

Thoughts and reflections from the 28 January event:

'I'm surprised governance is seen as a very minor factor relating to rights to participate when so many Boards of organisations have political appointees as well as a dominant cohort of professional trustees or directors, like lawyers, accountants, bankers etc.'

'Someone shared that in Rwanda and in general that in the great [lacs] countries it is hard to perform songs about Democracy and human rights.'

Responses to Catherine Magnant's speech

'Very interesting point about performing arts and how the term is used throughout the report, I myself don't have a performing arts [background] and am attending this webinar as a 'general' cultural practitioner/professional, because I assume the findings are often easily extendible to other artistic forms.'

'That's an interesting observation from a policy perspective. However, I think there is often a significant gap between how 'freedom' is defined in institutional frameworks and how it is actually experienced by artists and cultural workers on the ground. While there may have been periods of relative 'opening' 15 years ago, the internal mechanisms of censorship and the daily reality for creators remained deeply restrictive in Iran. Saying this as an Iranian who's been working in this sector for 18 years now.'

'Sharing the campaign Resistance Now Together. RESISTANCE NOW TOGETHER is the campaign working to establish a European Artistic Freedom Act (EAFA) - a coherent legal framework guaranteeing artistic freedom throughout the European Union. By making artistic freedom an enforceable right, the EAFA would safeguard artists and cultural workers from censorship and political pressure, enabling them to contribute freely to a democratic, diverse, and resilient Europe. I invite you to sign up to the newsletter to receive regular campaign updates, and opportunities to attend events, talks, performances and discussions on the topic of art and democracy! <https://www.resistance-now-together.eu/home>'

'It strikes me there are three separate elements to pressure on living arts in democracy and they should not be conflated. 1) the pressure by governments and political parties on artists who disagree with them. 2) The pressures on arts organisations to misrepresent history because reality or an alternative view undermines an official or political narrative. 3) the pressure from

political pressure groups in civil society to campaign against or 'cancel' artists who do not agree with or are seen to have views that do not fit with group agendas.'

'When economic pressure rises and social empathy declines, democracy often becomes more fragile. In response to Ms. Magnant's point, I strongly believe that, in our practice, the performing arts play a particularly direct role and front line, as a public good: creating spaces for public participation and enabling collaboration with the health and social sectors to build wider and more resilient alliances.'

'When artists choose to boycott or step away from certain platforms based on their principles, and in doing so take on real professional and financial risks, are these actions understood within existing systems or cross-sector research as a form of democratic practice? Could we imagine having to guideline the boundary between free-market logic, cancel cultural intervention and democratic practice in this context?'

'Thanks for sharing the report and your experiences - much of what you've covered resonates here in the US. We've recently won a lawsuit that we filed against our National Endowment for the Arts on gender ideology restrictions, similar to suing your Ministry of Culture. Much of the advocacy, arts activism and organizing work here in the US is through organizations and partnerships between organizations. Despite our outreach we know that many individual artists not directly connected to arts and culture organizations are looking for connectedness. What strategies are you and your organizations using to connect the vast population of individual artists?'

'Art and culture are expressions with a societal-building power, and cultural policy should be based on freedom of expression and tolerance. Cultural life and civil society are prerequisites for education and an enlightened public, and thus an investment in democracy. Culture should be free, with personal commitment and volunteerism as its basis. Our belief in the power and importance of art and culture in creating and maintaining open, democratic societies is the reason why Freemuse is systematic monitoring and documenting violation of artistic freedom.'

Questions for Catherine Magnant:

In what ways has the EU supported artists and cultural organisations in practical terms in cases of visible censorship?

How can we ensure that there is a real focus on cultural values? It seems to me that when talking about the relationship between democracy and culture/arts, the focus is often purely on participation in cultural activities, but rarely on what cultural values should guide those activities. What is your perspective on a European Commission-led policy study examining how culture and the arts influence democratic processes at the level of people's mindsets?

In these difficult times, cultural policy makers constantly emphasise that culture is an essential component of democracy and indeed the very foundation of democracy. I basically agree with

this in principle and would like to see this attitude gain majority support and shape reality, but I would nevertheless like to ask (speaking of honesty) What concrete arguments are there today to justify this? After all, as the report shows, we are in a phase in which democracy is in decline, while at the same time, art and culture are being exploited globally by non-democratic systems and have become an almost shameless market. So are art and culture necessarily on the side of democracy or drivers of democracy? I have my doubts and am curious to hear you're thoughts about that.

Attendee asks the speakers their perspectives on imagining new futures through shifts in collaborative practice, moving beyond and embracing more intersectional and pluriversal perspectives

Questions for Elena Polivtseva:

An attendee shared that in France, the significant budget cuts lead authorities who provide support in funding/activities creation, to require dance companies to increase mediation efforts for example with elderly people, disabled ones and schools. They express concerns of being limited to mediation activities, which it is felt as undermining the dance company's purposes and identity. They feel this tension is a matter of democracy too and are asking if there are similar tendencies in Europe

An attendee asked what strategies can artists, cultural professionals and artists associations adopt to express solidarity with artists outside the EU and especially from the Global South? They share the example of the cancellation of South African artist Gabrielle Goliath from last year's Venice Biennale because her work was defined as 'divisive' since it spoke of ongoing international conflict.

What are the specific actions undertaken by the EU institutions regarding the establishment of a secure, minimum salary for all art professionals and artists within the EU?

Additional shared resources:

A guide recently launched in Portugal:

<https://accessculture-portugal.org/a-guide-to-managing-incidents-and-promoting-safety-in-culture/>