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(EENC)**

*Promoting access to culture
via digital means*

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The present paper has been prepared, at the request of DG EAC, by the European Expert Network on Culture (EENC).

The paper has been written, on behalf of the EENC, by Mr. Niels Righolt. The views expressed in the paper are the sole responsibility of the author and the EENC and in no way reflect the views of the European Commission.

About the author

Niels Righolt is currently Managing Director at the Danish Centre for Arts & Interculture (DCAI/CKI) in Copenhagen. The centre is a national knowledge, competence and communication centre for international culture, cultural diversity and audience engagement. It promotes cultural democracy and a culturally diverse environment; it disseminates knowledge and experience between the country's artists and art institutions with the aim of developing and strengthening intercultural competences in the arts and cultural life as such in Denmark. CKI perform tasks and screenings, and CKI is responsible for skills development programs, audience and organizational learning, seminars and conferences, and more, as well as running what today is Denmark's largest and most important portal and news service on arts and interculture.

Mr. Righolt has a broad background and experience of over 25 years in the arts field. He has worked as Head of Information, Producer, Artistic Director, Cultural Political Developer, Managing Director and Political Advisor within a variety of cultural institutions and organizations over the years among others as Managing and Artistic Director of the Dunkers Arts Centre in Helsingborg, Sweden, as Chief Curator and producer for Møstings Hus & Byggeriets Hus, Copenhagen and as co-founder of the intercultural magazine and communication bureau Cultures. At present he is a board member of among others the national contemporary dance scene Dansehallerne in Copenhagen, the Audience Europe Network and the Platform for Intercultural Europe in Brussels and the Salaam Film & Dialog in Copenhagen.

He has been is responsible for the overall programming and conference design of the Arts and Audiences 2014 conference in Reykjavik, Iceland.

His training background is in Literature, Modern Culture & Cultural Communication and Spanish Culture & Language from the University of Copenhagen.

1. The *Digital Magorium*¹

“We need the ability to create ideas that in advance are thought to match the many narrative tools we shall use digitally and socially.”

Steffen Hjaltekin, Danish advertising guru and director, Hjaltekin Stahl

The quote, in many ways, hits the nail on the head. Digital and technological developments make it virtually impossible for our cultural institutions to maintain a traditional institutional narrative and maintain “power” over the story. The traditional didactic setup in which the cultural institution is the narrator and the audience listens and learns belongs to the world of yesterday. One-way communication is no longer enough and a deluge of new platforms, interactive elements and targeted individual messages has replaced the classical communication channels. New concepts such as co-creation and participation have become central to the ability of institutions to attract new audiences, especially the attractive trendsetting educated youth. This perspective is becoming still more crucial for the institutions’ ability to reach out to new audiences and include them in the offer they put on show. Access to culture and the demand for a still more inclusive institutional practice is setting the agenda, both in terms of the funding made available by public bodies and, more important, in terms of the audience’s demands as the audiences themselves put them forward in user surveys and other audience researches.

Traditionally, the cultural institutions of the post-war period have used the inspiration and the tools of an advertising inspired marketing form, where advertising or promoting happened through the media that the intended audience was assumed it would use. Business people were thus reached through professional media such as the *Financial Times*; young people through TV and radio; the culturally educated users through the major newspapers’ cultural sections etc. Communication departments in the cultural institutions communicated to relatively stable segments and designed their strategies accordingly. The cultural sector “copied” the communication strategies of other sectors and, within the institutions, those responsible for communication worked together with those in charge of marketing in specific departments often perceived as the primary tool to “sell tickets” to the imagined audience. Indeed, in many European institutions this is still the case. But the important institutional point is that the communicator’s role was to “sell” what the programmers and curators had decided should be sold: a classic setup as one might say.

As TV became a household item it became the preferred medium of communication to the masses. Pop artists “known from TV” could almost instantly read the effect of increasing sales figures. Exhibitions, which were mentioned in prime-time television, could often multiply their number of visitors in the following days. Successful “outreach” was closely related to the media chosen and the ability to frame and reach specific target groups, mostly the emancipated middle class. In times with monopole-like and predominantly nationally driven or supported television institutions the outer framework was anchored in a national cultural paradigm and modernistic tradition, with the exception of the UK, France and the Netherlands all with more diverse and multiple cultural environments. A pattern which has its close equivalent in the way and hierarchies most cultural institutions are built after.

With the emergence of the Internet these structures have been increasingly challenged. The web opened up a new world and a variety of opportunities and, as an increasingly important communication platform, communication changed character from “push” to “pull”. Where communication previously was entirely controlled by the institutions, who decided what and how

¹ Here “*magorium*” is used to refer to the digital equivalent of the classical “*Fantasmagorium*”, a magic place full of fantastic items or pleasurable activities, the modern gadget as a fun and magic universe in its own kind.

to convey, it now became possible for users to navigate in the communication world and to design their information from the websites according to their own needs: what is on the program, price and discounts, opening hours, special offers, etc. Above all, the Internet opened up a whole new world for the users to examine.

The Internet not only pounded around the traditional forms of communication, it also opened a much farther-reaching revolution as to how media is used, news consumed and who owns what stories. Even though we saw a constant development of the Web in the beginning of the new millennium, the communication structures - in terms of who communicated and to whom - were still intact in the sense that the institutions still pushed their information out to well defined segments of potential users – only now using a website as a staging post on the road, from which the users could pull all relevant information, as defined by the institutions themselves.

However, with the major search engines taking over the navigating function and allowing algorithms to be the refined tool providing us with the notion of being seen, a new transformation took place. The Wiki-generation, who would Google and search for profound knowledge previous to a theatre visit or going to an exhibition, framed and “articulated” the first signs of the digital challenge that most cultural operators still find very difficult to meet. The powerful search engines and collaborative encyclopedias threw a first heavy punch to the authority of the cultural institutions and the legacy they upheld. Wikipedia challenged the well-established and often very expensive national encyclopedias, the very symbol of national cultural legacy and civilization. Google and other engines allowed to search for the original sources of information, if available on the web, and gave a notion of freedom in the sense that the users themselves framed the search criteria. New media actors saw the light of day in the form of bloggers creating a digital cacophony of opinions, stories, perspectives - and with YouTube we could all be part of a global shared entertainment channel. Social media entered the stage and changed the narrative completely.

Phenomena like Facebook and LinkedIn created a new way of interaction, not only between individuals but also between users and cultural institutions. And when Apple launched its iPhone in 2007 the development rocketed away and cultural communication to and with the audience have never been the same since. The *Digital Magorium* had landed. Today - only seven years later - more than 20% of the world population has a smartphone! In countries such as the Nordic countries the figure is a staggering 90%. We now spend far more time on the Internet with our tablets and smartphones than through our computers.

An interesting figure in this sense is that a media platform such as YouTube has more than 1 billion unique users per month - and some videos and commercials become viral mass successes with huge audiences because users forward links, upload them to YouTube or share them simultaneously via other platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and the like. Reports indicate that 69% of consumer Internet traffic in 2017 will be video (*The Guardian*).

This is the reality that cultural institutions, decision makers and politicians have to relate to when it comes to issues dealing with facilitating access to culture and a wider inclusion of different audiences. Over a short time, audience behavior has changed quite dramatically in terms of cultural participation and consumption. Institutions are faced with new demands not only in terms of how they communicate but also in terms of what they communicate! The former and quite strict boundaries existing between the curatorial and communication departments are being washed away. In order to attract a new audience and open the institutions to “unusual suspects”, accessibility is not just a matter of pricing and efficient marketing - it is about becoming relevant to a wider group of people with presumably very different backgrounds and preferences. It challenges the traditional *modus operandi* profoundly. It becomes a question of new “narratives” and new ways of programming, of collaborating internally between different

areas of expertise, of the ability to master and manage the new media, new competencies, new partners etc. It challenges the cultural institutional practice as a whole.

2. The “same old wine in new bottles”

In fact, the changes are so extensive and rapid that dialoguing with the new opportunities becomes a pure survival strategy for cultural institutions in the form in which we know them today. The ability to act interactively and openly in relation to this new reality is a prerequisite for the development of both the institution and its employees. Once an organisation begins to understand this, the key internal challenge then becomes one of digital literacy and technical capability of the staff as they try to choose the right platform, channel or approach to do what they want to do; of internal change geared to nurturing digitally fluent staff and decision-makers. The classical models of organizational skills, professional roles, attitudes and professional development perspectives need to be redefined. Indeed, the new identity of any cultural institution grows out of complex interaction and collaboration with its audience, artists, other institutions and organizations controlled by their potential. And indeed, dialogue, renewal and openness are often highlighted as the key concepts for the development of institutions when they have to adapt to the new reality. There is a need for increasing knowledge and developing flow between individuals and institutions, and between employees with different skills and experience in order to fully exploit the new opportunities whilst providing the basis for new knowledge and stimulate further enhanced creativity.

Many arts and cultural institutions try to embrace the opportunities provided by the digital shift in terms of extending their audiences through new communication channels. However, it still seems as if the vast majority of them find it more than difficult to break the code. Surveys on how they make use of digital solutions in their everyday professional practice clearly show that the cultural sector struggles to significantly improve its digital services. Surveys in Denmark, Sweden, Norway and the UK² show that it is surprisingly difficult to meaningfully integrate digital tactics into a cultural organisation’s overall strategic mission. One would imagine that this would be an obvious move for any arts institution, but it is not. It has to do both with the internal decisive hierarchy and the role of communication in the overall perspective of the institutions’ relation to the society it serves and interacts with.

Many of the major cultural institutions in Europe are run and managed by people who are still somewhat unfamiliar with the potential offered by the online world and digital tools available. The leaders and management are aware of the knowledge gap between themselves and the often younger individuals who navigate fluently in this “new world” and its language. But what is more important is that they seem to try to create strategies that include digital tools in the already existing *modus operandi* rather than try to change their own components in terms of organisation, programming, recruitment etc.

Although digital technologies should be understood as tools that need to be used and shaped to a purpose, they also completely change the nature of their users’ behaviour - digital tools offer a multitude of opportunities for sharing and participation and through apps like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and the like we can all be part of a greater narrative. The arts institutions no

² Surveys like the Danish report on cultural habits “Danskernes Kulturvaner 2012”, <http://www.kulturstyrelsen.dk/nyheder/presse/temasider/danskernes-kulturvaner/>; the Danish user surveys on museums: <http://www.kulturstyrelsen.dk/institutioner/museer/fakta-om-museerne/statistik-om-museer/brugerundersogelse/>; the Norwegian “Oslo-Atlas” on cultural participation: <http://norskpublikumsutvikling.no/?p=5465>; the Swedish “Konst och Publik”; <https://www.riksutstallningar.se/kop>; the British “Taking Part survey”: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/research-and-data/arts-audiences/taking-part-survey/>.

longer have the monopole of their own story. The new technologies also provide access to information on the move, so we constantly can prepare the visit, communicate – or change our mind and do something else based on information accessible through our gadgets. This creates a tension between the traditional gatekeepers and those who master the new opportunities.

Many gatekeepers (curators, directors, museum directors, programmers etc.) are still anchored in a modernistic understanding of the cultural institution and its role in society. In some artistic fields there are very visible reproductive power patterns and there is a profound reluctance towards opening up for the organizational change needed in order for the organisation to feel confident in understanding how the changes in user behaviour influence all aspects of the relationship between the institution itself and its users. Many cultural leaders seem to underestimate the time, space and commitment needed in order to really benefit from the progress offered by the digital innovations and they fail to understand how the integration of digital tactics into their overall strategic mission requires a significant shift in internal thinking, at all levels. Instead, they meet and treat new online developments expecting that they will significantly improve their audience reach, provide access to new and especially younger audiences, help the institutions earn more money and immediately increase participation as well, without any need for the institution to change its behaviour and practice.

Not only are these expectations often unrealistic, they might even prove to be counterproductive. Over the last five or six years we have seen a great variety of different attempts to make use of new digital platforms and tools within a traditional marketing and communication framework and understanding. Instead of re-thinking strategies the new opportunities are limited to new ways of communicating the same type of narratives to the same kind of people as always - the “same old wine in new bottles”. Of course some institutions create digital projects in the form of an app, a game, etc., which positions the institution as cool and progressive, at the forefront of development; but this too only makes sense if the starting point is the result of an analysis of what you want to achieve and who for.

Although digital technologies should be understood as tools that need to be used and shaped to a purpose, they also completely change the nature of their users' behaviour - digital tools offer a multitude of opportunities for sharing and participation and through apps like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and the like we can all be part of a greater narrative. The art institutions no longer have the monopole of their own story. The new technology also provide access to information on the move, so we constantly can prepare the visit, communicate or change our mind and do something else based on information accessible through our gadgets. This creates a tension between the traditional gatekeepers and those who master the new opportunities.

Institutions that have really opened up their infrastructure and expose themselves to new groups of users and collaborators tell stories about how the staff composition has changed rapidly. There are examples of institutions where up to 80% of the staff changed over few years as a result of new ways of working, new ways of relating to the audience, new partners and, not least, a need to bring in new competencies into the organisation. This is a cause of anxiety for most employees in any institution: they believe that they will lose their jobs unless they also try to master the new ways of engaging with others' expertise and interests. This anxiety should not be underestimated in relation to why it seems so difficult for many art institutions to adapt to the digital shift.

There is little doubt that institutions that have taken the lead in bringing digital solutions and tools into all aspects of their work in order to frame a more complex, diverse and disparate reality are the ones defining the field for the upcoming political priorities and policies. In a way, the digital shift is still just happening and for the innovation oriented cultural institutions it is a gift in terms of an ongoing international laboratory, where to explore, exchange and develop new “cultural products” and experiences for the audiences in a much more collaborative way, where

new competencies play together. A good example of this is the dialogue and collaboration between Ars Electronica in Linz and the Click Festival in Elsinore. They are among the most significant of their kind as a constantly developing electronic interaction institution, the first, and a multi-faceted digital arts festival, the second. Together they are able to push and challenge the boundaries even further and by being influenced one by the other they seem to be able to maintain a position as absolute frontrunners in their field.

When it comes to policies and politics there seems to be few initiatives throughout Europe. This is mostly because the digital shift is widely perceived as an embryo of a new era of cultural production where, as mentioned above, there are a number of conflicts that need to be solved such as the hierarchical structures of the institutions as a result of a closer connection between audience, outreach, programming, in-reach, etc. as a response to the digitization but also because the new digital reality accentuates a need for new legislation on issues such as artistic property rights and distribution. It is indeed a complex setting in which many countries try to create space to investigate and analyse the effects of the digital development. Indeed, in these years there have been a number of different attempts to collect relevant data and make it available for the political process to come.

Besides the implementation of social media and the like in the web-based institutional communication practice, digitization is still not really embraced as the potential game-changer in terms of programming, recruitment, community interaction and democratic representation. It is interesting to see how terms like “glocalism” enter our vocabulary without really finding resonance in the cultural sector whereas it should be difficult to find any another sector in which the ability to orientate globally and act locally are more obvious. But there is of course a growing number of examples that show the contrary and many institutions and cultural players have recognized the opportunities offered by a more advanced use of the digital means, both in terms of establishing new relations with a new audience, embracing the possibility of new ways of producing and collaborating, new narratives and a new way of engaging the audience through participatory and co-creative methods.

3. The *abracadabra* of co-creation

Surveys like the recently presented Culture24³ in the UK and results, cases and overviews presented at the annual branch conferences all over Europe show examples of initiatives that actually do break new ground and give valuable new perspectives as to how digital strategies can work. In a survey produced by the Arts Council of England in 2014 a number of institutions answered that digital technologies are delivering positive outcomes in terms of audience development, creative output and operating efficiency – but lower impacts on revenues. The main argument presented is that the use of digital technologies helps organizations reach out to new and larger audiences, as well as to engage more extensively with existing ones. More than half of the responders say that digital technologies help them not only boost attendance at their events but also reach new audiences. One of three says that digital technologies have a major impact in helping them understand their existing audiences better. A majority of 60 per cent report that digital technology has had a major impact on their ability to fulfill their mission effectively. The survey also states that while music venues, festivals and theatres are at the forefront of the development, museums are less likely than the rest of the sector to report positive impacts from digital technologies. Most of the success stories point back to a process in which cultural organisations started by exploring how their organisational missions could

³ Cultur24 is a non-profit, digital cultural website which exist to support the cultural sector in reaching online audiences: <http://www.culture24.org.uk/home>

connect with the needs of their target audiences, new audiences and new demands from the surrounding society.

One clear example in that direction is the renewal of the Rijksmuseum⁴ in Amsterdam. Besides the rehabilitation of the building itself, the renewed show of the collection, the strive for a clearer and direct welcoming of the visitors, the new design of both the analogue and web-based communication platforms, the Rijksmuseum used the momentum to re-think the institution itself using the opportunities of present digital tools to discuss issues around the collection, sharing, reuse of artworks, democracy, visitor services, local communities, international ones etc. And they came to the conclusion that transparency and generosity should be two key factors in the design of their digital approach and interaction. The collection was made accessible to see and reflect on but it was also available for interaction, co-creation, and use in other settings outside the museum's control. The overall idea is that the collection belongs to the people of the Netherlands, for them to enjoy, learn from, and engage with. Free of charge and accessible on whatever gadget or platform they use. The strategy was simply to create a notion of ownership and sharing and, through it, reach out for the usual audiences as well as new audience groups. The tool that proved most interesting was the creation of the digital Rijks Studio⁵ where visitors can navigate the collections, download high-resolution pictures, sound files etc. for personal use; e.g. reusing them in new artworks, personal comments etc. It enabled a creative online community, which suddenly co-owned the museum, interacted with it, connected to it on a different level. And it gave the museum a unique connection to an audience they probably would not have otherwise reached.

An example from Denmark is Copenhagen Phil's project of the World Online Orchestra⁶, where musicians and amateur musicians from all over the globe can join in and play e.g. Beethoven's *Pastorale* symphony together with the musicians of the Copenhagen Phil. A digital participatory platform created to stimulate music and create understanding of the music's complexity as well as of the story behind the orchestra itself. A similar process of participating is found in the Music Experience Design initiative, where young gaming communities in both Sweden and Denmark have been working with the Malmö Symphony Orchestra and the Danish Royal Theatre, and influencing the very setup of concerts and performances through interaction modules and participatory programming. Still more obvious, the *Joystick* concert series where the gaming communities could order specific programs.

The gaming industry is one of the creative industries that are growing most rapidly. Technological developments have made it possible to play against others on the other side of the world from your smartphone in the living room at home, to comment and thus develop the game online, and in the most recent examples change the game online through a sequential process in which developers continually open new opportunities and short-cuts. The gaming industry plays an increasingly important role among the creative industries, now also as subcontractors to the phone companies' product development.

A transnational project of interest is the *Digital Storytelling* project where partners from Hungary, Italy, Spain and Belgium joined in an investigation on different storytelling methods and the prototyping of new ways to collect, refine and distribute these stories as well as open for new stories to be added. Access through participation was one of the key factors in this project, which enabled unusual user groups to participate in ways outside their comfort zone.

But nowhere has the development taken place with such speed as in the music industry, where the new media's cultural, artistic and commercial influence has completely changed the

⁴ <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en>

⁵ <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/rijksstudio?originalQuery=Rijksstudio>

⁶ <http://www.worldonlineorchestra.com/#about> ; <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/905074956/world-online-orchestra>

composition of the industry. The introduction of the MP3 as the format of choice for millions of consumers was dramatic. The record companies "gatekeeper" function and power base was broken, distribution patterns have changed through increased accessibility and file sharing, which in turn has led to new laws in this area. The latest development in the form of streaming services such as Spotify and Whimp allows millions of users to navigate through enormous amounts of songs and information material in an easy way. By subscribing to the services you have free access to the largest disothèque imaginable. You can co-create your own playlists - and *abracadabra* you have made your own radio programs and you can tell your friends about it via connected social media. The old trade paradigm regarding production, sales, marketing etc. is broken and the consequences for arts agencies, public institutions and the commercial players are huge.

On TV, the digital reality really pushed the boundaries. With the development of multi-bit hybrid it is now possible for TV stations to launch a portfolio of digital programming schedules adapted to the demands users express through their choices or through direct communication on the web. Movie channels, sports channels, entertainment channels, news channels etc. enable users to build their own daily TV experiences. On several sports channels, it is today possible to lock the on-screen action to one of the cameras that are in place in the field. As a viewer, you can even "produce" your own experience. The classic public service concept is changing and again it is the new patterns of consumption, and user behavior, which set the agenda.

Large media players are under pressure to meet the challenges and opportunities of the digital shift. Despite their effort to renew their homepage and turn it into one of the most advanced cross media platforms of its kind, *The New York Times* faces a decreasing usage of the homepage, which is visited by only one third of their readers. And those who do visit it spend less time on it: page views and minutes spent per reader dropped by double-digit percentages in 2013. Both *The NY Times* and *The Guardian* have set up active strategies to redefine themselves in the digital age. But that tendency is not reflected in the arts and cultural organisations.

The changes are so extensive and rapid that dialoguing with the new opportunities becomes purely survival strategy for cultural institutions as we know them today. The ability to act interactively and openly with the new reality is a prerequisite for the development of both institutions and their employees. Once an organisation begins to understand this, the key internal challenge then relates to the digital literacy and technical capability of the staff who have to be able choose the right platform, channel or approach to do what they have set to do; internal change geared to nurturing digitally fluent staff and decision-makers. The classical models of organization skills, professional roles, attitudes, development perspective needs to be redefined. Cultural institution's new identity grows out of a complex interaction and collaboration with its audience, artists, other institutions and organizations controlled by their potential. Indeed, dialogue, renewal and openness are often highlighted as the key concepts for the development of institutions, when they have to adapt to the new reality. An increasing knowledge and developing flow between individuals and institutions, between employees with different skills and experience is needed to exploit the new opportunities whilst providing the basis for new knowledge and to stimulate further enhanced creativity.

4. A talk of democracy at the Digital Agora

Although many will agree that creativity, technology and tolerance constitute a social potential with greater cultural diversity, the close link between cultural and industrial policy in the experience society raises some important questions: how public cultural policy can combine cultural pluralism with quality requirements? How to distinguish between art and creativity,

experience and knowledge, reflection and immediate perception? What role publicly funded culture should play in relation to commercial and private culture? How to operate within the contemporary demands for diversity and hybridity? How to support artists and cultural entrepreneurs being caught in the haste of development; e.g. the case of music streaming, where the artists are getting paid a very reduced sum per hit and they do not have many opportunities to influence their own incomes? Who takes responsibility for the so-called “high” art in a time of market orientated mainstreaming? What is the true potential and democratic accountability in the digital revolution?

History has taught us to understand a country’s (or society’s) stage of civilization in the light of its cultural openness, dynamism and tolerance. But what does it mean today in the light of the digital shift? Should we fear an increasing “instrumentalization” of culture as a utility and control instrument where public funds go to support what already works commercially rather than towards ensuring artistic and cultural diversity? We already see tendencies towards the economic logic: good culture implies a large audience and an industrial compatibility.

Following such a path, digital opportunities can be used as a way of mapping and scanning what the extended audience wants. Big Data is part of our reality and social networks like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, platforms like Google and others now contain large amounts of data about us, information we voluntarily posted online via our social profiles. Google, Facebook and Twitter see what we looking up in the net and they filter us for ads and product placement that we “should be” especially interested in and receptive to. By keeping an eye on our comings and goings on the net, businesses can get information on when to strike with relevant offers. When we are at a concert in Gothenburg we immediately get a number of proposals on accommodation and eateries in the price range we normally operate within. Thousands of algorithms allow the social platforms to tailor special offers to each unique user. In such an environment, it might be difficult to put emphasis on the need for a pluralistic and diverse cultural democracy, where even more élite, niched or specific artistic and cultural projects could be supported for the benefit of society as such, bringing in non-normative and most likely non-commercial perspectives to the whole.

Like nothing else the digital shift underlines and supports the global community as a steady part of our daily mental horizons. We operate in a world where existing rendering borders are constantly exceeded. Therein lies culture's true potential. It is limitless, subjective and evolving. The different cultural expressions constitute one of the very few free spaces where opinions, expressions, limits and standards can be tested and new opportunities arise. Seen in this light, the cultural sector is as if created to meet the new requirements for diversity, while exploiting the enormous possibilities that the new technology offers. This assumes that society and its institutions provide the space needed through investments and goals. It is perhaps the key issue of a cultural democracy. For Europe, there may well be an important benefit in a targeted focus on a cultural policy which can ensure a cultural environment that is diverse, inclusive and liberating - and at the same time clearly able to protect freedom of expression and create conditions for such freedom also to be used, *inter alia*, to support and stimulate artistic and cultural renewal in new settings. In other words, the digital development can contribute to the creation of a more accessible and inclusive culture if it is closely connected to all parts of the cultural DNA - from management, political agreements and funding over programming and curatorial practice to the tools used in the different platforms. Digital platforms open for a new way to contact and relate to new groups but only if the institutions are genuinely interested in the people they address and reach out for, if they try to understand them and how they perceive and respond to cultural experiences. The responsibility to act democratically is of course anchored within the agreement between the public funding bodies and the institutions. The digital shift has just expanded the opportunities to fulfill the obligation by offering a multitude of new ways to engage with citizens.

For institutions the digital development raises questions on what is on offer or programmed; who to work with, co-produce with; recruitment and staff policies in terms of skills and competences - a broader array of digital talent like technologists, user experience designers, product managers, data analysts etc. – new partners on the path towards new digital experiences, new audiences, collaborations and more.

Over the last decades “audience development”, and lately the more precise term “audience engagement”, has entered the formation of policies and public funding of the arts and it has assumed a greater strategic priority within cultural-sector management and policy development throughout the western world. There has been a movement from “audience development” - understood as a process of widening access to arts and culture, deepening and enriching the experience of audiences and participants and fostering a more open, receptive attitude to what might be deemed challenging or new work - to “audience engagement” reflecting the aspect of perception and the still more articulated demand for relevance, new narratives to reach out to a broader potential audience, co-creation and participatory experiences. The digital shift clearly underlines this movement.

Traditionally, countries like the UK, the Benelux and the Nordic countries have been amongst the pioneers in searching and testing new ways of interaction between the arts and the audience and many have looked to them for inspiration and new ways of working. However, the last few years have shown that, throughout Europe, there too has been a range of ground-breaking projects, learning programmes, new research and conferences examining how cultural producers and presenting organisations can improve their relationship with the potential audience, whether it happens through digital tools, education, outreach and community engagement or through more traditional methods such as mainstream marketing approaches. And recently demands for a clearer position on how the institutions and cultural projects will reach out to the public, has entered national legislation and regional priorities in e.g. the Nordic countries. In Denmark the Royal Danish Theatre has audience diversity written into its 4-year contract with the ministry and the same goes for several of the other national institutions in the country.

The digital shift has opened the field of cultural participation and co-creation dramatically, and its democratic implications are all to be examined and decided on. But, as a panel debate on digitalization at the Conference Digital at the Arts held in Reykjavik in October 2014 stated, “We cannot meet the challenges of tomorrow solemnly with the logics and structures of yesterday”.

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