

# New Policy Concepts for Art and Culture

ACTIVISTS PERSPECTIVES FROM AUSTRALIA, AFRICA, ASIA, EUROPE



## Culture Goal? A New Vision for Art and Cultural Policy An International Symposium

Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> September 2022, 1pm-5pm

OACPS House

Africa Room (1st Floor)

118 rue de l'Aqueduc

1050 Brussels

### Organisers:

- Cornelia Dümcke, European Expert Network on Culture (EENC), CULTURE CONCEPTS, Germany
- Justin O'Connor, University of South Australia; [Reset](#)
- Avril Joffe, UNESCO expert, Witwatersrand University, South Africa

### Background:

**This half-day workshop in Brussels on 16th September 2022** is part of a **series of events in Berlin (14th Sept), Brussels and Antwerp** between the proposal partners. **All events are based on a personal invitation. Over the course of September 2022 we plan to organise a series of seminars** to address current challenges and to rethink culture's current position in sustainable development, and in public policy per se. It stands particularly in the context of preparations for **Mondiacult/Mexico end of September 2022**, and along with the ongoing discussions around the **EU's new Workplan for Culture, 2023-27**.

All planned events build on a series of discussions between the proposal partners, including an online/ F2F international seminar 27th April 2002 in Australia, organised by the [Reset collective](#) with a panel involving the editors of the [2021 Voices of Culture document on the Cultural Goal](#).

**The Brussels symposium will specifically relate to these events:**

**First**, the *World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development - Mondiacult 2022* taking place in Mexico City 29/30 September 2022. We are organising an official Mondiacult (online) side-event aimed at the UNESCO Expert Facility on a Cultural Goal in the SDGs 24<sup>th</sup> August, and participants will also be involved in the *Mondiacult* launch of the *Goal for Culture* report September 27<sup>th</sup> (Mexico and online).

**Second**, the 12th International Conference on Cultural Policy Research (ICCP): *Cultural policy in Times of Disruption or Interruption* takes place 18/22 September 2022 in Antwerp. We see the Berlin Workshop and the Brussels International symposium as a contributor to this conference, where a panel will be organised to feedback the results of both events.

**Third**, and more generally, the preparation phase of the EU *New Agenda for Culture* by the European Commission, DG EAC.

The **Brussels symposium outcomes on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2022** will be reported (along with those of Berlin) in a plenary of the **International Conference on Cultural Policy Research, Antwerp**.

## Symposium Focus: A Culture Goal?

This half-day symposium will address the campaign for a cultural goal in the SDGs, less as a technical policy addition than a deep rethink of Culture's current position in sustainable development and public policy per se.

The symposium will assess the reasons for UNESCO's failure to secure a cultural goal in 2015 SDG process; what has changed in the global policy landscape and how this might impact the campaign for a cultural goal (#Culture2030Goal); and, consequently, what new themes and policy frameworks are emerging as priorities for Culture in the near-to-medium term.

In 2015 the United Nations General Assembly adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals, "a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable development for all" and set to be achieved by 2030. However, despite lobbying from many cultural organisations and UNESCO itself ([Hangzhou Declaration](#)), Culture failed to become a distinct Goal.

Whilst UNESCO has pragmatically sought to identify a role for culture in the other goals (such as education, economic development, sustainable communities, climate change), and has used the 2005 Convention as a serviceable framework to pursue the culture and development agenda, it was a significant setback.

The SDGs organise the activities of national and international development agencies and allow collaboration between them. Cultural agencies are hampered by being excluded, frequently focused on delivering to goals which only minimally accept its specific expertise or relevance. The important ethical and political concerns the cultural sector has brought to development, extensively outlined in the 1995 report *Our Creative Diversity*, have thus been 'marginalised, if not eliminated' (Throsby, 2017) from the SDG framework. So too the 'pragmatic' economic and social arguments for the development role (as 'driver and enabler') of the cultural and creative industries, launched in the wake of the 2005 Convention, failed to make it to the final 2015 UN 2030 document.

There is now a campaign for a Cultural Goal #18, which is gaining support, especially in the run up to UNESCO's *Mondiacult* Conference in September 2022, forty years on from the original 1982 Mexico conference. This symposium supports this objective but identifies the present moment as more than the occasion for a re-run of 2015 and the technical policy addition of a cultural SDG.

What is at stake in the Campaign is a radical reframing of cultural policy in a new global policy landscape, marked equally by uncertainty and fear, as well as new sources of hope and solidarity. It is in this light we also look to the next *Workplan for Culture*, the first post-pandemic EU cultural

policy framework. For the kinds of new thinking required to establish a cultural SDG are also those that would inform the new generation of cultural policy thinking whether in the EU, Asia, Africa or the Americas.

Such a re-imagining cannot just be the job of experts and professional policymakers, important though these are. As with the 'culture and development' agenda of the 1990s, which led to the 2005 Convention, the voices of civil society must be heard. Compared to the 1990s, civil society organisations in culture have diminished, or been marginalised, and lack the resources and the public platforms required to make their voice heard. This is both cause and consequence of the failure of the language of cultural policy to connect with a contemporary imaginary, with concerns very different to those of a previous generation.

This Symposium seeks to contribute to a new language and imaginary for a next generation cultural policy.

The Symposium will explore four related questions:

**First**, how to frame culture's cross-cutting themes (culture as vector) and its more specific needs and contribution as a sector, within a single goal for culture, rather than as a transversal theme. We address a perceived weakness of culture as 'too broad' by building on scholarly and advocacy work on how such a goal might be operationalised in practice.

**Second**, how to address more confidently culture's marginalisation by dominant economic and social policy discourses, exploring contribution to the new challenges, such as solidarity ('not leaving any behind'), climate change, growing inequality and distrust, and to new ways of imagining the future, as outlined in the UN's recent Our Common Agenda.

**Third**, to critically examine the prominence of economic justifications within UNESCO and other lead cultural agencies, especially around the cultural and creative industries, and how we might move these towards a more explicit and coherent account of culture as a 'global public good'.

**Fourth**, what new imaginaries, public policy discourses and practical policy proposals might we frame around a cultural goal and how might this connect to new global civil society voices coming from the next generations who must face these new challenges.

## Participants of the Brussels International Symposium

- Cornelia Dümcke, European Expert Network on Culture (EENC), Culture Concepts Germany
- Justin O'Connor, University of South Australia
- Avril Joffe, UNESCO expert, Witwatersrand University, South Africa
- Annick Schramme, University of Antwerp
- Tere Badia, Director, Culture Action Europe (CAE)
- Aya Kasasa, Expert Culture, Migration, Urbanisation and Demography, Secretariat of the Organisation of ACP States (OACPS)
- European Commission, DG Education & Culture (DG EAC), Mariachiara Esposito
- Frederic Jacquemin, Director, Association Marcel Hicter, Fondation pour la Démocratie Culturelle
- Mercedes Giovinazzo, Director, INTERARTS
- Marshall Marcus, Sistema Europe
- Tully Barnett, Flinders University, Australia
- Satu Teppo, Advisor to State Arts Office, South Australia; University of South Australia
- Sebastian Olma, Professor of Cultural and Creative Industries, Avans Hogeschool, Breda, Netherland
- Emma Webb, Arts Industry Association South Australia, Vitalstatistix
- Deborah Stevenson, University of Western Sydney, Australia
- Tom Fleming, International consultancy for culture and the creative economy

### Final confirmation expected

- Danielle Cliché, UNESCO, Secretary of the 2005 Convention on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2009-2019), current position Director a.i., Gender Equality Division, Cabinet of the Director General
- André Wilkens, Director, European Cultural Foundation
- Andrew Manning, Director of European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC)

## Procedure of the Brussels Symposium

Moderator: Avril Joffe, UNESCO expert, Witwatersrand University, South Africa

- 13:00 – 13:05 Welcome  
by Aya Kasasa, Expert Culture, Migration, Urbanisation and Demography,  
Secretariat of the Organisation of ACP States (OACPS)
- 13:05 – 13:15 Background, Context & Objectives of the Brussels Symposium  
by Moderator Avril Joffe
- 13:15 – 13:20 Introduction of Participants  
by Cornelia Dümcke, CULTURE CONCEPTS & EENC
- 13:20 – 13:50 *Cultural goal – Why this question now?*  
Presentation by Justin O’Connor, University of South Australia
- 13:50 – 15:00 Questions & Answers – Open Debate PART (1)
- 15:00 – 15:30 *Coffee Break*
- 15:30 – 16:30 Questions & Answers – Open Debate PART (2)
- 16:30 – 17:00 Summary of results (MONDIACULT, BERLIN; BRUSSELS)  
By Justin O’Connor, Cornelia Dümcke, Avril Joffe

**Additional background information for the Brussels Symposium is provided with a separate document from Prof. Justin O’Connor**

*Re-Imagining Cultural Policy Now*  
*A Workshop from a Global Perspective*  
Prof. Justin O’Connor (2022)  
University of South Australia

## Background Briefing

### Why did a Cultural Goal fail in 2015?

There have been a range of explanations put forward by scholars. Some are conjunctural (the distrust of UNESCO after the admission of Palestine as full member, 2009; the conservative electoral swing of some key supporters; the EU were preoccupied by digital regulation issues) or political (the US is opposed to the inclusion of 'cultural industries' in 'culture'; the UK, Scandinavia and The Netherlands worried a cultural goal would lead to 'cultural relativism' and an erosion of human rights) (Vlassis, 2015; Wiktor-Mach, 2020). Other tactical errors and internal organisational conflicts have also been identified.

However, there are recurrent explanations which point to more fundamental problems.

First, that the anthropological definition of culture adopted by UNESCO is too broad to be operationalised, a weakness often compounded by UNESCO's own looseness of use or easy assumption of consensus.

The UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies in 1982 defines culture as the 'whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group' including 'not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs'. Such a wide definition, it has been suggested, led to weak policy formulation:

"The debates were... limited to broad moral commitments, with no establishment of institutional mechanisms. In this sense, even if progress had been achieved, 'an overarching standard-setting framework and demonstration tools were nevertheless lacking' (Vlassis, 2015, 4).

To this one might respond by pointing to UNESCO's 2005 Convention and the Secretariat's operationalisation of its concerns in relation to the SDGs. UNESCO have also attempted to create a workable statistical framework for culture and development. Many others have attempted to provide a workable framework for Culture's sustainability agenda, specifying the ways in which culture, development and sustainability may be usefully broken down into demonstrable policy goals (see Special Issue of International Journal of Cultural Policy, 23(2) 2017). As detailed by the Goal for Culture Campaign, these [http://culture2030goal.net/sites/default/files/2022-03/EN\\_1-culture-as-goal.pdf](http://culture2030goal.net/sites/default/files/2022-03/EN_1-culture-as-goal.pdf) were available during the 2015 negotiations.

There is a tension, well known to cultural policy makers, between the broad 'anthropological' definition of culture and the specific system of production and distribution of 'art and cultural' sector, a tension of 'vector' and 'sector'. This will be addressed in this seminar. But 'broadness' itself is not an adequate explanation for culture's marginalisation.

There is then a second recurrent explanation: that culture was simply ignored. Whether or not it was too broadly defined or loosely operationalised, there are documented instances of key statements from the UN, EU and many member states which repeatedly failed to include culture, other than in the most cursory fashion. Even the latest UN statement [Our Common Agenda](#) fails to mention culture. Throsby (2017:142) summarises: in 2015 the problems were "identified in the goal-setting

process as economic and social issues, and correcting them would be expected to have a payoff in economic and social terms. In this scenario, culture does not figure, indeed is regarded as not necessary.”

Why? Throsby: ‘It could also reflect a view that art and culture are simply an adornment to human life, involving aesthetic and spiritual aspirations that are unrelated to the stern realities of survival’. (2017:142) This in turn is related to the over-reliance on narrow quantitative metrics, such as GDP, as measures of development, rather than other more diverse and qualitative measures – such as the Human Development Index, or the various Well-Being frameworks etc.

However, this does not entirely square with the inclusion of art and culture in the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights, and in many subsequent such UN declarations and conventions. It also ignores the centrality of art and culture to ‘social citizenship’, as with T.H. Marshall: “from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society”. What was taken for granted in older forms of social democratic thinking gradually dropped out of sight.

Whilst commentators rightly point to changes in our policy understanding and settings – simplistically, from ‘art’ to ‘cultural’ policy – which makes culture a complex and contested site, they often ignore concurrent changes in economic understanding that increasingly positioned the concerns of art and culture as peripheral. Thus Jordi Pascual, suggested that the “[Culture and Development](#)” Agenda approved in 1998 at the Stockholm Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development (already less ambitious than the “Our Creative Diversity” report) was eclipsed by the World Bank’s conference and agenda with ‘[The Power of Culture](#)’. For example, “Our Creative Diversity” clearly and explicitly promotes cultural rights, while Stockholm only mentions this frame, and “The Power of Culture” ignores them (Pascual, 2021).

An example of this is the question of intergenerational equity, the very heart of [Brundtland’s](#) definition of sustainability. David Throsby, in his discussion of intergenerational equity, suggested economics can only pose this as “an efficiency question, one of determining optimal strategies for intertemporal resource allocation”. As is widely known, ‘social discount rates’ are near on impossible for economics to determine. As such, Throsby suggests, it can only be framed as a “moral or ethical issue, dependent on people’s subjective value beyond the reach of a strictly-defined economic calculus” (2017:138). The disastrously short-term calculus of social discount rates involved here – where we value the present over and above the generations that succeed us – is given extensive coverage in Kim Stanley [Robinson’s Ministry of the Future](#). One of the most fundamental and universal definitions of culture is of a connection – Edmund Burke’s ‘contract’ – between generations. The inability of a certain form of economic reasoning to measure, and thus value, this connection is one of the reasons we are facing multiple world-wide system stress.

This should suggest that the problem may lie not (just) with Culture’s broad definition but the kinds of economic reasoning that began to dominate development after 1980. Whilst Culture should be able to provide clear policy outcomes and deliverables, its ethical framework sits uneasily within neoliberal economics. It is this narrow, quantitative, reductive version of human welfare and development that is currently being challenged on many fronts, with new forms of ecological, feminist, indigenous, neo-Keynesian and heterodox economics attempting to define new forms of human well-being and flourishing. These are attempts with which one might expect Culture to make common cause – and this symposium seeks to explore these potential connections.

The third explanation is that in 2015 the UN and member states rejected the attempt to present culture's role under the rubric of the 'cultural and creative industries'. Though there were multiple motivations behind the 2005 Convention, its project became increasingly defined by culture's economic contribution, as a 'driver and enabler' of development. This was a pragmatic response to charges that UNESCO's was a purely ethical programme (Pascual, 2009:13). Yet this also failed. Why?

A cultural goal focused primarily on CCI did not really make sense. If it was an industrial sector, providing decent work and economic growth, or gender equality, or sustainable communities then this could be accommodated by the existing goals. The CCI line defined Culture too narrowly, as stimulant for a 'creative economy', just as the anthropological definition was too broad. In both, culture could be positioned as pure vector, and disappear into the other 17 goals.

On the other hand, Culture as a specific area of public policy – along with education, health or social services – was an argument not explicitly made by UNESCO. This reflected a more general crisis of culture in public policy, caught between a weakly defined public good seeking subsidy and a boosterised 'creative economy' which claimed to be at the cutting edge of a global economic transformation, and requiring an industrial policy. The two positions made culture's pitch somewhat incoherent.

## Where Are We Now?

Covid marks a watershed moment for art and culture. Its immediate and catastrophic impact resonated beyond a particular crisis. It raised questions as to the boosterish claims for the creative economy, and the seriousness with which governments took its contribution.

New themes came to the fore, challenging the emphasis on the individualised entrepreneurship of previous decades. Care and common responsibility, collective organising and solidarity emerged. Whilst UNCTAD, NESTA and others took a 'build back better' approach with [Creative Economy 4.0](#), there has been a marked reluctance to simply go back to normal (de Peuter, Oakley & Trusolino, 2022).

There has also been a loss of faith in the global development narrative, as the Global South's share of world trade in cultural goods and services simply refused to move from its low starting point. The distinct drop in international aid around culture, and especially the IFCD, noted in the last [UNESCO](#) monitoring report, fed into the widespread disillusionment with the promises of globalisation witnessed generally in recent decades. There have also been fears about the impact of CCI-led economic development focus on cultural diversity, local sustainability and indigenous cultural practices. Equally, the ways in which CCI are actually part of the unsustainable growth problem have been documented.

The cultural policy narrative has been about incremental progress, where the cultural sector, despite setbacks, gradually 'chips away' at mainstream policy. The evidence rarely bears this out, with culture becoming increasingly 'eclipsed' in many sections of public policy. There are some key exceptions, especially in the urban field, where culture has been increasingly seen as part of any sustainable urban community. But on the whole, rather than a policy landscape of gradual progress we have one marked by radical shifts and breaks (as in [Amitav Ghost's The Great Derangement](#)). One such was around the 1980s, which re-positioned a previously commonly acknowledged Culture as peripheral to a now dominant economic logic. We are now in another period of radical change,

where these prior settings – culture’s ineffectual moral values needing to be firmed up by pragmatic economic arguments – no longer count as much.

There is a change in landscape of global development, where the reality of climate change has imposed strong environmental constraints on ‘sustainability’, radical shifts in the idea of ‘growth’ and direct challenges to the idea of GDP. There’s a shift away from market fundamentalism and small state ideology, and a focus on development through investment in public services and infrastructures rather than industrial growth.

This can be seen in the UN’s 2021 Our Common Agenda, which focused on social equity, solidarity and trust, with investment in health, education and human services (though culture is again absent). The recent UNESCO 2022 Cultural Monitoring Report had the by-line: Addressing Culture as a Global Public Good. On-going discussions around the Cultural goal with the EU in Voices of Culture, express the need for new economic models and new forms of public value. The UCLG has been calling for a cultural rights-based approach to development and urban planning for a long time.

Rather than the economic argument for culture, many are now using the language of cultural rights, returning to an original set of UN priorities and values. Here the broad anthropological definition of culture can be given policy specificity in a different register to that of economic development. Culture, whilst drawing on a wide ethical register – as with education, and health and social welfare – can elaborate specific public policy goals and operational priorities. It does not have to describe itself as an industrial growth sector to do so.

This specification might involve a narrowing of the claims for culture as vector. So it may no longer be able to claim exclusive rights to be the ‘social glue’, for example, but this specification can be a source of strength and confident co-operation with other public policy sectors, rather than its grandiose claims melting into the transversal ether.

We are only at the beginning of this process, of creating a new social compact for culture, and this symposium represents one contribution only.

## References

Greig de Peuter, Kate Oakley & Madison Trusolino (2022), ‘The Pandemic Politics of Cultural Work: Collective Responses to the COVID-19 Crisis’, *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, DOI: 10.1080/10286632.2022.2064459

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David Throsby (2017) *Culturally Sustainable Development: Theoretical Concept or Practical Policy Instrument?*, *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 23:2, 133-147, DOI: 10.1080/10286632.2017.1280788

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