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12TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CULTURAL  
POLICY RESEARCH:  
CONFERENCE PANEL THEME 'Futures and future-being for Cultural policy'

**Panel Title: 'Futures and future-being for Cultural policy – cultural policy as political imaginary of human possibility'**

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*Note on the following paper:* this is a 'dialogue' paper – written as a research discussion (or 'trialogue') between the three panel members, ahead of a discussion-based panel. It serves to provide a broader fulcrum around which the audience might attend as participants in the panel debate. While each member will present further research statements in the Panel, it will not be dominated by panel papers. Each section below is identified by our initials, JV, MDS and SA.

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**JV:** I want to begin by clarifying the terms of our Panel outline — starting with the conference panel theme term of 'Futures'. It has been modish for decades to append the word 'future' to an older term — 'cultural policy futures', for example, is a phrase that offers a degree of hope and even excitement, but without any substantive content. That, perhaps, is testament to our craving for innovation (our enduring modernist sensibility); or perhaps it's something deeper, such as an 'event' of culture (in Alain Badiou's sense), where culture can generate transformative power (e.g. avant-garde; radical protest; intervention; and so on: Badiou, 2005). 'Culture', while historically is mostly tradition, custom, lifestyle, memory and heritage, as a theoretical term (as in 'cultural studies') signifies the contemporary, the vital and dynamic, generating the means or power to take us beyond the current state of things, beyond our routine, established social life or 'system'. For Badiou, culture can be *the beyond* 'being' or the current status of social *reality* itself (Watkin 2017; Sandhya 2020). While both society and culture have material conditions, society remains embedded in an economy of function and task-driven rationality, whereas the economy of culture, whatever the presence of instrumental rationalities of all kinds, is situated within a more expansive landscape of intersubjective, imagined, and creative horizon

of possibility. And while 'intersubjective, imagined, and creative' sound immediately appealing, this is largely down to our own discursive positioning in our own neoliberal (post-neoliberal?) times – erasing recent memory on, among other things, how 'intersubjective, imagined, and creative' was as much characteristic of fascist mass politics as socialist or even our long European post-1980s consensus politics of 'social democracy'. Our conference term 'future-being' (for cultural policy) evokes such an immediate appeal, but, like the German *Sein und Werden* that has so typified post-Romantic philosophy, also sets up an irreducible problem.

This problem is that 'cultural policy' has become an object of a bureaucratic rationality that, while remaining bureaucratic (a system of governance that sits aside actual democratic processes) has become even more animated by the 'intersubjective, imagined, and creative'. Cultural policy is a routinely taught combination of knowledge, organisations, resources, funding systems, and so on, and yet much of this is (by virtue of being 'cultural') assumes the perpetual presence or possibility of intersubjective, imagined, and creative (culture as people like us, being creative, fulfilled, having freedom, deep meaningfulness, wellbeing of life, and so on). And this remains a very real composite reality for all our teaching and research (students believing we are offering them a truly viable career that is also an 'alternative' lifestyle) — that cultural policy as object of research is largely derivative of a range of social science and humanities disciplines and knowledge genres, attain to some value largely (only?) through its bureaucratic appropriation or promise of such. Yet, we are driven by the 'cultural' and all the meaning, hopes and dreams that allows (which is a slightly garbled way of saying 'cultural' and 'policy' makes for a contradiction, not least phrasally).

In Badiou's terms [and I'm no student of Badiou, by the way] this state of 'being' of cultural policy is indeed problematic – in its very constitution as something established, significant, a thing, a subject of research, and so expresses aspirations for potential change at the same time as setting forth its parameters (where change is only possible to the extent that the cultural is embedded in the bureaucratic rationalities that prevent substantive change). It remains animated by the promise, aim, future of horizon of possibility that is intersubjective, imagined, and creative, but such possibilities are only actionable through a bureaucratic overreach (a reliance on our public authorities facilitating something or investing in something they do not value or does not play a role in their economy of value).

A classical critical viewpoint would see this condition as an ideological contradiction (between the rhetoric and the material reality, and so on). But it is surely not so simple. It brings me back to the highly appealing but vacuous phrase ‘cultural policy futures’: It is testament to the power of brand (‘cultural policy’ now a prestige consultancy brand object, a profession, established discourse, and so on) that it has become a symbolic signifier we all embrace. In the sense of Max Weber’s famous distinction between ‘formal rationality’ and ‘substantive rationality’— the ‘cultural’ dimension of our research is substantive (‘ends- or values-driven, where our means are designed or defined through these aspirations) yet our policy thinking is necessarily ‘formal’, or defined by the legal-regulatory production of measurable outcomes that emerge from our institutions of government, culture or education: see Weber, *passim*, and Kalberg, 1980). We optimistically consider this a virtuous trajectory from theory to practice/practice to theory, and all the transdisciplinary and vocational benefits that follow. But it also sets up structural forces we cannot control — using a Weberian framework, Paul DiMaggio in the 1980s was identifying how otherwise diverse and independently-minded arts organisations gradually began to replicate the structural features of their economic superiors (like funders or patrons: an ‘institutional isomorphism’, DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). It’s important to factor into our conception of culture all the shaping forces of which we are not aware.

The only real debate on ‘rationalities’ these days is in the context of ‘institutional racism’ or diversity, but not the cultural economy itself, or the political economy of our cultural research and venerable academic institutions that employ us. I have been concerned for a long while how the prevailing value system of cultural policy research (if I could hazard to say, a generalised social democracy or ‘left liberalism’ as we used to say in the UK) is all too easily compatible with (indeed, is functionally adept within) a neoliberal economy. Perhaps after Covid, or after Trump’s protectionism and Biden’s ‘welfarism’, we are moving beyond the neoliberal; it may be, that the neoliberal was not just some passing ‘free market’ economic ideology but an expression of deeper or longer-lasting structural features of a historic ‘march of capital’, then the prospect of a ‘Left neoliberalism’ is not beyond the bounds of possibility. Perhaps this is why it has become increasingly difficult to sustain the old dichotomy (cliché?) of ‘critical versus instrumental’ cultural policy – for ‘instrumental’ also encompasses ‘impact’ and ‘public value’, and consequently, ‘critical’ is now a reflexive feature of democratic institutions and their demands (on behalf of government) for tangible signifiers of equity, rights, and the use of culture for the public good. Our previous special issue on ‘Cultural Policy and Cultural Populism’

(KPY 2017-1018) noted how ‘the popular’ was becoming an increasing condition of democracy itself. As cultural policy researchers with academic jobs and aware of the power of social media, we know the stakes of peer acceptance, institutional sponsorship, career promotions and prestige, big funding awards, citations and publication sales. These have become conditions of professional credibility involving an assent to a system that functions with a ruthless pragmatism (problem-solving, innovation-craving), a perpetual demand for measurable benefits or value-laden impacts, and all the while putting academics under a non-specific obligation to be ‘good for society’.

I am not setting this discussion in a certain direction — I want you both to respond to this with your own narrative. I will start with a question for you Professor Milena — are the components of cultural policy’s future already with us, and what we need to do is develop them or evolve in some way? Or, should we be looking for a Badiou-style ‘event’ of change, of a movement to a different space altogether – an event of an overcoming of the formal rationality of cultural policy, which embodies the structural priorities of our neoliberal cultural reality? Or, perhaps we are all living in different worlds, as neoliberal philosophy had it (which was more compelling that anyone would ever admit), that the freedom of individual interests naturally generates a distinctive particularity — that we can’t talk about ‘cultural policy’ as if it is something shared between Oxford, Belgrade and Istanbul [where we three are].

**MDS:** It seems to me that cultural policy, as it became an academic discipline, and due to the various demands of transparency, accountability and objectivity that are today norm for public policies (cf. the managerialisation of public policies: Protherough and Pick, 2002), became trapped in its own success, over-normativised (standardised), and consequentially less and less inspirational for *cultural development*. In the Sixties and Seventies, everyone knew that this emerging discipline had a future, thus, the question was not even asked. Rather, it was already imbedded in values that key thinkers were discussing, linked to both philosophy (Marcuse, Bloch, Yugoslav Praxis philosophy, later, Baudrillard), cultural studies and sociology of culture (Williams, Hoggart, Hall, Bourdieu) sociologie de l`education populaire et animation socio-culturelle (Dumazedier, Miege, Ion, Roux, Gaudibert), theories of emancipation and decolonisation (Freire, Boal) — and here I just quote a few names that were obligatory readings for the subjects of cultural policy and cultural management at the University of Arts in Belgrade and at Universities of Paris V and Paris VIII where I spent my years of bachelor and master studying (1972 -

1978). Today, 'shifting' (changing) the key notions and the key terms of the discipline — from Cultural policy to Creative Industries policy, principally — and refocusing the 'subject' of attention from cultural development and arts policies to CCI policies (even in UNESCO documents such as *Re/Shaping Cultural Policy*, 2014, 2018, 2022) this implicitly indicates a 'future of cultural policy' – policy that is centered on economic and instrumentally developmental aspects of culture, in spite of all efforts to underline *at the same time* the importance of freedom of expression, gender, equity, and so on (the aims of this Convention were: to support sustainable systems of governance for culture; to achieve a balanced flow of cultural goods and services; to integrate culture in sustainable development frameworks; and to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms. Three out of four aims, that is, are linked to better governance, management, efficiency and sustainability of the art sector around the globe, while only one is trying to protect the autonomy of artist and art field: Dragičević Šešić 2020: 41). Thus, our new vocabulary of cultural policy fits perfectly with both the neoliberal democracies of the Global North as much as the illiberal political systems of Central and Southeast Europe, and even the more authoritarian populist regimes that do not care to keep at least the appearance of democratic governance (currently, Turkey, for example).

Thus, I am not advocating to look back, but to look forward to new ideas coming from the Global South – true decolonisation ('decoloniality') of cultural policy as discipline, accepting that this world is a *pluriversum* (Reiter 2018), to explore emergent artistic practices as a source of a new reflection and exploration for future cultural policy frameworks, based more on the needs of different communities and their dissenting practices (Ranciere 2010), and not on needs of state (public) administrations.

To a certain extent, the process that we (academics) have praised the most — the evaluation of national cultural policies by the Council of Europe (since the late 1990s, by various means) that have set standards for policy-making and policy assessing — seem to be quite controversial. It was offered first to EU countries, then also to new democracies, as a set of standards as *universal* standards to evaluate the quality of policy-making and its instruments. Those standards were first situated in two countries with highly developed system of public cultural administration – Sweden and France — and later the contribution of British experts was critical in bringing into this European cultural realm the issues of accountability (and all other themes that have derived directly from the New Public Management or NPM). But on the whole, member countries have not even tried to offer new visions and ideas, or an

assessment on how their practices was different or important (for example, none of the national reports of former Yugoslav countries stressed the legacy of self-governance in culture as a model; or the highly developed status of their freelance artists, which still see local authorities paying their social security and retirement taxes and where the status itself is provided by representative associations of artists from every field). Even today, when we look the well-known *Compendium* grid to document and to analyse the cultural policies of various countries, we invariably find one and the same grid – and yet this grid did really influence the ‘unification’ and standardisation of cultural policies.

So then, my hopes for a future cultural policy as a practice but also academic discipline, go with a new generation of scholars that are thinking of a much more complex world, about cultural policies *in a more-than-human world, more-than-human agency, respecting the living world, etc.* that are words that are starting to enter slowly into a new cultural policy discourse (Kisić & Tomka 2020). As cultural organisations (public, independent, and commercial-private) are key ‘implementers’ of cultural policy, I would truly advocate for their autonomy; thus, for ‘bottom-up’ policy making. New forms of funding are needed – funding that would not impose criteria set in advance, or for what kind of projects that are supported – not pushing the creative sector to adapt their ideas to a ‘Call criteria’; to stop the pressure of ‘project’-making (that guarantees efficiency, but destroys focus and time for artistic research and reflection), today the key form of cultural policy-support for independent companies and artists. We need more research grants, and less bureaucracy in policy-making and decision-making.

I expect more from the intersectionality of culture and education, but not of education as it is seen today, endorsing ‘expanded professionalism in arts’ (advocating training of artists in becoming entrepreneurs), fostering art school emphases on skills and not critical thinking [in a discussion during the ENCATC congress in Antwerp in 2013 on European Education Strategy, this issue was asked, but not answered by an EU commissioner). It is not only in arts and culture that ‘employability’ has become the aim; thus ‘dual’ education has been praised in the last 10 years as an innovative educational approach (and imposed as a key reform pathway for Western Balkans countries by the joint forces of Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Lichtenstein, even though it existed throughout Twentieth Century. It was stopped when the whole industrial system in the Western Balkans collapsed, and pupils no longer had factories or experience of real ‘producing’ environments). Yet today the situation is

that the economy in the Western Balkans – factories, particularly – amount to foreign companies ‘packaging’ products, with no actual production, research and development, design and manufacturing. The ‘learning by doing’ is only a more sophisticated form of exploitation of a student’s labor, useful only for making these countries interesting for investors.

On the other side, new generation of scholars in Africa, Asia, Latin America, come with their vision and interests – and cultural policy might have a real future if it becomes open for voices not expressed only in the English language – as even the language is a form of standardisation. Look how everything that is difficult to express in English, such as animation socio-culturelle, or education populaire, is disappeared from the discourse of cultural policy-making?

Indeed, who now knows about fantastic experience of SESC cultural centers in Brazil, as they are only known in the Portuguese language. Or, why countries that are still facing issues of caste exclusion in their cultural policy presentations are not addressing this issue – probably because from a European perspective this is not important. But working and researching in India, in Mali, in Mauritania, I could see the huge discrepancy that exist between reality and the UNESCO national Quadrennial Periodic Reporting about Cultural policies in stimulating creative industries (i.e. the 2005 Convention). New generations of researchers and cultural policy practitioners are well aware of this – it’s only that up to now they have not been asked to present their research results on the world scene.

And further, it was interesting for me to ‘discover’ last year in Bamako, Mali, in the library of the NGO, Acte Sept, seven books about regional cultural policies. Although the research and printing was financed by European foundations, (the same ones that invited me to work in Bamako), they were not sent to me as preparatory material as they were entirely forgotten (and printed in French, not in local languages); further, they have not helped NGOs to make their books ‘public’, by asking for an ISBN number, so none of these books can be found, retrieved from any information library or publishing systems.

An issue to be raised, therefore – and one rare in European cultural policy discourse — is *intergenerational relations in culture*, which includes the role of ‘national languages’. Languages that are outside of educational and public social systems are ‘de-stimulated’ in their cultural development for those ethnic groups; there emerges

as double colonisation of African cultures, from the Arabisation through Islam and then colonisation through French/English language, education and social systems; the caste system (linked to caste as a profession: musicians, *Koredouga*) that traditionally supported art and craft production is now under religious (Islamic) repression and the State does not offer any response. For this configuration of a relation between culture and religion amounts to losing traditional ethics and related customs (as forbidden by a new religion) as embedded in their own cultural economy of knowledge transfer and confidence for the whole community. With both traditional and contemporary art practices forbidden along with the Westernised system of education and art education, a systematic neglect emerges, particularly of the crucial memory and former sites of the decolonisation process.

**SA:** Thank you, Professor Milena: I will try adopt two different perspectives towards cultural policy (and) futures: the first is a philosophical-critical one, the *outsider's* perspective; the second is an analytical-(self) critical one, the *insider's* perspective.

To present the outsider's perspective, two science-fiction novels spring to mind. The first one is the sweet dystopia of Arthur C. Clarke, *Nine Billion Names of God* [first published in 1953] — where Tibetan monks who believe that *when* all (9 bln!) names of god are finally listed, the universe will end. At the conclusion of Clarke's story, the two software technicians hired to run the project leave the monastery for fear that nothing will happen at the final completion of the names, turn back on top of a hill and see that "overhead, without any fuss, the stars were going out". This is one of our possible futures.

The other is a graphic science-fiction novel, *Snowpiercer* [first published in 1982 as *Le Transperceneige*, by Jacques Lob and Jean-Marc Rochette] now a movie and recent TV series, is about a post-apocalyptic dystopia where a train carrying all remnants of humanity (with evident class distinctions) and of civilization, which enters a life of harsh struggle as they end up in icy ravines facing total extinction. And we are only in 2031! The series, now on their third season, was produced and broadcasted in concomitance with the outbreak of the pandemic and lockdown. In any case, if futures are dystopic, dystopia become redundant.

From the insider's perspective, I do believe we have to change our mindsets and lexicon substantially (including us working in researching and teaching cultural policy-futures) trying to cope with the current and future uncertainty, and inequity. Let me use here a recent quote of mine: "I propose replacing Nietzsche's 'Will to power'

with a different 'Will', which will develop brand new concepts that favor beauty and life rather than the borrowed or customary language that we are in the habit of using: I propose replacing it with the 'Will to thought'.

[https://agenda21culture.net/sites/default/files/speech\\_izmircultsum2021\\_serhanada\\_en.pdf](https://agenda21culture.net/sites/default/files/speech_izmircultsum2021_serhanada_en.pdf)

Those of us, the academics of cultural policy, work in more or less three spheres of our discipline, viz. *teaching*, *research* and *advising practice*. Among these three, *advising practice* is the most problematic, due to changing nature of implementation in cultural policy (since the 1960s). It started as an administrative exercise of policy making in the realm of UN member states (see the first country profiles, Mondiacult 1982, etc.) and later slowly evolved into an accessory to Development to remedy the cyclic crises of capitalism (employment as creative industries – an oxymoron, but signifying value added, etc.) then extended to social inclusion (fourth pillar), diversity (2005 Convention) and environment, as well as wellbeing more recently. At a time when nation states were fading as principal actors of change, cities started to emerge as the new makers of cultural policy (see Rome Charter 2020; Izmir Declaration 2021; UNESCO creative city scheme, etc.); in the future, cultural policies would be more and more made for practice, at the micro level.

As far as the *teaching* dimension is concerned, our dilemma is to educate our students towards — a more or less hypothetical and ever declining — 'market'. Our current normative/affirmative pedagogic tools might turn into more analytical/questioning and interactive approaches as they try to be both skeptical and inventive. In the given university environment, as it is grounded in self-sublimation and financial concerns, this proves to be a tough challenge. But still worthy to be undertaken.

The last dimension of our activity, namely *research*, could serve as reconciliatory of the first two. If we can be brave enough to shake our own established and highly regarded frameworks — acclaimed by our peers and published in esteemed academic journals, without saying much on actual substantive cultural issues — we could maybe glimpse of a feeble light. One thing for sure, the truths of the Anthropocene that arrived to its dusk will be ill-adapted to meet and give meaning to a not-yet-named era.

As the gap among the wealthy and the deprived of the planet is turning into a huge cliff — not unlike the digital divide — the gap between the well-off institutions of

culture (having their annual allowances and regular incentives) on the one side, and the independents (who have to work to be resilient and build from scratch) on the other, risks reaching an irrecoverable state, a point of no return.

The French *situationist*, Guy Debord, wrote in his manifesto (of 1960) “[a]t a higher stage everyone will become an artist, i.e., inseparably a producer-consumer of total culture creation” continued by the expectation/prophecy that this would “help the rapid dissolution of the linear criteria of novelty” (Debord, 1960). That ‘higher stage’ prophesied by Debord is not be a million miles away from us, the cultural policy scholars; and yet we will have to address the micro level, i.e., the individual, the ‘producer-consumer self’ in our work, and maybe do this through other disciplines like psychology, ecology etc. The pivotal concept at all levels today has become *equity* and it goes parallel with *diversity* and *conviviality*.

**JV:** You have both taken very different avenues of thought, so thank you. If I can reiterate some of your salient points — Professor Milena, you begin with the historical fact of cultural policy as emerging with the broader spectrum of public policies (after the Second World War at least – we still take the post-War period as our most immediate origin for ‘society-building’ cultural policies, but perhaps that will disappear with the next generation). This historical fact raises two immediate questions — first, ‘public’ as a political concept has radically changed, and I am not sure how far cultural policy research maintains a strong socio-political grip on this changing reality; and second, that the public policy basis for cultural policy, while embodied in all kinds of political commitments (to common culture, citizenship, equality, cultural democracy, and so on) can nonetheless ‘over-normitivise’ culture and make it less pertinent to ‘cultural development’. And it is to the relevance of global development I will return – as you say, the future may not come from us (should not, perhaps – depending on who’s future is in question) but from the Global South. I am immediately attracted to this idea, and to the emphatic hybridity of culture as emerging globally (not, as ‘public policies’ had it, or primarily professional or institution-based). New forms of autonomy and self-management are now visibly possible, and new complex forms of thought are also possible, where categories of social and cultural and economic are less hermetic and ideological and more permeable with issues on the relation between human agency and the ‘living world’ as you put it.

Professor Serhan's focus on our conception of 'future' itself is an example of the new intellectual hybridity, where we can engage in a serious discussion on organisation and politics and economy but also refer to narrative writing, social behaviour, our philosophical heritage, and the pragmatic realities of intellectual research in an educational context. The research capacity of cultural policy as an academic field remains oddly small and lacking in any real profile – excepting the *International Journal of Cultural Policy* (the IJCP), which has grown enormously in the last ten years. But even the IJCP currently faces limitations simply in relation to the breadth of research conducted by our international community of researchers, notably in relation to pedagogy and to the following generations of researchers and teachers. As Serhan points out, the subjects of teaching and practice (if 'pedagogy' can encompass both) are the unique dimensions of cultural policy as an academic subject and yet are compromised and unclear as to their analytical status. How do we even define our pedagogies of cultural work or policy practice – either with terms common to the social sciences or terms inherited from neoliberal economics (which a creative industries-oriented cultural policy regards as the 'real' world, jobs and money). Or, do we define this 'real world' of work more fully (and in relation to actual global reality and its social orders) – taking in the ubiquitous presence of culture and creativity and also the enduring inequity and barriers faces by all too many?

But I want to take as my own starting point both your references to the intellectual history of cultural policy, specifically with the 2005 UNESCO Convention on cultural diversity (cf. Professor Milena's reference to *Re/Shaping Cultural Policies*, 2014, 2018, 2022; UNESCO 2005), and the shift in the international political discourse cultural policies, where this shift implicitly indicates a 'future of cultural policy'. The shift I identify is from the idea of a policy-thinking that revolves around questions thrown up by the economic and developmental (instrumental) aspects of culture – a huge period of investment, which for me runs up to the MDG-F projects (from 2007-8, the Government of Spain-funded 'Achievement Fund', notably the 'Culture and Development' dimension: i.e. of the old Millennium Development Goals). Why I say this, is that UNESCO did once facilitate some seriously good critical thinking in relation to the prevailing course of world development [the history of this critical thought remains unwritten in full, if survives in many declarations and scrupulous minute-taking and translation at the old-style UNESCO conferences, symposia and expert seminars [I note Richard Hoggart's lament that UNESCO was once an intellectual and philosophical organisation until it was incorporated into the UN's world development effort through the 1960s: Hoggart, 1978].

Yet, my reference to UNESCO's older political discourse could perhaps have its origin in the paradoxical origin of a global development policy, famously iterated by President Truman's 1949 inaugural speech in which he stated "The old imperialism – exploitation for foreign profit – has no place in our plans. What we envisage is a program for development based on the concepts of democratic fair dealing" (Truman, 1949/1967). The term 'development' was first deployed in relation to scientific and industrial progress as a means of both population productivity, prosperity and the evolution of institutions of representative democracy — quite unbelievable that they were all assumed to be internally connected by some kind of cause-effect linearity (cf. Walter Rostow's 1960 *The Stages of Economic Growth*). In reality, it spawned a model of global political economy, replicated as national domestic economy, according to which each poor country was measured against and assigned the appropriate measure of political patronage in terms of economic investment (read Escobar 1995 for this story). Crucially, while the 'three worlds' structure of global development became a fundamental organising mechanism for world politics, UNESCO managed to engage all three to various and lesser degrees and address what Truman first referred to as "underdeveloped" with questions of literacy, education, culture and heritage (with heritage becoming a surprisingly successful means of cultural policy mobilisation by the late 1960s).

The decades of the 1960s—1980s saw a range of cultural policy responses to this, which we would do well to remember: from the 1966 Declaration of the 'Principles of International Cultural Cooperation', to the Intergovernmental Conferences on Cultural Policies (Venice, 1970; Stockholm 1998), The World Conference on Cultural Policies (Mexico City, 1982), the World Decade for Cultural Development (1988-1997), the Action Programme of the World Commission on Culture and Development ('Our Creative Diversity', and so on), taking us up to the under-appreciated 2001 Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, around which was swirling an increasingly influential range of critical approaches to global development that acknowledged the role of culture from Dependency Theory, post-colonial critique, post-Development, feminist economics, Basic Needs and the rise of welfare economics, community development, the evolving 'capabilities' approaches, the rise of alternative forms of GDP, such as Wellbeing or Happiness indexes, and so on. This we can all remain inspired by.

But returning to my point – and this is where I would like your views – there has been a shift, noted in the UNESCO *Re/Shaping Cultural Policies* project from 2014 to 2022. i.e. from the role of culture in the international political economy of development (i.e. the economics of capital as promoted by individual nations states, and the critique of its colonial aspirations and destructive social consequences) to a more hybrid and expanded if not paradoxical) role, which I believe you both have intimated in your responses above. This hybrid and expanded role can be defined in terms of... (and I won't list them all)

(i): a *globalisation* of our sense of 'public' culture (i.e. the nation state and its historical cultural policies and models of institutions is no longer a principal frame of reference);

(ii): and with this, the replacing of 'policy making' as such (principally, from nationally-grounded models) with a *strategy development* for global governance, i.e. the 'policy' ground is around the 2005 Convention within an SDG 'meta'-framework.

(iii): The classical critique of capitalist development economics dissolves, as enterprise capitalism is no longer a 'big enemy' (and object of systematic critical theory development); rather, cultural policy is re-orientated towards sustainable development (i.e. a holistic and incremental evolution aiming not for dialectical or democratic or other conflict-based progress, but the integration of harmonious ecosystems and the like).

(iv): Sustainable development (resilience; balance and distributive harmony; ecosystems and flows; diversity and inclusivity) is a means to obtaining universal welfare where democratic models of representative interests have failed.

(v): Religion as a central component of historical culture, and politically incendiary, yet in this framework, ignored (for reasons we are aware, but even still, for many UN member states their religion *is* their de jure cultural policy).

Of course, the 2005 convention is an intervention in the global economy of cultural goods and services (not a comprehensive global cultural policy), and is fundamentally empirical and its concerns are limited to the meeting of Convention objectives. Yet, its use of sustainability and human rights presents itself as a global template for cultural policy development – and as a forum for talking about culture and the world, it de facto replaces the old UNESCO political discourse and great 'intergovernmental conferences' on cultural policies. Even so, there's little attempt to build on the groundbreaking *Creative Economy Report 2013: widening local development pathways*, which, masquerading as 'the local' nonetheless created a substantive new global culture and development model (UNESCO 2013). Is this

because the ongoing 2005 global rights-based sustainability model does not theoretically admit the local place-based, democratic deliberation and critical thinking traditions that are European in their provenance?

**MDS:** Thank you for giving me opportunity further to discuss changes in the cultural public realm today. Yes, the ‘public’ realm as a political concept has radically changed, as concepts of a welfare state and a ‘state’ of a social justice has practically disappeared from the agenda of cultural policy-making, but also from the analysis and theoretical interpretations of cultural policies. These concepts have been replaced with notions of creative industries and creative cities, changing the focus of responsibility from public authorities to citizens<sup>i</sup>, to individuals that should be as such or as part of different communities, entitled to organise things, to make them ‘work’; so, this ‘liquid’, amorphous civil society was not only stimulated but forced to participate in a ‘bottom-up’ policy-making. Being partisan myself of a bottom-up policy-making, but as a *complement and a correction* of top-down policy-making, I cannot accept that if the situation of artists and cultural workers is on the edge of precarity, that it is their own responsibility to change it. They should not be accused of such, or assuming that it results from their not developing entrepreneurial and other transversal skills, skills of ‘expanded professionalism’, as ELIA is calling it (Danhash & Lehtikoinen 2018) — now required for their active involvement as participants in the creative industries, from production ‘till dissemination or trade phase.

Only few theoreticians and policy-makers have recently openly spoken about this: that public responsibility on all levels had to be reduced, and that culture was left to the market and the capacities of its agents, for them to make a ‘success’. Dieter Haselbach’s book *Der Kulturinfarkt: von Allem zu viel und überall das Gleiche* (authored also with Pius Knüsel, Armin Klein & Stephan Opitz and published by Knaus Albrecht, München 2012) stirred up public opinion, as they were openly advocating for such (calling things with their proper names) and demanding what policies are implicitly doing – a diminishing of the public cultural sphere (the abolition of half of all public city theatres, for example). The cultural realm, cultural researchers and practitioners, had ignored their crude reasoning, but in reality, an ongoing process is really happening, and it is not being attended to by direct critical thought. If things are not working, we know, the blame is usually put down to the ‘corrupted system’, populist governments or authorities preventing a lack of transparency in decision-making, and so on. Yet the problem is, in fact, the system as such, and not

only in its methods of implementation.

Many online discussions followed the publishing of the “Cultural Infarction”, and we may consider some of their points<sup>ii</sup>): I quote — “The public discussion that has sparked this book shows how much the topic has been simmering for too long.. On the one hand, the demands of the makers [producers, artists], in part without any attempt at self-critical or economic consideration of their own concepts, on the other hand, the political landscape, which all too gladly accepts culture as a stage for its own interests or vanity [...]”; and “the book is more than polemics [the book’s subtitle was *Eine Polemik über Kulturpolitik, Kulturstaat, Kultursubvention*] helping to make clear the necessity of a cultural-political discourse: What will the future of the ever-growing cultural infrastructure look like against the backdrop of changing social conditions? The four authors “want to treat the patient” (p. 13). In their opinion, the person in need of help is the German cultural sector, which they have proven to know very well. They demand more entrepreneurial thinking and action, more orientation towards the market and demand, and above all dealing with real social challenges: Immigration, global exchange, media revolutions. They change everyday life, but not the cultural sector” (p. 25).

Again I quote: “Data presented in the book are there to threaten, not to praise: “unbelievable expansion of the cultural sector over the past 35 years: seven times more libraries, eight times more music schools, at least seven times more museums. Problem 1: rising costs. Problem 2: the number of users that has not increased. For the authors, the expansion was “haphazardly” with the feeling that they were doing something right, good. Neither follow-up costs were considered, nor were the hoped-for targets and the impact of this growth.” Another internet discussant observation was that the proximity to the State that characterises the cultural sector in their country (Germany), both in terms of the need for public bodies and for subsidies. For this creates a distance from the market and thus a lack of innovation: “State funding allows them to turn away from competition” (ibid, 64). The result, is by no means just a German problem, but a European one, as evidenced by one of the many international quotes in the book: “Europe is not sufficiently interested in pop culture, entertainment, the creative industries, the market and ethnic diversity, which is why is it experiencing great cultural stagnation” (Steven Erlanger from *The New York Times*, ibid: 71) — Dirk Heinze, Cultural Management Network”

Another: “the cultural infarct can be summarized in a single sentence: the public sector can easily close half of the theatres, as in a few years' time the computer game will be the 'leading task' anyway (loosely based on Hans Sedlmayr). Of course: opera as a high culture for immobile, persistent bourgeoisie versus interactive and cyber dangling as the leading cultural medium of tomorrow. Developed and advanced by industry, the free market, with no or only initial subsidies” — Joerg Mergenthaler

In spite of all criticism that I am sharing now with you, as Jonathan had rightly observed, “new forms of autonomy and self-management are now visibly possible, and new complex forms of thought are also possible, where categories of social and cultural and economic are less hermetic and ideological and more permeable with issues on the relation between human agency and the *living world*.” I have to agree. There are more and more new actors – organisations, collectives, individual artists, activists in the cultural realm. Thus, the structure and agency of cultural policies are changing dramatically, on all three levels. Of course, on a macro level – through scientific research and academic writings, but also through UNESCO efforts, certain ideologies, but also explanations of rationality (arts are good for... instrumentalisation), as well as legitimacy, are indeed emerging. Even citizenship is now being approached from radically different (ideological) perspectives: (a) as civic identity, (b) as empowerment, and (c) as ‘consumership’ (Bianchini 2022).

Here I am only sorry that we are not brave enough to respond to this with bold new theories; we are more following the interests of our national governments, as UNESCO also does (as a multi-governmental organization – thus, while the issue of cultural sustainability has entered into their policy theory, it is not acknowledged to what extent culture plays a role in general sustainability theories, or why culture is not mentioned in any of 17 SDGs), and research as such is still facing issues of ‘methodological nationalism’ (Beck U. 2007), imposed by the meso-level of cultural policy research.

The meso-level is controlled by state administrations – most cultural policy instruments are developed at governmental (or ministerial) levels, including policy measures, policy priorities, structural policies, macropolicies (urban development, *aménagement du territoire*, etc.). Here, new concepts are imposed on both policy-makers and practitioners: for example, *entrepreneurship* as a panacea (Dragičević Šešić 2020), cultural sustainability as a ‘duty’ and responsibility for each cultural

operator (Hristova et al. 2015), productivity and efficiency linked to audience ‘development’ (for the sake of income, and not of inclusion and quality of reception), event-making and festivalisation, to raise economic importance of culture (impact on job market, for national GDP, etc.).

However, micro level components (micropolitics and practices) are more and more diversified and enabling innovation and further diversification: this includes specific policy contents, people-led initiatives, processes, new types of power distribution, resources, specifically those linked ‘circular economy’ or to the digital realm. It can best be seen through different positionalities of different cultural agents, and the different perspectives those agents are bringing. The new, challenging issues in cultural policy that are emerging from this micro level are demonstrating a deep relationality of identity and memory politics – and yet, the culture and politics of memory are not yet explicitly part of cultural policies in most places (not even having a short subchapter in a ‘compendium of cultural policies and practices’). It is the same with international cultural work in cultural relations – cultural diplomacy and its real efforts in forging a decoloniality approach. If recently (June 2022) functionaries of the Council of Europe could make a statement that European countries have not had a war since 1945 – they forget the war in Indochina, or Algeria, not to mention the NATO wars in Iraq, Libya, Serbia... involving a lot of European soldiers and machinery. Official cultural policy research avoids such ‘political’ issues, including the geography of our network of foreign institutes abroad (why there is no British Council or Goethe Institute in Cambodia?)

Serious research would show that internationalisation strategies are economically driven – thus cultural diplomacy is just a side product (Nisbett and Rofe 2022) of military, economic and other important state policies, and basically is never happening through democratic scrutiny (elaboration and discussion). But the de-politicisation of cultural policies is still an idea worth following, returning to the idea of public values and public interest that should be discussed within public policy discourse, both related to its contents and forms in all different policy subsystems.

**JV & SA:** Thank you Professor Milena. Let us reiterate our opening quest, on defining *a future for cultural policies*: we have all discussed the concept of a public policy for culture in the context of the changing complexion of culture itself, of Global South-oriented, small-scale, local, and heritage-based culture as well as the globalisation of both organisations, legal discourses (like the UN’s cultural conventions) and the digital, of markets, fashion and technology, and so on. For us,

the question of a future for cultural policies obviously begins conceptually — by defining the aims and orientation of cultural policies as an object of research and practice of pedagogy (as a form of knowledge). And perhaps we can end by proposing, not some simplistic way through (or a dialectic of) local and global or corporate and public or any of those other structural dyads of culture we have indicated — but rather, propose another avenue of thought altogether. Cultural policy is a form of knowledge – and should become more invested in the critical and normative investigation of knowledge as a creative cognitive process, i.e. before it becomes codified and congealed as economy, as data, information, research material, intellectual property, publication, or whatever. Our proposal is that knowledge as process, as community, as space, as event (Badiou) should warrant more attention; we should ask questions on the lack of a philosophical dimension to our academic discourse of cultural policy, and even when we adopt UN-norms on justice, equality and recognition, there is all too little attention on what these crucial socio-historical concepts actually mean today.

More attention, therefore, must be given to the socio-historical dynamics of culture and policy *thought and knowledge* itself, and how these become operational within agendas for cultural policy research. If we did, more attention would be attributed to how cultural policy (as defined above) is a fundamentally ‘reactive’ discipline — from the post-War ‘society building’ to the 1960-70s ‘democratisation’ to the 1990s instrumentally significant capability for integrating cultural production into urbanisation, enterprise economy, and today, social and human development (both local and global or UN level). Any talk of cultural ‘autonomy’ or independence signifies either Euro-centric romanticism, avant-garde or modernist aesthetics, or the kinds of small-scale resistance once perhaps anarchist or libertarian but now fully absorbed into new meta-theoretical (grand narrative?) imperatives for human rights, equity and diversity and environmental sustainability.

But the question on the ‘instrumentality’ of cultural policies, while seemingly critical, has become a circular one — policy is intrinsically instrumental and that’s how democratic public culture is constructed — and it is only short-circuited by the fraught question of autonomy, which is surely internal to the whole notion of having a ‘future’ (of its own). Either a cultural policy research future is simply as *supplement* to future social and economic development (i.e. as the cultural dimension of governmental authority, methodologically absorbed into the kinds of social sciences utilised by public policy makers), or, cultural policy’s future is not equivalent to such, and this

margin of difference between culture and policy will not come down to the formal rationality of policy (instrumentally involved as it must be, in varying degrees of course) but to the ‘cultural’ — and the ‘research’ (processes of knowledge construction that do not simply mutate in response to changes in the conditions of political economy or economic development).

This may already sound romantic, but it is the critical romanticism of a post-Frankfurt critical theory, who may remind us that the fate of the ‘critical’ (or our capacity, both collective and individual, to reflect on the social and political conditions of human agency in all its forms and its aspiration for freedom) is intimately bound up with cultural autonomy or whatever autonomy may be left in the age in which we live. We end this dialogue, then, simply by summarising the points we hope to broach in our conference presentations:

The recent confluence of the economic inflationary crisis, of climate change, Covid-19, the #MeToo and Black Lives Matter social movements, Ukraine being destroyed by Russia, and so on and on, has generated a pervasive political disorientation. We can easily protest against large-scale oppression or war, but our arguments for and against particular iterations of the social order, have waned. Whether it is on the continued viability of European democratic liberalism and the transnational institutions it made possible, cultural policy research is not a place of contested viewpoints. This, for me, is not for a lack of a critical sensibility, or method or political will, but a lack of attentiveness to how cultural policy has been constituted as a species of knowledge — from bureaucratic public administration to municipal creative economy to global sustainable development and beyond — without resorting to the patronage of any one scholarly discipline. So then, how can we construct a form of international cultural policy discourse that invites a greater investment in philosophical and theoretical, methodological and diplomatic cultural knowledge (taking into account the persistent need for intervention, ‘impact’ and value that have begged this question over the past two decades)?

We all take for granted post-Enlightenment European thought, and terms like ‘critical’, assumed their intellectual legacy to be central to our research enterprise: however, through the current ‘culture wars’, the enduring dominance of English-language research, and the rising consciousness of the colonial heritage of our institutions, the ‘Critical Humanities’ and our identification of ‘culture’ as distinct from society or economy, is becoming indistinct from ideology and forms of populism that are increasingly useful for both Left and Right authoritarianism. We need to discuss

questions of legitimacy, democracy, authority, power and political ontology.

Where in the past, cultural policy by necessity assumed 'the cultural' as a substantive object of knowledge (albeit complex, historical, experiential, as structural contradiction, and so on), the epistemics (means of thinking in a research context) of that assumption were animated by European nation-state based arts, aesthetics, evolving traditions and institutional professionalism. We cannot now assume that colonialism, Empire and nationalism (forces that resonate as Ukraine is incrementally dismembered) are just historical-intellectual phenomenon on which to take a 'critical view'. Surely, they are internal to the political ontology of the formation of culture – specifically Europe, America and across the world.

Finally, our concept of 'culture' is becoming less authoritative as a repository of historical value, and is becoming a term more credibly operational within a new set of axioms. International Human Rights discourse has provided a series of axiomatic truths and operational policy rationales for culture that arguably bring into question all previous models of professional practice (models of scholarly expertise, knowledge-based institution-building, local and national cultural-determination, genre-based artistic development, and so on). How do we collectively reconcile ourselves to our own intellectual historicity and remain open to a world wanting to move into an era of non-domination by Western European epistemologies, patterns of logic and thought, dialogue and deliberation, 'liberal' social order?

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Acte Sept, Bamako – 7 transcripts of cultural policy discussions:

1. Journées de concertations culturelles de Sikasso, Bamako: Acte Sept, 94 pages 2010;
2. Les Actes de la concertation des acteurs culturels de Koutiala, Bamako : Acte Sept, 102 pages (21-23 Juin 2010.);
3. Journées de concertations culturelles de Kadiolo; L hommages aux martyrs, 15 mars 2013. Bamako: Acte Sept, 63 pages;
4. Journées de concertations culturelles a Kolondieba, 17/19 Avril 2013 Bamako: Acte Sept, 25 pages;
5. Journées de concertations culturelles de Bougouni 15/17 MAI, 2013, Bamako: Acte Sept, 27 pages;
6. Journées culturelles de Yorosso 22-4. Mai 2014. Bamako: Acte Sept, 27 pages;
7. Journées culturelles de Yanfolia, 2/4 Juin 2014 Bamako: Acte Sept, 78 pages.

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<sup>i</sup> "The democratic state expands on the citizen to be responsible in judging and shaping his life, which cultural policy denies him" (Haselbach et al. 2012: 25).

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.amazon.com/Der-Kulturinfarkt/dp/3813504859>, accessed 10<sup>th</sup> June 2022.