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**BEYOND THE OBVIOUS**  
**MALMÖ 29/5–1/6 2024**

# **Report on Beyond the Obvious 2024 Conference**

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29 May | Wednesday

## Town Hall Reception

Participants at the conference were welcomed for a reception at Malmö's Historical Town Hall. Welcome words were given by Carina Nilsson, the Mayor/Chairman of the Municipal Council in Malmö and Inês Câmara, the President of Culture Action Europe.

This was followed by a talk by Carina Listerborn and Pål Brunnström (Malmö University) on *Malmö Beyond the Obvious: culture emerges in unexpected places*.



30 May | Thursday

## Welcome

*Mark Isitt, Moderator*

Culture Action Europe celebrates its 30th birthday this year. CAE is an independent organisation not affiliated to any party, based in Brussels, whose main purpose is to get EU policymakers to understand the value of culture, including as a fundamental building block when making common ground. Considering the radical political environment (with elections in the Netherlands, Slovenia, Italy, France...) maybe that mission is more important than it has ever been in the organisation's history.

I am a journalist, covering architecture and city planning. The subtitle to this conference is *United by Future Places*. What does city planning do for cultural exchange? When urban planners plan new areas in the city, do they have the arts in mind? Are our public spaces inviting, repelling, cities too dense, need more green, blue, grey? What can we as citizens do? Do we have any responsibility in creating a sense of belonging, of identity? Why are we here in Malmö in particular?



*Janne Grönholm - Deputy Mayor for Leisure and Culture, City of Malmö*

I am so happy to see you all here. One of the main themes in my speech is something that came up during the different discussions I had with you yesterday at the town hall dinner. Our biggest mission: *hope*.

We all share similar challenges in our societies: climate change, social exclusion, economic inequality, contested democracy, freedom of speech and artistic freedom. With these dynamics in our society, it is easy to be afraid, to want to take a step back and be

defensive. But that is exactly what we should not do. It is so important to be here today and our mission is to take the step forward and set the agenda.

Culture is not the topping on our ice cream, it is a fundamental building block for our societies for now and the future. Looking at the title of the conference, *United by Future Places*, here in Malmö that can mean physical places (for example the new library in an area with big demographic challenges, which is the most visited library in the city).

But places can also be about common understanding. Malmö wants to give all children from kindergarten to high school cultural experiences throughout all levels, after which the knowledge of the power and unity of culture can be used to build uniting places in the future. Once again, I am very happy to have you here, to learn about your mistakes and victories, to strengthen ourselves and talk about what is important.

*Lars Ebert, Secretary General Culture Action Europe*

Thank you for your words that resonate with us here in the room. To take up the word *hope*, what we experienced already when the CAE members met yesterday in the library, it was a place where we could see what we want the future to be. We received a warm welcome at the town hall, with the mayor staying until the end and such a warm welcome shows how valued the arts are here in the midst of political decision making as the core of the matter of how to develop our future.

Thank you for taking us so seriously in our endeavours and we will learn from you about how when you put hope into culture, it pays off in the transformation of a city. It is so hopeful, how culture makes sense of such a diverse city. We are here to learn good practices first and foremost.

Welcome to members of Culture Action Europe and guests to this annual Beyond the Obvious conference of CAE. Thank you Malmö for hosting us, but also for this joint journey that we started a year ago and that has led us to today. It has been an absolute pleasure and privilege to develop this programme together and your support, including in financial and logistical terms, has been crucial to make this conference happen.

*United by Future Places* represents both the urgencies that we see at CAE and the collective ambition of the cultural ecosystem of Malmö. So first and foremost we, as co-organisers, were *United* by our ambition to create *Future Places*. Let me unpack the title a little bit and start with the term *United*.

### United

Culture Action Europe is a network of transnational cultural networks, national associations, organisations and individuals that want to give culture a central place in policy making. They are united by their belief in the transformative power of culture towards more sustainable, inclusive, democratic and just societies.

Tonight we will celebrate Culture Action Europe's 30th birthday and I guess we are all united both in the joy of what has been accomplished, but also in the urgency to form an even stronger and even more united voice to bring culture to the core of policy making in Europe and beyond.



Exactly one year ago, during our last annual *Beyond the Obvious* Conference in the European Capital of Culture 2023, in Elefsina, in Greece we formulated the [The Elefsina Manifesto: Envisioning a Culture of Care](#) as a co-writing exercise of all delegates. We invite you to read it on our website. Care has since been one of our two key concepts in strategising our vision and our mission for the years to come.

Care also translates for us in an unwavering commitment to the concept of cultural democracy, that goes beyond democratising culture, but builds our cultural governance and provision bottom up, with everyone in the room involved and leaving no-one behind.

We are therefore also *United* against the threat to democracy that we witness globally and across Europe. The upcoming EU elections will most certainly feature a shift to the far right and in statements of the lead candidate for the position of EU Commission president we hear worrying signs of flirting with the far right. We have to stand up, united for all the values that are worth fighting for in Europe, first and foremost: equality, human dignity, rule of law and, yes, democracy.

Most of you will have followed our *Pop the Vote / Culture on the Ballot* project in the last months. I am really happy that some of it's Changemakers are with us and will challenge us during the coming days - and also celebrate with us tonight.

And if you don't know how to vote next week: do consult our Culture Action Europe voting pack if you want to vote for strong support for the cultural sectors of Europe.

## Future

It seems that at the moment we tend to put attention rather to the past to find orientation for our behaviour. We have to come to terms with traumatic histories and work on our collective memories to become representative of the diversity of our societies today.

But what are the future images, the future scenarios that provide us with a sense of orientation in an ever more volatile environment and an ever more disorienting world?

At Culture Action Europe we have developed together with the City of Malmö a concept to bring together future thinking, foresight and art-based practices to develop compelling images of the future in the coming years that can guide our work and the transformation of our societies at large.

These images are crucial for the much needed cultural leadership - which we see both as leadership within our sector and leadership of our sector - to take up the big challenges that we currently experience: the digital, the ecological as well as the peace and security challenge.

We believe that this leadership is intrinsically linked to cultural democracy and hence the role for our network in the European context - a leadership that is informed bottom up, inclusive and co-creative. That is how we see the transformative power of culture root out.

We are currently running a *State of Culture Barometer* exercise, where we already see an interesting tension between cultural policies across Europe and the self image of the sector. "Access to culture" vs. "Culture transforming societies" - our role is to bring the two together.

If we manage to reconcile the perception of the cultural sector with the sector's self-image we can lead change across the EU. Only then can we get closer to a *Cultural Deal for Europe*, with a strong cultural sector to act as an enabler for change across policies.

The signs on a global level are encouraging: we can claim a success, the Culture Goal will be a reality with the upcoming pact for the future as a stepping stone.

### Places

Talking about places I feel we have to acknowledge in all our endeavours of the next few days that, overall, we, as cultural workers and we as a humanity are not in a 'good place' at the moment. The unimaginable atrocities unfolding in Gaza confront us not only with an existential loss of humanity, but they also question the dominant global value system. They force us to embrace the experiences of people of colour within largely white narratives, diverging collective memories, such as holocaust memory and postcolonial memory and consequently acknowledge the serious geopolitical implications ignorance has in our current lived experiences.

It is therefore our responsibility to create genuine spaces of care rooted in emancipatory and solidarity practices.

But when we think about these places that unite us in the future, we must also acknowledge who is in *this* room and that 'we' are not representative of 'us'. So let's look at ourselves and see whose voices are missing in this room today, whose stories we are not including, which actions are not being taken, which words are not being said. Let's have these questions in mind in the conversations of the next few days, as these conversations will fuel Culture Action Europe's work for the next year.

We also have to keep talking about the war on European soil. It pushes us to reconsider the role of our sectors in a discussion about the resilience of societies, while we are further and further drawn into a war as we speak. Take our new strategy that we have developed over the last year: it does not refer to the new peace and security paradigm that will be shaping the European Union in the coming years and we will need to talk about that urgently.

We learn from Ukraine about the positive role of art and culture in a war-traumatised society, but also how it can be abused. We at CAE see it as part of our mission to open and maintain spaces of dialogue and exchange about these existential challenges, to help our sectors determine their positions and support one another, but also to open spaces of exchange.

Consequently on Saturday we will have an in depth conversation on Gaza, to follow up the previous online conversation among our members. But also we will hear from a representative of the Georgian cultural sector later today and will further facilitate conversations between our members and cultural workers from Georgia.

Overall the political, social, ecological image of the world looks grim. It is also *our* role to lead with future images that help transform our societies for the better. It is our strength to be critical, creative, collaborative and caring in our approaches. It is with this spirit that I look forward to the next days and the actions that discussions will trigger in the year to come.

## Weaving the City with Culture

### *Discussion with:*

Janne Grönholm, Deputy Mayor for Leisure and Culture, City of Malmö

Marcus Horning, Director of City Planning, City of Malmö

Fredrik Sjögren, Chairperson Culture Committee, Region Skåne

Annika Olsson, Dean Faculty of Culture and Society, Malmö University

Natalie Giorgadze, General Director, Culture Action Europe

### *Moderated by:*

Mark Isitt



### *Mark Isitt, Moderator:*

What is the meaning of the title of this conference: 'United by Future Places | Beyond the Obvious'?

### *Janne Grönholm, Deputy Mayor for Leisure and Culture, City of Malmö:*

The meaning is that with culture we are able to find a common ground in a multi-diverse city like Malmö. We can find a way to have a common identity that unites us and where culture can be a really important tool. It doesn't matter about our background, with culture we can create spaces and we can meet despite our differences.

### *Mark Isitt:*

Malmö has in your eyes been working adamantly with culture to create that identity, is that right? Could you explain how that works?

### *Janne Grönholm:*

Culture is an important pillar in our welfare system and also it has its own value in itself. We acknowledge that in a welfare system with 186 different nationalities, culture is a



fundamental building block. In order to get our city to work, culture has an essential role, which doesn't mean we have to arrange festivals every month or so, but rather take culture into account in planning, for example how we give youth access to cultural institutions and experiences, how we create the spirit that everyone is a citizen of Malmö.

*Mark Isitt:*

Is creating a cultural identity in such a diverse city a challenge?

*Annika Olsson, Dean Faculty of Culture and Society, Malmö University:*

We take on challenges in Malmö as a region and a university. It is challenge that keeps us going. Culture can unite or divide, that's how it is in a democracy. There is room for differences, we don't have to like the same art or food, but we can still share these spaces together. That is what we as organisations stand for, spaces where people can come together and represent different traditions and histories, share and respect each other. It is a difficult but important task, especially right now. To not have more wars, we need to continue to stand for these open public spaces to meet and talk

*Mark Isitt:*

Is that particularly important in Malmö? Eurovision was here recently and it was dramatic, not only in relation to the music.

*Annika Olsson:*

In Malmö as a city, many people engaged in different demonstrations, which showed it is possible to have a very debated and tense situation, but we can manage it. That is really important for us as a democracy and as a city.

*Mark Isitt:*

You proved that. Is this conference about creating strong democracies?

*Natalie Giordadze, General Director, Culture Action Europe:*

It is not too strong to say that. What CAE is doing, moving *Beyond the Obvious* from one country to another and crossing borders, countries and sectors, rural and city, engaging with different societies, audiences, cultural representatives, this is what is weaving shared understanding of what culture can do. We come together for dialogue where we do or do not agree - this is not a bubble for where we all agree - we share values but we debate and disagree and open up to each other and each others' views. All this contributes to creating and empowering democracy and democratic dialogue.

*Mark Isitt:*

Is that particularly important today? Where we see movement towards the right, is that a threat to culture? Does it have to be a threat?

*Natalie Giordadze:*

It does not have to be a threat, but it could be and most probably is. We are leaving the last age, it is a big moment of transition and transformation with all the processes mentioned before happening at the same time. We need to be together, united, speaking with one voice, representing the diversity of our sector and society at large. Culture has the potential to be more imaginative and creative to face the situations, proposing hope and visions on how to get there.

*Mark Isitt:*

Is it a problem that culture, in some ways an immeasurable quality, that we can't really measure the value of a park, an urban space, a heritage building, a book?

*Natalie Giorgadze:*

It can be difficult in numbers, but measures can be done in different forms and shapes. There is more evidence across different sectors on how culture contributes in youth, health, democracy, in different sectors. More and more evidence is available and accessible

*Fredrik Sjögren, Chairperson Culture Committee, Region Skåne:*

It depends on who you're speaking with, what the purpose of the discussion is. In politics we have a finite budget. Politicians mostly discuss healthcare, so culture... When we are discussing the budget, I have to show that culture deserves the money that could perhaps go to another intensive care unit and I have to discuss long-term benefits. Culture has value in itself, but also a positive effect on health and on promoting and stopping diseases.

*Mark Isitt:*

What is the effect of culture on health?

*Fredrik Sjögren:*

So much research has been done on how cultural activities, art, music, theatre, strengthen people against being depressed and so on. It helps their health. So that discussion, we have to focus on getting that information to all the politicians to focus on what we can do concretely.

*Mark Isitt:*

Is it a challenge to persuade politicians to invest in this? As a representative in this region, what are your methods or tools?

*Fredrik Sjögren:*

We try to convince them of a different mindset, not just measuring year to year, but long term. In Skåne, that means looking at the healthcare system of the future, where promoting health must play a bigger part. It is less expensive if people don't become sick in the first place. We give money to things that promote health. We know today that culture has a very important role in that part of a healthcare system. Being a part of a group, bringing a sense of belonging to someone lonely or elderly, this can have a positive effect on the whole system.

*Mark Isitt:*

Transferring this to architecture, when you invested in the Turning Torso skyscraper - where there was a derelict area of harbour which is now a lively neighbourhood - is it possible to measure the value of the investment?

*Marcus Horning, Director of City Planning, City of Malmö:*

In property development, it is easy to measure, there are many different models. It's a bit harder to get a value on the key ingredients in a dynamic city. Looking at how arts and culture were treated in urban planning, it is mostly as an artefact, a museum, a house of culture. Today we have more focus on the ecosystem of culture in a city, the production places, the grassroots development and forces. Malmö has the challenge of the highest urban growth rate in Sweden in absolute terms. It's a way of changing perspectives on urban growth, not just houses and places to work, but looking at all the dynamic ingredients. So it is not just the end station of production, where you present the art, but

the grassroots spaces and production spaces. In Malmö, we are developing a different way of regarding space. The politicians are quite brave here and there has been a dramatic change in priorities, just in terms of numbers of housing, venues and so on.

*Mark Isitt:*

Are politicians brave in Malmö?

*Annika Olsson:*

I have been working in Malmö for four years and politicians here are braver than in Stockholm. There is much better collaboration between different sectors here in Malmö, across the bridge. Malmö is built on collaboration and everyone understands the benefit of it. Malmö University exists because politicians understood the need for arts, culture, health and education... A democratic society needs everything. There is a good understanding of the everyday need and use of culture, not just celebratory uses of culture. Libraries, street art, there is room for everybody.

*Mark Isitt:*

Why is it more culture-friendly in Malmö in comparison to Stockholm?

*Annika Olsson:*

Malmö is a different kind of city, with its own heritage of course, but also so many cultures and people live here and do things together. There is community spirit even when not agreeing 100%.

*Mark Isitt:*

Based in Stockholm, I have an impression of Malmö as a fast-moving city.

*Marcus Horning:*

There is a bit closer collaboration, not just getting ideas, getting approval and running; we do it together. It's not one voice or one power, it's a lot of different actors.

*Mark Isitt:*

Is there more energy in Malmö?

*Fredrik Sjögren:*

Yes, Malmö is not only the biggest city of the region, but also it tries to weave culture with the city. Culture is perceived as a natural part of welfare society and not every municipality thinks this way. We're progressive. As a region we work with all the municipalities, but not all municipalities have the resources to do what Malmö does. So the region is then the facilitator, spreading Malmö's good ideas and helping them. We don't produce culture ourselves, but promote it in the region. We help Malmö reach its goals with different financial support and sharing knowledge to Malmö as well. We also work with creators in Malmö to get them to reach as far as they can.

*Marcus Horning:*

Narrowing the gap between different sectors is the job of a city. Malmö does this with businesses, the university, the culture sector... A key ingredient for working with climate change, where the public in the city were not the main driver, but rather businesses. In our roadmap towards 2030, there is the aim to make the building sector climate neutral by 2030 and now 120 organisations are part of that movement. That could be transferred to how we work with culture in the city.

*Janne Grönholm:*

Malmö is a village of a city. You can go and talk to anyone, the hierarchies aren't that great. The biggest reason it is that way is because it is very dynamic at grassroots level, which produces culture and social movements. At municipality level, seeing it like that, ideas evolve and we take them forward.

*Annika Olsson:*

Another factor is not only that it is a very diverse city, but also a very young city. Demographics are very important. When we talk about energy, many young people are searching for what to do in the future, how to contribute and they fill the streets. We are closer in Malmö than in Stockholm. There are some things that are a bit annoying when we're smaller - for example, many restaurants being closed Sunday, Monday, Tuesday - but it's really more positive. Also, we are not far from the rest of Europe. We are closer to Denmark of course, but also the rest of Europe.

*Natalie Giordadze:*

The reasons are out there for why CAE came to Malmö to talk about places and future for *Beyond the Obvious 2024* and it is amazing to see and experience what is in store for the days to come, to get a taste of what colleagues here are talking about and what the diversity of cultural expressions and initiatives are. It is a great opportunity, getting to know the city and its cultural scene.

At CAE, the way we see culture is both as a sector and in its vectorial dimensions. We look at how culture contributes to health and other sectors. One of the tactics that an advocacy organisation takes up in order to create a more political voice for culture and put it at the centre of debate and decision making is the understanding of the value of the sector in itself when we're talking about its vectorial contribution. It is also a question of funding: is it coming in or being cut? But more importantly, it is about the recognition of culture as a peer in conversations and bringing us onto the same level, for instance, sustainable development needs culture as a pillar.

There was a lack of joy when culture was stopped during Covid and people couldn't experience shared cultural expressions. Then we started appreciating our books at home, or Netflix. Then people started noticing society was missing something.

*Mark Isitt:*

Do you think you've taken advantage of this situation? Or has this all been forgotten about now?

*Natalie Giordadze:*

We have forgotten many things from Covid, interesting things. We have been advocating to political decision makers across Europe for specific budgets dedicated to culture that have been mobilised to support the outcomes of Covid. All across Europe, 2% was dedicated to the cultural regeneration of countries. Politically it has been centred and the conversations have been happening.

## Q&A

*People engaged in culture during covid. We do have to focus on what we mean by culture, not just for transformation but transmission, because someone on the far right regards culture as a means of transmission of their own values. We need to focus on what we mean by the transformative value of culture.*

*Annika Olsson:*

Culture in itself is neither good nor bad, pro- or anti-democratic. It is important for us to discuss how we produce culture and what we mean by cultural values.

*Mark Isitt:*

Is culture enslaved by leftwing values?

*Annika Olsson:*

No, I wouldn't say so. There are debates going round in universities about what values we stand for, for example, democratic values.

*If Malmö's social fabric is going so well, how is Malmö preparing the social fabric of this city if Stockholm decides to cut city budgets? What is the preparation for the future if something happens? Cities are the future, not nation states.*

*Janne Grönholm:*

We are already there. The current government doesn't give enough money to the municipalities for welfare services, including culture. To be more resilient here, we have gone out and said that culture is a part of our welfare system. During tough economic times, culture is protected as long as possible in the same way that we try to protect education as much as possible from cuts. This is a guiding principle. Municipalities all over Sweden looking back ten years have been closing libraries. Here we open new ones. We prioritise these issues, most importantly the space to meet and engage. If cutbacks get severe, we will be in trouble, but we have the political will here.



## The Politics of Culture



### *Discussion with:*

Dr. Elke Kaschl Mohni, Goethe-Institut Brussels

David Ek, Counsellor – Culture, Audiovisual and Sport at the Permanent Representation of Sweden to the European Union

Stephanie Bonnici, Pop the Vote! Changemaker

Tamara Janashia, Executive Director, Culture and Management Centre

### *Moderated by*

Lars Ebert, Secretary General Culture Action Europe

### *Lars Ebert, Secretary General Culture Action Europe:*

Bringing together some thoughts from the previous panel: there is an image problem of culture, what we are and what value we give. There is an obsession with measuring and not recognising that we do a fundamental part of our human life when we talk about European values, when we talk about democracy and also about human dignity that is our core value in Europe. These are immeasurable and we have to assume that we all have it. Culture is what enables us to live a dignified life and that dignity is contested on a political agenda.

We are talking now about adding an 18th Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) for culture, but it was self-evident to have SDGs for education, water, health and poverty. Why not culture, if it enables all the others? How can we get into a position to enable without being used ourselves? At the Summit of the UN last September, the first draft again did not contain culture. We have been loud and outspoken and campaigning. We have found allies to put in the 7th of 52 actions in the [Pact for the Future](#).

Why is it there? Who were our allies? Mainly India has helped us to put it in. We know what kind of government there is in India and that paragraph mentions identity two or three times. The centring of identity is problematic, but still culture is there. We are being empowered through a right wing agenda - are we happy about it? This is not the question. It is there and now the question is how do we work with it? As a policy and advocacy organisation we want to influence politicians. This is a political ambition, hence the title of this panel.

We are facing mind boggling challenges and it is our responsibility to act as political actors. We have a wide range of perspectives on stage. We want to hear from all of them and have the possibility to react to one another, then open up to questions.

I am glad that we have a perspective from our host country, David Ek, who had a key role in the Swedish Presidency about artistic freedom, which is at the core of what we are concerned about.

At short notice, we welcome Tamara Janashia, as we wanted a Georgian voice, representing civil society on the streets and looking at the role culture plays in rule of law and democracy under threat

Stephanie Bonnici is one of the *Pop the Vote!* changemakers and as you will see the roles of other changemakers in other panels is to bring in activist and younger perspectives.

We also welcome Elke Kaschl Mohni from the Goethe-Institut Brussels, which is interested in what's going on in Brussels and the portfolio of cultural policy. She also brings us her personal experience in the Middle East.

As we are in Sweden, in honour of our host, I will give the first word to David.

*David Ek, Counsellor – Culture, Audiovisual and Sport at the Permanent Representation of Sweden to the European Union:*

Malmö is a very appropriate place to talk about artistic freedom, which was a main priority of the Swedish Presidency. In the nonconventional public scene of Malmö, it was the first city of refuge for displaced artists. Nordic countries have a large population of displaced artists. With the Nordic Council of Ministers, we had a conference on at-risk and displaced artists. We also had a conference in Umeå on artistic freedom and the IFACCA summit on artistic freedom in Sweden, which was very important to us.

There is a need for it on a European level. Before the Swedish Presidency there was no systematic approach to Europe as a safe haven. We got all the EU27 behind freedom of artistic expression in a democracy and the need for Europe to be a safe haven for displaced artists. This was before the Russian aggression in Ukraine, when many came to Europe. There is now a better understanding among Member States, who were not used to seeing themselves as safe havens. There is more openness, so it was quite easy to get all Member States on board to contribute to the momentum for more cities of refuge being created outside Nordic countries.

All the Member States and every country in world have challenges in artistic freedom. These are complex questions; it is not a clear-cut field. We need to discuss openly among Member States. We continue in the next policy cycle at EU level. We had a meeting yesterday of the OMC group on Working Conditions for Artists. There are recommendations on this and artistic freedom. The question is which instruments are

available on EU level as the competence for culture is very limited. There is no harmonisation of regulations, but non-legislative advances are also important. It was a fairly unexplored topic but important to get the commitment of Member States.

Cultural democracy was also confirmed in the Cáceres declaration last autumn, which all signed and the link between cultural participation and democracy was present. What occupies our minds, what we hear from the culture sector, is how you want policymakers to see the role of culture for democracy. We see abuses of power and limits on artistic content. Yesterday's presentation on the Hoola Bandoola Band told us about how they were publicly criticised for their artistic content.

How culture is included is important, because it includes positive narratives, but is it only that? The Commission has been good on new opportunities for culture intersecting with research and science in the last policy cycle. If political interest in culture continues, what will it be based upon?

*Dr. Elke Kaschl Mohni, Goethe-Institut Brussels:*

I want to make four points in five minutes! We have been speaking about the importance of culture, culture in disturbing times and how to put it on the political agenda. We are looking through a European perspective, yet the world is so interconnected and culture doesn't stop at borders. Given the global challenges, it is crucial to bring in an international dimension. We need flourishing local ecosystems, we need to connect them in Europe and with the world.

I've learned in five years in Brussels that it is hard making a case in Europe, but it is yet harder for international cultural relations. There are positive signs. There are EU developments, such as the OMC group on international cultural relations which gives a structured framework for communication and a vehicle for Member States to push this agenda forward. Creative Europe has 40 participating countries and not 27, because border crossing and good practice formats are so valuable. Projects are funded by various DGs, but we need overarching strategies for international cultural relations to be forward-looking and I am glad that CAE is looking at this.

Beyond the question of how culture is used and instrumentalised by party politics, it is important to look at the *how*. *How* means artistic freedom, this independent, weird, unexpected, disruptive, intrinsic value of the aesthetic that goes against the grain, provokes new thinking and third ways. Culture is imbued with this spirit. It's the thing we need in order to be inclusive, pluralistic and have encounters based on shared democratic values.

Yet, with the politicisation of discourse in the culture field since 8 October and the horrors of the Hamas hostage taking and the unspeakable brutality of Israel's response in Gaza, the red lines of the permissible have become more debated. The answer in the culture field should not be boycott but dialogue. Looking at my home country, Germany, there is a heightened complexity for Goethe and its role in international exchange. We need dialogue that goes beyond the obvious, aiming not at consensus but at listening on a shared basis of respect for human rights, allowing learning, new stories, perspectives and new views of future

There is something that Yuval Noah Harari at Hebrew University said in the context of the Ukraine war but it can apply in other cases too.

*“Most wars originate in the mind of some poet. The generals come much later and while they think they obey the laws of realpolitik, they actually follow the dreams of a mythmaker. What drove Putin to invade Ukraine are fairytales about imaginary threats and fantasies about power and glory. The war can ultimately be traced to the stories Putin loved as a child in the 1950s and to the stories Russian children still learn at school today.*

*But peace too begins in the mind of some poet, able to see a better world through the smoke of war. When the cannons roar, the muses must speak louder than ever and be extra careful about what they say. In the midst of carnage, we are tempted to sow the seeds of future hatred. But it's our responsibility to sow the seeds of future concord.”*

- Yuval Noah Harari, 'Peace begins in the mind of a poet', [‘Hope matters’: Ukrainian and international authors on why literature is important in times of conflict](#), *The Guardian*, Thu 6 Oct 2022

*Tamara Janashia, Executive Director, Culture and Management Centre:*

It was a surprise and honour to be here to talk about the recent developments in Georgia. Somehow, we ended up in a warzone. This is not just the Georgian case, but the region in general. Neighbours have issues with each other, like Armenia and Azerbaijan, a frozen conflict that revives every few years. The Ukraine war impacts our politics and lives a lot.

In Georgia on 28 May, the law passed about foreign agents so that all organisations receiving more than 20% of their money from abroad should register as foreign agents. This is against the constitution and Georgian democracy. The EU, the Venice Commission, everyone says it is unacceptable, but the government adopted it with its third hearing.

Not only cultural agents and institutions are jeopardised at the moment, but their physical existence, any organisation can get closed down. Kyrgyzstan passed a similar law in March and the first institutions are now closed or self-liquidating, because it is impossible to work. Achievements made in recent years with coming closer to EU and getting a visa free regime, everything is jeopardised.

Georgia has become a hub for cultural institutions in recent years, especially after the invasion in Ukraine. There is a big community of artists in exile from Belarus, Ukraine, Russia. Where these laws are passed, all see firsthand how they work against democracy. Artists were already fleeing these consequences and now we are also under threat.

Georgian society and cultural workers, we will not give up, we will fight by every means: protests, elections. A lot of self-organised processes, for example with filmmakers, who created their own association, because the government-controlled one does things not in line with development, for example at the Venice Biennale. For every government agency funded by taxes, there is an equivalent self-organised in a parallel reality that unites people from the sector. There is also a lot of cross-sectoral solidarity and entities operating.

How do we position ourselves as the cultural sector? One of the situations where people try to find creative methods to combat the threats through humour, artistic production, unprecedented solidarity when actors in civil society help each other, researching on the scale of anthropology and more. People from different parts come together and learn a lot about each other and remote areas they have never been to.

Culture is one thing and politics is another, we are told. Cooperating with Russian artists, it is clear culture is all about politics, it is very much influenced. There is no separation, this affects our lives. Cultural practices are masters of inter-spaces, building bridges locally and

internationally. The Georgian cultural sector is very internationalised and is mostly reliant on foreign cooperation, for example an exhibition with Georgian artists in Denmark, or a Georgian guest of honour in Frankfurt. This is not something that happens naturally, there is a lot of work behind it and we are not going to give up on our achievements.

What are the consequences of law and this threat to democracy? Organisations can self-liquidate, they can run to different countries, they get dispersed. There are other ways to operate online, like with the Belarusian Cultural Council running from different countries, but this is survival mode, not a long-term solution.

I am convinced that there is nothing that operates isolated in the world. There is a lot at stake and it doesn't just affect Georgia and post-Soviet countries. There is an impact on Europe and the world as well.

*Stephanie Bonnici, Pop the Vote! Changemaker:*

I was asked to speak about the urgencies of the younger generation: politicising culture or "culturising" politics. I want to start by saying that I cannot represent the entire young generation.

Speaking to a room of cultural workers and representatives, I've instead aimed to reflect on the urgencies felt by young people in the cultural field, drawing from insights gained through Culture Action Europe's 'Pop the Vote! Culture on the Ballot' project, which has allowed me to exchange dialogue about political engagement with 44 other young artists and cultural workers from across Europe over the past three months.

Young artists and cultural workers develop a public action together during the 'Pop the Vote' Changemakers' Playground Camp in Destelheide, Brussels in February 2024.

In the climate we are living in, the three elements that I am about to mention can likely be related to not only by young people but also by older generations and those three elements are: cynicism, disillusionment and hopelessness.

When we think of the past week, the past 24 hours, I am almost certain that we have all felt some degree of either or all of them; whilst reading the news or whilst dealing with the values and the work that we are engaged with in the cultural field.

Many of us are losing faith in democracy, in economic systems and in the very idea that politicians genuinely represent our hopes for the future.

Of course, some young people remain passive, perhaps because they've grown accustomed to the existing world order without having had to actively shape it. They may not realise the necessity of either a) safeguarding it if threatened or b) actively working to change it if it no longer serves our needs.

But some others — especially young cultural workers and artists — are deeply concerned and actively trying to make a difference. And what that looks like for us is that:

one minute we are protesting against war and authoritarianism;

the next, we are fighting corruption in government institutions;



the next minute, we are defending freedom of expression and the media;

the next we are urging governments to seriously address the climate crisis and the issue of climate justice;

the next we are trying to challenge the power of the capitalist lobby;

while doing all this, we are trying to figure out whether what we're receiving is misinformation or the result of what the algorithm wants to feed us with;

and we are also trying to bring attention to underrepresented communities like refugees, because we also believe in practising solidarity.

The activist collective 'Le Bruit Qui Court', co-founded by 'Pop the Vote' Changemaker Maxime Ollivier. Photo: Théâtre de la ville\_Nadège Le Lezec

In between all of that, we are trying to figure out how we are going to keep up with the soaring prices of rent. So we take on internships, traineeships and if we're lucky — jobs — in a sector where people are meant to lead with a sense of purpose (the cultural sector) — and we are often instead faced with the reality of people being completely burnt out, cynical and tired of trying.

And while we are told that we are the generation that needs to fix the issues I just mentioned, to top it all off, apart from figuring out how to pay rent, we are also trying to figure out how to pay therapists, who we need to go see because of all these external forces present in our world which I just mentioned. And that therapist is expensive, because many in our world still believe that the mental health crisis is not really a crisis for our generation, meaning access to support is still a big issue and something we lack.

During the panel intervention titled "The Politics of Culture" at Culture Action Europe's 'Beyond the Obvious: United by Future Places' Conference in Malmö, Sweden on 30 May 2024. Photo courtesy of Culture Action Europe.

So what I think about the urgency of the younger generation is that many of us understand the urgency, we want to do something about it, we are doing something about it but ... I have two key concerns:

a) how long can we realistically sustain our actions before we are also burnt out, cynical and tired of trying?; and

b) there seems to me a double standard when older generations pass the baton and responsibility to us without considering changes to present decision-making processes and values that continue to lead us in the opposite direction — and this applies to politicians, to policymakers, but also to leaders of cultural organisations.

The situation is grim, but there are possibilities.

I'm afraid I started this off on a very grim note and on what some might even describe as a typical rant of the younger generation who think their life is too hard.

But I am not here to rant and despite the grim outlook, I am ready to pull my sleeves up. I simply don't want to do it alone and I would therefore like to offer instead some possibilities for a future in which young and old generations can work better together.

I am inspired by my friend and colleague, the Italian artist Manuela Colacicco, who responded to Matteo Salvini's plans to limit the visibility of artists in the media, through an Instagram post in which - apart from many other poignant messages - she said: "we who create ask questions, we admit multiple answers, because reality is complex".

So I want to talk now about these three possibilities: connection, empowerment through intergenerational collaboration and hope — or even better — radical hope.

### **Possibility 1 — Connection**

A moment of connection during a writing workshop exploring hopelessness and hope as part of the initiative 'STORIES FOR HOPE' in Rotterdam. Photo by Gabriel Agius Pascalidis.

I've already mentioned mental health. There is a strong sense of isolation in our communities. The "epidemic of loneliness" is strongly affecting both young people and communities at large across Europe.

When you're feeling lonely, firstly the crises seem even bigger and secondly, you are going to find it harder to believe that you can stand up, act and bring about some form of change.

There is also the issue of individualism, which is further fuelled by algorithms in digital environments, which put us more and more into boxes.

So we need a lot more connection and if you look around, you will find that young people are taking an active cultural role in this — which sometimes is as simple and straightforward as creating 'phone free zones' or not allowing phones in cafes or places which were meant for us to come together and connect.

Such cultural movements should not be underestimated as a huge first step towards starting to bring about some sort of change in our world.

### **Possibility 2 — Empowerment through intergenerational collaboration**

The second thing I want to talk about is the need for empowerment through intergenerational collaboration (specifically in the cultural sectors) and I stress this one as a key point that requires serious consideration and mature dialogue.

I strongly believe that we need to adopt more genuine methods of learning from each other and more spaces where we can combine the experience of older generations with the urgency and hopes of younger ones.

In that process, we must avoid treating young people as mere sources of fresh ideas to tap into and then stopping there.

Tokenism is dangerous and a trap that you can easily fall into. By tokenism, I mean — but not only — praising young people without action, seeking their opinions without intending to act and giving them nominal roles without real opportunities for sustained and equal exchange as well as fair compensation.

Many young people often wonder why older generations have accepted to normalise the structures, power dynamics and the systems that are making them adopt the approaches that they are.

I can personally understand that this might be the result of:

a) you being genuinely tired of fighting those systems and

b) your sense of resilience and patience despite the realities you are faced with on a daily basis.

But in the urgent situation that we find our world in, this becomes more and more difficult to justify.

And so, very often, young people in the cultural sectors often face a choice: either join experienced organisations and conform — or just start your own thing from scratch.

But this dichotomy is very unsustainable and it would likely be much more effective if we are willing to come together, listen to each other, leverage each generation's strengths and find common grounds to achieve more effective outcomes that, in general, will also drain us all a bit less and allow us to focus our energies more sustainably.

Here I want to commend initiatives like Culture Action Europe's 'Pop the Vote' project. Of course, this project exists within current structural limitations, but it represents a strong step in an effective direction.

We need to build on this momentum together and to ensure that young people in the cultural sectors can continue to sustain their engagement with communities around democracy beyond the current election cycle.

I also think about how we can maintain the European Parliament's interest in young cultural and artistic voices beyond the level of instrumentalisation and how we can bring our learnings from these three months back to cultural organisations that are active three-hundred and sixty-five days a year.

I also want to applaud the choice to invite young artists and cultural workers from this project on each panel at this conference.

However, remember that those of us speaking here cannot represent all young people, especially those at your local and national levels. So to the cultural organisations in the room, I say: find those voices, engage with them and invite them onto your panels, your roundtables, your boards, your working groups, your teams and in decision-making processes.

Our times call for risk-taking in nurturing intergenerational dialogue.

Back in Malta, where I'm originally from, a very small organisation (which was also the first Culture Action Europe member from Malta) took the risk on me at a young age.

They took me to conferences and networks, gave me an equal seat at the table, learned from me as much as I learned from them, to the extent that seven years later, I've moved to the Netherlands, but I still collaborate with them — because I recognise how that is an environment that has nurtured me and that still continues to welcome my criticism as a strength, rather than a threat.

Now this was a small organisation with very limited resources. Imagine what big organisations — with more resources (even if never enough) could do if they were open to risking a little bit more.

Internships are valuable for young people to gain experience and for cultural organisations to gain insight, but they can also easily turn into situations of inequality and unsustainability if we are not careful.

I also want to propose the idea of taking on young board members. This shouldn't be a token group of young people making suggestions for experienced board members to consider, but rather a deliberate and equal process of integrating intergenerational voices into decision-making, which also enables us to understand the responsibilities that come with being part of that decision-making process.

So, there are many of us here in the room. Please brainstorm together with us. Please engage with us. Of course, that also goes for us — we need to engage with you; but if you're working for a cultural organisation, you need to also recognise that you hold some form of power and resources — even if they are very limited — and which you need to choose how to use responsibly.

So please invite us to observe and contribute and please get creative in finding ways to compensate us fairly for our contributions.

On a final note here, I also say, to both young and older generations: be ready to be uncomfortable. Of course there is going to be a clash of perspectives, ideologies, attitudes and approaches — but let's please embrace that diversity instead of viewing it as a conflict to the point that we shy away from it.

### **Possibility 3 — (Radical) hope**

And then the final thing I want to talk about is radical hope.

I know that some of what I've just said or proposed may be interpreted by some of you as naivety, but I want to also assure you that — also through my work in policy environments — I am aware that change takes time, that it doesn't happen overnight and that big changes are often the result of very small minute actions sustained over a long period of time.

Change needs strength, perseverance, resilience and lots of patience — the latter being something that us young people need to learn to nurture, because yes, we acknowledge that we are also often impatient as a result of our passion and understanding of the urgencies around us.

And nevertheless, despite knowing all this, I — not only as a young person but also as a young professional trying to build a future — find myself needing to be urgently critical because it's ultimately our generation's futures on the line.

And this is then where radical hope comes in. With my 'Pop the Vote' project, I have been exploring this theme of hope with local communities in Rotterdam through the community initiative 'STORIES FOR HOPE' and one thing I've learned is that we need to talk about hope more.

Do not mistake hope for wishful thinking. I am not talking about sitting down and hoping that things will get better, but rather about acknowledging what it is we hope for, so that we can then imagine alternative futures for our world and actually start to take the actions needed in order to realise those hopes.

Radical hope specifically is based on an understanding of the past and a critical awareness of the present.

It is a reminder that we have been here before and that possibilities — such as the three I just shared — exist.

There is strength in bringing our collective, intergenerational voices together and I trust and believe that the cultural sector has the capacity — and dare I say, the responsibility — to set the example here. But that can only happen if we all — young and old(er) — are willing to come together, to hope and also to act in the radical ways that our urgent times demand of all of us.

I close by referring back to Manuela's words: "Hope frightens you because it breaks out of the doldrums of those who believe they cannot improve their condition. And I want to be revolutionary, I want to get my hands dirty to actually build it, a different life."

## Q&A

*Lars Ebert:*

We are seeing an urgent line, a clear picture of freedom generally is something we need to explore. The response in the next policy cycle must be to keep up on these urgent questions, including freedom of artistic expression, thinking of those facing self-liquidation, of not being able to do their work.

Stephanie, thanks so much for bringing us to that mindset that is overwhelming. I get overwhelmed and it is important that you take space, dissolving the notion of "you and us" and that you are in our boards and where you need to be at this moment.

There is a need for third spaces, for artists as bridge builders as Tamara said, for keeping up dialogue as Elke sketched and getting to a space of ambiguity and welcoming different viewpoints, avoiding cancellation as was mentioned.

*We are seeing across Europe the organisational autonomy of cultural institutions being challenged. Yes in Georgia, but also in Italy, Hungary and in the future, I see maybe more. Is there space for a stronger collective action on European level on autonomy of cultural institutions, not only artists?*

*Tamara Janashia:*

As a minimum, there is a lot of solidarity coming from European colleagues. Any organisation in Georgia doing a serious job is connected to European organisations and have also benefited a lot from Creative Europe. We feel this solidarity on a daily basis, with comments made from European and Ukrainian and other colleagues. It helps us stay active and we need to stay active, because we have a long fight ahead.

Everyone is expecting sanctions on politicians, but these will also be bad towards us. You cannot sanction politicians without an impact on the population in general. It is difficult to say the best way to act, but our donors and partners are asking what is the best thing to



do, how to help. There is a Danish cultural institute planning to issue emergency grants to bridge this situation. All the support from European colleagues and partners helps a lot. We are in a mode of war and I don't want to dramatise, but for people within Georgia, there are families with generations on different sides, policemen beating up people, including protest groups with their own children in them. It is very much seen by the people in Georgia, this support.

*All the applications to Pop the Vote! were incredible. There was a lot of interest and we need more of these things to happen. Tamara - solidarity is a word missing from our vocabulary now. It is easy to say 'democracy' and 'solidarity' and not act. About older people, when I am finding myself on the frontline in campaigns with many other old people, we don't care what they do to us. For young people, I'm worried that they are fearful of being a protester in demonstrations, fearful for their professional futures, how they can be marked. Even academic institutions have to find shelter for young people, so they can truly be themselves in this current time. If they cannot, there is a real problem. We need more protection for young people to be cultural activists,*

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*From my personal experience, Stephanie talked about risk and I'm looking for work. The response I get is: "we love you, you're very professional" and then they give the role to someone with more experience. In cultural institutions, money is tight. They want someone they know can deliver on the job. In the end, there is a feeling that we cannot get into positions. We are spoken about as young people, but we are arriving at a point where we won't be able to be given positions. What will it take for institutions to value our voices?*

*Dr. Elke Kaschl Mohni:*

Point well taken. In Goethe, yes, we need to take risks. Engaging people early in their career is not so much a risk, but we need to take risks to survive in an insecure world where we cannot plan. It is not even risk taking to say that we need people of every generation and outlook. Goethe also needs to think about how to become more diverse, which is absolutely a need to go into the future as an institution. Alliances we need as well, otherwise we will not make it in this world that is so disruptive and difficult to navigate.

*Stephanie Bonnici:*

At protests, young people also need to be kept in mind. Malta is an island with a unique situation in terms of demonstration. Young people do protest. In the Netherlands, there is also a lot of protesting. These cultural contexts can shift so easily though. In the Netherlands this far right coalition published scary plans, which as someone who moved to this country that values cultural participation, suddenly I find myself questioning what space there will be for that in this country, with this new government putting people in a more fearful position via their lawmaking.

*Lars Ebert:*

It is not only about the perspectives of Georgia and the perspectives of the young generation. We need to open a policy perspective. These three terms proposed by Stephanie are very pertinent. What is being funded? As cultural organisations we are skilled in risk taking, so trust in our risk taking and sharing with others and not just to hope for the best, but to move forward with hope and to fight.

## Conversation Places

Participants had the opportunity to connect, exchange and talk about the topics which matter the most to us in a series of self-organised *Conversation Spaces* assisted by the Culture Action Europe members. The outcomes of the sessions were as follows.

### Caring Places

*Facilitated by Rocio Nogales*

How do you summarise a feeling, an attitude, a connection that unites us? In pressing times, care is a decisive form of activism, going against the march being played is radical change and roadblocks include lack of time. The system prevents us from accessing our time and caring for the people we care about the most. This disenables us from being reliable, makes us unreliable against ourselves and the people we love the most.

The big issue is the balance between assertiveness - fighting for what we believe in - and standing our ground and caring. But these are not opposites and we should not give one up for the other. There is hope there, signalling that we care, making our communities. We applaud CAE for making it such a present feeling.

Also, we need to be listening, listening, listening to people and communities. If you are an organisation, not assuming how people want to be cared for, but sitting down and listening to what they need is vital. Creating psychologically safe places - and we did create one in this group. Recognising the magic when it happens, we shouldn't just pass by it. Respect and promoting good practices, caring for others and being cared for is a need that crosses all of us, people and communities, that unleashes our potential and our healing potential.

"Truly, we live with mysteries too marvelous  
to be understood.

How grass can be nourishing in the  
mouths of the lambs.  
How rivers and stones are forever  
in allegiance with gravity  
while we ourselves dream of rising.  
How two hands touch and the bonds will  
never be broken.  
How people come, from delight or the  
scars of damage,  
to the comfort of a poem.

Let me keep my distance, always, from those  
who think they have the answers.

Let me keep company always with those who say  
"Look!" and laugh in astonishment,  
and bow their heads."

*by Mary Oliver*

## Commoning Places

*Facilitated by Paul Dujardin*

This was a great session and we can build bridges with what Rocio just told us. The commons is about:

1. Access and Shared Use:
  - a. Common resources are freely accessible to community members.
  - b. The use of these resources is shared and managed by the community.
2. Community Management:
  - a. Management and maintenance of commons are collectively regulated by the community.
  - b. Decisions on use and maintenance are taken jointly.
3. Sustainability:
  - a. The commons are managed to ensure their long-term sustainability.
  - b. This includes preventing overexploitation and protecting resources for future generations.

Our discussion brought together artists and representatives of arts institutions and public governments. It relates to natural commons (nature, water, woods...), digital commons (Open Source Software, AI, Wikipedia...) and cultural commons. The thought of the commons is related to knowledge, languages, culture. Challenges include over-expectation and legal aspects, but the opportunities are community-strengthening, innovation and sustainability.

We need a working group on administration of commons and innovation. At the administrative level, it can be effectively managed by innovative public administrations and institutions. We need new governance models and new synergies.

For example *Assemble* is a multi-disciplinary collective in London, which has got the Turner prize for innovation in the city, creating new spaces, making new things possible to realise. Temporary Autonomous Zones, using temporary freedoms to act in the community. Another idea is about rewilding, transforming urban spaces and combating monoculture.

Collaboration between artists and public administrations is essential for the success of the commons. Artists offer innovative solutions, while public administrations can implement them. Governments need to rely more on communities and grassroots activities. Community feeling creates new commons, achieving intergenerational information inclusion. Social impact is built on accessibility of public space, bottom-up and top-down, knowledge sharing and common goals, experimentation and active involvement of communities. We need to embrace complexity.

## Disruptive Places

*Facilitated by Burak Sayin*

What are they? Disruptive places are like cracks in the concrete, where there is the most movement, where seeds can grow. When authority comes in and learns from the cracks, we can build new infrastructure and places. Some will pour more concrete in to fill the gap, but there are always new cracks. They are temporary but never ending and will always be there. It is interesting for society and the cultural environment and we need to embrace them. It is interesting when artists get into these places. It opens up different

perspectives, alternative uses of places, meeting needs from alternative uses. As artists, what cultural organisations can do for us is allow space for us. We can shape a society that can manage dialogue and strong contrasts and respect different perspectives from different communities. Twisting things upside down, common sense says something should work a certain way but in fact it can take a different shape. These are regenerative spaces.

### **Places of Change**

*Facilitated by Niels Righolt*

We started our reflections, acting within a framework of a society of change, where expectations of cultural institutions change, where they are expected to be porous, to work inside and outside their walls, to engage with city planning and community development. It is even old fashioned, this change. How does it affect how we think about change, what are the values we want to fill it with, what connectivity? Any space needs to resonate collectively, individually, a narrative needs to be developed. It doesn't happen just as an intellectual process, it happens in the dialogue, when you invite different opinions to the table. That will push change. That has a catalytic effect. What values do we want to see? Generosity, soul, engaging the youth, care, resonance, community, curiosity, emotional relations, relevance, long-term ambitions. Where would you go to look for places of change, to make a difference? There are a lot of good examples: Centre Pompidou and Tate work on the hyper-local, but also new institutions, old industrial areas, buildings of belief.

### **Places of Many**

*Facilitated by Mateja Lazar*

The positive values that can guide our actions and can foster diversity and inclusion are things like community, solidarity, power-sharing, respect, equity, openness, listening, eye-to-eye exchange, mindfulness, consciousness, knowledge, freedom of being yourself, love. In communities and organisations, different experiences fuel innovation and creativity, this has been shown in a number of studies. It also comes with challenges: often a lack of imagination and fear of change, this fear is sometimes rooted in xenophobia. Significant time is needed for change at administrative level, but there is no time to waste, the change is needed now. We need dedicated and sufficient funding, resources, to test new tools and approaches. It should be correlated between education and culture politically to foster a cohesive society. Ideas are often more progressive than tools we have at our disposal and so we need to find imaginative solutions to allow us to use our existing tools in new ways. Or sometimes we are not aware of the tools available. When we create spaces together, we need empathy, advocacy, to break down patriarchal structures and above all: love.

### **Places of Memory**

*Facilitated by Inês Câmara*

Places need a chance to tell their stories, their traumatic stories. Allowing public spaces to be healing and a space for grieving. Whose stories are allowed to be told in public spaces? The politics of power, money, religion are all involved. Structurally, we need to rebuild memory spaces. The moment when stories become heritage, how does that form our identity as a community, as a society? How is it that one heritage can delete and erase other stories? The role of archives, where we hide important documents, these are time capsules that can save memory for future generations.

## Malmö Cultural Tours

Participants experienced the culture of Malmö first-hand in parallel cultural tours showcasing how the city uses culture to work on topics of environmental sustainability, diversity and inclusion and creative placemaking.

### **Culture on Wheels: Bicycle Tour of Malmö** with **Marcelo Castillo**

*Malmö has been named the best bike town in Sweden several times and ranked 6th place in the Global Bicycle Cities Index of 2022. With more than 500 km of bike lanes and no hills there is only a short bike ride to most parts of town - the city centre, the beach, parks, restaurants - and the city's different cultural venues and creative hubs. The bike is included in this cultural walk tailored to offer an experience, on wheels, of Malmö's most exciting cultural venues and meeting places, as well as contact with local associations and cultural agents showcasing the cultural diversity and grassroots spirit of Malmö.*

### **You Are What You Eat: Malmö's Food Caravan** with **Linda Dahl and Lena Ilkjea**

*Food culture is an important part of Malmö and the city established the first municipal food council in the Nordics. Food Caravan tells the story of the Malmö by sampling the different culinary heritages of the city: experience the basics of Swedish/Scanian food culture at Malmö Saluhall in combination with The Malmö "off the beaten track" tour at Möllan. Walk, talk and get to taste the past, present and the future of food in the region and discover the vibrant multicultural and alternative food DNA of Malmö.*

### **The City as a Classroom: Kirseberg's Young City Guides** with **Young City Guides**

*The City of Malmö's pilot project "Young City Guides" gives children (around 10-13 years of age) a voice in urban development processes. This pilot project trains young people to be city guides in their immediate environment in order to increase children's and young people's participation and influence over their living environment. Join a young-person guided tour of Kirseberg (literally "Cherry hill"), a neighbourhood in the north of Malmö. The originally working-class area mostly survived urban renewal between the 1930s and 1980s, but nowadays entered a transition process in which new and creative actors are moving in.*

### **From 1500 till Now: Malmö Art Museum** with **Clara Gustafsson Kadziolka**

*Malmö Art Museum, governed by the city of Malmö, is one of the leading art museums in Scandinavia, with a collection containing about 40,000 works, covering the period from the 16th century to the present day and the largest collection of Nordic contemporary art in Scandinavia, featuring works by most of Scandinavia's innovative and highly distinguished artists. The museum building from 1937 is situated in the Malmöhus castle complex, one of the oldest remaining renaissance castle in Scandinavia.*

### **Searching for Skyline(s): Visit to Turning Torso**



with **Anette Hansson & Anna Töörn**

*Turning Torso is a neo-futurist residential skyscraper designed by Spanish architect, structural engineer, sculptor and painter Santiago Calatrava. Opened in 2005 in the then-and-still developing urban area of western harbour, it fulfilled a political ambition to build a new symbol for Malmö, in lieu of the Kockums crane that had been used for shipbuilding, a process itself a symbol of the city's post-industrial transition. Turning Torso reaches a height of 190 m (620 ft) with 54 stories and 148 apartments, it has won the 2005 Gold Emporis Skyscraper Award and in 2015, the 10 Year Award from the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat.*

### **A Matter of Taste: Visit to Disgusting Food Museum**

with **Andreas Ahrens**

*Disgusting Food Museum is a museum exhibiting disgusting food from around the world. Exhibited delicacies include: Surströmming – fermented herring from Sweden, Casu marzu – maggot-infested cheese from Sardinia or Durian – infamously stinky fruit from Thailand. Conceptualized by Andreas Ahrens and Samuel West, also creator of the Museum of Failure, the Disgusting Food Museum invites us to explore an exhibit with 80 of the world's most disgusting foods and Disgust, one of the six fundamental human emotions. While the emotion is universal, the foods that we find disgusting are not. While cultural differences often separate us and create boundaries, food can also connect us. Do you dare smell the world's stinkiest cheese and taste insects?*

### **Handling with Care: Heritage Planning and New Art in the Hospital Area**

with **Nilsmagnus Sköld and Emma Hedar**

*The Malmö Hospital Area is located in the heart of the city and consists of several buildings, all built in different eras, with the earliest built in 1896 and the main concrete building built in 1975. The Region Skåne is modernizing the hospital area in Malmö, with the goal of providing better care, improved working environments and equipping the emergency hospital to meet the demands of the future. Today there are more than a thousand different artistic creations on the hospital grounds; paintings, sculptures and other works, which together with historic and new architecture contribute to a safe and healing environment. In connection with new construction work, several new works of art in and around the new buildings are being commissioned. Get to know more about how the process worked.*

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## Reclaiming the city

### *Presentations and Panellists:*

How to be many, Barbara Van Lindt, Kaaitheater, Belgium

Work in progress, Maryam Missawi, Work-in-Progress Festival, Sweden

Vivi La Bellezza della Tua Città, Valeriya Urbanovich, Club Silencio, Italy

Arkopolis skate park, Fjorida Cenaj, Pop the Vote! Changemaker, Greece

The whole city is a monument, Anna Wahlstedt & Rena Baledi, Sweden



In this session, we delved into the intersection of culture, democracy and urban life and discovered how we can collectively reclaim the city as a space for all voices to be heard and valued.

This panel discussion focused on the transformative power of cultural projects within urban landscapes across Europe. The session centred on the notion of reclaiming public spaces as vibrant hubs for democratic dialogue and community engagement. From performing arts and public art to community events, our panellists showcased innovative initiatives aimed at fostering inclusivity and diversity within cultural spheres.

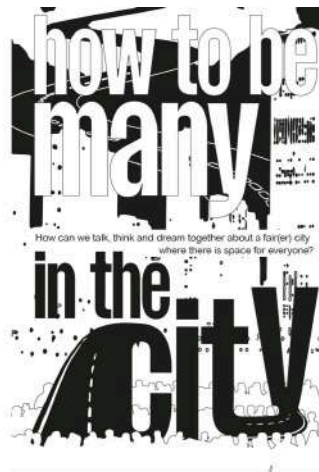
Through case studies and firsthand experiences, the panel explored strategies for broadening cultural offerings and amplifying the voices of underrepresented groups. From grassroots movements to institutional initiatives, we learned how these projects are

reshaping the cultural fabric of our cities and empowering individuals to actively participate in shaping their communities.

### **How to be Many, Barbara Van Lindt, Kaaithheater, Belgium**

Kaaithheater is a house for dance, theatre, performance and conversations in Brussels. Founded as a festival for performing arts, it was the driving force in support of Flemish Wave artists in the 1980's. It was picked up internationally and Brussels became a hub for international exchange. Kaaithheater presents many generations of performing artists and is known for cutting edge discursive programming in cooperation with academia.

Five years ago I came in as coordinator of Kaaithheater with my colleague Agnes Quackels. The title of our application dossier was “How to be Many”, or how to welcome more different people in all layers of our organisation in order to better reflect the city's many voices. Our work is geared towards access and inclusion, themes that resonate in society everywhere.



It might not be new, it might not be original, but it is urgent. 20 years ago when the homogenic white cultural field started with multicultural programming, an institution might present a Moroccan choreographer. But that didn't mean that there would be people with his background in the audience. We needed new practices in diversity and inclusion. We were not alone, we learned from colleagues too. This was not a theme for a season, “how to be many”, but a long-term commitment for several years and we plan to continue. It is our favourite problem. There are no easy answers.

There is always a question mark. We are asking ourselves how to be many, how to be present, which is the root of other questions: how to connect across generations? How to meet in many languages? How to be many on earth or how to be many in the city? We use these in our programme to highlight some thematics. The questions continue. Learning, experimenting, we did a lot...

During Corona, we instituted a *Pay What You Can* policy, diversified our team and engaged in Open Source Collaborations. We go and find and talk to small organisations and collectives in the city who often work from and with underrepresented perspectives and lived experiences of the city. We ask, how can Kaaithheater be a toolbox for you? How can it serve your community? We have means, people, spaces. We started saying that we want to share this power, this authorship, when we make a programme. We reserve part of our budget and calendars to make it happen, otherwise it won't happen.



Activism and mental health is a recurring part of the programme with *There's Nothing Wrong With People*. We collaborated with *Mothers and Daughters*, a lesbian, trans and non-binary feminist space for queer and racialised communities. We cooperate with all these groups that have no or little funding. The logo of Kaaitheater is not very present in the images - it's not about us, it's about them.



When it comes to experiences, there is no co-ownership without co-authorship. The process of building mutual trust is a step-by-step process. We formulate expectations in the beginning, get feedback, and learn from each other. We learn to work with new things, non-mixity, safe spaces, and learn new practices. We challenge fixed ideas, such as what is quality, professionalism?

We have to be prepared to feel uncomfortable because questions come that are not so easy to answer. Failing *is* an option. We stopped one collaboration. We shouldn't burn out our own team, but we do try to find common ground and acknowledge differences. The best practices are when collaborations come back and new communities come into your place. When activities are multidisciplinary and in a festival format it works really well.

### **Work in Progress, Maryam Missawi, Work-in-Progress Festival, Sweden**

I am an artist, musician and writer. For the last two years I have been studying urban music and during this time I had the opportunity to do a test incubator with Malmö City outside of Malmö. The first thing was about the importance of community, studying and seeing it, looking at how to build it as an organic process and celebrating the individual within a community sense, to meet each person and thrive together.

I have brought out *Work in Progress* as well. It started last year in November and became a two-day festival to experiment with different ways of celebrating the community itself, engaging with other people and people interested in the arts. They were coming into contact with their creativity and exploring that, taking hobbies to professional level. For professionals, they could network and connect.

The main goal is to create spaces and opportunities for people, to share information so that creatives know where to go, to make their creativity thrive on all levels in every community, to bridge between different artistic endeavours, all the while being taken seriously as a creator and working creatively.

The main focus was to elevate and make the community thrive. Many were not taken seriously as being creative in the beginning. Without a certain level of outside confirmation or publicity, they would not really be taken seriously and it gets worse the older you are. It is different in different cities. Malmö is a city that embraces culture very much and we all do our best to create these spaces, but I come from a small town where they didn't really exist.

### **Vivi La Bellezza della Tua Città, Valeriya Urbanovich, Club Silencio, Italy**

Our motto is "live the beauty of your city". Club Silencio is a cultural station in Turin engaged in experimental projects and getting young people involved in the social and political life of their area.

In 2017, two brothers named Ferrari were studying and travelling abroad. They noticed there was a significant gap between how cultural heritage is valorised abroad and in Italy in terms of what projects are developed for the engagement of people in institutions. Then they asked what they could do for young people in order to see them in museums like those in Torino, which has a very rich history and culture.

*Una Notte al Museo* is the format of the events. It is a format that is characterised by opening in the evening (19h - 24h) of Italian cultural institutions where alongside the visit, the public can enjoy refreshments and beverages with background music, artistic performances and audience engagement activities. Everything has been done to attract

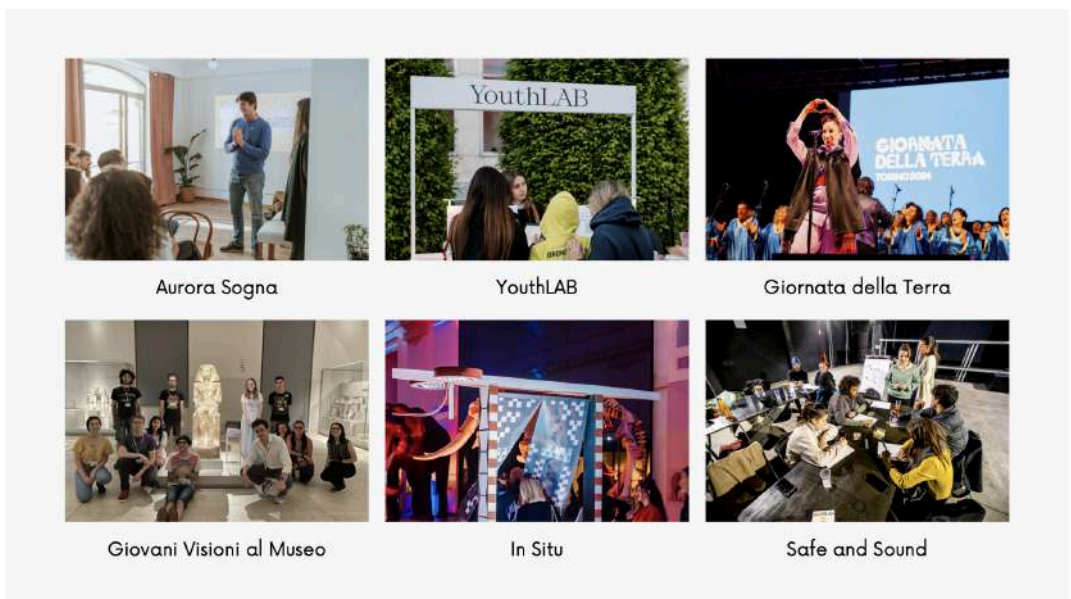


young people back to cultural institutions and provide an opportunity to engage with institutions in a way that matches with their lifestyle.



I am thankful to CAE for inviting me to speak, as it is an opportunity for me to reflect on our transformation from then to today. Starting with *Notte*, which was about poor cultural engagement of young people, we are now moving onto projects of more issues young people face. We are trying to empower, to give skills and opportunities, to do the change. We do not want them only to appreciate the external beauty, what has been done before them, but rather take it as a canvas and make it an opportunity for them to make their futures.

We have many different projects. Our motto evolved and started to get a spiritual meaning, what we young people can do, what instruments we have to make positive change, not just for communities but also for us personally, for the future and for new generations. So now we reclaim the city as a blank canvas, reclaim neighbourhoods and reclaim our city for our future.



We are not concentrated on background, but on all young people, using different cultural and art languages so that everyone can find their space. We are not trying to bridge the gap between old and new, we are trying to make dialogue between them, to build a new generation that remembers history and the past, but also tries to build something for them. Changing the narrative, yes, in our communication strategies to reach the audience, but most important is the narrative of our project, trying to present them the cultural institutions in the way they already live, not in a way that is alien to them, in a way that is very inclusive and accessible and interactive.

### **Akropolis Skate Park, Fjorida Cenaj, Pop the Vote! Changemaker, Greece**

Elefsina got European Capital of Culture status despite not being totally ready, for example not having enough venues to host upcoming events. We put a lot of effort into building new spaces, one of which is Arkopolis.

It went from a place only visited by couples at night and was transformed





The ark is built by *Time Circus* for the youth of the region. On this map of Arkopolis, you can see the ecosystem, where skaters communicate with Roma Community, cultural institutions with stray dogs and industry (the cement factory) meets tourists.



It is a disruptive place in Elefsina and the goal is for it to last as a legacy of the European City of Culture. The young people of the region have found a place to belong. It is more about what is cultural heritage in the town, than what cultural heritage that institutions can bring into the town.

What is the future of the Ark or of Europe? We did a ballot, a questionnaire, about what they like, how they feel safe in the space. The municipality didn't let us do the party there, but still our goal is to keep going, becoming a community centre for all the ecosystem to be there. Elefsina has an industrial history, but its factories are mostly closed, facing environmental problems all over the city. With culture, we really focus on these problems.

### **The Whole City is a Monument, Anna Wahlstedt & Rena Baledi, Sweden**

Working with public art in the city of Malmö, this is a project of the last couple of years. In 2019, five Malmö residents started a petition demanding an anti-racist monument to commemorate victims of violence between 2003–10, as a vision for shared space in a city where racism is seen as a systemic issue. They started conversation and took up collective action.

For almost a decade, a serial killer targeted mostly black, muslim and romany citizens. Convicted in 2012, he was never charged with hate crimes. Why the monument? Why public art? These citizens were not from the cultural field.

Public memory has always been expressed through memorials, monuments. Walking a city is navigating layers of history reflected in public art. Around Malmö, there are the



questions: which experiences and life stories are commemorated? What does it say about what histories we make important for society? Public art can heal and show what experiences we value and shape our common history. Who and what is represented in public space?

Since 2020 Malmö's cultural department in collaboration with the initiators have developed a group exhibition called *the whole city is a monument* for artistic exploration. No single artwork could answer. How can art explore racism in the context of memory politics, historiography, artistic representation?

There is a choral work that questions the narratives that have shaped our collective history based on a poetry collection written about Malmö. In dialogue with social movements in the anti-racism struggle, there is a written manifesto about struggle and beauty and memory that the city carries with it.



This project helped us see the city as a monument, viewing residents as carriers and creators of power, of history. Each piece was created after months of research, through diverse practices of artists, examining power structures in public space, how racist structures influence and shape a city's narrative. Collectively they raise important questions and carry messages to the future.

Now they are in the process of having artistic sketches of the monument. There are three different proposals, a final proposal will be selected by mid-Summer. Then it will take two years for the artistic process, so it would be mid-2026 for realisation. It will be in Jesusparken, a place chosen with the initiators of the monument. They chose this area due to its anti-racist history.

## Q&A

*The cricket team in Elefsina, what is that?*

*Fjorida Cenaj:*

Elefsina is not that big, but like all of Greece, we have immigrants. I'm second generation from Albania. It was a long request for a skate park from the young people, and the Pakistanis wanted a cricket field to practise, but now there is enough space for them in Arkopolis. We did three days of festival and had a community dinner with them and played cricket. The goal is to create an Elefsina cricket team.

*Julie Ward:*

There is progression beyond programmes in the ECOC. One of the projects beyond the ECOC is by an artist called Jenny Marketou who has done a project called *Futuring Waters* about water having a manifesto, a right to speak in relation to the ship graveyard at Elefsina. It is good to see some of the projects here showing progression, development, people engaged and involved in next steps.

*The process with communities, is it really understanding what communities need? What does that process look like? Who is involved in decision making who to bring in and who to keep out?*

*Fjorida Cenaj:*

With the ECOC coming to a small city, people are proud, but being local I could speak from my point of view. With the team of young people, we mapped the needs of what they want. Project managers come, they see the shipyard, but people living there are breathing the polluted air, so putting a park next to industry, they really see it. It is hard to develop the audience still.

*Barbara Van Lindt:*

From the start, we reserved 20% of artistic income for these programmes. It was important to do collaborations, but we have to gain ticket income from other activities, not expecting to bring in a lot from these programmes. We have been becoming more entrepreneurial, renting out our spaces and so on to continue our work. We will keep this part of our work and look for extra money in other ways. 20% comes from own income.

*Maryam Missawi:*

As artists we create these spaces, demand opportunities and do it by ourselves if we don't get the money. Institutions need to become more creative, we must revolutionise the institutions, understanding the importance of culture and of these spaces.

*Valeriya Urbanovich:*

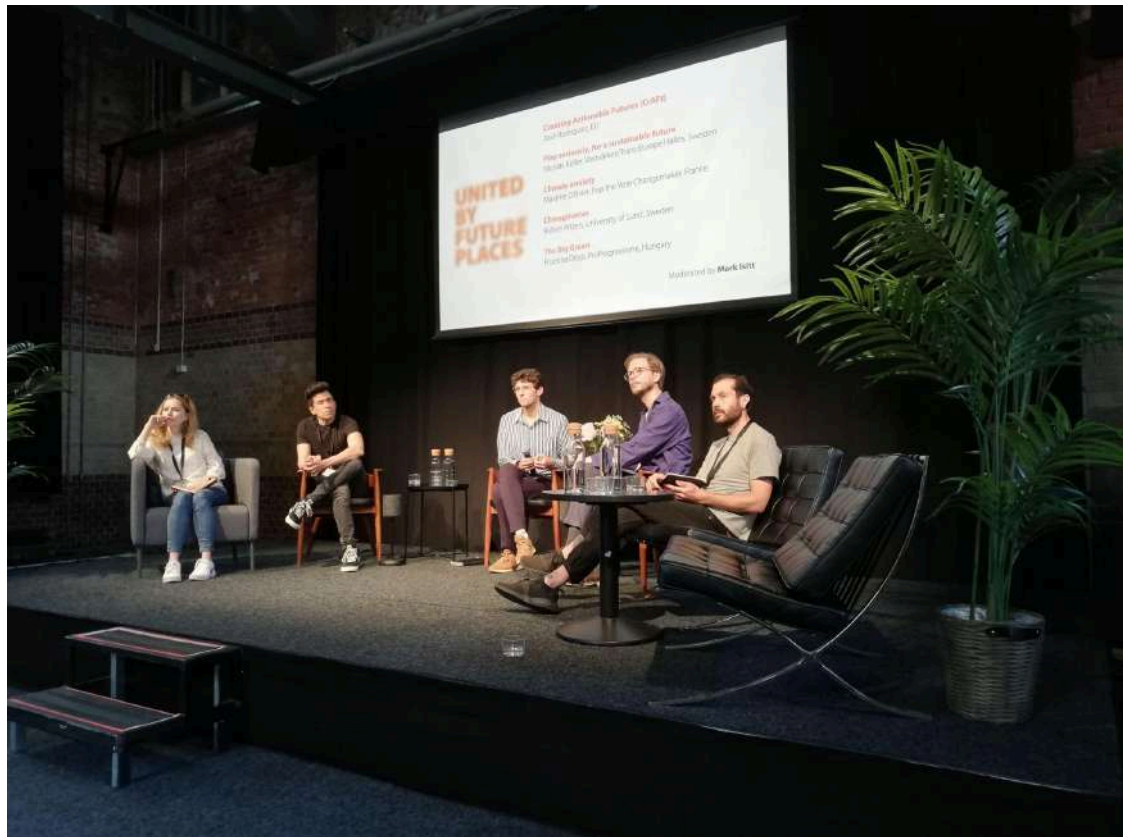
It was a journey with the institutions and it was sometimes difficult to convince them. Word of mouth helped us in the beginning. Convincing the first institution was the opportunity for others to see our work, looking at how many young people we brought in, who they haven't seen before. Now institutions contact us by themselves to organise our events inside their buildings. Cultural institutions have to realise, it needs time and they need to develop themselves for their audience. In Italy there was a dynamic that the audience have to adapt themselves to the institution. Now that is shifting, and they change for the needs of the audience.

*Barbara, talked about shared power and authorship. What are some of the limitations? You mentioned that one collaboration stopped. Who decided? To what extent should communities have agency over this?*

*Barbara Van Lindt:*

What we have encountered as a mid-scale well-funded white institution - that has become more diverse, but still that's our place in the city - our experience is that for some collectives or organisations we work with, it is not their goal to adapt. We have learned that is something to respect. Sometimes the differences are very big. This is not a shame, we need to acknowledge that the differences can be too big. Always it has to do with people and behaviour and so on. Some organisations, their role is to be challenging, they need polarisation, or nothing is changing. To invite this energy into an institution that can be prepared to change and adapt to their needs, but sometimes this can be incompatible.

## Cultivating the future



### *Presentations and Panellists:*

Creating Actionable Futures (CrAFT), José Rodriguez, EU

Play seriously, for a sustainable future, Nicolas Keller, Växtvärket/Trans Europe Halles, Sweden

Climate anxiety, Maxime Ollivier, Pop the Vote! Changemaker, France

Climaginaires - Ruben Ritzen, University of Lund, Sweden

The Big Green, Fruzsina Dézsi, ProProgressione, Hungary

In this session we explored the transformative potential of culture in shaping our response to the climate crisis and envisioning a more just and resilient world.

The discussion highlighted the intersection of climate action, cultural expression and the pursuit of sustainable futures across Europe. It brought together a diverse range of projects and initiatives that highlight the critical link between climate justice, environmental sustainability and cultural engagement.

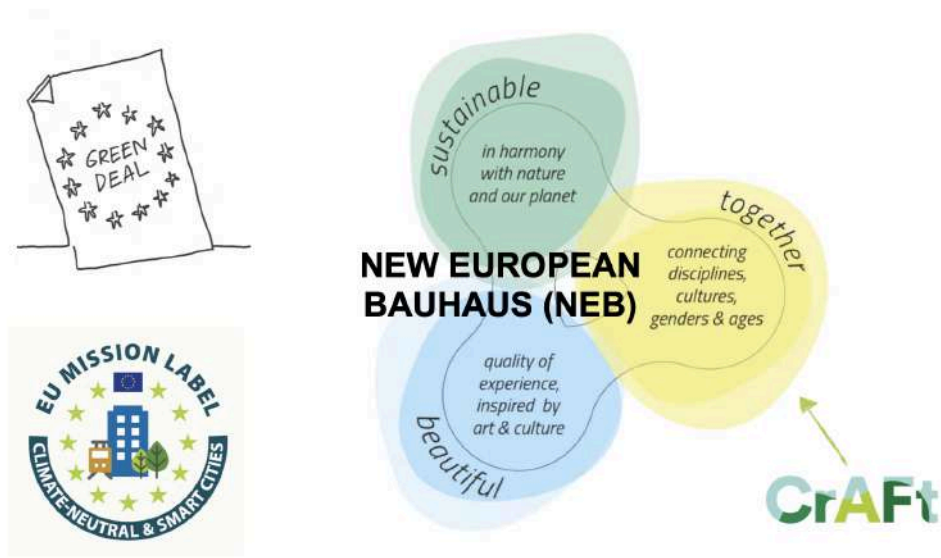
Through presentations and interactive discussions, our panellists showcased innovative approaches to addressing climate change through artistic expression, community activism and interdisciplinary collaboration. From eco-friendly art installations to grassroots movements advocating for climate justice, we discovered how culture can swerve as a powerful catalyst for positive change in the face of environmental challenges. The panel also explored the complex emotions surrounding climate anxiety and how cultural interventions can offer pathways for resilience, hope and collective action.

## Creating Actionable Futures (CrAft), José Rodriguez, EU

It is my pleasure to speak on behalf of ECF and CrAft, also with ELIA as a partner here.

This is a project funded by the European Commission. It has a three-year duration. Half the partners are universities, half are networks and other organisations. The context in which the project is taking place is as follows.

The European Green Deal aims to make the EU a climate neutral block by 2050. There is a huge investment of over 1 trillion euros. One initiative is the European Cities Mission, making cities climate neutral. It is asking for the commitment of the cities to sign climate city contracts and prepare a budget of how they are going to become climate neutral in the next years. Also there is the New European Bauhaus (NEB), which is about trying to bring the soul and heart into the technical initiatives, based on three principles (*Sustainable, Together, Beautiful*) into the climate project.



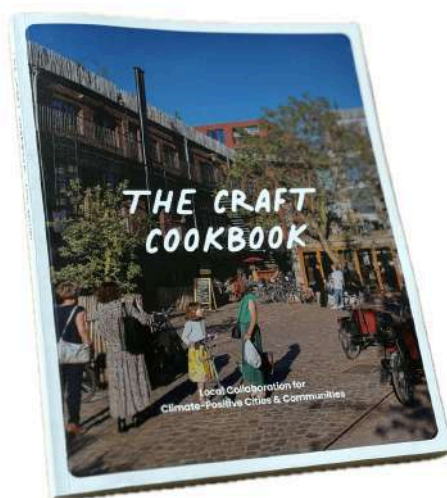
CrAft is working on the area of *Together*, meaning inclusiveness. In CrAft we are trying to bridge between the European Cities Mission and the NEB, bringing the principles of NEB into making cities greener.

The main initiative is to bring together a network of cities, now including some 70 cities. Some are “Sandbox Cities”, like Amsterdam, Prague and Bologna. Together the cities look at how to collaborate with other stakeholders, the culture sector, property owners, students and so on in their climate initiatives.

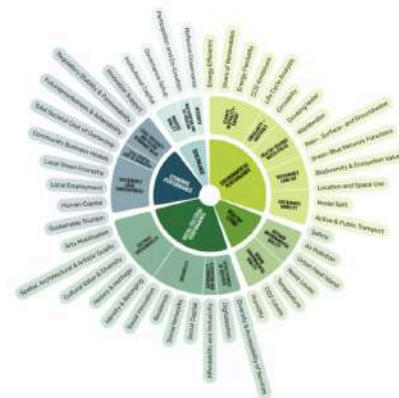




The main output is the CrAFT Cookbook, of which there will be two more editions after the first edition. This is all about local collaboration for climate positive cities, including a methodology in 7 steps how cities can engage stakeholders in their green initiatives, how to implement their projects and replicate them in different places. It includes recipes, stories, best practices, methods and you are free to contribute ideas.



## NEW EUROPEAN BAUHAUS IMPACT MODEL



The NEB Impact Model is a set of 46 indicators around 5 main pillars: environmental performance, healthy living, sociocultural performance, economic performance and governance. We will be adding more: participatory governance, for example. All have an impact on quality of life.

Only 33 cities which have received the label and the aim is 112. Espoo in Finland received the label, for example. These cities have until 2030 to implement their plans and serve as models for other cities that have until 2050. In this way they will be the forerunners for good practice.

**Play seriously, for a sustainable future, Nicolas Keller, Växtvärket/Trans Europe Halles, Sweden**

I am an environmental educator representing Växtvärket (meaning: growing pains). We are an NGO in Malmö made up of architects, designers, educators, passionate about places for young people.



10 years ago with the children of Malmö, we built our own playground and have been taking care of it since then. It has spread out like a mushroom over the park. We have learnt lessons in the process. We call it an adventure playground, where children can do what they want, create how they want. They might be bad at building codes and right angles, but they are really creative.





There are some important learnings for cities. It is made out of all recycled materials. The children did it themselves. They learnt to use tools safely, via hands-on learning. The lab for sustainable futures in urban environments has been developing the concept further and further. To create colourful transitions in our environments, we need these labs today for the citizens of tomorrow to work with this transition. It needs to be transformable, malleable, changeable. We need children to do whatever they want and explore. Calling all cities to work with these ideas, an old idea from the 1970's needs to be renewed for children to participate in sustainable futures.



It needs to be messy, the important aspect is change, cannot be constant, buildings go up and down, no permanence in the place, gives children and other people to influence the environment. Exception from playground laws for this kind of playground. Kids are well-adjusted to adjust the risk they take, danger we need to eliminate, but risk is part of life. Park is accessible 24/7 which influences the way we constructed things.

### **Climate anxiety, Maxime Ollivier, Pop the Vote! Changemaker, France**

I am a student of political art in Paris, writing a book on climate anxiety. Stephanie yesterday talked about how mental health is an issue for the young generation. It is not an individual problem, feeling anxious about climate, it is completely normal and you don't have to deal with it by yourself. Collectively we need to tackle it.

I go back to my body, to dance and I'm an activist and doing a lot of demonstrations and civil disobedience. We used to block planes from taking off. As an activist, I was wondering how to do it. We hear "artivism" a lot. In *le bruit qui court*, we use public spaces and creativity to do activism, in different spaces, denouncing fast fashion, a fake construction site to denounce pipeline construction in Uganda... This is how I tackle my climate anxiety.





What is it really to be an activist? I changed my mind. Five years ago I had a radical point of view: only civil disobedience. We have to be radical because it's an emergency. Then I talked with people in institutions and realised how difficult it is to be the radical one in the institution, trying to raise awareness, how lonely it can feel.

Both inside and outside are important. How can we work together? What is our role as changemakers? Is CAE ready to evolve for more radicalism, activism, and start actively listening to each other? How can we involve more changemakers in CAE? Yesterday Stephanie said that maybe the youth are not patient enough. I cannot be inside an organisation to advocate for months, for years and not be listened to by my colleagues. Not being listened to is something we have in common inside and outside and we need to listen to each other to see how to work together.



### Climaginaries - Ruben Ritzen, University of Lund, Sweden

I work at Lund University, but am mostly working with the Climaginaries organisation. It started as a research project after university in collaboration with other universities across Europe. *Transition stories and speculative future imaginaries* is the title, based on cutting edge climate research for speculating what the future could look like after the climate transition is complete.

Culture, both as arts and as norms in our society, can argue that we are living in petroculture - meaning that everything we do is somehow based on consumption of fossil-based energy. Sometimes we don't think that everything we do, like how to be a good citizen, is all based on this energy consumption. What we think of the good life being: planes, trains, trucks, clothes, our buildings, steel, concrete. Netflix, Zoom are powered in several places by fossil-based energy as well. It is not strange that it is hard to transition out and arts-based methods can help us see the way.

We tend to formulate visionary documents, statistics, abstract numbers of the sea level rise etc. For many, this is not engaging or mobilising. Arts-based methods and culture can concretise and situate the methods of transition. Also they can democratise, through this lens.



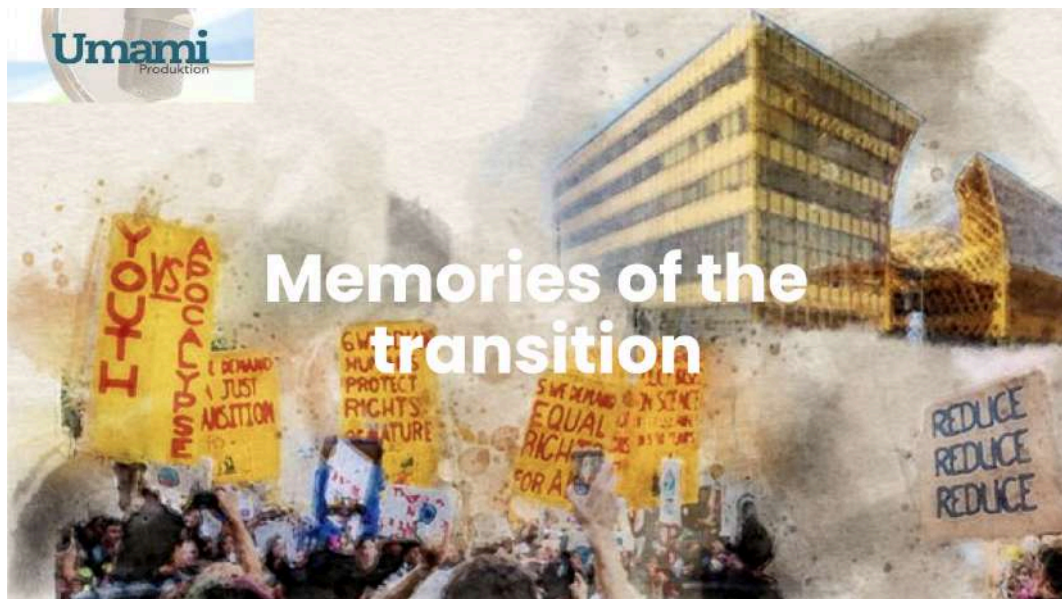
## Carbon Ruins



An exhibition of the fossil age



A couple of our projects are as follows. *Carbon Ruins* brings together artefacts of the fossil age, as we time travel to 2050 when Sweden has already made the transition. We made school material called *Beyond the Fossil Era* for teachers to get students to create their own vision of what the future looks like.



Umami's *Memories of Transition* is a sound walk - place-based radio theatre - set in Emporia, a shopping mall on the outskirts of town. Another talks about climate transition issues over a small settlement here in 2072, what effect that has if the process starts now. The Travel Guide to Skåne in the year 2050, where you can live and eat has also been turned into a podcast, a travel show, dated to 2050, in which three radio hosts travel around Skåne to talk to people about what the good life is.

# DET GODA LIVET



We try very hard to walk the line between utopia and dystopia, but if you interact with these projects you would get the sense that the transition is mostly completed, but we have had to sacrifice some things on the way. We look at hope as an active action, not just something naive. We need to actively take steps to transition as a global community. We try to angle these discussions in very local communities. In a local future, how do I feel about this, how can I adapt to our future? What future do we want here and how can we go about getting that?

## **The Big Green, Fruzsina Dézsi, ProProgressione, Hungary**

This is in an early stage, we just have the concept and are starting implementation. The Big Green is about bringing environmentally engaged artists together under one umbrella, an experiment with using art to promote sustainability. It regards different mindset changes, including emotional reconnection as well as cross-sectoral collaboration.

There have been many handbooks in the last few years, which are useful but in less developed countries, despite the opportunity, achieving change on one's own is challenging. How can we achieve a long-lasting mindset change? The initial steps: positive narratives which expand our imagination and our concept of what is possible. They should draw attention to the opportunities in switching to more sustainable ways of living, rather than focusing exclusively on the threats of climate change. It is not just a list of problems, but how to imagine democracy in line with nature in my community? A positive and active approach can fundamentally shape action individuals and communities can take.

In this approach, we recognised that people take the most care of things that they have an emotional connection to. When it comes to a connection with nature, many grow up deprived of green spaces, with no forest or park, nowhere to play, nowhere to escape daily stress. It is no surprise it is difficult to connect to sustainability when people have not experienced the benefits of it. Nature is good for personal and mental wellbeing and social cohesion. We encourage artists to use nature as a venue and a material, most of our programme including management meetings are held close to nature.

We want to increase people working with us with different expertise via discover sessions, with retreats close to nature, trying to highlight to artists how climate change is built on social inequalities.

We have cross-sectoral collaboration - environment, cultural and creative sectors, different stakeholders.

We encourage artists to create positive narratives in collaboration with the natural environment and local communities. They are socially involved not just socially concerned, then longlasting change can be achieved with personal connection with nature.

From a village next to the Romanian border, I just wanted to go to the capital. But after moving, I changed my mind, because connection with nature was really critical for my mental wellbeing to reduce stress. Without enough green spaces, society is full of disease, physical and mental struggle.

More public spaces are needed and we are working on a new project related to The Big Green called *Garden of Democracy*, which is a network of performative gardening centres, community gardens and art practices.

## Q&A

*To Maxime, talking about what changed in your mindset during the conference, did you find any partners from other sectors or potential allies when doing strikes and demonstrations? From the museum sector, when Extinction Rebellion started activism in museums, protection of artworks became a big topic. Then we were realising that we don't think about environmental sustainability in the moment. Together we created something that became way bigger, so we invited them into the museum, to use it as a space, not to learn or look at artworks.*

*Maxime Ollivier:*

We don't all agree on whether it is good or not to put soup on paintings in museums. It is in fact a big debate in the activist field. One of the main Extinction Rebellion demonstrations was blocking the Place de Châtelet, between two theatres: Châtelet and de la Ville, and that was for five days. There were live performances, people's assemblies, DJs on the sailboat. That was four years ago.

Then last year the Theatre de Chatelet asked if we could do it again. They wanted to offer the space for the organisation of a festival every summer, wanting activists involved. It was weird for us. Doing it illegally, occupying spaces we should have the right to was our practice. When we went there, it became institutional, less people were interested and we couldn't do everything we wanted. So, regarding allies, it's a question of mistrust when cultural institutions approach us. What do they want from us? Activism is cool, so do they want to take advantage of it? Where is the financing for the institution coming from, oil companies? That's the thing.

*Looking at the cities that are currently part of the CrAFt project - are you still receiving new cities and how can a city join if it is interested?*

*José Rodriguez:*

Through a public call two years ago most cities entered. Then there was another call for cities, but it is closed now.

*For The Big Green and also the others, what are the big challenges in cross-sectoral cooperation?*

*Fruzsina Dézsi:*

The biggest challenge was from the artistic sector because there is a way of thinking that if we do sustainable art it will limit our artistic thinking and artistic work. But despite these initial fears, in fact the cross-sectoral training and capacity-building, were an opportunity and a different perspective. It was actually accessible and inspiring for artists, not restricting. Now they are evolving constantly and creating wonderful works. This gives freedom of knowledge, which is what we need to create strong partnerships with environmental organisations. If we trust artists, look after their mental, financial and professional safety, then everything will be all right.

*To Ruben - the speculative future scenarios and your project between utopias and dystopias, which leaves an element of surprise, actually we don't know which way it will go in the end? What makes a convincing future speculative for you?*

*Ruben Ritzen:*

We are walking the line between research and narrative and it's a fine line sometimes. Currently as an NGO, for us it is important that the futures we put forward are not completely created out of our own minds, but on prototypes of social innovation and technological innovation. The thing I'm experiencing now is possible, these aspects of society are there in infancy as a prototype and they could develop in this way. There is also a sensory aspect, through sounds, which really brings it home.

*One week prior to the elections, there were a lot of articles in the paper, including polls. I read that climate is not a priority for young people or for the rest of voters. Climate anxiety is present within a small part of society, but climate disengagement or indifference is growing. Do you recognise this and if so, do you think there is a need for new strategies?*

*Maxime Ollivier:*

It is important to be honest about the fact that we are the minority. I do not believe in the metaphor that it's a generation. We see that other youth aren't all on the same page. Anxiety, we said in the book we wrote, is more systemic anxiety and climate is a part of that, talking about mental health and young people. It's not just the future, but concrete daily life that occupies us and stops us looking at the future. Disengagement is big. Young people feel there is no space for them in politics, a lot are not voting. To describe this climate anxiety more, young people feel they don't have the power or the tools, so they look away.

*José Rodriguez:*

When Europe is preparing for a war coming and we haven't seen tanks with electric engines, then I think that makes you realise what is the priority of the people in power. Just look at the budget, how much is spent on war and how much on climate transition?

# Project Pitches

*Facilitated by Stefanos Dimoulas*



## **Carpets as a participatory tool | Rachel Rouzad**

The carpet has never been such an exceptional element as in the redefinition carried out by Rachel, who turns it into a tool for citizen engagement and to address social and ecological issues. Being everyday objects present in many cultures, carpets can serve as a shared language to share ideas and re-imagine future cities.

## **The SPA of the Century | Christina Skarpari**

A mobile oasis of self-care and community support for cultural workers, this is what the Spa of the Century is. Rooted in healing practices and moments of togetherness, this project, originating from the Mediterranean coasts of Cyprus, will soon land in Malmö, evolving as a space of mutual care.

## **SIRIUS4all | Niels Righolt, Ina Doublekova and Ulrich Wunsch**

SIRIUS4all fosters a new narrative for Europe by promoting inclusion through cultural co-creation and expression, showcasing migrant artists' works. The project aims to broaden perspectives and build connections between "new and old" Europeans. Partners from Germany, Denmark, Bulgaria and Italy collaborate to bring this vision to life.

## **Diagnostic of Community Culture | Artemisa Cifuentes Quezada and Rocio Nogales**

How can we talk about sustainability in cultural ecosystems if we leave aside cultural rights? A tool like REACC - tested in Spain - provides a self-assessment framework for labor rights and dignity in community practices, fostering diversity and decentralization through quantitative and qualitative analysis.



**Water and Flesh | Blanca B. Gistau**

Blanca's performance promotes the awareness of the value and vital power of water by showing our relationship with it, how it is constantly present in our day, in our history and collective memory.

**Europa schaffen | Emma Hanny**

How does the EU impact our life? To Emma, photography is a tool for storytelling, to express the values of the young generation that will shape the future of Europe.

**Clubture Programme Exchange | Domagoj Savor & Ana Abramovic**

Facilitating direct collaboration among independent cultural organizations in Croatia, the platform created by Clubture allows the exchange of content, as well as the creation of new projects. The best proposals are selected through participative decision-making by all the members of the organisation.

**La Movida | Guillermo Rodríguez**

La Movida is a training, empowerment and youth participation programme for the development of innovative proposals in the area of artistic education. Bringing together 150 young artists from all over Spain and South America, the programme explored themes as mental health, social innovation and urban culture.

**CEM PORTAS | Joana Gouveia Loureiro and Maria Carlos**

CEM PORTAS is an existing project focused on the role of culture in providing equal opportunities to citizens. Offering free access to cultural heritage sites and hosting an eclectic cultural programme, it promotes democratic participation in public spaces through cultural enjoyment.

**Practising radical hope | Julie Ward**

Culture Declares Emergency is an international grassroots movement that advocates for justice, regenerative change and care through culture, heritage and the arts. Through creative action and environmental activism, they communicate climate science and inspire action thanks to the power of arts and culture.

**Local Culture & Sustainability - Walkshop | Frantz Dhers**

Frantz's projects help companies including local cultural elements into their ESG strategies through the simple action of walking. This tangible strategy is a way of restoring our connection with the surrounding nature and breathe the power of local heritage sites, improving the well-being of individuals.



## Future Labs

*Facilitated by Lucrezia Ponzano*



### **Tackling cancel culture at grassroots | Oana Nasui**

Oana's idea suggests hosting a series of debates engaging professionals and diverse audiences on topics such as accountability, history rewriting and filling in gaps. She'll discuss methods like ostracism, public shaming and activism used by "cancel culture" movements to change historical narratives.

### **CineCeccano | Alessandro Ciotoli**

Alessandro's idea is to partner public bodies with the private sector to convert an abandoned soap factory into a cinema city in Italy. This transformation would include film studios, creative labs and training centers, with a large green area by the river, providing a sustainable and creative boost to Rome's surroundings.

### **Mobility support for environmental artists | Ferdinand Richard**

What Fanak Fund proposes is the creation of a mobility fund for artists and cultural activists across Europe, Arab countries and the Middle East. This fund aims to support projects promoting environmental protection through art, such as land art productions, awareness workshops and CO2-free processes.

### **We CAN | Anna Formosa**

Anna's project addresses loneliness by engaging adults in creative activities and nature experiences. By partnering with local artists and utilising community spaces, it aims to prevent mental health issues by providing opportunities for well-being and social connection through art forms and outdoor activities.

#### **Gradinata (the Garden) | Iliyana Grigorova**

Gradinata is a community space in Bulgaria, focused on social and cultural initiatives. Iliyana's efforts are dedicated to the renovation of the building and its surrounding garden, turning it into an open space for music concerts, exhibitions, workshops, a community kitchen and language lessons.

#### **800V | Noemi Pittalà & Manuela V. Colacicco**

800V focuses on feminist and youth empowerment in Southern Italy. It channels individual anger into collective action, engaging marginalised communities in the 2024 European elections through critical thinking, active citizenship and dialogue. To do so, it aims to explore the use of public spaces.

#### **104 in Berlin | Leander Kämpf**

104 in Berlin is a vision for a community space open to all, removing financial barriers and offering flexible access, particularly for artists who struggle to find affordable and accessible practice spaces. By creating an open and inclusive environment, people can witness artists working alongside each other, fostering a stronger sense of community.

#### **CARE | Carla Montez Fernandes**

CARE is about joining forces among artists, scholars, cultural associations and local governance councils in Portugal. Its goal is to analyse successful artistic interventions and transfer this knowledge to areas where artistic practices are underutilised in community activation programmes.

#### **Crossing Bodies, Pushing Boundaries | Bruno de Almeida**

In the quest to answer the question "How can we all live together," Bruno has been developing a relational practice that seeks to use art as a tool for building transcultural dialogues, through a space where everyone can share, coexist and imagine how we can build diverse and inclusive futures together.

#### **Working Title\* | Zsuzsanna Zsurò**

Working title\* is a curatorial & research organisation for democratic values & criticality in the arts. It is to support subversive art & culture, to create debate & to give platform to marginalised voices. Working title\* produces exhibitions, initiates researches as well as collaborates on ahead-of-the-curve cultural projects.

## Malmö Workshop Visits

Participants visited different unique cultural initiatives in Malmö and brainstormed about ideas, ways of working and dreams for the cultural sector in future-proof cities. Follow-up projects are not mandatory, but highly appreciated!

### **Orkanen Library, Malmö University: Libraries as social infrastructure** with **Sara Kjellberg**

*The Orkanen library at Malmö University is a vital community space and an expression of Malmö as a “knowledge city” after post-industrial transition. It occupies the top floor of one the university buildings and provides a variety of study environments, a gallery for student art and a research gallery highlighting academic work from faculties.*

*What is the role of libraries in a culturally-sustainable future city? This will be explored in a guided tour of the University Library, followed by a conversation with focus on the concept of libraries as social infrastructure. The conversation involves discussions and exercises aimed at understanding and articulating the multifaceted role libraries play in their communities.*

### **Graffiti Hangaren, Centre for Urban Art: Urban Art Hall of the future?** with **Pärre Von Andreasson**

*The “Hangar” is a monumental urban canvas located at Enskifteshagen in central Malmö, where graffiti painters and urban artists have created since 2013. Unofficially managed by CFUK - Centrum För Urban Konst, there are ambitions to create a unique Urban Art Hall for free public art based on the Hangar, a sketch and starting point and a monumental workshop for urban artists.*

### **NGBG Street Festival and Noise Zone, City of Malmö: Making some Noise!** with **Nicklas Johansson**

*NGBG is a community-driven street festival and party on Norra Grängesbergsgatan in Malmö, organized with 40 stages featuring and attracting 45.000 visitors in their last edition. It takes place in Malmö’s “cultural-industrial sound zone” - a kulturljudzon (KLZ) permitting noise levels of up to 85 dBA at source and designed to create conditions for industry, culture and leisure to develop a symbiotic relationship.*

### **From Trains to Treasures: Lokstallarna’s Cultural Evolution** with **Emma Ribbing**

*Once dedicated to train repair and maintenance, over the next decade, Lokstallarna will evolve into a vibrant hub, featuring a Food Court, a Grand Circus Hotel and a community of creators, craftsmen, beekeepers and event organizers already active on-site. Explore the interplay of creators, craftsmen and community, nurturing Lokstallarna’s evolution and join Choreographer and CAO Emma Ribbing, who has been engaged with Lokstallarna since 2015, for a guided walk through the impressive architecture ending in a workshop at the in-discourse studio providing playful tools to ignite discussions and brainstorming sessions.*

## **Malmö University: Culture and creativity at the centre of sustainable urban development**

with **Per-Anders Hillgren & Per Linde**

*Meet Malmö University and the Forum for Social Innovation Sweden to learn about how academia can work with culture and arts in reaching societal impact. Through the transnational projects UNIC and Bauhaus of the Sea Sails we get to understand more how education and research can be concretely developed in close cooperation with relevant stakeholders in Malmö.*

## **Garaget Library, City of Malmö**

with **Hamza Warsame**

*Garaget is a library, creative workshop, a coffee place, a cultural venue and a stage for all ages and walks of life, where you can loan books as well as tools, or get help with your homework as well as with arranging your first event. Garaget is a real meeting place for Malmö's superdiverse and young communities. How do we hang out in the culturally-sustainable future city?*

## **Region Skåne: Public Art in New Hospital Area**

with **Nilsmagnus Sköld**

*The Region Skåne is modernizing the hospital area in Malmö, with the goal of providing better care, improved working environments and equipping the emergency hospital to meet the demands of the future. In connection with new construction work, several new works of art in and around the new buildings are being commissioned. Deep dive into how the process worked.*

## **Ny Hamnen Ferry Terminal, City of Malmö**

with **Kristoffer Nilsson and more**

*An old port and ferry terminal facility area is being transformed into the park of the future. Historic ramps, quays and buildings become the foundation of the new ferry terminal's development towards a sustainable, climate-neutral hub. A place created by and with those who in the future will be able to consider it as their own. Meet representatives from the City of Malmö and collaborators Malmö Försköning och planteringsförening, Arkdes and Team Layered: architect Daniel Feldman, art advisor and curator Ana Sokoloff, architect Sumayya Vally and performance artist María José Arjona.*

## **Anti-Racist Monument, City of Malmö**

with **Rena Baledi & Anna Wahlstedt**

*In 2019, some Malmö citizens hatched the idea of an anti-racist monument in the city, a place where residents could gather to exchange experiences about racism and support each other in dark moments. The city has then taken the opportunity to develop public art processes and works that not only reflects Malmö residents' history and experiences of racism, but also contributes to continuing the conversation about racism and its consequences in the public space making Malmö a more inclusive city.*

## **Young City Guides, City of Malmö: the City as a Classroom**

with **Karin Pålsson, Kristina Gidlöf, Sannah Salameh, Nina Kjällquist, Caroline Rosengren**

*The City of Malmö's pilot project "Young City Guides" gives children (around 10-13 years of age) a voice in urban development processes. This pilot project trains young people to be city guides in their immediate environment in order to increase children's and young people's participation and influence over their living environment. Meet the project*

*manager, pedagogues and city workers in charge of Young City Guides, to learn more about the working methods being used in the project and exchange perspectives on how young people can meaningfully participate in urban development processes.*

### **My New Museum, Malmö Art Museum**

with **Linda Holster, Marie Kraft**

*Discussion about future visions for the location, building and urban environment of Malmö's Art Museum have been happening for close to 30 years. The project My new museum? is a laboratory for conversation, content and knowledge production, method development and future visions, in which a pop-up room in downtown Malmö was activated for people to share thoughts, reasoning and dreams about what the art museum of the future is and what it will do for Malmö.*

### **Cross Innovation Southern Sweden, Region Skåne**

with **Elin Frost**

*Cross Innovation Southern Sweden is a collaborative project with the purpose of promoting creativity and innovation by breaking down sectoral boundaries, fostering synergies and addressing societal challenges for sustainable development. It is implemented with support from the the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to enhance southern Sweden's innovation capacity, focusing on cross-sectoral innovation with an emphasis on cultural and creative industries.*

### **Event Horizon Malmö: Sneak-Peek at Vernissage for artist Koo Jeong A and Meeting with Malmö-based performing arts collective Kollaborativet**

with **Mats Stjernstedt**

*Visit exhibition "EHM – Event Horizon Malmö" by artist Koo Jeong A, a sculpture created for skateboard inside Malmö Konsthall. The exhibition is co-hosted by Skate Malmö and Bryggeriet's high school, Malmö. The school's educational profile emphasizes on skateboarding and visual art.*

*LOVE Malmö, Triangel square. A reconstruction of the iconic skate-spot LOVE Park in Philadelphia, using original material and blueprints. LOVE Malmö is a sidewalk, a skate-spot and an interactive monument to the cultural contribution of skateboarding to the life of cities around the world.*

*During summer 2024 performing arts collective Kollaborativet presents an interactive exhibition in C-salen, Malmö Konsthall, built around documentation from a co-creative process with young people with special needs.*



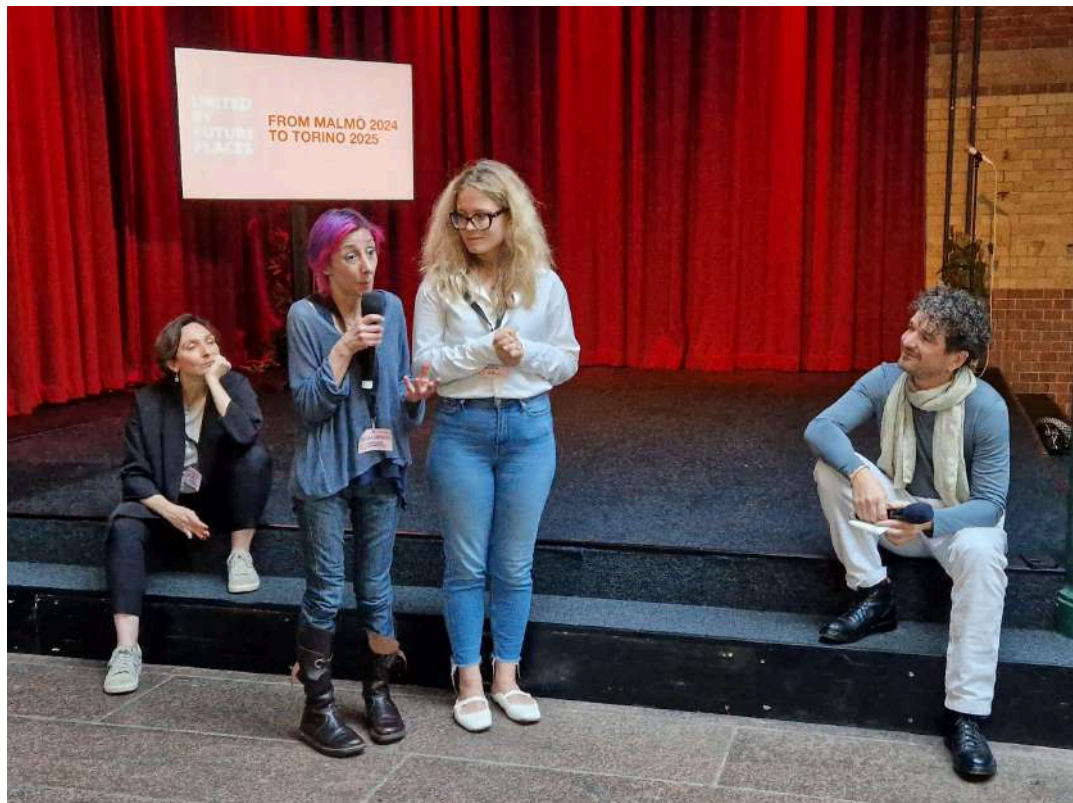
## Closing Mingle & Announcement of Beyond the Obvious 2025

The closing event took place at the Slagthuset - Restaurant, with last words from Annika Cedhagen (Director Culture, City of Malmö) and Lars Ebert (Secretary General Culture Action Europe). Warm thanks were offered to everyone who made this year's *Beyond the Obvious* possible, including the team in Malmö, the extended CAE conference team and the CAE board and those whose financing supported the event.

The next highlights on the CAE agenda were highlighted, including the political urgency of post-election advocacy and a call for interest in hosting a local launch of the state of culture barometer, especially for national and regional hubs.

Beyond the Obvious 2025 was announced, as Malmö passes the baton to Torino. Luisella Carnelli (Fondazione Fitzcarraldo) and Valeriya Urbanovich (Club Silencio) gave an introduction to next year's conference.

The participants were treated to a final part of the cultural programme, with the New Circus Surprise Show from CAE member Cirkus Syd.





**Culture Action Europe  
2024**



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