and strive to occupy their full potential for this role.

By default, we may seem to be implying here that our analysis relates only to networking at a Europe-wide - even EU – level, but this is emphatically not the case. Networks exist horizontally at every level across Europe. The connections between diverse levels, disciplines and territories may at times be obscure, but the basic principles of this argument remain the same. To be clear, we are referring here to cultural networking in Europe. Europe-wide cultural networks are a subset of this - an important one, but a subset none the less -, as are those that are nationally, locally or virtually as well as those based on particular disciplines and interests. In the same way, whatever specific level of democratic

governance in Europe we may centre around, that too remains a subset of broader questions of political governance in Europe. It may help if we start from the perspective that this is primarily about operating, whether individually or collectively, in a shared European space, rather than appropriating particular levels, interests or concerns. Then, from that starting point, what emerges can be regarded as a detail of this:

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* **Fondazione Fitzcarraldo op.cit.**

Anna Steinkamp meanwhile in 2013, turned to questions of governance in networks of cultural cooperation, highlighting what she saw as a set of common characteristics, that they:

- *group around a joint interest and/or shared objective in the field of cultural promotion;*
- *take various forms from informal to more formalised, legalised or institutionalised ones;*
- *are as dynamic, flexible and adaptive as other kinds of networks;*
- *have best conditions to be culturally sensitive, interculturally competent and promote intercultural dialogue as well as to overcome cultural barriers;*
- *are horizontally organised, either in a centralised or decentralised manner;*
- *build upon diversity, knowledge and social capital as their key resources;*
- *are hence necessarily linked to ICT;*
- *present as many tangible as intangible results, whereas the benefit is mostly intangible.*
  Anna Steinkamp Network Governance: Governance Models of International Networks of Cultural Cooperation, (Masters Thesis) Berlin, 2013

This theme of governance also features strongly in the recently published D'Art 48 Report. In July 2016 (coincidentally with the later stages of our own research), IFACCA, (the International Federation of Arts Councils and Cultural Agencies) published its own global D'Art Report 48 International Cultural Networks. In some ways then this report covers a similar territory of time and content as our paper, although there are many divergences between the two. D'Art 48 has a strong focus on questions of governance of cultural networks, reinforced by two reflective sections on broader approaches to networking and networking in a digital age. It states:

In their organisational appearance networks have proved especially suitable for international collaboration and for the resolution of complex problems inter alia because their main resource is knowledge. Beyond institutional boundaries, networks are more flexible, adaptive, non-hierarchic, quicker at making decisions and thus more effective …. However, networks often are like a phoenix – they appear suddenly and often they

disappear just as quickly, sometimes without having had a significant impact. Their success and failure are both a result of their characteristics.
**D'Art Report 48: International Cultural Networks, Annamari Laaksonen Ed.) IFACCA Sydney, 2016**

D'Art 48 highlights circumstances in which networks can make significant contributions:

Networks thus offer the opportunity of working together beyond traditional boundaries, allow for quick transmission of relevant knowledge and information in resource and cost-efficient synergies. Or said the other way around: Networks are especially practical when resources, e.g. people, are widely spread.
D'Art Report 48 op. cit.

It also features extensive analysis based on a global research questionnaire – a common methodology in D'Art reports – into the functions, financing and organisation of cultural networks. Although this is essentially a descriptive 'state of play' exercise, rather than a direct trigger for action, it contains a significant amount of useful raw data that could revisited and reshaped in a number of strategic directions. As such, it also complements and greatly extends the work trialled in chapter 6 of this paper.
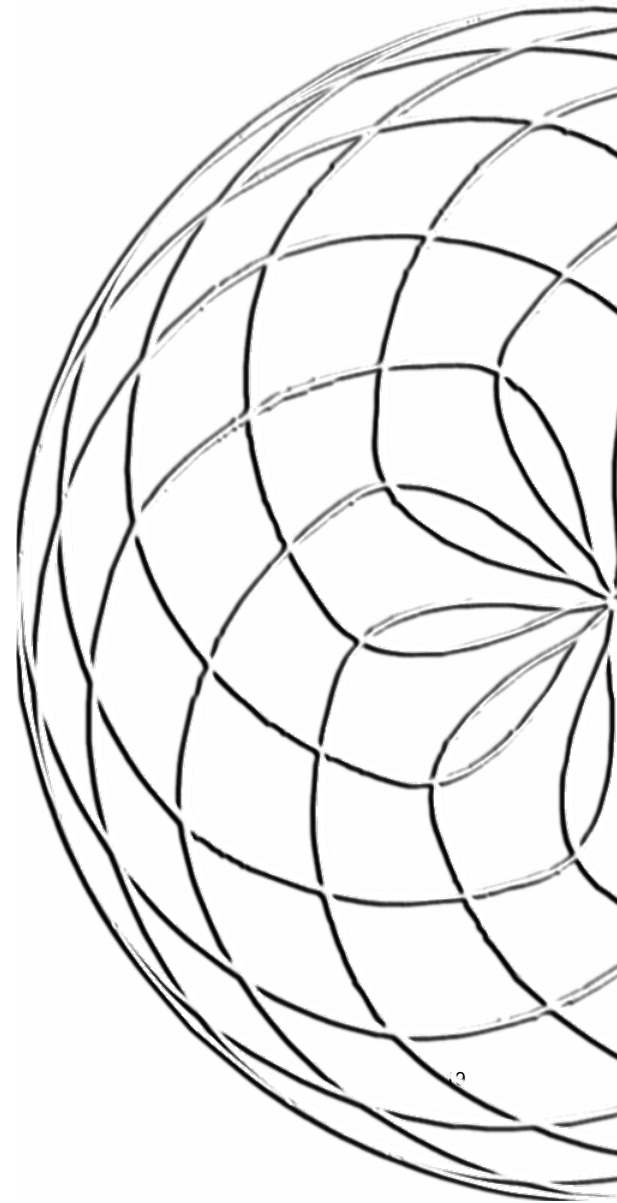
Chapter 2
Spreading definitions: cultural networking in Europe today

It would seem to be useful, given that this purports to be a study of cultural networking in Europe today, to take some time out to clarify our terms, in particular: 'culture', 'cultural networking' and 'Europe today'. Much of this may seem rather obvious but it is important to be clear, in order to establish a shared reference point. Along the way, these clarifications may also open up some areas for further discussion that we will revisit in greater depth - or maybe from a somewhat different perspective - in later chapters.

Culture

> *If Europe needs to be made, we should perhaps start with the culture; the Rome Treaty had made a mistake of not considering culture as one of the European construction's essential elements.*
> **Jean Monnet, Address to the European Parliament, 1983**

The concept of 'culture' is at once all-embracing, confusing and contested. Culture is understood and embraced in different ways by different people in different contexts. The Fribourg Declaration of Cultural Rights (2007) provides us with a useful, broad starting framework definition, as follows:

A. *The term "culture" covers those values, beliefs, convictions, languages, knowledge and the arts, traditions, institutions and ways of life through which a person or a group expresses their humanity and the meanings that they give to their existence and to their development;*
Fribourg Declaration of Cultural Rights (2007) via the Equal Rights Trust website, http://www.equalrightstrust.org/ertdocumentbank//Fribourg-declaration.pdf,

It is worth noting that each of the categories listed in this clause in itself comprises a large and diverse range of definers: sub-categories, such as: types of value or belief, primary and secondary languages spoken, artform skills and interests etc; and we all connect variously and individually with these sub-categories. Furthermore each of them may have a particular meaning to each of us individually, based for example on how we were introduced to, or otherwise connect with them. Our resulting 'culture' as individuals, then, can be seen less as a recognisable category that defines us, than as an expression of our individual diversity that distinguishes us.

And yet, there is a prevailing sense that, through culture, we also gain shared identity (or, rather, identities). Sometimes these identities are based on how we make choices, or feel about ourselves, but they can equally be labels that we or, frequently, others apply or attach to us. The Fribourg declaration framework also touches on this transition from the individual to the collective.

B. *The expression "cultural identity" is understood as the sum of all cultural references through which a person, alone or in community with others, defines or constitutes oneself, communicates and wishes to be recognised in one's dignity;*

C. *"Cultural community" connotes a group of persons who share references that constitute a common cultural identity that they intend to preserve and develop.*

Cultural Networking

It may be said that cultural networks are types of 'cultural community'. Certainly, many share a common focus of interest – and thus identity -, often based on one or more of the Fribourg 'categories' of arts and traditions (heritage). Indeed a review of the lists of current (146) Culture Action Europe member organisations (see appendix) reveals many examples of sectoral arts and heritage-based interests. It is also the case that the networks directly engaged in membership represent no more than a very small proportion of the vast array of arts and heritage-linked networks active, across all levels, disciplines and interests, in Europe today. It is perhaps when we take account of all the further tiers and sub-tiers of cultural networks and individual practitioners within this tent - themselves often 'members of members' -, that the sheer scale of networked engagement and influence becomes apparent.

Perhaps surprisingly, there is no single current source of quantitative information about all the cultural networks active across Europe today. A fairly recent list, in one European network website, suggests an estimated total of around 300:

> *Today the number of cultural networks in European totals over three hundred covering a multitude of art forms, disciplines, organisations, countries, and professions. There are networks for artists, arts festivals, carnivals, orchestras, arts centres, arts students, writers, dance, museums and even one for jugglers! There is not one central information point where you can find all of the networks listed but Lab for Culture has over two hundred in its database (under the directory section of its web site). Culture.info is also a useful resource tool for all things cultural in Europe and includes its own directory of networks.*

Today, neither Lab for Culture nor Culture.info continues as a source of up to date information on numbers of networks. Meanwhile, alongside the Culture Action Europe membership list, the Creative Europe Desk website lists just 84 networks (http://www.creativeeuropeuk.eu/european-networks), and the European Commission (DGEAC) website just 23. In most cases (CAE is something of an exception here), these lists figure predominantly Europe-wide networks, though there are some exceptions in the form of national networks. We have though found no independent contemporary directory that features, still less inter-connects, all sectors and all levels from continental, national and regional to local.

It may seem surprising that there is not a fuller picture of cultural networks; but on the other hand, it is important to recognise that Europe represents a mass of interlocking and overlapping interests, that connect up in infinitely variable ways, at continental, national, regional and local levels. Some of these operate in particular geographical contexts and spaces, some represent more than one interest (including many outside the cultural field), some operate within virtual and digital, rather than physical fields, and so on. There is a case for further detailed research into this overall picture, even if it is arguable how valuable a complex mapping exercise would be. It seems likely that those lists currently available grossly under-represent the scale of networking across all levels around Europe, while providing a somewhat distorted picture of their diverse nature. For example, they largely ignore how significant a role grassroots networks play in local cultural and social development, both in their own specific contexts and, collectively, as components of an overall European picture.

If we see networks as some kind of 'alternate voice' that variously complement or challenge public authorities and their policies, then it is arguable that each level of public cultural governance and policy deserves and demands a 'mirror' level of cultural networking, perhaps within the broader frame of civil society engagement, to act as a mirror, challenge, and direct connection between policy and practice. And all this is, of course, over and above the role played by networking in Europe that crosses or transcends the particular levels of governance.

And in addition, as we shall see later, there is a distinction to be drawn between 'networking' (i.e. the process of making connections) and 'networks' (i.e. the structures that enable this to happen). To take this down to a basic level: a priori, all networks network; but all networking is not undertaken by networks.

So this is not just about numbers; it is equally about a diversity of purposes, roles, interests and practices that bring people together. It is about a diversity of wider needs that these networks seek to meet. To exemplify this, presented we present here are a tiny sample of three, from amongst the huge and diverse array of representative arts and heritage based networks active in Europe today (each accompanied by a summary of its core purpose and/or roles – date April 2016).

Res Artis - International Network of Arts Residencies

Vision:
The worldwide professional body for artist residencies, ensuring sustainability and development of the field through enabling connection and facilitating professional development for our member organisations.

Mission:
- Enable sustainability by providing tools for professional development.
- Respect the regional, cultural and structural diversity of the artist residency field through adherence to our core values.
- Actively engage with and be responsive to members' needs and changes in the field.
- Ensure transparency through clear communication with members, the cultural sector and wider public.
- Connect and promote members through face to face meetings and the use of digital platforms.

http://www.resartis.org/

European Choral Association - Europa Cantat

Vision:
To be the leading pan-European nonprofit organisation dedicated to education and cultural exchange among singers of all ages, especially among children and young people in the field of vocal music. The European Choral Association - Europa Cantat directly represents more than one million and reaches out to more than 20 million singers, conductors and composers in over 40 European countries including new and future members of the European Union.

Strategy (2014 to 2017 and beyond): "**Benefit from the singing community!**"
5 main strategic objectives:
- Strengthen the Network –the association strengthened, network of members developed, capitalized and made sustainable, financial sources diversified and stabilised, services adapted to members' needs and means of communication updated and modernised
- Facilitate Peer-to-Peer Approach – direct cooperation between members encouraged, cooperation within the choral world in general promoted and concrete opportunities for peer-to-peer learning offered
- Invest in Capacity-Building and Training - activities focused on the learning process, professional training offered to conductors, composers, singers, managers and music pedagogues, the creation and circulation of repertoire encouraged and the new generation provided with new opportunities
- Reach Out - reach out to the entire singing community beyond the membership, activities connecting persons in risk of exclusion with the help of singing, more people involved in the experience of singing, activities aimed at audience development and enhanced cooperation with other disciplines
- Raise Awareness – contribute to the development and dissemination of knowledge on singing, communicate the benefits of singing together, advocate for singing on decision making levels, promote singing in music education and support advocacy for music education in schools, in cooperation with other associations

http://www.eca-ect.org/

There is no special rationale behind choosing these three from among hundreds of other cultural networks. Each example connects the cultural sector, both internally and externally, with many key social, educational, environmental, political, place-based and simply human issues of contemporary Europe. Individually quite diverse, all are interesting and significant networks in their own right; and yet, in another way, they can also be seen as exemplars of a much larger and more diverse common picture of European cultural networking.

Diverse purposes and strategies

Before moving away from this brief overview of cultural networks, we will return for a moment to some of the assumptions that we may make about networks. The more deeply we consider cultural networks, the more their diversity emerges: not simply diversity of areas of interest, policy, location or structure – all of which are in themselves significant – but, more fundamentally, diversity of purpose and strategic significance.

This is important, because they are all essentially service organisations. That is to say, networks not only strive, to enhance the quality and working environment of their own particular sector but also (and evidence from websites and advocacy documents underlines this), invariably to make a broader social contribution to enhancing the quality of life - and proposing the role of culture within that.

The case for more in-depth research into cultural networks

There is now scope for a broader and deeper programme of research than this one, to better understand the diversity and complexity of cultural networks. After all, it is less than satisfactory to be talking (with each other or with stakeholders and users) about networks, without being clear that we may not in fact always be talking about the same thing. An overview of a wide selection of cultural networks, undertaken in preparation for this work, quickly revealed the sheer breadth and diversity of profiles amongst working networks today. I do not believe this diversity is widely analysed or understood within networks or, more importantly, by their stakeholders and those they serve.

Among network profiles identified across the sector can be recognised many general characteristics, are the following:

- **Learning spaces and awareness-builders** – providing services to members and others, to increase understanding of shared issues – both internally and externally focused
- **Meeting spaces for people with shared interests** – providing physical (and virtual opportunities to enable members and others in their sector to meet, share new experiences and ideas and gain mutual strength
- **Meeting places for people with diverse interests** – as above but reaching out to connect with more diverse, interests and perspectives (e.g. culturally, geographically, disciplinary etc.)
- **Event promoters** – bringing together groups of artists from diverse backgrounds to make and share work internationally
- **Intercultural resources** – providing services and environments that enable people from diverse cultural backgrounds to interchange, build lasting relationships and cooperate in their practice
- **Vehicles for inter/transdisciplinary practice** – exploring and building connections with ideas and practice across diverse, complementary (or apparently contradictory) disciplines
- **Partnership consortia** – enabling members to work together to form partnerships based in their own specialist fields
- **Project developers and partners** - working centrally or with partners to devise develop and deliver cooperation projects
- **Communication media (internal)** – researching and disseminating news and information services for members and to their own specialist sector of interest
- **Addressers of issues in or with related fields** – seeking out and working with others, in order to connect with and impact on important wider social and economic issues
- **Special interest mouthpieces (external)** – being the voice of a specialist sector in wider debates about social and economic life, whether individually or collaboratively, as part of a wider 'movement'

- **Special interest 'ears' (external and internal)** - being an observatory that brings into and enhances the dissemination across the network of specific and wider intelligence, knowledge and awareness
- **Advocacy agencies** – devising and delivering strategies, towards and on behalf of their own specialist sector, to increase reach and impact, solicit support and recognition or argue for progress and change
- **Self-promoters** – pursuing own interests of growth and sustainability, by increasing reach and impact and developing sustainable organisational and financial models
- **Non profit-distributing enterprises** – providing a range of specialist services generating income that can, in turn, be reinvested into the wider objectives of the network

Despite its length, this list is not complete or comprehensive, and is open to debate and challenge. It is a starting point. The key reason to introduce it here is that the presence of such a complex list of profile characteristics within the field of cultural networks tends to raise a number of questions, for example:

- How well do stakeholders understand this complex profile, why it is important and what brought it about?
- How well do networks' own publics (members and users) understand their own profile, and why and how it came about?
- Which of these characteristics are driven, respectively, by internal demands (e.g. from members, officers, users) or by external pressures (e.g. from stakeholders, funders)?
- How does the complexity and level of responsibility attached to the profile match to the resources and financial structure of these networks?
- How do networks balance the competing pressures imposed by the relative demands of each within the whole?
- Who (outside 'the core group' of officers and board) really understands the nature and implications of this challenge?
- In a context of change, and of receding public European investment, what strategies, if any, are available today to networks to address these issues?

Coincidental with the time of early genesis of this piece of work, a number of European networks – collectively known as the 'Malta Group', produced an advocacy document that provides a useful gathering point, clarifying and addressing some of these questions:

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.
- 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.

- 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 condition 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.

The Value of International Cultural Networks: Malta Group, 2016

ARRE - Association of European Royal Residences
CAE - Culture Action Europe
ECHO - European Concert Hall Organisation
EMC - European Music Council
ELIA - European League of Institutes of the Arts
ETC - European Theatre Convention
EMCY - European Union of Music Competitions for Youth
Eurozine
Res Artis
OTM - On the Move
ECA-EC - European Choral Association - Europa Cantat
ENCC - European Network of Cultural Centres
IMC - International Music Council
IETM - International network for contemporary performing arts
TEH - Trans Europe Halles
RANN - Réseau Art Nouveau Network
FACE - Fresh Arts Coalition Europe
NEMO - The Network of European Museum Organisations
Triangle Network
RESEO - European Network for Opera, Music and Dance Education

Underlying this statement is an implicit and understandable sense of frustration at a lack of recognition, despite its longevity and open, interactive qualities, of the real significance of a movement of work.

In operational terms it is an understandable and self-evident reality, and an invariable complaint of many networks, that they are both overburdened and under-resourced. Indeed, if viewed from the perspective of a strategy-driven environment, one could argue the need for ruthless prioritising and pruning around their core strategic goals and objectives. But in this lies one of the key tensions and dilemmas of this operational environment. To what extent do, or indeed should, networks fit the profile of strategic operators? To what extent is a perspective of networks as strategy-driven vehicles compatible with the diverse range of profiles of cultural networks listed above? Indeed, is networking primarily a strategic, functional field of activity at all? And, crucially, what would be gained and what lost if networks were pressurised to transform themselves in a more strategy-oriented direction?

We are potentially charting some difficult and controversial waters here, because this line of tension can be interpreted from both sides. Purely in the interests of clearing the way for

debate, we will characterise (even caricature) two opposing perspectives here. In this crude form, both make painful reading!

The 'strategic' case

Networks could be said to have allowed themselves to evolve over time on the basis of multiple priorities and directions. They are arguably often overburdened and insufficiently focused, driven by inputs and external demands, rather than outcomes and outputs based on a core set of strategically devised objectives. They may need radical pruning of objectives and activities, so that they comply more closely with external demands and priorities – doing less, but better.

The 'relational' case

Networks have over time allowed themselves to be drawn away from their primary purpose and strengths: they can at their best provide an open, relational space for cooperation, debate, relationship-building, knowledge-sharing and exploration of new experiences and ideas. They can be said to some extent to have lost their way by drifting into the increasingly strategic business-focused environment within which most formally structured institutions operate today. They have presided over the concealment or weakening of their own unique proposition: as a place precisely where practitioners from diverse backgrounds and disciplines can step outside this formal environment, in order to relate differently, re-imagine, reinvent, innovate and thus be catalysts of transformation.

We can of course with some justification that neither of these 'indictments' stands up to real scrutiny. We can also recognise how difficult (and probably inadvisable) it would be today to build a firewall between the two positions. This is the real world, after all. Networks are often under continual operational stress, and cannot insulate themselves from formality, hierarchy, public policy environments and strategic 'business-like' thinking; meanwhile, the increasingly beleaguered environment of formal, traditional public and private institutional structures seems to cry out for spaces of innovation, new connections and re-imagined approaches such as those that networks can offer.

Nevertheless, there are elements of truth contained within (or, perhaps more accurately, between) the two positions. For example, some networks do appear to frame their vision more in terms of the particular interests of the field they serve, rather than within a wider vision of the changing and challenging external environment in which they operate. But then there is plenty of evidence of networking practice that belies this criticism. An overview of networks quickly reveals that many do explore this rich terrain of 'inside/ outside' interaction. Here are some examples (taken from websites and edited for length, April 2016):

Trans-Europe Halles

A European based support, exchange and co-operation network of cultural centres, providing a dynamic forum for ideas, experiences and exchange, supporting its members and their communities, facilitating and encouraging artistic collaborations throughout Europe.

Project: 'Creative Lenses'

How to develop viable business models for cultural organisations without compromising their artistic integrity, mission and values? "Creative Lenses" can contribute to a solution.

Many cultural organisations and artists around Europe struggle to find new ways to survive and develop in times of changed and declining financing structures for culture. This is why "Creative Lenses", a unique cooperation project funded by the Creative Europe programme of the European Commission, was conceived. Over 4 years, a unique partnership of 13 cultural centres, universities, city authorities, networks and cultural agencies will research and test new business models together with a wide range of cultural players throughout Europe.

Aim: to strengthen and develop the business capacity and sustainability of European arts and cultural organisations. The key objective of Creative Lenses is to research, devise and test new business and management models for the sector that can be replicated and then used by a wide range of arts and cultural players throughout Europe.

Legacy: the know-how, tools and support mechanisms required for the European arts and cultural sector to strengthen their business capacity and achieve financial sustainability, so that they are more able to successfully deliver their missions and create value.

www.teh.net

Time To Talk: The European Network of Houses for Debate

Time to Talk is a young and vibrant pan-European network of centres of debate, dedicated to stimulating discussion on the key socio-political themes of the day. Established in 2011, the network brings together debate centres from all across Europe, including non-EU states such as Turkey and Russia.

What unites Time to Talk members is a dedication to picking up where public discourse leaves off and tackling those vital questions, which mainstream commentaries all too often either ignore or only superficially observe. Members of the network are committed to confronting uncomfortable issues, offering inspiring new points of view and encouraging audience participation.

Whatever our current focus may be, Time to Talk is always about raising awareness of the important work done by debate initiatives across Europe and pointing to what we, who do that work, know so well: that what brings societies together and what moves them forward, is their citizens' capacity to deliberate, to respectfully disagree with each other and thereby to remain open-minded and curious about the world around them.

www.tttdebates.org

European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies (eipcp)

"Real progress is not being progressive, but progressing." (Bert Brecht)

A progressive Europe emerges as a dynamic concept - geographically as well as ideologically. Progressive culture politics develops within permanent conflictual debates about preconditions of such a dynamics, within the creation of critical public spheres, within a continuous exchange of differences. The European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies is concerned with intensifying networking among actors in the cultural field. It participates in their transversal practices of cooperation and develops their processual discourses on the arts and on the instruments of cultural policies.

What does the eipcp do? By what activity does it legitimize its existence? It's not difficult to answer this question in a purely descriptive way.

- It's first of all about a kind of networking of European cultural and art institutions with the aim of jointly realizing art projects and organizing discursive events to go with them.
- Secondly, the eipcp itself generates discourses; that is to say, it participates in the discourse production of others, including publishing activities.

…the eipcp's interdisciplinary mode of production can be understood as a kind of qualitative sum of the shortcomings of each of its own component fields. For example, an art that shies away from theoretical reflection or any reference to political praxis is already for the eipcp a deficient art. This is to be understood as a "purely aesthetic" statement – and not a merely political one. An art that today would like to remain or become "pure art and nothing more" would also be no art at all. It's precisely the absence of the political and discursive that invalidates its aesthetic status.

In other words, the activity of the eipcp is never artistic in just one of its aspects; it is an art-supplementing activity in all of its aspects – political, reflective, and cultural. It brings to art exactly what it lacks, in order to remain or become art.

It's similar for theoretical production, for political activism, and for what we call "cultural policy." The aim of the eipcp's activity lies in providing what each of these fields lacks; that is, in overcoming the specific insufficiency of each that first becomes meaningful in relation to the other fields. The hybrid character of this activity consists in this, and not in some mere overlapping of different spheres of activity.

http://www.eipcp.net/

What characterises all three of these among the many examples that can be found, is that networks are both capable of and enthusiastic to display core networking values (for example, as 'spaces of innovation and re-imagined approaches') and to engage in targeted interventions that may reshape thinking and action in the public sphere. Indeed, many may go further than that by applying core networking methodologies and values as a strategic tool within these interventions. There is no evidence that any of these projects was externally imposed on a network by the pressures of public policy or business interests, even though all are evidently influenced by wider external environments. They can then be said to be examples of ways in which networks deploy core networking values to fulfil their own missions while at the same time working strategically to influence wider transformative thinking and action.

This is a strong and dynamic narrative for the argument that open, relational networking today – perhaps now more than ever – is both relevant and essential to social innovation and transformation. The question remains though to what extent this crucial significance is more widely recognised at an external (public and private) institutional level and, indeed, internally amongst their publics, including members and users.

Chapter 3
Changing policy contexts in Europe and beyond

We have an economy now that needs to grow, whether or not that makes us thrive, because of the way it's structured; but what we need is an economy that makes us thrive, whether or not it's growing

...[working as artists] how can we draw and speak and poet and rhyme this new vision of a paradigm we need to create?
K**ate Raworth address: Is there an alternative to the Growth Imperative? FreeWord and Rethinking Economics debate, 2016**
http://www.eurozine.com/timetotalk/is-there-an-alternative-to-the-growth-imperative/

Europe today – a continent at a crossroads?

Go wherever you like in Europe, and talk to activists and art workers, there'll always be someone talking about commons, goods understood as common resources, accessible property: both physical goods, as public space, and virtual ones. Artists initiate social debates with their works, activists resort to tools traditionally associated with artists. This is what big European institutions are interested in. They perceive the artists-social activists as partners. This is the kind of culture we need: made in touch with people, in collaboration with them, together; accessible to as many people as possible

...In a world where individualism has killed cooperation and the capacity for being and working together, where cooperation sucks and self-reliance seems so cool, we are smoothly and consistently dismantling all social ties. Why am I supposed to do something with my neighbours? I'd rather do it alone.
Agnieszka Wiśniewska, Culture WITH People, Not Just FOR People!
In Build the City: Perspectives on Commons and Culture ECF, 2016

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the founders of union in Europe had a very clear vision for a permanent rejection of conflict between Europe's nation states. Since that time, whilst there have been regional wars in Europe, and wars beyond Europe in which it has been significantly implicated, the primary objective of avoidance of transcontinental war has been met. This is a major achievement, of course but, with the passing of time the threat of wars between nation states has naturally receded. And, with that, the original binding force for the union has also receded. It is still deployed as an argument by politicians; but it lacks the immediacy or positive binding force that it once had. It is essentially a defensive rationale – we should remain united to avoid further war – rather than a constructive or positive one.

The institutions of the European Union – the council as the forum of the member states, the commission as the permanent civil service, the directly elected parliament – all bear witness to the political nature of the European project, as do other EU institutions such as the European Central Bank. Yet Europe today is failing to fulfil its role as a political

actor, overwhelmed by events which have slowed the impetus towards unity and instigated a kind of permanent crisis management.

The accumulation of unresolved issues and internal disagreements within the EU arises chiefly from a piecemeal treatment of the problems and a habit in the EU of letting the means get the better of the ends, a loss of vision of what Europe stands for. The motto of the EU is 'unity in diversity' but at present there is far too much diversity and a dearth of uniting factors.

...This Europe as a no-more-war safety net lacks credibility, vision and purpose.
Nicholas Dungan, Chatham House, 2016
https://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/twt/europe-must-recapture-its-political-vision#sthash.G7cBpEYc.dpuf

It seems that Europe today is looking for a convincing binding cultural focus – a Europe 'story' that has emotional and symbolic meaning for today's citizens. There have long been movements to identify this within a shared European 'story, such as the Renaissance or classical tradition. More recently, we can point to the example of A Soul for Europe:

A Soul for Europe: Culture, Citizenship, Democracy
A Soul for Europe connects and mobilizes citizens and democratic institutions across Europe, fostering a sense of responsibility for the future of Europe and democracy through culture. We connect communities in order to build a common European public space and a culture of proactive citizenship.
http://www.asoulforeurope.eu/about-us/mission-statement

Such initiatives contribute to an admirable ambition to co-identify and co-construct a shared space and narrative for Europe. But the reality is that the disconnecting forces in Europe today seem to run much deeper than that. A public retreat from direct engagement with the democratic process, for example, would risk creating a population with, at best, a weak democratic voice certain vociferous groups become the emerging levers of power. But what role can cultural networks play in the huge task of (re-)establishing a 'commons', by way of a European narrative, and thus of contributing to addressing this democratic deficit?

Democracy is the mother of all commons. Democratic values and the principle of self-government may be very much alive, but it is impossible to avoid the fact that its procedural moments — elections — are not. Only five countries in the EU27 managed a turnout of more than 50% in the 2014 elections to the European Parliament, which saw the lowest turnouts on record. ... Whether you blame politicians, voters, the nefarious hand of elites or a more subtle set of long-term social changes — if elections can't command people's confidence, then an important part of the commons will go ungoverned.

...Across Europe there are hundreds of organisations, networks and individuals that are passionate about these issues and campaign for the commons. What distinguishes these groups from other civil society groups is that they are arguing for and trying to create new kinds of common space. They are interested in reclaiming institutions, communities and buildings through agreements, rules and other devices to make them more accessible, democratic and useable.

...the desire to claim, demarcate and create new rules for space is perhaps a new way of voicing these concerns and expresses a desire to engage with the means of making new space rather than simply making demands. The great symbolic, theatrical struggles for power used to take place at factory gates — now they take place in space.
Charlie Tims: A Rough Guide to the Commons
In Build the City: Perspectives on Commons and Culture ECF, 2016

The 'commons' is a somewhat nebulous, though evocative, concept. We may understand it better as a shared relational space that is equally open to all. As such it lends itself beautifully to the values of cultural networks, not only in relation to their open attitudes and processes, but also to the creative and cultural impetus that lies at their heart. The commons is, variously,: a workshop, a rehearsal space, an open class or studio, a fanzine, a street performance, a carnival, a festival, a sculpture park, a graffiti wall... It can contextualise and inspire so much of what, as creative people, we do and aspire to. At the same time it can become a place of threat, prejudice, even violence. It is thus closely connected to wider questions about our continent, and how in the 21st century we can re-find and reshape ourselves within it.

And yet we cannot deny that there is an inherent social and economic tension between the commons and individual and corporate value creation. The commons can be viewed as a physical entity – an 'asset' that can be 'captured' and turned into financial or economic value. Such assets may provide huge profits to corporations; but equally, they may also provide basic levels of sustainability to individuals. And the cultural sector itself – and, thus, its representation via networks - sits astride this line of tension. We typically like to focus on the capacity of culture to occupy and enrich the commons; at the same time culture in our own hands is often commoditised, and the resulting value exploited as an economic asset. We may consider this to be an inherit fault line or weakness within cultural networks today as an overall movement; equally however networks can serve as providers of an open relational space in which to debate different perspectives and air divergent arguments – both amongst members and users and on a wider public basis. They have the capacity – if we choose to extend their social and political reach – to provide a European democratic space – not in an instrumental way, but through direct artistic engagement in the commons.

Network culture promotes the use of information tools to manage information and context. While it undoubtedly creates a useful functional efficiency, there is a qualitative and obvious difference between access to information and understanding, between computational context-awareness and lived understanding, between performing the local and embodying the local.

The problem of building real connections and making a functional, useful, and human society in an age of globalized, monetized alienation is a very real one. Situated information is useful, but it is not a strong enough tool to create actual human, emotional connections between individuals in space. At most, it can perform a critical but small function of acting as a seed crystal, creating a surface on which such interactions can occur, but the potential creation of possibility is not the actual creation of interaction.
Eleanor Saitta blog (2010), Dymaxion https://dymaxion.org/me.html

This role is subtle, and relatively modest. It is about 'emotional connections between individuals in space', as Eleanor Saitta puts it. It is thus about relationships and relational engagement:

> *...friendship may well be a good starting point from which to explore what it means to be part of a commons that is not merely a resource management exercise, but an alternative to treating the world as made up of resources*
> **Dougald Hine, Friendship is a Commons in Build the City: Perspectives on Commons and Culture, ECF 2016**

Europe today – the re-emergence of nationalism?

> *What is Europe? Is it a continent, a collective culture, a bygone dream, a mutual solidarity, or the ability to forgive?*
> **Re: Creating Europe, The Forum on European Culture, June 2016**

Our lived experience of Europe today is that of an increasingly contested space of national and supranational (global) influences. This is a large and complex subject, but the following quote provides us with a context:

> *National culture plays a central role in people's evaluation of European integration. This is a major preoccupation among both, those who oppose and those who support further European integration.*
>
> *... The concept of nation... is based on the idea of national self-determination. It also implies some kind of prepolitical unity of blood, a common language, religious belief, or agreement on values and customs. In other words, people see themselves as part of a particular and distinctive national community. ... From early childhood individuals develop a loyalty to a particular group and, through experience, a sense of differentiation and opposition. This strong feeling frames the lives of most people. Emotions, irrational thinking, and logic become entangled.*
>
> *...As the large organization of the EU eliminates borders among countries in more and more aspects of life, a sense of the need for local community is growing among large sectors of the EU population. There is a perceived need for local cultural identities that are autonomous and separate from the large political power of the EU, which many people view as an external arrangement that imposes constraints on them that they can do little to change*
>
> *...Nationalism in this context is expressed as a reaction of the particular (local community, nation) to the universal (the process of European integration). Nationalism is equated with traditions and the nostalgia of small communities. ... Many people see the EU as an obstacle to their dream of harmony because they believe that harmony can best be reached among people who share a particular territory and speak the same language. Following this logic, they emphasize the cultural aspects that characterize their nationality and that differ from other countries of the EU to justify their view that further European integration is impossible*

… Culture is viewed as the essence, the spirit, of a particular nationality. Therefore, to protect a culture many people … believe that they must reject what they label as "foreign ideas and foreign ways of doing things." They even believe that people who share their particular culture are the greatest people in the world.

People meet the world as members of communities, and their identity and self-esteem are derived, in a large part, from the communities to which they belong. However, the emphasis on a particular national identity has usually served to separate people from each other.
Antonio V. Menendez-Alarcon, National Identities Confronting European Integration (1994)

This piece was written over 20 years ago (1994), and yet its currency suggests that, in this context at least, 'today' is not much different from 'yesterday'. Nevertheless, the underlying message that can be drawn from it is that the competing tensions and strains within Europe between local/national and continental/global interests are not only deeply rooted but also deeply connected with questions of culture. Maybe (returning to Fribourg) 'culture as national identity' is not a framework for categorising culture that many in the sector readily recognise?

In reality citizens increasingly seem to find such European arguments unconvincing – somehow intellectually contrived. The harder reality today seems to be that a more populist 19th and 20th century story for Europe is once again gathering strength. The simple and publicly appealing answer to this challenge of the need for a unifying story seems increasingly to be found along the road that leads to nationalism – a powerful and visceral uniting force normally constructed around a shared national myth, or, as Menendez puts it: some kind of prepolitical unity of blood, a common language, religious belief, or agreement on values and customs.

This underpinning of separate, competing identities is far away from the ethos upon which Europe came together. Indeed, Europe can be said to have united in the first place with the firm ambition of consigning it to history.

In this regard 2016 UK In/Out EU Referendum campaign provided Europe with ample evidence of a shift back to nationalist separateness.

OUR VISION
Our politicians say this country isn't good enough; too small to make a difference in the world. We say they have lost confidence in our country.

*…**Imagine** not having our laws dictated to us by Brussels. Instead, MPs would become accountable to the public and we would once again be able to make and decide on our own laws.*

***Imagine** how we could then regain control of important issues such as our borders. We could welcome the right talent from all over the world - adding to the country's already phenomenal cultural and economic strength (rather than having to accept all EU migrants regardless of skill level)…*
Leave Campaign website https://leave.eu/en/our-campaign#our-vision (June 2016)

Furthermore, it would be unwise to focus solely on the extraordinary case of the UK. If we look a round Europe today, we can find other instances - in both 'mainstream' and 'extreme' political perspectives

> *The most important issue related to the EU Membership is sovereignty of Poland nation (sic). The party invariably back the concept of Europe of sovereign states, and strongly opposes federalist tendencies. PiS strives for such changes in the Constitution, which clearly define its overarching nature to all regulations in force in our country, and therefore also against primary and European law, and enable effective control of compliance of applicable law in Poland EU to our constitution.*
> **Law and Justice Party (Poland), quoted in CEE Identity: National Identities, Europeum: Institute for European Policy**

> *We want to be masters again of our own currency, our own laws and our own borders... I want the Netherlands to be a proud and sovereign country again, and I believe that, in order to have a true democracy, one needs a nation state with a common culture, identity and flag. People need to know who they are; Europe costs us a lot of money, while we hardly have anything to say.... the goal of European elite is to trade this nation state in for a supranational state. This not only leads to the loss of our economy, but also our identity. ... Sovereignty is not just an economic concept, but it also means that people know who they are, what they stand for, what their identity is, and especially what their identity is not.*
> **Geert Wilders, (PVV, Netherlands), I Want the Netherlands to be a Proud and Sovereign Country Again Metro November 2015, (translated and reproduced in Gates of Vienna, November 2015**
> http://gatesofvienna.net/2015/12/geert-wilders-i-want-the-netherlands-to-be-a-proud-and-sovereign-country-again/

Meanwhile, a wider problem that Europe faces at all levels is that, for many people, public and private institutions appear weak, lacking in conviction about the future, credibility and authority. Arguably this could be said to be the case on many fronts, such as: European governance at all levels, business at all levels and even among institutionalised civil society. This is not the place to debate the assertion in depth. However, among its potential root causes, we could point to:

- the financial crash of 2008 and its aftermath
- the growing impact of climate change
- widely publicised cases of corruption involving economic and political elites
- the widespread policy reliance on austerity
- the continuing unpopularity and defensiveness of the financial sector
- the inability of governments to achieve any resolution of the disastrous interventions in the Near and Middle East of earlier decades
- the resulting cocktail of humanitarian crisis and ever increasing mass migration
- and much more

One important apparent by-product of this complex web of challenges can be observed in many areas from the seismic changes in voting patterns and collapse of major political parties in the face of populism. The darkening picture of austerity policy and reducing public investment is another important detail in this picture. Of course, reduced public investment in culture is a part of the picture, and should be seen as such; however, the challenge has been much more widely felt, as public austerity policies have impacted on

more and more areas of social policy and, in turn, spilled over into both business and civil society.

All of this contributes to a challenging and unstable contemporary European context. It seems that a political 'vacuum' has been created by our collective inability, as European citizens and societies, to cope with so much challenge and churn, and that this has catalysed new movements and voices that are variously progressive and regressive.

Europe today – the context for cultural networks

Europe is only one of many subjects and issues that are currently at a tipping point. Ever since the current economic crisis began in 2008, our faith and trust in the present economic system have been profoundly shaken. Things that used to provide us with security and stability, such as jobs, houses and money in the bank, suddenly turn out to be unstable and a source of anxiety. This anxiety is expressed in various ways. A part of society has started looking for alternative certainties and appears to be moving in a mostly inward direction: to what is known, what is safe and familiar. Others see the crisis – and the imaginary open spaces created by large-scale cutbacks - as an opportunity for new initiatives. Many of these initiatives are characterized by being small-scale, local and sustainable. This may sound insignificant, but combined, these initiatives most definitely influence the relationships between citizens and companies and between citizens and government.
Anoek Nuyens: 2018: the end of Europe, in No Culture, No Europe, Gielen (Ed.), 2015

This then, in turn, is the context and backdrop against which cultural networks at all levels in Europe today are operating. Although many of these are relatively recent in their formation, the origins of many important networks date back 20-30 years and more. Indeed PEN International was founded as early as 1921. One can say that the DNA of networks springs from the time of their foundation. This is not to say that networks have failed to evolve or that they are institutionally stuck in outdated values and methodologies; on the contrary, much evidence suggests that networks contribute to a hugely active trans-european community, that constantly experiments, in order to address contemporary issues and challenges in innovative ways.

Nevertheless, European cultural networks are certainly not immune from the uncertainties and challenges of evolving and operating in such a fast-changing wider context. Indeed, one could argue that, within a continuously moving external environment, the more sustainable and safer option is to be continuously on the move; and, conversely and counter-intuitively, maybe the higher-risk option today is to try to stay as we are?

Nevertheless, we do not need to dwell entirely on a negative prognosis for networks in a time of such change. In fact as organic, flexible, human structures,, they should in principle, be well-placed to recognise and respond to change, to experiment and innovate, and play a dynamic role, not as victims but pilots of transformation.

...The value of culture is determined by the interplay of socialization, qualification and subjectification and the value of cultural sectors is precisely that they engage in such activities in a reflective manner. Cultural professionals continuously inform the common

through these activities and are important in shaping communities. Of course, other social mediums such as politics, education, religion, media and, last but not least, the economy, also determine the shape of a society. Within cultural sectors in the broadest sense of the word this happens more reflectively, however, which means that processes of socialization, qualification and subjectification are often intentionally interfered with in order to purposely steer society in a certain direction – or rather attempt to do so. Because of the numbers and diversity of cultural players, all this pushing and pulling does not result in a very clear direction, let alone a harmonious way of living together. Rather, this varied group of designers produce a common of many divergent types of interaction models and societal forms. In our view, A Europe of diversity, of various cultures, can only find collective support in such a common. Then again, that may be the very essence of what we in our European culture are used to calling 'democracy'.
Pascal Gielen and Thijs Lijster: Culture: The substructure of a European common, in No Culture, No Europe: Pascal Gielen (Ed.) 2015

There is an additional element that we may add to this analysis: if, as seems likely in the face of the apparently insurmountable challenges of a changing world, the centralised structures and institutions of power cannot sustain their authority and legitimacy, it is far from certain that the solutions to the huge challenges that emerge from this will be found in new centralised structures and institutions – or at least not centralised structures with what we may deem to be acceptable values. If the 'centre' is weakened, we can perhaps visualise a transformation based on the resurgence of the 'periphery' – a new status quo perhaps where feeling, engagement and dynamism flow towards the centre from forces and ideas on the periphery, on the edge.

In stable times, centralised, hierarchical systems can cope with, and even control, influences from the periphery (or maybe, even without control, they can afford to ignore them); but we are not in stable times. This is not just a potential challenge for both Europe and national governments; it is also one that applies to both trans-European and national networks. For established cultural networks formulated in part in relationship to centralised (or centralising) institutional structures, this may imply an urgent need to reformulate their own structures and lines of communication. For example, this may involve centring more around the dynamic environment of localism. In reality, many cultural networks are already richly connected to locally driven practice, though perhaps the voice and influence of this 'periphery' is insufficiently strong. Arguably it is at what we might call the periphery, where theory and practice, disciplines, cultures and the daily tensions and contradictions of life interact so directly, that most dynamism, energy and innovation are at play. This is a fertile environment in which networks can, given their ethos and dynamics, play an increasingly important potential role. It may also represent a fundamental challenge to diverse cultural networks

The cultural networks have been set up and expanded in the late twentieth century. They have enabled cultures to deterritorialize and enter the cyberspace. They enabled cultural interactions that were hard to imagine in the midtwentieth century. However, it seems that their time is running out and that the transformation of very open and rather general cultural networks into more localized and more specialized ones is underway. They still provide for quite open communication but this can no longer be supported by a generalized widening of the cultural field and its all-encompassing character.
Cultural networks and cultural policies: a missing link: Nada Švob Đokić in Networks: The Evolving Aspects of Culture in the 21st Century Edited by Biserka Cvjetičanin Institute for International Relations Culturelink Network Zagreb, 2011

This is a field that Culture Action Europe has itself been experimenting in:

Kathréptis

Kathréptis ('mirror') is an international gathering held in November 2015 in Athens, to discuss culture, people and cities in a groundbreaking way. How can people engaged in culture and citizenship come together to enhance the life of those living in the city? And how can this happen in the historical moment we are living in?

Background
Kathréptis arises from meetings, visits, larger group conversations between CAE and many cultural operators and civil society organisers… to meet, discuss, exchange and challenge our own views and our interlocutors' ones… and act as a real "mirror" for what is happening in the city…

Aim
To … look for new, innovative and potentially disruptive answers to an ambitious, timeless and universal challenge:

- how engaged people in culture and citizenship can come together to enhance the life of those living in the city?
- how to create answers in the historical moment we are living in?
  … We believe culture (not limited to artistic expression) has the indisputable potential to help develop those capabilities that make human beings able to deal with this societal and historical transition.

Programme (based on three key questions)
- what is the cultural life of the city?
- in which ways is the cultural community of a city part of civil society?

So much for the wider European context. In the next chapter we will delve a little more deeply into the nature and characteristics of networks themselves.
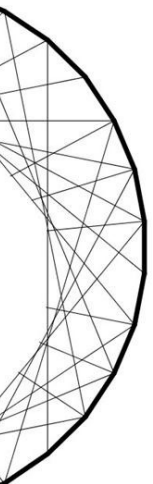
Chapter 4

Core characteristics of networks

Strength does not come from concentration, purity and unity, but from dissemination, heterogeneity and the careful plaiting of weak ties. This feeling that resistance, obduracy and sturdiness is more easily achieved through netting, lacing, weaving, twisting, of ties that are weak by themselves, and that each tie, no matter how strong, is itself woven out of still weaker threads...
Bruno Latour, On actor-network theory, A few clarifications, 1997

We have seen that while cultural networks vary enormously in their core purpose and constituency, they share a number of common threads. In this chapter we will open up this question a little further, with a brief exploration of networking and, in particular, how it can be interpreted as an activity in other contexts. This is not just a subject of academic interest, for two major reasons:

- there may be lessons to be learned by networks in our sector about practice (good and bad) in other sectors
- it may be that external perspectives about networking have changed over time, and there is a tendency in some quarters to see their role and importance differently, in which case this may make it all the harder for cultural networks that were perhaps built on earlier ethos and values networks to press their case.

Taking these points in reverse order, there is indeed evidence of changing perspectives about the value and nature of networking. To illustrate the point further, we will here look at two examples: one in the commercial sector and the other in the field of urban transformation.

Networking in Business

Managers who think they are adept at networking are often operating only at an operational or personal level. Effective leaders learn to employ networks for strategic purposes
Ibarra and Hunter: How Leaders Create and Use Networks, Harvard Business Review Jan 2007

It is perhaps no surprise to find that networking is employed strategically by business as a methodology for personal and corporate advantage. In this context, there is a strong and direct connection between networking and relationship-building. Relations then offer an 'inside track' to effective management and dealing, and this, in turn, provides opportunities to add value and deliver profit.

Ibarra and Hunter develop the point further:

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.

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.

Such a direct connection between networking and personal; (or corporate) gain may make painful reading for those of us in the non profit-distributing, collaborative field of culture where the quality of relationships, seems to have intrinsic value, in many cases as a prerequisite for artistic collaboration.

But maybe the problem is that we are using the term 'networking in two different ways? There is some evidence of this in the Oxford English Dictionary definition. Alan Chapman, editor of the Businessballs.com website (that describes itself as a 'free ethical learning and development resource for people and organizations'), develops the point as follows:

The word network is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary (2005 revised edition) as:

1   *An arrangement of intersecting horizontal and vertical lines...*

2   *A group or system of interconnected people or things...*
    Crucially a network - especially a business network - ceases to be a network if there are no connecting lines. Creating and maintaining good lines of communications, in all directions, is as important as developing contacts. We could say instead that there is really no point developing contacts unless good lines of communications are established and maintained.

    ...The word network first appeared in English around 1560. It meant, not surprisingly, 'a netlike structure', and actually originally referred to the process of making a net of some sort. The meaning of 'a complex collection or system' is first recorded in 1839. These terms derive originally from the net used by a fisherman. The bigger and stronger the net, the more fish would be caught. The same with business networks. (The fish represents your aims, for example sales achieved, or new clients.)
    Alan Chapman: businessballs.com business website, Leicester, England

This brings us to a realisation that this version of networking is essentially about 'catching your fish'. Stronger networks are those that catch the most fish. This is surely not what we do? On the other hand, if we substitute for the words 'pursuing business advantage' those of 'advocating special interests', then the distinctions in methodology (as opposed to values) begin to blur a little. There are many cultural networks in Europe today who share the (principal or subsidiary) aim of advocating the special interests of a particular sector or

discipline – including those of their members who may indeed expect this service in return for membership fees.

This is not a ground-breaking point – or even, for many of us, particularly controversial. The cultural sector forms part of civil society, and thus sits structurally outside the corridors of public or private decision-making. So advocacy of its needs and potential is an essential tool for advancement of its aims. Indeed, many areas of civil society long ago adopted aspects of the language and methodology of business (goal-driven policy, strategic actions, aggressive marketing, etc.) in pursuit of ethical, social and not-for-profit aims.

Here is just one high profile example:

> *A green and peaceful future is our quest. The heroes of our story are all of us who believe that better world is not only within reach, but being built today.*
> *The demons we must wrestle are the stories that are holding back a better world: that change is "impossible", "too expensive", "naive", "impractical." Stories that are rooted in apathy, cynicism, and despair and tell all of us we're too small, too few, too weak to change the world. We believe the story of the human journey is better than that. That it's rooted in courage, optimism, and creativity. That when people who believe in those things band together, when they stand up and take action together, their courage is compounded, it becomes contagious. Their voices are amplified, their stories ripple out to change the world.*
>
> *The old stories are failing us – the stories of infinite growth in a finite world. The stories that tell us we can consume our way to happiness.*
>
> *The world needs a new story – a story in which humanity overcomes seemingly impossible odds to not only survive, but to thrive. A story in which healthy, abundant oceans and forests heal a world powered by the natural forces that have powered life on Earth for billions of years. A world fed on a delicious bounty of life-giving food and pure water. A story in which the vast and powerful engine of human ingenuity is redirected toward building a more beautiful future for all.*
>
> *Be a part of that story. We dare you.*
> **Greenpeace website:** http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/about/our-story/

This is an ethical message that is also, frankly, a selling pitch. Advocacy is an important element of cultural networking in Europe today – emphatically not to the exclusion of its other important roles and identities, but important nonetheless. It is important that we recognise this reality. There are networks that have traditionally insisted on a separation between their roles as an open forum for peer debate and knowledge exchange and relationship building and that as a market place within which to pitch for professional opportunity. IETM's plenaries have long been an exemplar of this.

At the same time it would be difficult to argue that, over the years, participation in such networks has not served directly or indirectly as a vehicle for mutual professional advancement. This may well be a secondary or minor benefit of membership and participation, but it is still a significant draw for members. And on another level, networks have long worked, individually and collectively, to campaign for the special interests of culture, in Europe as on a national and local level.

Most recently, we have seen the launch at the 2016 European Forum in Brussels of the European Alliance for Culture and the Arts:

> *...urging policy makers to re-think the European approach and include culture and the arts in the long-term strategic goals of the European project. By doing so, the EU acknowledges their essential role in the development of European societies.*
> **European Alliance for Culture and the Arts** https://allianceforculture.com/, **2016**

The cause of the Alliance is quite different from that of Greenpeace or, say, UNICEF, but the advocacy and campaigning element of the work is not dissimilar. We need to be explicit about the dual focus between our ethical stance and values and content-driven programmes on the one hand and our advocacy and campaigning on the other. As a sector that often does both, this might allow us, without crossing over the line into non-ethical practice, to identify and focus more confidently on those aspects of our work that demand 'goal-driven policy and strategic actions – even, at times, 'aggressive marketing'? And this argument applies to advocacy and campaigning both on our own behalf and in collaboration across complementary interests, disciplines and sectors. The link below, for example, takes us to footage of a recent Greenpeace protest in London against BP sponsorship of the British Museum.
http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/greenpeace-activists-close-british-museum-in-protest-against-bp-sponsorship-a7037886.html, 2016

And there is one further uncomfortable, but perhaps necessary, detail to draw from comparisons with aspects of the broader civil society sector. Greenpeace, UNICEF and their like are large, ethical players in the sector engaged in extensive programmes of activism in their own right. At the same time though they also operate in a highly competitive field, with clear market-driven targets, to:

- raise awareness of their own particular campaigns to the front of public attention (over and above others)
- raise increasing proportions of funds from a limited public disposed to support progressive causes
- influence and effect change in public policies in their respective fields of concern (implicitly, over and above other fields)

Whatever tensions exist in addressing this competitive environment and balancing multiple priorities appear to have been addressed and resolved in these organisations perform publicly. That they behave in this way does not make them neo-liberal, commercial enterprises, but they share with this sector a range of competitive behaviours. Drawing on this point, we may ask ourselves how and where, within cultural networks today, we draw our own fulcrum of balance between our core collaborative values and a competitive external environment?
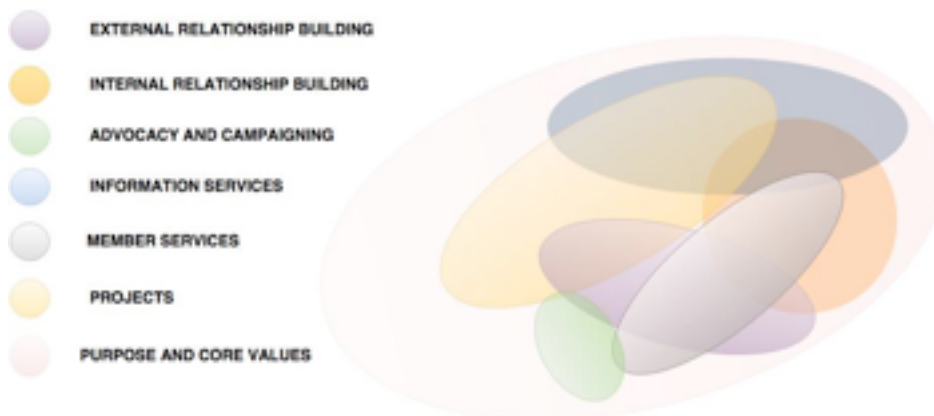
The table below posits a simple visual representation of the relationship between core purposes and values and a selection of the multiple roles and identities of cultural networks today. Implicitly, it also underlines the complex challenges that networks face in prioritising between these roles and identities.
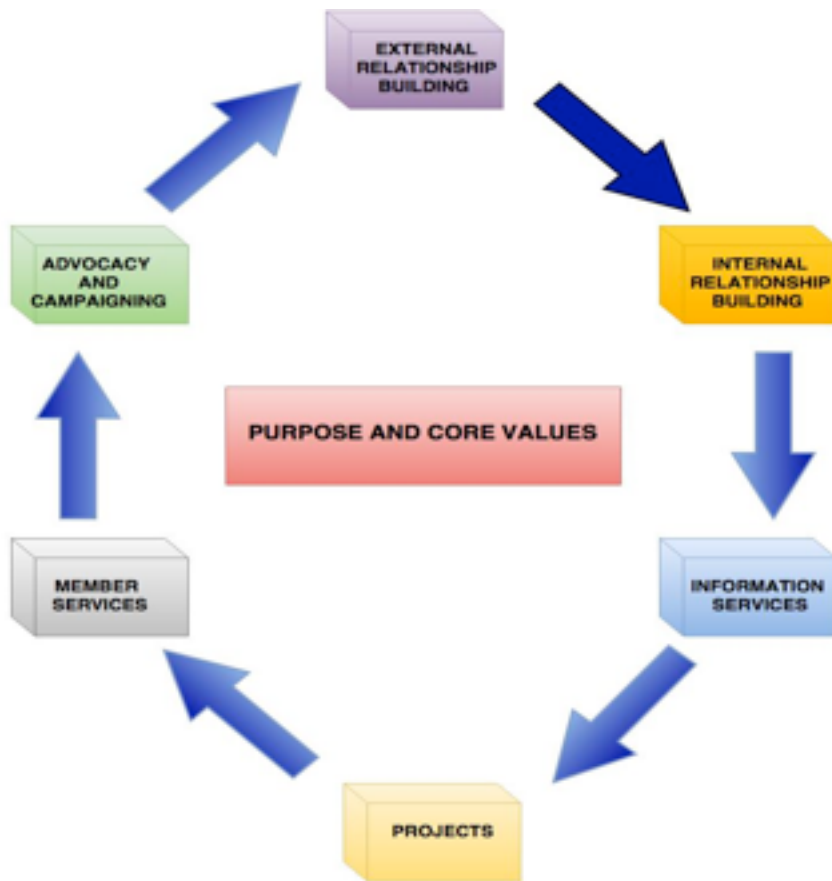
Cultural networks today: balancing roles and identities

Arguably most networks occupy a less than orderly working environment. But, then again as we have seen, it may be that a level of 'disorderly' relational interaction is one of their strengths, in a contemporary European context. Maybe the real interrelationship of roles and identities within networks is rather more interesting than this? For example:

EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

INTERNAL RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

ADVOCACY AND CAMPAIGNING

INFORMATION SERVICES

MEMBER SERVICES

PROJECTS

PURPOSE AND CORE VALUES

Cultural networks today: the reality of overlapping priorities?

Whatever the actual situation of each network may be (and they clearly occupy a complex spectrum of interrelating roles and identities), it would be unwise to ignore inherent tensions, that may at times engender differences:

- within networks (e.g. differing priorities amongst members, secretariats and boards)
- between networks (e.g. hindering them from finding effective ways to collaborate and campaign collectively)
- between networks and their stakeholders/users (e.g. fostering different - even conflicting - perspectives on a network's role and identity, value and contribution and even potentially, in extreme cases, its purpose and core values

At the risk of oversimplification we might suggest that cultural networks in Europe today feel pressurised to think and communicate externally rather more like the model in Table 1 but behave and communicate internally rather more like that in Table 2. We will return in the next chapter to some implications of this dichotomy.
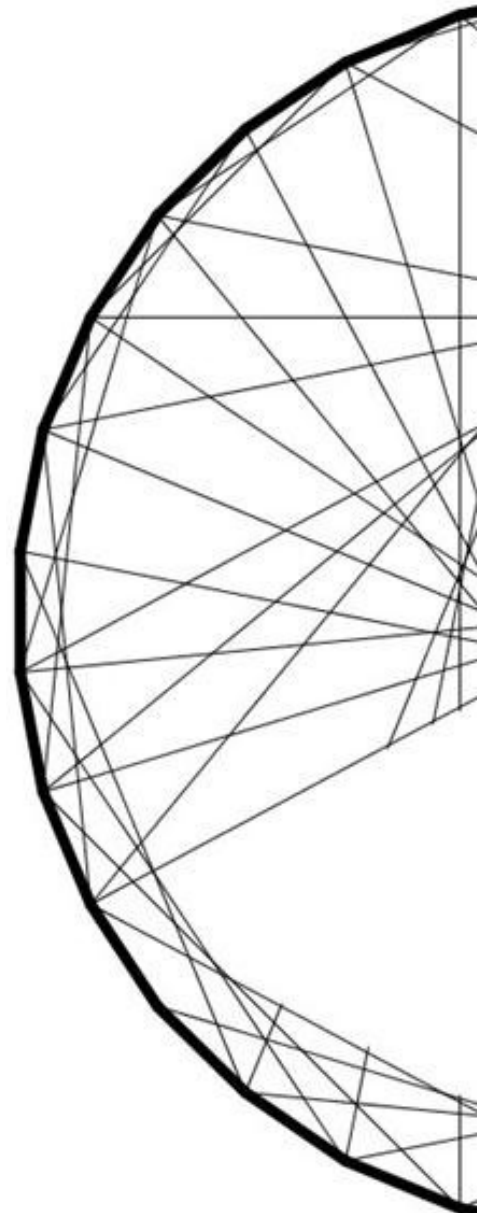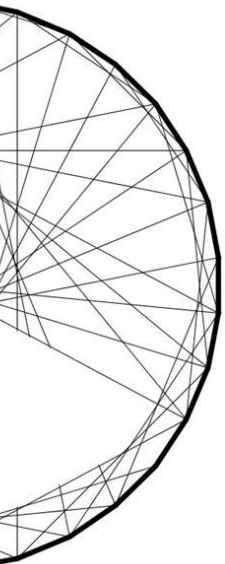
Chapter 5
How networks add value in Europe today

Networks and the EU

The history and evolution of the European Union are the result of a long and complex story of treaties, expansions and deals, featuring a cocktail of progress and setbacks. It is important, from a European networking perspective, to understand how institutional Europe works today; on the other hand though there is a widespread lack of knowledge of this historical perspective. At a time when in many parts of Europe, Europe itself has become such a contested political project, it seems important to revisit some first principles, and how the purposes and practices of European networks today match up to these first principles. In this way, while we cannot ignore the various contentious issues (for example those between member states), we may still be able to reconnect with some kind of common direction of travel.

Treaty of Rome 1957

In the preamble, the signatories of the Treaty of Rome declare that they are:

- *determined to lay the foundations of an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe, resolved to ensure the economic and social progress of their countries by common action to eliminate the barriers which divide Europe, affirming as the essential objective of their efforts the constant improvements of the living and working conditions of their peoples,*

-

- *recognising that the removal of existing obstacles calls for concerted action in order to guarantee steady expansion, balanced trade and fair competition;*

-

- *anxious to strengthen the unity of their economies and to ensure their harmonious development by reducing the differences existing between the various regions and the backwardness of the less-favoured regions;*

-

- *desiring to contribute, by means of a common commercial policy, to the progressive abolition of restrictions on international trade;*

-

- *intending to confirm the solidarity which binds Europe and the overseas countries and desiring to ensure the development of their prosperity, in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations;*

-

- *resolved by thus pooling their resources to preserve and strengthen peace and liberty, and calling upon the other peoples of Europe who share their ideal to join in their efforts...".*

Treaty of Rome, 1957
Extract: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3Axy0023, 2016

It is not widely acknowledged that the 'ever-closer union', that has become such a contentious phrase in today's highly-charged political atmosphere across Europe, was focused on 'the peoples of Europe', not (for example) on 'the nation-states of Europe'. This clarification potentially both legitimises and dynamises the role that networks play at a human level, as an open, relational space and progressive movement among European citizens. And, as European citizens, we arguably need more than ever today to deploy behaviours and strategies that bring people into contact with one another, both airing difference and seeking consensus.

Over and above this simple, though extremely important, assertion, there are other references to be found in the founding Treaty's preamble that merit further attention. We may for example ask ourselves what role networks can play in:

- *'laying the foundations of an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe'*
- *'affirming as the essential objective of their efforts the constant improvements of the living and working conditions of their peoples'*
- *'reducing the differences existing between the various regions and the backwardness of the less-favoured regions'*
- *'confirming the solidarity which binds Europe and the overseas countries'*
- *'pooling our resources to preserve and strengthen peace and liberty, and calling upon the other peoples of Europe who share our ideal to join in our efforts'*
  Treaty of Rome, op.cit.

There are obviously other ambitions built into the Treaty connected more to economic development, and to which European cultural networks could be said to contribute more peripherally. The key point however is that these five ambitions in the preamble to the Treaty of Rome each represent more or less central concerns of networks today: – closer union of citizens; improved living and working conditions; reduced disparity between advantaged and disadvantaged regions; solidarity beyond Europe; building cooperation to strengthen peace and liberty. This is a powerful unifying manifesto; and maybe it is time for cultural networks to re-appropriate its significance for progress among the 'the peoples of Europe'?

Over and above this, the relationship between the EU and European cultural networks is a long and somewhat complicated one. It can be said that, over time, whilst networks have in their own particular ways set about influencing and transforming the EU, increasingly in recent years, the EU has on its part seemed to be intent on transforming networks.

This is an assertion that demands some corroboration. In its Communication of 2002, the Commission underlined a commitment to installing a 'reinforced culture of communication and dialogue'

- *The principal aims of the approach can be summarised as follows:*
- *To encourage more involvement of interested parties through a more transparent consultation process, which will enhance the Commission's accountability.*
- *To provide general principles and standards for consultation that help the Commission to rationalise its consultation procedures, and to carry them out in a meaningful and systematic way.*

- *To build a framework for consultation that is coherent, yet flexible enough to take account of the specific requirements of all the diverse interests, and of the need to design appropriate consultation strategies for each policy proposal.*
- *To promote mutual learning and exchange of good practices within the Commission*

EC Communication, Towards a reinforced culture of consultation and dialogue - General principles and minimum standards for consultation of interested parties by the Commission European Commission (2002)

This document also quoted from an earlier White Paper on European Governance:

"Civil society plays an important role in giving voice to the concerns of the citizens and delivering services that meet people's needs. [...] Civil society increasingly sees Europe as offering a good platform to change policy orientations and society. [...] It is a real chance to get citizens more actively involved in achieving the Union's objectives and to offer them a structured channel for feedback, criticism and protest."
EC Communication op.cit, 2002

By 2007, in its Communication, On a European agenda for culture in a globalizing world, the Commission had moved towards a structured approach to dialogue with the sector, via unspecified systems of representation:

4. NEW PARTNERSHIPS AND WORKING METHODS
In order to deliver its agenda for culture, Europe must rely on a solid partnership between all actors, which has four essential dimensions.

4.1. Further developing dialogue with the cultural sector
The Commission is committed to pursuing a structured dialogue with the sector, which would provide a framework for the regular exchange of views and best practices, input into the policy-making process, follow-up and evaluation.
For reasons of legitimacy, the cultural sector should continue organising itself as far as possible in order to permit the identification of representative interlocutors. The Commission welcomes the progressive structuring already taking place with the emergence of some representative organisations as well as some cooperation structures such as a civil society platform on intercultural dialogue.
EU Communication, On a European agenda for culture in a globalizing world, 2007

In making this move however, the Commission was already expressing concerns about a sector that was insufficiently structured and assertive, and thus was preparing to assert its own role in addressing these 'weaknesses':

The Commission recognises, however, the special characteristics of the sector, notably its heterogeneity (professional organisations, cultural institutions with different degrees of independence, non-governmental organisations, European and non EU networks, foundations, etc), as well as the lack of communication in the past between the cultural industries and other cultural actors, and the challenges which this poses with regard to greater structuring of the sector. The effect of this has been to diminish the voice of the cultural sector at the European level.

With a view to developing a better dialogue between the Commission and these different actors, the Commission proposes the following steps:

- *to undertake a mapping of the sector in order to identify and better understand the full range of its stakeholders;*
- *to set up a "Cultural Forum" for consulting stakeholders and to foster the emergence of a self-structuring platform or a set of stakeholder platforms;*
- *to encourage the expression of representative views by individual artists and intellectuals at the European level ("cultural ambassadors"), including exploring the opportunity and feasibility of an on-line virtual European forum allowing for the exchange of views, artistic expression and reaching out to citizens;*
- *to encourage social partners in the cultural sectors to further develop their autonomous social dialogue under Articles 138 and 139 of the Treaty. On this basis, sectoral social dialogue committees already exist for the live performing arts and the audiovisual sector;*
- *to bring a cultural dimension to European public debates by using the representations of the Commission. Putting culture at the centre stage will enhance dialogue and reach out to new audiences.*

EU Communication op.cit., 2007

It is important to recognise the evolution that was taking place at this moment in that none of these proposals at that time were the work of the networks or civil society at large, but exclusively those of the Commission on their behalf.

Creative Europe

By 2011, as proposals for the period 2013-2020 began to emerge, a further new attitude toward networks could be observed: that of working strategically towards the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy (specific network relevance in bold):

The new objectives of the culture strand will be aligned with the aims of Europe 2020 and the European Agenda for Culture and there will be more precision about the programme's priorities to supplement the specific objectives, something which does not exist at present.

Specific objective 1: Support the capacity of the European cultural and creative sectors to operate transnationally:
- *Providing cultural operators with skills and knowhow to facilitate adjustment to the digital shift*
- *(audience-building strategies, new business models) through mutual peer learning;*
- *Support artists/cultural professionals to internationalise their careers;*
- *Strengthened European and international networks of cultural professionals to facilitate access to new opportunities and markets.*

Specific objective 2: Promote the transnational circulation of cultural and creative works and operators and reach new audiences in Europe and beyond:
- *Support international touring, events and exhibitions;*
- *Support literary translation, including promotion packages;*
- *Support for audience-building as a means of raising curiosity of the public and particularly young people and building a long-term audience for European cultural works.*

Specific objective 3: Foster policy development, innovation, audience building and new business models through transnational policy cooperation
- *Support for studies, evaluations, policy analysis and statistical surveys;*
- *Support transnational exchange of good practices and knowhow, peer-learning activities and networking related to policy development, including cultural and media literacy;*
- *Support the testing of new and cross-sectoral approaches to funding, distributing, and monetising creation;*
- *Support conferences, seminars and policy dialogue;*
- *Support a network of Creative Europe Desks.*
   European Commission Creative Europe proposals 2013-2020, 2011

We can identify here three references to networks and networking, and it may be worth dwelling on these for a moment:

- *Strengthened European and international networks of cultural professionals to facilitate access to new opportunities and markets.*
- *Support transnational exchange of good practices and knowhow, peer-learning activities and networking related to policy development, including cultural and media literacy;*
- *Support a network of Creative Europe Desks*

European Commission op.cit, 2011

This networking framework, connected as it is to accessing 'new markets and opportunities', supporting 'policy development' and facilitating funding applications, appears far removed from the 2002 approach, let alone the picture of the importance of networks painted in successive reports. Networks appear, at a European level at least, to have been progressively subsumed into arms of an institutional framework:

1. as occasional interlocutors
2. as structured interlocutors
3. as a strategic support arm towards institutional objectives

This perceived shift in roles begs two questions:

1. is this the most effective way for Europe to gain the maximum benefit from the particular contribution that networks can make to the wider debate, in support of European progress?
2. if this is the case, are networks structurally and constitutionally set up to be able to play this role effectively?

To be more specific, we may consider here the framework of direct support for European cultural networks:

Creative Europe - European networks

What is it for?

To support the activities of networks aiming to reinforce the cultural and creative sectors' capacity to operate transnationally and internationally, and to adapt to change. Initiatives that strengthen the competitiveness of the sectors are supported as well.

This scheme is intended to support a limited number of networks with a broad coverage across a balanced range of sectors. All applications will be evaluated on the basis of eligibility, exclusion, selection and award criteria.

What does it support?

Activities of networks that aim to:
- *foster the development of skills, competences and know-how, including adaptation to digital technologies*
- *test innovative approaches to audience development*
- *test new business and management models*
- *enable international cooperation and career development in the EU and beyond*
- *facilitate access to professional opportunities*

The award criteria concern:

- *Relevance of the project to the objectives and priorities of the scheme*
- *Quality of the content and activities*
- *Communication and dissemination of the activities and results of the project*
- *Quality of the European network*

EACEA Creative Europe Guidance
https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe/actions/culture/european-networks_en, 2015

The assessment criteria for the fund also make interesting reading:

1. Relevance (30)
This criterion evaluates how the activities of the network will contribute to reinforcing the sector's professionalization and capacity to operate trans-nationally, to promoting transnational circulation of cultural and creative works and mobility of artists and to improving access to cultural and creative works

- *How relevant is the project to one or more of the following priorities considered as instrumental to the achievement of the objectives of the Sub-programme:*
  Providing cultural players with skills, competences and know-how, including encouraging adaptation to digital technologies, testing new approaches to audience development and testing new business and management models;
  Enabling cultural players to cooperate internationally and to internationalise their careers and activities in the EU and beyond;
  Strengthening European cultural and creative organisations and international networking in order to facilitate access to professional opportunities;

Supporting audience development as a means of stimulating interest in European cultural works.

- *Are there other priorities identified in the framework of the project and how appropriate are they to achieve the specific objectives of the Sub-programme?*
- *Is the network seeking to work inter-disciplinarily and/or beyond the cultural sector?*
- *To what extent is the project aiming at producing results which will go beyond the sole interest of the network members and direct participants and have potential long-term impacts on the cultural and creative sector?*
- *How complementary is the project to cultural actions implemented at national, regional or local level?*

2. Quality of the content and activities (25)
This criterion evaluates how the project will be implemented in practice (quality of the activities and the deliverables, the experience of the staff in charge of the project and working arrangements).

- *Are there concrete and well defined project outputs and how appropriate are they towards the overall objectives of the project?*
- *Is an assessment of the results foreseen and how clear and appropriate is it?*
- *How concrete and well defined are the actions to be implemented in the framework of the project? How clearly related are the objectives and activities of the projects to the identified needs of the target groups?*
- *How relevant is the experience of the team taking part in the project in terms of, for example organisational skills, experience and track record in the cultural and creative sectors, communication and language skills? For this purpose, the CVs of the persons responsible for the submitted project within the applicant organisation will be assessed.*
- *How appropriate is the allocation of the budget and human resources to the actions undertaken in the framework of the work programme?*
- *How clear and realistic is the time-table for the work programme?*

3. Communication and dissemination (15)
This criterion evaluates the network's approach to communicating its activities and results and to sharing knowledge and experiences with the sector and across borders. The aim is to maximise the impact of the project results by making them available as widely as possible at local, regional, national and European levels, so that they have a reach beyond those directly involved in the project and an impact beyond the project's lifetime.

- *How clear and appropriate is the strategy to communicate on the activities of the network, including the objectives, target groups, tools, channels, media, impact and timeline?*
- *How will EU support be made visible throughout the duration of the project and beyond?*
- *How and to whom will the experience and knowledge acquired through the project be disseminated, including beyond the duration of the project?*

4. Quality of the European network (30)

This criterion evaluates how broad the coverage of the activities of the network is and the way in which it will ensure that these activities can be supported and their outcome disseminated beyond the members of the network.

- *How broad is the coverage of the network both in terms of geography and within the sector in which it operates?*
- *To what extent does the network bring together members from the countries which joined the European Union in 2004 and onwards?*
- *How does the functioning of the relationship between members ensure their direct and active involvement?*
- *How open is the network to non-members?*

EACEA evaluation criteria http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/culture/documents/euro-networks/guidelines-call-for-proposals-eac-s18-2013_en.pdf, 2013

What these guidelines reveal is a significant degree of alignment between the EU's strategic goals, and its rationale for supporting European cultural networks. In some ways this natural and uncontroversial, except that the EACEA's European Networks criteria raise a central question:

> *how compatible are the core attributes that networks bring to the evolution of Europe with the level of stratification and structuring of networks (purposes and processes) implied in these criteria? Or, in other words, is the level and type of efficiency implied in the programme objectives and assessment criteria compatible with the levels and types of effectiveness that networks, at their best, contribute to Europe?*

But, further than this, there is little evidence to suggest that the 'alignment' comes from any mutual intention to align. In fact the real alignment is that between the guidelines and overall EU strategy – notably its 2020 strategy. Cultural networks are invited to show how closely their purpose and practices align with this; and it is clear, looking at the various purposes and practices of European networks that these do include categories that support this alignment. But, inevitably given the wide diversity of networks, this is variable. That fact alone tends to lead to a division between 'those that do' and 'those that don't' based, not on the overall qualities and contributions of networks but on their relevance and ability to support the strategic objectives of the EU - in other words their efficiency in supporting these strategies.

For many networks, this may not present an insurmountable problem; but the key point is that the various purposes of networks - and their contribution to Europe - is much more diverse than narrow focus of the fund. There is clearly an argument to reconsider them on their own European terms, as contributors to a collective progressive European movement and, thus, to monitor and evaluate their contribution, individually and collectively, through the lens of both direction and effectiveness. However, under current circumstances, a broader interpretation of the strategic effectiveness of networks (i.e. their specific contributions to a bigger European picture) seems to be becoming lost - certainly in relation to their access to EU cultural network funding.

Cultural networks, it can be argued, are not really being afforded the opportunity through the European funding process to play to their real strengths, and the danger is that by

attempting to re-present themselves to fit a tight European agenda that the picture of their purpose and potential that emerges is distorted, formulaic and, ultimately, rather sterile.

This is important because, over time, the relationship hardens into a more concrete one - and the following extract from an April 2016 letter of invitation from EACEA to European networks suggests this may already be happening:

Dear partners/networks

… we would like to invite you to participate in a seminar dedicated to Creative Europe funded networks …

The objective of the seminar is to continue deepening collaboration and exchanges between networks, with the Agency and the Commission. 2 years after the launch of the Programme and more or less midway in the implementation of the activities within the current 3-year FPA we think this a good moment for taking stock.

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)*

We would like this seminar to be useful for all of us (networks, Commission, Agency) and are open to any suggestion on the format, speakers or concrete topics of the day. We will post a discussion on Yammer to launch the debate.
EACEA Letter to Cultural Networks funded under Creative Europe, April 2016

The agenda for this meeting is broadly valid in relation to the specific objectives of the 2020 Strategy and Creative Europe programme. What it is not however is an open, two-way trans-disciplinary event, a sharing of diverse experiences and ideas, an open space - indeed any of those things at which networks at their best excel and where especially at this difficult moment in Europe's evolution their major potential contribution to European progress may be found.

This is not, of course, to say that, where networks undertake strategic activities connected to specific areas of public policy and investment, that specific outputs or outcomes should not be evaluated within project plans and assessment. On the contrary, networks exist in the real world where public investment must be accounted for. Indeed, this is both normal and justifiable - as it should be in a private investment context. But, as we have seen, over and above this there is a bigger picture to be painted.

Wider significance of networks in Europe today

Evidence suggests that many European cultural networks have understood, and are evidently seeking to rise to, the dual challenge of both exerting important social influence and sustaining their own core values and purposes; significantly also, many are doing so in ways that make dynamic interconnections. Here are just three examples:

ACCR

The central aim of the European Network of Cultural Encounter Centres is to encourage exchanges and develop cultural cooperation on a European and international scale. Therefore, the ACCR :

offers strategic support to members in researching partners and implementing European projects (cooperation projects, festivals, ambassadors etc.);

organises information sessions on the framework programmes of the European Union (Culture, Education, Youth, Structural Funds);

monitors calls for projects published by the EU or other European funding bodies (e.g. European Cultural Foundation and other European networks);

is a partner in projects submitted by its members, assuring the dissemination of activities and the results of European projects (e.g. Aqueduct).

Since 2010 the ACCR and its members have changed, conscious of evolving European, national and local cultural policies, economic developments and strategic positions in Europe and the rest of the world. The ACCR is engaged in a process of redefining the values which will revitalise its communications (incorporating advances in participation) in the coordination of services and resource-sharing amongst members. In addition, convinced that the label 'Centre culturel de rencontre' is a label with a future at a moment of territorial and cultural changes, the ACCR intends to make it an essential element in national and European policy-making.

ACCR website http://www.accr-europe.org/, 2016

Reading through the documentation of European cultural networks today, we find numerous examples of how they variously connect directly not only with a specific sector of interest or competency but also with many major questions facing the continent. So when we consider challenges such as 'contemporary significance', 'relevance' and 'broader connection', there is an obvious case to be made that repositions many networks not at the periphery of contemporary European debate but at its centre.

However what is also clear is that they are clearly not widely enough recognised in this role. Networks are perhaps constrained – even stifled – in this by what is often a sense of 'one-way dialogue' that characterises so much political and social discourse in Europe today (often 'top-down' but also 'bottom-up'). The more crucial question is perhaps then not whether they are sufficiently engaged in the 'appropriate' debates but whether they are sufficiently engaging in these in the 'appropriate' locations – and with the 'appropriate' people. We will return to this point in the next chapter.

Chapter 6
Contemporary opportunities and challenges for cultural networks

In this chapter, we will look at some wider contemporary questions pertaining to networking in Europe, along with some of the opportunities and challenges that these may imply. These are

Trans-disciplinary networking

The trans-disciplinary model of INTA provides an illuminating introduction to this section of our document:

INTA

A global membership association of urban policy-makers and practitioners to share knowledge, experience and tools for integrated territorial development. …INTA's fundamental mission is to foster the sharing of knowledge and experience in the management of urban development and of territories undergoing deep and rapid change, by providing towns, cities, local authorities and their economic partners with the political and management tools they need to contribute to controlled and equitable urban development.

All the assignments taken on by INTA and all the activities it undertakes using a variety of tools are based on these values and principles. The fields in which INTA operates cover urban development on all scales, but a common thread runs through all its activities: integration of the sectional policies implemented by public and private sector players in areas such as urban planning, housing, education & training, economic development, employment, social inclusion, security, safety, accessibility, travel & mobility, health, culture, historical heritage, tourism, public spaces, urban shapes, images, urban identity, territorial marketing, etc. When integrated, such policies make it possible to redesign territories, their urban structures, social life and professional bodies and practices. They are the drivers of changes to the modi operandi in different territories, such as new towns, neighbourhoods, municipalities, metropolitan areas and regions. Integrated policies are opportunities to draw up innovative approaches and to induce new forms of dialogue & negotiation, as well as new relationships between social players, resulting in original systems of governance.

….What INTA is not
INTA is not a network of cities: it is an association of urban decision makers and practitioners. INTA is not an association of planners: it is a place where urbanists, planners, architects, developers, engineers, investors, etc. engage with public authorities and companies, with researchers and community, economic, environmental, social and spatial stakeholders to jointly create strategies for sustainable urbanity, connecting all issues critical to the integrated development of urban territories.

INTA website http://www.inta-aivn.org/en/, 2016

Now it is clear that, whatever INTA's website, it is indeed a network: one that is global, with multiple and diverse levels of local reach. True, it is not specifically a cultural network, although, as the above text indicates, its connections with culture are clear. One point that is being made however is revelatory. Why does INTA claim not to be a network of cities when it both is a network and has a clear focus on cities? We could assert forcibly that networking in the public sphere today demands openness, trans-disciplinarity and a relational, open space for both collaboration and the airing of difference. The focus here is not on the engagement of a network as the 'centre of gravity' of a process, but on an open deployment of diverse interests and disciplines – all centring on a shared, central subject. In the case of INTA, the network's role is to enable and facilitate that 'open deployment', not to populate, appropriate or control it.

The point here relates to more general questions today of what we might term 'open-ness' and 'closed-ness' (neither word exactly exists). This question bears down heavily on networks today, especially those whose vision tends to engage them in activities and connections beyond their own particular members' sectoral interests. While many networks share a quality of openness of philosophy and working process, it can be more of a challenge to devise and construct successful working methods that are truly based on openness of participation and engagement. Self-evidently we need to talk to ourselves (serving the interests of our own members and specialist sectors); but how do we engage dynamically and openly with others (serving the interests of a vision that is broader than our own direct interests)? This is not so much a question of values as of methodologies.

One contributory factor could clearly be linked to relative levels of self-confidence or defensiveness with regard to our own long-term security and sustainability. This is, of course, a phenomenon that is experienced far more widely in Europe today than just in the cultural sector. At a time of stress and uncertainty, we may have a collective tendency to 'circle the wagons': to deploy a strategy of solidarity and self-defence. And of course, mutual solidarity is an admirable quality that may, at times seem our only viable strategy of resistance; on the other hand, there is a countervailing argument, especially in today's uncertain context, that we should deploy this strategy sparingly, maybe as a last-ditch act to resist a particular threat, rather than as a permanent behavioural response. For while our mutual relations 'inside the wagons' may be entirely open and progressive, this is still essentially a 'closed' posture. We will not really open up unless or until we have the confidence and opportunity to 'open the circle' to ideas and influences, even (or maybe especially) those that are new and perhaps more challenging. This is not just another strategy, but part of a long term shift towards new modes of relational behaviour. In this regard networks are no different from any other structure today: attempting to come to terms with seismic external political, economic and cultural shifts may require a range of equally seismic internal ones. Indeed nation states in Europe today offer many prime examples of how the 'defensive circle' phenomenon is gathering pace, and the results of this are almost universally worrying.

Encouragingly, several of the examples cited in this paper suggest that such an open approach already has currency among many European networks today. Culture Action Europe is currently engaged in a long-term collaboration with UCLG, a global trans-disciplinary local government network, in particular via a collaborative project: Pilot Cities. This project, linked to Agenda 21 for Culture and sustainable urban development, seeks to engage the cultural sector / civil society as major partners with local government and the broadest range of local participants, at the heart of questions of the evolution of cities today.

This is an example of a fluid and experimental network that is operating on several separate and interlocking levels:

- UCLG and CAE are two diverse and independent networks, working closely together in an area of shared interest
- the programme is engendering local trans-disciplinary networks (short or long term) in each of the 'pilot cities'
- the cities themselves are forming a peer-learning network between themselves to share and benchmark experiences and ideas

The significance for cultural networks of trans-disciplinary collaboration, over and above the broad purpose of the Pilot Cities programme, is that those involved are engaging with it as enablers of an open, collaborative process. The programme has its own central purpose and method, and the partner cities, along with all those involved, are invited to buy into these. They are, in other words, not the 'centre of gravity' of a process, but collaborating actors, within it. This also connects us back to the example of INTA.

It is too early to evaluate the likely successes and failures of such experimental approaches, or the lessons to be gained from these experiences – whether in terms of external aims and outcomes or any long term interconnection with the longer term direction of each partner. No matter for now. There is evidence here that something material may be shifting in the nature and processes of networking: in this case, something that connects in a direct and dynamic way to crucial wider questions about Europe today – but, even more crucially, to the central place of culture within it.

Digital networking

This is a broad subject that merits further discussion, both in its own right and in relation to the implications on human networking of the digital age. The D'Art 48 Report offers further considerations on it. For our part, we could perhaps start with initial set of basic questions:

- how are people networking differently today?
- what might this imply for established human networks and methodologies?
- how is digital networking being applied today in other related fields (e.g. political activism, civil society)
- what are the opportunities for cultural networks to build on these applications?
- what are the challenges?

It is obvious that major transformations have taken place in recent years in digital networking and how people engage with it. Bennett and Segerburg (2013) have analysed this phenomenon through two forms of public engagement on organization websites (information and action), each pursued in both passive and interactive modes, as follows:

Information
- *information moving in largely one-way flows from the organization to its public, such as newsletters or organisational calendars*
- *interactive information sharing among the public, such as open calendars or photo pages*

Action
- *structured actions managed by the organization, such as public recruitment or fund-raising*
- *co-produced actions between the organization and public, via creative contributions, such as participatory actions or satellite events*

W.L. Bennett and A. Segerberg, The Logic of Connective Action, 2013

This field of digital networking falls broadly into the category of what Bennett and Segerburg term 'connective action' (based on approaches that emerge from personalisation and individuation), although they also pay attention to 'collective' action (where digital tools are utilised as a function of an institutional framework).

They provide a useful typology for this, as follows:

Connective Action   Crowd-Enabled Networks
- *Little or no formal organisational coordination of action*
- *Large-scale personal access to multi-layered social technologies*
- *Communication content centers on emergent inclusive personal action frames*
- *Personal expression shared over social networks*
- *Crowd networks may shun involvement of existing formal organizations*

Connective Action   Organizationally-Enabled Networks
- *Loose organizational co-ordination of action*
- *Organizations provide social technology outlays – both custom and commercial*

- *Communication content centers on organizationally generated inclusive personal action frames*
- *Some organizational moderation of personal expression through social networks*
- *Organizations in the background in loosely linked networks*

Collective Action   **Organizationally Brokered Networks**
- *Strong organizational coordination of action*
- *Social technologies used by organizations to manage participation and coordinate goals*
- *Communication content centers on collective action frames*
- *Organizational management of social networks – more emphasis on interpersonal networks to build relationships for collective action*
- *Organizations in the foreground as coalitions with differences bidged through high-resource organization brokerage*

Bennett and Segerburg op.cit.

Social networking can be seen as the most clearly generational source of influence on networking today. There are vast numbers of people whose daily personal and professional lives today intertwine directly and (almost) perpetually with an ever-evolving array of social media platforms and tools, along with the vast field of contacts and exchanges that these offer them. Meanwhile there are many others, especially those not born into this generation, who may engage variably or not all with social networking of this kind. For more and more people in general, social media's influence is hard to ignore; however, for a large section of the population to fully embrace presents a significant challenge.

Digital networking in political and business contexts

We have already seen how new forms of action for protest and democratic renewal across Europe and beyond are today being driven and, indeed, re-imagined as digital-led processes. When asked in 2015 what the key tool was in support of the evolution of Podemos in Spain, a 'leading' Valencian member answered without hesitation that it could not function without continuous and permanent digital interconnectivity (in this case, through 'Messenger').

Equally, however digital networking plays a central role in a corporate working environment, as businesses increasingly collect and transforming information via data analytics into business intelligence to be used for competitive advantage. And meanwhile the social networking giants continually refine and extend the commerciality of their services in order to maximise both their reach and profitability, surrounded by a plethora of tools.

The table below crudely represents this, via one of many directories of social media tools available on the internet (April 2016):

61 Social Media Tools for Small Business

Dashboards / Management Tools	Social Media Monitoring Tools
SocialBro	Nutshell
TweetDeck	MailSocial
Tweetcaster	Mention
Twitter Tools	Keyhole
Followerwonk	**Social Media Content Tools**
Social Rank	News.me
ManageFlitter	Feedly
Must Be Present	Pocket
Tweriod	Paper.li
Tweepi	Swayy
Tweet4Me	Pie
Commun.it	Bottlenose
Twtrland	**WordPress Plugins**
NeedTagger	Digg Digg
TweeterSpy	Flare
Twitter Feed	Ivy
TweetReach	Pin It Button for Images
Twazzup	**Miscellaneous Tools**
Facebook Tools	Fivehundredplus
LikeAlyzer	Rapportive
Fanpage Karma	Bitly
Wolfram Alpha Facebook Report	Rev
Facebook Custom Audiences	Pinterest Board Cover Creator
Social Media Analytics Tools	Jelly
Rival IQ	Google+ Page Audit
Buzz Sumo	Powtoon
Klout	Cardmunch
SharedCount	IFTTT
Google URL Builder	Zapier
Visual Content Tools	

Infogr.am	
Piktochart	
Visually	
Canva	
Compfight	
BeFunky	
LICEcap	

If we now delve a little more deeply into just one of these tools, Twazzup, we can begin to see how this field is opening up as a business tool.

Twazzup

Twazzup offers real-time monitoring and analytics for Twitter on any name, keyword, or hashtag you choose. The Twazzup results page delivers interesting insights like who the top influencers are for your keyword and which top links are associated with your search.

Put this tool to use: You can track your first and last name here to see what's being mentioned about you outside of direct @-replies. You might be particularly interested to peek at the links and influencers associated with your name.
Twazzup website https://blog.bufferapp.com/best-social-media-tools-for-small-business#dashboards *2016*

This kind of tool is increasingly at the heart of business communication and competitive advantage. Its adoption clearly carries a risk for the non-profit sector of crossing over a line between human-to-human values and rampant business data-gathering and analytics. The question in all of this for cultural networks, most of whom have some level of interaction with digital social media (typically through website links to Facebook and Twitter), is to what extent to explore and engage with such data-analytical aspects of social media. It is not that there is any lack of technical expertise in this area - though maybe not enough of this is currently attached to many established networks?

We are in dangerous waters here, as questions of values can be caught up in a discussion about methodologies. We may risk sidling up to rampant neoliberalism, or worse… It is nevertheless worth spending a moment considering social media networking in relation to the practice of cultural networks today. We may then either compare or contrast – or, more likely, both - its relevance to these two contrasting worlds.

Over and above the question of the distinction between 'for-profit' and 'not-for-profit' (legal structure, operating environment, competitiveness, core values etc), there are also clear challenges in re-interpreting what is a business analysis in the context of cultural networks today – not least in terms of language. Below is a crude 'first attempt' at such a translation, the purpose of which is to explore the additional contribution that incompatible language may make to the distinction.

Forbes' Business Language	Substitute' Network Language?
Brand	(Particular) network
Customers	Members / Users
Consumers	Potential / Occasional Users
Convert	Win over / be won over
Sales	Event bookings, Service take up
Brand loyalty	Longer term support, Membership
Major influencers	Policy makers, Funders, Partners
A Brand signal	Visible evidence of identity / value

Of course, this is not an entirely serious or satisfactory comparison – for example, the 'translation' between the two contexts is far more complex than simply one of shifting vocabulary. And furthermore there is no reason, given their diverse roles and contexts, why all networks should themselves employ the same vocabulary.

Nevertheless, it is quite revealing experimentally to apply this 'substitute' language artificially to a single passage.

This is an extract from the Forbes Magazine website:
[substitute language in orange, original version in green]

ORIGINAL VERSION	REVISED VERSION
The top 10 benefits of Social Media Marketing (Forbes website, 2014)	**The top 10 benefits of Social Media Marketing (Forbes website, 2014)**
To some entrepreneurs, social media marketing is the "next big thing," a temporary yet powerful fad that must be taken advantage of while it's still in the spotlight. To others, it's a buzzword with no practical advantages and a steep, complicated learning curve.	To some entrepreneurs, social media marketing is the "next big thing," a temporary yet powerful fad that must be taken advantage of while it's still in the spotlight. To others, it's a buzzword with no practical advantages and a steep, complicated learning curve.
Because it appeared quickly, social media has developed a reputation by some for being a passing marketing interest, and therefore, an unprofitable one. The statistics, however, illustrate a different picture. According to 'Hubspot', 92% of marketers in 2014 claimed that social media marketing was important for their business, with 80% indicating their efforts increased traffic to their websites. And according to 'Social Media Examiner', 97% of marketers are currently participating in social media—but 85% of participants aren't sure what social media tools are the best to use.	Because it appeared quickly, social media has developed a reputation by some for being a passing marketing interest, and therefore, an unprofitable one. The statistics, however, illustrate a different picture. According to 'Hubspot', 92% of marketers in 2014 claimed that social media marketing was important for their business, with 80% indicating their efforts increased traffic to their websites. And according to 'Social Media Examiner', 97% of marketers are currently participating in social media—but 85% of participants aren't sure what social media tools are the best to use.
This demonstrates a huge potential for social media marketing to increase sales, but a lack of understanding on how to achieve those results. Here's a look at just some of the ways social media marketing can improve your business:	This demonstrates a huge potential for social media marketing to increase Event bookings and take up of services (sales), but a lack of understanding on how to achieve those results. Here's a look at just some of the ways social media marketing can improve your business:

ORIGINAL VERSION	REVISED VERSION
Increased Brand Recognition.. social media networks are just new channels for your brand's voice and content. This ... makes you easier and more accessible for new customers, and makes you more familiar and recognizable for existing customers.... [A] Twitter user could hear about your company for the first time only after stumbling upon it in a newsfeed. Or, an otherwise apathetic customer might become better acquainted with your brand after seeing your presence on multiple networks.	**Increased Network (Brand) Recognition**.. social media networks are just new channels for your particular network(brand)'s voice and content. This... makes you easier and more accessible for new members or users (customers), and makes you more familiar and recognisable for existing members or users (customers).... [A] Twitter user could hear about your company for the first time only after stumbling upon it in a newsfeed. Or, an otherwise apathetic members or user (customer) might become better acquainted with your brand after seeing your presence on multiple networks.
Improved brand loyalty ...brands who engage on social media channels enjoy higher loyalty from their customers. ... A strategic and open social media plan could prove influential in morphing consumers into being brand loyal	**Improved network (brand) loyalty** ... networks (brands) who engage on social media channels enjoy higher loyalty from their members and users (customers). ... A strategic and open social media plan could prove influential in morphing potential or occasional users
More Opportunities to Convert. Every post you make on a social media platform is an opportunity for customers to convert. When you build a following, you'll simultaneously have access to new customers, recent customers, and old customers, and you'll be able to interact with all of them. ...	**More Opportunities to Win over (Convert).** Every post you make on a social media platform is an opportunity for members and users (customers) to convert. When you build a following, you'll simultaneously have access to new (customers), recent (customers), and old members and users (customers), and you'll be able to interact with all of them
Higher conversion rates ... brands become more humanized by interacting in social media channels. Social media is a place where brands can act like people do, and this is important because people like doing business with other people; not with companies.	**Higher win over (conversion) rates** ... networks (brands) become more humanized by interacting in social media channels. Social media is a place where brands can act like people do, and this is important because people like doing business with other people; not with companies.

ORIGINAL VERSION	REVISED VERSION
Higher Brand Authority. Interacting with your customers regularly is a show of good faith for other customers. When people … post your brand name, new audience members will want to follow you for updates. The more people that are talking about you on social media, the more valuable and authoritative your brand will seem to new users. … if you can interact with major influencers on Twitter or other social networks, your visible authority and reach will skyrocket.	**Higher Brand Authority.** Interacting with your members and users (customers) regularly is a show of good faith for other members and users (customers). When people … post your network (brand) name, new audience members will want to follow you for updates. The more people that are talking about you on social media, the more valuable and authoritative your network (brand) will seem to new users. … if you can interact with policy makers, funders and partners (major influencers) on Twitter or other social networks, your visible authority and reach will skyrocket.
Increased Inbound Traffic. Without social media, your inbound traffic is limited to people already familiar with your brand and individuals searching for keywords you currently rank for. … every piece of content you syndicate on those profiles is another opportunity for a new visitor. The more quality content you syndicate on social media, the more inbound traffic you'll generate…	**Increased Inbound Traffic**. Without social media, your inbound traffic is limited to people already familiar with your network (brand) and individuals searching for keywords you currently rank for. … every piece of content you syndicate on those profiles is another opportunity for a new visitor. The more quality content you syndicate on social media, the more inbound traffic you'll generate…
Decreased Marketing Costs…. If you can lend just one hour a day to developing your content and syndication strategy, you could start seeing the results of your efforts. …	**Decreased Marketing Costs**…. If you can lend just one hour a day to developing your content and syndication strategy, you could start seeing the results of your efforts. …
Better Search Engine Rankings. …being active on social media could act as a "brand signal" to search engines that your brand is legitimate, credible, and trustworthy. That means, if you want to rank for a given set of keywords, having a strong social media presence could be almost mandatory.	**Better Search Engine Rankings.** … being active on social media could act as a "brand signal" to search engines that your network (brand) is legitimate, credible, and trustworthy. That means, if you want to rank for a given set of keywords, having a strong social media presence could be almost mandatory.

Jayson DeMers http://www.forbes.com/sites/jaysondemers/2014/08/11/the-top-10-benefits-of-social-media-marketing/#258923322a4d, **2014**

If we adopted Bennett and Segerburg categorisation and its criteria, maybe cultural networks in Europe would be most readily recognisable as Collective Action Organizationally Brokered Networks? In business terms of course they are invariably non profit-distributing - although, within an overall economic model, some do rely partly on surplus income from sales (for example, events, courses and study visits). Furthermore, evidence in many European countries where liberal and austerity policies (collectively leading towards reducing public spending) have taken root suggests that earned income is likely to play an increasingly important role over time in the budgets of many networks – as in the public sector as a whole. Perhaps the key distinction to be drawn is between:

- **a profit-distributing structure** – where profit not reinvested into the business is then distributed (e.g. through earnings and share dividends) – the commercial sector model
- **a non profit-distributing structure**, where any profit generated (e.g. from events, courses or visits) must be reinvested in the work, towards financing the core aims and objectives of the network.

Other than this distinction, however, there are in the case of many networks more similarities between the two models than may meet the eye, and the comparisons (as well as the contrasts) may merit further consideration.

Of course, digital cultural networking is about much more than just marketing and winning over opinions. These roles can though play an important role in the general practices of a network, for example, as an internal and external medium of communication and as an open space for dialogue, knowledge sharing etc. that is unlimited by geography, physical access etc. As a medium digital networking lacks some of the deeper, in-depth human qualities of 'physical' social networking; on the other hand its large reach and immediacy are assets that physical networking cannot easily match.

There is a degree of complementarity between these two networking media that is probably greatly under-exploited: the 'social-physical' and 'the social-digital'. It seems likely that there is considerable scope in many cases both to build a stronger digital base as a complement to the physical, and apply physical approaches to bring new relational contexts to the digital. Indeed a number of networks already operate extensively on a digital, virtual level. What is less clear (and suggests more research is needed) is to what extent networks today are developing their own dynamic, relational practices spanning the two media.

To go further into this field, there are a number of broad aims that are, or could be, explored individually and collectively by networks, as part of a commitment to understanding and keeping abreast of its evolution and development:

- understanding the multiple uses of social media, and the many contributions they could make to networks and their practice, both internally and in their connections with the wider European context
- keeping abreast of evolving forms and issues in the fast-changing theory and practice of social media
- understanding evolving social media practice and how they interact with cultural practice
- exploring the role of social media in the connections between culture and the wider economic, political, and technological context, including critical oriented research

And not least amongst the issues that could be addressed in this way is that of wider representation within European cultural networks from across Europe and neighbourhood countries. Social networking is clearly not in itself an answer to this challenge – but in its extraordinary reach and ability to cross boundaries, it certainly has a contribution to make.

A word of caution

While digital social networking offers many opportunities for 'opening up' cultural networking, it would be unwise to regard it as a panacea. Indeed, it may be prone to some of the very same dangers of 'feeling open/ remaining closed' that we seek to overcome in the 'human to human' frame of networking. In an illuminating article, Katharine Viner addresses this danger. Digital social media, such as Facebook or Twitter, along with search engines such as Google, work on algorithms that effectively reflect back to us our own range of views, through the mouthpiece of people who also share these views. While it can be strangely affirming and reassuring to feel that so many people share our perspectives on life, it is, despite its appearance to us, a somewhat artificially created and, ultimately rather 'closed' world. While we may feel, when we click on a message to share or 'like' it, that we are sending our views out across a boundless virtual world, this is only partly true. In fact there are millions of people out there with different or conflicting perspectives whom we are 'protected from' by this process. They too may be 'liking' and sharing messages diametrically opposed to ours, with the same misguided perception of general consensus. To some extent, we are living in a series of 'gated digital communities', that many of us do not really understand. Viner states:

> Algorithms such as the one that powers Facebook's news feed are designed to give us more of what they think we want – which means that the version of the world we encounter every day in our own personal stream has been invisibly curated to reinforce our pre-existing beliefs. When Eli Pariser, the co-founder of Upworthy, coined the term "filter bubble" in 2011, he was talking about how the personalised web – and in particular Google's personalised search function, which means that no two people's Google searches are the same – means that we are less likely to be exposed to information that challenges us or broadens our worldview, and less likely to encounter facts that disprove false information that others have shared... On the day after the EU referendum, in a Facebook post, the British internet activist and mySociety founder, Tom Steinberg, provided a vivid illustration of the power of the filter bubble – and the serious civic consequences for a world where information flows largely through social networks:

> "I am actively searching through Facebook for people celebrating the Brexit leave victory, but the filter bubble is SO strong, and extends SO far into things like Facebook's custom search that I can't find anyone who is happy despite the fact that over half the country is clearly jubilant today* and despite the fact that I'm actively looking to hear what they are saying."

> But asking technology companies to "do something" about the filter bubble presumes that this is a problem that can be easily fixed – rather than one baked into the very idea of social networks that are designed to give you what you and your friends want to see.
> **Katharine Viner, How technology swallowed the news, The Guardian, 12 July 2016**
> https://www.theguardian.com/media/2016/jul/12/how-technology-disrupted-the-truth

So if a charge of 'mainly talking to our friends' can be aimed at human to human cultural networks it can equally be directed at its digital siblings in digital social networks. We do not have to exclude all 'closed' qualities in our everyday practice – indeed this would be virtually impossible - ; but maybe we should begin to recognise to what extent this has become a central or 'default behaviour for us – and, if so actively seek to address this. This 'rule' seems to apply equally to any form of contemporary networking. Our contribution to

digitally-based networking is only as great as the quality of our posts, clicks and shares. Each of us must take our own responsibility for that, and be vigilant about the quality of what passes through us. The same is ultimately true of 'human to human' networking.

One particular field of digital connectivity that could be explored further is how networks could add value by mapping and analysing relational paths, across Europe, via a number of dimensions, such as:

- tiers and levels of engagement if networks (individually and collectively)
- connectivity across related or complementary disciplines
- transnational, national and local connectivity

In public engagement terms transnational (Europe-wide) networks seem at times to sit relationally somewhere between the demands of European influencers (often Brussels-based policy-makers), and their respective memberships. This can potentially represent a fairly fixed, linear field of connection, albeit one that can at times pull in opposing directions - such as upward, towards EU policies and funding of networks and needs or downward towards the aspirations and demands of members. One of the benefits of a more systemic overview of networking (via mapping), is that it could allow us to 'plug into' rhizomic or transnational networking, and the ways in which it engages within a much richer and more diverse field. Often this is to be found in its most dynamic forms at local levels, where communications can take on a nature and scale that is both accessible and truly transversal.

Of course, the will of network members and users is an issue to be addressed, as are the additional resources likely to be required – at least in effecting the transition towards more outward-facing engagement. There may be a strong case for some 'physical' networks to take collective ownership of a project to coordinate and extend their engagement with digital social media, conceived, of course, around their core values. A by-product of such a collaboration might be a collective approach funding of – at least of transitional costs. It may then be that a new economic model may emerge, perhaps linked to some new functionalities, thus providing a step towards a self-sustaining basis for ongoing social media networking. This though is just a loose assumption, and one that would need to be carefully tested within a much larger and more ambitious framework.

Chapter 7
Some reflections on the financial picture today

In this, somewhat experimental, chapter, we offer some reflections on basic analysis of the income budgets of four contemporary European cultural networks.

Rationale

The rationale for doing this was an idea that, by drawing some comparisons and contrasts at a quite broad level between the budgetary evolutions of a small sample of networks over a short period of considerable change, we might just be able to identify some common trends. A few cautionary words at the outset: This is a small and modest experiment that is as much about exploring a simple comparative methodology as about deriving firm conclusions. If the results appear to be of more than a passing interest, this methodology could be picked up, and maybe extended into a more comprehensive and systematic study. This version is, if you like, a low key experiment.

We approached six cultural networks of varying types and sizes, each to provide anonymously two years of budgets – ideally those for 2013 and 2015. We agreed not to reveal their identities, largely because this is not an individual analysis of these networks, but rather a simple experiment at a comparative study. We were seeking by this to gain some insights about general trends, contrasts and comparisons. In the event four of the six networks were able to supply material within our timescale. While they remain anonymous, we would like to thank each of them for agreeing to take part, and for their help in providing the material.

As an integral part of this process, we also offered each of the four networks the opportunity to review and respond to a draft of this chapter. This reflected our intention to use the process to begin to explore a methodology of comparative budgetary analysis. While our raw material purposely featured a small and focused, but broadly common, set of data, we always recognised that this 'narrow-cast' approach could lead to distortions of analysis. On balance we felt it was important to open up the process by presenting both our 'raw' analysis and the informed response – particularly in the case where the latter challenged or improved the former. In each of the following sections, where we received such responses, we have summarised these as a 'postscript' that, we feel, adds greatly to the value of the work. In addition, these responses raised a number of additional concluding reflections for the chapter. These are focused on the quality and value of the methodology: its strengths and weaknesses, and how it could be further developed.

For simplification of comparison, we have reshaped each budget into a common set of budget 'heads' that broadly correspond to almost all the items listed. We have focused here on income, rather than expenditure, as this tends to be more readily interpretable (without a whole series of sub-notes). This is clearly another limitation within the current methodology, and it would certainly be interesting, as part of a wider study, to add some analysis of comparative expenditure patterns.

Example 1

Budget line	2013	%	2015	%	Comments
Membership fees (€)	36062	13.5	38182	25.0	
EC Core grant	60000	22.4	0	0.0	Loss of EC core grant
Core grants – national	20115	7.5	20408	13.4	Via National ministry
Core grants – local	34483	12.9	61224	40.1	Via a local authority
Sales and partnerships	14621	5.5	2996	2.0	
Project income	102343	38.2	34334	22.5	
Other	0		-4547	-	Currency differential
Total	267605		152597		

In this first example, the network received core funding until 2013 from the EU. In 2013, its financial structure was based on a broad, and broadly balanced, range of sources: local, national, European, membership and projects. The loss of 60,000 euros from the EU has partially been addressed by significantly increased local funding and a small increase in membership fee income. Overall, however, the budget has declined by almost double the level of the EU cut, largely because project income has also been in steep decline (by around 68,000 euros).

The underlying causes and effects of these other changes merit further examination, in particular the decreased project income. Is this due to a decline in available project funding sources (maybe the 'austerity factor' in Europe?). Is it a one-off phenomenon or part of a longer term trend? Or could it be that revenue budget cuts have reduced the capacity of a smaller core team to function beyond the 'bread and butter' work of managing the network? What is though clear is that, while in 2015 this network still actively operated Europe-wide, it received over 50% of its income that year from local and national sources in its host country. It is doubtful whether this would be a sustainable long-term income model.

Postscript

The response from the network reflected that only comparing two years may lead to drawing conclusions based on too little data. Furthermore, in the case of this network, that in turn, has lead to drawing some incorrect conclusions.

For example, 2014 was the really tough year when we the network had to cut down staff and major EC project funding came to an end. The network did indeed stabilise itself via a pilot project from local sources. But, at the same time, it also used Autumn 2014, to develop two European cooperation project bids (despite only having a core staff of 1.5 people), leading to one long term and one short term partnership projects that started in May/August 2015.

So what, in the data analysed, looked like a trend of declining project income, was in fact an early stage in an considerably increasing project income from 2016. The real trend can be further be clarified since the decline in project funding in 2015 compared to 2013 was due to a major EC project ending in 2014/2015. It was not in fact related to the EC networking funding rejection during that period. The network has replaced its EC core network funding income with that from:

1. these two projects
2. increased national funding
3. increased membership fees (from 2016 on)
4. slightly increased income from other types of partnership
5. sales of services.

Example 2

Budget line	2013	%	2015	%	+/- rounded	Comments
Membership fees (€)	64980	44.6	81855	67.4	+ 26%	
EC Core grant	50046	34.4	0	0	-100%	Loss of EC core grant
Core grants - national	0	0	0	0	0	
Core grants - local	0	0	0	0	-	
Sales and partnerships	25382	17.4	32498	26.8	+ 30%	
Project income	0	0	6074	5.0	new	
Other	5125	3.5	949		-81%	
Total	145536		121377		-17%	

In this example, the network also lost its core EU grant in 2013, though the subsequent budgetary developments have been rather different. By 2015, membership fee income has increased significantly – to over 2/3 of total income -, as have sales and partnerships. Meanwhile there has been a relatively small additional line of project income. The overall level of income has also dropped significantly.

This appears to be a network that is moving towards budgetary 'self-sufficiency', albeit by reducing its core capacity. That calls into question what resources remain available to undertake development activities with and on behalf of the network – over and above core management duties. This appears, on the face of it to suggest a shift towards a 'mixed economy' budget structure based on increased earned income. If so, this would not be an atypical response to a reducing level of public investment. There is no source of income that comes without some sort of strings attached – some influence on how the money is spent. This is not an issue if the network still retains the flexibility to act within its own core aims and priorities, but it is a useful monitoring measure to ask this question. It would, of course, be premature to draw any conclusion that this is an early sign of a long-term trend; given the broad extent and impact however of austerity policies, it would merit further monitoring across a much wider cross-section of cultural networks affected in this way.

Postscript

The network reviewed this analysis and was happy to let its stand without further comment

Example 3

Budget line	2013	%	(NB) 2014	%	+/- rounded	Comments
Membership fees (€)	73980	50.0	89000	52.7	+ 20%	
EC Core grant	73486	49.6	77997	46.2	+ 6%	
Core grants – national	0		0			
Core grants – local	0		0			
Sales and partnerships	0		0			
Project income	0		0			
Other	560	0.4	1785	1.1	+ 219%	
Total	148026		168783		+ 14%	

In this third example the network retained its core EU budget in 2013. The overall structure of the budget is very simple, and has altered remarkably little across the two years (note though that the figures supplied are those for 2013 and 2014). The only significant overall budgetary development is an increase in membership fee income (though in proportional terms this too is minimal).

It is interesting to note the stability of this budget. It can of course be seen in a positive light: that of continuity and sustainability. On the other hand however we might question whether, stability of budgeting is appropriate response to a context of major external change. It would, of course be unfair to draw this direct conclusion from the data. It is made here though as a general point that might, equally merit further comparative research.

Postscript

In response to this analysis, the network confirmed that its financial stability is connected to its membership cohesion. It enjoys a remarkably high level of member commitment. For example, every year 95% of members attend the General Assembly and related activities.

Example 4

| Budget line	(NB) 2014/15	%	(NB) 2015/16	%	+/- rounded	Comments
Membership fees (€)	-		-			None shown in accounts
EC Core grant	118335	58%	130757	59%	+10.5%	
Core grants - national	84745	42%	91521	41%	+8%	Via host (national agency)
Core grants – local	0		0		-	
Sales and partnerships	0		0		-	
Project income	0		0		-	Via members
Other	0		0		-	
Total	203080		222278		+9.45%	

In this final example, the budget is balanced between continuing EU and national government sources – both increasing slightly faster than inflation. The proportion between the two is quite stable (around 58:41). Interestingly, in these accounts neither membership fees, project costs nor earned income figure. The reasons for this are not entirely clear, although there is an indication that direct activity costs are typically delegated to, and borne by, members themselves.

Postscript

In response to this analysis, the network offered these further remarks:

- there are no membership costs in this network
- in the second year, even though this does not show in the accounts, this network received 11,000€ organization of a specific activity (independently from the core national grant received each year to sustain the network)
- the network does not describe its activities as entirely delegated, but co-organized by the network and the members
- the network itself tracks those costs borne by the members themselves, even though they cannot appear in the EU budget

These comments reveal the limitations of an analysis based purely on a 'one-size-fits-all approach. This network clearly plays an interactive role both with and through its own members, and this cannot easily be read or described through a methodology that is purely based on published figures. In other words, to be really useful and informative the analysis needs to look further.
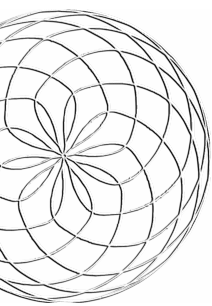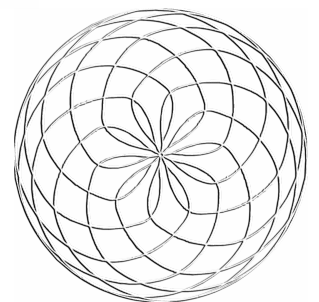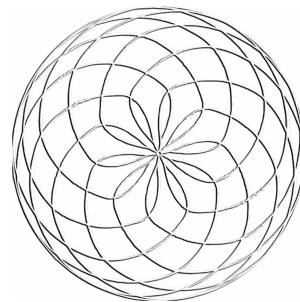
General comments and conclusions

Clearly, on one level, these are just four random examples of European cultural networks and their evolving income budgets at a time of changing external and funding environments.

In fact there is a small natural 'split' between the four in that, while two have budgets for both core operations and networking project activities, two appear to delegate financial responsibility for the activities to their own members. Without taking sides on this point – context is everything -, this raises an interesting general question for European cultural networks, between the attractions of self-managed activities at a trans-European level and, say autonomous but networked activities that may take place at a local level – or maybe operate across particular digital or other specialist fields.

One of these networks in particular appears to operate strongly at a local and national, as well as European level. It appears that this may have been influenced by a loss of European Union funding, although it is not clear to what extent this shift was pre-planned or influenced by the cut at EU level – an important question in its own right. Over and above that however, it would also be interesting to explore the experiences – both financial and in terms of changing direction - of other European networks that may have gone down this 'less Europe-wide/more locally connected' route. What are the implications for European networks themselves and for the way they act in their own particular spheres?

The budgets do not present enough evidence to draw any meaningful conclusions about the way these networks may communicate or interact with a wider 'public', beyond their own direct connections: say, internal (e.g. memberships and friends) and external (e.g. funders) fields.

The responses from networks provided an important element of the emerging methodology, both by confirming significant elements of the original analysis and by offering alternative or additional analysis based on a much closer knowledge of each individual case. This 'outside/inside' equilibrium is an important characteristic of the methodology, since it forms a bridge between specificity and comparative judgements. Both are important here; as is the relationship (or maybe tension) between the two. More generally, a number of general design recommendations emerged from these responses:

- it is important to build some kind of interview into the process, where the two perspectives may be compared, contrasted and 'renegotiated'
- a larger sample would iron out some of the evident weaknesses of the original sample; this could in part be addressed by designing an ongoing analytical methodology – (for example, based on sampled returns over a number of years)
- some method needs to be added to include secondary or indirect activity and impact – where the network may play a central or partnership role that need not necessarily feature in its own accounts; alternatively maybe networks should consider devising 'hybrid' reporting mechanisms that bring these secondary, indirect activities into the open?
- It is clear that a 'real' version of such a methodology of comparative budgetary analysis would require more resources, applied over time within a sector that is

already often very stretched; on the other hand good design in this field should take account of streamlined methods that deliver maximum shared benefit from minimum individual input. This is one advantage of adopting a sampled, comparative approach, rather than one that is individualised, standardised and applied 'across the board'

We have tried in this paper to consider a number of longer term issues and trends for networking in Europe, all of which may sooner or later have financial implications. One conclusion from a comparative approach of this kind is that networks may reflect collectively on future financial structures and provisions. This may be an important bridge towards creating shared thinking about opportunities to measure up to the challenges of the changing financial environment. Funding is an element of this; but it seems increasingly inadequate to address funding as a lone issue.

Budgets certainly cannot tell the whole story in this regard; but they may provide useful additional data or indications about short, medium and long term shifts and evolutions.

Conclusion

Challenges for networks: today and in the future

We are at a point in time when we have to take responsibility. But we have to do this by our creativity, by directing it towards engagement that is as much political as spiritual. (...) That is why I am speaking about creativity. And about the necessity for artists to bring into play their inspiration. About how urgent it is that artists bring into play their individual liberty and transform it into collective responsibility and, in that way, spark profound change in society.
E. Morin and M. Pistoletto Impliquons-nous: Dialogue pour le siècle Actes Sud (2015) (translation: I Davies)

We set off in this paper with dark words of concern about the external environment of 2016, and about the threats and challenges that this poses. In the subsequent chapters we have explored this in further detail, along with the ways in which networking today, and cultural networking in Europe in particular, is playing a role within this environment that is both creative and functional. This role necessarily combines elements of pragmatism – exploring and treading pathways through it – and activism – working to bring about change (e.g. in attitudes, behaviours, policies, practices, and in the broader environment itself).

Established networks today face particular challenges in reconciling these twin roles of pragmatism and activism, that are not always mutually complementary, and can indeed in some ways seem to be in tension. This is an especially acute question for a 'sector' whose core values embrace experimentation and innovation – in both form and content. While it has in the past been perfectly possible to argue that innovative form and content are not necessarily mutually inter-reliant, (i.e. that each need not be an essential component of the other), we have seen that the increasing influential nature of interconnecting, personalised digital-based communication seems to be blurring the distinction between the two In other words, it may be that for some forms of networking today, innovative content and innovative form may in some way be coalescing.

Is it appropriate to talk about 'traditional' and 'contemporary' approaches to networking? If so, what do we mean by 'traditional'? What certainly seems to be the case is that many cultural networks in Europe today seem to struggle to address the conflicting needs for formal structure and sustainability on the one hand, and open, relational behaviour on the other. Indeed, it could be argued that these are largely the same challenges (albeit on a much smaller and more human scale) that Europe's dominant governance structures are themselves facing. On the one hand we can identify a pressure to be better organised, more focused on the core issues and strategically driven; meanwhile on the other sit a host of 'human' challenges around finding new ways to live and communicate successfully with each other. To some extent, attempts by networks to respond to external pressures by simultaneously following both paths, though admirable, may represent something of a trap. The danger of this is that their core strengths may become dissipated, and that they may be seen to be failing on both fronts.

If, for example, we regard networks as parts of a broad movement for change, it is instructive to consider the following critique of movements and their strategies:

McAdam identifies six strategic hurdles that movements must be able to surmount if they are to achieve change:

1. *attract new recruits*
2. *sustain the morale and commitment of current adherents*
3. *generate media coverage*
4. *mobilize the support of 'bystander publics'*
5. *constrain the social control options of its opponent*
6. *ultimately shape public policy and state action*

In our opinion, issues advocates are often focused primarily upon goals 2 and 3, ignoring the importance of 1, 4 and 5 to the achievement of the primary goal of 6. Put another way, when advocates focus narrowly on the care and feeding of their direct mail lists and core believers, they lose the ability to expand their constituency by engaging and enlisting others in the society who share values and goals consonant with their objectives.
FrameWorks Institute, Framing Lessons from the Social Movements Literature, 2005

If we unpack this perspective a little, the challenge it implies for membership networks today is how to focus simultaneously on meeting the demands of what is an important but ultimately finite membership interest, while opening out to engage with a wider public, key stakeholders and interests in other fields and disciplines.

Of course, as we have seen, it is unfair to attach this criticism to all networking today. We have seen plenty of examples amongst cultural networks of open, outwardly facing behaviours and activity. Nevertheless the reality of this challenge of competing imperatives is also clear.

This is not a simple task. In reality any of us can only do so much at any given time, particularly a time such as this when additional resources seem to be increasingly hard to access. The question though is whether the choices we make in relation to such challenges will allow us to achieve the outcomes we seek – whether internal or out-facing. And, given this limitation, how should we prioritise between competing demands?

Colin Mercer takes this point further:

The implication of this for cultural networks is the need to recognize that they are operating in a greatly expanded cultural field with new 'actors' (people, institutions, industries, websites), new 'networks' … and a now respectable body of theory… In turn, this will require a careful consideration of the 'space' in which networks now operate. This is no longer a space well characterized, in Latour's words, by metaphors such as 'levels, layers, territories, spheres, categories, structure, systems' (to which we might add art forms, genres, and 'silo-based' funding and policy agencies) but rather with a 'fibrous, threadlike, stringy … capillary character'
Colin Mercer: Culturelinks: cultural networks and cultural policy in the digital age, in The Evolving Aspects of Culture in the 21st Century, Biserka Cvjetičanin, ed. Culturelink 2010

Mercer argues that networks today need to pay far more attention than in the past to the social and economic geography of the platforms and the nature of the expanded and digitally enabled networks on, and in which they are now operating. Critically in this context, he lays a direct challenge to the current mindsets and practices of networks:

> *New and more heterogeneous stakeholder alliances will be necessary in the new network environment. These various 'creative imperatives' mean that the idea of a cultural network can no longer simply be confined to groups of like-minded individuals, organizations, institutions and agencies which, with a few exceptions, they have long been.*
> **Mercer op.cit.**

He argues for a changed approach by networks, based on:

- *recognizing, engaging with, and exploiting the communicative, creative and 'new network' capabilities and potential of digital mobility*
- *recognizing the points of contact of 'transnational creativity and consumption' that this has enabled, especially for young people, the 'digital natives' as they are sometimes known*
- *a re-organization of the relationship between the local/national/global and a re-orientation to what Jane Jacobs once called the 'mercantilist myth of the trading nation' (Jacobs, 1986) and towards city regions and other more dispersed locales*
- *sharing and exchanging of research outputs; more consolidated, institutionalized networking involving universities, private and public sector agencies, and NGOs.*
Mercer op.cit.

And finally, he contextualises, clarifies and extends the point in a way that also suggests a rich 'new' seam of direction and practice:

> *This is not just about a communication style: it is about a logic of communication, co-creation and co-production leading to new forms of cultural and creative consumption. It is also about a new logic, a new cultural ecology, a new creative economy, in which the historical policy settings and network orientations on funding and prioritization will need to change dramatically. The trick is to know where and how these changes will, and should, take place. Cultural networks are in a strategic position to intervene and map the new terrain – if they get onto it...*
>
> *For cultural networks to be effective in this new and heterogeneous environment they will need to do a lot more netting, lacing, weaving and twisting of some of the weak ties, especially in the development of a stakeholder research and knowledge-producing agenda. The ties vary with many areas of government as, in the European context, cultural networks tend to look towards national government or the EU for policy orientations and funding opportunities. The links and collaborative research and policy development agendas at local, municipal and regional levels are much weaker but possibly more fruitful in a collaborative and stakeholder context of hubs and nodes.*
> **Mercer op.cit.**

This is not the last word on our subject; that, rightly, belongs to all those, past, present and future, who continue to explore the new connections and correspondences that networks can, at their best, provide. Cultural networking in Europe has necessarily moved a long way from the world that Judith Staines and others so clearly and coherently mapped out for us. The context

for our ideas today has been transformed and reshaped in many ways - some quite violent and others less obvious. Our practices have also evolved, and in many surprising directions. Meanwhile we understandably struggle to come terms with the complexities of a new and still-evolving context. This is a story without a conclusion. However, in such a world of doubt and disarray, maybe that is precisely why our subject is so important? At the end of this paper, we are convinced (more so than ever) of the importance of open and effective cultural networking, both in Europe and between Europe and the world. But the way we network and reasons why we network – along with the dynamic interconnectivity between the two - rightly remain an open and unfinished book.
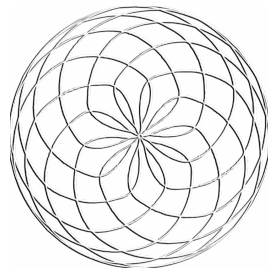
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Appendix

Culture Action Europe
Advocating networks today - Focus group
Brussels 21 March 2016, 11:00 - 15:00
@BOZAR

Confirmed Participants:

Frédéric Meseeuw, Bozar
Stéphane Segreto-Aguilar, Circostrada
Katherine Heid, Culture Action Europe
Robert Manchin, Culture Action Europe
Andrew Manning, ECHO
Francesca Cerretani, EJN - EUROPE JAZZ NETWORK
Giambattista Tofoni, EJN - EUROPE JAZZ NETWORK
Stefano Zucchiatti, EJN - EUROPE JAZZ NETWORK
Carla Delvos, ELIA
Simone Dudt, EMC
Gianna Lia Cogliandro, ENCATC
Sylvine Bois-Choussy, ENCC – European Network of Cultural Centers
Louise van Rijckevorsel, Europa Nostra
Piet Jaspaert, Europe Nostra
Sonja Greiner, European Choral Association – Europa Cantat
Filip Zieliński, Eurozine
Nan van Houte, IETM
Alexandra Buchler, Literature Across Frontiers
Julia Pagel, NEMO
Silke Lalvani, PEARLE
Anita Debaere, PEARLE
Mark Vennegoor, Res Artis
Ivor Davies, Researcher
Anne-Lise Alleaume, Réseau Art Nouveau Network
Anne-Sophie Riffaud-Buffat, Réseau Art Nouveau Network
Barbara Bessac, Réseau Art Nouveau Network
Isabel Joly, RESEO
Birgitta Persson, Trans Europe Halles

CULTURAL NETWORKING IN EUROPE: TODAY & TOMORROW

A READER