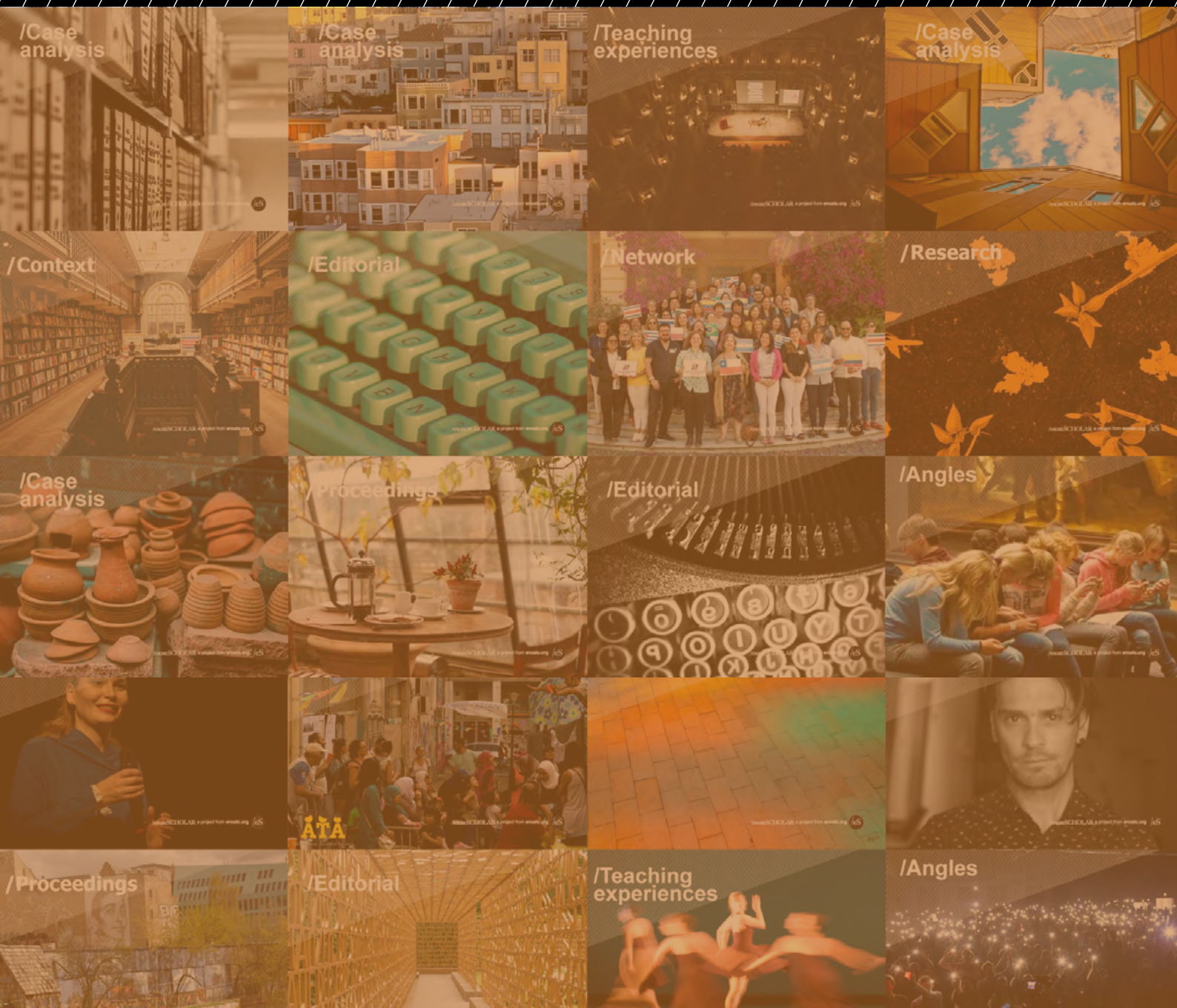


# CULTURAL MANAGEMENT AND POLICY IN A POST-DIGITAL WORLD – NAVIGATING UNCERTAINTY





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“Rethinking Education Strategy and the relevance of producing highly skilled and versatile people who can contribute to innovation and entrepreneurship”

Androulla Vassiliou

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## **General objective**

/encatcSCHOLAR was born to satisfy the demand of ENCATC members academics, researchers and students: to exchange teaching methodologies and knowledge to use in the classroom. /encatcSCHOLAR is intended to provide reference tools for education and lifelong learning on cultural management and cultural policies.

## **Specific aims**

To be an open tool that encourages participation and sharing in the creation of teaching materials. To offer suggestions about some basic and accurate methodological approaches related to how to:

- study emerging issues that affect public policies;
- present and analyze case analysis;
- open debates on how to improve the management of projects.

## **Target**

/encatcSCHOLAR is aimed at academics and researchers teaching and students learning about cultural management and cultural policies. Its contents are intended to provide reference tools for education and lifelong learning on these fields.

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/CASE ANALYSIS

# **An Italian case on developing soft skills for future cultural leaders in a Master's Programme**

**By Antonia Silvaggi**

Co-founder and Head of Skills for Culture, Melting Pro Learning

**By Ludovica De Angelis**

Co-founder Coordinator, Melting Pro Learning

## **Introduction**

This article describes the teaching experience of the module entitled “Developing skills and abilities for future cultural leaders: the importance of soft skills” delivered as part of the Master in Management of Artistic and Cultural Resources of IULM (Free University of Languages and Communication), an important University in Italy based in Milan, though this Master is located at the Rome offices. The module was delivered in January and February 2020, just before the outburst of the Covid-19 pandemic. The second edition is now being run online and in a hybrid blended format.



In 2019 we met with those responsible for the Masters who were concerned that the class was not engaging as a group. They observed that if the class worked together, they developed team working skills and had more chances of success afterwards. In addition, they wanted students to be more aware of their desired direction by choosing an internship in a more mindful way and to be more responsible for their own learning.

Drawing on our own experience we developed the module entitled “Thriving skills and abilities for future cultural leaders: the importance of soft skills”. This module is the outcome of our research and reflection as cultural professionals. We experimented the importance of it on ourselves by taking part in the Synapse workshop<sup>1</sup> led by Adrian De La court and Sian Prime at Goldsmiths’ College, London, whose aim is to work with students to develop their potential.

The module aims to raise awareness of the importance of soft skills such as flexibility, adaptability, creativity, empathy, active listening, emotional intelligence, resilience and risk-taking for students coming from the Humanities field. As a result to create a more collaborative environment and a sense of working in a team. More importantly it aims to give them the tools to lead change in the cultural sector in Italy. In this article, we argue for the urgency to nurture soft skills development alongside the more analytical (hard) competencies such as those associated with strategy, finance and the planning processes in arts management programmes. Developing students’ soft skills could improve their chances of employability in a difficult job market such as that in Italy. Although there isn’t much agreement on what exactly constitutes these qualities or even what to call them ‘soft skills’ are nevertheless frequently recognised as necessary for the development of tomorrow’s managers (Klaus, et al 2007; Goleman 2004; Godin 2017). The sector as a whole can benefit from impact- oriented cultural leaders.

## Setting the context

In Italy, a degree in Humanities used to be known as a “weak” degree (Fioredistella Iezzi, 2008)

meaning that they offer fewer opportunities for students to get a job after graduation compared to a “strong” one, such as in technology or science (occupability). Over the years this thinking has shifted thanks to the publication of the celebrated book “Not for profit. Why Democracy needs Humanities”, by the philosopher Martha Nussbaum (2010). In Italy in particular, professionals working in the cultural sector are usually graduates in humanities; typically art history, literature, archaeology, philosophy or anthropology. Whilst they may have developed excellent and useful knowledge of culture, they typically lack managerial and business know-how, and in general soft skills, only eventually these skills are learnt on the job (SAVOROVSKAYA, 2020).

One of the reasons for the reform of the University system (D.M. 509/99, D.M. 270/04 and on) in Italy was to make a stronger connection between the University System and the evolving world of the job market, to help students acquire competences that the job market needed. Indeed, work experience was introduced as part of the curriculum in order to address this. Since our research in the European project Cream<sup>2</sup>, that focused on the importance of encouraging an entrepreneurial mindset for students that wanted to work in the cultural sector, we have been asking ourselves: what are the skills, attitudes and values that will help today’s students to thrive in the cultural job market in Italy? There is much talk about a new kind of cultural leadership on the world stage, but at what point does this educational path of a future cultural leader need to consider these elements in Italy? This module is a way to answer our questions.

## Structure of the module

*“It helped me to think more deeply about my skills, something I never really did before”*

Participant

We delivered the module in January and February 2020, as part of the Masters Programme in Management of Artistic and Cultural Resources, to 34 students from different faculties – Humanities,

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gold.ac.uk/icce/synapse/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.encatc.org/en/projects/past-transnational-cultural-projects/cream-2011-2013/>

Arts, Political Sciences, Communication – coming from all over Italy.

The goal was to encourage students to analyse their skills and inclinations, to listen to others by creating a space of continuous discussion and open feedback. It raises self-confidence, responsibility and to recognize and seize opportunities when they arrive. It focused on allowing students to share their thoughts and ideas and to be actively engaged and share their opinions. As a result to create a more collaborative environment and a sense of working in a team.

The learning outcomes are:

- To be able to employ creative tools to respond to change
- To be able to demonstrate their relational, communication, listening and group work skills in a team context
- To be able to illustrate their values and ambitions in presenting their professional story

**We take great care to develop a judgement-free safe environment amongst the group.** The module is very practical, we use exercises to prompt students' reflection on the importance of listening, leadership, creativity and impact.

The first workshop is delivered to kick off the Master and is aimed to allow students to know themselves in a creative and more friendly atmosphere.

The module is articulated in four workshops around the themes, where we use different exercises:

1. Creating and consolidating the working group
2. Developing self-management concerning the group
3. Storytelling for leadership
4. Action Planning – How to plan your future

So far in the online version we have using platforms such as Mentimeter, Mural, and padlet

which have been helpful to change rhythm and get students acquainted with different tools, and breakout rooms.

Methodology for each workshop:

Each workshop starts with an 'icebreaking', linked to the main theme, an indispensable step to achieve the best results in terms of participation and active involvement. We group participants in pairs, or in larger groups (but not larger than 5 or 6) and always ask to share the one thing that was memorable, that resonated with them.

To facilitate the development of leadership skills, we use storytelling techniques as a reflexive practice, referring to the method of the American Storycenter at Berkeley. These techniques are useful to focus on each professional story, practice storytelling, learn to talk more effectively about themselves in a working environment and to be more aware of their emotions.

Here a list of some of the tools used<sup>3</sup>:

- Reflecting on their own personal values and professional<sup>4</sup>

This is a good tool to encourage the student to introduce themselves and give an insight into their background and ambitions. The questions below are recommended and are printed on an A5 card, or given into a form of digital card, to be given to the participants as a prompt, but you can alter or add to these questions if you need specific information.

- What is your name?
- Where are you from, and what is your background?
- What do you do?
- Why do you do this?
- Why are you here today?
- What do people say about the work that you do?
- What is your great ambition?
- What difference do you hope to make?

When used as a group exercise tool, participants are paired and asked to interview each other using the Valyous cards

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<sup>3</sup> This tools and many others, are also available in the toolkit "A toolkit of exercises for mentors in the CONNECT programme"

<sup>4</sup> \*\*Activity developed by Adrian de la Court and Sian Prime (Goldsmiths, University of London).\*\*



and to then introduce their partner (not themselves) to the group. It is always easier for a participant to answer a question, than give a general overview of themselves.

- Skills mapping<sup>5</sup>

This modelling tool helps students in identifying their skills, attributes and competencies. This process helps them visualise and map out what they are good at. It is based on the idea that many of the skills people have are often latent and taken for granted. By articulating and mapping what they have done so far, they will become more aware of their skills and learn to prioritise them.

We make sure that words such as ‘talents’, ‘creative’, ‘confident’ and similar are challenged. We ensure that they keep this skills map for future use. It is a rewarding experience to be able to revisit this map at the end of the programme. It is a great way for them to be able to acknowledge their learning over the programme and affirming for their personal and professional development.

- Networking/stakeholder mapping

A visual, creative approach that help students understand the importance of relationships and networking. There are many versions of this tool. What we do is to ask students to draw a map of their relationships, the ones they already have and the ones they want to get in contact with in the future. It is a good tool to trigger conversations in the group.

- Creative tools to spark conversations such as storytelling exercises like

- *What inspires you?*

Ask students to describe a person, place, or book that inspired them the most in their life or career. What was the emotion that inspired you to choose a profession, change careers or go for a promotion?

- *Make your mind up*

Students are asked to write about a time in their lives when they made an important decision. They are free to describe it as they wish, but they are limited to exactly 50 words. This game fulfils two purposes. Primarily it looks at the theme of important decision making in life and the resulting feelings that were created. Secondly, it attempts to instil in them the value of tightly edited text.

- *Love/hate*

Each student creates a list of 10 things they love and 10 things they hate (or even less depending on time) and they read these out to the others in the group. This is useful as the list may produce a topic for a potential story and allows us to explore the themes more fully.

- Evidence modelling<sup>6</sup>

This exercise helps students to visualise the scale of their ambition, and the impact that they are aiming to make. Ask your students to draw the front page of a newspaper or magazine. The publication should be relevant to the industry – for example if the mentee is working with a theatre company or theatrical venue, then publications such as The Guardian or The Stage, etc.. The date on the publication must be in their future, and indicates the time period in which they hope to have achieved this success. It is a great inspirational tool.

## Conclusion

As the recent pandemic has shown, it is imperative to provide future cultural managers with the right skillset to question management practices to offer better solutions for their future stakeholders, softs skills are an essential part of it. As Price (2017) mentions “*Cultural leadership should ask questions of the purposes of what we want to pursue, and therefore of what structures are necessary for the future, rather than being limited to the questions of how we manage and maintain organisations we already have*”. Since our establishment, we have been advocating

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<sup>5</sup> \*\*Activity developed by Adrian de la Court and Sian Prime (Goldsmiths, University of London). \*\*

<sup>6</sup> Concept by Marshall McLuha. Developed by Chris Downes (Live|Work) and refined by Nesta, and Adrian de la Court and Sian Prime (Goldsmiths, University of London).

for the importance of soft skills development in many European projects such as in ADESTE (2014), CONNECT (2019) and ADESTEPLUS (2020). We believe that it is urgent to review curricula in light of recent developments by enhancing soft skills/leadership development/emotional intelligence. There has never been a more volatile and uncertain time than this; therefore, soft skills development is crucial.

We are certain that soft skills and leadership development should be part of the curriculum. It makes a difference during challenging times, as one student told us last year: *"Out of necessity, hard skills sooner or later become something you can delegate but you cannot delegate your attitude. It is something important for the implementation of a project and involves relationship management."*

### Questions for further discussion

- What knowledge, skills, attitudes and values will today's students need to thrive in and shape their world?
- How can we include these topics earlier than in a Master Programme for students that want to become future cultural managers?
- Should soft skills development have their own course or be embedded?
- How can instructional systems develop these knowledge, skills, attitudes and values effectively?

### Addendum

*Details of the University Master's Degree Master's & Executive Education – Continuing Education*

The Master in Management of Artistic and Cultural Resources opens the door to a sector that has become an engine of economic development: from the classical sectors of the visual arts to entertainment, from cultural heritage to the monumental and museum one, to cultural tourism and the creative industries. In Italy, the culture supply chain constitutes over 16% of the gross domestic product.

This Master aims to train qualified professionals in the management of artistic and cultural activity through wide-ranging preparation, including through the humanities and social disciplines and promoting the development of specific

managerial skills so as to enable the design and coordination of cultural events and activities.

The Master is divided into four modules on:

- Governance and legislation
- Management and organization
- Marketing and communication
- English or Spanish language

The course consists of lecturing, assisted teaching workshops, conferences, internships and final exams. At the end of each module or workshop, students undergo an evaluation test for the acquisition of credits.

Attendance on the Masters course provides recognition of (60 CFU), 8 of which are for internship or other activities useful for entering the world of work (workshops, exercises, simulations).

The degree is aimed at holders of a bachelor's degree obtained in an Italian or European universities.

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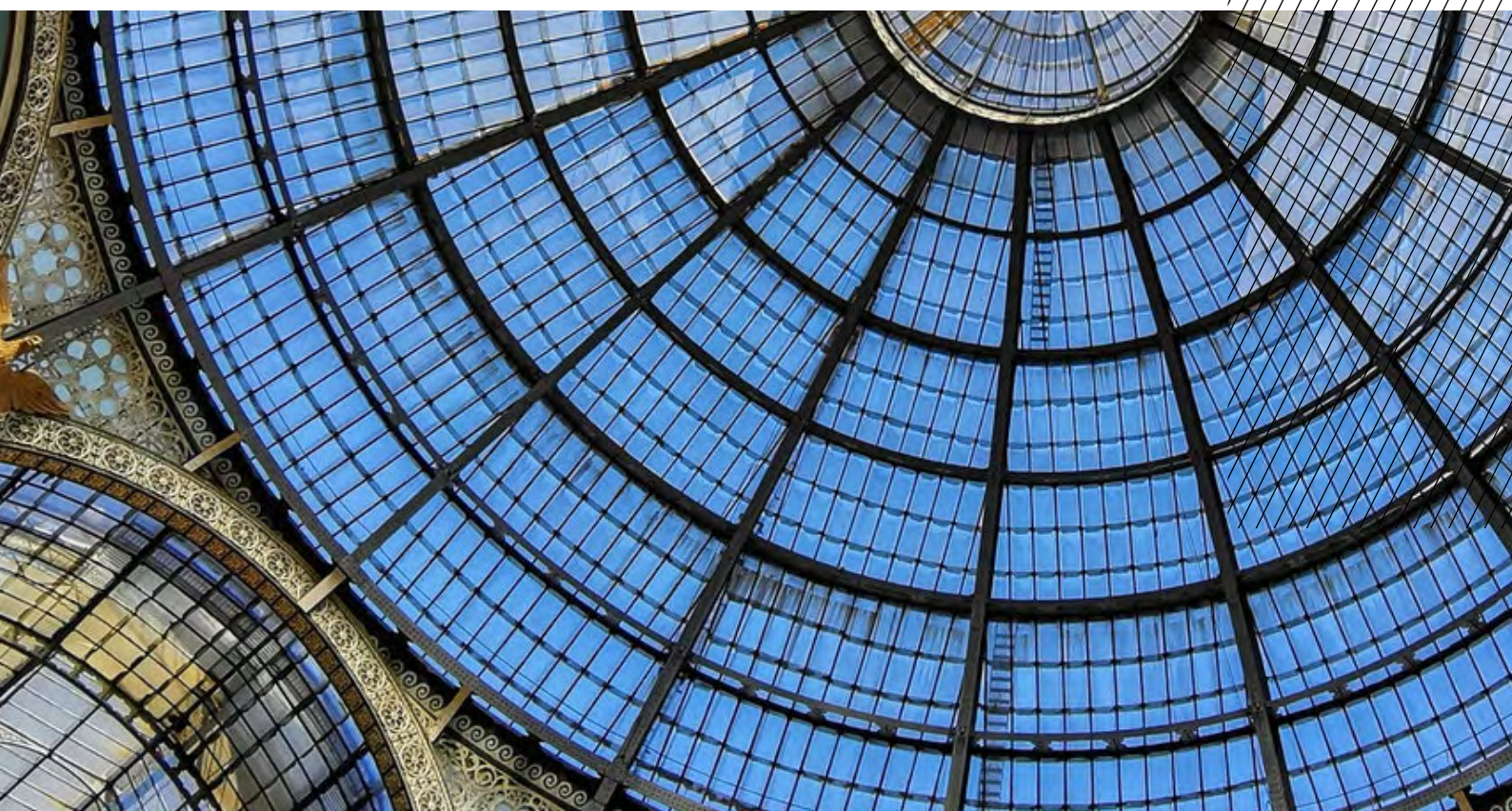
### **Antonia Silvaggi**

Antonia Silvaggi is a researcher, trainer and project manager of international cooperation projects in the field of audience development, storytelling and creative entrepreneurship. Her passion is to listen and to support people in telling their stories. Co-founder and Head of Skill at Melting Pro, a consultancy organisation active in the field of culture, she is involved in the ADESTE PLUS project Creative Europe on organizational change and audience focused organisations, and was involved in the Mu.SA-Museum Sector Alliances and in the Erasmus Plus Knowledge Alliances project CONNECTING AUDIENCES. Certified trainer of Action learning (Action learning associates) and Digitalstorytelling (Storycenter, Berkely, USA).



### **Ludovica De Angelis**

Co-founder and Coordinator of Melting Pro she has extensive knowledge in developing capacity building programmes for the arts and cultural sector. She is an expert consulting in audience development strategy, community engagement and Project management. She is the project manager of ADA- Audience Development in Asti and Torino Open Library - Her passion are words and anagrams!







/PROCEEDINGS

# Global Conversation: Decolonising cultural management education

**By Alice Demattos Guimarães**

PhD Candidate, Western Norway University of Applied Science

*An invitation to reflect our role and position in times of changes*

In a first-ever digital format, ENCATC embraced resilience adapting its annual congress to the unprecedented year of 2020 and the COVID-19 outbreak. In a online platform, from the 3rd to the 11th of November, the 28th ENCATC (Digital) Congress grasped the novel momentum to instigate virtual debates under the umbrella of **“Cultural management and policy in a post-digital world – navigating uncertainty”** as its main theme.

As long-well-known by its community, the cultural industry incessantly has to adapt and innovate to get through historical socioeconomic transitions. Contemporary, digitalization has been at the forefront of such efforts. The global pandemic has undoubtedly brought emphasis to this when rapidly shifting everyday basis routine to virtual dynamics. Complying the health crisis modus operandi, social isolation

has damaged the culture sector and shackled the educational system. The online (re)configuration of various activities has also further exposed the abyssal and multiple inequalities worldwide. At least half of the globe did not have the means to instantly accompany the “post-digital”<sup>1</sup> passage.

ENCATC 2020 Digital Congress and its participants shared the belief that culture and education are essential tools to bring us through the most challenging periods. At a time of enormous societal upheaval, one can argue that COVID-19 pandemic is also a moment of transformation. In essence, every transformation is a cultural project in which paradigmas are to be changed. Black life matters sustains the great example of social agendas been reenergized in current setting. Indeed, new challenges have arisen but possibilities too emerge for humanity wherefore for arts & culture and teaching & learning in a post-digital context.

ENCATC Congresses aim to provide space for encounter, to learn from leading experts and exchange between diverse practices. As an opportunity to access the latest advancements in cultural management and policy, it covered from education and training, to research and business models. In transferring to a digital format, there was also the prospect of coming to common questions and answers that may support all actors to navigate the uncharted waters. At a time when the counternarratives with respect to racial (in)justice and socioeconomic (im)balances were popping up everywhere intersecting with digital and internationalisation of arts and education, it was coherent that ENCATC invoke the reflection of its own space as an institution that “represents, advocates, and promotes cultural management and policy education” not only at European level but universally.

It is easily arguable that digital and computational arts & culture and teaching & learning further weigh to reinforce the existing global unevenness

which is (re)produced in the canons of knowledge. Knowledge and education are interrelated: education is to expand knowledge. Oddly, among the innovative topics explored in the Congress, “Education in a post-digital context” was present. By inviting a global conversation about to what extend cultural management and policy education is welcoming real diversity, ENCATC was acknowledging the knowing, perceiving and experience of “others”, beyond the still dominated Eurocentric discourses and Anglo-Saxon authors and theories.

Education, alongside with arts & culture, represents the driving force bringing the Congress’ participants to work together, sharing and collaborating with the at hand “desire to reconstruct tomorrow”<sup>2</sup>. Tomorrow can only be different if the reconstruction accepts the prefix ‘co’ and collectively, in a multitude of perspectives, challenges the status quo. This also means to question the academic knowledge as well as the aesthetic, cultural, social values of Western discourses, frameworks and contributions in order to move forward. In this sense, recontextualized knowledge is one of the main lessons that can be taken from this global shakeout.

Decolonising movement have risen to precisely confront the (cultural and moral) authority of the “established” knowledge. ENCATC could not be more accertive in inviting a real group of international scholars to make happen its session of **Global Conversation** tackling the matter of **“Decolonising cultural management education”**. As well pointed out during the provoking talk, cultural management, policy and education must also rethink its curricula, pedagogical and research practices in order to be a real significant tool to the co-reconstruction of tomorrow. An international summit with references, experts and enthusiasts about the theme surely has the scope to set in this essential paradigma transit.

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<sup>1</sup> ENCATC uses Florian Cramer’s understand of ‘post-digital’ as a situation in which digitalization is embedded in all spheres of life with profound impact on cultural practices and social transformations. Moreover, the scholar and novelist Dominique Kalifa suggests that ‘post-’ is intrinsic to uncertainty – the order of the day in a global pandemic setting.

<sup>2</sup> Reference to the epigraphy of the Congress Concept Note, by Dominique Kalifa: “There is today a desire to reconstruct tomorrow and the days after in a different way not knowing what this tomorrow will look like. This feeling of uncertainty is linked to the difficulty to project ourselves”.

In an truly Global Conversation, its structure and representation was already food for thought. Different continents – Africa, the Americas, Europe and Oceania – were made present. Counterpoint the usual dynamic, US and UK were also there but to chair the talk; while (semi-) peripheries were in charge of the 40min-panel discussion, first commenced by a 20min-keynote speech by the South-African scholar, **Avril Joffe**. Thoughtfully, she started by asking “why is it important?”, meaning why to, in the second day of the Congress, dedicate the global conversation focused around the thematic “Education in a post-digital context” to address the process of de-coloniality in the field of arts and cultural management higher education. (*Self-Reflective moment suggested*).

Before delving into more of the embellished content, concepts, and cases covered in the conversation, the further speakers shall also be properly introduced. Firstly, as chairs, from the UK and the US respectively, **Ana Gaio** and **Alan Salzenstein**. Then, from the geographical South but not necessarily part of an “Southern coalition”, Australia, **Xin Gu** joined instigating the inevitable flaws that can be part of the post-digital context. Following, from Puerto Rico, **Javier J. Hernández Acosta** contributed with the Latin American tradition of linking culture to social rights.<sup>3</sup> Before heading to final considerations within Q&A, the 2019 Laureate Fellowship Awarded, **Milena Dragičević Šešić**, from Serbia, added up with an often left behind semi-peripheral view of the “self-colonized” Eastern Europe.

Counterpointing the geohistorical systemic power asymmetry and sociospatial segregation in a institutionalized culture of privilege in its local historic features, movements are elsewhere claiming to tomorrow’s construction start in the basis of contesting the structural unevenness of socioeconomic complexities, intersecting with racial, gender, territorial, ethnic, generational, and opportunity issues. The convergence of

movements fight in the roots of capitalism, patriarchy and colonialism. In this perspective, the conversation ended up converging to an epistemology approach, because, as it was highlighted, decolonisation is the replacement of colonial concepts and knowledge: de-coloniality reinforce an epistemic change (Maldonado Torres, 2007). In also coinciding various references, Sousa Santos was also brought up and this proceeding section takes this link to mention this author’s encouragement to embrace “**Epistemologies from the South**”<sup>4</sup> as a project fundamentally focus on recognizing othered epistemic agents and collectives that have been historically oppressed.

According to the Standford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, the term “epistemology” comes from the Greek, in which “episteme” can be translated as “knowledge”, while “logos” can be translated as “argument” or “reason”. Hence, within the decolonialization effort, it is crucial to understand knowledge as situated, dependent on a context in which it is inserted. The standpoint of any source of knowledge is partial, selective, and incomplete (Ribeiro 2017). From this angle, the curricula, pedagogical and research practices not only in arts & cultural management but multidisciplinary extensive, should observe their own subjectivity of a partial view in a way to promise a more objective global comprehension. This awareness does not necessarily match representativeness: recognizing one’s privileged social locus is no excuse to release themselves from responsibility to face systemic inequalities. No matter how people belonging to privileged groups are aware and fight oppression hard, they will not fail to benefit, structurally speaking, due to the oppressions they inflict on other groups (Ibid.).

Not literally mentioned during the talk, yet certainly aligned with the problematic in question, Grada Kilomba<sup>5</sup> defends that the privilege of not being distinguished that (re)

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<sup>3</sup> In the UNESCO Creative economy report 2013: Widening Local Development Pathways, “the legacy of a continental tradition of linking culture to social rights” is highlighted when accessing the Latin American creative sector.

<sup>4</sup> Noteworthy that Sousa Santos pouses the ‘South’ metaphorically representing the human suffering, not necessarily a geographical parameter: it can be located in both the geographical North or South.

<sup>5</sup> Grada Kilomba is a Portuguese writer, psychologist, theorist and interdisciplinary artist, working on critically examine memory, trauma, gender, racism and post-colonialism.



produces power. This means that when one talks about people, the allusion is a white person (most likely high-middle class from the Global North). Kilomba refers to that as taking the “whiteness” as the human condition. In this sense, when curricula are treated technically rather than critically, it assumes certain nature of reality, truth and knowledge that does convey views and experiences which most likely are linked to the “White Privilege”, as introduced in Avril Joffe’s speech: the epistemic position of centrality in seeing the world. Curriculum is part of teaching, learning and practices within art & culture management. It must include both intentional and operational factors to achieve the (decolonial) epistemic transformations in the means of a contextualised social process. As identified, multiple epistemic traditions co-exist and education should embrace multi-versity: diverse knowledge and perspectives standing up in resonance with multiple voices.

What it is being taught, how it is taught and if there is space for agency is at stake when reflecting about cultural management and policy. In tackling it, Xin Gu nurtured those inquests remarking the repercussion of having digitisation embedded in arts & culture management educational community. The process of online teaching and learning requires a broad commitment on the public sphere, private initiatives and civil society to reimagining the creative arts in a format in which face-to-face social interaction is lost. Challenges to reforming narratives regarding technology are many, so are the opportunities of experimentation and co-creation. At a time when failure is smoother accepted amid uncertainty as the order of the day, to devote efforts, actions and discussion towards equity is about co-creating tomorrow based on multiverse frameworks.

On account of that, Javier J. Hernández Acosta, illustrating with Latin American experiences and own examples, displayed the cultural agent whose profile is built transdisciplinarily and role is to change socioeconomic reality through cultural-creative practices. Recounting an episode in which his work about bringing scholars from elsewhere to broaden the cultural management and policy field has oddly received the feedback

about the lack of “theory” (a.k.a: which theory?), he highlights the relevance of composing such conversation at times of societal transitions. Admitting the existence of language barrier as well as epistemologic differences, the need of reevaluating the creative professional is approached by wondering how to develop social agency pondering to the mission in the local territory. By emphasizing the presence of arts & culture among international agendas, as ones of UNESCO and the SDG’s which are taking up cultural policies as pro-social action.

Playing around the previous talk, Milena Dragičević Šešić “whinged” about not having the Latin American references translated to the Eastern European languages, upon touching the matter of legitimacy to what she calls the “academic capitalist” in which only Anglo-American publications are taken into consideration. Therefore, in face of akin **epistemicide**, subservity may be needed: critical thinking, controversial topics, and subalter knowledge must be advocated and shared. The multitude of voices and perspectives are essential in decolonising cultural management education, further contesting the patriarchal established curricula, pedagogy and research with feminists cards as well. Accordingly, to come to a conclusion with reference to this reproachful and inspirational global conversation, this brief text could only end by calling the “**Epistemic Disobedience**”: inviting the readers to consciously act on de-linking both epistemically and politically from the web of imperial knowledge (Mignolo, 2011). Are we ready to take this forward?

### Questions for further discussion

- What of the socialisation of cultural management and policy community with practices modelled on predominantly Western ways and mental images? Are we, as such community, actively decolonizing our intellectual landscape?
- Are we as scholars, educators, students, and enthusiasts globally contributing to a world of multiple voices? What role do the ones “not characterized” play in the social process of contextualizing knowledge?
- To what extent are cultural agents receiving the analytical skills and understanding abilities to foster diverse possibilities for transnational multiverse cultural cooperation practices and programs according to the decolonial vision and values?

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### **Alice Demattos Guimarães**

Alice Demattos Guimarães is a Brazilian cultural-urban economist, graduated in economics from the Federal University of Minas Gerais. She has worked as a researcher in the field of urban development correlated to the cultural sector, with focus in museums and performance arts. She holds a master in Global Markets and Local creativity as an Erasmus Mundus scholarship awarded between the University of Glasgow, Universitat de Barcelona, and Erasmus University of Rotterdam. Her master's thesis investigated the ordinary cities as a stage for culture, creativity, and social inclusion, studying the practice of the social circus in Latin America, intigating a decolonial approach. She has also collaborated as project officer in ENCATC in 2020. Currently, she is PhD Candidate with a fellowship in "Alternative finance as a responsible innovation within the cultural sector" within the [CrowdCul project](#) at the Western Norway University of Applied Sciences.

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Photo credit: Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)

/INTERVIEW

## **Why Culture Matters: In conversation with Ambassador Morikawa Toru, Executive Director, Asia- Europe Foundation (ASEF)**

**By ENCATC**

Ambassador Morikawa Toru joined the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) as its 8th Executive Director in August 2020. He is a career diplomat, and his previous postings include serving as Minister, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Japan in Iran; and Minister-Counsellor, Embassy of Japan in France where he was in charge of various cultural exchange initiatives. He has also worked in the areas of Media and Regional Economic Cooperation and has experience in cultivating and enhancing partnerships for projects with different organisations including the private sector.

**ENCATC: For those of our readers who may not know ASEF, could you introduce the organisation to us? What is its mission?**

The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) has been in the business of funding and facilitating multilateral cultural co-operation since 1997. Currently, we work to connect 51 countries in Asia and Europe. It is our aim to build long-term alliances between civil societies in Asia and Europe, based on fair exchange and mutual respect.

Over the past 23 years, we have brought together more than 40,000 professionals and students from the 2 continents. At ASEF, we do this by creating neutral platforms for dialogue – on equal terms – among cultural operators from across Asia and Europe. Within these dialogues, we embed our guiding principle of diversity, not just demographically, but in terms of worldviews as well. Through these efforts, we hope to deepen mutual understanding between the peoples of the two regions. Culture and education have always been priority areas for us.

What might be interesting for your readers to know is that our work is publicly funded by 51 countries, as well as the European Union and the ASEAN Secretariat (that brings together 10 south east Asian countries). Together, these 53 partners make up the Asia-Europe Meeting, the ASEM informal political dialogue process that set up the Asia-Europe Foundation as its only permanent institution. In fact, 2021 marks the 25th anniversary of ASEM. While ASEM focuses on government-to-government relations, ASEF facilitates people-to-people connections.

**ENCATC: What role do you see for arts, culture & heritage in these uncertain times?**

On one hand, the crisis has shown us how important the culture is to society's emotional well-being. Communities have created music from their balconies to cheer up their neighbours. Many of us have enjoyed movies, music and museums online to keep ourselves positive in this time of economic turmoil, when our routine lives have been thrown out of gear. The COVID-19 Social Study, led by Dr. Daisy Fancourt

of the University College of London has been widely cited in the last year. It has tracked arts participation and mental health in a cohort of 72,000 UK adults aged 18 and older on a weekly basis between March and August 2020. The data clearly suggests that people who have spent 30 minutes or more each day during the pandemic on arts activities like reading for pleasure, listening to music, or engaging in a creative hobby have lower reported rates of depression and anxiety and greater life satisfaction. Culture has, thus, been an affirmative and calming force at this time of great uncertainty for humanity.

At the same time, there has been some debate among the public as to whether the arts are essential services during a global public health emergency. This points to the important work that needs to be done in reaffirming the intrinsic value of the arts. Culture matters. It is a bridge connecting the social, economic and psychological wellbeing of human beings and of society at large. Thus, the arts have an important role to play in post-pandemic recovery.

Owing to the pandemic, the people of Asia and Europe – unfortunately – continue to remain divided, both in physical terms due to restricted travel and in terms of perceptions of each other. In this context, culture is a door to deepen mutual understanding. We are what we are, thanks to our culture. We, therefore, need to preserve cultural activity and cultural exchange as well as protect the people undertaking this important job.

In this International Year of the Creative Economy for Sustainable Development, we would also do well to remember that the arts have both symbolic and economic value for our societies. As UNCTAD's Creative Economy Outlook Report 2018 reminded us: the size of the global market for creative goods has expanded substantially more than doubling in size from USD 208 billion in 2002 to USD 509 billion in 2015. We must, therefore, reaffirm the value of the creative economy. The cultural and creative industries offer important opportunities to generate income, jobs and exports, particularly through small and medium-sized enterprises. Acknowledging this dual value can support economic recovery efforts, while also ensuring society's emotional well-being by

ensuring public access to the arts during this global crisis.

These are the key messages that we urgently need to convey to both the public and to policymakers.

**ENCATC: How is ASEF adapting its work in culture in response to the pandemic, both in terms of content and format? What are some of the key lessons you have learnt in the last year?**

The arts – including our own programming – have been severely affected due to closure of public venues and the limitations on travel as well as physical gatherings. Since early 2020, we, therefore, begun to re-think our programmes and approaches to adapt to the rapidly changing needs on the ground. We thought about the unique challenge to international cultural collaborations posed by the pandemic: how to ensure trans-national networking and co-operation in a time of travel restrictions?

If we are not to lose the gains we have made in the past, we realised that need to think more innovatively about how to use technology to nurture meaningful social and professional connections. We needed to find creative formats to gather online, formats that will enable a true exchange of ideas, where all sides are heard, and new connections are made.

In response, we have piloted 3 initiatives through our arts website, culture360 ([culture360.asef.org](https://culture360.asef.org)). We launched two virtual artists residencies in 2020 & 2021 in partnership with the ASEAN Foundation and Japan Foundation to support peer-to-peer & mentor-mentee engagements among cultural professionals. This year, we are delighted to be working with ENCATC to launch a pilot initiative for arts journalists in Asia and Europe to work with a mentor from the other region. We have also transformed our *Mobility First!* travel grant for cultural professionals into digital collaborations for Asian and Europeans to work together to create new artworks or new knowledge.

We would also like to draw your attention to a digital exhibition launched to mark ASEM Day

2021. Titled *A Passage to Asia: 25 Centuries of Exchange between Asia & Europe*, this free online exhibition – presented by the European Union (EU) and the Centre for Fine Arts-Brussels (BOZAR) – presents exquisite artefacts rendered in 3D and drawn from the collections of several museums. At a time when on-site cultural events are not possible, and many cultural venues remain closed, this exhibition harnesses the power of technology to create a truly immersive experience for the public. We invite your readers to visit <https://passagetoasia.eu/> to enjoy the exhibition.

**ENCATC: In the light of recent developments, what are the key gaps in Asia-Europe cultural co-operation that we must pay attention to?**

I would highlight 4 key areas for us to focus on in the short to medium term future.

Inclusive recovery is important. We should be careful enough not to overlook the needs of all the vulnerable groups in special need affected by the pandemic: artists and cultural practitioners are among them. For some, it is a matter of survival as they have lost opportunities to perform locally and internationally. Many young people, too, are isolated and cannot find hope for the future. Dr. Fancourt's study, which I mentioned before, has found that during the pandemic young adults have had higher reported rates of depression and anxiety than older adults, as well as lower levels of happiness and life satisfaction. Interestingly, 70% of the young adults in the UK aged 18-29 reported missing cultural institutions, even though normally older adults aged 60+ are more frequent visitors. With some help, these young people may contribute to the society, including as volunteers.

Although we are enjoying more digital connectivity than ever, we should also remember that the digital divide is still a reality. A UNESCO report from 2020 acknowledges that the internet is now an essential service but is still not accessible to 46% of the world's population. This shocking statistic must make us sit up and re-think access to technology. How can we reach those who are on the other side of the digital divide?

We should advocate for continued policy



coordination between Asian and European policymakers to exchange good practices in the cultural and creative sectors, including innovative approaches to sustaining international collaborations over the next 3 years, when mobility may not return to pre-pandemic levels. ASEF has been playing a valuable role to assist the host and the secretariat of ASEM Culture Ministers' Meetings (ASEM CMMs). It may be a time for us to appeal the Governments to resume this process.

We should also ensure that the needs and voices of artists and cultural professionals are heard by policymakers. This is best done by regularly facilitating platforms for multistakeholder dialogue. It would be particularly important to include ideas from key cultural actors on how the arts and creative industries could support the path to an inclusive and green recovery.

### Questions for further discussion

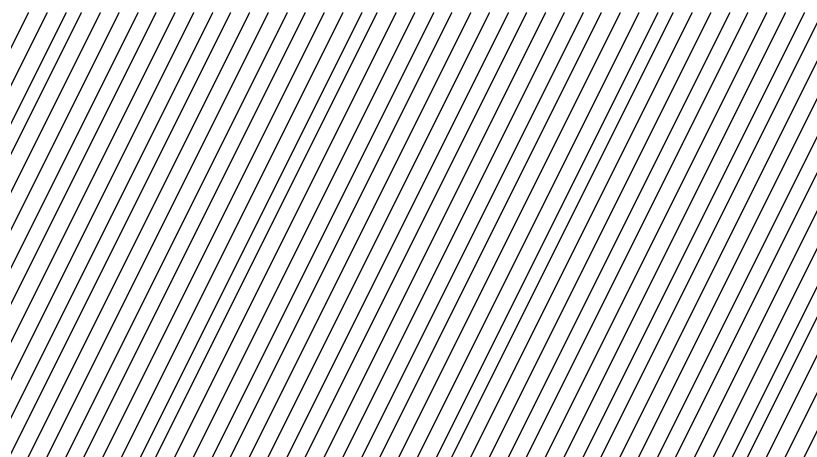
- Are the arts an essential service during a global health crisis? Why? Why not?
- Can virtual forms of cultural exchange fully replace face-to-face encounters? What might be the key disadvantages of overwhelmingly relying on digital means to promote international cultural co-operation in a post-pandemic world?
- What might be the key factors impeding equal partnerships between Asian and European cultural professionals?

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### GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS

- You are invited to use a language which makes it easy to share knowledge in the classroom.
- We kindly ask you to close your contribution by outlining some questions to spark the discussion in the classroom.
- As it is an online publication, we would suggest the text to have between 2.000 and 3.000 words.
- Please follow this citing style:
  - **Books:**  
TOFFLER, A. (1970) *Future Shock*. New York: Random House.
  - **Book chapters:**  
WALSH, P. (2007) *Rise and Fall of the Post-Photographic Museum: Technology and the Transformation of Art*. In Cameron, F. and Kenderdine, S. (eds.) *Theorizing digital cultural heritage: a critical discourse* (pp. 19–34). Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.
  - **Journal articles:**  
DEL BARRIO, M. J.; DEVESA, M. and HERRERO, L. C. (2012) Evaluating intangible cultural heritage: The case of cultural festivals. *City, Culture and Society*, 3 (4), 235–244.





WAYNESBURG UNIVERSITY'S ENTERTAINMENT AND ARTS MANAGEMENT STUDENT SAMANTHA MORAD WORKING ON A PODCAST. Source\_Samantha Morad.

/TEACHING EXPERIENCE

# Using Podcasts to Enhance Student Learning Inside & Outside the Classroom

**By Dr. Xela Batchelder** (Waynesburg University); **Thomas Karr, MFA** (Wayne State University); **Dr. Brett Ashley Crawford** (Carnegie Mellon University); **Brenda Lee Johnston, MAM** (Butler University); and **Dr. Amy Shimshon-Santo, Ph.D.** (Claremont Graduate University)

## Introduction

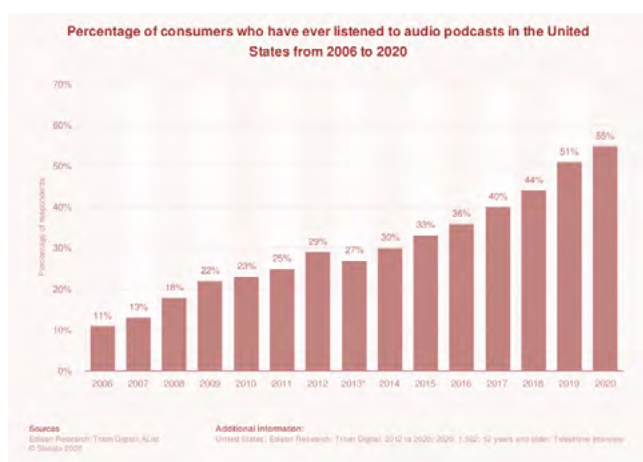
As technology evolves and the society we live in changes, so do the ways we learn and engage with information. A challenge faced by higher education is to find new ways to engage students and diversify the voices represented in curricula. One way to approach this challenge is by using podcasts. Podcasts allow students to learn about current issues in the field, hear from new and myriad voices, and provide new ways for students to engage with material. Teaching students to develop their own podcasts increases their knowledge and practical skills as they learn the software used to record, edit, and share podcasts. For these reasons and more, podcasts are an effective and desirable way to achieve several educational goals.

## What is a podcast?

Podcasts have proven to be a useful tool for student learning. One of the main benefits is their appeal to digital natives (Prensky, 2001). Although podcasts can support a more Universal Course Design, providing more opportunity for those students who learn better through auditory means, they are also an auditory-dependent pathway, perhaps making learning more difficult for students with hearing impairments. So, it is recommended that all podcast content (for class work or otherwise) be transcribed for the web with a free or low-cost transcription software.

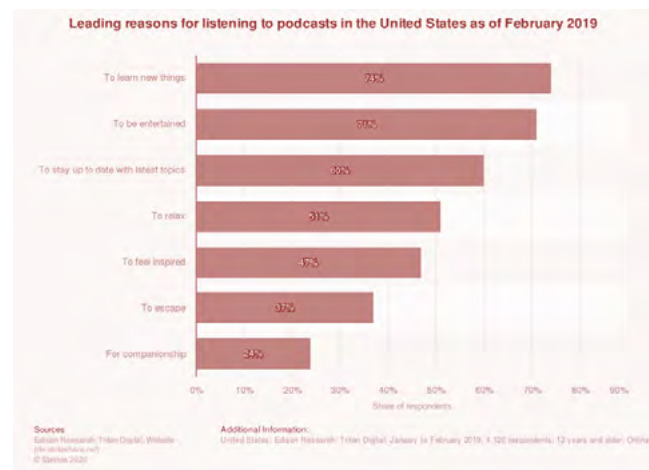
## Why Podcasts?

For those who are convinced that “podcasting is a fad or a trend”, data reveals that it is actually a mode of communication that is still growing.



**FIGURE 1. LISTENERSHIP YEAR OVER YEAR. Source: “Podcasting in the U.S.,” Statista, 2020.**

The *Chronicle of Higher Education* noted 2019 as the “Year of the Podcast in Higher Education”. But, as is demonstrated in Figure 1, listenership continues to grow. The pandemic has only accelerated this trend. Why is podcasting a preferred means of consuming ideas, stories, and other content? In many ways, podcasts are an outgrowth of contemporary life: podcasts are easy, mobile, and personalized: the trifecta of modern life. If that answers the practical motivation, it still does not answer the deeper “why”. Research into audiences reveals that the number one reason to listen to a podcast is to learn something new, which aligns well for using podcasting as a pedagogical tool (Podtrac, 2020).



**FIGURE 2. REASONS FOR LISTENING. Source: “Podcasting in the U.S.,” Statista, 2020.**

On the practical side, in training future arts managers, a pedagogical goal is to provide students with the tools to succeed in their careers and to support the successful work of arts organizations. With fifty percent of all homes listening to podcasts, arts organizations are utilizing podcasts as a mode for audience engagement (Listen Notes, 2020). Thus, if institutions are using podcasts as programming and communication tools, then it is important that training programs provide students with an awareness and proficiency in podcasting as both a consumer and producer.

## Pedagogical Theory

Humans have always told stories with sound—whether the parole of speech acts, or musical performances (Holquist, 1983). Technologies for sonic communication continue to evolve. Podcasting has become a widely used learning strategy that belongs in the arts management classroom. We consider the management of sonic knowledge objects as relevant to the techne of art making, preservation and archiving of artistic knowledge, and technological innovation or practical applications of scientific knowledge (Bolisani et al, 2012). Assigning audio knowledge objects in the classroom is a refreshing strategy to diversify the experience of in-person and remote learning (Bolisani, Borgo & Oltramari, 2012). Producing podcasts in class cultivates collaborative learning while providing novel opportunities to diversify curriculum, build personal and social skills, and gain confidence using cutting edge technology.



Podcasts can be used in the classroom to broaden access to cultural and geographic content. Podcasting can enhance intersectional studies by including a wide range of voices and experiences (Crenshaw et al, 2019; Thimm, Chaudhuri & Mahler, 2017). Hierarchical social structures amplify privileged voices while demeaning or silencing people who occupy a lower status in the social hierarchy (Wilkerson, 2020). Podcasting culturally relevant content can amplify silenced voices and performances of cultural citizenship (Flores & Benmayor, 1997). Amplifying a diversity of voices cultivates worldliness and increases empathy among participants critical to disrupting cultural hegemony and hierarchy in favor of anti-racism and inclusion (Kendi, 2020; Wilkerson, 2020; Hooks, 2015).

Podcasting has potential health benefits for students. Offering meaningful content through mobile devices can expand asynchronous or remote learning beyond a sedentary experience. Mobile options offer valuable learning for students to experience while in transit or performing other necessary mundane tasks. This provides the potential physical and mental health benefits from movement or exercise while learning that can mitigate the negative impact of sedentary behavior or excessive screen time associated with remote learning.

Learning to produce podcasts prepares students to better serve differently abled publics in their future careers as arts managers. Everyone will experience disability in their life at some point, and arts management education would do well to prepare future professionals to better serve artists and audiences throughout the human life cycle. Audio-rich teaching and learning enhances accessibility to better serve participants who are differently abled.

Producing podcasts can be used to develop compassionate listeners, courageous communicators, and practice shared leadership during collaboration. In terms of skill development, producing podcasts activates numerous skills including attentive listening, composition and writing, curation, public speaking, and collaborative decision-making

regarding content (Gardner, 2011). Producing podcasts enhances students' competence using professional software, equipment, and digital platforms. Producing podcasts cultivates confidence with one's own voice, while affirming the diversity of voices, perspectives, and expertise in any given learning community (Campbell & Ngan 2020; Shimshon-Santo 2020). In addition, participants become more sophisticated code-switching across communications modalities and styles that will be useful to their future careers as professionals.

Listening to and creating podcasts provide opportunities to communicate across the generations and expand ways to personalize the curriculum by bringing students' world, social capital, and creative interests to the center (Hooks, 2015). Whether listening to learn, or learning how to produce sonic knowledge, podcasting plays to the strengths of artists as storytellers, music makers, visualists, and kinesthetic communicators. Arts management pedagogy continues to adapt to issues in techne, preservation, and technology. Listening to and producing podcasts in the classroom can further empower educators to inspire inclusivity, collaboration, and connection in their learning communities.

## **Classroom Applications**

Educational applications include both listening to podcast content and/or producing podcasts in the classroom. This section discusses classroom applications for both listening and producing podcast content.

### **Listening to Podcasts in the Classroom**

Listening to podcasts can be used as part of assignments in preparation for classroom discussion and in tandem with students creating their own podcasts, as listening to podcasts helps them understand what makes a quality podcast (such as style, musical enhancements, and technical production). A benefit of listening to podcasts is that they can be listened to while driving or doing simple tasks like cleaning. For students overwhelmed with assignments, it helps to remind them that this assignment can be

done while mundane tasks are accomplished. Having students listen to podcasts is particularly effective for introducing them to the world of podcasting. Therefore, the first goal is to have students listen to podcasts and to become familiar with important podcasts in their field of study. Students then write reflections and critiques of the podcasts and discuss them together as a class.

The Podcast Listening Assignment includes the instructor providing a link to or title of the podcast for the class to listen to and a short writing assignment with prompts. This ensures student engagement by requiring them to be attentive to the podcast, while also reinforcing the course themes present in the podcast. The instructor often adds a few open-ended prompts (student's favorite part of the podcast, what students learned, etc.). Such questions help the instructor assess what students are thinking about and learning from the podcast; this often proves to be surprising since students come to the assignment with diverse experiences and backgrounds. Such questions also allow the instructor to catch misunderstandings or promote unique viewpoints in advance of the class discussion. The assignment concludes with an in-class discussion of the podcast.

**Producing Podcasts in the Classroom**

Creating podcasts move students from passive consumption to active engagement with course materials. Podcasts are a transmedia opportunity for students to demonstrate understanding and application. Podcasts can be created just for the class to listen to, ergo tech skills are less important, or they can create them for an actual audience demonstrating proficiency in content and technical skills.

When creating a podcast, in lieu of a paper or other assignment, it is important to provide the frameworks students need to consider (Hicks, 2018). These include thinking through a pre-recording script, collecting biographical or context information for the content, and then completing outlines of purpose and content parts. A sample pre-recording script might look like:

Time	Speaker/Text/Content	Sound FX	Purpose
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Another approach would be a storyboard. The actual podcast recording should include clear introductions and contextualizations that might include trigger warnings, special acknowledgements, pre-recorded and mixed sound effects, as well as show notes that might include citations or other references. Providing students with a starter idea for content format might come from a listening exercise or a list of choices including interviews, storytelling, research reports, or panel discussions.

Technology needed can be from simple to advanced, but a quality microphone is necessary for anything to be distributed outside of a classroom setting. Otherwise, the microphone on a cellphone or computer can suffice. Once content is captured, a student or assistant can work in editing software. Audacity is a free, open source tool that is available to all and easy to learn. Additionally, simple editing can be done on native apps in smartphones or computers. Once edited and saved as mp4 files, content can be distributed in myriad ways. Many professionals use syndication tools like Libsyn or Podbean, however a discussion board in a learning management system can also be used. If publishing broadly, it is important to provide for universal access via transcription. Tools such as otter.ai or descript can automate the job, or if using for on-campus purposes only, the university disability services team can provide support.

**Conclusion**

In sum, an array of positive learning outcomes can be gained from including podcasts in teaching and learning that are applicable to undergraduate to graduate level education, and from community-based spaces to executive education curriculum. Including audio-based assignments builds professional relationships and expands voices and knowledge available to the classroom. Listening to podcasts furthers student learning while diversifying voices and knowledge included in curriculum. Active listening to current podcasts makes new information available for study more quickly than many literary publication modes. Just as reading informs writing, listening

prepares students to become podcast creators and communicators. Whether audio works are shared only in the classroom, or with broader audiences, valuable collaboration skills are learned including communication skills (listening and structuring communication), and critical thinking through multimodal forms of teaching and learning. Students develop expertise in listening, interviewing, interrogating knowledge, and expanding their awareness of the arts, culture, and administration. Listening to, and/or producing, podcasts fortifies social networks that connect students, educators, artists, audiences, administrators, and creative communities locally and globally. Podcasting expands platforms for students to think critically, connect, and cultivate their own ideas and voices.

### Questions for further discussion

- Do you listen to podcasts, and if so, which ones and why?
- Have you listened to, or produced, podcasts in the classroom? If so, how have you used them to enliven arts management pedagogy? What new sonic strategies might you use to deliver content, and shape assignments?
- How can podcasts further an organization's artistic and administrative goals?
- What are potential student learning outcomes from incorporating podcast listening or production into your coursework?

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### **Dr. Xela Batchelder**

Dr. Xela Batchelder is an Assistant Professor at Waynesburg University. Her area of expertise is Fringe festivals around the world, particularly the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. She is the Executive Director and co-founder of the Pittsburgh Fringe, and has consulted with many other Fringe Festivals. She is also the Executive Director of Fringe University, an educational program using the Edinburgh Fringe, the largest arts festival in the world, as a classroom. She holds a dual master's degree in English and Art History from University of St Andrews, Scotland, as well as a master's and Ph. D. in Theatre from The Ohio State University.



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Dr. Brett Ashley Crawford is an Associate Teaching Professor and the Faculty Chair of Arts and Entertainment Management at Carnegie Mellon University's Heinz College of Information Systems and Public Policy. Dr. Crawford also serves as the Executive Director of the **Arts Management and Technology Laboratory**. Her areas of expertise include audience engagement, systems theory, gender and management and, of course, technology and the arts. She brings 15 years of professional theatre management experience into the classroom.



### **Thomas Karr**

Thomas Karr is the Director of Graduate Studies in Theatre Management at Wayne State University. His areas of research include audience engagement as a revenue developer, data-driven decision making, and strategic planning. Previously he taught at the University of Alabama and worked professionally for Theatre Development Fund (NYC) and Children's Theatre of Charlotte (NC). He holds an MFA in Theatre Management & Arts Administration from the University of Alabama.



### **Brenda Lee Johnston**

Brenda Lee Johnston is the Department Chair and an Associate Professor of Arts Administration at Butler University. Prior to joining Butler's faculty, she served as an executive director of community-based performing arts centers. Her areas of expertise include community engagement, programming, board governance, and strategic planning. She holds master's degrees in arts management from Carnegie Mellon University and in Innovation & Organization of Culture and the Arts from the Università di Bologna, and a BA in Arts Management from the University of Wisconsin—Stevens Point.



### **Dr. Amy Shimshon-Santo**

Dr. Amy Shimshon-Santo is a writer and educator who believes that the arts and culture are powerful tools for personal and social transformation. Her interdisciplinary work connects the arts, education, and urbanism. She has held educational leadership roles at Claremont Graduate University and the University of California, Los Angeles. Shimshon-Santo earned a Ph.D. and M.A. in Urban Planning from the Luskin School of Public Affairs at UCLA, an MFA in Creative Writing from Antioch University, and a BA in Latin American Studies from UC Santa Cruz. Learn more about her work at [www.amyshimshon.com](http://www.amyshimshon.com).



/CASE ANALYSIS

# **Lessons from planning hands-on heritage training programs during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

## **Case analysis of European Heritage Volunteers**

**By Emilia Sánchez González**

M.A. World Heritage Studies. Brandenburg University of Technology

### **Introduction**

The reach and severity of the COVID-19 pandemic took the entire world by surprise. Every individual and every organization had to find fast solutions to adapt to a new restricted living situation. While some managed to thrive amid chaos, the rollercoaster of conditions did not make this easy for anyone.



Unfortunately, this challenging situation is not over. There is still uncertainty about the upcoming challenges we must face in 2021. The new vaccines have given us all hope but it is too soon to chant victory and throw caution to the wind. We will need to keep adapting our way of working, socializing, and living.

### COVID and the Cultural Heritage Sector

The pandemic had a powerful impact on the cultural sector, often struggling with reduced funds and highly dependent on social interactions. Museums, libraries, and archives closed their doors, and cultural events, conferences, and training courses were postponed or canceled. Since contact was reduced to the digital space, there was a sudden urgency to accelerate the digitalization of culture. Many saw this as the only option.

Presenting the case study of European Heritage Volunteers, I will analyze the crossroads faced by this organization when they decided to proceed with their offer for cultural heritage training programs during 2020. The challenges faced by the administration, the partners, the coordinators, and the volunteers themselves will help shed light on the complexities undergone during this fateful past year. I will further reflect on digital alternatives or complements and explore the conception of hybrid models for this type of non-formal cultural heritage education.

### Case Study: European Heritage Volunteers

European Heritage Volunteers is an organization dedicated to providing heritage conservation projects and training courses for young people around Europe. It has been operating for more than twenty years offering hands-on educational activities for volunteers interested in conservation, restoration, and revitalization of heritage. It aims to draw the public's attention to undervalued heritage sites and to foster a deeper understanding of heritage and volunteering.

The pandemic impacted this organization severely because the projects revolve around physical contact with the site and traveling. The projects are organized in partnership with local

institutions and organizations across Europe, which meant that the decision to continue with the projects depended on the varying conditions of stakeholders. When questioning how to proceed with the projects planned for the summer of 2020, the organization knew they were taking a great risk but they also felt they had few other choices.

Juan Carlos Barrientos, coordinator of programs at European Heritage Volunteers, explains the difficult decision they were facing when they decided to move forward. He mentions that in some cases, approaching their past partners to continue the projects was met with demoralizing responses since some were unable to cooperate despite wishing to. In other cases, the locals and the partners, who desired some semblance of normalcy at their sites or were even already relying on the projects to help impulse their bids for external funding were the drivers to keep the projects functioning. In these cases, they were willing to take the risk and face the upcoming challenges together.

*"It was a very tough decision which was taken after much reflection and only with the agreement of all those who would be responsible for carrying out the season of projects. We implemented our projects only where we could count on absolute support from the local hosts. We all knew this was a gamble of our future. One single positive case could endanger everything, and we felt the responsibility for each participant's safety."*  
– Juan Carlos Barrientos, European Heritage Volunteers<sup>1</sup>

The challenges came from different fronts and Juan Carlos recalls that navigating uncertainty was probably the biggest one. Official regulations were constantly changing and there was always the high probability that within a matter of days or hours, the panorama regarding restrictions or permits for operating projects would change. The summer of 2020 saw improvements in the numbers of cases in many European countries and restrictions relaxed. However, the consistency of these decisions was very difficult to monitor, and surprise travel bans were a huge threat. Even if the project was allowed to

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<sup>1</sup> Extract taken from an interview with J.C. Barrientos García by Emilia Sánchez González (14 April, 2021) Weimar, Germany.



continue, what would happen if a large number of participants could not get there? Or if group coordinators or key partners were unable to take part? Which measures could be taken to ensure everyone would be safe? What more could the organization do to sustain itself financially?

Communication was key in dealing with these questions, having sincere conversations about the dangers, developing prevention and contingency plans. It was crucial to develop a sense of trust with the partners and this could only be achieved by a clear day-to-day logistics plan, a well-researched narrative, and careful consideration of all the people who would be involved. With all these aspects taken into consideration, unlikely projects managed to successfully take place, but the particularities of every project had to be addressed individually and some of them had to inevitably be canceled. In the end, little over half of the projects were able to take place. Of the 24 projects initially planned, 15 were carried out. Juan Carlos recalls the struggle to keep projects alive and the emotional blow it was for the whole team each time a cancellation was deemed definitive.

Juan Carlos explained that one of the most contested spots was the finances. The organization is partially funded by the house rental activities of the mother organization 'Open Houses e.V. and without the possibility to rent their leisure houses and conference halls, they were running out of funds. Logistics involve time and money, and continuing the planning of projects was risky business. It is necessary here to recognize the key role of community engagement. When it came to interceding for the interest of projects before the local authorities and applying for local funding, committed partners made all the difference. Nevertheless, in some cases, the decisions were out of their hands, corresponding to regional or national restrictions and processes.

*"There was a lot of stress. The Director and our accountant spent countless hours moving around assets, juggling the whole apparatus of the organization to make the projects happen with the funding available from our depleted*

*coffers."* – Juan Carlos Barrientos, European Heritage Volunteers<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, the challenges did not disappear for the projects that were allowed to continue. After receiving training from the administration and experienced former coordinators, the team of group coordinators at the 2020 projects had the difficult task of ensuring the safety of everyone involved and, at the same time, keeping the "interactive" spirit of Heritage Volunteering alive. In this regard, the reduced number of participants was an advantage. One coordinator expressed, "it was only because we had a reduced number of participants that we were able to control the measures and keep the quality of the experience." Another coordinator mentioned, "I think the corona measures added to the stress of being a coordinator. There were many things that we had to consider for the first time and more organizing to do before the participants even arrived. It could also sometimes be difficult to balance enforcing pandemic-related restrictions with encouraging participants to hang out and get to know each other."

The organization and all stakeholders will be happy to know that their efforts were well received. Not only were the projects carried out completely free of COVID cases, but the participants conveyed a satisfying experience that did not diminish in quality for those who had the experience in previous years. Moreover, the young public is grateful for having had the opportunity to participate in the summer programs and expressed how they completely separate the difficulties experienced because of COVID restrictions. The setting of the projects themselves, which allowed for many activities to be carried out outside played an important role in the experience of the participants. As an enthusiastic participant expressed it "being outside instead of in front of my screen, on-site instead of a webinar, it delivers a powerful learning experience."

### **Digital Alternatives and Hybrid Models**

Initially, we saw the pandemic drove the cultural field to increase and improve their online offer. Now, having analyzed the case of the completely

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<sup>2</sup>Extract taken from an interview with J.C. Barrientos García by Emilia Sánchez González (14 April, 2021) Weimar, Germany.

non-digital type of cultural offer, we can explore the possibility of meeting these two approaches. Could digital alternatives have been just as successful? Would heritage conservation projects benefit from digital complements? Would it make sense to conceive hybrid models for this type of hands-on cultural heritage education? Would the standards be able to be reproduced? And how could these alternatives be communicated attractively?

When prompted to reflect on digital alternatives, Juan Carlos said he does not foresee this changing dramatically in the near future of European Heritage Volunteers. He mentioned European Heritage Volunteers is considering Webinars or online conferences within their educational offer but the essence of the organization lies in learning-by-doing and hands-on experiences. Group coordinators and participants' interviews were likewise interested and skeptical, considering the experience less attractive and concerned about the quality that could be delivered. One coordinator mentioned "digital learning is great because it is so accessible, but so much of the current programming is based on getting to know the place of the project and the people and communities that you are working with, which is considerably more difficult from a distance, and a lot of the value would be lost that way", another that she did not believe digital gives a true sense of the restoration/conservation experience. In the case of the participants, the connection to heritage or the work itself is only one of the reasons to apply for this kind of project, at times coming in second to the intercultural interaction with the other volunteers. Volunteers mentioned, "it would be better to do the covid test several times, rather than doing it digitally", and "the essence of a project is an encounter with heritage physically and virtually".

While a completely digital project was met with skepticism, there seems to be a consensus that a hybrid complement might be attractive, and allow for the desired physical experience as well as embracing the benefits of technological advances. Participants and coordinators alike were curious to find out how such a program would work. At the moment, the organization

does not have any plans for hybrid projects to take place but we must not forget the key factor of uncertainty, which could still turn plans around at any moment.

## Conclusions

After this fateful year of lessons, the organization is confident in its planning for the summer of 2021, which will begin with the exhibition "Volunteering for European Cultural Heritage" this June in Weimar, followed by the group coordinators training seminar in July and projects until the end of October.

When it comes to digital transformation, international organizations such as ICCROM and Europeana have sought to provide digital education options that have attracted many participants. Historic England is another example of an organization that provided digital heritage conservation courses last year. However, their constitution differs greatly from a volunteering project, where the educational component needs to be supported by the physical connection to the site, aimed at kinesthetic learners and providing the satisfaction of immediate results. Moreover, the educational offers are one among many activities within these bigger institutions and their management cannot be compared to an organization that specializes uniquely in the development of hands-on projects. It is not possible to say at this stage, if the heritage volunteering sector will ultimately join the hybrid and digital cultural offers out of interest or necessity, or maybe not at all. What we do know, is that if that day should come, we will all be better prepared for it.

I invite you to engage in a conversation about the future of our non-formal heritage education, the possibilities of using technological advances to benefit the existing offer, the need for out-of-the-classroom experiences, the need for risk-preparedness plans, and the place of volunteering as a legitimate learning experience that deserves to be better supported.

### Questions for further discussion

- Which lessons can we learn from the European Heritage Volunteers case?
- How would heritage conservation volunteering projects benefit from digital complements?
- Would the standards of the on-site projects be able to be reproduced for a digital or hybrid version?
- How could these digital alternatives be communicated attractively?

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More information about European Heritage Volunteers project can be found at <https://www.heritagevolunteers.eu/index.php?lang=de>

### GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS

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### **Emilia Sánchez González**

Emilia Sánchez González is an emerging cultural heritage professional with the mission to communicate the value of culture as a medium for interdisciplinary learning, peacebuilding, and sustainability. She has a bachelor in tourism management with a focus on communication and languages from the University of Guadalajara, Mexico and a master in World Heritage Studies from the Brandenburg University of Technology, Germany.

Her experience lies in the planning and development of cultural events and educational activities, community management, and research. Her main topics of interest include intangible heritage, transcultural practices and identities, decolonial studies, heritage interpretation, museum education, and Asia-Latin America relations.





/CASE ANALYSIS

# Theater after dust: the light after the digital BigBang

**By Rodrigo Paris and Roma Triunfo**

Nodo Centro Cultural Digital ([www.nodocultural.art](http://www.nodocultural.art))

According to a study carried out by SINCA, a total of 1,591 venues are registered in Argentina for the exhibition of performing arts. The majority (70%) are theaters; 23%, cultural centers, and the rest correspond to educational centers, artistic bars, and circuses that include performing arts shows in their programming (7%).

These statistics imply another value when it is taken into consideration that, as a consequence of the pandemic caused by COVID-19, Argentina suspended all its cultural activities between March and November 2020 (TELAM, 2020).

This situation, which was paralyzing at first, quickly morphed into a series of creative responses by the Argentine theater community. Despite being one of the sectors hardest hit by the Pandemic crisis, the theater sector, used to operating in an extremely unstable context in economic terms, did not stop asking questions.



In order to think about the particularities of the event, a panorama of the plays and shows carried out by the Argentine artistic community in the context of the Pandemic will be outlined below. These plays will be separated in groups according to characteristics that are related to them.

The first case that we will mention is the performance shows that were translated into audiovisual language.

"Historias de Vendimia", with a marked folkloric imprint, is a show that has been held in Mendoza since 1936 with a central performance held at the Greek Theatre Frank Romero Day, annually hosting more than 1,000 artists on stage and 22,000 spectators to celebrate the wine harvest. In March 2021, with the challenge of translating the work of the theater scene into a 100% audiovisual language, 15 historical-artistic directors of the show were summoned with the aim of shooting six chapters that would be part of a feature film. The work that annually brought the entire team together on the same stage found in the audiovisual format the possibility of creating safe sanitary capsules in more than 36 locations. Trials were carried out with small casts and in open-air spaces, with sanitary measures such as the use of sanitary masks, social distancing, and taking the temperature at the entrance time. In the event that a positive case of COVID-19 was detected, the corresponding capsule would be isolated and substitute artists would jump into the scene, to avoid stopping the project. In addition, more than 100 cultural points were arranged throughout the province for the screening of the feature film and simultaneous screening at events in more than 55 countries. In this way, the Pandemic propelled the transformation of a phenomenon with strong traditional and folk roots towards a specifically audiovisual format that would present new challenges and opportunities (Vendimia-Mendoza, 2021)

In the same direction, there were other types of shows, those that were filmed in the original space, to be broadcast virtually. Based on the measures ordered by the ASPO, the Teatro Nacional Cervantes (TNC), dependent on the Ministry of Culture of the Nation created the

"Cervantes Online" program using the Hashtag #QuedateEnCasa proposed to accompany the first days of isolation. The record not only of previously released theater shows was posted on the YouTube profile; but also talks and lectures by different artists. Likewise, in May 2020 the TNC opened the call "Nuestro Teatro" for the selection of 21 short plays by national authors not released. Once the works were selected, the artistic teams were formed for each one, without any certainty about the real possibilities of realization. The shows were rehearsed and recorded in the theater itself, through strict sanitary protocols, without the presence of the public to be included in the virtual platform.

A similar example is the one carried out by the City of Buenos Aires with the program "Teatro en casa" that arranged the broadcasting of shows premiered before the coronavirus pandemic.

Perhaps the most interesting phenomenon is the one that occurred with the works that were created especially for the spaces that this "new normal" proposes. "Amor de Cuarentena" is a work headed by Santiago Loza and Guillermo Cacacce. The viewer bought a ticket and for two weeks received WhatsApp messages, which included texts, images, and songs, which reconstructed an old love story.

In this case, the artists chose to experiment with an element that is outside the theater but in its drifts. It is not strictly a film, nor theater, nor radio novel. But it is fiction, which asynchronously finds its viewer.

The students of the last year of the acting degree of the National University of the Arts (UNA) carried out their 2020 graduation project using the context in their favour:

That's the case of "Un día El mar, experiencia escénico-audiovisual en vivo", a show written and directed by Ariel Farace. It consisted of a series of performances with the simultaneous presence of artists and spectators, mediated by the screen. The appointment happened on the YouTube platform and then stayed online for a certain time. The artists, geographically located in different parts of Latin America, built the show.



Some of them worked in everyday environments that were surprised by the appearance of the camera and the inclusion, through it, of the viewer's eye. Others installed green screens, replacing their background with that of a theater room or other projection. This work created in and for the Zoom platform gives relevance to the device at the same time it constructs the story.

The play "Mi parte es todo" by Braian Kobla, is carried out in a central square in the city of La Plata with an area of 7000m<sup>2</sup>. In it, a small group of spectators who are invited to attend with a mask and are offered alcohol, manages to fully respect social distancing.

"Vivir en una casa prendida fuego" by Danae Cisneros and Julieta Koop is, according to their program, a scenic, performative and sound experience touring the Saavedra Park. This show, also created in and for the context of the pandemic, is held outdoors in a park of more than 10,000 m<sup>2</sup> located in the center of the Saavedra neighborhood, in the City of Buenos Aires.

In both cases, there is a simultaneous and tangible encounter between artists and spectators, the theater changes to an open-air space, but there is no technological intermediation. Yes, there are chinstraps, masks, plastic helmets, and physical distances that intermediate to make the gathering possible.

Finally, the phenomenon of protocolized Theater is identified: After the joint and articulated work of various organizations that represent the cultural sectors of Argentina together with the Ministries of Culture and Health of the Nation, the approval of the General Protocol for Theatrical Activity and Music performances with a live audience was achieved in November 2020. Following international examples, measures were established such as reducing the capacity of the theaters through the cancellation of seats, social distancing in entrance lines, use of a mask, and taking the temperature at the entrance to the theaters. It is the example of "Con Todo el Amor del Mundo" by Juan Francisco Barón premiered at the NAVE UNCuyo in Mendoza in March 2020, in the midst of the arrival of the second wave in Argentina and "Microteatro" in the Rural Society in Buenos Aires.

As can be seen in the previous examples, the impossibility of the physical, material and tangible encounter of the bodies put the theater, as we know it, in crisis. For the Argentine theater theorist Jorge Dubatti, "the inescapable basis of the theatrical event is in the **theatrical gathering**" (Dubatti 2015). The author calls **theatrical gathering** the reunion of artists, technicians, and spectators at a daily territorial and temporal crossroads without technological intermediation that allows the territorial subtraction of the bodies in the gathering.

That is, he claims that without the physical and auric presence of bodies in the same space, there would be no theatrical event. This would leave a large part of the above-mentioned works expelled from their theater category. But then, where are they located?

The author opposes a concept to describe the experience of that living culture deterritorialized by the mediation of technology, he will call it **techno-gathering**.

It should be noted that this notion was born long before the impossibility of meeting in theaters and at a time when it was far from thinking that artists were going to find in the digital universe a possibility to develop a new type of spectacle.

Faced with this deterritorialization effect that technology produces on the human cultural experience raised by Dubatti, it is proposed to reflect on Marc Augé's notion of no-place. Recently, the French anthropologist has declared that the use of new technologies makes us carry the no-place with us. At first, it seems that in virtuality, as in non-places, anonymity is imposed, the subtraction of individuality. We are facing a discussion of ontological dimensions, necessary to lead the crisis that the Argentine theater is going through in the midst of a pandemic towards a fertile field for the appreciation of new experiences.

Following what was proposed by Santos (1996), the territory is understood as a "socially constructed space" based on the appropriation of certain uses and meanings by various actors. In this sense, the question is whether the creative and sensitive effort of thousands of artists, manifested

in formats such as those described above, cannot be understood as an appropriation of virtuality, a re-territorialization, a transformation of that non-place. The transformation of virtuality as an entity that removes subjectivity and allows anonymity, towards a non-physical territory that enables a new type of sensitive gathering, a digital scene.

### Questions for further discussion

- Will it be possible to transfer the emotions and effects of the gathering theatrical event to the artistic experience marked by the techno-gathering that, at least in Argentina, takes on exponential dimensions during the coronavirus pandemic?
- Where do we locate all these artistic expressions linked to the theater in all its elements except the gathering?
- What happens if that territory is built in an immaterial space?
- Is there a difference between synchronous and asynchronous techno-gathering shows?

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- "Un día El mar, experiencia escénico-audiovisual en vivo" by Ariel Farace, Argentina (with performers in several latinamerican countries)
- "Mi parte es todo" by Braian Kobla.
- "Vivir en una casa prendida fuego" by Danae Cisneros and Julieta Koop.
- "Con Todo el Amor del Mundo" by Juan Francisco Barón, Provincia de Mendoza, Argentina.
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### GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS

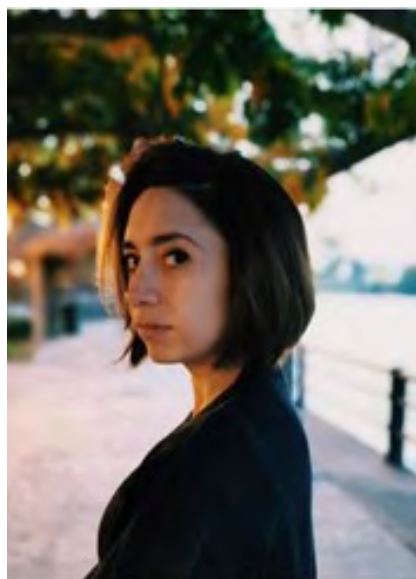
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### **Rodrigo Paris**

Rodrigo Paris is an actor and researcher with a degree in Acting from the National University of the Arts. He is currently a recipient of the EVC-CIN Scholarship investigating the play "El Hipervínculo: Test 7" by Matías Feldman. In 2018 he was selected to carry out an ERASMUS exchange at the Instituto del Teatro in Barcelona, Spain. As a teacher, he has served as an Assistant in various subjects in the Department of Dramatic Arts at UNA. In the context of a pandemic, he works as an Assignee of one of the virtual Seminar of Performance and as a workshop leader of the Laboratory "Drifts and readings of the Beat Generation" of the Líbido Project in Buenos Aires. He has worked as an actor, producer, and performer in projects in Mendoza, Buenos Aires, and Barcelona. His career of more than 10 years as a volunteer in Argentine NGOs linked to the promotion of non-formal education and citizen participation stands out, being part of exchange projects in Chile, Paraguay, Romania, and Turkey.





### **Maria Romina Triunfo**

Maria Romina Triunfo is an actress, teacher, and producer. She has a degree in Acting from the National University of the Arts (UNA, Arg.) and a diploma in Cultural Mediation, Community, Arts and Technology (CLACSO). She studied programming (UTN, Arg) and trained in film, 360 ° film, and creative writing.

She works as a teacher at the National University of the Arts and is a researcher at the Theater Research Institute (IIT-UNA) and at NODO Centro Cultural Digital. She produces the 48 Hour Film Project Festival in Buenos Aires since 2017.

As an actress, she worked in independent theater, having toured Argentina and abroad. With her artistic works, she has participated in several festivals such as 26° FITUB Festival (Blumenau, Brazil), Festinver 2014 (Gaspar, Brazil), FAUNA 2016 (Bs As, Arg.), Filmapalooza (Seattle, USA), 27° FITUB Festival (Blumenau, Brazil), Filmapalooza 2019 (Paris, France), among others.

