

Culture and the Commons

Statement by members of Connected Action for the Commons.

For the attention of the EP Intergroup Common Goods and
Public Services and EU decision-makers

We, Connected Action for the Commons – a European-wide network of cultural organisations accelerating the movement of the commons in Europe – urge European decision-makers to embed culture as an important perspective and practice contributing to the commons in their policy deliberations.

Why culture?

As a consequence of migration, the development of new communications systems and economic (inter) dependencies, different cultures are becoming increasingly connected with one another. The result of these processes is a culturally diverse Europe – a strong asset in today's globalised society. This asset needs to be preserved and promoted. Cities in Europe are home to a wide range of communities from different cultures and therefore need to address increasingly complex social issues.

These developments make it all the more urgent to give the same rights to all citizens, regardless of their cultural background and social or economic status, without discrimination. This includes access to education, health care, citizen's rights (e.g., the right to vote) and social services. Local governments need to make sure that citizens from different cultures feel accepted, as well as being represented and having the right to participate in democratic processes.

Culture & the commons

At the same time, the emergence of 'commoning' practices across Europe and beyond – as collective ventures of co-development and co-government – are dramatically affecting the way we look at our societies by challenging the duopoly of the state and the market. In these inclusive, collaborative and co-creating practices, culture is a key factor in terms of encouraging equality and experience, as well as accepting diversity and negotiating participation.

Culture functions as a language to describe reality and to express feelings and opinions. It is a tool for narrating and debating our societies and for creating a space to establish meaningful relationships beyond status and cultural affiliation.

Culture offers the much-needed imagination to change mind-sets and break out of existing frameworks.

Culture is a testing ground for commoning and a space where we can negotiate ways of living together. Culture can establish relationships that matter and strengthen social ties within communities. Cultural and artistic processes create spaces where working together creates opportunities for both individual and societal development.

Culture, commons and democracy

We consider **art and culture to be a driving force in democratic renewal and a valued contributor to the commons**. Therefore, we – **Connected Action for the Commons** – support and share citizen- and community-led practices that bring about a new reality of democratic governance and deepen democracy across Europe. We need to create more solidarity and allow greater social inclusion by giving citizens a greater say in local, national and European policies and decisions through democratic participative governance, and by sharing culture – through critical thinking, performances, music, narratives and sharing traditions from different cultural contexts. In this respect, the contribution of both civil society and culture is essential.

CULTURE'S CONTRIBUTION IN THREE AREAS OF THE COMMONS

1. Culture for inclusive societies and participatory democracy:

On a local level, democracy is reinvigorated through new ways of citizens' involvement in policy-making. There is a growing interest among citizens to actively take part in the political, social and cultural life of our communities. Through models of self-organisation and active participation in the governance of common goods alongside public administrations, the gap between citizens and institutions is narrowing. At the same time, these models offer a sustainable alternative to the commodification of common goods and public services that leaves many citizens deprived of access to their fundamental needs and rights to participate in public life. The many positive practices developed in communities – such as civil-public partnerships in the governance of cultural and social centres, or participative budgeting processes developed at a local level – can inspire policy reforms across Europe and gain influence if positioned at the European policy level.

2. Knowledge and digital commons:

Knowledge is a common good and nowadays it is probably the most important common good in our information-driven economy. Since free and open knowledge is nourished by the freedom to access and to transmit information and culture, it helps us affect change and ultimately improve society. Free and open knowledge empowers citizens and enables fair and sustainable societies. Open commons-based licensing fosters communal ownership, as these licences are created under commons-oriented principles that drives citizen-focused economics and politics. Digital tools (as commons) can enable democratic participation on a large scale, thus fostering crowd-driven processes to fund and get resources for citizen action and social innovation. Participatory governance can be achieved when information and knowledge are accessible to citizens so they can make publicly accessible and common interest decisions and follow and evaluate the ones made by political representatives.

3. Culture's contribution to urban commons:

Culture is a proven driving force for urban regeneration and development, and one of the key contributors in terms of tackling social issues. To prevent gentrification, mono-cultural spaces, exclusion and a shrinking public sphere, resources and energy, political imagination must invest in engaging as many actors as possible to participate in the life of our communities. Many citizens – including artists and cultural workers – are re-appropriating public spaces and inventing new ways of living in their cities by re-designing them. In this way, culture catalyses citizens' initiatives from community-gardening to participatory artworks. But it also allows the envisioning of new relationships between residents and their urban environments: relationships that go beyond individual property towards cooperative design, co-governance and shared use.

With our practices, views and activities we would value the opportunity to work together with you – the MEPs of the intergroup and EU decision-makers – to shape the role of culture and the commons as a much-needed alternative for governing common resources in Europe. To work in a 'commoning' way – in other words, involving citizens and civil society in the process of EU decision-making and drafting proposals. This should become a role model for the European Parliament.

Signed by the **Connected Action for the Commons** network

- 1. Culture 2 Commons (Croatia)** is a partnership of three Zagreb-based civil society organisations – Clulture Network, Alliance Operation City and Right to the City – connecting civil society organisations dealing with culture, youth and the commons in Croatia and the SEE Region.
- 2. Krytyka Polityczna (Poland)** is active in three main fields – education, culture and politics – working through a national network of activists' groups in Poland.
- 3. Les Têtes de l'Art (France)** specialises in participatory arts projects with artists and communities, encouraging learning and exchange in southern France.
- 4. Platoniq – Goteo (Spain)** focuses on collaborative creation using open source ICT for social uses, including running their crowd-funding platform, Goteo, in Spain and abroad.
- 5. Oberliht (Moldova)** works to connect dispersed artistic scenes and to build an artistic community and communities making use of public spaces, mainly in Moldova.
- 6. Subtopia (Sweden)** is a space dedicated to cultural and creative processes and production for professional creatives and start-ups in Alby, Stockholm.
- 7. European Cultural Foundation (the Netherlands)** supports and connects cultural change-makers to strive for an open, democratic and inclusive Europe within which culture is a valued and key contributor.

To further fuel and catalyse the co-developing process, we would like to share some examples from our own practice of managing commons and public resources through involving citizens and by using cultural and artistic practices in the process of decision-making. We believe that there is great potential in scaling these practices up to different levels, including the level of EU decision-making.

Good Practices

Idea Camp 11

Marseilles, Botkyrka, Madrid



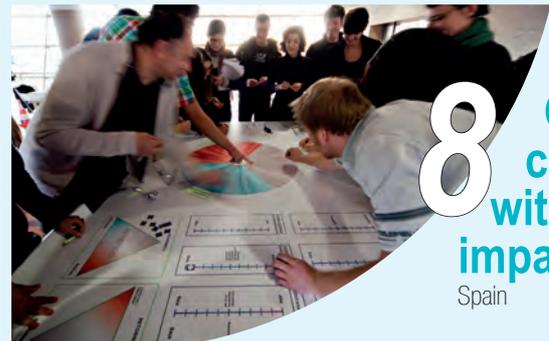
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POGON

Zagreb, Croatia



POGON – Zagreb Center for Independent Culture and Youth is a public, non-profit institution for culture, based on a new model of civil-public partnership. Established in 2008, its main function is to provide spaces free of charge for cultural programmes and youth organisations in the Croatian city of Zagreb.

Actors involved

POGON was founded by and is managed by the Alliance Operation City and the City of Zagreb. The main actors involved are independent cultural and youth organisations that come together in the centre.

Co-governance model and culture

The model of co-governance allows for long-term sustainability as a result of a balanced relationship between public financing and supervision on the one hand and independent programming and participatory decision-making on the other.

The role of the City of Zagreb is to provide appropriate spaces and basic operational means for running the centre and realising the programme. The primary role of the Alliance is related to the content (POGON's programme). It brings together organisations working in the fields of independent culture and youth.

Drawing on the expert advice of POGON's Programme Council, the Alliance and its

members are engaged in a continuous improvement of models and practices of using the infrastructure of POGON, so that it becomes a resource for the wider community. The renovation of POGON's main venue, the former Jedinstvo factory, will allow for a greater number of users and different content in future.

Outcomes and results

POGON is the first public cultural institution in Croatia based on a civil-public governance model, marking a turning point in institutional design. Through the advocacy work of independent cultural organisations in Croatia, the concept of civil-public management of cultural and social infrastructure has become an important topic on local and national cultural and urban agendas, even crossing the national borders into the South East Europe (SEE) region.

In different cities in Croatia (Rijeka, Pula, Dubrovnik, Split, Čakovec) and in various smaller communities, local platforms are

working on the establishment of models of civil-public partnership within their own local communities. The advocacy work of POGON's independent cultural organisations has also been successful in terms of calling for support for the further development of participative governance over socio-cultural infrastructure through the European Social Fund in Croatia.

Lessons learned

Similar initiatives are now spreading across the country and the region, but the model is also transferable into different sectors of public life. This model introduces an institutional framework that meets the needs of the community by introducing democratic processes that see a significantly strengthened role for the community.

Ursus Social Museum

Warsaw, Poland

Ursus is a former industrial district of Warsaw in Poland that has been transformed into a residential area. The local community is demanding the commemoration of Ursus' industrial heritage (the Ursus Factory used to manufacture agricultural machinery). The project involves the collaboration of artists, activists, community members and authorities to amplify and meet that demand.

Actors involved

Ursus Social Museum is a centre of activities involving artists, the local community and urban activists. It collaborates with district authorities, local cultural public institutions, Warsaw City Hall, developers operating on the terrain of the former plant and a motor company that is the legal successor of the Ursus Factory heritage.

Co-governance model and culture

This project involves community-oriented artistic interventions that aim to create a platform for the local community to express itself and to amplify its issues and demands.

This includes:

- translating demands into concrete actions (for example, the appeal for commemoration turned into the idea of Ursus Social Museum);
- shooting documentary films to empower a social campaign aiming to put pressure on

City Hall to meet the demands of the local community;

- using journalism to support the idea of creating the Ursus Social Museum;
- establishing the museum;
- involving urban activists and international networks and executing a campaign based on collecting signatures for a petition;
- using new digital media (augmented reality technologies) in order to build awareness among people and the popularity of a district;
- organising conferences on topics including industrial heritage and social governance instead of cultural institutions.

Outcomes and results

Some of the outcomes include: reclaiming ex-plant territory for social purposes; the social revitalisation of a district; creating through artistic actions an agora for self-expression of the local community; bringing dignity and biographical fulfilment to ex-workers and their

families; building wide awareness about the Ursus case; organising a successful campaign in favour of establishing Ursus Social Museum; opening a discussion on social mechanisms of commemoration and social governance over cultural institutions; opening discussion on civil-public collaboration in cases that affect local communities and civil-public partnerships in establishing and running cultural institutions.

Lessons learned

Social cultural initiatives demand continuous financial support in order to operate on behalf of local communities. Collaboration between civil and public should be built in such a way that: 'civil' is a central motor of actions; and 'public' is a supportive element, mostly in relation to the sustainability of social partners' engagement.

Les Têtes de l'Art

Marseille, France



Place à L'Art 2014 © Les Têtes de l'Art

For many years, French cultural policy has developed specific programmes to help residents in poor areas to have access to cultural and artistic events. The goal of the French association Les Têtes de l'Art (Heads of Art) is unique because it goes further by promoting co-creation between residents and artists through participative processes.

Actors involved

Founded in 1996, Les Têtes de l'Art (TDA) brings together various stakeholders around its activities: professional artists, residents in poor areas, pupils, volunteers, a network of local non-profit organisations, local authorities and public funders.

Co-governance model and culture

TDA is an artistic mediation operator specialising in the engineering and mentoring of participatory art projects, in networking activities for local cultural actors and in the exchange and sharing of practices, skills and technical equipment. TDA's ultimate goal is to make art accessible to all.

By providing art 'with' rather than 'for' people and adopting a perspective overlapping the realms of art and culture, TDA is involved in

popular education and a social and solidarity-based economy. TDA initiates three types of actions: 1) 'in situ' creations by artists, echoing the specificity of the space they work in; 2) artistic participatory workshops involving residents; 3) mediation activities to encourage residents' involvement.

TDA also works in institutions like schools, social centres, medical centres and in public spaces. One example of TDA's work is citizen television, which invites residents and local organisations to co-produce films on topics that interest them.

Outcomes and results

In 20 years of existence, more than 30,000 participants engaged in hundreds of projects accompanied by some 400 different artists. Yet we particularly note that the success of the

association is based on the dissemination of ideas and tools within the local arts community as well as within public policies with a proactive approach of accompanying, transmission and advocacy.

Lessons learned

This case shows that the growing complexity of social issues requires the teaming up of a wide-ranging community of actors over a long period of time and the sharing of skills and resources. The impact can be measured through personal development, improved social cohesion, community empowerment and renewed local image and identity.

Goteo: crowdfunding with scalable social impact

Spain

Goteo is a platform for civic crowdfunding and collaboration on citizen initiatives and social, cultural, technological and educational projects. Based in Spain, Goteo has catalysed similar organisations and formed alliances in several countries, thanks to its open source code as well as the awards and international recognition it has attracted since 2011.

Actors involved

Founded by Platoniq, a collective of cultural agitators, Goteo is a tool for generating resources 'drop by drop' for a community of communities including more than 90,000 people, as of October 2016. Of these, 60,000 are active donors; Goteo has a funding success rate over 70%. Since 2013, Goteo has been working in a social investment pool with contributions from public institutions, business and other private institutions, as well as individuals. This is to achieve the multiplier effect and to encourage co-responsible investment in projects that rely on civil society support.

Co-governance model and culture

The Goteo Foundation – a non-profit foundation (with consequent tax advantages for donors) – is behind the platform, as well as a multidisciplinary team developing tools and services for co-creation and collective funding. Its mission is tightly linked to principles of transparency, progress and societal improvement. A pool of matched

funding is a deposit of big donations coming from distinct types of annual commitments with different organisations. These funds are distributed through specific temporary calls for crowdfunding projects – via pre-established formulas or through ad hoc agreements.

Outcomes and results

After five years of activity, Goteo has raised more than €4 million, which is distributed among more than 500 successful crowdfunding campaigns. The average contribution per donor is close to €50 and the diversity of projects increases day by day. Recently, there has been increasing interest in campaigns for independent media publishing their contents under open source licences, cultural projects and a focus on collective activist campaigns. By October 2016, up to nine *matchfunding* calls had been launched, raising €166,000 directly from institutions to be re-distributed among civic projects. Social innovation, health and culture are the main topics addressed in these calls; campaigns gain a success rate of up to 90% due to the

involvement of institutions. Since 2015, Goteo has been showing its open data publicly in a dedicated site where statistics are updated live. It has also developed an open source API (application programme interface) for programmers, researchers, activists and developers to use.

Lessons learned

Alliances with cross-sectoral institutions have demonstrated positive outcomes for all actors involved. This has included participating in the collective creation of open and accessible knowledge and supporting socially innovative projects, holding a close and direct dialogue with emerging communities, and achieving visibility and recognition linked to projects that not only contribute to the common good but are also linked to the social pulse.

People's Park (Zaikin's Park, a Park for the Community)

Chişinău, Moldova

This project initiated by Oberliht opened the process of rehabilitation of Zaikin's Park – an abandoned green area in the centre of Chişinău, Moldova. There was a passive and politically inactive community around this area and an uncooperative local administration, as well as several urban developers that intended to appropriate a part of the park.



Chişinău Civic Center - People's Park (Zaikin's Park) © URBalance

Actors involved

At first, we intended to initiate a trilateral partnership that would involve local authorities, the local community and civil initiatives (civil-public partnership). Now we are attempting to extend the partnership in order to include two urban developers that have built blocks of flats in the area (civil-public-private partnership).

Co-governance model and culture

In 2012, we carried out a mapping of public space workshop involving the local artistic, architectural and scientific community. With a group of sociology students, we carried out surveys, addressing the needs of the residents living around the park. We helped to initiate several art and cultural events (concerts, dance performances, plays, exhibitions, etc.) designed to raise awareness for the park's problems. Through a series of workshops we also provided opportunities for children to get involved in the process of redesigning

the area. With the help of the architectural community, we designed a new plan for the park that was approved by the municipality. In the meantime, the existing infrastructure of the park was repaired and additional infrastructure was built (e.g., a stage). Through discussions, focus groups, debates, picnics, common actions (cleaning, arranging and building), we aimed to mobilise the community. We designed a new contract with the municipality that encourages a more active role for the authorities in engaging the local community. We have also organised regular meetings with residents and representatives of the construction companies.

Outcomes and results

There are several concrete changes:

- we have built a stronger community around Zaikin Park, making use of culture as a general framework for establishing relationships and improving communication be-

tween the different parties involved;

- we have initiated a positive example of a grassroots city planning methods;
- local authorities paid attention to the process of engaging local communities in decision making processes;
- local businesses are more conscious about the need to conform with formal rules but also about involving the community at various levels and stages of the project;
- this has become a road map for 'civil-public' partnerships in Moldova, with the participation of different groups and the potential to be used further.

Lessons learned

We strongly believe that a model like this could be relatively easily transferred and implemented in other contexts, in a variety of cultural, political and urban environments.

Subtopia

Botkyrka, Sweden

Graffiti artist Pablo Delgado © Subtopia



Botkyrka, Alby in Sweden is the most ethnically diverse municipality in Sweden – with 170 nationalities and 100 different languages spoken. In 2002 Subtopia started with the aim of becoming an attractive central hub where creators, entrepreneurs and civil society could develop ideas and businesses together. Subtopia is now a home for operators in circus, film, media and other artistic and creative sectors. It encourages community development on a local, regional and global arena as well as stimulating synergies and spillovers across sectors.

Actors involved

Subtopia is a municipally-owned limited company that is community based, working in close collaboration with the local population in Botkyrka. Local politicians (both majority and opposition) are represented on the Board. Subtopia has use of about 14,000 m² of indoor spaces, most of which belong to the Botkyrka municipality and were given to Subtopia to manage. Subtopia hosts more than 70 organisations and businesses, as well as renting out spaces to TV shows, performances, rehearsals, etc. Most of these organisations are small and micro enterprises, many of them start-ups, mainly from circus, film, television, music and different creative businesses.

Co-governance model and culture

Subtopia started as a model of social entrepreneurship, around an idea and detected the need for developing a space for circus artists. It expanded its activities in response to the needs for integration of the local communities in the municipality of Botkyrka. The local festival 'This is Alby' is a prototype of a participatory (Do-it-together) project for cohesion.

Subtopia's activities are best described through a 'Quadrohelix model' made up of: Art (38%); Business & entrepreneurs (17%); Education & research (28%); Social responsibility (17%). This model requires each of the organisations working at Subtopia to work in at least two of these four areas.

Outcomes and results

Subtopia has influenced the development of Alby's new city plan, where art and experience took priority over roads and sewage systems. Now the future of Alby is decided by an *agora* approach rather than post-modern functionalism. This has helped to build a sense of belonging and optimism in the area. 'This is Alby' festival has increased Alby's level of engagement and self-confidence as a place with its own identity (not just as a suburb of Stockholm). Other programmes such as reclaiming the neighbourhood or immigrant women running a restaurant or café by cooking native food and talking Swedish is important for social integration.

In terms of place making and urban development, Subtopia pushes the agenda of the area, emphasising in weekly meetings with politicians the value of culture and creativity as change makers in Subtopia and the surrounding areas.

Lessons learned

Business Sweden is helping Subtopia to develop an exportable model to be able to apply Subtopia's work elsewhere. On a regional level, Subtopia encourages municipalities around Stockholm to provide value in places other than Stockholm. Botkyrka has become a frontrunner for culture and democracy, driven by the work of Subtopia.

More information: www.subtopia.se/about

Idea Camp

Marseilles, Botkyrka, Madrid



The Idea Camp is an innovative three-day collaborative working platform co-organised by the European Cultural Foundation (ECF) and Connected Action for the Commons – a network of six cultural organisations across Europe. Idea Camp offers 50 selected cultural change-makers the opportunity to present their ideas and develop them with peers, international guests and local initiatives. The Idea Camp – which is happening for the third time in 2017 – encourages bold alternatives provided by citizens through local cultural initiatives. ECF then invests in these local initiatives to help them become enduring solutions to the multiple challenges facing Europe.

Actors involved

Local partners are an essential ingredient to the Idea Camp's success. For the 2017 Idea Camp, the City of Madrid and Platoniq are key partners alongside co-organisers ECF and the Connected Action for the Commons network. The Camp hosts 50 idea makers plus advisors, experts and other peers from across Europe and neighbouring countries.

Co-governance model and culture

The Idea Camp brings together diverse idea makers and gives them the opportunity to co-design and exchange skills and knowledge. An open call invites individuals and collectives to send in innovative ideas that will contribute to a more democratic, inclusive Europe.

At the Idea Camp, the methodology used – a peer-to-peer and common tactical knowledge format – is called Idea on Wheels. It has several stages to help idea makers think about

their issue in greater depth. From explanation and visualisation through to group discussions on differences in goals, users, tools or content, this helps people to imagine and specify who is the end user of their idea. The final stage involves sharing ideas with a wider group of people, making alterations to their concept according to feedback. This collective-based review process brings the dynamics of trust and knowledge exchange very successfully into the setting and creates rapid and innovative results. Contributions from all applicants are also collected digitally via ECF Labs for a crowdsourced book, which serves as an independent publication on the year's theme, and as a reader for participants.

Outcomes and results

After the Idea Camp, participants are invited to submit a concrete plan for further research or investigation of their ideas. A selection of proposals are then awarded an R&D Grant.

These proposals must be valuable for the local settings they were conceived in, but must also be applicable transnationally. Residencies and workshops are thus a natural outcome of participation in an Idea Camp.

In some cases, idea makers have changed local policies; in even more cases, their ideas have been helpful in raising awareness about political issues such as pollution, public space, loneliness among the elderly and creating a welcoming culture for newcomers.

Lessons learned

If we have learned one thing from Idea Camp it is this: in order to invest in local initiatives to become enduring solutions to the challenges facing our continent, we need cultural imagination. By its very existence, Idea Camp provides and feeds this cultural imagination.

This is Alby, Botkyrka, Sweden



Connected Action for the Commons

A European Cultural Foundation initiated network of six cultural organisations from across Europe: Culture 2 Commons - Alliance Operation City, Clubture Network, Right to the City - (Croatia), Les Têtes de l'Art (France), Krytyka Polityczna (Poland), Oberliht (Moldova), Platoniq - Goteo (Spain), and Subtopia (Sweden) working on topics such as the Commons, Public Space, Culture and Economy as a group and in their independent, diverse activities. The aim of the programme is to scale up activities, to combine influence, to highlight and connect new practices with European policy makers and to gain knowledge from each other.

For further reading:

Connected Action for the Commons web space:

<http://politicalcritique.org/connected-action>

Eurozine's dedicated Focal Point on Culture and the Commons:

<http://www.eurozine.com/comp/focalpoints/culturecommons.html>

Build the City: perspectives on commons and culture, book published by Krytyka Polityczna and ECF:

<http://www.culturalfoundation.eu/library/build-the-city-book>

Build the City: How people are changing their cities, magazine published by ECF:

<http://www.culturalfoundation.eu/library/build-the-city-magazine>

A little guide of the commons, by Mehdi Afraoui, published by Culture Action Europe:

<http://cultureactioneurope.org/news/a-little-guide-of-the-commons/>



CLUBTURE
Cultura i Upravljanje / Clubture Network
OPERACIJA: GRAD
CULTURE 2 COMMONS



SUBTOPIA
krytyka polityczna



LES TÊTES DE L'ART
médiation artistique



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