



ENCATC

The European network on cultural
management and policy

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The future is cultural

Foto by Florencia Dalla Lasta on Unsplash

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Editorial

This special issue is dedicated to the 2025 ENCATC Congress in Barcelona, held at a moment when our sector is being tested on every front: ecological transition, democratic pressure, rapid technological change, and growing inequality. The Congress theme—*The Future Is Cultural: Policy, Practice, and Education*—was a clear statement that culture cannot remain at the margins of these shifts; it must help shape how societies respond.

Barcelona also carried a wider horizon. The Congress took place in close proximity to MONDIACULT 2025, when cultural policy debates moved onto a truly global stage. That matters because what we develop in classrooms, research, and cultural organisations is not separate from international frameworks: it influences what becomes defensible, fundable, and durable. ENCATC's role is precisely to strengthen that bridge—so ideas generated in the field can inform policy, and policy can be challenged by evidence, practice, and education.

The keynote framing by Ernesto Ottone Ramírez sets an important tone in this issue: culture belongs in the core of development thinking, not as decoration, but as a field of rights, cohesion, and resilience—and as a space where restitution, dialogue, and the status of artists must be treated with seriousness.

From there, the contributions push toward what matters most now: capacity. The Global Conversation makes it plain that training programmes are being asked to form cultural managers for complexity—not stability—where digital transformation, sustainability, social responsibility, and organisational viability must be held together rather than taught apart.

The article on cultural citizenship sharpens the institutional challenge even further: the question is no longer whether cultural organisations are “relevant,” but what their responsibility is as democratic spaces when trust is fragile, and polarisation is high.

This issue also names a structural weakness we can no longer afford: culture is widely praised, but too often weakly prioritised. The call for a Global Culture Index is one expression of a broader demand—decision-making tools that allow culture to be taken seriously in policy and investment, without reducing its meaning to a single metric.

And it stays grounded. The Espronceda perspective shows how “future-facing” becomes real only when values are translated into systems: programmes, partnerships, working methods, and ecosystems where artistic experimentation, research, education, and European collaboration reinforce each other.

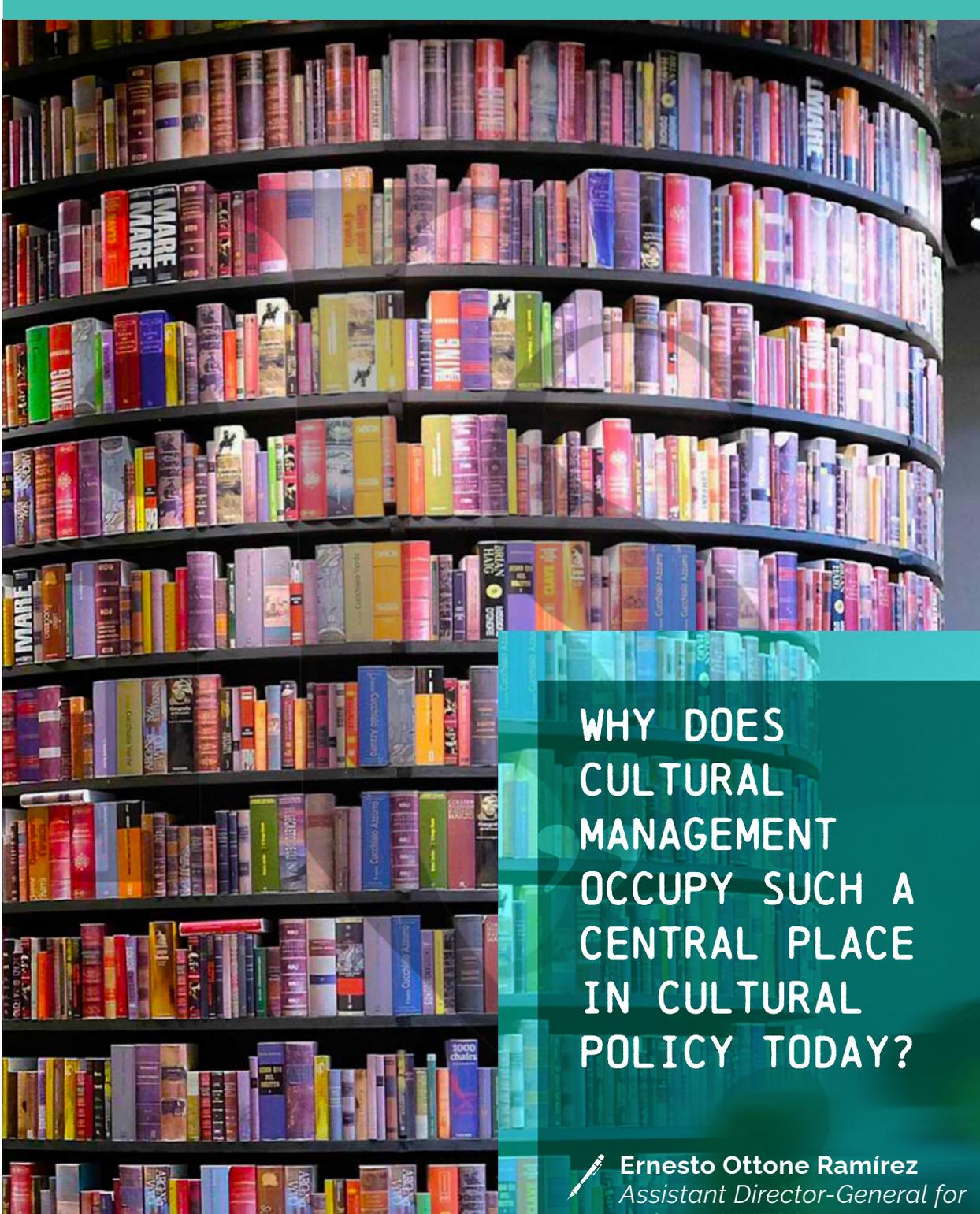
If there is a motivation to carry forward from this special issue, it is this: culture will not be strengthened by declarations alone. It will be strengthened by education that equips, institutions that listen, policies that protect freedoms and working conditions, and financing models that reward long-term public value. That is the work ENCATC is committed to advancing—across research, education, practice, and policy—so that the future becomes cultural not by wish, but by design.

GiannaLia Cogliandro Beyens
ENCATC Secretary General

December 2025

GiannaLia





WHY DOES CULTURAL MANAGEMENT OCCUPY SUCH A CENTRAL PLACE IN CULTURAL POLICY TODAY?



Ernesto Ottone Ramírez
Assistant Director-General for Culture, UNESCO

This question has guided my work for more than three decades. As I close an eight-year chapter leading UNESCO's Culture Sector, I want to reflect on this journey within an institution whose mandate continues to inspire and challenge me.

During my mandate at UNESCO, we faced unprecedented complexity. The world is restless, fluid, and increasingly polarized. Communities are more aware of the larger context, countries are searching for harmony, climate action shapes our behaviors, and crises of every kind erupt simultaneously across the globe.

For those of us from the Global South, culture is inseparable from life itself. It is holistic. Communities inhabit territories and create from them, drawing nourishment from their land. That is why, to us, dividing heritage into “tangible” and “intangible” is simply impossible. Concepts like “movable” and “immovable” heritage feel outdated and artificial. The more I witness this interlinkage and symbiosis, the more I feel compelled to say that all heritage is living—whether material, natural, intangible, or underwater.

For those of us from the Global South, culture is inseparable from life itself. It is holistic.

On this premise, we began hosting fundamental and intellectual debates among experts, academics, civil society and Member States. We have made great strides, and today, we are revisiting definitions such as integrity, universal value and authenticity that are embedded in legal instruments created in the 1970s. If some found this to be rather daring, I say: who better than UNESCO, now celebrating its 80th anniversary, to question itself and reclaim its role as a laboratory of ideas. Just as it did during the Cold War and Latin America's military dictatorships, providing critical thought to a world in turmoil.

There is no denying that multilateralism is under scrutiny. The value of a specialized agency like UNESCO has been called into question for its perceived lack of utility or loss of relevance. These accusations are unsubstantiated and easily disproven by our impact on the ground. Education for All has been central to sustainable development; technological innovation is increasingly key to leveling the playing field; science was essential to stopping pandemics; and cultural diplomacy creates dialogue where politics fails.

Culture has gained unprecedented visibility on the global agenda. From the G20 and G7 to BRICS, COPs, and the African Union, culture is now present at all major global meetings as an integral part of the public agenda. After long months of negotiations, we achieved the inclusion of paragraphs on culture as a global public good in the Pact for the Future, and later in the Seville Commitment. This was a historic moment for those of us working towards an independent goal in the post-2030 development agenda—those who felt that culture has been a “missing goal.” We now have a unique opportunity to achieve what once seemed impossible.

**Cultural
diplomacy
creates
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where politics
fails.**

Progress is also felt in more subtle, but equally important, places. When I arrived at UNESCO eight years ago, there was still some resistance to the concept of cultural and linguistic diversity. True, there is much left to do to protect diversity of human expressions, especially in the digital sphere—but I am an eternal optimist and believe that our Member States have the tools and determination to achieve it.

The same goes for the restitution of cultural objects and the fight against illicit trafficking. These discussions, once fraught with tension and mistrust, now take place around shared tables, with



I believe we are witnessing a long-awaited, great turning of the tide, a chapter of return and restitution marked by intercultural dialogue and mutual respect.

ministries, museums, the art market, collectors, and historians all working together, listening to each other. I believe we are witnessing a long-awaited, great turning of the tide, a chapter of return and restitution marked by intercultural dialogue and mutual respect.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed deep vulnerabilities in the cultural sector, as if we woke up after a long sleep and realized that little had been done to advance the status of the artist. Over 80% of creators worldwide work informally; only 7% have social security or healthcare. Copyright laws remain absent in more than 50 countries. Efforts to develop cultural industries and grow the creative economy had overlooked their true protagonists—the creators—without whom none of this would exist. Meanwhile, cultural rights, freedom of creation, and freedom of expression have regressed in many countries.

And then came MONDIACULT. After forty years of dormancy, MONDIACULT returned with force, unanimously adopting a Declaration based on the priorities established by all countries. In Mexico 2022 and Barcelona 2025, the UNESCO Conference brought together culture ministers, international organizations and NGOs in their thousands. A shared vision, a roadmap, and the very first Global Report on Cultural Policies signal a new era of collaboration of cultural actors—horizontally, top-down, and bottom-up.

A shared vision, a roadmap, and the very first Global Report on Cultural Policies signal a new era of collaboration of cultural actors—horizontally, top-down, and bottom-up.

These eight years have been intense, filled with meaningful encounters, life-changing field visits, reconstruction of museums, churches, traditional homes and mosques, and heartfelt conversations with artists, politicians and ordinary citizens. All of it puts a heart into cultural management. It is a vocation of public service, mediation, dialogue, and above all, love for art, creativity and heritage.

ERNESTO OTTONE RAMÍREZ

Ernesto Ottone Ramírez holds a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre from the University of Chile (1995) and a Master's degree in Management of Cultural Institutions and Policies from the University of Paris IX Dauphine (1998).

He began his career as a cultural advisor for the Valparaíso Urban Recovery and Development Program and later gained international experience in institutions such as the Grande Halle de la Villette in Paris and Berlin's Kulturbrauerei. In 2001, he became the founding Executive Director of the Matucana 100 Cultural Center in Santiago, a position he held until 2010, transforming the institution into one of Chile's most dynamic cultural hubs. Subsequently, he directed the Museo de la Solidaridad Salvador Allende and later, from 2011 to 2015, the Artistic and Cultural Extension Center of the University of Chile, which oversees the National Symphony Orchestra, the Chilean National Ballet (BANACH), and the Chile Symphony Choir. In 2015, Ottone was appointed Chile's first Minister of Culture, Arts and Heritage, a role he held until 2018. As Minister, he created the Department of First Peoples and a Migrants Unit, while also reinforcing copyright laws and heritage protections. He chaired the Regional Centre for the Promotion of Books in Latin America and the Caribbean (2016–2017) and actively promoted cultural diversity and accessibility.

INSIDE GREAT MINDS

ERNESTO OTTONE R.

Interview by GiannaLia Cogliandro Beyens

This interview is part of the ENCATC's exclusive interview series, where we delve into the insights and perspectives of influential figures shaping the cultural landscape.

In this session of the magazine, we engage with leading managers of cultural organizations and policymakers, exploring their innovative strategies, challenges, and visions for the future. In these times of changes and need of rethinking our relation to the private and professional life, these interviews uncover the stories and wisdom behind their impactful roles in shaping the cultural sphere.

What gives you the most pleasure in your day-to-day work?

The belief that we are making a difference in people's lives is what drives me. In Spanish, we say *poner un granito de arena*—to "put a grain of sand"—which means making small contributions toward a much bigger goal. Of course, the scale of our projects varies, from MONDIACULT to workshops, but at a macro level, they all contribute to building peace through culture. I try to remind myself of this every day.

What do you do to relax?

I go to the cinema a lot. For me, going to the movie theater is almost a ritual—an encounter with the soul of a creator and a brief passage into someone else's life. My taste is very eclectic, but I especially enjoy foreign-language films that tell stories of heartbreak. They are unique yet universal at the same time. My father took me to the cinema when I was little, and now I do the same with my children. It feels like a tradition we are building across generations.

Do you want to be liked or respected?

I have never been too concerned about how others perceive me. What matters to me is having dialogues with people—hearing their opinions, sharing knowledge, and being as honest as possible. I believe this creates a

respectful environment conducive to developing big ideas, and that is my way of showing respect to those around me.

Are tough decisions best taken by one person or by a group?

It depends on the nature of the decision. I strongly believe that the best solutions are identified collectively. At the same time, I recognize that there are moments when tough decisions have to be made by a leader—and when that happens, it's their responsibility and their burden to carry.

Do you read management books?

Yes! I read about cultural policies, cultural management and socio-political transformation.

What's your background, personally and professionally?

I was born in Chile but grew up in exile across Europe and Latin America for nearly two decades. I returned to Santiago at 18, where I began my career as an actor and director. Eventually, I moved into the field of cultural management because I wanted to create spaces and opportunities for fellow artists to reach their full potential. My goal was to translate the concept of artist empowerment into concrete policies. I was part of the team that established Chile's first Ministry of Culture and served as



Minister of Culture, Arts, and Heritage. I joined UNESCO as the Assistant Director-General because I felt that the international cultural sphere was missing local and regional good practices—and I wanted to bring those voices forward and amplify them.

My upbringing in exile profoundly shaped who I am and how I see the world. I believe in the power of intercultural dialogue to foster social cohesion and in the ability of communities to respect one another. At the time, I didn't have the words to express this, but it was something deeply instilled in me through my everyday interactions.

What's your leadership style?

At work, you'll often find me exchanging ideas and brainstorming with colleagues around the table. Good ideas don't recognize hierarchy, so I give everyone a chance. Trust is essential in my team, and while I can be demanding, it's because I see great potential in people and want to help them realize it.

Who is your inspiration?

Too many to list, but if I had to choose one person, it would be Néstor García Canclini. I was 22 when I heard his lecture for the first time—he was passionate and inspiring, and his words felt full of color. That was the moment I discovered what cultural policies were, and I knew immediately that this was exactly what I wanted to do. García Canclini said there are many ways to bring value to our societies, and I truly believe that. I also have to mention my four children, who inspire me everyday to leave the world a better place for them.

What does success look like to you?

To me, success is ultimately measured in one's personal life—by the positive marks we leave on others. At the end of the day, all we truly want is to love and be loved





WHY ART ORGANISATIONS MATTER FOR CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP



Lucrezia Gigante

AHRC Place-based Research Programme Postdoctoral Research Associate, University of Glasgow

In 2019, I began my doctoral research, driven by a simple question: what does it mean to feel a sense of belonging in a place? And how does culture, more specifically art organisations, help create that feeling?

In the years since, the world has moved fast: the pandemic made us question how we relate to place when we cannot experience it every day; nationalistic discourse has resurged violently; and the language of “place” has risen to the top of public policy agendas. In this landscape, re-examining the role of museums – their relevance, potential and contradictions – in creating cultures of belonging has become not only timely but urgent.

Research Beginnings

My research set out to understand how art organisations foster belonging through practice. What does it mean for the art organisation to be situated and in dialogue with its surroundings, to cultivate meaningful relationships with its communities and to be an agent of political practice?

Within museum practice, I focused on what is often the most public yet least theorised area of museum work: public programmes. These are the community conversations, building takeovers, skill-sharing sessions and other public-facing activities that form the first point of connection between an art organisation and its communities, straddling the inside and outside.

As a relational practice, they offer that space of encounter where art, scholarship and education meet people, their needs and their aspirations. Yet, they are seldom discussed as a museum practice in their own right. Through interviews with museum directors, heads of public programmes and community engagement leads across the UK, Southern Europe and the Americas, I surveyed the strategies and ambitions for place-based practice. The research found that place-based public programming functions as one of the most strategic means to foster social and political belonging in art organisations.

At times, the research findings highlighted an unresolved tension between the community-oriented work carried out by art organisations and their 'exhibitionary' apparatus. While curatorial work is still seen as central, the slower, more relational work of public programming often remains invisible within institutional practices and hierarchies.



'Making Place' Exhibition at Primary, Nottingham, UK. 2021. Photo by Lucrezia Gigante

Through situated participatory practices, public programmes enable structures of solidarity and collaboration that activate new forms of civic imagination.

The pandemic, for example, brought this imbalance into focus. When exhibitions closed, the public programmes carried on those vital relationships with communities and the local came to the forefront of museum practice, forcing even major art organisations with international reputations to become more attentive to their immediate communities.

Recent debates in the art world have emphasised situated curatorship and the importance of exhibitions responding to place. However, my research looked beyond the curatorial, which has been thoroughly examined elsewhere, and towards public programming as an area of practice and study that is vital but too rarely recognised for its merit.

Through situated participatory practices, public programmes enable structures of solidarity and collaboration that activate new forms of civic imagination. In these encounters, art organisations not only welcome communities through their doors but also the social and political issues relevant to those communities.

Rethinking cultural citizenship

To navigate the experience of place and belonging through culture, I mobilised the notion of *cultural citizenship*, a concept that has generated a significant discourse in many disciplines and across public policy, but has often remained abstract. Further, it had yet to produce a critical model of public engagement for actual cultural organisations.

In the everyday lexicon, citizenship can be a loaded term. It becomes a marker of difference and exclusion when mapped onto legal status. Yet, cultural citizenship has been developed in many different directions across academic and policy discourse, to articulate the relationship between people and culture within and beyond the nation state. From cultural policy studies to political theory, anthropology, media studies, arts education and, over the last decade, museum studies, the term has come to signify cultural competencies, access to and participation in culture.

In my research, I operationalise a definition of cultural citizenship that is concerned with the 'political' in cultural practices, rather than the 'cultural' in civic duties, meaning that cultural citizenship is not seen as the cultural dimension of formal citizenship (we become 'better' citizens when we engage in cultural activities) but *as a politically significant cultural practice*. That is, the collective process of creating alternative forms of political belonging and agency through culture.

I maintain that the full potential of cultural citizenship is heightened when applied to real-world contexts and practices, rather than abstract theorisation. And public programmes in art organisations offer a powerful site for

Through practice cultural citizenship becomes something we do together.

observing cultural citizenship on the ground. In other words, through practice cultural citizenship becomes something we do together.

Informed by empirical research and extensive engagement with theory, my study suggests that cultural citizenship can be understood as “post-national forms of political belonging and agency over one’s spatial-cultural context through situated and collective cultural practices” (Gigante, 2024, p. 16).

Why this matters now

Cultural institutions are called to a critical self-reflection as they seek to navigate their role in the current political climate. The question is no longer about museums’ relevance but about their political responsibility as democratic spaces.

Debates on participation in museums have long focused on the power imbalances and the politics of access. In my research, I approach the question of participation in the art organisation through an alternative angle: instead of asking how museum participation is or can be political, I am interested in how the art museum itself can participate politically in its local environment. Whose sense of place gets produced and reproduced through cultural practice? Whose voices are heard and to what extent? And how accountable is the organisation and to whom?

This shifts the terms of the debate by positioning the art organisation as one actor among many, as just another neighbour. When the art organisation puts people and relationships at the centre, and engages meaningfully and intentionally with its surroundings, it becomes a site of cultural citizenship – a place where we can rehearse together what it means to belong.

Overall, my research refreshed our theoretical understanding of cultural citizenship and its potential for place-based practice in art organisations, producing a model for cultural citizenship that is fit for purpose in the 21st century. It provides a methodological and analytical approach to investigate strategies of place-based public programming in art institutions, contributing to an emerging and exciting area of research – public programmes. And it offers a series of critical reflective tools to put the model into practice and to venture together into new forms of cultural belonging and democratic innovation.

Moving forward

As I continue to reflect on the complexities of cultural citizenship, my focus is on embedding these insights within policy and practice, working with those who are reimagining the civic role of culture. The next challenge is not only to recognise the value of the relational labour and potential for social cohesion within public programming, but to equip it with adequate infrastructure through funding models that value long-term commitment to communities, evaluation frameworks that go beyond metrics, and institutional practice that makes space for slowness and care.

The question is no longer about museums’ relevance but about their political responsibility as democratic spaces.

In the face of political polarisation and shrinking public trust, rethinking cultural citizenship through public programming as progressive, post-national, and collective is a way of recognising the power of culture to open up new forms of togetherness and, perhaps, the glimpse of hope we need.

Reference

Gigante, L. (2024), "The Spatial Politics of Art Organisations: Public Programs as Sites of Cultural Citizenship", PhD Dissertation, University of Leicester.



LUCREZIA GIGANTE

Lucrezia Gigante is an early-career academic examining place-based cultural practice and the politics of cultural participation.

She specialised in place-based public programmes in art organisations and practices of cultural citizenship through a PhD in Museum Studies at the University of Leicester. Since then, she has continued to focus on the interplay between place, people and culture by holding postdoctoral research roles in two major UK-wide programmes bridging policy and research. These include Culture Commons' Open Policy Development Programme 'The Future of Cultural Devolution', and currently the AHRC Place-based Research Programme at the University of Glasgow.



ENCATC GLOBAL CONVERSATION 2025: HOW DO TRAINING PROGRAMS IN CULTURAL MANAGEMENT INNOVATIVELY ADDRESS CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES?

Report summarized by
Alan Salzenstein

The ENCATC Global Conversation 2025 was presented during the annual Congress in Barcelona on 17 September 2025, with the following participants:

Introduction by:

ALAN SALZENSTEIN, Director, Performing Arts Management and Arts Leadership programmes, DePaul University, United States of America

Moderation of the panel:

GERALD LIDSTONE - ENCATC President

Panelists:

ALBA COLOMBO - Director, Master's Programme in Cultural Management, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Spain

ADRIANA PANTOJA DE ALBA - Coordinator, Master's in Communication and Culture, Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Occidente, Mexico

LLUÍS BONET - Director, Cultural Management Graduate programme, University of Barcelona, Spain

WU CHIEH-HSIANG - Executive Director, Taiwan Association of Cultural Policy Studies, Taiwan

DANIEL GREEN - Director, Master of Entertainment Industry Management, Heinz College & College of Fine Arts at Carnegie Mellon University, United States of America

The 2025 ENCATC Global Conversation, held in Barcelona—aptly described as an “open-air museum” with a distinct cultural identity—opened with framing remarks by Alan Salzenstein (DePaul University; ENCATC Board Adviser). Salzenstein situated the session within the long-running partnership between ENCATC and AAAE (Association of Arts Administration Educators), noting the series' evolution across cities worldwide from Edinburgh and Brussels to San Juan and Helsinki. What began as a forum to surface differences has matured into a platform emphasizing shared understandings and interdependence across systems and cultures. The central premise: contemporary pressures—digital dominance and AI, climate change, migration, cultural rights, and volatile geopolitics—require cultural management education to produce leaders who can act as *agents of change*, balancing artistic vision with organizational sustainability and social responsibility. In discussing the obligation of education to improve our institutions for the future with creative citizenship, Franklin D. Roosevelt's words framed the conversation: “We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future.”

Key Themes and Insights

Expanding Current Challenges: Beyond “Digital” to AI, Fragility, and Geopolitics

Colombo urged a deeper reading of “digital transformation,” highlighting AI as a structural shift that is reshaping authorship, rights, audience expectations, archives, and intangible

heritage. COVID-era habits taught audiences to expect participatory, boundary-breaking experiences; programs must now prepare managers to navigate (and sometimes reset) those expectations. She reframed “climate change” within a broader *global crisis*—health, climate, and geopolitics—underlining sectoral fragility exposed by the pandemic and ongoing conflicts that endanger heritage, participation, and agency. Her curricular response: embed (not add-on) sustainability, diplomacy, community engagement, and transdisciplinarity throughout programs and treat classrooms as international laboratories where local, contextual knowledge is brought into a global dialogue.



Latin American Perspectives: Cultural Rights, Inequality, and the Social & Solidarity Economy

Pantoja de Alba centered Latin American cultural management within traditions of popular education, socio-cultural and political art, and movement activism. She traced how the 1990s brought governmental and university recognition of the field alongside neoliberal policy, shrinking public budgets, and emergent frameworks for cultural rights. In her context, undergraduate training is more prevalent than graduate study due to structural barriers to access. She critiqued the rarely-criticised importance of the “creative industries” entrepreneurship models that can individualise risk and erode social fabric. As an alternative, her program is piloting the *social and solidarity economy*—centering collective wellbeing (human and non-human) and needs over capital accumulation—to better fit regional realities and to align management with challenging societal norms, instead focusing on rights-based cultural practice. Inequality, she argued, is the cross-cutting issue linking climate, migration, and violence; and private universities must equip privileged students to see beyond their bubbles and to act with public responsibility.

Values, Transversal Skills, and Situated Practice

Bonet described a transdisciplinary ecosystem at the University of Barcelona that assembles lectureships from law, anthropology, business, heritage, and political science. The goal is to form resilient mediators who speak across political, touristic, community, and artistic perspectives—often in tension—while anchored in values (cultural rights, empathy, diversity) and capacities (risk assessment, critical observation, problem-solving). His programmes emphasize prospective analysis (student-led debates on urgent topics), field visits linked to reflective essays and solution proposals, and early immersion in professional networks (e.g., major festivals within weeks of the program start). Critically, he pressed colleagues to prioritize *transferrable* or *transversal skills*—what employers most demand—over excessive content specialization. Work placements (ideally in small organizations where students “do everything”) and coaching initiatives reinforce this skills-first approach and foster career trajectories; in one prime example, a former intern now leads the National Theatre of Catalonia.

Public Sphere Building, Crowdfunding, and Misinformation

Wu Chieh-Hsiang spotlighted Taiwan's acute exposure to misinformation and the resulting challenge: students possess abundant data but less structured knowledge and weak cross-disciplinary learning. She offered an interesting example focusing on the power of the individual—using crowdfunding as both object and method to build a *cultural public sphere*. Synthesising historical (Pulitzer's 1885 Statue of Liberty appeal) and contemporary (a pandemic-era global letter from Taiwan) cases show how distributed micro-giving can convene discourse, mobilize communities, and counter isolation. She also critiqued grant-driven “festivalisation” that can overproduce and exhaust artists. Sustainability, she argued, begins with career design and resisting superficial compliance with overused policy buzzwords; and that managers should help artists integrate public policy aims authentically into practice, not merely to satisfy criteria.

Ethics, Market Forces, and the “City on Fire”

Green, working at the nexus of entertainment and screen media, connected wildfire disaster management failures in Los Angeles to a broader crisis of public trust and ethical leadership. He challenged educators to confront students' transactional tendencies—“the kill”—by teaching kindness, reading the room, and earned informality and humor. He added that professionalism is a social skill as much as technical mastery. His case study of the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic organizing leadership controversy illustrated a teachable paradox: when market power eclipses ethics, students internalize the wrong lessons. The antidote is explicit instruction with courses like “Ethics and Entertainment,” organizational justice frameworks, and frank, current case analyses. These initiatives along with mental-health support and career development must be embedded from week one.

From Crisis-Chasing to a Coherent Counter-Narrative

A floor intervention asked whether the sector could stop “chasing crises” and instead craft a counter-narrative to the authoritarian playbook that manufactures perpetual emergency. The panel’s responses converged with two levers:

1. Narrative competence grounded in evidence.

As educators, we must build student capacity for storytelling that is persuasive and ethical while anchored in empirical research. This equips graduates to rebut disinformation, articulate public value, and convene plural publics.

2. Protected spaces for imagination and listening.

Pantoja de Alba called for interrupting “common sense,” making space for silence, questions, and encounter—conditions in which political imagination and new ways of being and creating together can emerge.

Lidstone concisely offered that it is a necessity to focus on a pragmatic skill that is often neglected: *listening*. For ENCATC (and similar associations such as AAAE), the mandate is to scale these practices: comparative case studies on ethics and public value; exchange on solidarity and economic models; frameworks for embedding transversal skills; and shared practices for integrating mental-health and professional development into curricula.

Pedagogical Efforts to Cultivate

Across contexts, several potential best practices emerged:

- **Embed.** Sustainability, diplomacy, cultural rights, community engagement, and digital/AI literacy should appear across modules and assessments, not as isolated electives.
- **Global classrooms, local laboratories.** Use diverse student cohorts to surface knowledge that is context-specific, then test them through project-based, community-partnered work in local settings.
- **Experiential reflection.** Pair site-specific work with structured reflection and concrete proposals delivered back to host organizations.
- **Transversal skills scaffolding.** Prioritize critical thinking, mediation, risk appraisal, collaboration, ethical reasoning, communication, and listening; treat content knowledge as necessary, but insufficient without scaffolding knowledge.
- **Career and well-being from day one.** Normalize coaching, résumé and networking literacy, and mental-health resources alongside academic rigor.
- **Public-sphere literacy.** Teach crowdfunding, community media, and participatory platforms as key instruments to convene discourse and build communities.

- **Ethics in the open.** Use real-time case studies (across nonprofit, public, and commercial domains) to practice ethical analyses under market and environmental pressures.

Conclusion: Educating Translators and Bridge-Builders

If the sector is fragile, it is also inventive. The session's through-line reminded us that cultural managers and educators are translators and bridge-builders—between artists and administrators, local and global, resources and rights, innovation and heritage. Programmes that embed values, build transversal capacities, and cultivate public-sphere competence prepare graduates not merely to keep institutions afloat, but to animate cultural ecosystems that are inclusive, sustainable, and socially responsive. The Global Conversation has thus shifted—from cataloguing difference to practicing shared responsibility. In that spirit, the latest Global Conversation lesson is evident: the task is not only to protect culture from external forces, but to train leaders who can read destructive signs, convene like minds, and reinforce or rebuild—together.



ALAN SALZENSTEIN

Alan Salzenstein is Professor at DePaul University in Chicago where he directs the MFA/Arts Leadership and Performing Arts Management programs. Salzenstein is an international correspondent advisor to the board of ENCATC and past president of AAAE (Association of Arts Administration Educators). He has held various Executive Director positions for a wide array of arts organizations over the past thirty-five years, with a long history of theatrical producing, devising and presenting many special events, membership on various arts boards, and as an arts consultant. He is a frequent invited speaker on topics related to arts management and legal issues in the arts, having presented across North America, Europe and Asia. Salzenstein is also an attorney, focusing on issues related to the performing arts industry.



INTERVIEW

by GiannaLia Cogliandro Beyens

CARLOTTA SCIOLDO

*Researcher and consultant
focusing on EU cultural policies*

Carlotta Scioldo is a researcher and consultant focusing on EU cultural policies. Through her professional and academic trajectory, she has acquired a multifaced view of the cultural and creative sector in Europe. Her fundamental drive is to bridge the communication gap between the cultural sector and policymaking, ensuring that the functioning and aspirations of the artistic field are effectively conveyed. With this motivation, she has worked as dance dramaturg, joined the Creative Europe Unit at EACEA, and served as Network Manager and Policy Advisor the European Dancehouse Network. Carlotta completed her Ph.D. on how European Transnational Networks operate in the Cultural Sector at DIST the Interfaculty Department of the University and Polytechnic of Turin, and she was visiting researcher at the UCL's Public Policy Department. Her work questions the political and empirical implications of Transnational Networks in the EU's cultural sphere and the external dimension. She holds two master's degrees, the first in Theater Studies from IUAV in Venice, the second in Cultural Projects for Development from ITC-ILO and UNESCO Centre in Turin. Carlotta's expertise was also acknowledged through a visiting fellowship at New York University. www.carlotte-scioldo.com

ENCATC YOUNG AND EMERGING RESEARCHERS'

What motivated you to take part in the 2025 ENCATC Young and Emerging Researchers' Forum — and did your expectations align with what you experienced?

As the ENCATC Research Award winner in 2023, this is a valuable opportunity to reflect on how the Award has contributed to the development of my research, career, and professional network.

From your perspective: what were the most valuable insights or lessons you gained — regarding PhD development, the transition to post-PhD careers, or broader challenges in cultural research — through the Forum's discussions?

In my case, I have participated in the Forum by sharing the experience of a post-PhD scholar. I appreciated the exchange among different career level scholars and the informal connections, but in my case, I did not find concrete examples, suggestions or feedback of how to further structure my own professional parcourse (post- post-doctoral).

How did engaging with other young researchers and (senior) peers during the Forum influence your outlook on collaboration, networking, or future research directions?

Through informal connections with other scholars, it became even clearer to me how specific my research agenda and perspective are— particularly my use of a public scholarship theoretical framework and methods to analyze European cultural policy. In this sense, attending the ENCATC Congress and its various activities has certainly helped me to better position my research trajectory.

Were there any challenges, frustrations, or “gaps” you encountered during the Forum (e.g. in format, themes addressed, inclusivity, relevance) that you feel are important to highlight?

The 2025 ENCATC Young and Emerging Researchers' Forum, held during the ENCATC Congress 2025, was well designed, inviting contributions from researchers at various stages of development—and this worked effectively. It also highlighted how often cultural policy researchers are simultaneously practitioners, or how their work is shaped by professional practice.

What could have been improved is providing more information about the long-term aims of the ENCATC Young and Emerging Researchers' Forum. With a clearer understanding of its overarching objectives, participants and contributors could have contributed more effectively to shaping its future direction.

Based on your experience in 2025, what advice would you give to other early-career researchers considering participation in future editions of the Forum?

To clearly communicate the overall objectives of the initiative on the long run, that could work beyond the mere networking, as currently does. In my opinion the ENCATC Young and Emerging Researchers' Forum might work better for early researchers (PhD) than for further steps.

If you could redesign or improve the Young and Emerging Researchers' Forum for future editions, what changes — in structure, content, support, or format — would you propose to make it more effective and inclusive?

Keep one part of the gathering focused on researchers' personal experiences, but also introduce selected topics of shared interest (e.g., career development at different stages) to discuss in greater depth and with clearer feedback.

Meanwhile, other fields benefit from powerful benchmarking tools. The World Bank Innovation Index, the Global Competitiveness Index, and the QS and Times Higher Education Rankings shape public investment, research priorities, and national strategy. But there is no equivalent Global Culture Index - no shared model to measure cultural literacy, cultural access, or the societal impact of cultural institutions across countries. This gap prevents policymakers, cultural leaders, and funders from understanding culture's true contribution to economic resilience, diplomacy and human well-being. Culture continues to be valued, but it is not measured, and what is not measured struggles to be prioritized.

To address this, the Chartered Culture and Education Institute (CCEI) has initiated the Global Culture Index (GCI): the first comprehensive, evidence-based project for evaluating culture's multifaceted role in society.

Culture continues to be valued, but it is not measured, and what is *not* measured struggles to be prioritized.

At a time when societies need clarity, culture lacks the decision-making architecture that data provides in other sectors.

Benchmarking Culture in the 21st Century

As Chair of the UNESCO Culture Commission at the 41st General Conference in 2021, I saw how political disputes often overshadowed meaningful dialogue on creativity, heritage, and cultural cooperation. At a time when societies need clarity, culture lacks the decision-making architecture that data provides in other sectors.

Recently, we presented the Global Culture Index proposal at the ENCACT Conference in Barcelona, where participants raised important questions: "How will this be measured?" and "Why is this needed now?" These conversations strengthened our belief that while culture is widely valued, the global ecosystem has never been equipped with a shared tool to measure its impact.



Vasif Eyvazzade presenting the 'Global Culture Index' at the ENCACT Conference in Barcelona

Measuring how societies integrate AI into cultural ecosystems will help ensure technology becomes a tool for inclusion and innovation, not inequity.

AI and the Future of Culture

Artificial intelligence is rapidly reshaping how culture is created, preserved, and accessed. From digitizing collections and enabling multilingual access to immersive heritage experiences and AI-generated creativity, technology broadens participation, but also raises ethical issues around authenticity, rights, and diversity. Measuring how societies integrate AI into cultural ecosystems will help ensure technology becomes a tool for inclusion and innovation, not inequity.



CCEI Global Culture Index

What the Global Culture Index Measures

The Global Culture Index proposes a multidimensional indicator framework across five domains:

| Domain | Sample Indicators |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Cultural Institutions & Access | Participation rates; digital access; inclusivity for diverse groups |
| Cultural Literacy & Education | Cultural competence in curricula; heritage knowledge; informal cultural learning |
| Creative Economy & Innovation | GDP and employment share; incentives for cultural entrepreneurship; export of cultural goods and services |
| Cultural Diplomacy & Mobility | Participation in cultural exchange programs; institutional partnerships; artist mobility |
| Social Impact & Community Value | Cultural cohesion; civic trust; impact of cultural programs on well-being |

These indicators are not designed to rank nations competitively, but to support better decision-making, resource allocation, and institutional improvement.

Triggering New National and Local Data Systems

One of the transformative effects of the Global Culture Index will be its ability to inspire national, regional, and municipal authorities to build cultural data systems where none exist from participation statistics and digital access records to investment outcomes and cultural well-being metrics.

In many countries and cities, the Index will not only measure existing cultural data, it will help create the data infrastructure needed for future cultural planning.

Toward a New Cultural Future

Culture is not simply heritage or entertainment. It is a driver of identity, trust, creativity, innovation, and peace. Cultural competence has become a strategic human skill. AI and digital transformation are reshaping cultural life faster than traditional policy frameworks can keep up.

A Global Culture Index provides the missing architecture to:

- Enable evidence-based cultural investment
- Demonstrate and improve the societal value of cultural institutions
- Strengthen cultural access and participation for every community
- Identify global models of cultural innovation and excellence
- Track the cultural implications of digital transformation and AI
- Modernize cultural data systems at national and local levels

The world does not need another arena for cultural debate. It needs a scientific, collaborative, and future-oriented system to evaluate cultural impact and guide cultural policy with confidence.

The Global Culture Index is designed to fill that void helping the world not only value culture, but measure it, understand it, and strategically build its future. Now, as this work enters its collaborative phase, we warmly invite partners, institutions, researchers, policymakers, cultural leaders, museums, libraries, universities, creatives, and heritage organizations to join us. Building a global measurement system for culture is not a task for one institution, it is a shared responsibility. We welcome dialogue, collaboration, research partnerships, and pilot participation with actors across the cultural ecosystem. If your work is rooted in culture, heritage, arts, education, or creative industries - there is a place for you in this movement.

Let us build the Global Culture Index with the sector, for the sector and shape the cultural future the world deserves!

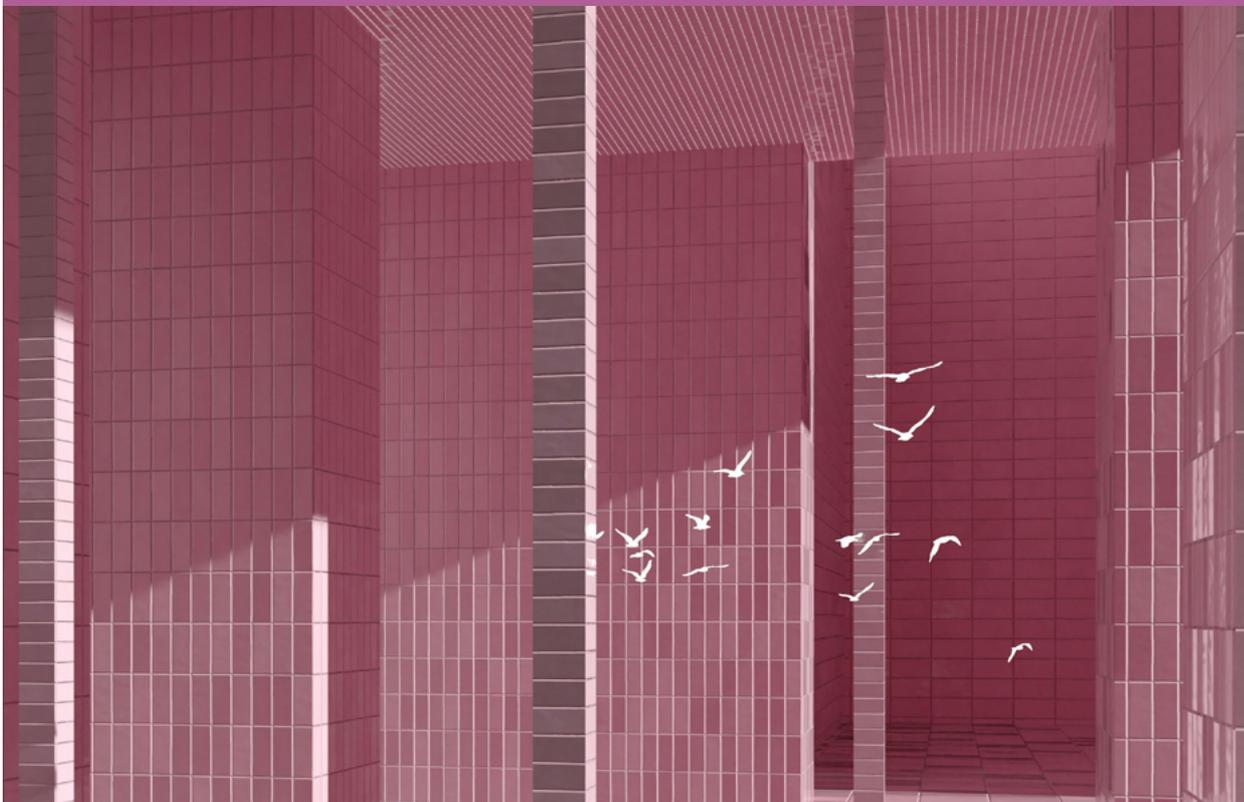
It needs a scientific, collaborative, and future-oriented system to evaluate cultural impact and guide cultural policy with confidence.



VASIF EYVAZZADE

Vasif Eyvazzade is a globally recognized leader in cultural diplomacy, institutional transformation, and strategic partnerships, with more than 20 years of experience across government, academia, and the non-profit sector. A recipient of the U.S. EB-1A Extraordinary Ability award for intercultural diplomacy and the creative economy, as well as two Presidential Awards from Azerbaijan, he has led collaborations across 150+ countries. In 2021, he served as President of the UNESCO Culture Commission of the 41st General Conference, guiding global policy negotiations with representatives from 180+ nations. He later served as Global Manager at Jhpiego, Johns Hopkins University (USA), advancing culture and inclusion strategies across 40+ countries, and taught Cultural Competences at the School of International Studies at Johns Hopkins University. Previously, he held senior roles in the Government of Azerbaijan, including Director of International Cooperation and Chief of Staff at the Ministry of Culture, where he coordinated partnerships with UNESCO, UN, UNAOC, Council of Europe, European Union, ICESCO, and other international institutions. For 15 years, he served as Secretary of the World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue, a UN-supported platform for intercultural and interreligious understanding, and later chaired the Azerbaijan Creative Industries Federation (2021–2024).

Vasif is the Founder of the U.S.-based Chartered Culture and Education Institute (CCEI), dedicated to advancing global standards in culture, heritage, education, and leadership through professional certifications, research, and international cooperation. Under his leadership, CCEI has launched several pioneering initiatives, including the Government Excellence Lab, the Culture & Education Assessment Hub, the Science & Tech Diplomacy Hub, and the Life Design Lab, each designed to empower individuals and institutions for the future.



CULTURAL FUNDING AND FINANCING



Anders Rykkja
Queen's University Belfast

Lluís Bonet
University of Barcelona

Introducing the project

Most artists, creators, cultural producers, and organisations in the cultural and creative sectors and industries (CCSI) find accessing sufficient funding and financing to sustain their professional work an omnipresent and perennial problem. 'Omnipresent' means that it's a constant predicament. 'Perennial' indicates that it is a difficult, if not impossible, quandary to resolve satisfactorily. I would argue that part of the issue is that the difficulties with accessing funding or financing has become perceived as normalised across the CCSI to the extent that it has become a taken-for-granted issue across the CCSI. In other words, a topic debated solely in terms of whether there are enough funding and financing available. Discussions around how to progress or advance towards better, more

equitable and efficient financing models are more subdued, because no real solution is apparent.

Moving forward, a first step towards a more fruitful debate and potential solutions is to stop framing funding and financing as the same thing: a somewhat, illusive scarce resource we would like to have more of. This becomes problematic because we, as either scholars, educators or practitioners, tend to focus our attention on single methods or sources of funding (for example, public grants, philanthropy, sponsorship or crowdfunding) to the detriment of giving attention to how these funding sources, tools, and mechanisms combine into financing models.

Our models are in need rethinking. As was recently highlighted in one of the side events leading up to Mondiacult (sitiofuturo.com), how to fund culture has become the elephant in the room. To progress the discourse and find solutions we need to focus on how we can develop better financing models.

Exploring, discussing, and understanding these models with a special emphasis on developments post-digitalisation.

The result: an edited volume

This is the objective our project, the edition of a compendium collating contributions by 18 scholars on traditional as well as emergent and new funding sources and financing models. With this objective as a guide, we wanted a compendium that helps us understand the diverse sets of tools and practices related to accessing funding and finance available to 'make art', 'create', and 'build a career' for and within the CCSI. The edited volume, with the title *Cultural Funding and Financing: A Guide to New and Traditional Models in the Arts and Culture* (Palgrave/Springer, open access, forthcoming) thus focuses on exploring, discussing, and understanding these models with a special emphasis on developments post-digitalisation. The book therefore aims to serve a resource for professionals and researchers interested in learning more about the most up-to-date thinking on how artists, creators, cultural producers, and organisations navigate the need for financial sustainability.

Other guiding concerns

There are additional concerns justifying a project taking on a funding and financing culture across the CCSI. The first concern is the necessity of providing knowledge about both traditional core sources of funding (e.g. public funding, philanthropy, sponsorship, patronage and exploitation of intellectual property) and emerging funding and financing models post-digitalisation and how they advance on each other. A second concern is informed by the need to understand how funding tools combine into proprietary financing models, including understanding of the drivers and barriers related to broader adoption across the CCSI and in different countries. The final matter of concern is a return to the justifications for why we advocate for a greater focus on funding and financing models or, in other words, a discussion about the ways to access the means of cultural production that needs to be at the centre of how we make various art forms available to the public.

Besides these concerns, two contextual issues underpin the relevance of producing more writing, thinking, and debate around traditional and new emerging funding and financing models: digitalisation and stagnating public funding across the EU.

The Impact of Digitalisation and Platformization

The prevailing funding and financing models in the CCSI are changing because of the impact of digitalisation and the rise of platform-based business models. Digitalisation, in particular the lowering of production costs and the underlying shift in business models from direct sales to payment for access to culture as a service, has brought an increase in the number of self-producing creators and independent producers competing for attention and revenue. The outcome is, on the one hand, increased fragmentation and oversupply (what do we want to watch, listen to, read or engage with?) and a widening gap between high- and low-earning artists and producers. With hindsight, the current post-digital context is difficult to reconcile with the optimistic, initial promises of digitalisation's potential for democratising market access and provide income for 'niche' producers of cultural expressions and outputs. The long-tail model has indeed proven to be very slim (for the many) and extremely spiky (for the few).



Anders Rykkja speaking at the ENCATC Conference

The Difficulties of Accessing Public Funding

Another contextual issue is that many artists and organisations in the CCSI also find access to public and other traditional funding sources challenging. In many EU countries cultural budgets allocated to governmental agencies for redistribution started to decrease after the financial crisis in 2008. These same countries today still struggle with providing the same level of pre-crisis provision and access to funding. In some cases, the reasons can be explained by the persistence of cuts in public funding resulting from the adoption of policies of austerity. In other cases, explanations point towards the way funding to bail out the CCS was managed after a more recent crisis, namely, COVID-19.

These concerns and contextual challenges provide evidence that the financial means of production for practitioners across the CCSI are kept in check by the combined effects of diminished access to public funding, growth in for-profit cultural activities, and the impact of COVID-19. Artists, cultural and creative organisations, governments, and intermediaries at the sub-sectoral level are in a state of quandary. They either struggle



Lluís Bonet addressing challenges in public funding frameworks during the ENCATC Conference

to adapt traditional practices to the current post-digital context or acknowledge the emergence of new financing methods. Or they embrace these developments and new tools without critically reflecting on their limitations and capacity to exacerbate existing inequalities of access to funding across the CCSI.

Further thinking

These circumstances justify further thinking around how sectorial funding and financing models are evolving. As such, the underlying argumentation of the book is that funding and financing are not simply a matter of pragmatics (i.e., which funds are available for particular groups of creators aiming to reach intended goals) but also a matter of social perception, access to information, asymmetrical markets, norms, informal rules, and how culture is less subject to top-down decision-making processes, thereby affecting how novel and traditional funding methods are seen in complementarity rather than as a substitution for traditional formats

Concluding remarks: the focus should be on the many, not the few

The book project was motivated by wanting to highlight how most artists, creators, and organisations producing culture finance their work and careers through the combined use of multiple digital and non-digital models. Other works can focus on successful and emblematic cases. As editors, our approach and take were guided by the idea that we need to speak more about funding and financing. There is a need for new thinking and innovation around public funding models that can help inform the work of governments. What is happening in Ireland with basic income is one such promising example. Most importantly, however, is the need to better understand how to combine the new platform-based options with what we refer to as 'traditional' or 'core' funding and financing sources. In all cases, we need to think of solutions for the many, not the few. If the transformative powers of arts and culture are to permeate European societies, we need more diverse and heterogenous cultural production taking place. Without financing or available funding, this will not happen. Therefore, we need to talk about and understand the models and opportunities that are available. We hope the coming edited volume will be a step in that direction.



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Anders Rykkja is a lecturer in Arts & Cultural Industries Management at Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland. Before entering academia, Anders worked over twenty years in artist management, concert and festival production,

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Anders' research interests include cultural entrepreneurship, festivals, and events; platform economics; cultural leadership and management; cultural and creative organisations and the ecosystems within which they are embedded; cultural policy; and the music industry. Alongside Carolina Dalla Chiesa, he is the editor of the forthcoming volume with the title "Cultural Funding and Financing: A Guide to New and Traditional Models in the Arts and Culture", to be published by Palgrave MacMillan.

Anders is an affiliated member of the University of Agder's (Norway) Crowdfunding Research Centre and the Volda University College (Norway) research group on cultural policy and artistic labour. Prior to becoming a full-time academic, he was the coordinator of Knowledge Works, a Norwegian Ministry of Culture-sponsored research centre on the cultural and creative industries.



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Lluís Bonet is Professor of applied economy and Director of the Cultural Management Graduate program at the University of Barcelona. Specialized in cultural economics, cultural policies, and arts management, he has been

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IDEAL TOURISM AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN CULTURE, HERITAGE AND EDUCATION: A CROATIAN CASE STUDY OF TOURISM CULTURE



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Introduction: A New Understanding of Tourism and Culture

Building on the most important cultural policy documents of the 20th century – such as the Council of Europe's Cultural Convention and key UNESCO frameworks – the cultural policies of the 21st century increasingly highlight the need to link culture with sustainable development and education. From UNESCO's Mondiacult 2022 conference to the ENCATC Congress in Barcelona, a shared message emerges: culture must become the foundation of social and educational progress.

This raises a crucial question: Can tourism, traditionally perceived as an economic activity, also become a pedagogical tool – a means of learning, understanding, and preserving cultural heritage. UNESCO defines tourism not merely as travel, but as a school of tolerance and identity, where people learn both about others and about themselves. This perspective aligns with the view expressed by the expert group led by Charles Landry in the National Cultural Policy Review of Croatia, which concluded: "In Croatia, there should be an equal sign between culture and tourism." This vision inspired the Croatian project Tourism Culture, which connects culture, education and tourism in a unique model of experiential learning.



Participants - Split, Croatia: The Diocletian's Palace

Genesis of the Project: From Idea to Movement

The project was developed by Prokultura – Observatory of Cultural Policies – Split, a civil society organisation with over three decades of experience in researching, developing and promoting cultural policy.

Before initiating Tourism Culture, Prokultura implemented numerous innovative educational and cultural programmes – such as the historical game Even the Fish Wonder What Is Hidden in Split's Museums and Galleries (1997) and the Festival of French Chanson as part of the Days of French Language and Culture in Croatia (1993–2023). These initiatives demonstrated the strong interest that young people show when culture – whether their own or others' – is presented through play, creativity and interaction.

Such projects were accompanied by research into the functioning of cultural and educational policies within decentralised and transitional contexts. Drawing on these experiences and long-term dialogue with public administration, the project's author – who, in addition to designing and managing projects in the civil sector, also pursued scientific and research work in cultural policy and held positions from local to ministerial level – launched Tourism Culture in the late 1990s.

The aim was to create an interdisciplinary educational programme linking education, heritage and tourism, fostering among pupils a sense of identity and cultural responsibility.

From Classroom to Community: How the Project Works

The project began in seven primary schools in Split and today brings together more than 400 schools across Croatia and the Croatian diaspora, involving over 5,000 participants – pupils, teachers and cultural professionals.

Its methodology is based on four key pillars:

- Modular teaching – connecting subjects such as history, languages, natural sciences and art through shared themes.
- Student research projects – for example, Traditional Healing Practices or Monuments of Our Homeland.
- Public presentations and exhibitions – where pupils present their results to the community, media and experts.
- Education and training – seminars and workshops for teachers, cultural workers and local administrators.

This blend of theory, research and public presentation has transformed schools into spaces of active learning and civic engagement.



Pupils Public Project Presentation

Development and International Reach

The project led to the creation of the national event Heritage and Tourism Days for Youth, an annual gathering where awarded students and teachers present their projects on a new theme each year. The event has become a platform for intercultural dialogue and creative learning about local and national heritage.

Beyond the main showcase, the manifestation includes:

- » programmes for preschool children through exhibitions and performances,
- » student art exhibitions and concerts,
- » professional seminars for teachers on Culture, Heritage and Tourism within civic education,
- » and an interdisciplinary scientific conference on local development.



Preschool Children Exhibition

The project has joined international networks such as IPAE and Erasmus+, and has become a subject of academic research on the interconnection between cultural, educational and tourism policies. In her doctoral dissertation in Communication Studies, the project's author, who also authored this text, demonstrated, through the case study of Tourism Culture, that the links between public policies of culture, education and tourism in Croatia are often fragmented, preventing coordinated action under existing laws and strategies. The research also revealed the lack of training among public officials and the insufficient alignment of actions across governance levels within decentralised systems.



Professional Seminars for Teachers

Tourism as a School of Identity and Tolerance

Working with schools, teachers, children and youth, Tourism Culture embodies UNESCO's concept of tourism as a school of tolerance:

- A school of identity – pupils explore and reinterpret their own heritage.
- A school of dialogue – connecting children from different regions and minorities.
- A school of democracy – developing cooperation, critical thinking and responsibility.
- A school of sustainability – viewing heritage as a legacy, not a consumable resource.

Through this approach, the project achieves transformative education – learning that shapes not only knowledge but also values and awareness.

Impact and Results

- » For young people: strengthened research and communication skills; a deeper sense of identity and belonging.
- » For schools: adoption of modular and interdisciplinary teaching models.
- » For communities: affirmation of local heritage and the role of schools as cultural hubs.
- » For the economy: demonstration of sustainable, culture-based tourism.
- » For policy and governance: encouragement of lifelong learning among officials and improved cross-sector cooperation.

Challenges

The project faced familiar challenges: a lack of institutional support, rigidity of the school system, and financial instability. Despite these, it proved that civil initiatives can serve as laboratories for public policy. Similar challenges are shared across Europe, as countries attempt to link cultural, educational and tourism sectors in practice. According to international observers, the Croatian experience reflects a broader European challenge – how to translate reforms from theory into practice and connect sectors that usually operate separately.

Recommendations for the Future

- Integrate culture and heritage into all forms of education.
- Strengthen partnerships among schools, institutions, authorities, civil society and the private sector.

- Systematically educate policymakers on culture's role in sustainable development.
- Encourage international exchanges of pupils and teachers through EU programmes.
- Develop tourism as an educational practice focused on experience and dialogue.
- Improve communication and managerial literacy among public officials.

Conclusion: Culture as the Foundation of the Future

The Tourism Culture project and the Heritage and Tourism Days for Youth demonstrate how tourism can become a pedagogical and cultural tool. In this way, tourism transcends its economic function and becomes a space for learning, intercultural dialogue and democratic participation.

In line with the ENCATC Congress theme The Future is Cultural, this project shows how heritage and education can shape a regenerative future. The Croatian experience confirms that tourism, when understood as ideal tourism, becomes a school of identity, tolerance and sustainability. Heritage is therefore not merely a reminder of the past but a foundation on which future generations can build inclusive and just societies. Through the project, young people do not only learn about history – they live culture through dialogue, exploration and creativity.

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THE EDUCATIONAL ROLE OF THE RÉPÉTITEUR AS MEDIATOR BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND THEATRE INSTITUTIONS: A CASE STUDY OF “OPERA CHILDREN’S LAB”

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Collaborative Pianist*

Introduction

The need to form a new generation of opera audiences represents today an urgent cultural and educational priority. In Italy, where opera constitutes one of the foundations of national identity, its transmission to younger generations requires innovative strategies capable of combining artistic practice and pedagogy.

This article illustrates an ongoing research project at the Conservatory "G. Frescobaldi" of Ferrara, entitled *The Educational Role of the Répétiteur as an Intermediary between School and Theatre Institutions*. This PhD project aims to redefine the figure of the Répétiteur

(collaborative pianist) — traditionally understood as an accompanist and vocal coach — expanding his competencies toward educational and pedagogical dimensions. From this perspective, the Opera Children's LAB was created, an experimental space conceived to explore the potential of the Répétiteur as a cultural mediator capable of creating connections among schools, theatres, and communities.



The role of the Répétiteur

Within opera production, the Répétiteur occupies a multifaceted and indispensable role. He is the professional capable of substituting for the orchestra during rehearsals, accompanying singers, assisting the director, and often participating directly in performances as an harpsichordist, lighting assistant, or surtitles coordinator.

This plurality of functions grants him a comprehensive view of opera, encompassing both its musical and theatrical dimensions. However, while his function is well defined within the professional sphere, his potential in the educational field remains largely unexplored.

The research presented here is based on the hypothesis that the Répétiteur—precisely by virtue of his transversal understanding of the operatic system—can act effectively as a mediator between the world of theatre and that of education. By integrating pedagogical training with artistic competencies, he can assume an expanded role as a facilitator of learning, creativity, and cultural dissemination.

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Research Objectives and Methodology

The main objective of the doctoral research is to redefine the professional profile of the Répétiteur, extending the traditional musical domain to a broader set of educational and communicative competencies. This aim is articulated in three specific objectives:

1. **To analyze the current involvement of Répétiteurs in educational programs** of Italian and international theatres and institutions, identifying the structural and cultural barriers that limit the pedagogical participation.
2. **To design and implement experimental experiences** that test new models of interaction among Répétiteurs, schools, and theatres.
3. **To evaluate the pedagogical and social impact of such experiences**, in relation to children's understanding of opera and the perception of musical theatre as an expressive and collective language.

Within this methodological framework is situated the Opera Children's LAB project, conceived as a pilot case to investigate the mediating role of the répétiteur through direct educational practice.

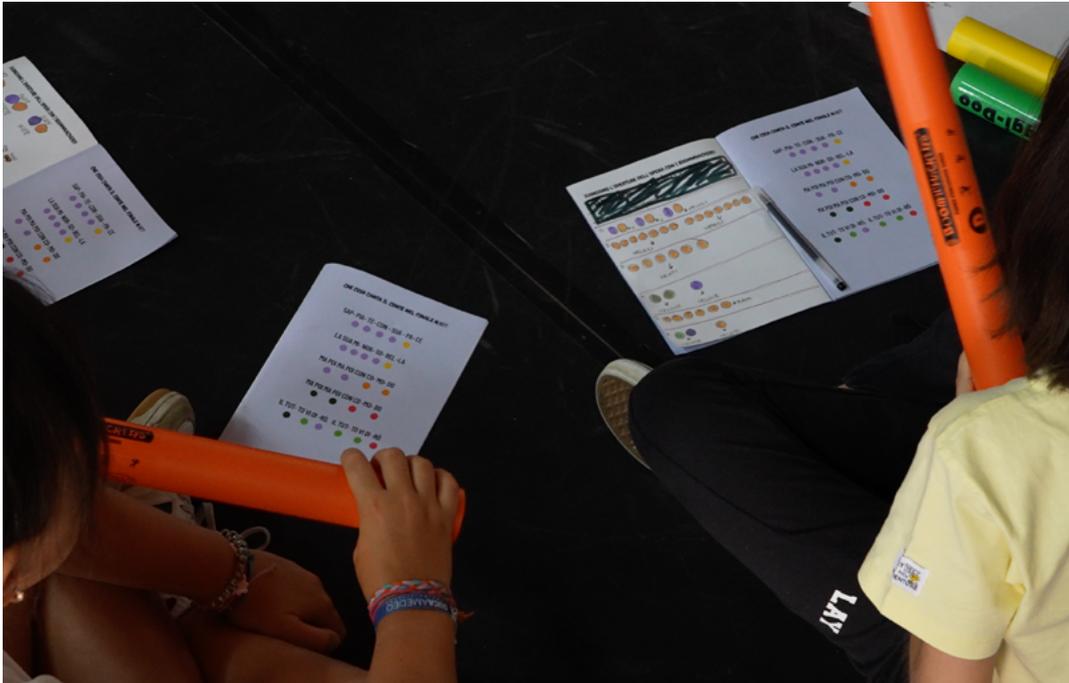
Opera Children's LAB: Conception and Structure

The **Opera Children's Lab**, conceived and developed by the researcher, was integrated into the opera production of *Il matrimonio segreto* by Domenico Cimarosa—a collaboration between the Conservatory of Ferrara and the city's theatre. Given the performance date (June 29, 2025) and the resulting placement of the workshop outside the regular school calendar, a partnership was established with **CIDAS**, a social cooperative specializing in educational activities and summer programs for children and young people.

The workshop took place from June 23 to 27, 2025, and was designed as a theatre-themed summer camp. Initially structured in two daily sessions of 25 participants each, it was subsequently remodeled into a single morning session for a reduced group, to ensure a more personalized and attentive approach. At the close of registration, nine children participated, aged between 5 and 11 years: an age range chosen intentionally, since while the theatre already develops projects for secondary schools, primary school age lends itself more readily to experiential and ludic-musical workshops like the one proposed.

Educational Framework and Pedagogical Approach

The workshop pursued a dual objective: on one hand, to explore how the Répétiteur can function as an educational mediator; on the other, to allow children to discover the complexity of opera theatre.



The main pedagogical objectives were:

- » **To introduce participants to the principal constituent elements of opera (music, theatre, professional roles);**
- » **To stimulate natural musicality through melodic and rhythmic exercises;**
- » **To promote creativity, imagination, and expressive autonomy.**

The project was founded on the principles of constructivist pedagogy, and particularly on Jerome Bruner's theory of "scaffolding," according to which the teacher provides temporary support that enables the child to engage in activities otherwise too complex.

The experiences were therefore organized according to gradual progression: from guided activities to moments of autonomous reworking, maintaining a constant balance between guidance and discovery.

Also fundamental were references to the methods of Zoltán Kodály and Carl Orff, which privilege multisensory learning based on singing, movement, and use of simple instruments. The continuous interaction among sight, hearing, gesture, and manipulation fostered holistic and inclusive learning.

Theoretical Foundations

The didactic structure of the workshop was inspired by Giorgio Pagannone's model of the six dimensions of musical dramaturgy: rhetorical-vocal, morphological, temporal, scenic-representative, affective, and historical-stylistic. Among these, the rhetorical-vocal and affective dimensions — relating respectively to the expressive identity of vocal types and to the representation of emotions — proved most accessible to children.

As Carl Dahlhaus emphasizes, *musical representation foregrounds, more than the dialectic of the dramatic process, the affective substance of what is happening on stage.*

These dimensions guided the workshop's activities, allowing participants to come into direct contact with the emotional and expressive core of opera. Through singing, rhythmic play, and guided listening, children internalized the feelings and musical gestures of the characters, transforming opera from an abstract object into a concrete and participatory experience.

Structure and Activities

All activities were accompanied on the piano by the Répétiteur, using excerpts from *Il matrimonio segreto*. Guided listening sessions introduced selected passages, explained in simple language by the conductor and singers. Children learned brief vocal parts, experimented with breathing and vocalization exercises, and participated in rhythmic games with boomwhackers, colored sound tubes that connect rhythm, movement, and collective coordination.

In parallel, participants completed a specially designed didactic booklet containing games, reflection sheets, and summaries that supported learning and provided assessment tools.

A central element was the participation of professional artists from the production. The conductor led a conducting simulation with the répétiteur at the piano, allowing children to understand the symbolic and coordinating value of gesture. Each participant was able to conduct the opening measures of the Overture in the orchestra pit after constructing a personal baton, thus experiencing the emotion of standing before an orchestra. Singers from the secondary cast collaborated actively, presenting their characters and demonstrating ensemble moments. Games such as the "character domino" or symbolic recognition of the six protagonists facilitated understanding of the plot and dramaturgical relationships.

A central element was the participation of professional artists from the production.

The program concluded with two immersive experiences: a visit to the dressing rooms and backstage areas of the theatre, to discover the "behind the scenes," and participation in the opera's "Antegenerale" rehearsal, a culminating moment that allowed children to connect what they had learned to the real experience of the performance.

Results and Evaluation

The results of Opera Children's LAB were analyzed through direct observations, participant feedback, and satisfaction questionnaires. Responses were unanimously positive: children showed a high level of engagement and content retention, while parents, educators, and artists expressed great appreciation for the project's formative value.

Particularly significant was the creation of alternative endings for the opera, developed in three small groups. This activity, synthesizing the entire program, required integrated

use of acquired competencies — rhythmic, vocal, and theatrical — and highlighted children's capacity to internalize content and rework it creatively.

CIDAS educators emphasized the cooperative and inclusive climate that developed, while professional musicians highlighted participants' growing musical awareness. From a pedagogical perspective, the workshop achieved its main objective: demonstrating that the Répétiteur, through their role as interdisciplinary mediator, can facilitate meaningful opera education experiences.



Critical Reflection and Future Perspectives

On the organizational level, the project presented several challenges: tight timeframes, the need to coordinate heterogeneous activities, and the absence of the opera's director in the workshop phase, whose participation could have further enriched the experience with references to scenography, costumes, and staging.

Despite this, the experience confirmed the strategic centrality of the Répétiteur as a cultural mediator. His deep knowledge of the theatrical and musical worlds enables him to translate the complexity of opera into accessible and engaging pathways.

Beyond musical accompaniment, he can conceive and coordinate educational activities, engage in dialogue with schools and community organizations, and contribute consciously to audience development.

To consolidate this new professional profile, it is necessary to integrate pedagogical training for Répétiteurs into Conservatory programs. In addition to solid musical and theatrical foundations, future Répétiteurs should acquire

The experience confirmed the strategic centrality of the Répétiteur as a cultural mediator.

knowledge of pedagogy, learning psychology, and artistic education methodologies. Collaboration with didactic experts and the inclusion of educational research within advanced training programs can contribute to effective professionalization of this emerging figure.

Discussion: Toward a Model of Cultural Mediation

The experience of Opera Children's LAB proposes a preliminary model of inter-institutional collaboration. The synergy among Conservatory, Teatro Comunale, and CIDAS cooperative represents an example of an interdisciplinary and community-based approach. By involving artists, educators, and families, the project created a microcosm of cultural exchange in which opera was configured not as elite art, but as a participatory and collective experience.

Learning is a co-constructed process through interaction.

Children's observations and spontaneous contributions — questions, comments, creative proposals — proved to be determining elements for the workshop's evolution. This confirms a fundamental principle of constructivist pedagogy: learning is a co-constructed process through interaction.

The Répétiteur's capacity to welcome and valorize such contributions proved crucial for maintaining high motivation and promoting reflection. The workshop thus transformed into a dialogic space, in which artistic competence and childhood curiosity met on a plane of mutual enrichment.

Conclusions

Opera Children's LAB demonstrates the potential of the Répétiteur as an educational mediator and catalyst for collaboration among institutions. Through this experience, opera became not only an object of study, but a living practice accessible to children.

The project confirms that, guided by an aware and pedagogically trained Répétiteur, the encounter between theatre and school can generate profound formative experiences, capable of stimulating creativity, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence.

The implications of this work extend beyond the single case: in a broader perspective, the expansion of the Répétiteur's role can become a strategic component of opera dissemination policies and music education.

Acting as a bridge between artistic and educational institutions, they can contribute to renewing opera's social relevance and to forming culturally aware citizens sensitive to art.

Opera Children's LAB demonstrates the potential of the Répétiteur as an educational mediator and catalyst for collaboration among institutions.

Ultimately, promoting stable collaboration among Conservatories, Theatres, and territorial organizations means creating conditions for sustainable and inclusive opera transmission. In this transformation process, the Répétiteur — artist, educator, and mediator — occupies an innovative position.



MARINELLA DELL'EVA

Marinella Dell'Eva is an Italian collaborative pianist who graduated with honors from the Conservatories of Trento and Padua (Italy), later specializing in vocal accompaniment at Berlin's Universität der Künste. She has worked at Leipzig Opera on productions including *Rusalka*, *L'elisir d'amore*, and *Carmen*. She has accompanied Masterclasses with renowned artists including mezzo-soprano Daniela Barcellona and soprano Janet Perry at the Mozarteum in Salzburg, and served as accompanist at Vicenza Conservatory. She actively collaborates as a recital pianist with internationally acclaimed singers including Alessia Panza, Matteo Macchioni, Alvaro Zambrano, and Liu Huigang. In 2024, she won First Prize at the E. Respighi Competition. Founder of Festival Liricastello, she is currently a PhD candidate at Ferrara Conservatory.



Foto di MARIOLA GROBELSKA - unsplash

EXPANDING ACCESS TO ARTS ADMINISTRATION: THE ARTS ADMINISTRATORS FELLOWSHIP AND MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS



Milena Deleva

*Executive Director, Association
of Arts Administration Educators*

According to the fictional authority created by Homer in *The Odyssey*, Mentor was a friend of Odysseus, entrusted with the care and education of Odysseus' son, Telemachus, while Odysseus was away fighting in the Trojan War. In the father's absence, Mentor introduced Telemachus to community leaders and guided the young man's search for his father and heritage.

It seems that Mentor fulfilled his role well, so it's no surprise that, over time, the name "Mentor" extended beyond Greek mythology, and the word *mentor* came to mean a wise and trusted advisor. Today, the term describes someone who provides guidance and support to a less experienced person, typically in a professional or educational context.

What has changed, however, is that mentoring has evolved from a one-way pedagogical relationship into a more reciprocal exchange, one that is also more diverse in terms of who can serve as a mentor. Mentoring is now viewed as a supportive relationship in which an experienced individual shares knowledge, skills, and life experience to guide someone seeking to advance their education or career.

Across the arts sector, pathways to becoming an arts manager, or, as the profession is more commonly known in the U.S., *arts administrator*—have traditionally been uneven. While formal education in arts management provides a solid foundation, many aspiring professionals face barriers to access: financial, geographic, and institutional. University programs could also benefit from more experiential learning opportunities and mentorship to facilitate career entry, transition, or advancement of their students and recent graduates thus fulfilling their own promises for career realization.

To address these needs, the Association of Arts Administration Educators (AAAE) developed two complementary initiatives: the **Arts Administrators Fellowship** and the **Arts Administrators Mentorship Program**, both designed to support emerging arts managers and educators.

The Arts Administrators Pipeline Fellowship: A Framework for Applied Learning and Equity

Launched in 2023, the Arts Administrators Fellowship was created to support individuals who may not have had opportunities to develop careers in arts management or are based in areas with limited cultural resources, while also strengthening the capacity of arts organizations across California to authentically engage with their communities. The program was launched thanks to public funding from the state of California where AAAE was founded.

The program offered a 12-month, full-time paid fellowship structured around mentorship, professional development, and cohort-based networking. Eleven fellows were selected from a competitive pool through a rigorous review and interview process conducted by a panel of arts administrators and educators. Fellows were matched with host organizations—all 501(c)(3) nonprofits or arts councils—based on mutual interest and alignment of professional goals.

Each fellowship included \$50,000 in compensation and health benefits for fellows, with host organizations receiving an additional grant of \$35,000 to support mentorship and integration. The hybrid program model – combining in-person and remote participation – enabled a geographically diverse cohort, representing a wide range of institutional contexts from small community-based nonprofits to major museums.

A Cohort Model Anchored in Practice

Central to the fellowship is its experiential learning design. Each participant collaborates with their host organization to co-develop a work plan that aligns fellow's learning goals with organizational needs; these plans form an integral part of the contractual agreement

with both parties, fellows and hosts. Activities have spanned administrative, curatorial, programmatic, development, and marketing functions, from exhibition curation and festival management to curriculum design and donor cultivation.



Museum of Arts and History

Beyond day-to-day responsibilities, the program fosters professional development through workshops, cohort meetings, and participation in the AAAE Annual Conference. These experiences strengthen both technical and interpersonal competencies while building a supportive network of peers and mentors.

Navigating Challenges and Institutional Realities

As with any pilot program, implementation brought challenges that tested the adaptability of both fellows and host organizations. High living costs in California, inconsistent mentorship styles, leadership changes, and the assignment of undesirable tasks to fellows occasionally disrupted placements. In some cases, work plans had to be revised midyear to realign expectations and ensure meaningful learning outcomes. In these instances, AAAE's role as an intermediary between fellows and hosts proved crucial to the successful completion of the fellowships. Treating the fellowship as an internship were among the issues we encountered.

Rather than viewing these challenges as setbacks, the program embraced them as opportunities for reflection and recalibration. Fellows were encouraged to advocate for themselves, negotiate more substantive responsibilities, and engage in open dialogue about institutional realities.

Impact on Fellows and Host Organizations

Program evaluation combined narrative and quantitative tools, including interim and final reports, exit interviews, multiple cohort check-ins, and separate fellow-only and

host-only reflections. Fellows reported positive changes in confidence, adaptability, and leadership capacity. Many cited the guaranteed income, half of which was distributed at the start of the fellowship and the other one midway as a crucial factor that enabled them to take risks, explore new career paths, and pursue roles that would have otherwise been financially inaccessible. Several transitioned into permanent or extended positions following the program, while others shifted professional directions—for example, moving from K–12 education into museums or from local to regional networks.

One fellow, for instance, entered the program hoping to learn how to establish a nonprofit organization but discovered an aptitude for fundraising and donor relations. Another realized that sitting in the backseat felt more comfortable than arts leadership; another one reconsidered their graduate plans, shifting from urban studies to arts administration. Exposure to AAAE's opportunities to attend the annual conference also inspired additional fellows to pursue arts administration degrees.

Unexpectedly, the fellowship surfaced an important question: to what extent can one-year fellowships function as a form of guaranteed income—providing fair compensation and benefits while avoiding the stigma often associated with basic income programs?

Host organizations, in turn, benefited from fresh perspectives, renewed commitments to equity, and strengthened internal capacity. The experience encouraged new approaches to mentorship, leadership development, and community engagement, reinforcing the idea that investing in early-career professionals can catalyze institutional learning.

Implications for the Field of Arts Administration Education

In addition to direct benefits for fellows and host organizations, the Fellowship Program helps arts administration programs keep their curricula current with professional practice. Several partnerships have evolved into potential teaching cases, while others have informed experiential learning opportunities for students. One-fifth of the fellows were recent graduates of AAAE member arts administration programs. Although they had generally positive academic experiences, they reported encountering steep learning curves during their fellowships—gaining skills and insights not experienced in the classroom.

“Experiential learning has become a major pillar of arts management and administration programs”, as reflected in AAAE's most recent [Graduate Standards in Arts Administration Education](#) (ed. Ximena Varela, 2023). These programs commonly offer students hands-on experiences that connect theoretical knowledge with real-world arts management contexts. Exposure to a diversity of community partners (not just well-resourced institutions) enriches students' understanding of arts management in varied contexts. As Cuyler and Heidelberg (2014) describe, such “exposure experiences” help integrate diversity into arts management education and deepen students' practical competence (AAAE Graduate Standards, ed. Ximena Varela, 2023).

Given all that, expanding the fellowship to a national scale remains a long-term ambition; to date, implementation has been limited to California due to funding restrictions.

The Mentorship Program: Building Bridges Reciprocal Relations Across Experience Levels

AAAE began experimenting with mentorship models in 2022 through one-on-one virtual consultations. The first year-round mentorship program was subsequently launched with support from the National Endowment for the Arts. Now in its third year, the Arts Administrators Mentorship Program is a 12-month initiative designed to offer individualized guidance, foster critical thinking, peer learning and reciprocal exchange among emerging arts administrators and educators.



Open to participants globally, the program pairs mentees with seasoned professionals across two tracks: education and practice, which also includes research partnerships. Each pairing is mentee-driven, with participants setting their goals autonomously and meeting regularly (typically 10–15 times) throughout the year. Mentors receive a modest honorarium, and mentees are supported with travel stipends for a study visit to AAAE annual cohort where they can attend all events, additional speed-networking meetings and a cohort meeting.

Program Design and Distinctive Features

The results of Opera Children's LAB were analyzed through direct observations, participant feedback, and satisfaction questionnaires. Responses were unanimously positive: children showed a high level of engagement and content retention, while parents, educators, and artists expressed great appreciation for the project's formative value.

Particularly significant was the creation of alternative endings for the opera, developed in three small groups. This activity, synthesizing the entire program, required integrated use of acquired competencies — rhythmic, vocal, and theatrical — and highlighted children's capacity to internalize content and rework it creatively.

CIDAS educators emphasized the cooperative and inclusive climate that developed, while professional musicians highlighted participants' growing musical awareness. From a pedagogical perspective, the workshop achieved its main objective: demonstrating that the Répétiteur, through their role as interdisciplinary mediator, can facilitate meaningful opera education experiences.

Measurable Outcomes and Transformative Learning

Nearly all mentor-mentee pairs set clear goals and reported achieving them. More specifically, mentees improved their skills in career planning, goal articulation, fundraising, budgeting, program development, and research. They also reported increased confidence in navigating professional transitions, whether into tenure-track positions, curriculum development, new program creation, or expanded research collaborations that continued beyond the program's duration.

Participants valued the program's non-hierarchical structure and praised the professional relationships developed "without the constraints of a teacher-student relationship." Rather than reproducing traditional top-down mentorship models, it encouraged reciprocal learning, mutual respect, and shared inquiry. Aligned with AAAE's international scope, the mentoring structure represented a departure from the common model in which Western experts mentor individuals from the Global South—a pattern that has seen few exceptions.

This approach fosters genuine multi-way exchanges where all participants contribute and benefit equally, with several mentors reported they learned from their mentees. The program's international reach has included mentors and mentees from the U.S., U.K., India, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore, and South Korea, incorporating diverse and non-Western perspectives.

Conclusion: Building Pathways, Not Pipelines

Unlike its original designation as a "pipeline" in the case of the Arts Administration Fellowships, and unlike the ancient conception of mentoring as a fixed and hierarchical relationship, the two AAAE programs offered a flexible space for exploration, adaptability, and accessibility. The fellow-driven mentoring design played a key role in that success.

As one of the oldest forms of professional learning, mentorship holds universal appeal and has special value for our evolving and interdisciplinary field. It has helped participants discover where their passion for arts administration truly lies. Together, the

Arts Administrators Fellowship and Mentorship Programs demonstrate that the future of the field depends on how we nurture potential and build the cultural competence of those serving diverse communities. They model how education, research, and practice can work together to help the next generation of arts managers both enter and reshape the field.



Participants learned to navigate ambiguity, embrace vulnerability, gain agency to self-advocate, and collaborate across institutional and community boundaries. Perhaps most tellingly, across both programs, it was emphasized how much participants valued moments of genuine human connection, especially during in-person meetings.

Overall, both programs reassert how experiential and relational learning can complement, rather than compete with, formal arts management education.

Sustainability

Research shows that programs supported by multiple stakeholders and diversified funding sources exhibit greater long-term sustainability than those reliant on a single funder. Thanks to the support of the California Arts Council, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Wallace Foundation, we have been able to achieve a degree of sustainability and are now working toward a lasting model for professional development, one that draws on both public and private support and connects local and international contexts.

Although AAAE is uniquely positioned to advance this work in service of early-career faculty and practitioners, questions and challenges for the future remain. We are exploring how educational institutions and membership organizations can collaborate with industry partners to design similarly innovative programs that expand experiential learning opportunities for our member institutions and continue to uphold one of the oldest forms of professional relationship - mentorship.



MILENA DELEVA

Milena Deleva holds master's degrees in Cultural Studies from Sofia University and in Arts Administration from Baruch College. She serves as the Executive Director of the Association of Arts Administration Education in the US. Before this, she acted as the Managing Director of the Elizabeth Kostova Foundation for Creative Writing for nearly 15 years, overseeing the foundation's initiatives in both Bulgaria and the United States. Under her leadership, EKF's work has garnered coverage by The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, Publishing Perspectives, Poets & Writers, Oberlin's College Blog Reading in Translation, and the organization was shortlisted for the Literary Translation Initiative Award of the London Book Fair's International Excellence Awards 2021.

In her current role, Milena spearheaded year-round programs for the Association of Arts Administration Education, such as the first year-round Mentorship Program, Professional Development and Research Series, and the Arts Administration Fellowships, and increased the organization's budget tenfold.

She routinely participates in review panels at the Department of Cultural Affairs in New York, among other arts councils. Milena co-authored *Cultural Policy, Politics and Change* (ed. Boekmanstichting, Amsterdam, 2005) and wrote *Technological Park Culture* (ed. Ecumest, Bucharest, 2005). She contributed to the anthology "Stories from the 90s" (ICU, 2023).



THE MERITA REVOLUTION RETHINKING WHERE MUSIC, HERITAGE, AND INNOVATION CAN MEET

Bianca Traxler

*Executive Director at Le Dimore
del Quartetto*

With nearly ten years of expertise, Le Dimore del Quartetto stands as a unique creative and cultural enterprise at the crossroads of chamber music, cultural heritage, and sustainable innovation. Founded on a simple but powerful idea, Le Dimore del Quartetto transforms historic houses and places of cultural interest into living stages for musical creation and exchange. What began as an initiative to support young quartets has grown into a dynamic network linking musicians, cultural institutions, and territories across 18 countries. The organisation operates through a dual network: on one side, over 300 historic houses that open their doors to creativity; on the other, more than a

hundred emerging professional ensembles from all over the world. Together, they form a circular model where music brings new life to heritage, and historic houses, in turn, offer inspiration and hospitality to musicians at the start of their international careers.

Through residencies, concerts, festivals, masterclasses, educational projects, and partnerships with public and private institutions, Le Dimore del Quartetto supports young artists and revitalises cultural sites, creating shared value among artists, audiences, and local communities. Its work connects multiple worlds, from culture to education, from enterprise to social innovation, and responds to a growing need in the performing arts: to rethink the role of classical music within contemporary society.

At the center of this vision stands MERITA - where Music, cultural hERitage and TALent meet, a European platform coordinated by Le Dimore del Quartetto and co-funded by the European Union (Creative Europe 2021 and 2024). Born in 2022, MERITA platform set out to redefine chamber music as more than a refined art form, as a tool for connection, innovation, and social change. Its mission is to enhance the visibility and mobility of emerging ensembles, strengthen their professional development, and reactivate Europe's heritage sites with meaningful cultural experiences.

"MERITA was imagined as a living platform," explains Francesca Moncada, President of Le Dimore del Quartetto and Project Manager of the initiative. "A space where musicians and cultural institutions could meet, collaborate, and grow together, combining excellence with accessibility, innovation with sustainability."



Akela Quartet at Palac Radziejowice - Artistic residency with Julian Cochran Foundation

Three years later, that vision has taken solid form. MERITA has evolved into a vibrant ecosystem of artistic and cultural exchange, uniting 38 string quartets, 152 musicians from 28 nationalities, and more than 20 interdisciplinary artists (dancers, actors, composers, and multimedia creators). Through artistic residencies hosted in historic houses for a total of 263 days, the platform has enabled musicians to explore new repertoires, formats, and audiences.

Turning chamber music into an engine for creative growth and sustainable development.

Between March 2024 and August 2025, MERITA organised 199 concerts in 140 venues across 27 countries, reaching over 10,000 listeners, nearly 50 more events than initially planned. This demonstrated not only the strong commitment and the good collaboration of its partners, but also the growing interest and engagement from audiences and institutions across Europe. Many of these performances were designed for non-traditional audiences: children, or people in vulnerable conditions, and communities in remote areas, reaffirming MERITA's belief that beauty and culture should be accessible to everyone.

The success of this first phase has paved the way for the project's evolution: MERITAcubed (2025–2029), once again selected among the winners of the Creative Europe – European Platforms 2024 call. This new phase consolidates MERITA's results while expanding its reach, its partnerships, and its social and environmental ambitions.

MERITAcubed will involve 22 new string quartets, 22 piano trios, and 12 quartets from the previous edition, 202 musicians in total, offering them training, international exposure, and the chance to develop artistic and outreach projects, as well as paid performing opportunities in different countries. Coordinated by Le Dimore del Quartetto, the platform brings together a wide alliance of cultural organisations, festivals, and concert societies from across Europe and beyond. Its structure is designed to promote circulation, collaboration, and innovation, turning chamber music into an engine for creative growth and sustainable development.

For musicians, MERITA represents an invaluable opportunity to develop their original projects supported by trainers and artistic residencies, access professional networks, experiment with new forms, and build sustainable artistic careers. For heritage venues, many of them historic houses, villas, or gardens located in lesser-known areas, it offers a chance to rediscover their public role, attract new audiences, and contribute to local economies through cultural tourism and education.

At the heart of MERITAcubed lies a strong commitment to social, economic, and environmental sustainability. Each residency, concert, and partnership is conceived to minimise environmental impact and maximise

At the heart of MERITAcubed lies a strong commitment to social, economic, and environmental sustainability.

cultural and social value. The project includes the creation of a tool for the measurement of CO₂ emissions related to artists' travel and residencies, raising awareness about sustainability within the performing arts sector and encouraging more responsible practices.

Equally crucial is the project's social dimension. By working with schools, specialised care centers, rural communities, and underused cultural sites, MERITAcubed promotes inclusion, accessibility, and participation. The project's philosophy is simple yet transformative: music is not just to be listened to, but to be shared. Through artistic residencies, educational workshops, and cross-disciplinary collaborations, it brings people together, fostering dialogue and empathy in diverse contexts.



String Quartet Meraki presenting their MERITA project at YAM Awards_ Credits Silver Tonisson

For Le Dimore del Quartetto, the launch of MERITAcubed marks both a continuation and a renewal. After nearly a decade of activity, the organisation has proven that chamber music can be a catalyst for regeneration: cultural, social, and environmental. Its model demonstrates that art and heritage, when placed in dialogue, can create a sustainable circular economy of culture, where everyone benefits: musicians gain spaces to grow, venues find new vitality, and communities reconnect with their territory.

"MERITA has shown that classical music is not static or exclusive. It can adapt, evolve, and reach new audiences without losing its essence. It can inspire innovation while preserving tradition. And above all, it can connect people. (...) In a present marked by complex environmental and social challenges, chamber music stands out as one of the most human and moving messages our society can convey. Its intimate scale, based on

listening, dialogue, and balance, offers a metaphor for how communities can work together in harmony”, states Francesca Moncada.

As the new cycle begins, MERITA is ready to broaden its horizons, strengthening its digital tools, expanding its European partnerships, and deepening its engagement with sustainability. The platform's evolution is not only a success for Le Dimore del Quartetto but a model for the entire cultural sector: a proof that when art meets collaboration and purpose, it can shape a more connected, inclusive, and forward-looking Europe.

In this new chapter, ENCATC, the European network on cultural management and policy, will play a key role by evaluating the project's results and impact. Its contribution will ensure that values such as collaboration, inclusivity, and environmental responsibility remain central to every action.



Sonoro Quartet performance at Villa Pignatelli

MERITAcubed is a project coordinated by Le Dimore del Quartetto (Milan, Italy) and gathers 19 organisations from 16 countries (soon to be 22 - one more from different countries will join the consortium each year): Asociación Red Europea de Jardines Históricos (ERHG) (Lloret de Mar, Spain), Cadenza Arts Management Ltd (Budapest, Hungary), Comitato AMUR (Milan, Italy), Conc.arts berlin gUG (Berlin, Germany), ENCATC - European Network on Cultural Management and Policy (Brussels, Belgium), Esterházy Palace (Eisenstadt, Austria), Europa Nostra (The Hague, Netherlands), European Historic Houses (Brussels, Belgium), Fundación Teatro Real (Madrid, Spain), Julian Cochran Foundation (Warsaw, Poland), Kolarac - Zadužbina Ilije M. Kolarca (Belgrade, Serbia), Lofoten International Chamber Music Festival (Lofoten Islands, Norway), ProQuartet - Centre européen de musique de chambre (Paris, France), Qendra Event(Tirana, Albania),

Qualco Foundation (Athens, Greece), Scandinavian Cello School (Rødvig, Denmark), String Quartet Biennale Amsterdam (Amsterdam, Netherlands), Terra Foundation (Lisbon, Portugal), Traces&Dreams (Stockholm, Sweden).

If you're interested in becoming part of the MERITA platform, or collaborate with our network, visit the website (meritaplatform.eu).

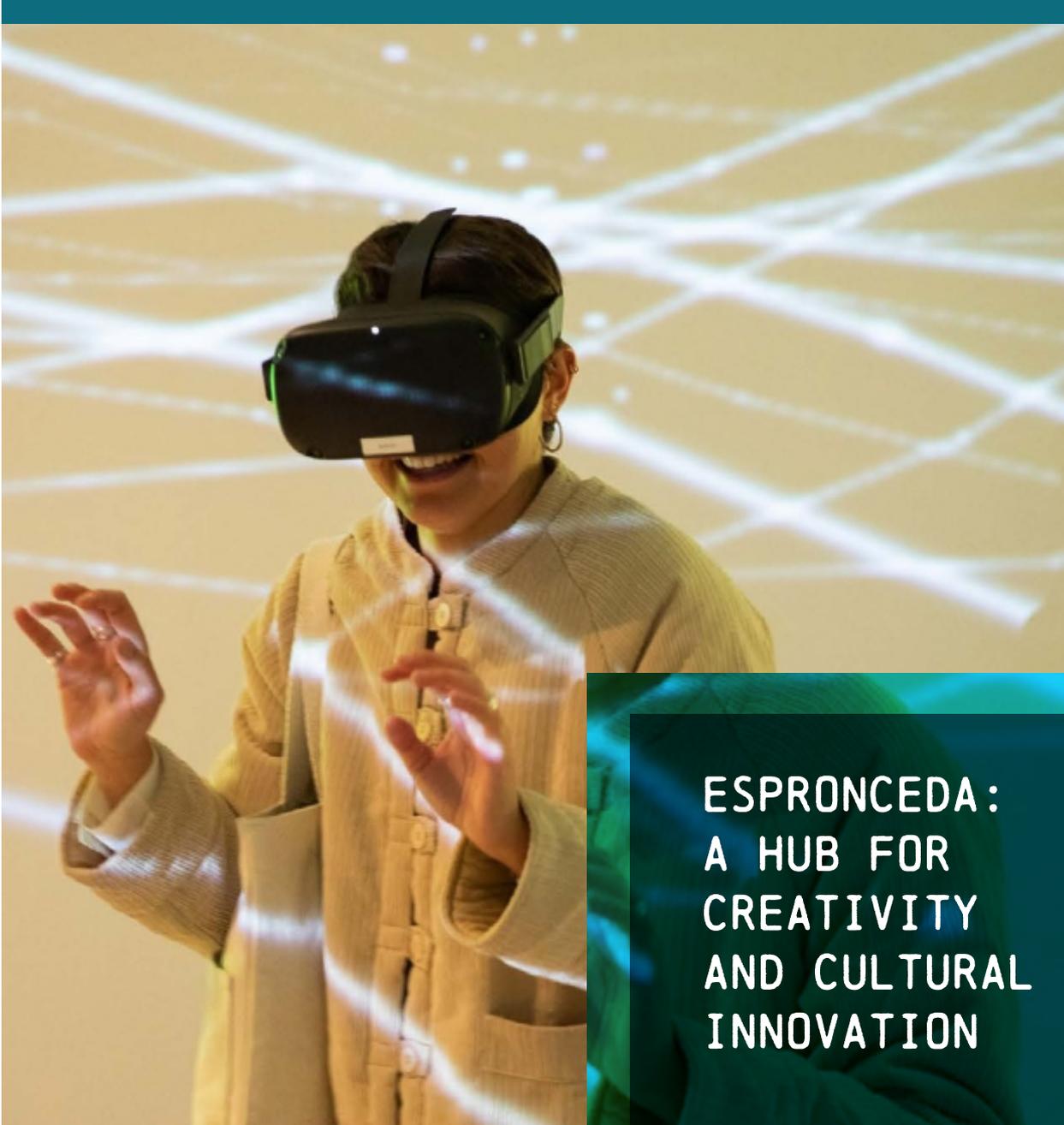


BIANCA TRAXLER

Bianca Traxler is the Executive Director at **Le Dimore del Quartetto**, a Milan-based cultural and creative social enterprise. Before taking on this role, she spent over two years leading Corporate Projects and International Relations at the same organization, overseeing its growth across Europe from Barcelona.

Previously, she worked as **Social Responsibility Specialist at MANGO** in Spain, managing social compliance across the company's global supply chain, developing sustainability strategies, while training over 300 suppliers on compliance and best practices.

She has also collaborated with international organizations such as **Henkel/Schwarzkopf Professional, Sermo**, and **Valore D**, focusing on CSR, sustainability, innovation, and diversity initiatives across Europe.



Espronceda, IMMENSIVA residency

ESPRONCEDA: A HUB FOR CREATIVITY AND CULTURAL INNOVATION

A conversation with

Henrik Sprengel

*Director of the Espronceda
Institute of Art and Culture*

For this special edition, we speak with Dr. Henrik Sprengel, Director of the Espronceda Institute of Art & Culture, host venue of the 2025 ENCATC Congress in Barcelona. Joined by insights from Professors Anne-Sophie Radermecker and Isabel Causadias, the conversation explores how Espronceda is shaping the future of cultural production, artistic research, and international collaboration.



This year's ENCATC Congress chose Espronceda as its primary venue. What made this collaboration meaningful?

Hosting the ENCATC Congress was an honour — and a natural alignment. Espronceda has always worked at the crossroads of artistic experimentation, cultural policy, and education. The Congress theme, "The Future is Cultural: Policy, Practice, and Education," mirrors our values: openness, research, international cooperation, and the desire to connect creative practice with wider societal debates.

Furthermore, Espronceda is proud to be one of the first partners of the New European Bauhaus (NEB), an initiative of the European Commission launched in 2021 that aims to promote a sustainable and inclusive future through multidisciplinary art practices. The ENCATC Congress was part of our Espronceda NEB 2025 programme.

For readers unfamiliar with Espronceda, how would you describe its mission and evolution?

Espronceda was founded in 2013 and has grown into a vibrant European meeting point for artists, researchers, and innovators. We operate across two renovated industrial warehouses in Barcelona's Sant Andreu district, bringing production, exhibition, and education together in one ecosystem. Our mission centres on collaboration,

experimentation, and knowledge exchange, empowering creators to engage with contemporary challenges across disciplines.

Espronceda is widely recognised for its European partnerships. What role do EU programmes play in your work?

A substantial one. Since 2018 we've participated in Horizon Europe, Creative Europe, Erasmus+, and CERV programmes. Projects like MindSpaces, RISE UP, AI4Future, Craftwork, Theatre in Palm, Crea(s)heroes, and PMP reflect our commitment to bridging art, technology, and society.

We were also pioneers with IMMENSIVA, the world's first residency programme dedicated to digital artists working with XR and AI. More recently, NUBIA LABS, launched in 2023, supports creative entrepreneurship and immersive digital practice. Our 2025 edition, IA Mons, places a special focus on AI and immersive storytelling.

Espronceda is known internationally, yet deeply rooted in the local community. How do you balance both dimensions?

Barcelona is our home and laboratory. While we collaborate with institutions across Europe, Asia, and the U.S., we remain committed to the local ecosystem. We've produced over 130 exhibitions in the last decade — from experimental installations to socially oriented projects. Our prizes, such as the Arte Laguna Prize, the Swab-Espronceda Prize, and collaborations with the RCA London and RUFA Rome, open doors for emerging artists while expanding Barcelona's visibility.



We also prioritise accessibility and inclusion: guided tours, round tables, and community programmes ensure that artistic research meets citizens directly. And as partners of the New European Bauhaus, sustainability and social impact guide our actions.



During the ENCATC Congress, Espronceda hosted the closing Art Talk on the art market. What were the main insights shared?

I was very intrigued to learn from the research of Prof. Isabel Causadias, "From Canvas to Confidence," that eBarcelona's low-end art market is a segment often overlooked, yet crucial. Her analysis shows that of 145 galleries shows that although 95% of global auction sales occur under \$50,000, the most dynamic activity happens below \$5,000. In Barcelona, most works fall between €80 and €8,500. This ecosystem thrives on accessibility and experimentation rather than speculation. From her conversation, what

emerged clearly is that trust is the operating system of this market. Instead of formal contracts, relationships are built transaction by transaction — through transparency, proximity, and shared responsibility. Trust becomes not an emotion, but a structural mechanism that supports coordination, resilience, and reputation-building in the cultural economy.

What does the future hold for Espronceda and similar cultural hubs in Europe?

Our goal is to remain a living laboratory. Cultural policy, artistic practice, and research should not operate in silos — their intersections generate innovation. Through European projects, residencies, educational events, and collaborations, we aim to ensure that ideas developed here contribute to Europe's broader cultural resilience.

Barcelona increasingly recognises Espronceda as both a resource and a catalyst. And we see ourselves as part of a wider European infrastructure: translating policy ambitions — digital transition, sustainability, inclusion — into daily practice. That is where the future of culture truly takes shape.



Founded in 2013, Espronceda fosters contemporary and new media arts, research, and education, with a mission to support sustainable societal transformation. Its interdisciplinary approach combines advanced technologies, visual and performing arts, and social innovation, promoting inclusivity and collaborative creativity.



HENRIK SPRENGEL

German by origin, he studied law in Germany and France and obtained a Doctorate in Law. He worked as an attorney at Clifford Chance before joining his first start-up in Berlin in 1999. After completing an MBA (Fontainebleau / Singapore), he worked as International Business Development Manager for Bertelsmann and moved from Shanghai to Barcelona in 2002. After launching an online dating service in Spain (and Mexico), he founded HS3 (www.hs3.biz), a company builder that has launched several projects in the digital and offline sectors (the first project being Cooltra, co-founded in 2006), and which he heads as CEO. HS3 now primarily serves as an investment vehicle with a focus on technology- and sustainability-based projects. He also founded and ran a Berlin-based company in the field of medical cannabis, which he sold in 2022. He is a founding partner of Norrsken Barcelona, a European hub for tech and impact. As an admirer of art, he co-founded the Espronceda Institute of Art and Culture (www.espronceda.net) together with his brother. Originally created as an artist residency, it has since evolved into an innovative center for contemporary visual and digital art, including education and cultural research. Espronceda has participated in more than a dozen projects under the Horizon framework (including S+T+ARTS), Creative Europe, CERV, and ERASMUS+.



A VISIT TO THE PIRAMIDÓN CULTURAL CENTER: ART IN THE HEIGHTS OF BARCELONA



Jaime Ruiz-Gutiérrez
*Profesor en Universidad de los
Andes*

As part of the ENCATC Congress in Barcelona, I had the opportunity to visit the Piramidón Contemporary Art Cultural Center—a space that surprises with its authenticity and the way it connects with artistic creation. This visit was also a wonderful chance to discover other aspects of the city that, given the short duration of my stay, I wouldn't have been able to explore otherwise.

The Piramidón Contemporary Art Cultural Center is located in the Sant Martí district, northeast of Barcelona. This neighborhood blends a rich industrial history with remarkable

urban transformation, where modern residential and office buildings contrast with the “Catalan Modernism” architecture that dominates the city’s more touristy areas. Within this urban context, home to various cultural spaces, stands a 16-story tower—an emblem of the area’s vertical development—whose top four floors house the Piramidón Contemporary Art Cultural Center. My visit to this artistic enclave was a revealing experience, where art is not only observed, but breathed, discussed, and lived



The Center

This center defines itself as a hybrid space between an art gallery and a creation factory. This dual nature is striking, and during our visit, our group of about ten attendees was warmly welcomed by two young managers who guided us through a friendly conversation, explaining the center’s general aspects and answering various questions from the group.

Founded in 1990, the center was created to bring together the creation, dissemination, and commercialization of contemporary art. What makes it unique is its structure: numerous artist studios coexist with an exhibition gallery, all located at the top of a building offering panoramic views of Barcelona. From the very beginning, it’s clear that Piramidón is neither a traditional museum nor a commercial gallery—it’s more of a creative ecosystem.

The 16th floor serves as the center's art gallery, where numerous and diverse works are displayed, created by artists participating in the center's artist residencies. These residencies are open to visual artists and vary in duration—some are short (2, 3, or 6 months), while others are more permanent. Occasionally, the center issues specific calls for 2-month residencies. Both national and international artists can participate, provided they meet clearly defined requirements, and they commit to paying a stipend.

After the introductory conversation, we toured the spacious, well-lit gallery with beautiful views of the city, which complemented the diversity of works on display. I'm not an art expert, but I could clearly appreciate the variety of pieces in this collective exhibition, created by artists of different nationalities, backgrounds, and experiences, using various materials, styles, and perspectives. Most of these works are produced in the Piramidón studios, where the artists live and work—visiting these studios was the second part of our tour.

What's interesting about Piramidón's gallery is that many of the exhibited works are available for purchase, but without the commercial pressure typical of private galleries. Here, art is presented as an experience rather than a product. Moreover, having seen some of the studios where the works were created, the connection with them felt deeper. They weren't isolated pieces, but fragments of a process I had witnessed.



Touring the Studios

Piramidón has 18 studios that have hosted more than 200 artists from 30 different nationalities. To visit these workshops, we went down two floors and explored three of them. One of the most enriching aspects of each studio was the encounter we had with the artists—the conversations we shared and the insights we gained, not only about their work but also about more personal elements that reflect their identity.



Each studio is a spacious area with excellent lighting and also serves as the artist's residence, where we could discreetly glimpse aspects of their personal life. Every space is personalized, reflecting the personality and style of its occupant, immersed in full creative effervescence.

The most fascinating part was witnessing the creative process unfold in real time. The tools, sketches, scattered materials—all contributed to an atmosphere of authenticity. It wasn't a staged setup for visitors, but rather a window into the intimacy of art. The artists were open to sharing their ideas, doubts, and influences.

This direct interaction is one of Piramidón's core principles: breaking the barrier between creator and spectator. It's rare to have the chance to see how art is made from the inside. Seeing a finished piece in a gallery is not the same as witnessing the chaos of the creative process.

The Terrace: Barcelona Through Art

We could say that each stage of the visit took us to a new level, culminating at the highest point—the building's terrace. A magnificent space offering countless angles and perspectives, allowing us to observe the Mediterranean Sea, enjoy its breeze, and admire the never-finished Sagrada Familia Basilica, as well as the mountains surrounding the city.

We were told that the terrace is also used for cultural events, presentations, and artist gatherings. It's a space for connection—not only with the city but also among the people involved in this project. Piramidón is not just a cultural center; over time, it has built a community.



Final Reflections

Visiting the Piramidón Cultural Center was much more than touring a gallery or seeing artist studios. It was an immersion into a way of understanding art as a process, a dialogue, and a shared experience. In a world where art is often consumed superficially, this space offers an alternative: seeing how it's made, talking to those who create it, understanding their motivations, and participating—if only briefly—in their universe.

Moreover, its location in a tall building, away from the tourist bustle, gives it the feel of a creative retreat. It's as if art literally rises above the city, without losing touch with it. The views from the terrace, the distant sounds of the city, the sunlight streaming through the studio windows—all contribute to a complete sensory experience.

I would recommend this visit to anyone interested in contemporary art, but also to those seeking a different experience in Barcelona. You don't need to be an art expert to enjoy Piramidón; curiosity and a desire to discover are enough. Because in the end, that's what this center offers: discovery.

Among the activities that were part of the Congress, I consider this one a highly valuable complement. It was essential, as it allowed us to momentarily step away from the academic world and explore the real world of cultural management—the diversity of perspectives it must embrace and the fundamental role it plays in creating synergies. Piramidón is a great example of this. After the visit, I continued my urban exploration of this part of the city, enjoying the many experiences that made up this edition of the annual ENCATC Congress.



JAIME RUIZ GUTIÉRREZ

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MONDIACULT 25
ESPAÑA

MONDIACULT 2025

UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development

from 29 September to 1st October 2025

Barcelona, Spain

Barcelona International Convention Center (CCIB)



BETWEEN DESPAIR AND HOPE – OBSERVATIONS AT MONDIACULT 2025 IN BARCELONA



Cornelius Holtorf

*Chairholder, UNESCO Chair
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MONDIACULT, UNESCO's World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development took place in Barcelona, Spain, 29 September – 1 October 2025. MONDIACULT had originally started as a regular event in 1982, then continued in 1998, and eventually restarted in 2022 in Mexico-City. It will now be held every four years.

UNESCO is the United Nations organization that promotes cooperation in education, science, culture and communication to foster peace, security and sustainable development worldwide. "Culture of Peace" has long been one of UNESCO's most memorable programmes. As Federico Mayor, then Director-General of UNESCO, put it in 1995, its purpose was "to provide the needed solidarity, both intellectual and moral,



to unite people working around the world for peace and justice, to inspire hope and persistence for the common task." In 1999, he said on the same topic: "Instead of the cynical proverb – if you want peace, prepare for war – we should say: If you want peace, prepare for peace, try to build peace in your everyday life."

With this in mind, it was surprising that at MONDIACULT there were Ministers of Culture that emphasized culture as the soul of a country and an expression of national freedom, the need for cultural preparedness in the face of military threats, and cultural policy as a form of survival, security and defence strategy, as foreign forces are known to attack first

the cultural fabric that binds societies together. In those contributions we did not hear much about international solidarity, dialogue and uniting people around a culture of peace, inspiring hope. We heard much more about mistrust against other countries and preparing for war, inspired by fear.

Such language is very different from the general commitment of all states not only to UNESCO, including its Culture of Peace programme, but also to the field of cultural rights which has central importance in the work of the UN Human Rights Council. As Alexandra Xanthaki, the current UN Special Rapporteur for Cultural Rights, emphasized several times during the conference, cultural rights are about the rights of individuals and groups: they oblige states to implement the rights of minorities, marginalized people and migrants, among others, not to foster or support majority state culture.

According to the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, everyone has the right to take part in cultural life which compels

The logic of war must never trump culture. [...] Culture should not be what sustains people when everything else is taken away from them, but what prevents states from taking away everything from anyone in the first place.

all states to take the necessary steps for the conservation, the development and the diffusion of culture. In short, the logic of war must never trump culture. It could also be said that culture should not be what sustains people when everything else is taken away from them, for instance in situations of war, but what prevents states or anybody from taking away everything from anyone in the first place, including starting a war.

Similarly surprising to me was that too many of the discussions were still about protecting and preserving cultural heritage or returning it to their rightful owners. This is a perspective of culture as property and a valuable resource, something you do not want to be deprived of, as that would mean that you lost what sometimes is called your heartbeat or your past. This is a familiar view to take also regarding cultural heritage, but it chimes poorly with the many statements we heard during the conference that culture is precisely about our common humanity and a global (!) public good. Culture in that view is something for all humans to enjoy and use together, not something to own and store safely stacked away. Indeed, in UNESCO's very constitution from 1945, culture is discussed in the context of a general human (and not the nations') dignity, with the Governments declaring on behalf of their peoples "[t]hat the wide diffusion of culture, and the education of humanity for justice and liberty and peace are indispensable to the dignity of man and constitute a sacred duty which all the nations must fulfil in a spirit of mutual assistance and concern."

When some policy makers declared in Barcelona that "culture is who we are", I agree when this refers to our shared human condition. But in other contexts, this statement is rather a predicament for human beings. In many respects, the world is not in a good state because of who we were, and who we are. Culture is also about who we have failed

Culture is where all changes begin – it is about transformation, innovation and creativity.

but still aspire to be, or perhaps would like to become, as human beings inhabiting a planet shared with others. That is why it was disappointing to see that MONDIACULT did not take up the momentum of the United Nations 2024 Summit of the Future and improve on the recognition of culture in the Pact for the Future. In that context, culture was recognized as "an integral component of sustainable development." Now, it is time to specify not only to what exact ends on the future development agenda culture can significantly contribute but also how to keep track of its benefits on a human scale. If culture is who we are, its benefits should sensibly be measured in terms of human happiness or wellbeing, not on monetary scales.

Culture is also about who we have failed but still aspire to be, or perhaps would like to become, as human beings inhabiting a planet shared with others.



According to the Pact for the Future, humanity is at a time of profound global transformation requiring us to change course so that we do not risk tipping into a future of persistent crisis and breakdown. This has implications for cultural heritage, which is the way in which we today recall and use the past. After all, as our political host Ernest Urtasun, the Spanish Minister of Culture, had it at MONDIACULT, “culture is where all changes begin” – it is about transformation, innovation and creativity. In other words, the most significant question is not how to safeguard culture and heritage ahead of various threats and risks associated with an uncertain future.

The real question today is how we make sense of the past in a world where the future is not what it used to be (as Marek Tamm once wrote). For understanding the transitions needed to accommodate our unique challenges of the future, humanity is likely to benefit from seeking direction from a newly interrogated human past. Culture provides



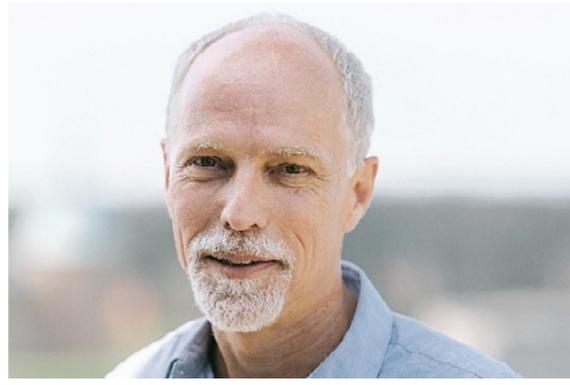
important approaches that promise relevant answers in exactly that context: it can teach us long-term thinking; it can encourage us to appreciate and embrace change; and it can inspire us to keep asking what it means to be human in this world.

**The kind of culture
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term processes of
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Finally, what is the way forward? Senior decision-makers emphasized on several occasions at the conference the need of evidence-based policy and the benefits of culture for meeting quantitative indicators of environmental, economic, and social development as well as for building national identities and even as an asset for national defence. But this does not fit very well to Pedro Sanchez, Prime Minister of Spain, declaring in his Opening Speech that “culture invites us to dream”. Similarly, Octavio Paz was quoted as saying that the world is a projection of our images and, one might add, of our narratives and worldviews.



Others attending MONDIACULT talked in that context about a holistic perspective we need to take on culture. According to that view, we do not benefit as much as we could from culture while it is part of a fragmented, siloed, and hierarchical view of the world: culture and nature, culture and society, low and high culture, primitive and civilized culture, culture and development, etc. Sometimes, for example, culture is sought to be instrumentalized for controversial purposes outside its unifying power, and on other occasions (too many!) it is assessed for its value in inappropriate currencies such as gross domestic product (GDP). The kind of culture that gives us hope in the present time is what reliably leads to happiness and wellbeing for humans undergoing long-term processes of difficult change and in the middle of thorough transformations. That is why we need to develop measures of success that are adequate to this task, going far beyond GDP. Culture can be the place where such change begins.



CORNELIUS **HOLTORF**

Cornelius Holtorf is an archaeologist and holder of the UNESCO Chair on Heritage Futures at Linnaeus University in Kalmar, Sweden. Educated in Germany, he received his PhD in the U.K., and has been living in Sweden since 2002. His current interests include long-term memory in relation to nuclear waste repositories, futures literacy in the global heritage sector, and a post-human approach to archaeological excavation.

The ideas and opinions expressed in the current text are those of the author, not necessarily those of UNESCO; they do not imply any commitment by the Organization.



MONDIACULT 2025. CULTURE, DEVELOPMENT AND PENDING COMMITMENTS

 **Andrés Muñoz Cárcamo**
Lawyer and consultant

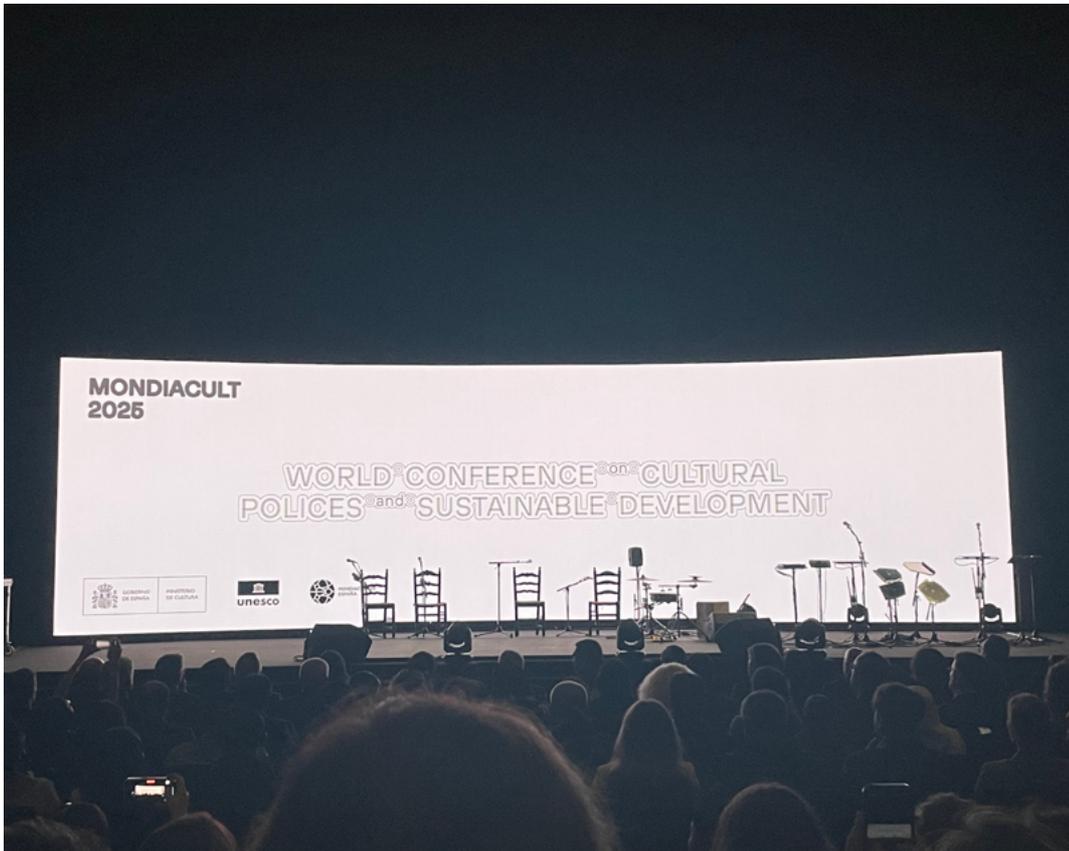
The [UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development](#) took place in Barcelona, bringing together over 160 delegations from around the world, including nearly 120 Ministers of Culture. In the days preceding the intergovernmental conference, several civil society forums were held —among them [Ágora Cívica](#)— which extended the discussions toward citizen perspectives. Coinciding with [La Mercè](#), the city's main festival in honour of its patroness, the capital of Catalonia enjoyed a moment of cultural effervescence marked by debates on the role of culture in development policies. I had the opportunity to attend these meetings, exchange ideas with colleagues from different regions, and accompany the Chilean delegation led by its Minister of State.



Castellers

MONDIACULT 2025 follows a trajectory initiated in Mexico City in 1982, during the first World Conference on Cultural Policies, whose final declaration defined culture as “the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group,” encompassing, beyond arts and letters, “the modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs.” Forty years later, in the [MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration](#), also held in Mexico, UNESCO Member States recognised culture as a “global public good,” endowed with “an intrinsic value to enable and guide sustainable development,” and invited the United Nations, in paragraph 19, to integrate culture as a distinct goal in the post-2030 development agenda.

**Culture as a
'global public
good,' endowed
with 'an intrinsic
value to enable and
guide sustainable
development**



The result on this key point proved less firm than expected

In the Final Document of MONDIACULT 2025, however, the result on this key point proved less firm than expected. While the declaration acknowledges culture as a component of “just, peaceful and sustainable development,” it merely states that it “should be considered” as an independent goal within the future UN framework after 2030. This formulation, replacing an earlier and more explicit draft, illustrates the persistent reluctance of States to fully commit to a claim long upheld by civil society and international non-governmental organizations in the cultural sector.

This demand was advanced, among others, by the consortium #Culture2030Goal, which, in the days leading up to the conference, presented a [position paper](#) arguing for the inclusion of a specific goal dedicated to culture, accompanied by an [analytical report](#) outlining targets and indicators. Along similar lines, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) presented a [declaration](#) at the close of its summit, calling on UNESCO, the UN system, and national governments to assume clear and verifiable commitments. In the same direction, the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFACCA) released its [MONDIACULT 2025 dossier](#), and the International Federation of Coalitions for Cultural Diversity (IFCCD) its [participation programme](#), both underscoring the urgency of recognising culture as an independent goal within the global sustainable development agenda.

Although several delegations sought to reintroduce a stronger formulation in the intergovernmental declaration, this was not reflected in the final text. Developing

countries—including all sub-Saharan African States represented by Kenya, as well as Latin American and Caribbean countries such as Chile, Panama, Paraguay and the Dominican Republic— advocated for a more assertive language, consistent with the [Declaration of the XXII Ibero-American Conference of Culture](#), also adopted on the eve of MONDIACULT 2025. During the negotiations of UNESCO's conference document—in reality settled before the event— certain developed countries promoted a less ambitious wording, which ultimately prevailed in the compromise text.

In the section devoted to culture and sustainable development beyond 2030, the official declaration enumerates nine priority areas of cultural policy and practice, encompassing the 6 thematic focuses of the conference—cultural rights; digital technologies; culture and education; cultural economy; culture and action against climate change; and culture, heritage and crises— as well as 2 cross-cutting areas: culture for peace and artificial intelligence and culture, with a final point on cultural data, research and evidence. In all these domains, the commitments adopted remain general in scope, presented in bullet-point lists that reflect a discourse oriented more toward consensus than concrete action.



Cultural rights occupied a central place in Barcelona. The Spanish government—which as host chaired the official conference— presented its [Plan for Cultural Rights](#), developed through a participatory process and recently published. Although it has not yet translated into national legislation—and it seems unlikely to become one— this plan represents a significant effort to articulate 146 measures for the 2025–2030 period aimed at promoting, guaranteeing, and implementing these fundamental rights, most of which are scheduled for short-term execution.

The UN Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, Alexandra Xanthaki, recalled that these are human rights of individuals, not rights belonging to States. The latter nonetheless bear the obligation—enshrined in legally binding international instruments—to ensure that all individuals and communities can access, contribute to, and freely participate in cultural life. She emphasized that these rights can only be realized through “implementation, implementation, implementation.”

The Rapporteur also observed, not without a certain irony, that while these issues were being discussed at the international convention center, several kilometers away other cultural spaces in the city were hosting similar debates from more critical and participatory perspectives. Thus, in parallel, [Culturopolis](#) —another of the civil society forums —presented the [Barcelona Declaration on Cultural Rights](#), an open document that acknowledges the emancipatory potential of culture but also its contested nature, where political and economic structures may restrict rights and deepen inequalities.

Another noteworthy initiative is Fair Culture, launched by the German Commission for UNESCO with the support of public and private entities from various countries, which, during an event preceding the official conference, presented its [Charter for Fair Culture](#), open to the endorsement of individuals and organizations. The document sets out eight principles for fairer cultural relations, grounded in reciprocity, shared responsibility, and a balance between sustainability and cultural diversity.

Also participating in the meetings were members of the group that, in 2007, issued the [Fribourg Declaration on Cultural Rights](#), an academic and non-binding document that systematizes an expanded catalogue of these rights based on the main international human rights instruments. Jurist Patrice Meyer-Bisch, one of its promoters, emphasized in his remarks that all human rights have a cultural dimension and announced that an updated version of the declaration is being prepared to mark its twentieth anniversary.

The challenges posed by new technologies and artificial intelligence for the creative sectors and the exercise of cultural rights also featured prominently in the debates. In this context, some voices —including Chile, vice-presidency of the bureau— called for progress toward an Additional Protocol to the [2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions](#), to adapt its provisions to the digital environment and establish a global normative framework to safeguard cultural and linguistic diversity online in the face of technological transformations. This Protocol, subject of discussion for some time within the statutory meetings of the Convention and whose adoption was recommended by an ad hoc expert group, has met with resistance

from certain developed countries (see a [recent article of mine on the subject](#)).

Behind the diplomatic language and formulas of consensus, a clear gap persists between political rhetoric and actual commitments

Among the key publications by the Organisation on the occasion of the conference were the global report on cultural policies, significantly entitled "[Culture: The Missing SDG](#)", the first in a four-yearly series to monitor global cultural policies (a commitment made at MONDIACULT 2022); the [UNESCO 2025 Framework for Cultural Statistics](#), whose update had been awaited since 2009; and the [Report of the Independent Expert Group on Artificial Intelligence and Culture](#), which explores the ethical implications of artificial intelligence developments for contemporary policies on culture.

Barcelona thus became the world capital of culture, offering a space of convergence between institutional and civic visions regarding the future of cultural policies.

Yet, behind the diplomatic language and formulas of consensus, a clear gap persists between political rhetoric and actual commitments. MONDIACULT 2025 leaves open a crucial question: how can these declarations be translated into mechanisms that ensure the effective exercise of cultural rights and consolidate culture as a genuine pillar of sustainable development?



ANDRÉS MUÑOZ CÁRCAMO

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to this issue of
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ENCATC Magazine is a new digital publication with its inaugural issue launched in June 2020. It is meant to educate, entertain, raise awareness, and inform on various topics related to cultural management and policy. It is also created to offer an additional space for the publication of articles to our members, as well as a space for knowledge transfer to our partners (EU, UNESCO, ASEF, etc.).

Our contributors are leading academics, researchers, experts, practitioners, and policy makers. They are recognised by the industry we belong to as influencers. For our magazine, they are generously providing us with high-quality content, commentary, the best industry practices, and personal stories. Their contributions aim to help ENCATC to achieve its mission of helping the cultural sector become stronger and more sustainable. **This publication is made possible thanks to the financial support of the Creative Europe programme of the European Union.**

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