

Culture Action Europe

From Access to Democracy





Who are we?

Culture Action Europe (CAE) is the major European network of cultural networks, organisations, artists, activists, and policymakers. As the only intersectoral network it brings together members and strategic partners from all areas of culture. Culture Action Europe is the political voice of the cultural sector in Europe, the first port of call for informed opinion and debate about arts and cultural policy.

We believe that culture serves as a fundamental cornerstone for shaping a shared future in an open, globally connected Europe, ensuring the sustainability of our planet, and fostering plural, open, and caring societies.



Who are we?

290 members in 38 countries

European Networks

National Associations

Public and Private non-membership organisations &
companies

Cities & Regions

Foundations & Cultural Institutes

Individuals & freelancers





What do we do?

✓ We advocate for culture and the arts!

We influence political decisions affecting the cultural and creative sectors, participate in the agenda setting of cultural issues, elaborate and propose policy recommendations, and create open spaces for public debate.

✓ We connect and facilitate exchange and dialogue!

We 'encode' the sector's lived experiences and proposals to the EU policy makers and 'decode' EU political and policy-making to the sectors' representatives on the ground.

What do we do?

✓ We co-create and share knowledge!

We undertake intensive research into specific topics to provide information, ideas and advice to policy and decision-makers, to our members and to other intra-sectoral and cross-sectoral actors.

✓ We lead projects and campaigns!

We campaign to put culture at the heart of public debate and decision-making.



Common values & challenges

We advocate for the **intrinsic value** of culture and its role in imagining the future. Simultaneously we highlight **culture's contribution to other policy areas**.

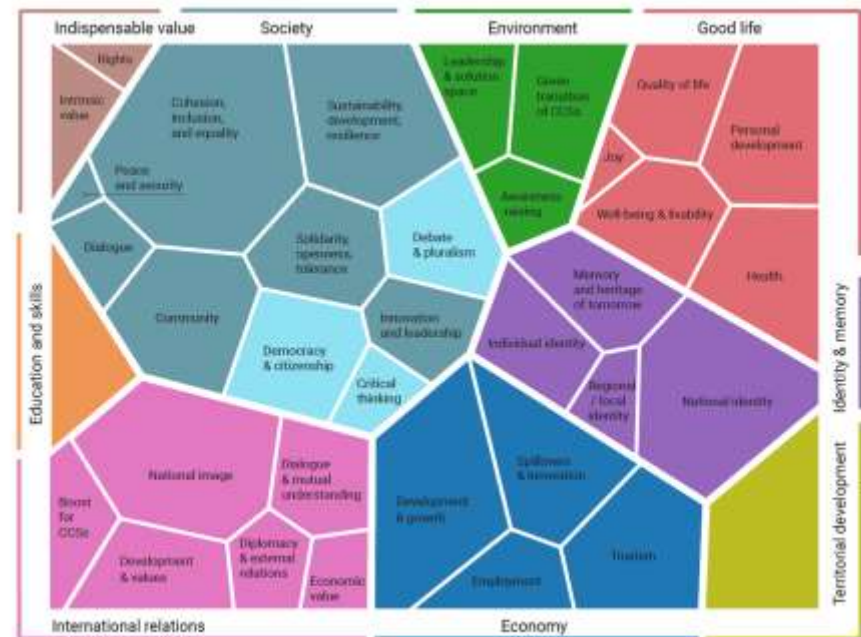
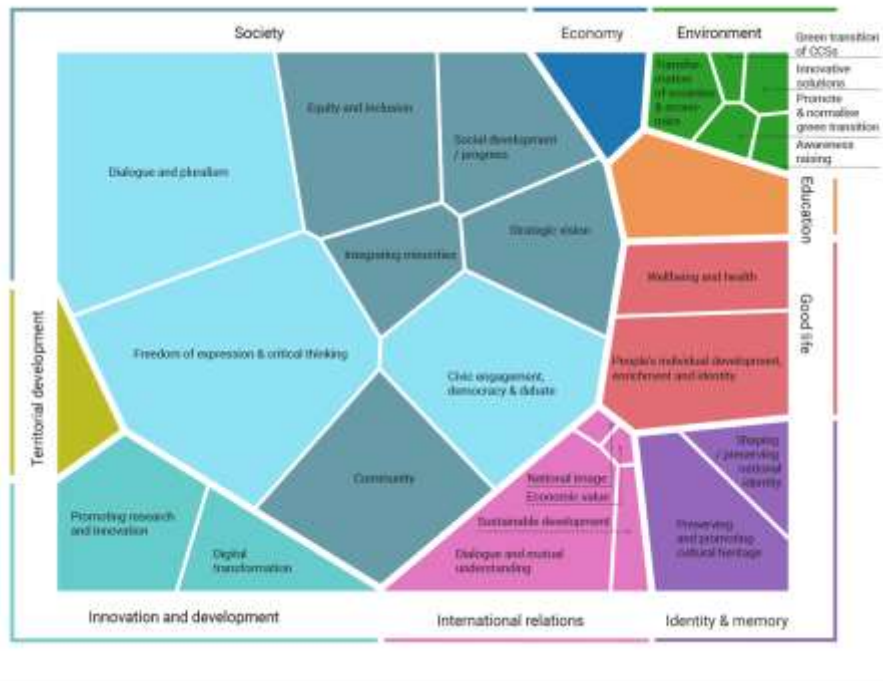
Cultural rights are human rights and our community stands strong behind the concept of **cultural democracy**.

We embrace the concept of cultural leadership that advocates for policies ensuring that **culture and artistic expression are inclusive and accessible to all**, in centres as well as in peripheries.

Access vs. transformation

State of Culture in Europe 2024, policy research aimed at:

- generating a snapshot of cultural policy affairs in Europe
- exploring the essence and diversity of cultural policy priorities among EU member states and the EU
- offering an insight into how these priorities correlate with the concerns of various cultural sectors.



Findings of the State of Culture in Europe 2024:

- Where does the cultural sector sees the value of culture: **transformative power of culture**
- Where do national governments place culture: enhancing **access to culture** and promoting culture as part of people's life and education

How to read the gap between the two?

Changing Paradigms

Democratisation of Culture

Aims to make arts accessible to everyone, as a public good, like education or health care.

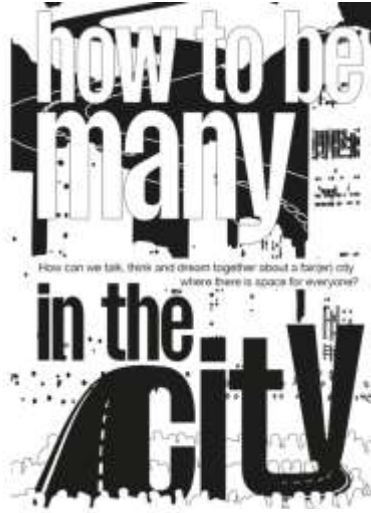
= "Great art for Everyone" (coined by Arts Council England).

Cultural Democracy

Refers to bottom-up, participatory, networked, open forms of culture and cultural governance that reflects social diversity and the fluid, changing nature of artistic expression.

= art by, for and with everyone.





Strengths & weaknesses

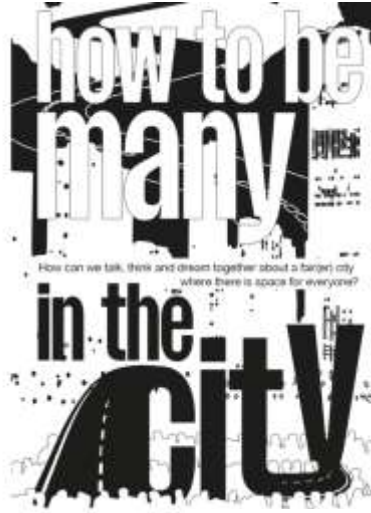
Democratisation of Culture

Strength: simple idea, it links with other public policy priorities, and it suggests fairly straightforward actions

Weakness: top down and can be disempowering. It provides access to the arts and culture but only on the terms of those who create, manage and live from it.

Posters of
Kaaitheater,
Brussels





Strengths & weaknesses

Cultural Democracy

Strength: It's bottom up, inclusive, values diversity and plurality, opens up spaces for participation, including governance and decision-making, empowers to exercise cultural rights

Weakness: idea is complex and often challenges existing policies.

Posters of
Kaaitheater,
Brussels



Recommendations

Carta do Porto Santo Porto Santo Charter

1. Principles and **values of cultural democracy to be reinforced** into all EU Member States' cultural and educational public policy objectives and measures.
2. To foster the **development of cross-sectoral action plans for education and culture**, responding to the challenges and creative potential of a more diverse, inclusive and democratic Europe.
3. To reinforce the necessary conditions to create long-term action plans, for all people to be able to exercise their **cultural rights and duties**: valuing cultural diversity; empowering them and giving them voice and power of decision; involving them in the creation of cultural policies and in the programming of cultural organisations; promoting access and the possibility of participation in cultural production and dissemination; making them accountable for reaching common cultural goals. Digital tools offer an opportunity to achieve these goals.
4. To **fund cultural organisations to create the concrete conditions for promoting cultural democracy**.

Changing Paradigms What's next?

- From economic and social justifications for investing in culture to supporting **culture's intrinsic value and transformative power**
- From enhancing access to culture to recognising **culture's contribution to the overall renewal and RESILIENCE of our societies.**
- Cultural leadership that is intrinsically linked to **cultural democracy**

Expect a framing paper after the summer and join our conversation

Sector Blueprint

Culture Compass



Participation in culture takes many forms: from creating, performing, producing, governing, curating, volunteering, donating, learning, mentoring to more receptive ways like attending, watching, or listening. Generally speaking, cultural participation aims to enable Individuals and communities to engage with, contribute to and benefit from cultural life.

As stated in the European Commission's report 'Culture and Democracy: the evidence,' citizens who participate in cultural activities are much more likely to engage in civic and democratic life.

Despite the proven societal benefits of cultural participation—from strengthening democracy and social cohesion to promoting well-being—many of the most impactful cultural practices remain underfinanced or undervalued. Structural inequalities, bureaucratic obstacles or top-down models limit the accessibility and transformative potential of culture.

European Commissions Culture Compass



3.3. Widening participation in and access to culture

Cultural participation and access to cultural activities are essential to promote active citizenship, and are a fundamental pillar of any democratic and inclusive society.

- Culture passes designed to enhance cultural access, especially for young people.
- EU funding, notably under Creative Europe, has also promoted access to culture

To broaden and improve the quality of participation in culture, the EU and its Member States should assess how policies, such as those related to science, health, environment, education, training and social cohesion can foster engagement in culture.



Thank you!

**Lars Ebert
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