Brainstorming Report

PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE IN CULTURAL HERITAGE (July 2015)

I. FRAMING

This report comes out of a Brainstorming session organised through the *Voices of Culture* process, a Structured Dialogue between the European Commission and the cultural sector. This process provides a framework for discussions between EU civil society stakeholders and the European Commission with regard to culture. Its main objective is to provide a channel for the voice of the cultural sector in Europe to be heard by EU policy-makers. In addition, it aims to strengthen the advocacy capacity of the cultural sector in policy debates on culture at a European level, while encouraging it to work in a more collaborative way.

The session on Participatory Governance in Cultural Heritage, held on 2 and 3 July in Florence, provided a space for exchange and discussion between around 35 participants representing the cultural sectors of the EU Member States.

The present report is the result of this discussion. It has been presented to the European Commission at a Dialogue Meeting in September 2015 in Brussels.[1]

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[1] Disclaimer: The opinions expressed here are the views of the participants in the brainstorming session and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of their organizations.

II. SOME INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

We, members of civil society organisations, would have liked to have been able to participate in the definition and articulation of the Structured Dialogue process on Participatory Governance in Cultural Heritage itself. We believe that civil society should have been involved in the process of defining the main issues to discuss and the most important questions to be answered. It seems somewhat contradictory to set up a dialogue on participation without letting the other side of the table, the other partner in the dialogue, take part in the process of making decisions about what should be discussed and how.

We think that the structure of the brainstorming session and the whole process of the Structured Dialogue, as it has been conceived, have not allowed civil society to work effectively or properly. A two and a half hour brainstorming session is not enough to map out all the important issues that should be discussed in relation to participatory governance in culture, let alone to propose measures. It would not be serious or professional to suggest measures around the topic only after this short period of time and without having been able to analyse the root causes of all the identified problems, barriers, obstacles and challenges. Therefore, we would like to emphasize that this document and its content are just a first approach to the topic and not at all exhaustive.

III. DEFINITION OF PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE

The word 'governance' has a double meaning: it is both a synonym of 'government' and 'authority' and also refers to the 'management system' of an organisation.

Therefore, when we talk about participatory governance in cultural heritage we are talking about these three levels:

- Participatory government

- Participatory authority

- Participatory management system

The concept 'participatory' refers to those activities in which people take part. So, the combination of 'participatory' and those three concepts (government, authority and management system) implies that government, authority and management (all those terms related to power) should be shared with people, with the citizens to whom the heritage belongs. As Arnstein explains "*participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless*"[2].

A common understanding of participatory governance in cultural heritage is needed. Heritage is a broad and complex sector, and a common understanding of participatory governance is not in place as yet. There is no common vocabulary or framework of definitions at work, at both

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[2] http://lithgow-schmidt.dk/sherry-arnstein/ladder-of-citizen-participation.html

international and national levels, but most relevant actors in the field have expressed the urgent need of encouraging community participation and involvement[3]. At one level this means that different parts of the sector, such as an NGO or a private museum, have different understandings of both what participatory governance is and its relevance. At another level, what the heritage sector may consider to be participatory governance may be different to what community practitioners think of as best practice.

Not every kind of public participation in the cultural heritage can be considered 'participatory governance'. Citizens can participate in educational projects, in entertainment activities, in consultation processes even, but those types of participation activities are not examples of 'participatory governance' for us. Only shared governance, only shared power could be thought of as such. Just the last three steps in the Arnstein´s Ladder of Citizen Participation (Citizen Control, Delegated Power and Partnership) might be thought as genuine participatory governance.

The discussion process on participatory governance of cultural heritage was proposed by the organisers to be structured around the power, capacity and incentive gaps underlined by Siddiqur Osmani in the UN document "Participatory Governance and the Millennium Development Goals"[4]. However, our group considered this division as artificial and unclear. It causes unnecessary overlaps and repetitions. Issues of power, capacity and incentive to participate are often raised when considering participatory governance in general and must be addressed when discussing this topic. However, we believe that they are confusing as a means to structure the debate.

In trying to consider all these issues in relation to the three different heritage types (tangible, intangible and digital), the group concluded that there was more crossover than division between these types and so pre-conditions, challenges, and key messages should be considered across all types of cultural heritage.

The 21st century is a time when tangible cultural heritage is under increasing threat from environmental decay, neglect, and conflict, intangible cultural heritage is hard to access and to preserve, and digital cultural heritage raises new legal, funding and preservation challenges. Against this background there is a reduction in provision of state funding, services and support for heritage.

Given this retrenchment by governments, an increasing need for community participation in heritage preservation was identified and an acceptance that it was no longer valid or practical to rely on state institutions to do everything.

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[3] The high relevance of community involvement as part of the so-called 'Cs' (credibility, conservation, capacity building, communication) was outlined in the Budapest Declaration on UNESCO World Heritage 2002 (http://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/1217/). It was included as an own "C" for community involvement as part of the Strategic Objectives in 2007 (http://whc.unesco.org/archive/2007/whc07-31com-13be.pdf) and described in World Heritage Papers 31: http://whc.unesco.org/documents/publi_wh_papers_31_en.pdf

[4] http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/UN/UNPAN028359.pdf

IV. WHY IS PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE IN CULTURAL HERITAGE NEEDED? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

We believe that participatory governance can be the driver for change, radical transformation and innovation in the management and governance of cultural institutions in Europe. Citizens cannot be kept apart from participating in the protection and preservation of European heritage. Far from the absolutist maxim "Everything for the people; nothing by the people", governments in Europe should promote citizen participation in the government and management of cultural heritage in order for people to be able to take care of their own cultural wealth.

Participatory governance in the cultural sector could be the first step towards promoting shared governance in other sectors in society. It could be at the forefront of public participation in the governance of governmental institutions, regardless of the social area they are working on. Citizens today are demanding more direct participation in the decision-making process of managing governmental institutions. Voting is not enough.

V. PRE-CONDITIONS FOR PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE IN CULTURAL HERITAGE

- Trust and respect between rulers, professionals, and citizens
- A democratic starting point
- Willingness to listen to each other and to act together in order to change things for allowing true participation
- Ethics must guide participation
- Respect for heritage
- Need for more democratic storytelling
- Need to identify and get to know the different community groups in order to establish better participation mechanisms
- Need to generate an emotional link with, and interest in, culture
- Organised civil society structures
- Legal framework and long-term policy mechanisms which allow and encourage participatory governance in cultural heritage
- Transparency and information - more available information ex post and ex ante
- Structures and formats that support participation
- Education and training for politicians, managers, and communities
- Building capacity for advocacy work on these issues
- Common understanding of the participatory process
- Common understanding of participatory governance
- Build and re-build (where broken) engagement leading to active participation

Political challenges

- No clear political will.
    - o Anxiety about change in power and responsibility dynamics.
    - o Fear of civil society, of communities.
    - o Who are the actors?
    - o Who makes the decisions?
    - o Who decides what to preserve/to protect?
    - o Who allows others to participate?
    - o Need for better identification of responsibilities.
    - o Use of culture by politicians in their own interest.
    - o Politicians do not trust local actors.
    - o Policy makers do not act as facilitators between different social sectors.

- People, in some cases, do not have the right to participate, and, in other cases, even if they have the right they do not feel they can exercise it.
    - o Fear of government and public administrations.
    - o Need to find out the story behind the emotional link people feel towards cultural heritage that would justify their participation in governing, managing, preserving and protecting cultural heritage.
    - o Need to make participation relevant for the community.
    - o Need to include everybody in the decision making process.
    - o Lack of private sector participation.

- Lack of legal mechanisms and proper implementation.
    - o Lack of EU legislation on participatory governance in general.
    - o Need for better implementation of EU laws related to other domains that could have an impact in participation in European countries.
    - o Lack of human resources in the European Commission to work on these issues.
    - o Lack of national legislation in some European countries.
    - o Need of better implementation of national laws related to participation.

- o Lack of cooperation-coordination between local-national-EU authorities.

- o Need for evaluation of the legislation and its implementation in European countries.

● Lack of transparency as to how cultural heritage organisations/institutions are managed and lack of access to information on their decision-making, management and funding.

Professional challenges

● Gap between professionals and citizens.

- o Conflict of legitimation to manage and preserve cultural heritage:

  ▪ Legitimated source vs. 'uneducated' citizens

  ▪ Hierarchies of interpretation

- o Power related to cultural heritage institutions is concentrated in a small number of managers.

- o Top cultural managers are not often open to participation by communities in the management and decision-making of their institutions.

- o Cultural workers not invited or encouraged to be fully engaged in participatory activities.

- o There is a language gap between experts/institutions and citizens/communities. In general, language and process exclude communities, whilst playing in favour of the bureaucrats. Even when everyone is speaking the same language, lack of transparency can mean that it is sometimes hard for citizens to penetrate institutions and to make their voice heard.

● Need for education and training on participation for politicians, public servants, top cultural managers, cultural workers, civil society organizations and communities.

- o Cultural heritage organisations/institutions lack the knowledge to approach their communities and to put in place participatory governance mechanisms.

- o And vice versa - the communities which certain organisations/institutions are supposed to serve have little knowledge of, or expertise in, participation or do not know how to approach organisations/institutions in order to ask for participation in their governance.

- o Lack of extensive compilations of examples, experiences and good practices that would share how participation really works in the management, decision-making, preservation and protection of cultural heritage.

Economical-social challenges

● Lack of public/private funding in order to promote participation and the implementation of participatory mechanisms in cultural institutions/organisations.

- o Who has the power to fund?

o   Who is willing to fund?

 o   Who is able to fund?

 o   Lack of targeted efficient measures through EU and national funding.

● Need for a 'participatory budget' for new co-created projects.

● Lack of partnership between public and private owners of cultural heritage.

● Lack of a holistic approach for measuring impact of cultural heritage in people´s lives.

● Lack of transversal-horizontal interactions with other fields.

VII. KEY ACTORS

When it comes to the process of promoting participation in the governance of cultural heritage, we believe a good starting point is to establish who the primary 'actors'[5] are. Each cluster of actors have been organised around common characteristics that would directly influence their approach to participation. Furthermore, this approach would allow for a more action research focused approach to participatory governance and cultural heritage, based in the work of Paolo Freire and a commitment to working in partnership with communities. Four broad categories have been agreed upon:

 a. Policy Actors

-These include: the EU, UNESCO; national and local government; international and national NGOs; universities and research institutions.

-Motives for developing participatory governance in cultural heritage include: cultural democracy; public support; intercultural dialogue; education and learning; political ownership.

 b. Delivery Actors

-These include: national institutions; public sector venues and agencies; cultural centers,; private owners; charitable organisations; private sector venues and organisations; community led initiatives; and social enterprises.

-Motives for developing participatory governance in cultural heritage include: increased public engagement; widening contemporary relevance of cultural heritage; investment and business case; improved governance; relationship to locale / place.

 c. Professional Actors

-These include: professional associations; senior managers and strategists; curatorial and operational staff; artists and producers; experts, advisers and consultants; academic researchers.

-Motives for developing participatory governance in cultural heritage include: contemporary relevance; public support and engagement; community linkages; expanding reach and impact.

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[5] 'Actors' meaning active participants at all levels.

d. Community[6] Actors

-These include: community led organisations and projects; volunteers and other engaged citizens; local groups; project participants; audiences and visitors.

-Motives for developing participatory governance of cultural heritage include: local and personal relevance; access; quality of life; place-making; community development; inter-generational and inter-cultural dialogue; support for intangible cultural heritage.

Incentivising the various cultural heritage 'actors' to take forward participatory governance in their work requires a commitment to three areas:

- Showing what it looks like;
- Demonstrating its impact;
- Supporting its implementation.

There are other groups of citizens who are not active regarding cultural heritage due to different factors (as lack of interest, education, etc) but who could play an important role if measures to promote true participation and to convey its relevant consequences in society are put in place and implemented.

VIII. KEY POINTS

a. Connection between policy and practice

There are strong policy commitments to participatory governance in place at the international level, and in some cases at national level. However, unless there is a lead organisation working to translate this into sectorial practice it is unlikely that this will be translated into practice 'on the ground' or even into strategic thinking at the local level.

b. Maintaining professional standards and professional morale

An increase in participatory governance means changes within the priorities and operational environment of professional staff. It can be difficult to carry through changes of this type within organisations when staff feels that their professional standards may be compromised by a change of focus. Working practices may not keep pace with changes in governance, and there may be insufficient organisational investment in the process to support development and the transition.

c. One size does not fit all situations

The sector is very diverse and heterogeneous. Actors vary in terms of the scope of what they consider to be heritage, and their approach to its upkeep, access to it, and what they consider to be appropriate governance. While participatory governance in some guise is relevant in all situations, the form that it takes will vary greatly. For this reason, while Independent Voice it would be difficult at this stage to include examples of what Voice of Culture participants agree

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[6] 'Community' meaning society, public. 'Community Actors' meaning groups and individuals in European societies who are active participants regarding cultural heritage.

collectively to be good case studies of participatory governance in cultural heritage without agreed definition currently being researched and criteria to select best practices being agreed.[7]

d. Engaging all the different communities without excluding marginalised groups

Where participatory governance does exist it can reinforce the interests of those already engaged with the cultural heritage of the museum and gallery. Although there are questions as to how to engage minority groups, migrants and under-represented groups with cultural heritage at the local level, and then how to translate this into participatory governance, there are also concerns about the reason why non-marginalised communities do not either participate in cultural heritage. It might be due to the lack of a legal framework and clear political/professional will and knowledge.

e. Political risks

Not everyone considers the widening of participation and participatory governance as desirable and there are risks of this process triggering media coverage and debate that turns participation in cultural heritage into a 'political football'. Community interests are often a contested area and at the local level there may be opposition to, or undermining of, widening community participation. Additional risk factors must be identified in relation to divided societies where heritage is, by nature, contested.

IX. KEY MESSAGES

The following key messages should underpin any work on participatory governance:

a. Including participatory mechanisms in all the management cycle phases and each and every process related to decision-making regarding cultural heritage

Participation must be introduced at every phase of the management cycle of cultural heritage (planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation). People must be involved in every process of decision-making regardless the kind of decisions that must be made. Participatory mechanisms, tools and training materials should be facilitated in order to facilitate participation even in areas where citizens do not have specialized knowledge and where traditionally politicians, experts and professionals are not willing to give up control (e.g. financial or artistic decisions).

b. Ensuring transparency and access to information for a true participation

Participation is only possible if all the actors involved in cultural heritage and common citizens can have access to true and updated information on every management aspect of cultural heritage institutions and organizations. Access to reliable and complete information is the basis for genuine participation.

c. Adopting a 'whole organisation' approach

Participatory governance requires every part of an organisation to be involved, from the Board of Directors, to key staff, to volunteers. This means resources and planning must be invested in

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[7] As mentioned above, a two and a half hours brainstorming session is not enough to deeply study these issues and to agree on definitions or criteria in order to select best practices or to compile case studies.

the changes. This also requires investment at the community level so people have the resources needed to participate.

d. Translating into a performance and evaluative framework

The need for staff and stakeholders to assess how well they are doing in developing participatory governance requires a performance framework, with aims translated into realistic targets. This in turn should inform an evaluation that can enable the implementation of participatory governance for a range of stakeholders.

e. Embedding into professional practice

Cultural heritage rests on a platform of recognised professional practice and standards. Those involved are committed to maintaining and developing professional standards and participatory governance needs to be embedded in them. This means that education, training and continuous professional development will need to address approaches to participatory governance.

f. Raising importance of intangible and digital cultural heritage

The expansion of intangible and digital cultural heritage is a particularly powerful method of widening and deepening participation. Engaging with people's lived heritage provides a range of pathways to involve local communities in participatory governance. The increasing challenge of maintaining physical collections should not detract from the need to focus on this area. Furthermore, the sector must seek out a wide range of cultural crossovers to stimulate and sustain this work.

g. Pathfinding to explore different approaches

While core definitions and standards for participatory governance are required, their application in different settings needs work to explore how they can be applied. This requires an action research approach in each of the four levels of 'actor'. The commissioning of pathfinder projects in different parts of the sector needs to be accompanied by work that demonstrates how to connect this activity at the levels of policy and strategy. Processes need to allow for, and be capable of resolving conflict that may emerge between different actors in the process.

h. Demonstrating value to wider society

Cultural heritage contributes to much of our lived experience, from democracy, to civil society, to education, to health. Processes where public or private sector commissioners simply 'buy' cultural heritage input for a project do not allow for the full potential of the sector. Involving stakeholders from a range of disciplines into the process of participatory governance is likely to expand the role of culture heritage across public life.

i. Ensuring Digital inclusion

The digital shift has provided many new opportunities to involve a wider public in cultural heritage. The sector now has many excellent examples of innovative work in this field. However, the reach of this work can be restricted by the limited scope, or duration of projects, and the technical requirements of participants. Attention to how to use digital materials in a way that maximises inclusion in the participatory governance of cultural heritage is required, from online materials in education or library systems, to links with broadcasting, to tailored products for smart phones.

j. Embedding funding programmes

a) Embedding participatory governance in existing funding schemes and agreements. This incentive can be applied at a variety of levels, from the EU, to national funding agreements, to localised grants and investment. However, this requires the grant giving body to enshrine participatory governance in their aims, objectives and strategies, and to demonstrate their own commitment to this approach.

b) Funding for pathfinder projects that allow organisations to explore participatory governance in their own setting.

c) Research and development funding at both the European level, and at local level, to demonstrate the advantages and benefits of participatory governance, and how to set about introducing or developing it.

k. Review of best practice[8]:

There is ongoing work to progress participatory governance of cultural heritage across Europe involving all four of the 'actor' categories: policy; delivery; professional; and community. There is best practice that can demonstrate what can be achieved, and how to set about achieving it. There are also examples of failure and poor practice to learn from. The following list indicates the various areas of practice where case studies could be usefully developed.

a) Policy
   i. best practice at the policy level
   ii. strategic documents
   iii. sector networks and frameworks
   iv. cross sectoral ambition and relevance

b) Delivery
   i. case studies at the organisational level
   ii. new models of governance
   iii. organisational development
   iv. management of change
   v. transparency and access to information

c) Professional
   i. training and professional development
   ii. curatorial practice
   iii. collaboration and networking
   iv. learning materials and online tools

d) Community
   i. tangible and intangible cultural heritage and community engagement
   ii. digital inclusion

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[8] In order to focus the search for case studies we provide, as reference, a list of different areas where it would be interesting to look for best practices.

iii.   community led initiatives

X. CONCLUSIONS

Remember Art. 27 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1) "*Everyone **has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community**, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.*"

Participatory governance is about **shared governance** plus **shared responsibility**. It requires:

- Trust
- Ethics and respect
- Political will (no tokenism)
- Professional and social will
- A legal framework
- Transparency and access to information
- Education/training for all the actors involved
- Funds for promoting true participation

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	ORGANISATION
Darko	**Babic**	ICOM Croatia / ICOM-ICTOP / UNI of ZG Subdepartment of Museology and Heritage Management
Luca	**Bergamo**	Culture Action Europe
Dominique	**Bouchard**	The Hunt Museum/Limerick 2020, Ireland
Kalliopi	**Chainoglou**	University of Macedonia, ECURES
Luca	**Dal Pozzolo**	Osservatorio Culturale del Piemonte (OCP), Piedmont Cultural Observatory
Céline	**D'Ambrosio**	Association of Cultural centres Brussels/Wallonia
Karin	**Drda-Kühn**	Kultur und Arbeit e.V.
Delphine	**Dupeux**	European Historic Houses Association
Cristina	**Farinha**	ADDICT Creative Industries Portugal
Chiara	**Galloni**	RENA / Articolture
Enara	**Garcia**	Donostia / San Sebastian 2016 Foundation
Lucia	**Gembesova**	Academia Istropolitana Nova

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	ORGANISATION
Julie	**Herve**	EUROCITIES
Dorota	**Ilczuk**	Pro Cultura Foundation and University odf Social Sciences and Humanities
Sam	**Khebizi**	Les Têtes de l'Art
Catherine	**Leonard**	International National Trusts Organisation (INTO)
Piotr	**Michałowski**	European Network of Cultural Centres and Community Culture Centre of Oleśnica, Poland
Ritva	**Mitchell**	CUPORE
Eva	**Moraga**	Instituto de Arte Contemporáneo (Institute of Contemporary Art)
Andrew	**Ormston**	Compendium of Cultural Policies & Trends in Europe
Clara	**Paillard**	PCS union (Public & Commercial Sector)
Rita	**Paqvalen**	Culture for All Service
Ieva	**Petkutė**	NOG Socialiniai meno projektai
Ad	**Pollé**	Europeana Foundation
Sneška	**Quaedvlieg - Mihailović**	Europa Nostra
Corina	**Raceanu**	Intercultural Institute Timisoara
Pierluigi	**Sacco**	IULM University Milan - CICO Center for Cultural Policy
Margherita	**Sani**	NEMO - The Network of European Museum Organisations

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	ORGANISATION
Laura-Melpomeni	**Tapini**	DIADRASIS, Interdisciplinary Research on Archaeological & Architectural Conservation
Georgia	**Tramacere**	Teatro Koreja
Piroska	**Varga**	Association of Cultural Heritage Managers
Elizabeth	**Whyte**	Wexford Arts Centre
Heidi	**Wiley**	European Theatre Convention (ETC)
Ana	**Zuvela**	Institute for Development and International Relations