ENCATC Digital Congress 2020 Concept Note
Cultural management and policy in a post-digital world – navigating uncertainty

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"There is today a desire to reconstruct tomorrow and the days after in a different way not knowing what this tomorrow will look like. This feeling of uncertainty is linked to the difficulty to project ourselves"

Dominique Kalifa

The cultural field being marked by constant evolution and self-questioning, the current times, under the threat of the coronavirus outbreak, find the different cultural agents – in a conscious or rather unconscious process for – (re)positioning themselves in a post-digital context.

What do we mean by 'post-digital'? The definition by Florian Cramer is endorsed here, according to which 'post-digital' does not refer to a situation where digital has been left behind, but rather to a context where digitisation is embedded in all spheres of life and profoundly marks cultural shifts and ongoing mutations – in a way that is remarkably different from how it did when it first broke into our societies. Furthermore, scholar and novelist Dominique Kalifa suggests that 'post-' is inherently linked to uncertainty, which makes the exploration of the post-digital world possibly more timely than even before.

What new, unforeseen challenges emerge for the cultural sector in a post-digital context and, in particular, after the coronavirus outbreak? How could cultural management and policy education prepare itself to adapt to a new scenario? What new political strategies and specific policies will be needed in this post-digital, uncertain times? How do audiences evolve in a post-digital environment? How can the arts and culture bring new perspectives that go beyond purely technological approaches into different spheres of life? What ethical issues arise in this context? The ENCATC Congress aims to provide a space for encounter, to learn from leading experts, get to common questions and look for common answers that may help all actors in the cultural management and policy sphere navigate uncharted waters.

Media convergence and audience development in a post-digital context
Media convergence – understood, following Henry Jenkins, as the flow of content across multiple media platforms – acquires new meanings and has new potential implications in the current post-digital context. During confinement, we have witnessed an exponential growth of search and offer of entertainment linked to the arts and culture via different, mostly digital, media. This in turn has an impact on audience development.

Do we know why people do or do not participate in arts and culture in a post-digital context? Who are they and what are their main drives? And how to find out while securing necessary and important data protection? How big data and data analysis can be helpful? How can digital tools help a post-digital culture identify its post-digital audience? These questions need to be addressed through renewed critical lenses in the current global context.

Education in a post-digital context

Cultural management and policy education have been particularly shaken by the coronavirus outbreak. Most programmes across Europe being strongly focused on face-to-face formats of teaching, a swift adaptation from both teachers and students has been needed. After the initial turbulence, this conjunctural challenge opens up new perspectives: what does this experience tell us about the way cultural management and policy was/is taught and learnt? What is to be kept as good practices? To what extent is the human dimension in education substitutable? How to make the most of modern online learning tools, e-learning methods, MOOC's combined with personal, 'offline' contact between teacher and student and peer-to-peer learning? How will internationalization look like in a context mobility restriction? What can we learn from critical pedagogy in its intersections with digital technologies?

However, not only the act of teaching has been challenged, but also the curricula may be reviewed in the light of the most recent developments. The current global health crisis has revealed that future cultural managers, policymakers and researchers will most probably face very different challenges than those which were usual in recent times. To what extent do our experiences and historical examples provide relevant lessons for the future of cultural management and politics?

Post-digital Cultural Policy

The ENCATC Congress proposes a joint reflection on the changing environment and context that post-digital culture has brought to cultural policies. In addition to that, cultural policy across the world faces the challenge of responding effectively to ongoing changes. By way of example, more than ever, trust emerges as a crucial concept in a post-digital world. Will cultural policies be able to help build trust among cultural actors in an uncertain future? What other challenges emerge for the arts in a post-digital world? How may cultural policy help face those challenges?

Furthermore, it is to be highlighted that, in addition to the agenda of the Cultural ministries and state departments, culture and the arts are or can be used as an instrument in other areas. What are the benefits and impacts of the practical use of concept of cultural and creative industries on culture itself? Or what's the role of creativity and artistic expression in achieving global political and social goals such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals? At the same time, however, there may be concerns about maximizing the use of the positive influence of culture – i.e. its utilitarian exploitation –, while limiting its natural development and jeopardizing its basic, immanent value. Should we be on guard?

Culture, Arts and Ethics in a post-digital context

The ENCATC Congress also want to provide a forum where digital technologies can be explored through the lens of arts and culture, particularly considering ethical issues for the sector in the post-digital world.

Ethical issues emerge in the post-digital context related to the issues of ownership and copyright. These have become very evident in COVID-19 times, with cultural and artistic productions being shared massively online, and some cultural actors making the decision not to engage in practices that may not be able to guarantee artists' rights. How can we feed – and learn from – these topical debates?

Digitisation and new business models for cultural institutions

Institutions and the ways they are managed are obviously significantly pre-determined not only by their missions, but also by external influences. In light of all the above changes, it is not easy to choose an appropriate strategy, offer relevant products and services, and operate efficiently. But still, there are also new tools that can facilitate the administration of cultural organizations and projects. The benefits of digitization in archiving and preserving the cultural heritage are evident, but new tools and practices are also available for live arts organizations.
But the more fundamental question is whether – or rather what kind – the process of digitization or the development of artificial intelligence has or will have an impact on cultural production and distribution in its different, very specific areas. The impact of current trends on business models of existing organizations is therefore one of the actual topics we want to address during the

Congress. After the media convergence process, can we expect a similar shift in cultural infrastructure? And how to prepare for it?

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Today's social processes bring tons of unsuspected, thrilling opportunities to explore, and a flood of new questions to which we need to find answers. With some luck, at least some of them can be found at ENCATC 2020 Congress.

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