



Kültür Politikaları ve Yönetimi Araştırma Merkezi
Cultural Policy and Management Research Centre

About This Issue - Cultural Policy Yearbook 2022

RESILIENCE IN THE ECOSYSTEM OF THEATRE:

CULTURAL POLICY PERSPECTIVES FOR THE INDEPENDENT PERFORMING ARTS

Co-Editors:

Wolfgang Schneiderⁱ

Gökçe Dervişoğlu Okandanⁱⁱ

Independent Performing Arts in these years are taking place in the extraordinary context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Theatre companies are hit extremely hard, and the urgency to intervene in favour of cultural and creative industries, artists and cultural professionals is being felt around the world, especially in developing countries. However, the actual crisis only exacerbates a pre-existing situation: artists and other cultural professionals have always been vulnerable, particularly in developing countries.

UNESCO is discussing the concept of "Fair Culture" as a key to Sustainable Development. 2021 is announced as the year of "Creative Economy for Sustainable Development" and states have adopted legal instruments that contribute to promoting equity in the cultural and creative industries sector and rebalancing cultural exchanges between the Global North and the Global South. The two main instruments, the 1980 "*Recommendation concerning the Status of the Artist*" and the 2005 Convention on the "*Diversity of Cultural Expressions*", have stimulated important progress in the field of cultural policies and cultural cooperation. However, efforts still need to be made to improve the situation of artists and cultural professionals in developing countries and to strengthen their cultural and creative industries.

Whatever its form, especially independent theatre has a tendency to be mobile. It travels to different regions, rural areas, in between countries. The hosting of the visiting company is an established principle. This exchange can influence artists, and, occasionally, cultural policy. Theatre practitioners have a need to communicate: with the public, but also amongst themselves. They disseminate not only their stories, but elements of our cultural discourse: they are the voices in an ongoing international dialogue. Independent theatre is elemental, alive and enlivening; it allows us, through its cross-border co-productions, festivals and networks, to continually re-discover our continent through dialogue and exchange. An analysis of the worldwide theatrical landscape reveals platforms for debate and the sharing of work at every level: we are woven together by theatre. Despite language differences, there is a high level of geographical mobility amongst artists, and despite the different structures in different countries, communal creation is widespread. Festivals are important points of contact, embracing the full diversity of performing arts activity. This mobility and flexibility are made possible by a huge number of organising groups, alliances and networks, which are recognised and supported by cultural policy makers.

From a system thinking perspective members of this ecosystem of the performing arts scene, from transgovernmental UN institutions to independent artist initiatives share the energy of this communication, interaction, from a critical perspective solidarity thus resilience.

One of the greatest social and political challenges in a globalised world is integration, the need to ensure that people of all ethnic backgrounds, religious orientations and cultural traditions are able to participate equally in society. Instrumental to this is the nurturing of respect for cultural diversity in a multi-ethnic and multicultural context. Cultural policy can play a part in this, contributing to the recognition and understanding of cultural difference. "Interculturality" is a key concept in the identification of appropriate policy and practice to facilitate integration.

In societies characterised by cultural diversity and fast-paced change, efforts towards equal participation will only bear fruit if ideas around cultural identity and artistic activity are understood as process-driven, and if serious, critical questioning of our conceptions of borders and thresholds is recognised as a motor for social change. In the context of cultural multiplicity, discourses around societal forms and the understanding and treatment of difference transcend multiculturalism to become 'transculturalism'. An equalities-based framework is important, and of self-evident practical value, in the implementation of intercultural actions in conceptual and policy arenas, in agenda-setting, especially for collaborative decision-making, in the fair redistribution of cultural funds and in

the internal restructure of arts organisations. Infrastructure, network-building and access criteria are key to successful intercultural practice. Possibilities must be created for broad participation, to allow for the forging of relationships based on empathy for the new rather than fear of the strange.

Three major aspects need attention if the theatrical landscape is to be re-organised along intercultural lines.

1. The first and most fundamental area for action is that of **cultural education**. Unless society can provide a broader cultural training within the compulsory education system - a 'school for life' - large parts of the population will continue to remain excluded from cultural offerings and, in the best-case scenario, new forms of cultural expression will eke out a meagre existence beyond the pale of mainstream cultural policy. We must demand a commitment from policymakers to make good the rhetoric of annual government education reports and regional plans and recognise cultural training as a social responsibility. This could be achieved through the inclusion of cultural training in the educational curriculum, as a subject taught from kindergarten to adult education level. Training policy would emphasise culture as a core aspect of lifelong learning. With the tools of digitalization cultural education becomes an important catalyst of informal education, an important notion which should be respected in the design of intergenerational, intercultural, interdisciplinary programs.
2. The second working area is that of **cultural participation**, as a cross-cutting issue for all institutions that aspire to a holistic practice: it can inform their creative and organisational methodology and allow them to grow alongside their changing public, as well as to nurture that public. Only a self-imposed commitment to cultural diversity by the entire arts industry will lead to a culturally diverse public. Traditional marketing methods, focussed on the maximisation of profits and the selling of an existing product to an existing customer, are not equal to this task. In order to plan, position, communicate, disseminate and offer cultural programs to diverse target groups, cultural participation needs to work in tandem with research, education and training. Equality of participation, the democratisation of culture, and the dismantling of elitist structures are amongst the most important aims of cultural participation. Alongside these socio-cultural perspectives are other considerations. Cultural policy-makers have the right to demand to see a wide social cross section of the public in state-funded institutions, based on the belief that art can have a sustained and enriching effect on people's lives, and can strengthen communication, identity and sense of community. The benefits to just one participant can justify the public money invested.¹
3. The third topic will go around the research of **international cooperation**. Over the past fifty years, cultural policy has developed several approaches to international exchange that now need a makeover towards new models for integrated programmes of cultural co-operation beyond eurocentrism.

These need to be more innovative than mere funding schemes for artists or an idea of cultural diplomacy as a tool for conflict-management. Artists are convinced that international co-operations and the intercultural inclusiveness of their institution are closely linked and that both enrich their work and audience experience. These are varied and they owe the audience diverse stories, heroes, perspectives and artistic decisions as well as the elimination of barriers that keep people from participation. It needs to be accessible. Theatre can be a window into a different world that offers many perspectives on history, present and future. This can only be achieved if artists are open for co-operation beyond borders. This is why "Fair Cooperation" was established as one of the leading principles of artistic work to rethink the idea of fairness in cooperation in the context of equity and equality. The concept includes reflections on process and product as well as the idea of (co-

¹ Wolfgang Schneider, *Towards a Theatrical Landscape. Funding the performing arts: cultural policy consideration*; in: Manfred Brauneck and ITI Germany (eds): *Independent Theatre in Contemporary Europe. Structures - Aesthetics - Cultural Policy*. Bielefeld 2017

)authorship and (co-)ownership and administrative and legal challenges. Respecting the UNESCO definition of Cultural Diversity, Annika Hampel's research on "Fair Cooperation" (2014) has described examples of cooperation between North and South beyond postcolonial realities in order to define standard requirements for artistic work in the context of globalization and digitalization.

The European Theatre Forum in 2020 discussed the current situation of the independent performing arts and decided the "Dresden Declaration" with several statements for the future: *"The current crisis has demonstrated the interdependence of the highly diverse structures and players within the performing arts ecosystem. And, in some countries, it has exposed significant gaps between them:*

large and small organisations; artists and institutions; companies, venues and festivals; full-time staff and freelancers; independent, commercial and public structures. Gaps have also become evident in the different support mechanisms of each country. At the same time, the artists and arts organisations have shown an extraordinary level of inventiveness and determination to fight the impact of the crisis. They have also shown an enormous amount of solidarity, underlining the power of human capital, the core asset of theatre and the performing arts."

Urgently, the conference gave advice to Cultural Policy, to develop a comprehensive and coordinated plan to support and revive the sector during and after the pandemic; to address the urgent need to defend the freedom of artistic expression and acknowledge the undeniable power of the arts to open minds and encourage critical reflection, fostering the internationalisation of the theatre and performing arts sector, addressing environmental sustainability and promoting the performing arts as a public space.

The Cultural Policy Yearbook 2022 is facing the tasks to report about the transformation processes in the independent performing arts, focus on the development under construction and reflect results of research studies about **diversity, sustainability and digitalization**, about **future audiences**, the role of **arts education** and the **collective** actors as producers, about **new structures** of management, **alternative concepts** of cultural policy and a **radical change in the public support**.

ⁱ **Prof. Wolfgang Schneider PhD**, President of the National Fund for the Performing Arts in Germany, former founding director of the Department of Cultural Policy at the University of Hildesheim, from 2012 to 2020 UNESCO Chair in Cultural Policy for the Arts in Development, Honorary President of the International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People, member of the International Theatre Institute and editor of a variety of books and articles in cultural policy, arts education and the performing arts. (schneider@uni-hildesheim.de)

ⁱⁱ **Assoc. Prof. Gökçe Dervişoğlu Okandan PhD**, Faculty in Arts and Cultural Management Program and LITE Program on Learning Innovation Tech& Entrepreneurship. Academic advisor of YEKON (Creative Industries Association of Turkey) and Theatre Cooperative. Advocate on Cultural Diversity and Sustainability/ publishes on CCI, cultural management, entrepreneurship, social innovation. (hgokcedervisoglu@gmail.com)