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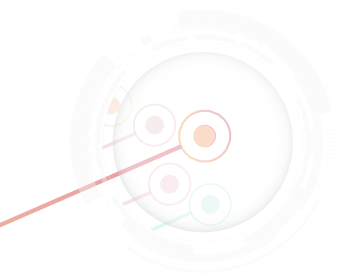
Cultural Policy
TRACKER

Frameworks for the Future



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editorial

As 2025 unfolds, ENCATC takes pride in presenting the 10th issue of the *Cultural Policy Tracker*, a publication that has become a vital space for reflection, evidence, and foresight in cultural policy. Entitled "Frameworks for the Future", this edition invites us to think collectively about how culture can anchor societies through uncertainty and transformation.

In recent years, culture has emerged as both a catalyst and a compass for addressing the defining challenges of our time—from climate transition to digital ethics, social inclusion, and the redefinition of creative labour. The contributions in this issue illuminate how research and policy are converging around these priorities, offering grounded insights and forward-looking frameworks for sustainable cultural governance.

Lorenzo Biferale, Roberta Comunian, and Tamsyn Dent open the issue with an innovative study of cultural mapping in Dundee, proposing inclusive, data-informed approaches that balance regeneration with social equity. Giorgia Natoli's analysis of Italy's *4C Project* highlights how cultural organisations can lead by example in the ecological transition, embedding sustainability in internal governance. Antonio Taormina revisits the evolution of Italian Cultural Observatories, reflecting on their pivotal role in producing knowledge to guide policy decisions and ensure accountability across regions. Anna Ochmann's contribution explores the implications of artificial intelligence for culture and creativity, urging ethical and transparent frameworks that safeguard artists' rights and agency.



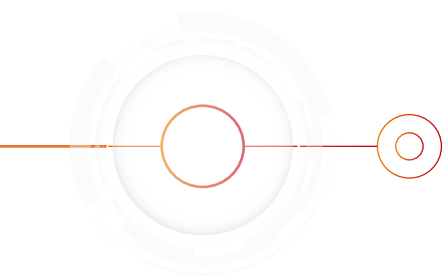
editorial

Taken together, these articles form a powerful reflection on how policy frameworks can evolve to support more equitable, resilient, and future-oriented cultural systems. Following the success of MONDIACULT 2025 in Barcelona, which reaffirmed culture's place as a global public good and a pillar of sustainable development, this edition underscores ENCATC's continued commitment to building bridges between research, practice, and policymaking—to ensure that culture is not only protected but empowered to shape our collective future.

May this edition inspire all those who work to ensure that culture remains both a public good and a human right—at the heart of sustainable societies.

Yours sincerely,

GiannaLia Cogliandro Beyens
ENCATC Secretary General



Locating Culture and Creativity: Pluralism and the Making of Urban Cultural Opportunities

The case study of Dundee, Scotland

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Introduction

This article examines the distribution of cultural and creative (CC) resources in cities, assessing how current mapping and planning approaches shape investment and access. Existing models often focus on formal assets and creative clusters, whereby opportunities are normatively concentrated in dense urban centres. While such clustering aims to foster the economic impact of creative industries, it can overlook sustainability, community engagement, and the diverse ways citizens experience culture. We define CC inclusively, encompassing public, commercial, non-profit, and amateur cultural opportunities. Drawing on recent urban frameworks such as chrono-urbanism and the 15-minute city, the paper explores accessibility and proximity as key to equitable cultural participation, particularly highlighted during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Considering the Scottish city of Dundee, a city notable for its local government's implementation of culture-led regeneration, the research compares official Points of Interest (POIs) collected by the Ordnance Survey (OS) with qualitative insights from resident interviews. This mixed-methods approach reveals significant gaps between top-down representations of culture and the decentralised, everyday experiences of local communities.

The findings suggest that urban planning focused solely on cultural clusters risks overlooking citizen needs and local diversity. Participatory mapping and inclusive engagement offer a pathway to more equitable, responsive cultural policy, ensuring that urban development reflects the lived experiences and cultural aspirations of all residents.

The issue and current knowledge

Over the past few decades, cultural policy and urban planning have focused heavily on creative and cultural clusters (CCCs) – concentrated areas of cultural industries, flagship institutions, and festivals. These strategies have been used to drive regeneration and economic growth (Tommarchi and Jonas, 2024). While successful in some respects, they have also fuelled gentrification, displacement, and inequalities, often leaving out local artists, grassroots culture, and communities in less central areas (Brokalaki and Comunian, 2021).

More recently, alternative approaches have emerged (see De Bernard et al. 2022 for a review). Creative and cultural ecosystems (CCEs) and cultural mapping highlight the importance of everyday cultural practices, community participation, and diverse networks that go beyond large institutions or flagship projects. However, these approaches are not always well-connected to urban governance and planning tools.

At the same time, the 15-minute city model (chrono-urbanism) has gained traction as a planning concept that emphasises proximity, accessibility, and liveability – ensuring that residents can access key services, amenities, and opportunities within a short walk or cycle (Moreno et al., 2021). This model is being discussed in relation to health, sustainability, and equity, but has rarely been applied to culture and creativity.

This paper argues that bringing these approaches together can help policymakers rethink cultural provision in cities:

- **Beyond clusters:** Culture does not exist solely in centralised hubs – it is embedded across neighbourhoods, communities, and everyday life.
- **Equity and access:** Planning should account for the spatial and temporal accessibility of cultural opportunities, not just economic growth.
- **Bottom-up perspectives:** Local citizens' lived experiences and cultural practices should inform how cultural infrastructure and opportunities are distributed.
- **Integrated frameworks:** Combining chrono-urbanism with CCE thinking allows cities to move away from top-down, investment-heavy projects towards more inclusive, place-based, and community-driven cultural strategies.

In short, cultural policy needs to evolve from concentrating resources in a few high-profile areas towards a distributed, accessible, and equitable cultural ecosystem, embedded in the everyday lives of urban residents.

Dundee as case study and methodological approach

Research draws from the Horizon 2020 project (2019–22) DISCE (Developing Inclusive and Sustainable Creative Economies) analysing creative economies in 10 European cities, with Dundee examined as a case study. Following periods of deindustrialisation and urban decline, Dundee has undergone major culture-led regeneration (McCarthy & Lloyd, 1999; England, 2021), with investment in flagship cultural infrastructure (e.g., Dundee Contemporary Arts, V&A Dundee) and designation as the UK's first UNESCO City of Design (2014). It is recognised as a case study in which culture has been strategically integrated into wider regeneration (housing, employment, community development), with a strong higher education and creative industry ecosystem, especially in design and digital

media, which supports Dundee's innovation identity. It is also acknowledged for its inclusive narratives of participation and creativity remain central to official policy framing.

However, the current understanding of creative and cultural resources within the city can generate tensions and limitations. The spatial concentration of investment in central waterfront risks excluding peripheral neighbourhoods. While creative clustering generates economic benefits, it can narrow opportunities for community-led or grassroots cultural participation.

Methodologically, it is clear that official datasets (e.g., Ordnance Survey) provide comprehensive mapping of cultural institutions but may not reflect lived experiences or informal cultural spaces. On the contrary, citizen-led mapping shows broader, more diverse geographies of culture than official records suggest, including community centres, commercial creative spaces, and subcultural gathering places. This new research study used both official statistics (61 cultural institutions identified via OS data) and qualitative interviews (20 participants). Participants mapped where creativity happens in their city, highlighting the mismatch between official "top-down" data and community perceptions of cultural life. Analysis connects with the "15-minute city" discourse, emphasising accessibility and proximity of cultural resources.

Key findings

The institutional perspective (official data) confirms that culture is concentrated in Dundee's city centre and waterfront, particularly in the area surrounding the "cultural quarter." It shows the role played by flagship investments (e.g. V&A Dundee, UNESCO City of Design status) and universities that have reinforced a centre-focused, institution-led model of cultural growth. Libraries, cinemas, and community centres are among the few cultural assets spread throughout neighbourhoods. It is evident that this centralisation risks reinforcing inequalities, leaving many peripheral areas underserved (figure 1).

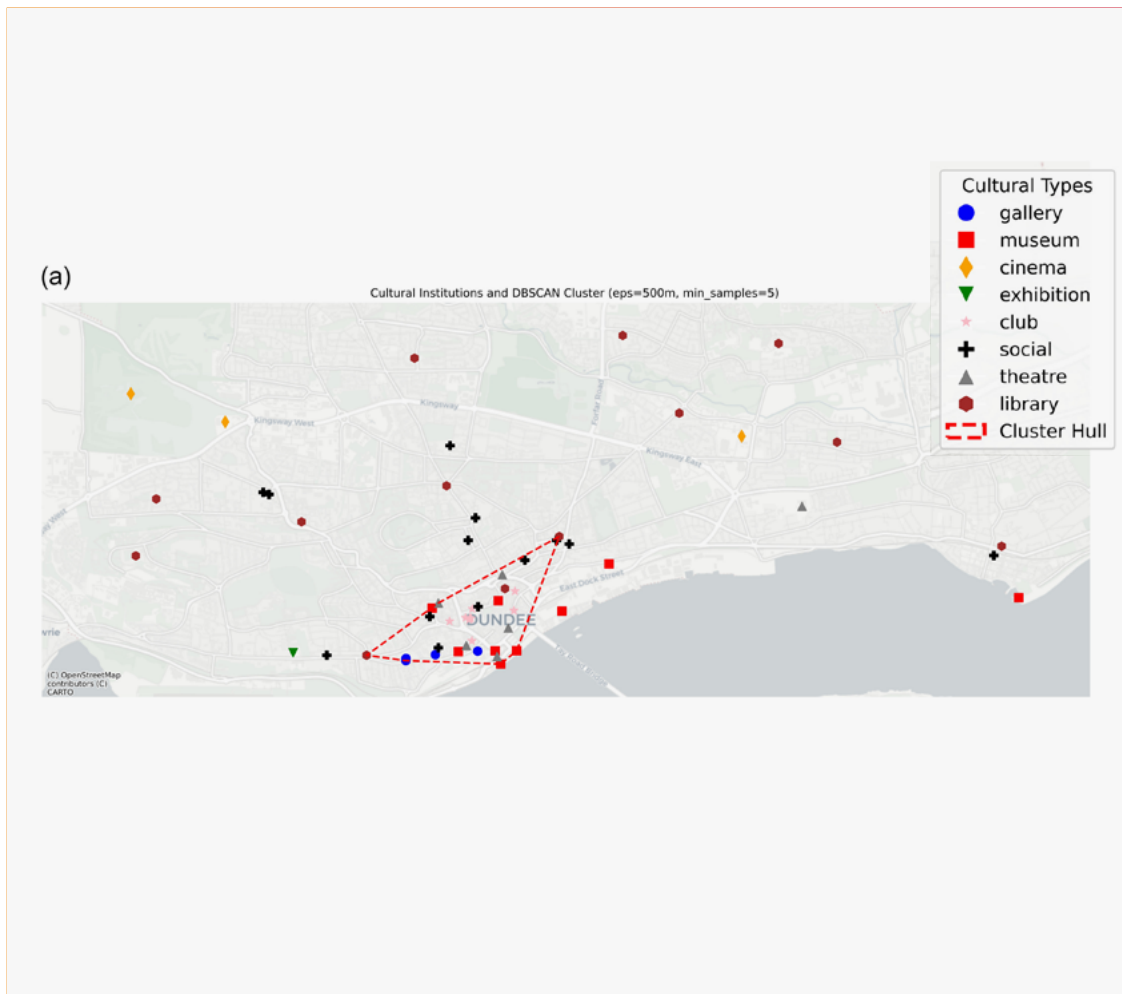


Figure 1: (a) shows the spatial distribution of all cultural POIs in Dundee as identified by OS data together with the results of the clustering algorithm (DBSCAN) run on such data.

If we consider the community perspective (resident data), we recognise that residents identify a broader and more diverse cultural geography, extending beyond central institutions. In their views, culture is tied not only to formal venues but also to neighbourhoods, local groups, ethnic communities, recycling initiatives, and everyday creative practices. There are physical barriers - such as a major bypass road known as The Kingsway, which marks a clear divide between the regenerated centre and more deprived residential areas. While residents recognise the value of flagship developments, they also note these are often designed to benefit tourism more than local communities (figure 2).

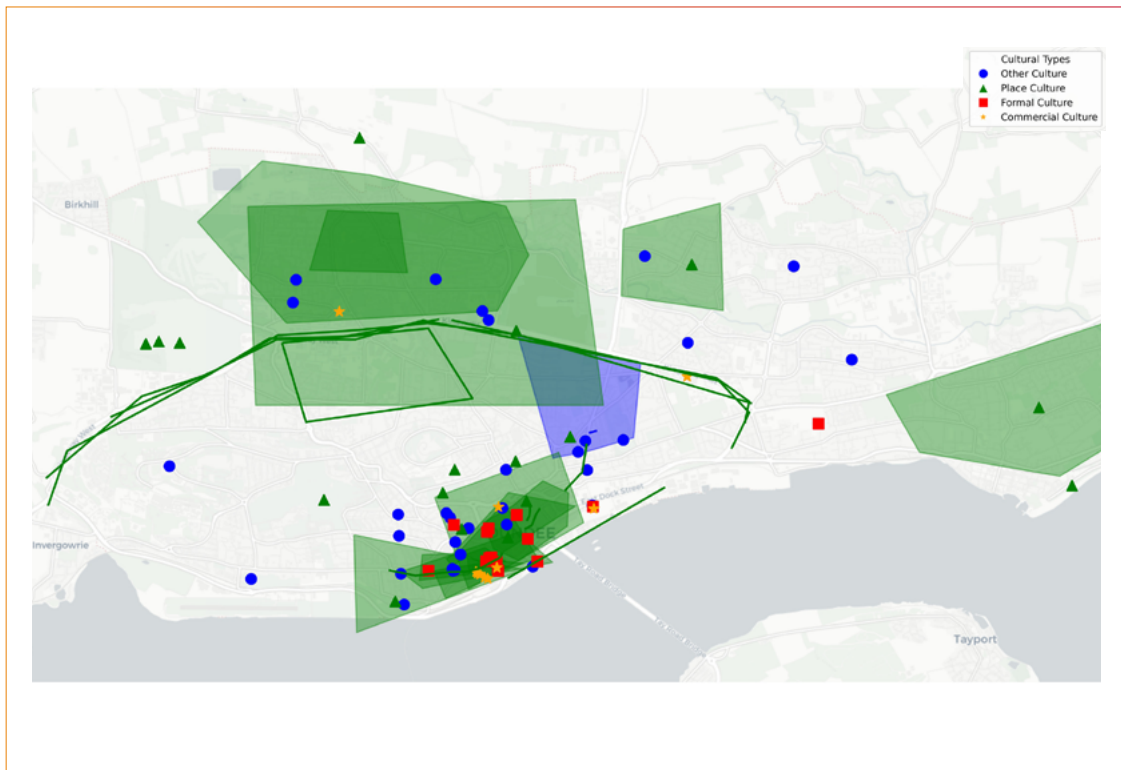


Figure 2: shows the spatial distribution of all POIs identified by respondents during the interviews (source: project data).

One main difference emerged in the interview between locals and newcomers. People born in Dundee identified more dispersed, and community-based forms of culture, often in deprived areas beyond the city centre. People who moved to Dundee tend to mirror the institutional map of culture, focusing on formal venues and city-centre spaces. This demonstrates two parallel cultural geographies: an “official” version and a more fragmented, lived version rooted in local knowledge.

Conclusions and Policy Implications

The research highlights the need to balance clustering with inclusion, ensuring flagship projects and creative clusters do not overshadow or marginalise community-led initiatives in peripheral areas. It also calls for policymaking to acknowledge informal, commercial, and place-based cultural activity beyond established institutions. It highlights that official statistics must be complemented with community-driven evidence to avoid reinforcing narrow or biased definitions of culture. Citizen mapping and community engagement provide essential insights into cultural value and should inform cultural strategy.

- Address cultural inequality: Cultural policy must extend beyond flagship institutions to support diverse, community-driven cultural activities across all neighbourhoods.
- Recognise “everyday culture”: Informal, place-based creativity (e.g. local initiatives, reuse/recycling groups, neighbourhood cultural hubs) should be valued and resourced alongside formal institutions.
- Tackle spatial divides: Investment strategies should consider accessibility barriers, including transport and ensure underserved communities are included in cultural provision.
- Balance growth and inclusion: While culture-led regeneration attracts investment and visitors, policies should prioritise participation and benefit for Dundee residents, particularly in deprived areas.

Overall, we find that accessibility matters and embedding a 15-minute city framework in cultural policy can enhance equity of access and distribute cultural opportunities more evenly.

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This policy brief highlights the key findings and recommendations emerging from the analysis of urban data from the Ordnance Survey in the UK and from the Horizon 2020 project DISCE (<https://disce.eu/>). This was a collaborative reflection between Dr Lorenzo Biferale (University of Chieti Pescara), Prof. Roberta Comunian, and Dr Tamsyn Dent (King's College London)¹. The study's main guiding research questions were:

- Does our understanding of city-based cultural and creative resources align with the lived experiences and interests of local communities?
- Can a 15-minute city framework help urban cultural policy and planning?

¹ To read the full paper and data analysis please refer to Biferale, L., Comunian, R., & Dent, T. (2025). "Where are culture and creativity in your city?" Chrono-urbanism and the importance of pluralism in defining and understanding cultural opportunities in cities. *Cities*, 166, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0264275125005220>

AUTHORS



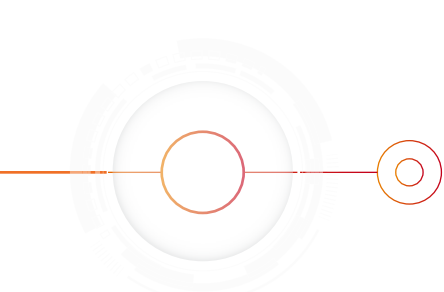
Dr Lorenzo Biferale holds a PhD in Regional Science and Economic Geography, with a thesis titled 'Mapping Cultural Participation: the Effects of Frictions, Distances and Disasters'. His research focuses on data science, cultural economics and cultural participation. He is also a consultant in cultural and creative policies for KEA - European Affairs.



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The Climate Role of Culture. Where Does Italy Stand? Exploring Internal Organisational Dynamics through the 4C Project

Giorgia Natoli

PhD at IULM University

As the climate crisis deepens and environmental pressure escalates, it's clear that the global response cannot rely solely on technological solutions or sector-specific regulations. While decarbonisation efforts often focus on transport, construction, and heavy industry, a broader cultural transformation is equally essential. The ecological transition goes beyond energy policy or emission targets. It calls for a profound shift in collective values, everyday behaviours, and the way we relate to the world around us. In this context, the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) have an essential, yet often overlooked, role to play.

Culture has a unique power: it shapes how people understand the world, imagine the future, and make everyday decisions. Through their narratives, practices, and physical spaces, cultural organisations can translate scientific complexity into shared meaning, create emotional connection, and inspire action. At the same time, they are also economic actors, and with that comes responsibility. While not among the most polluting sectors, CCIs are closely linked to several strategic areas identified in the Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan (INECP): from mobility and energy consumption to logistics and material production. Their role in the ecological transition is therefore twofold: they are both subjects and agents of decarbonisation.

Within this context, 2024 saw the launch of "4C- Cultural and Creative Carbon Cut", a national research project by Fondazione Santagata for the Economics of Culture. The initiative is designed to act on two strategic fronts. On one side, it supports cultural organisations in building awareness. On the other side, it works to shape policy frameworks and sector-wide guidelines that can make the ecological shift not only structural and scalable, but also socially beneficial in the long term.

An Overview of the Italian Cultural Sector

Drawing on 770 cultural organisations' responses, the study offers a snapshot of an industry that is both diverse and fragmented. The analysis spans nine cultural sub-sectors: Museums and Cultural Institutions, Performing Arts, Cultural Events and Festivals, Contemporary Art and Galleries, Film, Music and Audiovisual Production, Publishing and Literature, Artistic Craftsmanship, Design and Fashion, Arts Education and Training.

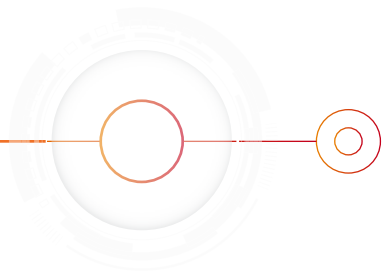
Looking closer at the sample, structurally, it is largely composed of small-scale organisations: over a third have fewer than five employees, while only 13% employ more than fifty. Museums and Cultural Institutions dominate (60%), followed by Performing Arts (14.5%) and Cultural Events and Festivals (13.2%), figures that closely align with the actual composition of the Italian cultural landscape.

One of the most striking findings is the gap between Awareness and Activation. While the overall level of environmental awareness is high (75.5%), the actual implementation of sustainable practices remains limited, with an average activation score of 47.7%. This disconnect reveals structural and operational challenges that prevent organisations from moving beyond intention.

Surprisingly, smaller and more peripheral organisations, often assumed to be less equipped, tend to show greater responsiveness in adopting sustainable measures. This agility may come from reduced bureaucratic layers, stronger community ties, or fewer logistical constraints compared to larger, urban-based institutions. Still, a lasting ecological transition requires systemic changes that go beyond individual goodwill.

Decarbonisation Starts from Within: Internal Processes Under the Lens

Among the seven areas of impact analysed by the 4C study, Internal Processes stands out as the dimension with the highest level of Awareness, reaching 88.2%. This category focuses on internal governance elements that can foster a sustainable management of cultural activities. It includes operational action plans on sustainability issues, internal policies, climate-environmental



risk analysis related to organisational activities, dedicated staff responsible for these topics, staff training courses, and staff engagement strategies aimed at increasing awareness and encouraging positive behaviour. Within this domain, one message comes through clearly: the role of formal governance tools is widely recognised.

Despite high awareness, internal processes also reveal one of the widest gaps between intention and action. The average Activation score in this area is just 41.1%. Only 12% of organisations have adopted internal sustainability regulations, 10% have developed action plans, and a mere 5% have implemented both. The most common measure adopted is encouraging sustainable staff behaviours, such as using public transport, adopting remote work practices, or attending sustainability training. While these efforts are important, long-term transformation requires more than individual initiatives. It calls for structured and measurable governance tools. Currently, only 32% of organisations integrate sustainability objectives into their business plans, and just 8% publish dedicated environmental impact reports. Although 21% of respondents report having a designated green team, only 2% have staff members exclusively dedicated to sustainability. Larger organisations are more likely to formalise roles and offer regular training. However, even in these cases, the journey toward embedding sustainability as a strategic priority is still very much in progress.

A closer look at the data reveals significant differences based on territorial context (Figure 1). The Awareness level remains consistently high across different classes of territorial marginality, ranging between 84% and 89%. However, the real divergence appears in terms of activation. Organisations based in peripheral and ultra-peripheral areas (categories E and F) are significantly more proactive in adopting tools to support sustainable management, with an Activation score of 48,7% compared to just 31,7% among those located in urban areas (categories A and B) and 34,4% among the ones located at distances relatively close to a Pole areas (categories C and D). Figure 2 shows a similar pattern when considering organisational size: while awareness levels remain fairly stable regardless of scale, smaller organisations (those with fewer than five to ten employees) tend to show higher levels in implementing sustainability measures than their larger counterparts.

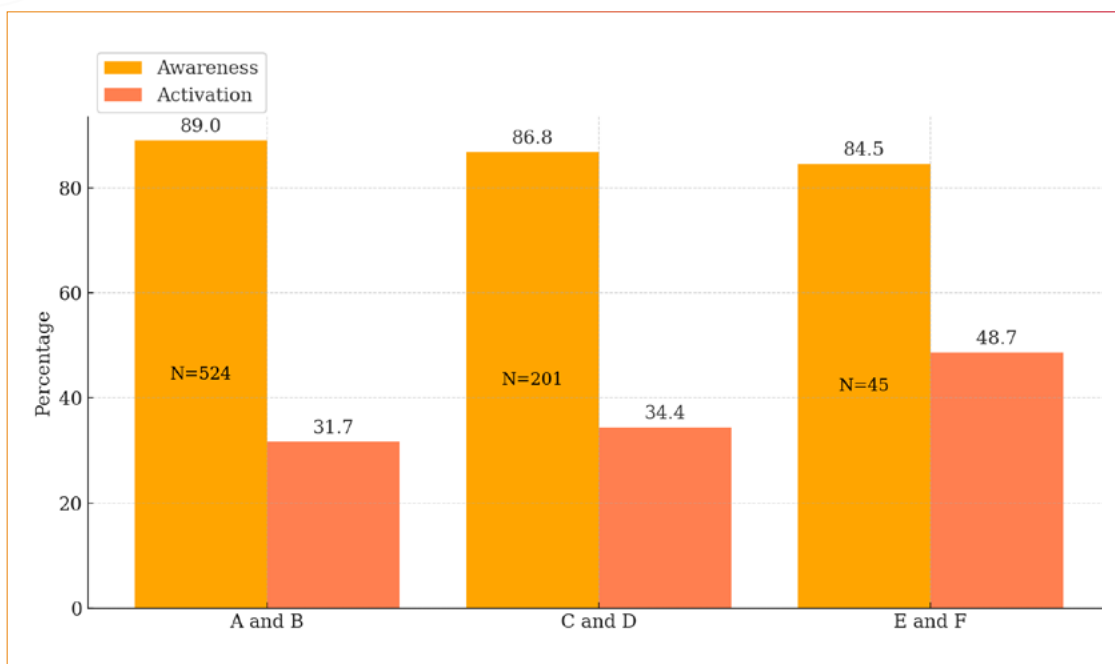


Figure 1. - Average levels of Awareness and Activation by Territorial Marginality Classes

Credits: The author on data from Fondazione Santagata, 2025

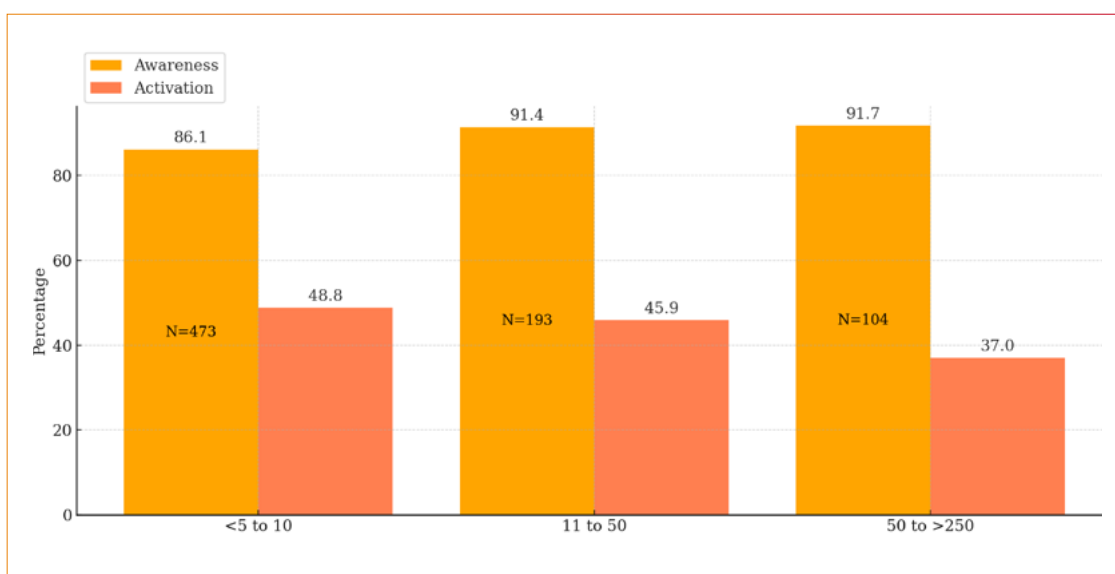


Figure 2. - Average levels of Awareness and Activation by Organisational size

Credits: The author on data from Fondazione Santagata, 2025

Sector-by-sector comparisons offer even more insight. As illustrated in Figure 3, all nine cultural sub-sectors examined reported average Awareness scores above 70%. However, Activation levels are more uneven, ranging from a high of 62.3% in the Artistic Craftsmanship sector to just 27.4% in Publishing and Literature. These disparities highlight the need for targeted support strategies,

ones that take into account not only the size and location of organisations but also the specific dynamics of each cultural field.

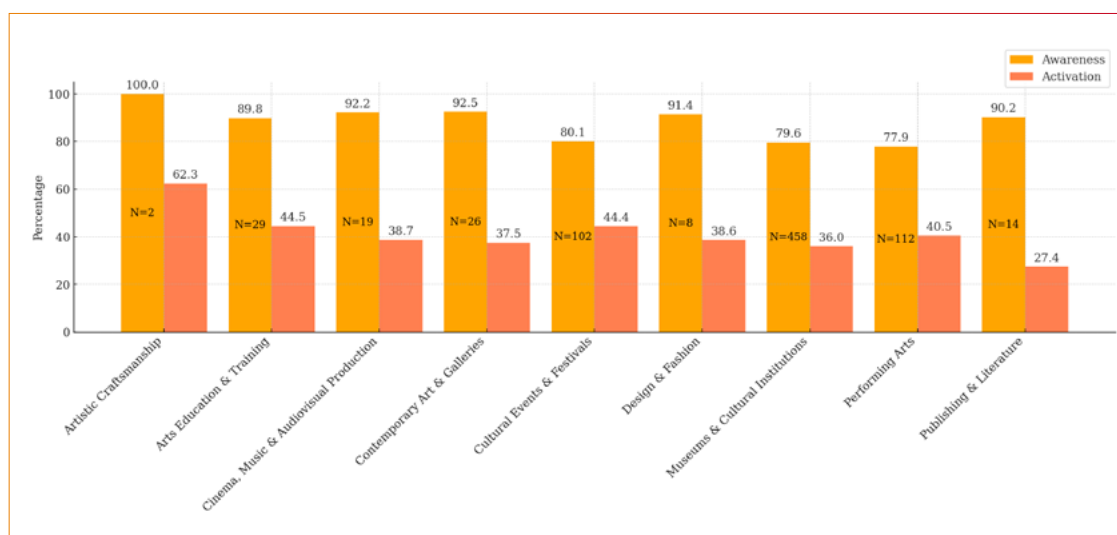


Figure 3. - Average levels of Awareness and Activation by Cultural sub-sector

Credits: The author on data from Fondazione Santagata, 2025

Strengthening Skills to Support Organisational Change

One of the key obstacles slowing down the ecological transition within cultural organisations is the **lack of internal expertise**. This gap extends beyond environmental literacy; it also includes strategy planning, green public procurement, impact assessment, and strategic climate-specific communication to spread awareness among the audience. In this context, capacity building becomes a strategic priority. Yet, only 24% of surveyed organisations offer regular training on sustainability topics, and most of these do so with low frequency. A stronger investment in training, supported by dedicated roles and technical assistance, is essential to strengthen capacity across the entire cultural value chain.

A constructive way forward lies in developing new hybrid professional profiles- those that bring together cultural expertise with a practical knowledge of sustainability planning and compliance. This shift can be supported through dedicated funding, accessible mentoring schemes, and collaborative learning networks, helping to build skills and create lasting impact across the sector.

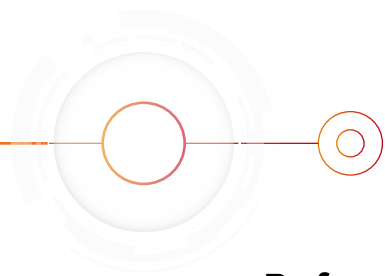
From Standalone Commitment to a Structured Ecosystem

A clear opportunity for the cultural sector to lead the ecological transition lies in strengthening **collaboration**.

Cultural organisations should embed environmental responsibility throughout every stage of their activities, from planning and production to distribution and consumption. During the planning phase, in particular, they should develop strategies with defined sustainability objectives, backed by dedicated budgets and robust monitoring tools. When sustainability is embedded not as an external mandate but as a core organisational value, it becomes an authentic part of the institution's identity, moving beyond a formal declaration into meaningful, everyday practice. This is not about sacrificing the cultural mission in favour of sustainability goals. On the contrary, sustainability efforts should be grounded in that mission, drawing on the sector's unique capacity to create meaning, foster inclusion, and improve quality of life.

However, rather than facing the ecological transition alone, cultural organisations can be part of a coordinated, multi-level approach that scales impact and overcomes barriers. Networks- whether thematic or territorial- serve as key enablers by pooling resources, sharing tools, and shaping common strategies. This collaborative effort can be further reinforced by the active involvement of public and private stakeholders such as funders, foundations, and local governments. Beyond financial support, their role includes creating enabling environments through tailored policies, infrastructure investments, and technical support. When organisations, networks, and institutions join forces, decarbonisation becomes more than an obligation- it becomes a shared opportunity for innovation, resilience, and long-term relevance.

Read the Italian version of the full report to get a deeper look at the results of the "4C- Cultural and Creative Carbon Cut" research: [Report 4C- risultati della ricerca](#) | Fondazione Santagata for the Economics of Culture, 2025.



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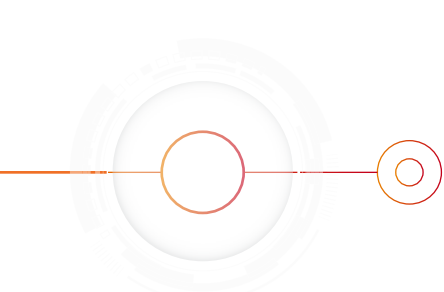
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Her main research interests include the economics of cultural and creative industries, with a particular focus on sustainability and museum management.



Cultural Observatories in Italy: the State of the Art

Antonio Taormina

Cultural analyst and former member of the High Council for the Performing Arts at the Italian Ministry of Culture

Premises

The emergence of Cultural Observatories in Europe dates back to the final decades of the twentieth century. They were established and gradually disseminated during a period in which information and knowledge came to be regarded as key drivers of political, social, cultural, and economic development (Ortega Nuere, 2011).

In Italy during those years, the cultural sector experienced remarkable dynamism. This was primarily fuelled by an overall increase in public investment, by significant changes in cultural consumption, and, more broadly, by the new responsibilities entrusted to the Regions. Following the 1977¹ national law that defined their role in the field of culture, the Regions began to enact legislation on the subject. Public cultural institutions, and to some extent the academic community, consequently felt the need to equip themselves with advanced tools capable of deepening the understanding of the cultural sector, particularly with regard to its economic dimensions, structural features, and social dynamics.

The genesis of Italian Cultural Observatories can be traced back to the establishment in 1985 – on the basis of a new national law concerning economic measures in support of the performing arts² – of the *Osservatorio dello Spettacolo*

¹ See: Decreto del Presidente della Repubblica 24 luglio 1977, n. 616, Attuazione della delega di cui all'art. 1 della legge 22 luglio 1975, n. 382 attuativo della Legge n. 382 "Norme sull'ordinamento regionale e sull'organizzazione della pubblica amministrazione".

² Law of 30 April 1985, No. 163, "Nuova disciplina degli interventi dello Stato a favore dello spettacolo" – Articolo 5 (GU Serie Generale n.104 del 04-05-1985).

under the former Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment. The aim of this measure, highly innovative for its time, was to create “a flexible and technically equipped body, capable of collecting knowledge on the performing arts in Italy and abroad, in order to provide it to decision-making bodies”. This initiative proved to be the forerunner of subsequent studies and conferences promoted by local authorities, universities, and research institutes, which laid the groundwork for the creation of Cultural and Performing Arts Observatories, supported and promoted by Regional administrations (Taormina, 2023).

The first of these was the *Osservatorio Culturale della Regione Lombardia*, established in 1988. It was followed, in 1996, by the *Osservatorio permanente sull'economia della cultura* in Emilia-Romagna, which in 1999 was transformed into the first Regional Observatory specifically dedicated to the performing arts, managed by ATER – Associazione Teatrale Emilia-Romagna. In 1998, the *Osservatorio Culturale del Piemonte* (OCP) was created, bringing together both public and private partners, including the Fitzcarraldo Foundation.

Scenarios

It was the Conference of the Regions and Autonomous Provinces that decisively shaped the operational and strategic direction of Cultural Observatories. In 2006, it proposed the establishment of an Italian Network of Cultural Observatories, the creation of new regional Performing Arts Observatories, and the development of a shared system for collecting and analysing data related to performing arts policies. Building on these objectives, between 2007 and 2013 the Regions, in agreement with the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities, the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI), and the Union of Italian Provinces (UPI), implemented the ORMA Project³, which benefited from the collaboration of the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT).

In Italy, the greatest expansion of Cultural Observatories actually occurred in the 2000s, with the establishment of several observatories, many of which were

³ Orma stands for “The establishment of regional observatories and cooperation with the National Observatory in the field of performing arts policies”.

dedicated to the performing arts. This process was facilitated by the 2001 reform of Title V of the Constitution, which strengthened the role of the Regions in the performing arts sector. This led to a distinctively Italian phenomenon: the dichotomy between generalist Observatories – which naturally also addressed performing arts and audiovisual sectors – and those devoted exclusively to these sectors. Over time, however, this division has largely disappeared. In total, fourteen Regions established observatories based on regional laws or other administrative measures⁴.

The objectives that, overtime, led to the establishment in Italy of entities identified as Cultural and Performing Arts Observatories largely reflect – understandably – the knowledge-oriented purposes of the public bodies, mainly public, that instituted them. Despite differences in functions among these entities, in an initial phase the main areas of investigation were shared and included demand and supply, financial and economic data, employment, and venues and spaces. Subsequently, some Observatories expanded their scope to include economic and social impacts, qualitative studies of audiences, environmental sustainability, and educational demand and supply, as theorized by Lluís Bonet (2011).

Over the years, a tendency has emerged, from various quarters, to prioritize functions related to the acquisition and processing of statistical data, emphasizing the “heuristic” value of the information. Moreover, as Luca dal Pozzolo, Director of the Piedmont Observatory, notes (2023), there is a need to “...highlight how the body of data at our disposal, vast as it may be, is partial and incomplete, and how it is necessary to bring to discussion and awareness what the data cannot clearly convey.” It is now widely acknowledged among those working in Observatories that the evaluation and measurement of activities focused predominantly on economic aspects and conventionally adopted parameters – such as the audience numbers – only partially contribute to understanding the very role of the cultural sector.

Similarly, the very concept of a cultural observatory as a tool primarily intended to facilitate access to information and knowledge, in support of the decision-making processes of relevant bodies, must be reconsidered, as this approach limits its potential, scientific autonomy, and consequently its necessary impartiality.

⁴ Cf. “Dossier del Servizio Studi sull’A.S. n.2318-A. Deleghe al Governo e altre disposizioni in materia di spettacolo”, maggio 2022 n.441/1, Servizio Studi del Senato.

New Directions in Cultural Observation in Italy

In Italy, in light of accumulated experiences, there is now a recognized need to move beyond the previously adopted schematizations regarding possible models of cultural observatories, both in terms of management and, considering that the boundaries of cultural domains are constantly being redefined, with respect to fields of investigation and research activities. It is also important and necessary to maintain cultural observation, in its broadest sense, among the priorities of institutions and organizations within the sector. As J. Mark Schuster (2002) wrote years ago, "Cultural observatories do not represent a homogeneous reality. Under a single category, one finds a variety of hybrids of different models of research and information entities".

In this regard, it should be emphasized that, since the last decade, the centrality of bodies that, although this is not their primary function, effectively perform the role of a Cultural Observatory has progressively emerged. These institutions conduct studies, research, analyses, and monitoring that culminate in periodic reports, widely valued and considered points of reference for the entire sector; foremost among these is the Symbola Foundation (associated with ENCATC). Particular interest is also warranted by the *Osservatorio Innovazione Digitale per la Cultura* at the Politecnico di Milano, created with the aim of supporting the adoption of digital innovation in cultural institutions.

In recent years, Italy has witnessed a renewed interest in Cultural Observatories. The COVID-19 pandemic, which began in 2020, played a significant role in bringing this issue to the forefront, as it revealed a Pandora's box of latent challenges in the cultural sphere, foremost among them the absence of a structured system capable of evaluating, at the national level – and beyond purely quantitative aspects, which remain important – the impacts of pandemic-related measures on supply and demand, changes in modes of cultural consumption, training processes, and social repercussions. Not for nothing, in 2022 the national legislator revisited the issue of Observatories with the enactment of a new law on the Performing Arts⁵, which has not yet been implemented, as its application is scheduled for the end of 2026 and may undergo modifications in the meantime. Among other measures, the law provides for the creation of a *National networked system of performing arts observatories*,

⁵ Law of 15 July 2022 No. 106 "Delega al Governo e altre disposizioni in materia di spettacolo".

comprising the Ministry of Culture's *Osservatorio dello Spettacolo* and regional Cultural and Performing Arts Observatories. It also envisages the establishment of a National Performing Arts Information System, responding to the knowledge needs of institutions, businesses, and sector operators.

The renewed interest in cultural observatories is further evidenced by the emergence of new initiatives proposing wide-ranging projects. Among these is the *Osservatorio Arte Contemporanea*, a tool dedicated to analysing the international visibility of Italian contemporary art, launched in 2023 by four professionals in communication and cultural management⁶. The project has grown significantly with the launch, in 2025, of a platform developed with support from the Next Generation EU (PNRR), involving partners such as the Milan Fair and a major banking group. Another significant initiative comes from AGIS (Associazione Generale Italiana dello Spettacolo), which in 2025 launched a Performing Arts Observatory in collaboration with the Association for the Economy of Culture, and CLES. AGIS represents over 13,500 enterprises in the performing arts and cinema sectors and is the main national organization of enterprises in the entertainment sector.

Returning to the Regional Cultural Observatories, it should be noted that not all of those established operate regularly. However, the most structured in terms of organization and content production – typically the earliest established – perform a central function in service of the national cultural system. Among the foremost of these are the *Osservatorio Culturale del Piemonte* (OCP) and the Emilia-Romagna Observatory, now called the *Osservatorio Cultura e Creatività*. Other regions conduct more limited activities or are in the process of implementation. Among the most significant developments is the recent establishment of the *Osservatorio Cultura e Creatività* in Veneto, supported by the Region and developed through collaboration between Ca' Foscari University – with the Venice School of Management and Centro Aiku – and IUAV University of Venice, representing an important example of collaboration between public bodies and academia.

The system of Cultural Observatories in Italy is therefore expanding, and the conditions now exist for the creation of a shared national system that leverages the best public and private expertise, a system that the cultural sector has long felt the need for.

⁶The promoters of the project are Silvia Anna Barrilà, Franco Broccardi, Maria Adelaide Marchesoni, and Marilena Pirrelli. The platform was presented on 12 June 2025 at the Triennale di Milano.

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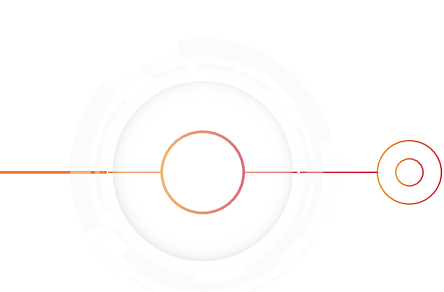
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The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on the Cultural and Creative Sector. Tool, Author, Creator?

Anna Ochmann
ARTeria Foundation

Technological developments have always influenced changes in the way art is created and perceived. When Albrecht Dürer used the printing press, combining its capabilities with his unique style, he changed the world of graphic art.

When paint tubes were invented and painters were able to leave their studios and work outdoors, Auguste Renoir said: *'Without paint tubes, there would be no Cézanne, Monet, Pissarro or Impressionism'*¹ Photography? Digital printing? The examples are endless, because every new technology opens up new possibilities for artists.

However, artificial intelligence in art is not just a new technology. It challenges the values that humans associate with creativity and raises questions about intellectual property and ethics. Its social, cultural and environmental impact requires careful reflection and responsible, far-reaching public policies. The responsible use of AI should go hand in hand with ethics, equal access, sustainable development and transparency – only then can technology become a tool that supports and inspires artists, rather than depriving them of their jobs.

Experts from the World Economic Forum list graphic designers among the 15 professions most likely to disappear by 2030 [1]. According to data from the

¹ <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/never-underestimate-the-power-of-a-paint-tube-36637764/> accessed on 9.09.2025

Society of Authors (SoA), in 2024, 26% of illustrators and 36% of translators lost work due to generative AI, and another 37% of illustrators and 43% of translators reported a decline in income [2]. According to a report by the British Film Institute (BFI), the lack of regulations on the use of scripts and works in AI training could lead to systemic economic and structural erosion of the entire sector [3].

The implementation of two projects co-financed under the Erasmus+ programme (AI4CREATIVITY² in the VET sector and YOUR.AI³ in the YOUTH sector), numerous discussions and workshops with artists and representatives of the creative industries have inspired me to outline, in this article, the most commonly defined concerns of the community, but also recommendations that should be an important voice in the development of further strategic legislation and public policies. This is all the more important as both artists and the creative industry are currently facing a tense and often ambivalent narrative about artificial intelligence.

Authorship and creativity, purposefulness.

Artificial intelligence is not just a technical innovation to be absorbed into creative activities, as was the case with other technological innovations. It is a challenge and, at the same time, a foundation for new philosophical reflections. From the point of view of art theory, the question is: what makes that art is art? Does the aesthetic value of a work depend on its human author, or can works created by AI also be considered valuable, even in the absence of human intent? [4] Consequently, one of the key dilemmas is the question of authorship: is it AI that creates, or is it humans who use AI-based tools in their work? Whose copyright is it in this situation? [5] [6]

In many jurisdictions, copyright is exclusively granted to humans, so AI cannot be considered the author. However, the situation becomes more complicated when humans create using AI-based tools, which are commercially owned by other entities, and issues related to co-authorship and the contribution of algorithms arise. The use of AI has given rise to new phenomena such as style

² <https://ai4creativity.eu/>

³ <https://projectyourai.com/>

transfer, where AI-based applications analyse the patterns, colours and textures of a given image and apply them to another, making it possible to combine the style of one image with the content of another (e.g. inspired by the work of van Gogh, Picasso or another artist). Copyright regulations have always been controversial in the cultural and creative sectors, and now the challenge seems even greater and requires swift and responsible action.

Social and cultural impact. Access and exclusion.

AI affects the cultural and creative sector not only by automating creative processes, but also by changing the way we 'consume art' using, for example, recommendation algorithms. AI adapts interfaces based on user behaviour, preferences or demographic data. What is more, by analysing data, it predicts which elements will be accepted in the future and what the needs of specific customers will be (predictive design). However, these are not neutral activities – this is technology developed by specific institutions in specific social and cultural conditions.

This is linked to access (or lack thereof) to advanced AI tools, which requires financial resources, equipment and technical knowledge – so it directly relates to socio-economic issues. As a result, AI-based technologies are mainly available to artists from developed countries or institutions with adequate financial and technological resources, deepening global inequalities in access to creative tools, limiting the diversity of voices in the digital culture sphere, and shaping entire social structures and individual experiences. As artificial intelligence shapes the world, ensuring equal access to AI-based tools (regardless of socio-economic status) is crucial to ensuring a culturally diverse future and ensuring that artificial intelligence becomes a tool that enriches culture and promotes equality, rather than a factor that deepens existing divisions.

Bias and representation. Who is (in)visible?

Another issue raised in the community of artists and creators is the perpetuation of stereotypes and the narrowing of cultural horizons by AI-based

tools. AI models learn from huge data sets, which often reflect existing cultural, racial and gender biases. As a result, the images or texts generated may reproduce stereotypes or marginalise minorities. This is particularly evident in visual works created with AI-based tools, for example in the representation of characters: AI is more likely to generate white, young people who conform to the dominant canons of beauty, and it also reproduces stereotypes about social roles [7]. This reinforces the exclusion of underrepresented groups and directly contributes to the perpetuation of stereotypes. Additionally, in relation to the social and cultural impact of artificial intelligence described above, such practices may further distort its development, leading to the creation of technology that primarily responds to the needs and represents the perspectives of specific groups, while neglecting or misinterpreting the needs of others.

Sustainable development and environmental impact

CO₂ emissions, huge energy and water consumption, and e-waste issues resulting from the rapid development and growth of AI users are challenges that also require regulation and agreement on new standards for the sustainable future of this technology, but as green transition issues are not the main topic of this article, here is only a brief mention signalling awareness of these challenges in the artistic and creative community. In artistic practice, this means that the ecological dimension of AI use must be taken into account, which may translate into the practice of choosing more efficient models, local servers or shaping awareness of the ecological cost of digital creation.

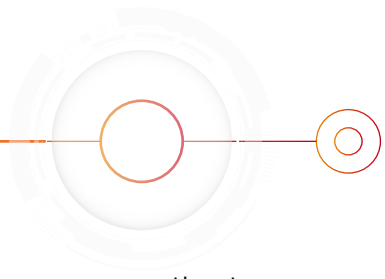
Responsible use of AI in art. Ethical framework and good practices.

Several recommendations resulting from discussions and actions taken during the projects, which, as the voice of the community, should inspire work on public policies in this area:

- ensuring transparency in the creative process by indicating whether the work was created entirely or partially using generative AI (UNESCO, 2023 [8]), i.e. clearly defining the contribution and intentions, e.g. whether AI was only an editing tool or a full-fledged content generator [9]

- obtaining the consent of creators to use their works to train AI models [10] [11] and creating regulations to counteract cultural exploitation, e.g. the use of indigenous artistic styles without consultation or compensation (UNESCO, 2023)
- credits and other forms of remuneration for artists or sources of inspiration whose style has been reproduced or processed by AI
- regulations according to which *"AI should support, not replace, human creativity"* [12]
- changes in the arts education system to enable artists to understand the potential and risks of using AI technology, both in an aesthetic and social context (UNESCO, 2023)
- ensuring cultural pluralism and counteracting monopolisation and concentration of power in a situation where tech giants (GAFA) can take control not only of distribution but also of the production of art based on generative artificial intelligence [5]

The inclusion of AI-based tools in artistic practice is becoming increasingly common. It is changing the way we think about creativity and authorship, as well as how we participate in and perceive culture. Artists and creators can already decide to make their creative process transparent, inform their audience about the role of AI in their work, and choose tools that respect copyright and privacy. Reflections from participants in our projects, mentoring programmes and workshops have indicated artists' interest in the possibilities offered by artificial intelligence [13], but at the same time have highlighted their considerable confusion in interpreting existing regulations (e.g. AI ACT, copyright in the context of AI) and their lack of knowledge of good practices. Hence, it seems so important to introduce these types of issues into arts education (to support new forms of creativity, preserve pluralism and protect artists' rights), but also to ensure



the transparency and comprehensibility of legal regulations. This may make it possible to change the narrative about AI in the cultural and creative sector and to use artificial intelligence more widely and responsibly as a cooperative, ethical, sustainable and regulated tool.

Artists and creators are increasingly aware of the ethical, legal and environmental challenges associated with the use of AI, and aware of how illusory the very enthusiasm for the possibilities of technology is. Critical reflection on the consequences of its development and use is necessary.

The coming years will be a particularly difficult period for the entire cultural and creative sector (also taking into account its specific nature, employment formats, etc.), for many creators a time of redefining their own value and searching for new forms of artistic expression, as well as creating new business models.

However, drawing on history, technology that often seems threatening can become an important tool in the hands of creators. The question that remains is whether this will be possible with the further development of AI while preserving the artistic identity of creators.

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[13] Interest in the use of these tools is growing, highlighting the urgent need for appropriate management of this development. For example, the AI Film Festival in New York received as many as 6,000 submissions in 2025, compared to 300 in 2023 <https://apnews.com/article/ai-film-festival-runway-movies-3b5d40e4c2e20f7a4d34f1f5d4907ba7> accessed 9.09.2025

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Anna Ochmann combines research and analysis with interdisciplinary forms of artistic expression (she is a graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts). As president of the ARTeria Foundation, she develops and implements international projects (including these related to AI). She is an expert in the field of cultural and creative industries (e.g. she is a speaker during Creative Skills Week in Prague in the session 'Digital Transformation in the AI Era' - <https://creativeskillsweek.eu/> and she was a co-author of the chapter 3 "Research, Lifelong Learning, Representation, Entrepreneurship" in the report - https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/culture/docs/voices-of-culture/voices-of-culture-brainstorming-report-status-working-conditions-2021_en.pdf), she is interested in searching for, combining and visualising discursive narratives that are relevant in the context of contemporary challenges and how they can stimulate new critical imagination.

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