

Creativity and Society

Panel 2A: Civil Society in the Creative Age



Xavier Troussard

Head of the unit Cultural Policy and Intercultural Dialogue,
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Panel Civil Society in the Creative Age – Moderator

I'm working with Vladimír Šuha in the European Commission in the Directorate-General for Education and Culture. I'm dealing with cultural policy and intercultural dialogue. Yesterday, the most of discussion was about the relationship between culture, creativity and the economy, even if some of the concepts that were presented were embracing a larger reality and covering some social aspects. This morning we want to concentrate on civil society. I would say we want to concentrate on the points highlighted by Václav Havel in his speech, that is, how culture and creativity can help us to cultivate the world, and how it can help us build up some meaningful community. We're going to concentrate on human rights, values and citizenship. Of course these perhaps won't be a kind of easy-going blowing with the wind panel, these will encompass some critical review of the concept.

Curriculum Vitae

Xavier Troussard is the Head of the Unit of Cultural Policy and Intercultural Dialogue at the Directorate of General Education and Culture (DG EAC). He studied international and European law in France and in Belgium. Since 1989 he has worked in various units and sections of the European Commission. He began as an administrator at the Audiovisual Policy Unit, Directorate General for Information, Communication, Culture, Audiovisual (DGX). Three years later he was nominated as an adviser for horizontal and international aspects of culture. His field of activity was in negotiation on behalf of the European community, UNESCO's Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions; promotion of cultural diversity in the EU; and preparation for the European Year for Intercultural Dialogue (2008).

Most of this discussion has been about the relationship between culture, creativity and the economy. However, some of the concepts that have been presented have embraced a larger reality and covered some societal aspects. We would now like to concentrate on civil society. We want to concentrate on the points that illustrate how culture and creativity might help us cultivate the world at large, and how to build meaningful communities. Therefore, we're going to concentrate on human rights, on values, on citizenship. Of course we hope to encompass some of the critical views of these concepts.

Link:

http://ec.europa.eu/staffdir/plsql/gsys_fonct.properties?pLang=EN&pSernum=16293



Gottfried Wagner

Director of the European Cultural Foundation, Netherlands
Panel Civil Society in the Creative Age

The first point I would like to make today is that right now we are creating a new fetish: creativity fetish with the absence of the creators in this process. We're all politicians, intermediaries, facilitators, cultural managers but we are not the makers, and in a contemporary economic context, we tend to take to a new fetish called creativity. Also, at this conference we're trading in interesting buzz words, exchanging easy currency, and, since this conference is very much about policies and the future of Europe in terms of cultural policies, I think we really have to get it right. We have to get it right. We cannot allow ourselves to remain superficial. If we don't get it right, it becomes like those Tibetan prayers, the mantras. The more you repeat it in the European context, the less convincing we will be vis à vis to our citizens, because citizens can smell it. They have a very strong and immediate understanding of whether it's real currency or fake currency. Artists know it and citizens smell it. So I disagree with some of the messages we heard yesterday and today, not only for methodological reasons, but also for political reasons. I think we agree there is something precious about creativity, but I disagree in the way we treat it. The best example is where we are meeting today. We are meeting in the midst of a city that has been bursting with creativity throughout the centuries. I wonder what will be the result of our contemporary production of creativity, which we are so proud of right now.

My first question is, "What's new, pussycat?" You laugh but I take that as an agreement. If you look at the Greeks, the Renaissance, Art Nouveau, if you follow the discussion of Walter Benjamin, or if you recall Pierre Bourdieu, there is not much new in our discourse. I dare to say to you, as well as to the professors of yesterday's panels, I was not convinced about the novelty of your contributions.

What may be new is a kind of a social democratic turn. It would be new because our experience is rooted in a bourgeois and an aristocratic context. Maybe it's the social-democratization of creativity. Or perhaps it's a post-industrial social-democratization. And there is no wonder it comes from the UK: it is creative industries in the New Labour model. But we have seen what happened to New Labour.

Secondly, creativity as discussed here can mean almost anything to anyone. And that is a danger. The term tends to become empty.

Then we heard from the UK DCMS speaker in a very lovely presentation, actually it almost sounded like a revival of Soviet-style five year plans on creativity. Considering everything on every level as a highly elaborate concept developed over a long period of time, it sounds like social engineering. Maybe it works. But what I find interesting is the contradiction between no state and total state.

Fourthly, I think creativity should deal with meaning and not with marketing and advertising. If that is not understood, creativity doesn't make sense. In his speech this morning, Václav Havel referred to creativity as spirituality. He used the imagery of a cathedral as his example. I would say that at least that suggests meaning, and that's where arts come into the picture. We don't need priests for this new meaning, and Richard Florida, for me, is the best testimony to why we don't. Somebody has a bible and televises his bible to the believers or those who are supposed to be believers for an hour. The worst thing about his contribution to my mind was that he had no questions. He had answers to everything. That is a totalitarian concept, and I wonder why people find him so fascinating. I think creativity can produce almost anything imaginable. The best example is Bernie Madoff and his colleagues. In the past twenty years, some of the most creative people dealing with the financial markets have also been the most creative destroyers of our economy. And I don't accept that we should pay for that.

I think creativity sounds like an innocent concept, and probably to a large extent it is; it can be innocent, it can be productive. But it can also be destructive, as we have witnessed in the 20th century. We believe it's an innocent and productive category. With competition, we are not sure. Because we are hearing here that we need to be utterly competitive, or otherwise we become the museum of the world and the Chinese tourists will be our major source of income. The concept is that we might not manage if we are not extremely smart, extremely fast, and extremely creative. If we don't manage, then we're lost on the scale of the world economy. Competition and creative competitiveness tends to become defensive and exclusive so that things compete with the states, nations compete among one another, Europe competes with the rest of the world, and in the end, it is about the Darwinist model of who is the fastest, the slimmest, and the smartest.

I think our problems are global problems. What my suggestion would be to the Commission and to our civil society is to think about a new civil creativity which turns competition into co-operation. I think some of the problems are so deeply cosmopolitan and global that we can only solve them if we co-operate creatively, otherwise we compete ourselves to death.

Curriculum Vitae

Gottfried Wagner has been the Director of the European Cultural Foundation (ECF) since January 2002. The ECF is an independent, European non-profit organization promoting cultural cooperation in support of the European integration process. With the guidance of its international Board, Advisory Council, and network of National Committees, the ECF pursues its mission on three major fronts: Grants, Programmes and Cultural Policy Development. Wagner was formerly the Director of KulturKontakt Austria, a non-profit organization for educational and cultural cooperation with Central, Eastern and South-East Europe. He has also worked for the Austrian Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, with responsibility for educational cooperation with Central and Eastern Europe.

Gottfried Wagner was born in 1950, graduated in philosophy and German literature from the University of Vienna, worked as a teacher and university lecturer, and subsequently specialized in management and organizational development.

Link:

www.eurocult.org



Natalia A. Koliada

General Director and Co-founder of Belarus Free Theatre, Belarus
Panel Civil Society in the Creative Age

It is my belief that creativity is really moving Belarus forward, but the creativity is coming from underground. The only public space we have in our country is the public space existing underground. We have a long tradition of this going back to the Soviet era. The Soviet Union created an entire system of relationships between artists, power, and creation. They exercised control over artists, placing them in psychiatric clinics and prisons for samizdat work. And the process of inhibited creative potential provoked an unprecedented outburst of interest in Soviet art after the collapse of the Soviet Union. And so Belarus faces two aspects of the problem: on the one hand, the regime puts creativity to death, and on the other, it stimulates it by introducing new mechanisms of prohibition. So the question we face is whether or not it's worth having ten million people live under a dictatorship in order to create more new ideas? It's difficult to find any positive side in the role of totalitarianism in the development of art. I'm currently reading a book called *An Easy Way to Give up Smoking*. There is a chapter entitled "The Positive Side of Smoking" and it consists of totally empty, virgin sheets of paper. So, there is no positive side of dictatorship either.

It's very interesting that we receive so many requests from our foreign partners. For example, soon we will have guests from France, Switzerland, UK, Italy, The Netherlands, Ireland, and the U.S.A. We tell them that if they come to Belarus, they might be arrested, sit in jail, and eventually be deported. We ask them if this is what they want. And guess what they answer? They wish to be arrested in Belarus! It's a very interesting feeling when you get such an answer and when you have journalists from all over the world telling you, "You know, there will come a day when you will remember this time of resistance as the best time of your life." I wish this day would come so that I could remember this time as the best time in my life.

I will just tell you that the main point of us being here is to organize our activities based on the advice of our two patrons, Václav Havel and Tom Stoppard. Václav Havel told us that we need to speak loudly and openly and take everything with irony, or otherwise we will die. So we are trying to do that. Tom Stoppard said that a moral position must be maintained, especially when your friends are killed, when your friends go to jail, when your family go to jail, even if you cannot stay above these facts. By means of art, we are trying to change the situation.

My last point is that the Belarus Free Theatre (BFT) acts as a global artistic ambassador for human rights, and in order to confirm this status, we appeal to the whole world's artistic community to exert pressure on your governments so that we can prevent Europe's last dictator from visiting places like Prague—the city of the Velvet Revolution and the land of Jan Palach, Jan Zajíc, the Plastic People of the Universe, and Václav Havel. All politicians need to understand that this is the main challenge existing in Europe. When there is no dictatorship in Belarus, the whole European continent will be free from dictatorship for the first time in its history. Today, only North America and Australia can be proud of that.

I will now briefly focus on financial issues. It's very difficult, of course, to get support for people who make art in Belarus. It's always difficult to hear that there will be no financial support for any social issues. But we can prove that in some cases it's possible. For example, we did a very big project called European Challenges. It was supported by the council of Lund in Sweden and partially by the European Cultural Foundation. The Foundation's contribution was vital because they covered the visit of fourteen playwrights from all over Europe and the US to Belarus. Playwrights need to write plays about the major challenges of their countries, and so it was appropriate that their visit coincided with a huge political rally in Belarus. They only escaped arrest because my husband told the police that they were foreigners. All the playwrights rewrote their plays because they understood that the challenges existing in Belarus are really different from the challenges that they try to reflect.

It's important for us to say that the number of dangerous artistic products in the world is decreasing. So we really understand that it's difficult for people who stay in Belarus despite the quizzical looks from the political captives, the relatives of killed and kidnapped people, the relatives of people who committed suicide. The last example happened two months ago in Minsk: a woman who received two years in jail said she would not stay in jail and committed suicide. She was 33 and had a five-year-old child.

At this moment, Xavier Solana is coming to Minsk to have a meeting with the last dictator of Europe. So it's very important for the creative, artistic part of Belarus, as well as artists from all over Europe, to support any political changes that should take place in Belarus. And all of us need to understand that when the situation changes, ten million people will come to the border of Europe. They're very talented and ready to share their ideas! But it is not possible because striving to survive is the only issue they face at the moment. The issue of ideas is not in the picture.

The Russo-German philosopher Boris Groys rephrased Dostoyevsky's famous quote that "the world will be saved by beauty." Groys said that "art will save the world from beauty." Artists are obliged to analyze, to ask questions, to control, and to dominate intellectually. Politicians like to discuss creativity and their main message to the creators is, "be innocent lambs, make pure art, because beauty will save the world, while we, the sacrificial sheep, take upon us all the dirt of political and social processes." So it's very important for us to be actively involved in changing our society. We ask you to help us to change our society through your artistic efforts.

Curriculum Vitae

Natalia, along with her husband Nikolai Khalezin, founded the Belarus Free Theatre (BFT) in 2005. In 2009 she co-authored the theatre conception *Eurepica*, also *Challenge*, produced together with Manteatern and Lund. BFT has started a Global Artistic Campaign to support of the UN Convention against Enforced Disappearances by the performance of *Discover Love*. Koliada, together with Nikolai Khalezin and Vladimir Scherban, organized the only underground Arts School in Belarus, Fortinbras, in 2008. She taught at the European Humanities University, Lithuania and DasArts School, the Netherlands. BFT under Koliada's leadership received the French Republic Human Rights Prize and the Europe Theatre Prize (New Theatrical Realities). It was initiated by Sir Tom Stoppard, President Václav Havel, Sir Harold Pinter and ArtVenture Freedom to Create Prize. BFT was named a Global Artistic Ambassador of Human Rights. Koliada has been detained three times by the Belarus special-forces for her activities.

Link:

www.dramaturg.org

Vuk Čosić

Internet Artist and Web Strategist, Slovenia
Panel Civil Society in the Creative Age



I'm a sort of founding person in the narrow field of internet-art, a sub-branch of new media. In the second half of the '90s, when all of this was really beginning to happen, I was interested in investigating this new thing that suddenly fell on our heads.

I was thinking of what might be pertinent, interesting or maybe even useful, bearing in mind that in focus groups people always lie. You might remember Margaret Mead, the famous anthropologist. She did a whole thesis based on a tribe where she was aware of all the rules except for the one where you always lie to a stranger.

I was thinking of how I should report my state of mind, or the way I work, to inform the poor people that are destined to measure and quantify me. Somehow in concordance with the concept of the cultural ecosystem, I have to confess that I actually manage to function fully as an artist, as a creative person, in three different ways or tracks. That is to say, my cultural output, my artistic existence, follow three lines.

The first one is art for artists. It's a sphere where we don't discuss cash, prestige or anything like that. We freely exchange our minutes of time, our ideas of artistic relevance. It is the most important part to us. And it's the one you never get to see in a gallery.

The second one is art for institutions. It's how success is measured in that particular line. You end up in as many museums and galleries as you can, possibly the good ones, and then you're considered good.

The third type is art for collectors. Those works are inspired by my real art and could go well in the market. It's supposed to be impossible to exist on all three of these levels. But as a matter of fact it is not ethically or even politically impossible to exist in these three separate fields.

There's one particular aspect of this way of life that I think needs to be mentioned because it has something to do with creating policies. It is this silly velocity thing. You see, a hundred and fifty years ago, in the early Victorian age, you were born into a world where being a painter of landscapes was a very meaningful thing, and so you slowly started drawing, and then you began doing fabulous watercolours of the cliffs of Dover. And then, by the time you were eighty, you were still doing the same thing, and you were recognized as a very good painter. And then you would die. The trajectory was rather static in comparison to what we live today. Here, every five years, three years or even one year will pass, and you have a complete shift in what's artistically meaningful and relevant, and that's very interesting for an artist. We use our creativity to address this velocity and we can cope because we have very few people below us. But I would like to understand how policies are supposed to address this.

I used to live in socialist Yugoslavia, a very soft version of socialism I must say, in comparison to Belarus. But still I lived in a society where we used to measure the happiness of the population by tons of raw steel. So I know about measurements a little bit, and I know that they never work. My little idea, from the position of someone outside the circle of policy makers, who seem to be representing half a billion people, is let us do our work and please be very polite and kind, and find the most decent way you have to ask for permission to hang out with us guys. I think the best thing you can do is just stay out of our way. If you're not going to help, the best thing you can do is not interfere. At least don't bullshit us with anti-copyright things, don't create obstacles. If you have to send branding managers to interpret us, if you don't understand what we're doing, just get out of our way.

Curriculum Vitae

One of the pioneers of internet art, Čosić has frequently exhibited in such venues as the Venice Bienial; the ICA, London; Beaubourg, Paris; ICC, Tokio; Kunsthalle, Vienna; Digital Artlab, Tel Aviv; ZKM, Karlsruhe; Ars Electronica, Linz; the Walker, Minneapolis; Postmasters, NYC; Friedricanum, Kassel; Neue Galerie, Graz; IAS, Seoul; Baltic, Newcastle; Moca, Oslo. Čosić has also lectured at such museums as le Beaubourg, Paris; Guggenheim, Venice; CCA, Glasgow; Thing, NYC; LAMoCA, LA; and at festivals in Hong Kong, London, Liverpool, Dessau, Montreal, Banff, Madrid, Gorizia, Copenhagen. Čosić has also lectured at art schools and universities, among them at Stockholm, Los Angeles, Chicago, San Francisco, Troy, Dundee, Liverpool, Venice, Linz, Barcelona.

Čosić has been written about in various media: *The New York Times*, *Liberation*, *La Repubblica*, *The Guardian*, *The Financial Times*, *Cahiers du Cinema*, *Artforum*, *Newsweek*, *Wired*, *Haaretz*, *ORF*, *CNN*, *BBC*, as well as key publications on new media: MIT Press, Thames & Hudson, Tate, Taschen, Baltic.

Link:

www.ljudmila.org/~vuk/

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vuk_Cosic



Simona Levi

Director of Conservas and Multidisciplinary Cultural Practitioner, Spain
Panel Civil Society in the Creative Age

Over the last few years, we have witnessed several attacks on our civil rights and freedom in the name of artistry and creativity, and in the name of the concept of intellectual property. Many are surprised to hear these words. I will try to explain why I chose them.

I am speaking here as a citizen, but even more so as an artist. There are extremely devastating cultural policies being carried out in our name. This is done, they say, to protect our intellectual property but it is against our will. Often, to protect us, of course, we hear the word piracy. This word is used to purposefully mix up two phenomena in order to protect the culture industry's interests. Personally, I doubt that this interest is the interest of the artist or of society.

The two things that are purposefully mixed up are, on the one hand, the idea of exchanging private information and knowledge. For example, I have the Bible. You haven't read the Bible. I give it to you. What about the new song from Madonna? You haven't heard it yet. So I give it to you. This is an absolutely legitimate exchange between people. On the other hand, there is the right that everyone has to be paid for what they do for a living. Of course, no one should do business with other people's creation without paying the author fairly. By this I'm not referring to the precarious jobs that the culture industry offers, such as screenwriting for television, etc. The proliferation of this confusion can be very devastating for our daily life.

This is not a frivolous problem. Allow me to tell you something that is happening at the moment to illustrate my point. We are accustomed to the digital tools and the internet the way we know them now. However, few are aware that it could very easily be privatized any day. Why? Because at this very moment the so called Telecommunication Pact will be voted on in the European Community, and this is legislation that requires the internet providers to be monitored by a private royalties management agency; a private agency to control the content of your traffic, and without the permission of any judge. We are fighting for this law to be rejected. Yet the governments of France, Spain, Italy, Ireland, and England are trying to implement the same law in their countries.

Another thing that is important to remember is that one month ago we narrowly escaped a vote in the European Community that would have extended copyrights from fifty to ninety-five

years after the death of the artist. Furthermore, this is not over. It will be voted on again. So as you see this is not science fiction. It is our reality. It is the policy our governments are carrying out at the moment. I think there are more than economic issues at stake. We are fighting for the very idea of culture and for the right to the access information which has taken us a couple of centuries to gain.

The cultural industries often hear the voices of the royalty management societies. Governments have redefined the concept of culture and creativity for their private benefit. They often use the word "culture" when in fact they mean the entertainment industry. They speak of pirates but they are actually referring to every one of us. I think all of us in this room are pirates. I am a very terrible pirate. I also see many beautiful PowerPoints used here these days. All the pictures that are used in the PowerPoint presentations are pirated pictures. So I think there is a large amount of pirates among us and we must be aware. This concept of piracy used by governments is just an anachronistic concept used as an excuse for very concrete reasons. The phenomenon of social networks can be summed up in such a simplistic way: we are pirates. But I say that they are pirates because it's overly simplistic and dishonest to divide the population into those who copy and those who buy. We do both things at the same time, every one of us. I think it's the same as saying that a person who cooks without buying cookbooks is a gastronomic pirate. I use the internet to compile music and for me, a music lover, this feeds my desire to go to a concert and to buy a CD. Yet the record industry's greed and delirium cause them to believe that people in the digital era who want to listen to music must buy thousands of records which are accessible on the internet.

It's simply not true that if we share we stop appreciating art. Have people stopped buying the Bible because it's in the public domain? Will people stop going to the cinema to see the new Spielberg movie? Will Spielberg no longer be a millionaire? I don't think so. Perhaps he will have a few less millions, but does the entire European population really have to worry about the fluctuation of Spielberg's millions? We have to remember that this cultural industry is mainly American. It's not even something that we do for the economic benefit of the European Community.

Culture is bound to keep producing emotions, but also investments, just as it has always done before. In the digital era, more and more people dedicate themselves to their creativity because of what they learn through the internet. Therefore people won't stop appreciating creators, just the opposite. They will not stop appreciating artists, because we all become artists and creators through new digital tools. What people stop appreciating is the middleman. In recent history the real middlemen between the artist and the audience was "industry." Now it is the internet. This is the period of the highest level of cultural production and consumption in history. I can carry in my pocket my mp3 player with thousands of songs from all corners of the world. Does it mean I am being detrimental to the diffusion of culture? No.

Finally I come to my conclusion. What is important is that in Spanish and European history we have a flagrant example of a private institution that joined with government and managed to impose its point of view on society, when the then new technological transformation, the printing press, permitted the access of knowledge to be more wide spread. It was called the Inquisition! It managed to impose its own interests for centuries, through the burning of books, burning of scientists, and by condemning thousands of people to death. Those terrorized were not called pirates but rather heretics. It's the same thing. The Inquisition also managed to hinder technological progress for centuries.

I propose that something identical is happening in the digital age. There is a minority opposing the new "printing press." They wish to hold back all the benefits we can get from sharing of information. The time of crisis, is actually a problem of the governments. Although those who want to apply the so called Sarkozy Law are trying to criminalize file sharing on the net they totally overlook the thousands of artist allowing their work to be shared by using free licensing. They also ignore the privacy of all internet users, and the democratic benefits of breaking the control of information. For us in Spain this is very important because the free internet permitted us to prevent the coup d'état of Mr. Aznar in March of 2003.

For more than four years, people from all over Europe and the United States were asking their governments to control the price of housing and to not continue allowing the unlimited greed of the housing and mortgage industry. The governments didn't listen to their citizens. It has led to the immense catastrophe we are living now, this absolutely foreseeable crisis. Again, for the access of knowledge, we ask the governments to vote for the people and not for the private interest groups. Do we really want to follow in the footsteps of Pakistan, China, and Sudan? Do we want to live in a country in which the government is afraid of the creativity of its citizens? Will we allow Mickey Mouse to control the future of knowledge, creativity, and culture?

Curriculum Vitae

Simona Levi is a multidisciplinary theatre director, born in Italy. She is the Director of Conservas, a cultural foundation in Barcelona. She has worked in renowned physical performance theatre groups all over Europe. Her multidisciplinary creations are currently touring festivals around Europe. Since 2000, she has directed the scenic and visual arts festival IN MOTION which takes place at the CCCB (Centre de cultura contemporània de Barcelona) during the Grec festival. She is an outstanding activist in the European social movements in the area of free circulation of knowledge, the right to housing and the use of public areas. Levi is also involved in several artistic and activist platforms.

Link:

<http://exgae.net/los-oxcars>

<http://exgae.net/exgae-multiply-and-share-forth/theoxcars>

http://conservas.tk/english/?page_id=6

Concluding Remarks Given by **Moderator Xavier Troussard**

The shortest description is that it was a panel of rebels. It consisted of those who don't buy into the concept being discussed by many in the European community. Furthermore, they have looked at the concept from a critical point of view. They have questioned the concept as, perhaps, hiding some emptiness. They also have questioned the objectives that were assigned to these new hopes about creativity, and they have questioned the conditions under which you can express creativity. It was suggested that the concept itself is not new, but what might be new is the social, political, and economic context in which we look at it. The speed of development has probably changed the way we look at it as well.

The second important point that I noted was whether or not we look at it in a global context of competition, where we try to be more creative than one another, or we look at it from a collaborative perspective.

Then there was a clear opinion that the concept requires resetting creativity, a reaffirmation of human rights and a freedom of expression. But we should also not lose sight of the autonomy of art and the value of art for its own sake. Also, in terms of rights, there was the beginning of a discussion about access and participation. But, in this case, the opinions were more oppositional. We discussed whether the existing models of remuneration of artists through copyright are really benefiting the artist and society as a whole or should we look at other ways of achieving the remuneration for creators.

Beyond those points, when it came to the issue of whether there's any direction in which policies should or should not go, I think the conclusions were not that clear. We had everything from the point of view of isolation, where people want to be left in peace, to some timid steps towards diversification. Some want policies that could fit all agendas, including mobility, and some championed the idea that the nurturing of art and of culture should probably be developed in specific places.

At the end of the panel, an interesting concept was presented. It was interesting because it went beyond the provocative. The concept was that this panel was a rebalancing exercise, and I think it served an important function in the overall conference. There's a rebalancing element which has been presented in the form of competition and collaboration. You have competition for the best ideas as well as collaboration. And this might be a model for reconciling the different positions that have been expressed.