

Speech IFACCA 2016, Malta

AT THE CROSSROADS?

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Dear participants,

Let me start with a story ...

Next year ENCATC, the European Network in Cultural Management and Cultural policy education, is celebrating her 25th anniversary.

In preparation for this celebration, we looked through our archives to produce a history of ENCATC and examine how things have changed.

We found a letter from one of our previous presidents in which he described exactly the same challenges as we are facing now. Fifteen years ago he was writing that we are living in a transition period, he wrote about the impact of globalisation, migration and digitization and he was calling for everything to be different .

We always think that we are living at the forefront of time and that everything will change NOW, but after reading these archives, we suddenly realized that we are not. It was shocking, but also interesting to read. Have we not moved forward? Is everything still the same? If this is the case, then what have we been doing all the time? Perhaps we are guilty of always giving the same answers? And thinking in the same way?

All over the world, we are now facing the same challenges but our reaction is defined by a different context and history. So let us have a look back at the evolution of cultural policy within Europe, and this might provide us with a better insight as to where we are standing now, in the hope to better understand where we are going to. Of course you need to be aware that talking about Europe as a whole is not easy because there are a lot of historical differences within its borders. But hopefully these observations can feed the discussions for the afternoon and over the following days of our conference.

From a cultural policy perspective we observe that the role of the government regarding culture is now being revised. After recovering from the Second World War, several democratic European countries started to develop what we now call the 'Welfare State'. Social-democratic governments believed that arts and culture could contribute to the wellbeing of their citizens. Separate Ministries for Arts and Culture – distinct from Education – were created in several European countries. In France, for example, the famous writer, André Malraux, became Minister for Culture at the end of the 1950s. It was the government that primarily took care of the financing of the arts, even building many new cultural infrastructure to 'bring culture to the people', as part of their democratisation strategy. Governmental support for the arts and culture was above all legitimised by its social

function. According to the Frankfurter Schüle with Horkheimer, Adorno and Benjamin, economy and culture were even incompatible. An economic approach would only lead to 'massification' and 'commodification', which was opposed to artistic integrity, and thus the quality of cultural products. These critical concerns were very strongly felt, and are even still present, in the minds of many artists and cultural organisations today.

During the 1980s, neo-liberalist right-wing parties came to power in response to the economic crisis. They wanted to reduce the role of the state, with deregulation, privatisation, competition, return on investment and sponsorship becoming the key words (following policies introduced by Thatcher as prime minister of the UK and Reagan as the president of the US). This resulted in a first reorientation of cultural policy. New preconditions were introduced at the micro level, such as budget responsibility, minimum income standards and the introduction of management skills to deal with this new reality in praxis. This need for more management resulted also in the establishment of several training and education programmes in cultural management at multiple levels in Europe and elsewhere. After the publication of John Pick's book about arts management in 1980, different new education programmes started in France, Germany, Finland and the Netherlands and these were followed at the end of the 1990s by programmes in Spain, Italy, Belgium and

some Eastern European countries. It led to a professionalization of the cultural sector in general.

In the nineties a more European perspective came to the fore. With the 'Maastricht Treaty' in 1992 there was for the first time a paragraph about culture in a European Treaty. The European Union was founded in the 1950s as an economic project, but political awareness increased to appreciate that if Europe wanted to become a real community, then cultural diversity within Europe needed to be respected, cultural heritage protected, and mobility between artists be enhanced. In the years that followed the 1950s, different kinds of cultural networks were established within Europe. Networking became the new way of working and advocacy in Europe. This was the context that ENCATC, the European network for cultural management and policy education started their activities. After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the board of ENCATC attempted to support the post-communist cultural sector in Central and Eastern Europe by sharing knowledge.

By the end of the nineties, we experienced **a new shift in cultural policy** in Europe that had much to do with the changing political, social and economic environment. This shift took place in the UK, when the then Labour government put the creative industries on the political agenda. The Labour government was looking to identify new

sectors that could fuel economic prosperity as an alternative to the declining old industrial sectors, such as steel and finance. They observed that creative activities such as architecture, design, fashion and some art productions were creating new industrial-scale movements. They believed that creativity was a base for innovation and economic growth and possessed huge potential. Richard Florida's ideas about the *Creative City and the crucial role of the creative class for the local economy* influenced also a number of city governments. National and local governments became aware of the potential richness of the creative industries and started to develop their own strategies.

On a global level, two studies went on to illustrate the global impact of the creative industries: the European Commissions' Green Paper on the creative industries (2009) and the UN Creative Economy Report 2008, which described the creative economy as one which is led by the potential for creativity and innovation to promote social prosperity worldwide.

At all political levels, governments actually believed that the cultural and creative industries are fundamental to advancing prosperity, inclusiveness and sustainability. Most of the definitions also included the traditionally subsidised sectors of arts and heritage. The changing of the title of the previous European Cultural Programme (2007-

2013) into the 'Creative Europe' Programme in 2014, was in that respect significant.

Meanwhile, EU and UN documents also set out arguments for why cultural and **creative entrepreneurship** is important to fulfil the potential of the creative industries. Through its Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan and its Communication on 'Rethinking Education', the European Commission has emphasised the need to embed entrepreneurial learning in all sectors of education, including non-formal learning.

In most European countries, the subsidised arts and heritage sector felt threatened by the economic approach led by the EC and at other national and regional policy levels. Many European countries including Italy, the Netherlands and the UK, since 2008 decided to reduce subsidies for the arts and culture as a response to the global financial crisis. As a consequence, new questions have arisen for the arts sector.

1. **The question of the autonomy of the arts** and how to respect this autonomy in a world dominated by motives strongly connected to the instrumental functioning of arts and culture.
2. **The question of finance:** Rather than relying primarily on government support, cultural organisations in Europe are now obliged to find other financial resources to survive and become

more resilient. In the Netherlands for example, arts organisations and museums must prove that they are entrepreneurial and can find income sources other than subsidies from the state or the region.

3. The question about measuring the impact of arts & culture.

In recent years across several European countries (certainly in the UK) they introduced evidence-based cultural policy that focuses on output and outcomes rather than on input, and independent ideas. Thus questioning the value of arts and culture. A lot of reports (often commissioned by governments) have been written that are emphasizing not only the economic but also the societal and artistic role of culture in society.

The paradox is that all through this debate, that there has never been such a wide range of cultural productions or choice of culture on offer. But what strikes me the most is that these discussions only take place within the cultural sector. So the question arises - are we asking ourselves the right questions. Are we perhaps too focused on our own survival?

This summer I read the autobiography of Stefan Zweig the Austrian-Jewish humanist. Tragically, he and his wife committed suicide in 1942.

In the beginning of his book 'The world of yesterday. Memories of a European', he describes the situation in Europe at the beginning of the 20th century. Zweig believed strongly in the idea of a united Europe as an antidote against nationalism. It could have been written today. Also he wrote, technology was present everywhere and was having a huge impact on social and daily life. Arts and culture were flourishing and there was a lively interaction between the different artists within Europe. Nobody would have predicted the first World War at that moment.

It was really revealing to read how many similarities there are between our time and his time at the eve of the first World war: Politics and military action, polarisation and populism, the lack of reason and nuance. Although we experienced meanwhile in Europe two World Wars, the question remains what did we learn from it – or are we inevitably, like the Encatc story and Zweig's text – going to find that history repeats itself?

I don't want to be a pessimist or an optimist but we need to face reality and this is, that it is our responsibility to look at which role arts and culture should play at this time and this may also require us to re-consider the questions as well?

The challenges of globalisation, migration and technology are after, more than 100 years, still relevant and their impact has only been reinforced. We can feel the impact of these developments each day more sharply. The Internet has entered our lives in an intrusive way and the world is permanently present around us everyday.

Nationalities from all over the world are living within our borders and the question as to how we need to deal with this in the most appropriate way is still an open question.

Of course we know that history is never exactly repeating itself. For although there are similarities, there are also some differences.

While Stefan Zweig was describing the period before the first World War as an age of optimism and certainty - because the belief in progress was very strong - we are now living in quite a different age, one that is much less optimistic and one bound by Uncertainty, in which the impact of globalisation and digitization leads to a volatile, complex and unpredictable world. At the other hand, since the end of the Cold War, **interdependency** between nation states has become much bigger. Therefore Brexit, for example, doesn't have to lead to an implosion of the European Union. We live in a time that we have to face challenges together. Even the Hungarian president Victor Orban, through his rough language, realizes that he has to collaborate. The European Union after all has led to spectacular growth for the Hungarian economy.

Maybe we are facing now a period where we are still stumbling, but you can't turn the time clock back, we have to move forward. So for me, arriving at this crossroads for ENCATC is timely – and simply, we have to acknowledge that simply going in the same direction should not be automatic.

Arriving at a crossroads is about asking ourselves fundamental questions - questions like: should we follow the same familiar route and likely find ourselves looking to leadership and other 'top-down' approaches to cultural policy. If so, then probably we will likely fall into the same rhythms and looking towards the same inspirations for answers (like the USA or the UK).

Alternatively at this crossroads, we could turn right – and look for 'bottom-up' approaches – for example, different types of entrepreneurs models and other means of community support. This is already happening in a lot of European countries. I see around me a lot of arts organisations and artists who are experimenting with new models of collaboration. Creative enterprises are looking for new business models. And also policy makers who are looking for new ways for supporting or investing in the arts and how they can cooperate with other policy domains or policy levels.

But even then, although this might be attractive at the present time, I think we need to pull ourselves out of this traditional feedback loop of learning and action. So, I would call for us at this crossroads, that we also consider looking to the left - this is an alternate route, one that looks to new sources of inspiration. From places beyond the West, from other places across the globe who are not restricted by the same past, who have another history, and who are not afraid to experiment with the new.

I see this latter route as one for the future – not in the sense of an immediate change – but perhaps one for future investment. A route that challenges and creates, possibly in a direction that takes us away from our comfort zone.

I am certain that we cannot afford to take only one route at this crossroads. I feel the future is about investment in new ways of asking questions, of experimentation, of gathering answers from unfamiliar sources. We need to be able to explore all of these routes concurrently.

I know it is a big task, but I am positive that we cannot afford at ENCATC to look through our archives in 25 years time and conclude we are still formulating the same answers to the same challenges. So this is our chance to step out of the loop and invest in new questions.

Thank you.