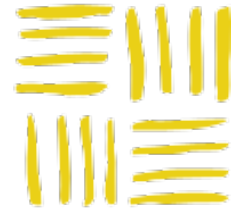


# SIRIUS4all



## RESEARCH REPORT

Phase 1: initial research -  
#Bulgaria #Denmark #Germany  
#Italy ... and the EU

Partner:

A25 + CKI + Freeartus + Luoghi Comuni  
more: [www.sirius4all.eu](http://www.sirius4all.eu)



Credits:

*Undertaken and authored by the partaking organizations*

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## Preface

Research was conducted by the four partners of the project, coming from Bulgaria, Denmark, Germany, Italia.

Each research depicts a different individual perspective: of the writer, the culture, the city, the nation.

The decision to perform research in this way was taken knowing that the perspectives of the European experience vary to a large degree in the respective countries.

The idea is to represent different angels that might – or might not – enrich each other, contradict each other, mirror each other, explain each other, fascinate each other.

Research uses a multitude of methods. Aesthetic research, being part of this project, focusses on the individual experience and the expression of such, being aware that the sensorium of perception and cognition is not situated in the brain, and is not situated only in the body (solar plexus, belly, or wherever) or in a spiritual world (soul) but in an interrelation of all these human constructs to reach some understanding of the mechanics and sense of the world we exist in.<sup>1</sup>

Research is presented individually representing the countries of the organizations in individual documents: 1. Bulgaria | 2. Denmark | 3. Germany | 4. Italy (more see under [www.sirius4all.eu](http://www.sirius4all.eu)). Research was undertaken individually. A research framework was developed before and agreed upon in internal meetings as well as already portrayed in the application for funding made in 2023.

The application with its underlying assumptions was created in the beginning of 2023, research was conducted the first three month of 2024. This is the status quo represented here.

Research of the project will be continued via the artifacts created in the events of the project. Results will be presented in a 3-D-Online-Gallery and on the website of the project: [www.sirius4all.eu](http://www.sirius4all.eu).

## Disclaimer 1

### **On Language and Horizons(s)**

This webpage is written in trans-national English, an idiom emerging from the need-driven, imaginative usage/application of a kind of English language vocabulary by a diverse multitude of non-native speakers in various situations and walks of life.

It does not mimic any standard or "correct" kind of British English. It is a language in its own

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<sup>1</sup> In German there is a term for this connection, which is "Leib". It signifies the inseparable linkage of mind and matter; it means more than a body but an individual presence that is both at the same time. Deriving from the Germanic "leiba" meaning "to live" it means a whole presence of a personality. It is visible in the Christian term for the wafer representing the true Jesus Christ, named in Latin "Corpus Christi" or in German "Leib Christi", thus signifying the spiritual unification.

right. It is a language, an expression, not owned by one culture or country any longer, but shaped by its free-floating adaption.

It signifies that words have meanings rooted in an individual, in a specific usage, and at the same time in a common understanding shaped by shared culture(s). It points out that speaking is listening, that writing is reading (even with machine translations, sometimes used here).

Providing sense stems from a dialogue - which always takes two, even in the individual reflection. This flowering tongue/lingo of trans-national English, this dialogue might be the starting point for a fine mix/assemblage of narratives heading towards a bright uncharted territory: OUR EARTH & a next EUROPE.

## Disclaimer 2

Words shown in capital letters signify a wider context or field of the term than using the word inside of quotation marks or the word in small characters. This wider context refers to the process of emergence of a field. For example with ART, it contains creating, selling, buying, curating, watching, placing, discussing, teaching, institutionalizing, ... art. It means: doing art = ART. It is transcending and integrating past, present, to variable, diverse, decolonized, Western, Eastern, Northern, Southern perspectives, all forming a sphere of meaning already and almost becoming a narrative. These nouns thus become “breathing subjects” of the sentence, for example in the terms ART, EARTH, OTHERS.

# The BULGARIA<sup>3</sup> Perspective

Research conducted by A25, Sofia, Bulgaria

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<sup>3</sup> BULGARIA, DENMARK, GERMANY, ITALY are framings of an ideal/subjective state. The territory and/or the nation, the state represents much less than this collective and at the same time individual term signifies.

## **Bulgaria from earthly and outer space perspective**

### ***Research (or A Galaxy Traveler Guide )***

#### **Some basic official statistics on where you've landed:**

According to the latest census, published in 2021 by the National Statistics Institute, the population of Bulgaria is 6 519 789 - women are 51.9 % or 3 383 527 and men are 48.1 % or 3 136 262. The population has decreased by 11.5 % compared to the previous census, carried out in 2011, making Bulgaria the fastest shrinking country in the European Union and in the world.

4 782 064 people live in the towns, or 73.3%, and 1 737 725 people live in the villages, or 26.7% of the population of the country. During the period between the two censuses, the population in the towns decreased by 10.4%, and in the villages - by 14.2%

The population aged 65 and over is 23.5% of the country's population, whereas the population in the 15 - 64 age group is 62.4%.

The data also shows that 99.1% of the country's population has Bulgarian citizenship. Of them, only 0.5% have dual citizenship - Bulgarian and other. The citizens of the European Union who reside permanently in the country are 10 549, or 0.2%. The majority of them are citizens of Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland and Romania.

According to the official census, third-country nationals number 49 453, or 0.7%, with 35.3% of them being citizens of the Russian Federation, followed by citizens of Ukraine, the United Kingdom, Turkey and the Syrian Arab Republic. There are 539 stateless persons. 97.9% of individuals were born on the territory of Bulgaria. 0.9% of the country's population were born in a European Union country, and 1.2% in a third country.

In terms of religion, 62.7 % of the population identifies itself as Eastern Orthodox, 9.8 % as Muslim, 1.1 % as Protestants, 15.9 % answer that they do not have a religion and 9.5 % prefer not to answer the question.

The main ethnic group are the Bulgarians, which are 84.6% of the population. Turkish minority accounts for 8.4 % and the Roma - for 4.4%. About 40 other smaller minorities account for the remaining 1.3%, and 1.3% do not self-identify with any ethnic group



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<https://www.nsi.bg/en/content/766/statistical-data>

## Where do we stand on the map of Sirius4All Project:

Bulgaria is situated in South-Eastern Europe, neighboring Turkey, Greece, Northern Macedonia, Serbia and Romania. The distance from Sofia to:

- Berlin is 1,635.4 km and according to Google map, if you start driving right now it will take you 16 hr 15 min to get there;
- Perugia is 1,528.7 km and according to Google map, if you start driving right now it will take you 15 hr 15 min to get there;
- Copenhagen is 2,068.8 km and according to Google map, if you start driving right now it will take you 22 hr 28 min to get there;
- Brussels is 2,113.5 km and according to Google map, if you start driving right now it will take you 21 hr 19 min to get there;

## What are Bulgarians most proud of:

### *The Invention of the Cyrillic Alphabet*

The Cyrillic alphabet is nowadays used by more than 300 million people mainly in Eastern Europe and Asia, but Bulgarians are particularly proud that it was created in the 9th century by Bulgarian brothers, Cyril and Methodius. The brothers have been proclaimed as saints and are celebrated every year on May 24.

### *Being one of the oldest nations in Europe*

Established in 681, Bulgaria is one of the oldest European countries and the only one in Europe that has never changed its name. Thus, it is the third country in Europe in terms of archeological sites after Italy and Greece. It is also the home of the oldest city in Europe - Plovdiv, which has existed for more than 8000 years.

### *Bulgarian Song Flying in Space*

“Izlel e Delyu Haidutin” is a Bulgarian folk song performed by the singer Valya Balkanska. A recording of it was sent on board of the Voyager Spacecrafts in 1977, along with other earthly artefacts, meant to introduce humanity to extraterrestrial life if encountered.

### *Nature*

Bulgarians are very proud of nature in the country, which ranges from diverse mountains to



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the Black sea coastline. One third of the country's territory is forest, making it one of the counties with the greatest number of forests in Europe. Bulgaria is also the second European country in terms of natural mineral springs.

### *The Bulgarian Oil-Producing Rose*

Bulgaria is a world leader in rose-oil production. Central Bulgaria's Rose Valley has the most suitable climate and soils for roses, where most of the fields are situated.

### *The Yogurt*

Lactobacillus bulgaricus, is a healthy bacterium and the main one used in the production of yogurt. It was first identified by Bulgarian doctor Stamen Grigorov, who named it.

### *Famous people*

John Vincent Atanasoff, the American physicist, credited with inventing the first electronic digital computer, was of Bulgarian descent.

Hristo Stoychov, who received Ballon d'Or in 1994 is credited at the most famous Bulgarian soccer player of all time, whereas the recent successes of Grigor Dimitrov on the tennis court term him into the contemporary sports legend of the country.

The present Bulgarian team of Rhythmic Gymnastics, who has won many medals are also quite loved in the country.

### **"Europe" as a star of Bulgarian constellation**

There are a number of topics that an honest conversation about Europe will always address (in quite a provocative manner) among members of Bulgarian society. They can be thought of as strategic dilemmas and as such they have been discussed from different perspectives, but still remained contradictory and subject of intensive debate.

### *National or Supranational Identity*

From earthly and outer space perspective it is still the national identity, which dominates the Bulgarian spaceship, no matter its intergalactic activities in all spheres of human life. In 2021 a national survey explores the modern identity of Bulgarian citizens and shows that despite global mobility and transnational communication (between friends, colleagues, family members, etc.) the national identity remains the primary and guiding factor in the self-identification of Bulgarian citizens. The permanent exchange of thoughts, beliefs, social codes, and cultural practices do not necessarily result in a recognition and unquestioned supranational identity. They are followed by some examples of traditions going into oblivion, while new ones are paving their way, derived from foreign societies and nations. But notably



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the need of identification and belonging became even more distinctive and while participating in global processes and engaging with universal codes and values, people's behaviour became more local and seclusive.

A team of Bulgarian Academy of Sciences initiated a nationally representative survey targeted Bulgarian citizens aged 18 and above, encompassing 1,022 respondents, forming a sample representative of Bulgaria's population<sup>1</sup>. Among the respondents interviewed, 47.4% were male, while 52.6% were female. In terms of age distribution, 2.3% were aged 18-30, 30.1% were aged 31-50, 29.0% were aged 51-65, and 19.6% were aged 65 and above. Regarding educational attainment, 1.9% had no formal education, 17.9% had less than secondary education, 42.6% had completed secondary education, and 37.6% had tertiary education. However, in a response to the questions of the survey, 37.1% of the respondents in the Veliko Tarnovo region (where all respondents self-define as ethnic Bulgarians) expectedly highlighted their national identity. Furthermore, an additional 11.4% not only identified as Bulgarians but also emphasized their citizenship as part of the Republic of Bulgaria, further emphasizing their national affiliation. Among the surveyed individuals, 28.7% prioritized their national identity as their foremost self-identification; 5.7% positioned it as the second most important, and 2.8% ranked it third. These findings underscore the importance of national affiliation, given that respondents voluntarily highlighted this aspect without any specific prompt in the question. Notably, among various identifications such as name, residence, profession, social status, age, education, and marital status, a substantial proportion of interviewees—approximately one-third—specifically emphasized their national identity and affiliation, with the majority placing it as their primary identification. Simultaneously, the survey results reveal that around one eighth (12.4%) of all respondents from the Veliko Tarnovo region define themselves in the context of supranational structures. Among these, 3.8% of the interviewees identify themselves based on their affiliation with Europe, considering themselves as citizens of Europe, while 8.6% perceive themselves as citizens of the world. When respondents were presented with various proposed identities and asked to rank their importance, including national, ethnic, European/EU citizen, global/citizen of the world, regional/the Balkan region, local/the settlement, religious, professional, and affiliation to a circle of friends, an astounding 100% identification emerged with the national affiliation. Thus, we could easily conclude that despite the willingness to feel more European, reach the EU standard of life and prosperity, relate to the European values for human rights, Bulgarians still reflect on Europe as an "ideal" more than a reality.

### *Migrants and Returnees*

After joining the EU followed by opening of the borders to live and work freely around the EU Bulgaria became one of the countries with the highest percent of emigrants. According to the data provided by Albena Nakova (Associate Professor and Deputy Director of the

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<sup>1</sup> (Albena Nakova & Valentina Milenkova; The Future of National Identity in Bulgaria: The Role of Communication with "Others" for the Formation of Supranational Identity. UDC 17.035.3(497.2):316.454.5](497.31) <https://doi.org/10.32728/flux.2023.5.8>)



Institute of Philosophy and Sociology to the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in the article “Migration and new European dimensions of Bulgarian identity” the numbers are:

Emigration from Bulgaria (number of people)

Год / Year	Эмиграция из Болгарии – численность мигрантов/ Emigration from Bulgaria – number of migrants
2010	27708
2011	9517
2012	16615
2013	19687
2014	28727
2015	29470
2016	30570
2017	31586
2018	33225
2019	39941
2020	6649
Всего	273 695

People left in search for work and a better life, which the transition period of socialism to democracy failed to provide. Later on, the huge number of emigrants resulted into dynamic process of return and reintegration to Bulgarian society. The group of returnees though faces challenges to adapt into three basic and extremely important aspects: family, public services and working environment. Leaving your family as a Bulgarian and returning back later as an European puts returnees either in isolation or glorification from the family members neither of which is constructive for the personality and adequate individual perceptions. It requires not just a time, but a mid or long term process to adapt and overcome tensions within the family itself and sometimes it stays impossible. Challenging for returnees is also to survive the system of public services, which in Bulgaria are often confusing, non available, contradictive and unclear in regard to their access and use. This aspect of reintegration is often such a big obstacle that people just leave back. The third aspect of traumatic adaptation for people, who choose to come back after years abroad is their professional life. The difference between their acquired working culture with the local practices is so huge (and common) that it leads to a well-defined solution, island of paradise, known as “international company”. Working in such a company in Bulgaria became the key to feel good at work, and close to the practices which returnees have been close to, while living abroad. Taking into account these three important pillows of life, work and relations of the returnees we should be alarmed that they also need a new narrative about Europe. One that is respective to the local specifics and is not an “ideal”, but a fact, one that is not contradictory to the “national” practices, but emerges from them and overcomes the opposition rich (European) vs. poor (local/national/Bulgarian). In other words, developing adaptation strategies and local experience with European views.



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## A Gallery about “Europe”

If we wonder what can be done for better understanding of Europe, art and culture can give us the answers. They are resources of imagination, which we need to imagine better Europe; the trans-national “language” to communicate it on; the courage to point at the weaks and celebrate the strengths. Some artistic vibes about Europe interpreted by the Bulgarian cartoon artist Komarnitski are available online enriched by the power of satirical dissent.





# CETA

This one reflects on the Bulgarian position on the process of accession of North Macedonia to EU.



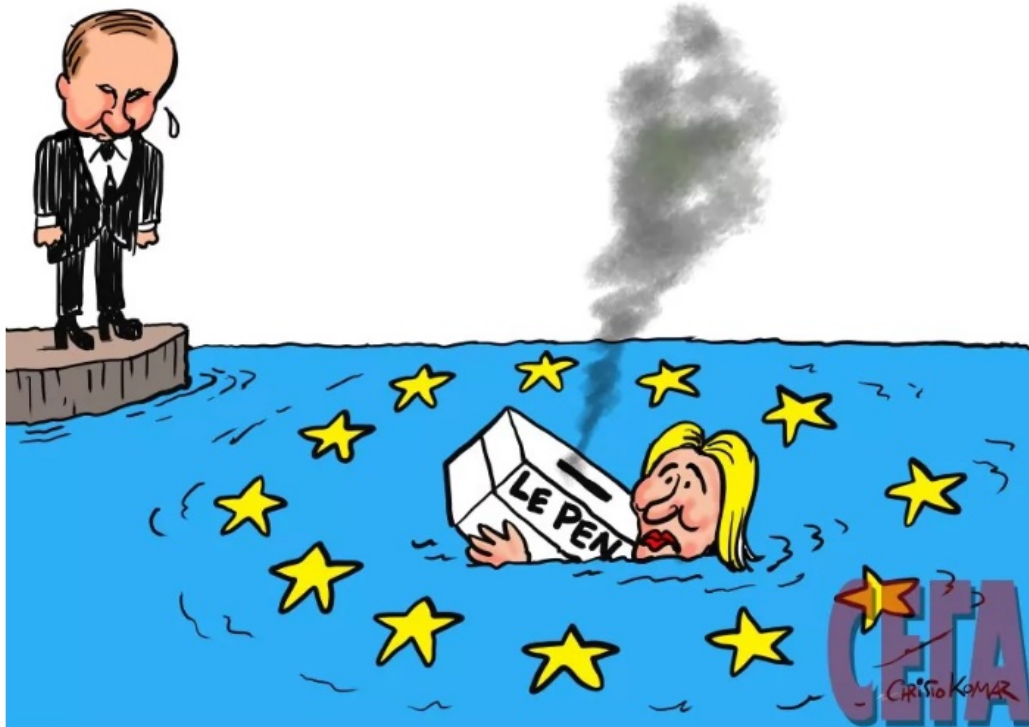
# CETA

CRISTO KOMAR



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СЕТА

\*in cyrilic: "Fill it up!"



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\*In cyrilic: „Turkish stream“ (under the flag)  
„Euroatlant“



\*in cyrilic: Bulgarian Chemtrails



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\*in cyrilic: Government or trick (analogous to „Trick or Treat“ Halloween saying)



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**Books, articles, research, etc. that circulate in Bulgarian cultural sector and the society and shape concepts, beliefs, discussions and decisions:**

- Krastev, Ivan. After Europe, 2017: <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/32672819-after-europe>
- "The Club of the Poor – Focus magazine on Bulgaria's EU accession / “Клубът на бедните” – списание Фокус за присъединяването на България към ЕС. 18.09.2006: <https://www.dw.com/bg/%D0%BA%D0%BB%D1%83%D0%B1%D1%8A%D1%82-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B1%D0%B5%D0%B4%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B5-%D1%81%D0%BF%D0%B8%D1%81%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B5-%D1%84%D0%BE%D0%BA%D1%83%D1%81-%D0%B7%D0%B0-%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B8%D1%81%D1%8A%D0%B5%D0%B4%D0%B8%D0%BD%D1%8F%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B5%D1%82%D0%BE-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B1%D1%8A%D0%BB%D0%B3%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%B8%D1%8F-%D0%BA%D1%8A%D0%BC-%D0%B5%D1%81/a-2594314>
- Peter Sloterdijk: Europe, pandemic and belief / Петер Слотердаjk: Европа, пандемията и вярата, 18.06.2021: <https://www.kultura.bg/article/817-evropa-pandemiyata-i-vyarata>
- Club Z: In two surveys: what Bulgarians think about the EU, NATO, Russia and the US / В две изследвания: какво мислят българите за ЕС, НАТО, Русия и САЩ. 19.12.2022: <https://clubz.bg/131029>
- Péter Tschet: What Do We Protect by Protecting the European Way of Life?, 2019, A Soul for Europe
- Lorena Stella Martini & Tarek Megerisi: Road to nowhere: Why Europe's border externalisation is a dead end: <https://ecfr.eu/publication/road-to-nowhere-why-europes-border-externalisation-is-a-dead-end/>
- Pavel Zerka: The European Sentiment Compass 2022. <https://ecfr.eu/special/sentiment-compass/>
- Susi Dennison, Ivan Krastev, Mark Leonard: What Europeans really want: Five myths debunked. 16.04.2019: [https://ecfr.eu/special/what\\_europeans\\_really\\_want\\_five\\_myths\\_debunked/](https://ecfr.eu/special/what_europeans_really_want_five_myths_debunked/)
- Almut Möller, Dina Pardijs: The future shape of Europe: How the EU can bend without breaking: [https://ecfr.eu/profile/dina\\_pardijs/](https://ecfr.eu/profile/dina_pardijs/)
- Milena Stoyanova: The fate of Europe or how the hunter became the hunted / Милена Стоянова: Съдбата на Европа или, как ловецът се превърна в плячка, 8.05.2023: <https://geopolitica.eu/2023/204-broy-2-2023/3735-sadbata-na-evropa-ili-kak-lovetsat-se-prevarna-v-plyachka>



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A project by: Freeartus gGmbH, CKI, A25, Luoghi Comuni

- Ognian ZLATEV: Migration as a challenge for the EU: institutional response and need for reforms / Миграцията като предизвикателство пред ЕС: институционален отговор и нужда от реформи. 2017: <https://ebox.nbu.bg/sec16/index4.php?id=4#t>
- Hristo Georgiev: EU between federalism, functionalism and the "sacred egoism" of nations. The political future of the organisation / Христо Георгиев: Европейският съюз между федерализма, функционализма и „свещения егоизъм“ на нациите. Политическото бъдеще на организацията: <https://ebox.nbu.bg/sec16/index4.php?id=7#t>
- Vihren Buzov: EU and the crisis of multiculturalism / Вихрен Бузов: Европейският съюз и кризата на мултикултурализма. 2017: <https://ebox.nbu.bg/sec16/index4.php?id=9#t>
- European Sovereignty Index. By Jana Puglierin, Pawel Zerka (eds.) June 2022: <https://ecfr.eu/special/sovereignty-index/>
- Intercultural cities Programme. Council of Europe, 2019: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities>
- Gallup International Survey: Today the world is divided - but how much? / Проучване на Галъп: Днес светът е разделен – но колко сериозно. 19.12.2022
- European Parliament Eurobarometer - Autumn 2023: graphics and figures. 6.12.2023: [https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/video/AV\\_1249776](https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/video/AV_1249776)



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# The DENMARK<sup>2</sup> Perspective

Research conducted by CKI, Copenhagen, Denmark

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<sup>2</sup> ITALY, BULGARIA, GERMANY or DENMARK are framings of an ideal/subjective state. The territory and/or the nation, the state represents much less than this collective and at the same time individual term signifies.

## The Danish / Nordic Perspective

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*'The EU Member States are going through challenging times. Financial crises, as history shows, are fertile opportunities for the rise of extremism and xenophobia. The diversity of Europe, while enriching, brings about challenges as well. In the current context of increased migration toward several Member States, increased mobility of people across the EU, and the fact that various groups need to live side by side (including those from migrant and non-migrant backgrounds or national and ethnic minorities), the resulting tensions may put social cohesion and at the same time the European project at risk.'*<sup>1</sup>

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Many aspects of the Nordic societies are under revision these years – the ways of yesterday are being tested and questioned. We, The Danish Centre for Arts and Interculture, are based in Copenhagen, Denmark, and wish to explore the Danish perspective, grounded in a wider Nordic perspective.

The Danish / Nordic perspective report stands on three legs:

- The first chapter will give a brief history of Denmark's colonial history,
- the second chapter will focus on cultural policy in Denmark and in the Nordics,
- and the third chapter will highlight key artists/ organisations/ etc in Denmark who create and explore within the same sphere as SIRIUS4all, working towards a more inclusive, 'next' Europe.



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# Danish Colonial History –

## A short history lesson

Not many people know that ‘little’ Denmark has a long history as a colonial power. Denmark’s colonial rule began with the Danish East India Company’s trading post in Tranquebar, India, in 1620 and ended when Greenland became an equal part of Denmark in 1953. Most of the time, the kingdom consisted of Denmark and Norway, the duchies in North Germany, the North Atlantic islands of Iceland, Greenland and the Faroe Islands and the Danish possessions in India, West Africa and the West Indies.

The massive fortification Dansborg in southern India (close to today’s Chennai) was the governing center in the colonial town of Tranquebar (Tharangambadi) set up in 1620 with the purpose of acquiring a share of the eastern wealth to Denmark and the Danish king. The city became the capital of the Danish possessions in India until it was sold to the British East India Company in 1845. The Nicobar Islands were under Danish rule between 1756 and 1856 under the name of Frederiksøerne and at Car Nicobar the Danish East India Company had a factory called Danish India. And in the West Bengal - in what is today part of the Calcutta metropolitan area - the city of Serampore was under Danish rule under the name Frederiksnagore between 1755 and 1845 and was then sold to the British East India Company together with Tranquebar.

However, Denmark’s colonial history primarily revolves around its involvement in the transatlantic slave trade and colonial activities in the Caribbean, primarily in what is now the U.S. Virgin Islands, specifically St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix. Denmark established colonies in the Caribbean during the 17th century, with the Danish West India Company being a key player in these ventures.

In Africa the Danish Gold Coast was part of the Golden Treasury in present-day Ghana, which was a colonial council of Denmark, first under the Danish West India Company and later directly as a colony under the Danish crown. Denmark’s interests on the Gold Coast began in 1658. Between 1660 and 1680, trade was handled by the Glückstadt Company, which established two large trading forts, Frederiksborg and Christiansborg, both in present-day Accra. The Glückstadt Company was followed by the West Indies-Guinean Company, which first handled the trade in the area from 1698. Six additional forts were later established further east. Administration of the area alternated between royal rule and the rule of private trading



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companies from 1754, until the Crown finally took over all forts in 1792. Until the beginning of the 18th century, the Danes were mainly interested in the area's gold deposits. After that, the slave trade came to dominate.

The Danish colonies on both sides of the Atlantic were heavily involved in the slave trade, with thousands of enslaved Africans being brought to work on sugar plantations in the Danish West Indies. In total, about 85,000 slaves were shipped to the West Indies from around 1700 to 1802, when the Danish slave trade in Africa was banned. In 1850 the entire Danish Gold Coast was sold to the United Kingdom and incorporated into the British Gold Coast. Slavery was abolished in the Danish West Indies in 1848, making Denmark one of the first European nations to formally abolish the practice. But the legacy of slavery and colonialism still deeply impacts the descendants of enslaved Africans in the Caribbean and has left a lasting mark on the region's culture, society and economy. In 1917 the Danish West Indies were sold to the United States of America.

Today, Denmark acknowledges its colonial past and its implications, in that there have been efforts to address this history through acknowledgment, remembrance, and initiatives aimed at reconciliation. Denmark has also provided financial support for development projects in the former Danish colonies, aiming to improve living conditions and opportunities for the local populations. However, a formal apology has still never been given on behalf of the Danish state and government. The recognition that would lie in it is usually drowned in political agendas in Denmark and a fear that it will lead to demands for compensation, which will cost Denmark dearly.



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When it comes to the legacy of colonialism, Denmark's approach to issues such as human rights, equality, and international development. Denmark tends to support initiatives aimed at addressing historical injustices, promoting human rights, and fostering sustainable development, particularly in regions affected by its colonial past. In other words, it is a delicate balancing act between acknowledging past sins while trying to build lasting relationships through investment and presence on today's terms. Additionally, Denmark's colonial history has led to discussions about reparations and restitution for descendants of enslaved Africans and indigenous peoples who were affected by colonialism. While these discussions are ongoing, Denmark's beginning acknowledgment of its past and its commitment to addressing its consequences shape its policies and actions on both domestic and international levels.

*'I Am Queen Mary' sculpture by Jeannette Ehlers and La Vaughn Belle. Photo: David Berg*

Danish policy today, the and slavery influences

In the North Atlantic the Norwegian settlements on Iceland and Greenland became Danish through the Danish-Norwegian Union that followed on the dissolution of the Kalmar Union, which was a Scandinavian union between the kingdoms of Denmark, Norway and Sweden that was formed in 1397 and lasted until 1523, when Sweden broke out. The Danish-Norwegian Kingdom existed between 1523-1814, when Norway as a result of the Napoleonic wars was forced to enter in a personal union with Sweden. Iceland was in reality a Danish province until June 1944, when Iceland's union treaty with Denmark expired. After a referendum, the country declared itself a republic.

Today the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Denmark proper are the three constituent parts of the Danish Rigsfællesskab (Danish Commonwealth), and together form the Kingdom of Denmark. The Faroe Islands have been under Danish rule since 1380, but since 1948 they have had significant internal autonomy named Hjemmestyret (Home rule) that today includes trade, education, research, and maritime and fisheries issues within a specially designated maritime zone around the islands.

When Denmark became a member of the European Economic Community in 1973, the Faroe Islands chose to remain outside, thus retaining control over the country's fishing rights. That relationship persisted after the EEC was transformed into the European Union. However, the Faroe Islands and Greenland are territories associated with the European Union and have free trade agreements with each other, Iceland and the EU. Constitutional issues, citizenship, the Supreme Court, foreign policy, security and defence policy, as well as exchange rates and monetary policy are still governed by the Danish Parliament.



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Greenland became a Danish colony after 1814 when Norway was transferred from Denmark to Sweden, while Denmark retained the former Norwegian colonies. In 1953 it became a formal part of the Kingdom of Denmark. In 1973 Greenland joined the European Economic Community (EEC) as a (then non-self-governing) part of Denmark, despite the fact that a majority of Greenlanders voted against Denmark's accession. In a new referendum in 1982, a majority of the population voted for Greenland to withdraw from the EEC, which happened in 1985. In 1979, Greenland was granted Home Rule, partly autonomy, and in 2008, Greenlanders voted in favour of extended autonomy, which transferred more power from the Danish system of government to the local Greenlandic government.

As of 2009 Greenland can progressively assume responsibility for the police, judiciary, company law, accounting and auditing; mineral resources; aviation; legal capacity, family law and succession; foreign background and border check; work environment; and financial regulation and supervision, while the Danish government retains control over foreign policy and defence. It also retains control over monetary policy.

Denmark's treatment of the Greenlandic Inuit population has evolved over time and has been marked by both positive developments and controversies. Historically, Greenland was colonized by Denmark, and the Inuit population experienced significant cultural, social, and economic changes due to colonial policies. These policies often marginalized indigenous practices and lifestyles. Even though many aspects of local affairs, including education, healthcare, and natural resource management was transferred to Greenland as an effect of the home rule, many Inuits still feel marginalized in their own country and there is an increasing demand for independence. A demand that also carries a wish to make decisions about the rich underground resources in line with the population's own wishes and needs.

Despite efforts at self-governance, Greenland faces significant socioeconomic challenges, including high unemployment rates, substance abuse issues, alcohol abuse issues and limited economic opportunities, particularly in more remote communities. Traditional lifestyle is under pressure and climate change adds significantly to the challenges mentioned, impacting traditional Inuit practices such as hunting and fishing. The melting of the ice sheet also raises concerns about environmental degradation and the loss of traditional Inuit territories.

In Denmark there is a small Inuit population, primarily consisting of Greenlandic students, workers, and migrants. Like other immigrant communities, they face challenges related to integration, language, and cultural adaptation. For the older generations of Inuit and Greenlandic individuals, marginalization and discrimination has repeatedly been an issue they had to deal with, ranging from racial profiling to social exclusion, prejudice and racism. Challenges that the Danish society still have to confront.



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In 2023 a temporary UN report<sup>1</sup> called Denmark's treatment of Greenlanders racist. The Danish government claims that the welfare state is based on equal access. But in practice, the Inuit population face significant administrative and institutional obstacles, as well as racism and racial discrimination, it stated.

Efforts have been made to increase the representation of Greenlandic and Inuit culture in Danish educational curricula and public institutions. However, critics argue that more needs to be done to promote awareness and understanding of Greenlandic history and culture among the Danish population.

Overall, Denmark's treatment of the Greenlandic Inuit population is complex and multifaceted, with ongoing efforts to address historical injustices, promote self-governance, and foster socioeconomic development. However, challenges remain, and controversies persist, highlighting the need for continued dialogue, cooperation, and respect for indigenous rights and perspectives.



Jessie Kleemann at Sermeq Kujalleq Glacier. Photo: Chelsea Reid.

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<sup>1</sup> The final report is still in the making and subject to political debate in the UN



## Cultural policy in Denmark and the Nordics



In the following, we will provide an introduction and an overview of the dominating threads in Danish culture policy reflected in a Nordic perspective. We will zoom in on the fundamental values in cultural policy design in the Nordic countries and how culture in the Nordics is prioritized and valued.

This chapter is based on research and studies that describe the major cultural policy reforms that have been implemented in the Nordic countries over the last two decenniums, as well as some more general political changes that have affected responsibilities and relations between the various levels regarding cultural policy issues.



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To understand Denmark and the Nordic region<sup>2</sup> and the cultural infrastructure in the Nordic countries, it might make sense to begin with a short overview of some of the most central aspects of Danish and Nordic societies. Based on desk research and conversations with colleagues across the Nordics, it is possible to identify some of the most important and defining aspects of cultural life as a fly-in to the report as such.

The Nordic countries are often seen and perceived as a kind of societal laboratory, where an alternative ‘response’ to current crisis’s is implemented. And there is some truth in that, although it is important to point out that the Nordics are five sovereign states, each with its own parliamentary system, legislation, and cultural distinctiveness. And in addition, three autonomous areas.

The Nordic region is on the one hand a structural diversity of peoples, languages, cultural expressions, and local traditions and at the same time a very homogeneous corner of the world in many ways.

## **The Nordic Model**

An important common denominator for Denmark as well as for the other Nordic countries is the strong belief in the state as the best possible framework for the basic common values. A trust in each other and in authorities that is absolutely central to what is often described as the Nordic model.

The Nordic model is based on a combination of responsible economic policies, innovation power, social welfare and strong partnerships in the labour market. This has created societies that combine high prosperity with high welfare and a good and socially secure life for the vast majority of their populations.

The model developed in the interwar period as a response to the economic and social crisis of the 1930s. And after World War II, the model was strengthened by the need to bind people together in the different countries and the need to create a stronger sense of cohesion and community. Up through the 1950s and 1960s, the Nordic model gained a clearer Nordic character by legislators in the different countries squinting at each other and adapting solutions that were similar to those of the neighbours. In some cases, these were pure copies of the neighbour’s solutions.

For decades, the Nordic model was explained as a special kind of welfare vision, which was well rooted in the predominantly social democratic and Protestant Nordic societies. A story that was also nurtured by conservative and liberal forces, who often described the model as rigid, too dominated by the state and inadequate to be able to function in the age of

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<sup>2</sup> When we in this document refer to the Nordics, we refer to the five Nordic countries in Northern Europe and the North Atlantic; Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland and Iceland as well as the three autonomous areas of Greenland, the Faroe Islands and the Åland Islands commonly known as *Norden*.



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globalization. However, in the light of the changes societies at large have undergone in recent decades towards increased world trade, growing changes in the economy and digital communication, which we just a generation ago could not dream of at all, it is fair to say that the Nordic model has proved to be a strong strategy for achieving globalization with a human face.

Traditionally, the political right has been skeptical of the various components of the model, but that is largely no longer the case. In several countries, most parties, from right to left, support the foundations of the Nordic model. An important explanation being that the model has managed to combine economic growth with equality. The model has also managed to reform itself in times when major crisis and changes in the outside world have been shaking its foundations. The challenges and crisis's we have seen over the last decades being examples of that, from the financial crisis in 2008 over the refugee crisis in 2015 to the Covid-19 crisis.

This is indeed also the case in Denmark, where most nationalistic and value-conservative right-wing parties embrace the welfare intentions of the model. It's considered 'political suicide' to argue for a more liberal anglophone model for these parties, whose political constituency historically has benefitted from the Nordic welfare model.

## **Distribution of Wealth**

The combination of equality and relative growth is one reason why The Nordics are often perceived as one of the most secure, calm, and stable corners of the planet. As a good place to live in an international perspective.<sup>3</sup>

The Nordic countries are all among the 25 richest countries measured in GDP per capita. But what really sets the Nordic countries apart from other parts of the world is not wealth as such, but rather a more equal distribution of wealth.<sup>4</sup> The social differences are much smaller than in most other countries and in the UNDP's measurements of human development (the Human Development Report), the Nordic countries' level of social equality plays an important role in that.<sup>5</sup>

Additionally, all of the Nordic countries are in top 10 when it comes to measuring equality between men and women.<sup>6</sup>

The Nordic model is sometimes described as a three-legged chair, which must ensure social balance and gradual development and at the same time make it possible to develop and grow society so that it is competitive and agile without losing coherence.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The Nordic Countries, the Next Supermodel, The Economist 2013-02-02.

<sup>4</sup> Business Insider Nordic, 6. marts 2017

<sup>5</sup> Human Development Report UNDP, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap 2016 report

<sup>7</sup> Jesper Bengtsson: Den Nordiske Model - Hvad kræves der?, Tankesmedjan Tiden, Stockholm 2018

[https://tankesmedjantiden.se/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Dansk\\_final\\_digital.pdf](https://tankesmedjantiden.se/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Dansk_final_digital.pdf)



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The three legs consist of:

- a) a clear public economic management based on macroeconomic and business policies,
- b) public welfare built on the idea of a welfare state, income security, free services and education, an active labor market policy among others,
- c) a regulated and organized work life based on coordinated wage policies, broad collective agreements and local cooperation between the labour market partners.

The three legs are mutually dependent on each other. Making changes in one leg will have consequences for the others.

It is not unique to the Nordic region to have a welfare state and an organized labour market based on collective agreements. But the Nordic countries have some special features. The relationship between employers, employees and the state is considerably more equal in the Nordic region and this has been a prerequisite for the kind of agreements at central level that has characterized the model's emergence and practice. Another important factor is that the Nordic countries have developed comprehensive institutions and structures for co-operation between the state and the labour market partners.

This structure, and the implicit democratic expectations, frame the Nordic societies and are also at the core when we talk culture, cultural infrastructure and the role of the arts and culture at large. In short, the Nordic model unite a strong economy with a model of society that promotes change, flexibility in the economy, and security for citizens. Of course, the Nordic model does not prevent global challenges from interfering and influencing the development of the Nordic societies and there are obvious areas of conflict and challenge.

## **The Democratic Demand**

In the Nordic countries, a free and independent cultural life is often described as an important ideal in both Nordic co-operation and within the framework of the cultural policies of the individual Nordic countries (see, for example, Nordic Council of Ministers, 2020<sup>8</sup>).

A central political objective in the Nordic Region is thus that artists and cultural creators should have the opportunity to work without the risk of hatred, threats and harassment, and without political control that unduly restricts artistic freedom.

However, there is an ongoing debate in the Nordics about how free arts and culture really are, in relation to politics, to economic structures, public values and in relation to other actors in society.

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<sup>8</sup> Nordiska ministerrådet, 2020: Konst och kultur – drivkraften för hållbar utveckling i Norden. Kulturpolitiska samarbetsprogram 2021–2024. Nordiska ministerrådet.



In this report, we have in particular taken two publications as our starting point: The Danish researcher Peter Duelund's groundbreaking mapping of Nordic culture and politics in 'The Nordic cultural model'<sup>9</sup> and the report 'Cultural policy governance. Division of responsibilities and reforms in the Nordic countries cultural policy during the 2000s' from the Swedish Agency for Cultural Analysis.<sup>10</sup> Both of these research reports describe the most central and distinctive features of the formulation of Nordic cultural policy, before and after the year 2000, respectively.

Since the 1950s, the Nordic countries have developed relatively similar policies for artistic creation and participation in cultural life. The Nordic cultural policy model is the result of a distinction between, on the one hand, policies that focus on the conditions for artists and cultural creators and the conditions for the development of artistic expressions, and on the other hand measures taken for the dissemination of arts and culture in order to engage many different groups of inhabitants in as many parts of the countries as possible. The democratic demand, so to speak. But there is also a desire to encourage the population to take part in and practice different forms of arts and culture themselves.

In the Agency for Cultural Analysis' report, these two tracks are described as artist policy / art policy and cultural policy, respectively. Both reports describe the countries' cultural policy goals, forms of financing and administration, cultural habits and they place the role of Nordic cultural policy in an international context.

Looking at the Nordic cultural policy model from the outside, one can be led to believe that it is similar to the English model, where an arm's length principle was created through the establishment of the Arts Council of Great Britain in response to the lack of a Ministry of Culture or a politically formulated cultural policy. In the English model, independent experts play a central role in, among other things, the distribution of funds.

## **A Nordic Hybrid**

The Nordic counterparts are also characterized by a high degree of expert presence and they can be described as relatively strong arm's length authorities. But here rather as advisers to the authorities who legislate on the distribution of resources. This is due to the fact that the Nordic countries also have comparatively strong cultural ministries, based on the French model with a leading minister, a reflecting administrative structure and a goal-oriented cultural policy.

The Nordic model can therefore be understood as a kind of hybrid between the French Ministry of Culture model and the British arm's length model. With the important distinction

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<sup>9</sup> Duelund, Peter (ed). 2003: The Nordic cultural model. Vol. 1 - 18, Copenhagen: Nordic Cultural Institute.

<sup>10</sup> Myndigheten för kulturanalys, 2018: Kulturpolitisk styrning. Ansvarsfördelning och reformer inom de nordiska ländernas kulturpolitik under 2000-talet, Stockholm: Myndigheten för kulturanalys



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that decisions on the distribution of funds are most often made on the basis of clear guidelines established by political bodies and on the basis of professional recommendations from experts and representatives of the arts.

What is often considered to unite the Nordic countries' cultural policies is that since World War II they have been based on an idea of cultural policy as part of the welfare policy.<sup>11</sup> Cultural policy has therefore evolved in relation to a balancing act between individual freedom and collective aspirations. In cultural policy, artistic freedom as well as economic and social security for artists and cultural creators and an inclusive cultural life that reaches the entire population have thus been important ambitions. The cultural policy of the Nordic countries has largely been characterised by the idea that arts and culture should be spread geographically and socially, and that it should be possible to make a living as an artist and cultural creator regardless of background and where in the country you live.

In short, the objectives of cultural policy in the Nordic countries have revolved around:

1. The development of high-quality arts and culture and a sector characterised by creativity and artistic freedom,
2. Goals for an accessible cultural life and everyone's opportunity to participate in cultural life (anchored within the UNESCO Convention),
3. That arts and culture in different ways should play a role/have a function in society, or characterise the development of society in various ways.

*Horsens Kommune / Chifumi. Photo: Horsens Kommune*

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<sup>11</sup> See e.g., Duelund, 2003; Kangas, 2003



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## The Architectural Model

Culture politics in the Nordic countries are often described as following the architectural model. This model is characterised by the fact that cultural policy is largely seen as an integral part of welfare policy and thus includes more values than artistic freedom and artistic quality. This means that the starting points and objectives of cultural policy are to a relatively large extent justified on the basis of equality and social needs. In this way, cultural policy is subsumed into a larger political entity in which equal access to culture is seen as an important political goal, and where the protection of the social and economic situation of artists and cultural creators is often a starting point for public cultural policy.<sup>12</sup>

In the architectural model, ministries of culture and government officials have a greater influence over the design and implementation of cultural policy, for example in relation to grants distribution. But cultural experts are also heavily involved in the implementation stage, especially when it comes to assessing artistic quality in, for example, the application processes. A basic idea is that public support is needed for a free cultural sector that produces high-quality arts and culture, but also that high-quality arts and culture must not risk becoming the concern

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<sup>12</sup> Kulturanalys Norden, 2022: Konstens och kulturens frihet i Norden. En kunnskapsöversikt med utgångspunkt i forskningen om kulturpolitik, Gothenburg 2022



of the few, the 'usual suspects', but should be made available to as many people as possible. The architectural model therefore is characterized by an inclusive ideal of enlightenment and democracy. Cultural policy is thus perceived to have an important role to play in the formation of social and democratic development.

Researchers such as Harry Hillman Chartrand and Claire McCaughey have argued that a potential risk associated with the architectural model is that long-term public responsibility for cultural life risks leading to creative stagnation.<sup>13</sup> The model may also create challenges in reconciling the different ambitions of cultural policy, which may have a negative impact on the freedom of arts and culture. For example, state and public governance may risk going too far in its desire to achieve various social objectives.<sup>14</sup> Hillman Chartrand's and McCaughey's typology from 1989 has been widely criticized for being insufficient and overly simplistic in describing and analysing the development of cultural policies in different countries. In a contemporary response to their typology, Per Mangset (1992) instead distinguishes between four different Western European models<sup>15</sup> and exemplifies with:

1. The centrally-controlled French cultural policy model
2. The market-oriented British model
3. The German federal state model with a regionally governed cultural policy
4. The Nordic model with several levels of decision-making and strong interest groups (corporative elements).

Mangset's categorisation addresses two additional dimensions such as the degree of centralisation or decentralization and the influence of interest groups on cultural policy, factors that can also be assumed to have a bearing on issues of freedom of arts and culture. Mangset's approach has in many ways framed the understanding of culture policy development in the Nordic countries.

### **The Principle of Arm's Length**

The Nordic countries generally link their cultural policies to the principle of arm's length and to the ideal of artistic freedom. Additionally, in various political and societal contexts, the countries claim what they describe as the intrinsic value of art in the sense that arts and culture have a *raison d'être* beyond various types of utilitarian aspects.

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<sup>13</sup> Hillman-Chartrand, Harry & McCaughey, Claire, 1989: The arm's length principle and the arts: An international perspective – past, present and future. I Cummings, Milton & Schuster, J. Mark (red.), Who's to pay for the arts? The international search for models of arts support. New York: ACA Books.

<sup>14</sup> Mangset, P., 2010: Kulturpolitiska modeller i Västeuropa. I Frenander (red.): Arkitekter på armlängds avstånd? Att studera kulturpolitik. Valfrid.

<sup>15</sup> Mangset, P., 1992: Kulturliv og forvaltning: Innføring i kulturpolitikk. Oslo. Universitetsforlaget.



The concepts of arm's length, artistic freedom and the instrumentalisation of culture therefore often recur in Nordic cultural policy and research. Arm's length particularly understood as public structures not interfering with intentions to limit artistic freedom, institutional integrity or to alter independence and transactional equality.

In Denmark there have historically been a strong emphasis on fairness and equality within the social and political fabric. The Danish welfare state is built on principles of social solidarity and trust in its institutions. This cultural inclination towards fairness and transparency likely influences the application of the arm's length principle. Both when it comes to taxation and to the distribution of public means. The traditions of consensus-based policymaking and a strong welfare state have ensured a focus on broad social and political priorities aimed at upholding fairness and sustainability in society. As a result, the principle of arm's length is stated as a demand for public governance in cultural law texts.

Similar to Denmark, Sweden and Norway have strong welfare states and a social democratic political tradition. Values around egalitarianism, trust, and social responsibility play a significant role in the shaping of different policies. Social cohesion and economic stability are at the core of all three states as well as a strong sense of collective responsibility for the welfare of all citizens. As in Denmark, the principle of arm's length is ensured in Norway by law, whereas it in Sweden is formulated as an overall recommendation for societal interaction between public authorities and civic society.

But how strong is the arm's length principle in practice?

That is one of the dividing questions Nordic researchers are concerned with at the moment. To what extent is arts and culture used to achieve different goals for the development of society, and if so, to what extent does it risk having a negative impact on artistic freedom? And how do different forms of hatred, threats and harassment affect artists' and cultural creators' opportunities to free creativity and expression?

These questions have given rise to both debate and research studies in recent years, both internationally and within the Nordic countries.

Despite the fact that there has long been a political consensus in the Nordic countries on the importance of a free and independent cultural life, and despite a recurring discussion of the issues, there is a lack of studies and overview of the state of knowledge regarding the free status of arts and culture in the Nordic Region. The most recent attempt to address the issue was a report<sup>16</sup> produced by the Nordic Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis with the ambition to

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<sup>16</sup> Kulturanalys Norden, 2022: Konstens och kulturens frihet i Norden. En kunskapsöversikt med utgångspunkt i forskningen om kulturpolitik, Gothenburg 2022



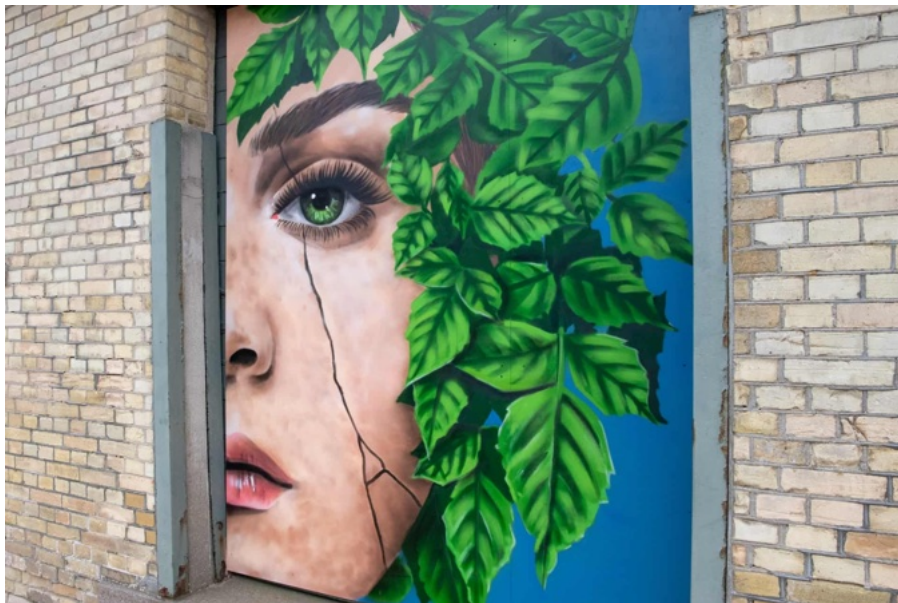
provide a basis for knowledge and discussion for a broad target group in the sphere of cultural policy and in cultural life as a whole in the Nordic countries.

## A Diversified Public Realm

It is fair to say, that the formation of cultural politics in Denmark and the Nordics reflect the overall major strands in the political priorities. In a time of transition where our ways of communication and inter-human interaction are changing so rapidly and with such steep and overwhelming consequences that we barely recognise the societal structures we had just a decade ago, the ways of yesterday are being questioned and tested. We are living in a time where the political and financial logics are under pressure from the effects of digitisation and AI, the emergence of advanced algorithms and social media platforms, anti-globalisation movements and a raising nationalism. They all cause a still more disparate and diversified public realm and debate. A reality that stresses the need to revisit and potentially redefine purpose, focus and ways of action for all parts of the Nordic societies.

As a result, a redefinition of aims and ways has been happening in the Nordics for well over a decade, accelerated since the financial crisis ramparted Nordic economies in 2008. Since then, the five Nordic countries have undergone a significant change in terms of societal and political priorities and in terms of how to meet the demands of an increasingly divided population's wishes for the future.

Every aspect of the Nordic societies is under revision these years. No matter whether it's about culture politics, power and resources, urbanisation, social political tendencies in society, audience and diversity, digitisation, competence and innovation, education, health care, migration etc.



Street art in  
Lunderskov. Photo:  
René Aunsbjerg  
Foah

## **Strong Domestic Agendas**

Across Europe, North America, and most of the Western hemisphere we see nation states close themselves off, focus on domestic agendas and seek domestic solutions to basically transnational and transversal challenges. Transnational unions and bodies are under severe pressure from the nation states, not least the EU and the United Nations - political structures citizens across Europe have put faith in as the political frameworks and potential solutions to shared challenges such as employment, sustainability, energy, social development, trade, poverty, global aid etc.

The former US president Donald Trump and his likeminded European Heads of State addresses transnational collaboration via structures as EU and UN as a threat to national sovereignty and domestic democratic decisions.

Transnational solidarity and aims for collaborative solutions to common problems are undermined and replaced with increasing national agendas. And despite President Joe Biden's efforts to re-engage in transnational dialogue, the domestic focus remains a priority.

One could argue that this was to be expected as a 'foreseen backlash' to the ongoing globalisation and the consequences it bears with it. Those marginalised as a result of a still more intertwined international economy and global trade and those who might lose their domestic influence have joined forces in political and social alliances aiming at preventing the ongoing resolution of the national state, as they see it. A line has been drawn and the political positioning reflects this. In Europe at large as well as in Denmark and the Nordics.

## **Migration Changing Politics**

One major change maker in favour of a nationalist agenda has been the effects of the crisis in 2015, when Syrian refugees crossed the Aegean Sea and fled into Europe, stressing and testing European solidarity, which collapsed over the summer and left a number of Mediterranean countries alone receiving migrants and clearly left an area of action open for the political extreme right movements occurring all over Europe. Border after border was closed and passport declarations reintroduced. For the first time since the establishment of the Nordic Passport Union<sup>17</sup> in July 1954 - which ensures that citizens of the Nordic countries can travel freely across the borders in the Nordic countries without bringing passports and settling throughout the Nordic region without applying for a residence permit - Sweden and Norway reintroduced formal and personal passport controls in November 2015 for all travelers from Denmark (and other countries) as a result of the crisis.

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<sup>17</sup> Den nordiska passkontrollöverenskommelsen,  
<https://web.archive.org/web/20191230154551/https://www.norden.org/sv/avtal/den-nordiska-passkontrolloverenskommelsen>



Migration and growing xenophobia were already becoming an influential political cocktail prior to 2015, but nowhere near the impact these issues now have on the daily political discourse across the European continent. Nationalist political populist parties have gained an enormous support in almost every EU member state during the last ten years and quite often on a mixed policy of traditional 'Christian' values and an expressed concern of the effects of the increased migration. Ethnic and religious minorities have been pointed out as deviating and threatening to the coherence and prosperity of the European societies.

## **New Nationalism and The Nordics**

Politicians who were considered politically too extreme just recently are now either in power as in e.g. Hungary and Slovakia or in possession of the 'power giving' votes as in e.g. Sweden. The Nordic countries are no exception to these societal movements. Even though the support for the nationalist parties in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Finland is relatively stable with around 15 - 22% of the elector base, it is notable to which extent they have influenced the political agendas in the Nordics.

Nationalist parties are either in power or more or less dictating the political focal points in all five countries. In Scandinavia - Norway, Sweden and Denmark - in particular. These rich Nordic welfare states all witness and experience the above mentioned 'backlash' to development and are now dealing with a complex political reality.

As in most other European countries, culture has become a battlefield for the new nationalism - in Denmark and the Nordic countries. Many major institutions are either directly or indirectly under governmental auspices and the nationalist parties are often using arguments based on an idea of cultural preservation and heritage to try to limit institutional freedom to engage in e.g. issues concerning migration, politics, and religious values. However, it seems to be relatively difficult for the domestic nationalist parties to exercise these ambitions in the Nordic countries due to their legislative practice of arm's length between the donating public bodies and the cultural institutions. But the rhetoric has been sharpened and there is no doubt, that managers and directors of the cultural institutions are aware of what is being expressed by the populist and nationalistic parties.

Politically, it is worth noting that the traditionally large parties across the political centre in Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland have until now largely embraced the right-wing parties demands for restrictions in relation to immigration and migrants' opportunities to obtain citizenship, civilians rights and financial assistance. It has created a number of political challenges, and in both Sweden and Denmark minority governments rule, while in Norway and



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Finland government-based coalitions have been created to be able to handle the political challenges.

Interestingly, the Social Democratic parties have been leading the movement towards tighter immigration laws, more restrictive opportunities for immigrants to have a lasting new life in the Nordic Region and, not least, in relation to the introduction of significantly tougher conditions for obtaining public support and subsidies. There is no doubt that immigration has been a major challenge for the otherwise stable, homogeneous Nordic societies. And there has been a need to create a framework and rules for how newcomers are received and under what forms the right to stay can be obtained. But if you look through Denmark's recent legislation in this area, for example, it is surprising how many of the current laws that clearly have their origins in right-wing nationalist bills.

Although the Social Democrats have been in power for almost 5 years, no significant attempt has been made to soften the rules and create a bridge to the traditional welfare model's legislative practice. Quite the opposite. There is a good deal of political opportunism hidden in it, as a result of the Social Democrats sharing their electoral base with the far right.

The tougher rhetoric and the stricter conditions for foreigners who want to come to the Nordic countries create a lot of challenges. Not least for the big cities, where the amount of well-educated expats from all over the globe has made up an ever-increasing share of immigration to the cities. In Oslo and Copenhagen, for example, the proportion of expats was between 30 and 50 percent of the newcomers between 2012 and 2023. Expats often come with a finished education, they are in work and can start paying taxes right away. They are high-performing and highly paid, which makes them attractive. Cities invest political and economic capital in being able to attract people with the right profile as part of their development strategies. Therefore, mayors are not happy when restrictions at the national level reduce the opportunities for recruiting widely outside the Nordic region.

The conflict between the often heterogeneous and open cities and the national level, which increasingly seeks to ensure greater homogeneity in relation to the ethnic, cultural and value composition of the population, is obvious. But there are some interesting perspectives and models underway in both Greater Oslo and Malmö in Sweden, which may soften the positions a bit. In both cases, cultural policy and the cultural area are used as a matrix across the other policy areas, to see if in this way a stronger 'common third' can be developed, which strengthens local democracy and supports citizens' diversity.



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*Ser Du Mig' Teater Grob. Photo: Emilia Therese*

## **New Urban Growth**

Alongside the quite dramatic changes in the political realm, the Nordic countries have also been through an unforeseen urban growth, which to some extent resembles the urban revolution in the time of the industrialisation. The major Nordic cities and urban centres have grown dramatically during the last 15 years, both numerically in terms of population, economically in terms of their importance for national and regional wealth and not least in relation to their cultural importance, production and usage.

As an example, Copenhagen reflects a development that can be recognized throughout the entire Nordic region. Every year the population of the metropolitan area increases with the equivalent of a medium-sized Danish town and alone in the city of Copenhagen the population has been growing by approximately 1,200 new citizens a month up until 2020 when the pandemic paused domestic migration. This development trend is even more dramatic in the metropolitan areas of Oslo and Helsinki, while the development in greater Stockholm seems more like that of Copenhagen. But even the major Nordic provincial cities are undergoing similar changes in these years. Cities like Bergen, Stavanger, Tampere, Gothenburg, Aarhus and especially Malmö are in the middle of an urban transformation as a result of the changes to how people today live and work in the Nordics.

The changes in the demographic structure and composition are also quite remarkable. In the metropolitan area of Copenhagen nearly 2 million people live, of which about 430,000 - between one in four and one in five citizens – have their childhood and / or cultural background outside of Denmark. In urban Copenhagen, the average age is now down to about



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35 years against 40+ in the rural and less populated parts of the country - a pattern quite similar to the situation in the other Nordic countries.

The consequence is that nuanced multifaceted heterogeneous societies exist in the metropolitan areas like Copenhagen, Stockholm and Oslo, with a growing critical mass of citizens with different backgrounds, cultural references and opportunities. In contrast, especially the rural countryside finds itself outside of these development patterns.

This obviously puts tremendous pressure on the cities' ability to meet the challenges posed by the development. Housing, jobs, public services, day-care centres, schools, hospitals, infrastructure - in all areas, cities need to upgrade themselves in order to cope with the changes. The same applies, of course, to the cultural field.

## **Formidable Challenges**

For the cultural sector the urban changes and rapid growth involves formidable challenges. The cultural sector in the major urban areas has to relate to and meet the effects of an increasingly younger population as well as a larger demographic diversity and at the same time respond to a more and more articulated need to act locally and participate globally. On top of that our changed habits and behaviours create new demands for the cultural institutions; e.g. on the experience of their offerings as appropriate and relevant as well as on concepts like co-creation, participation, interaction, relationship building, innovation, quality, professionalism, etc.

For the cultural operators outside the major growth centres, it is also very much about dealing with the changes, but here often in relation to depopulation issues, local anchoring, new goals for whom they are addressing and not least a new understanding of what role they play for the cohesiveness of their local community and context. In Denmark, politicians often talk of the 'outskirts of Denmark' as an image of a Denmark outside of development. It is often described as mono-cultural, economically stagnated, picturesque with an average age of 45+. In the rural areas and the many small islands, people now talk openly about a future locked in retirement communities and recreation areas for large urban populations in the summertime.

## **Cultural Policy Since the Millennium**

If we look overall at the design of cultural policy in the Nordic region since the turn of the millennium, cultural policy research shows that the five countries are developing in different directions. This has to do both with structural legislation and with the role of culture in the different countries. It is anything but easy to draw too many conclusions about cultural policy in the Nordic countries as a whole. In addition, the differences between the countries are too large in terms of structure and division of roles between state, regional and local levels.



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But at the same time, it is quite clear that the basic Nordic core values are recurring in all five countries and that they are reflected politically at all levels in terms of cultural policies. Culture politics in the Nordics are formulated in a context and a time of upheaval, where societal structures are being challenged and where it is becoming more and more clear that the old patterns and habits are breaking down. The question of what is happening in these years naturally also concerns many researchers with an interest in cultural policy and the development of culture in a broader perspective.

Two of Norway's leading cultural researchers, Per Mangset and Ole Marius Hylland (2017), even ask the question of whether national cultural policy, as we have known it in the Nordic countries for the past half century, has played its role<sup>18</sup>, in the light of, among other things, globalisation, digitalisation and relatively low goal fulfillment in a number of areas, not least expanded cultural participation.

They point out that we often get answers as we ask, and what we most often ask for lies within the framework of existing policy, management and fund distribution practices. But with the enormous changes we are experiencing now, the cultural area should also look critically at its own practice and its own structures, if the ambition is to keep pace with developments in general.

## **Different Political Perspectives**

Across the Nordic countries, cultural politicians on different levels try to respond to the challenges as they see them and translate the new reality into political actions. Together with Nordic colleagues and researchers, CKI has monitored and analysed how cultural political tendencies and policies are framed and put to work for more than a decade. Influenced by the increasing urbanisation and the digital shift there seem to be a diverse set of different cultural policy perspectives existing alongside and influencing each other in the formation of new cultural political strategies on national as well as on regional and local levels.

As a result of facilitating new culture plans in Norway, Sweden and Denmark on local and regional levels and through our yearlong collaboration with partners<sup>19</sup> in all the Nordic countries CKI has identified nine perspectives, which seem to be recurring in all the Nordic

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<sup>18</sup> Mangset, Per & Hylland, Ole Marius. 2017. Kulturpolitikk: Organisering, legitimering og praksis. Oslo: Universitetsforl.

<sup>19</sup> CKI's main partners in the field of culture policies and culture habits are: RePublik and Intercult (Sweden), Cupore, Caisa and Culture for All (Finland), TrAP and Norsk Publikumsutvikling (Norway), City of Reykjavik and the Icelandic Ministry of Culture (Iceland) as well as Applaus, BARC, KIT and the Take Part Network (Denmark). Alongside a close contact to the arts councils and agencies for culture in Denmark, Sweden and Norway.



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countries as perspectives which frame the cultural political discourse and form the backdrop for the legislative decisions and local priorities and initiatives:

- *Culture as a national narrative* - including excellence within traditional Western art forms such as opera, ballet, classical music, drama, fine arts, literature etc. as a way to define and place a city or a region as a place of cultural significance.
- *Culture as an identity matrix* - framing culture as a marker of something specific to a city or a region, something that differs from the rest. Copenhagen as a design heaven and landmark for fine art e.g. supporting expressions and initiatives that underpin the specific notion of the place.
- *Culture as entertainment* - putting a city/region on the map! Mega events with global superstars as a way to raise awareness of a place and its capacity. Big money, large audiences, revenue guarantee.
- *Culture as a societal driver* - Richard Florida's ideas about the potential impact of the creative class still influence many politicians and civil servants. Behind it lies a hope of attracting a well-educated, culturally conscious younger workforce that can provide better tax revenue and create the foundation for more innovative solutions locally.
- *Culture as democratic glue* - reflecting the notion that culture can bridge the gaps politics don't seem to be able to fill. Whether it's a matter of social representation or a way to create better inclusion of marginalised groups into society, many politicians in the Nordics value culture as a key factor to provide social change.
- *Culture as an innovation engine* - in cities and regions with a rich and diverse cultural life, the public investment in new cultural and artistic initiatives and projects is significant and much higher than the municipal average. Investments in cultural infrastructure and initiatives are often connected to a notion of culture as a 'place' in constant motion and development, a place where innovation happens.
- *Culture as a glocal fixpoint* - recently we see how political strategies embrace culture as a way to highlight the local cultural virtues and opportunities and at the same time reflect the ongoing global tendencies, movements and formats. Culture as a way to embody globalism without losing the local identity. Acting locally; Navigating globally; Orientating glocally.
- *Culture as the game-changer* - probably the most frequently activated cultural political idea in the Nordics over the last two decades. In cities like Aalborg, Tampere, Malmö, Umeå, Stavanger i.e. we see how heavy investments in culture and education are thought to be the steppingstones into a new era for traditionally quite heavy industrial cities and regions. A way towards a complete redefinition of a given place.
- *Culture for health* - culture and cultural participation understood as something that provides opportunities for post-medical care and treatment and more importantly



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# SIRIUS4all

A project by: Freeartus, CKI, A25, Luoghi Comuni

culture offers an opportunity to prevent e.g. mental diseases caused by issues of loneliness, loss of cognition and other societal mental health issues. Each of the above perspectives work alongside the others. They all seem to be present in the political debates, the rhetoric, the media coverage, and the daily conversations among citizens. They are often intertwined, and the political logic seems to make use of them as a way to meet a society that is increasingly getting more and more diverse, more complex. Relations have become technically easier but socially more complicated. That calls for a new approach, where the above perspectives often form the foundation for new decisions. Decisions that are thought to be flexible, to reflect migration effects and the shifting populations and cultures, to be anchored in the values and ethics in power, to strengthen equality aspects between individuals and groups in society, to work for constructive and sustainable relations between different partakers in society. For many politicians in Denmark, culture and the arts need to find resonance in a wider part of society to be perceived as relevant and adequate in order to get funded especially outside the capital and the major national institutions.



SMUG – Vestre  
Fjordvej Aalborg.  
Photo: Nordjyske.



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## Digitisation and a New Media Reality

As mentioned above, the financial crisis in 2008, the refugee crisis in 2015 and Covid-19 were important game changers for the formation of politics. Steve Jobs' introduction of the iPhone was another. Ever since his introduction of the first iPhone and the following emergence of social media we have experienced an unprecedented change in our communication and media behaviours, not least in Europe and North America. Digitisation has become a revolutionary factor in most aspects of our lives. And in the Nordics more than anywhere else. Finland, Sweden and Denmark have the three most advanced digital economies in the EU according to the Digital Economy and Society Index in 2020<sup>20</sup> and Norway and Iceland operate at the same level.

In reality all the Nordic countries are on a move towards a cash free society. In Denmark that is in practice already achieved.

In Denmark, Norway and Finland, self-declaration, tax payments and most other contact with public authorities are now fixed via smartphones or similar gadgets, international news and headlines hit us within seconds after they are released, Russian hackers apparently influenced the last two US presidential elections and now try to influence and disturb their neighbouring countries infrastructure, and in the EU we experienced how advanced SoMe communication moved the Brexit agendas from the traditional media platforms and allowed emotional logics to dominate public debate.

Our media reality has changed dramatically. With smartphones everybody has gained access to a world of news and opportunities; a cacophony of voices and an overwhelming stream of information and misinformation. The classic information and news channels are challenged, and the power balance changed almost overnight. Today 25% of the world population have a smartphone! In the Nordic countries it is more than a staggering 94%.

Already back in 2016 YouTube passed over a 1 billion unique users per month. These numbers are remarkable, not least when you consider the timespan. In less than a decade media logics and traditions were changed on a global scale. We now spend far more time on the Internet with our tablets and smartphones than through our computers.

Paper based daily newspapers are closing or reducing their paper editions and instead building up digital universes, which allows them to reach out far more efficiently and to more specific customers and readers than ever before. Many newspapers die in the process and those who survive are engaged in a media universe, where strong relations and traditions have changed

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<sup>20</sup> The Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2020, European Commission 2020, file:///Users/nielsrigholt/Downloads/desi\_2020\_thematic\_chapters\_-\_full\_european\_analysis\_22E60892-D319-9F6D-3E247D4BE7030772\_67086.pdf



character. The mass media too is trying to adapt to the technological opportunities and find new ways of connecting to their readers, listeners and viewers.

In the Nordic countries we also see this shift manifested. By 2008, most leading dailies and broadcast media had permanent cultural editorial offices and a large body of critics, who to a large extent set the framework for the public cultural debate. But after the financial crisis and especially after the advent of the smartphone, that picture has completely changed.

A few of the agenda-setting medias have been able to maintain their own cultural sections and permanent employees in the area. In the vast majority of cases, the cultural coverage of the traditional media has shrunk, and the public discourse has shifted to other platforms.

Specially designed cultural media and platforms have emerged instead and today the large culture institutions announce and communicate their initiatives there instead. At the same time, virtually all cultural actors in the Nordics today have a relatively nuanced SoMe strategy, which makes it possible to communicate and interact with their users both directly and by proxy, i.e.. by the users themselves. The picture is more or less identical across the Nordics - in Denmark and Norway, a few of the major newspapers have been able to expand and nuance the cultural area.

## **SoMe and the Digital Cacophony**

The mix of powerful search engines taking over the navigating function - allowing algorithms to be the refined tool providing us with the notion of being seen - and the logic of most social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, has pounded the traditional forms of communication around. Bloggers, Vloggers, intertwined multi-media social platforms form, together with billions of users, a global digital cacophony of opinions, stories, perspectives – and with YouTube and Vimeo i.e. we are all part of a global shared entertainment channel. Social media has taken the stage and changed the narrative completely.

This is a reality that cultural institutions, decision makers and politicians have to relate to when it comes to issues dealing with facilitating access to culture and a wider inclusion of different audiences. Over a short time, audience behaviour has changed quite dramatically in terms of cultural participation and consumption. Institutions are faced with new demands not only in terms of how they communicate but also in terms of what they communicate! The ability to constantly be digitally present on the ‘right’ platforms has become absolutely crucial for the cultural institutions’ ability to reach, for example, new users. Just 10 years ago, all communication would have a fairly strong organizational foundation internally at the institution to ensure ‘ownership’ of the messages sent out. Today, that image has been replaced by partnerships with various individuals and actors who have a more direct, and perhaps even a more credible, approach to the groups that the institutions want to reach. Understanding what this means for their relationships and opportunities is a prerequisite for the institutions’ ability to work more audience-focused and dynamic.



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## **A New Operational Reality**

For the arts and cultural institutions and operators the digital transformation together with the overall changes in society challenge the traditional *modus operandi* profoundly. Becoming relevant to a wider group of people with presumably very different backgrounds and preferences is about much more than just a matter of pricing and efficient marketing. In order to attract a new audience and open the institutions to ‘unusual suspects’, accessibility becomes a question of new ‘narratives’ and new ways of programming, of collaborating internally between different areas of expertise, of the ability to master and manage the new media, new competencies, new partners etc. The new demands challenge the cultural institutional practice as a whole and we now witness how the former and quite strict boundaries existing between the curatorial level and other departments like e.g. communication are being washed away.

The institution’s or event’s ability to act interactively and openly in relation to this new reality is a prerequisite for the development of both the institution and its employees. The classical models of organisational skills, professional roles, attitudes and professional development perspectives need to be redefined in order to meet the demands. A process that seems to grow out of a complex interaction and collaboration with its audience, artists, other institutions and organisations. Nordic cultural institutions and organisations that have been able to tap into the new reality often highlight a need for increasing knowledge and the development of a collaborative praxis between individuals and institutions, and between employees with different skills and experience in order to fully exploit the new opportunities whilst providing the basis for new knowledge and stimulate further development in order to reach and anchor with a wider audience.

## **Audience Focus**

In Denmark and the Nordic societies where most of the funding for arts and culture is public it easily becomes a matter of legitimacy and access to participation to uphold funding in a longer perspective. If all citizens are ‘paying’ the party, how can the institutions and supported initiatives ensure they also feel invited to take part in it? This question is heard still more often from the politicians. How can the arts and culture institutions ensure a diversity of modes, stories, expressions, events and projects that reflects different societies in e.g. Copenhagen or Aarhus and finds resonance in their respective communities? There is a growing expectation that the institutions and cultural operators will actively work to reach out beyond the ‘usual suspects’, beyond their existing core audiences.

In a Danish and Nordic context, we see that policy makers and cultural institutions are now intensely engaged in connecting the field of audience development, user engagement,



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outreach and community interaction to the fields of urban planning, innovation, cultural politics, youth politics, representation, cultural democracy, institutional development, artistic practice and the models / tools used to reflect and connect to society. Engaging with the audience is both a strategy of cultural and political management as well as a toolbox of techniques and methodologies. And it involves a broad spectrum of skills and knowledge to enable increased access to arts and culture to the widest range of people and social groups - particularly among traditionally underrepresented or excluded groups.

## **A Matter for All Stakeholders**

There are some quite different political approaches to this across the Nordic countries, but overall distribution of and access to culture plays a significant role in the formation of cultural politics on both national and local levels. Engaging with a wider audience has become a matter for all stakeholders in the cultural sector including the artists, and since new demands on relevance and inclusion have been raised there is a profound need for collegial sharing of experiences and methodologies. National and transnational Nordic networks<sup>21</sup> and research environments have been established and we see both the legislative level as well as the arts councils, the regions and the municipalities support professional cross-sectorial networks across aesthetics, genres, municipal and national borders. There is a growing recognition of the importance of the relationship between the artistic expression and the audience, as an in principle equal meeting, where the meaning, interpretation and relevance lies with the audience. That a focus on engaging with the audience and different participatory elements also underline the democratic aspect in the process and opens up for a more nuanced investigation of methods, programming, narratives, participation, recruitment policies, selection of partners etc.

## **Regulation and Funding**

What the research reports we have looked at have in common is that despite some clear differences between the countries in terms of their strategic orientations, goal formulations or legislation, there is still a core that the countries share. The cultural policy offer is in principle similar in all the Nordic countries - regulating and funding performing arts and music, cultural heritage and museums, libraries and cultural schools through national cultural policies. But when it comes to delegating the main responsibility for the activities to regional and local decision-makers the countries and the solutions differ. Sweden stands out as the country where the cultural policy goals are most clearly formulated by the state. In the other Nordic countries, there is a different structure, where clear goals are anchored in legislation around

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<sup>21</sup> An example of a trans-national Nordic network is the Arts and Audiences network, that produced 7 Nordic conferences between 2011 and 2019 on issues related to increasing and diversifying audiences. CKI was co-leading this network together with RePublik (Sweden) and Norsk Publikumsutvikling (Norway).



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individual areas or in reports, strategies or in annual state budgets and possible writings on cultural purposes. In both Denmark and Norway, municipal library activities and municipal music and culture schools are regulated by legislation, and in Denmark it is also regulated by law that certain institutions must have state funding.

As mentioned earlier, the Nordic countries' cultural policies share the ambition to create conditions for artists to be able to work, and to create innovative art with high quality as well as to give everyone the opportunity to take part in a wide range of cultural offerings. Concepts of extended participation and societal relevance are also playing an increasing role throughout the Nordic region.

In Norway and Finland, the focus is very much on ensuring a basic cultural offer throughout the country and ensuring a democratic distribution of culture also far outside the large urban areas. In the relatively recent cultural policy structure in Iceland, it is stated that the state takes responsibility for culture throughout the country. Whereas in the other countries there is a transition where regional and local structures are taking over an increasing part of the responsibility for sharing support for cultural life. Another new movement that several researchers point out is that civil society and volunteering have become more significant and to a greater extent contribute to nuance the division of roles. As the Swedish Agency for Cultural Analysis points out in their report, it is difficult to make any comparison of the financing of culture due to the differences between the national solutions in relation to the distribution of responsibilities from state to region and municipality.<sup>22</sup>

## **Municipalities Contribute More**

The generally most interesting common denominator in Nordic cultural policy these years is that there is apparently a common movement in the Nordic countries where the national level transfers economic power as well as political and economic responsibility to regions and clusters of municipalities. In the field of culture, Norway and Sweden are the only countries to have a clear regional political level. In Denmark and Finland, the municipalities have a significantly greater responsibility. More specifically, new figures from the municipalities' national organization indicate that municipalities in Denmark now account for more than 52% of the total public contributions to cultural life.<sup>23</sup> This is a result of the Structural Reform in Denmark in 2007, when municipalities took over part of the former state responsibility for certain types of cultural institutions, especially libraries, culture schools and some museums. At the same time, a structure was introduced where project- and development funds are

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<sup>22</sup> Myndigheten för kulturanalys, 2018: Kulturpolitisk styrning. Ansvarsfördelning och reformer inom de nordiska ländernas kulturpolitik under 2000-talet, Stockholm: Myndigheten för kulturanalys

<sup>23</sup> Kommunernes Landsforening: <https://www.kl.dk/kultur-og-fritid/det-kommunale-perspektiv-kulturens-vaerdi-en-podcast#episode-3-paneldebat-hvordan-maalder-vi-kulturens-vaerdi-0c>



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distributed through a cluster agreement with groups of municipalities in so-called local Culture Regions.

The priorities in these agreements are negotiated with the individual culture region, which does not necessarily have to do with the political regions. An example is the Region of Southern Denmark, where the municipalities constitute four different geographical culture regions and where there are four independent agreements. The responsibility for the implementation of various laws in the field of culture lies with the Ministry of Culture and the municipalities in Denmark. The political regions do not have an actual cultural policy portfolio or mandate.

This policy movement is an expression of a distribution of both power and resources which corresponds very well to the movements sociologists and other social scientists point on as an effect of a simultaneously increased local and global focus for the individual responding to globalisation, digitalisation and not least the increased focus on our environmental footprints.

It is a kind of dualistic movement. At the same time characterized by centralization and decentralization. State structures are reformed and in Denmark, for example, state administrative activities, support structures and authorities are merged to make them more efficient. At the same time, responsibility is decentralized in a number of areas. In the previously mentioned example with the music and culture schools, it has been stipulated by law that all Danish municipalities must have music and culture schools and that this must be implemented with partial funding from the state according to certain principles.

Similar formulations regarding the transfer of state funding of cultural activities to the regional level can be found in connection with new reforms in both Norway and Sweden, which is very much aimed at consolidating and spreading the responsibility for cultural activities to more actors nationwide. Whereas the movement in Finland more resembles that of Denmark with the establishment of Taika in 2013, a model quite similar to the structures in the Scandinavian countries.

On the whole, the many reforms in the field of culture in the Nordic region are indicators of how important the area is perceived politically, despite the relatively small amounts it receives in an overall political and financial perspective.

## **Redefining Decisive Procedures**

Many Nordic arts and cultural institutions try to meet the new reality and promote a state of affairs where it is possible to test opinions, modes of expression, boundaries and norms, within all aspects of the institutional practice.

But equally many institutions find it more than difficult to break the code. Surveys in Denmark, Sweden and Norway<sup>24</sup> show that it is surprisingly difficult to meaningfully integrate new tactics

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<sup>24</sup> The annual user survey in Denmark is an example of a recurring survey format, that among other things reflect the outcome and effect of audience related initiatives.





into a cultural organisation's overall strategic mission. One would imagine that this would be an obvious move for any arts institution, but it is not. It most likely has to do both with the internal decisive hierarchies and the role of curation in the overall perspective of the institutions' relation to the society it serves and interacts with.

Mostly still anchored in a modernist perception and tradition deriving from the mid-20th century in terms of how cultural institutions are organised and led, many Nordic cultural organisations face the challenge of being 'locked' in an organisational structure that does not truly meet the transition that is taking place as a result of the overall changes of the Nordic societies. As a result, they have become both politically and financially more vulnerable and exposed. This is subject to a series of new research initiatives in the Nordics, where focus is on the relation between change management and cultural production.

Many artistic leaders and institutional managers acknowledge the need of a new approach but are often unfamiliar with the tools available. Leaders try to create strategies that include new tools in the already existing modus operandi rather than to change their own components in terms of organization, programming, recruitment, communication, audience focus etc.

For those who seem to master the new reality and the opportunities it presents, redefining hierarchies and decisive procedures play a significant role for their institutions' abilities to master change. Concepts such as co-creation and participation have become central to the ability to attract new audiences, engage in new partnerships, become subject to new funding and being able to recruit more differentiated and thus meet the demand for an inclusive and explorative institutional practice.



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'Vær I Vejret' Olafur Eliasson. Photo: Andreas Omvik

## Democracy and Access to Culture

When looking at Nordic cultural policy in general, with the aforementioned nine parameters in mind, the link to democratic expectations becomes clear in all countries. In addition to the usual and general formulations to strengthen and develop cultural traditions, tangible and intangible cultural heritage, cultural excellence and national distinctiveness, it is clear that the focus is on ensuring that cultural investments benefit as large parts of the populations as possible. Users and audiences of the cultural offerings are written into the political agreements and supporting structures.

There is nothing radically new in articulating the need for an audience strategy. To a greater or lesser extent audience development as a concept has been operating in the Nordics for the last 25 years. What is new is that the term has taken on a whole different meaning. In the Nordic countries it is largely about how to open cultural institutions and how to create the basis for a more dynamic and cohesive cultural democracy, in which different social groups can be covered and included within the cultural offerings. This approach supports the desire to ensure a higher degree of inclusion and accessibility. In short, the concepts of audience development, inclusion and access to culture form the foundation for the formulation of cultural policies in the Nordic countries. Both up to the Covid-19 crisis and perhaps even more clearly after.

## Balancing Development



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There also seems to be a correlation between the compositions of the urban environments and the politicians' and institutions willingness to innovate and support cultural engagement initiatives through investments and earmarked projects. Common for all Nordic countries is a tremendous difference in the degree of cultural differentiation between urban and rural areas. The vast majority of institutions, investments and audience engaging initiatives are gathered in conurbations with more than 100,000 inhabitants or in cities with a high proportion of young people in education. This frames one of the overall challenges Nordic cultural politicians on national level are faced with these days: How to create a multi-faceted and inclusive cultural environment outside the culturally diverse cities.

## **It's Going Quite Well, In A Way**

The challenges are many and there is plenty to tackle. But here too it can be important to get some perspective on the challenges. If you look at the Nordic region in a European or global perspective, there is good reason for optimism in relation to the anchoring of cultural life in the Nordic populations.

According to Eurostat's Culture Statistics 2019,<sup>25</sup> more than half of all adult Danes, Swedes and Finns had both participated in a live event, visited a cultural memorial and been on a trip to the cinema. The three countries, together with Norway, Iceland and Switzerland, are at the absolute top when it comes to cultural consumption. In Denmark alone, more than 64% of the total population has participated in at least three cultural events during a year, which is the highest number in Europe in 2019. And the other Nordic countries follow right behind. And the number of Danes making use of the cultural offerings is increasing. The Danish statistical bureau recently addressed that the reports coming in from institutions across the country for 2023 points at an all time high level of participation.

The broad support and participation in cultural offerings is in many ways an expression of democratic strength in Nordic societies. It has managed to reach much wider than the privileged cultural and educated elite alone. They have succeeded in 'mainstreaming' the cultural offerings and participating in culture in a way that we have not seen before. But there is still a gap regarding the new incoming citizens. Especially in relation to newcomers from non-European and non-Western cultural parts of the world.

## **Culture For Whom?**

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<sup>25</sup> Culture Statistics 2019, Eurostat, European Commission

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/10177894/KS-01-19-712-EN-N.pdf/915f828b-daae-1cca-ba54-a87e90d6b68b?t=1571393532000>



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In the autumn of 2012, a large report on Danish cultural habits and leisure activities was released.<sup>26</sup> The comprehensive study presents interesting reading about Danish cultural consumption, and it shows that more Danes than ever before take an active part in cultural offerings. The study showed that the percentages of Danes who do not feel distanced from the more highbrow and classical culture are lower than ever before. Since the former survey in 2004, the percentage of Danes who do not take advantage of the cultural offerings dropped to 36 percent from 47 percent.<sup>27</sup> But although cultural participation is increasing, there is still a good third of the population that does not make use of publicly funded cultural activities. The then Minister of Culture welcomed the study as an example of how performance contracts can be seen as a way to ensure that the institutions receiving public support are aware of the audience perspective and are focused to ensure that as many people as possible view the institutions as a real opportunity.

## **Cohesive Cultural Democracy**

As mentioned earlier there is nothing new in articulating the need for an audience strategy. What is new is that the term has taken on a whole different meaning. Now it's not about targeting and audience segmentation alone, it is largely about how to open up cultural institutions and how to create the basis for a more dynamic and cohesive cultural democracy, in which different social groups can be covered and included within the cultural offerings. During the first decade of this millennium the cultural focal point in Denmark was on the issue of the 'genuinely' Danish, the *Danishness* as it was formulated by the then neo-liberal and populist right wing backed government. The focus was on the establishment of a cultural canon and a strong grounding in the story of Denmark as a cultural nation through huge investments in new and spectacular buildings and a significant support for normative mainstream productions that could support the story about the Danes' Denmark. When the liberal government came to power in the autumn of 2001 a veritable ideological crusade began against what they saw as a predominantly centre-left cultural sector. The result was a divided culture sector, an increased financial management of cultural resources and significant support for the large state institutions. Cultural democracy was not on the agenda.

## **Immigrants: 'No Thanks' to High Culture but 'Yes, Please' to Libraries**

The report about Danish cultural habits is particularly interesting because for the first time it also mapped the cultural habits of the new residents, and the picture in 2012 was quite clear.

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<sup>26</sup> Bak, Lene. 2012 Danskernes Kulturvaner, [The Danes' Cultural Habits], Pluss Leadership og Epinion, Copenhagen: Ministry of Culture

<sup>27</sup> Surveys were conducted on a regular basis in 1975, 1987, 1993, 1998, 2004, 2012 and 2018 and based on +30.000 respondents



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'New Danes' were clearly behind when it came to the use of cultural offerings such as theatre, museums and concerts. A third had never been to a museum, one in five had never been in a theatre and one in ten had never visited a concert hall. Several of the interviewed expressed that they do not feel invited to participate, they do not experience the cultural offerings as relevant, and they indicated that lack of interest and an expensive price level played a role in their non-participation.

However, the study also showed that the new Danes participate much more in volunteering and make more use of the libraries than the rest of the population. Particularly young new Danes stand out as frequent users of the libraries. Since there are no comparable earlier studies of new Danes' cultural habits, it is difficult to assess why the new Danes compared to the rest of the population make so little use of public cultural facilities. But experience from other countries shows that the picture is often much more nuanced. New Danes so-called 'lack of interest' might have to do with the fact that this group does not experience the existing services as appropriate.

The cultural institutions still have a long way to go in terms of establishing long-term and sustainable relations with the new Danes. And there is a need for a nuanced picture of who the new Danes are. It is far from a homogenous group, but rather a heterogeneous mass that reflects the global reality as it is present especially in Copenhagen, where an estimated 80 percent of all newcomers to Denmark live.

## **A Plethora of Initiatives**

The increased awareness of the need for more nuanced and inclusive audience work in order to reach out to, for example, the third of Danes who do not regard themselves as subject to the cultural offerings, and not least in terms of creating a more coherent cultural landscape, has now led to a veritable plethora of initiatives, projects and cultural priorities, which help to re-draw the Danish cultural landscape.

In Denmark - particularly in Copenhagen - the development of various inclusive and outreach initiatives for a growing critical mass of citizens with different cultural references has accelerated. Thus, a number of the largest art museums and art galleries in the city have launched major learning projects on citizenship, identity and the institutions' responsibilities in relation to changes in the city's demographic composition. Many art institutions are aiming directly at non-users of the cultural offerings; in order to develop, together with them, new ways of working, and to create new narratives and new common interfaces.

A common trend and driver in Copenhagen and other major Scandinavian cities is that a steadily growing group of cultural practitioners and decision makers allow concepts of identity and cultural diversity to permeate their programs and choice of repertoire, to influence audience initiatives and work, the organizational structure, recruitment policies etc., in order



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to reflect and meet citizens' different experiences, knowledges and perspectives. And efforts are now more focused on increasing opportunities for people to participate in the publicly funded cultural life.



'Until the Lion' Jeannette Ehlers. Photo: David Stjernholm

## Drivers of Development

Demographic composition; the presence of a rapidly growing critical and well-educated mass of citizens with different cultural references; the need to rethink the Nordic welfare state in the face of globalization on the one hand and the development of adequate inclusive structures locally on the other; the digitization of society; the Nordic capitals' international position in relation to the development of design, infrastructure and new media; the desire to realize the creative, artistic and cultural potential of the multicultural Nordic population are just some of the key drivers that have boosted the development over the last few years.

There seems to be a clear correlation between the compositions of the urban environments and the politicians' and institutions willingness to innovate and support engagement initiatives. Common for the Nordic countries, there is a difference in the degree of cultural differentiation between urban and rural areas. The vast majority of inclusive initiatives that see the light of day take place in cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants or in cities with a high proportion of young people in education. This frames one of the challenges Danish and Nordic cultural politicians are faced with these days: How to create a multi-faceted and inclusive cultural environment, also outside the culturally diverse cities?

Compared to many European countries, it is obvious that cultural diversity as a norm is not fully reflected in the socio-bearing structures within the Nordic countries, quite the opposite to the experience of gender equality, where the Nordic countries traditionally occupy a leading position.



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Looking at how gender equality work has taken place in the North, it is interesting to consider to what extent legislation, quotas and an ever-present political discourse have defined the level of development up until now. Many commentators argue that inclusion work in relation to immigrant citizens should be understood in the light of the process of gender equality and that similar 'tools' or incentives should be introduced before one can really talk about real equality and inclusion in society. There is but little doubt that the development of sustainable long-term relationships for successful integration is all about creating a democratic discourse, which is about variables, individual skills, diversity and an integrated understanding of society as the sum of all of its components and not just some of them.

## **The Challenge**

Such actions have revealed a growing need to develop new and modern facilities for supporting small entrepreneurs, cultural and socio-cultural projects. The young generation and new citizens organize themselves differently than previous generations. The focus is on content and skills rather than on traditional forms of organization in associations and similar structures. The challenge is to create support structures that can meet new needs and organizational forms. In relation to the cultural sector as such, the challenges are about how to create a dynamic cultural landscape that includes diversity, nuances and opportunities within Danish culture, which relates in an open and welcoming way to the changes and new paths which occur independently of policy objectives and directives.

It is very much about being able to incorporate the continuous paradigm shifts for the individual artist, institutions and the audience - and the relations between them. The challenge for the politicians will be to formulate policies that go all the way. Policies that can both support current processes and stimulate new initiatives, expressions and forms of production. A differentiated, complementary and progressive cultural policy for example, which is anchored within the framework of the overall state and regional goals, and able to contribute positively to local growth and to expand and strengthen local self-understanding.

Policymakers must, in other words, navigate and relate to the new experiences, knowledge, relationships and resources in order to meet and exploit the potential that a diverse cultural reality holds. It is no easy task, as this will intervene in all aspects of the cultural system.



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'Meeting Her Parents' BEZT. Photo: Aalborg Kommune.



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## The Danish arts scene anno 2024

If we zoom in on Denmark, what we wish to explore is how we can move forward, and combat xenophobia, racism, prejudice and discrimination with the use of arts. If we zoom in even further, on the capital, Copenhagen, we aspire to take a look at how the arts scene looks now, in 2024. Is it culturally diverse, and how? Does it discriminate, exclude, stereotype? Is it trying to tackle this discussion of how we can move towards a 'healthier' Europe, a stronger, more inclusive Europe?

### Where are we now?

*'In recent years, very important work has got underway to expose, register and describe structures in society that create inequality, injustice and insecurity among minorities. [...] Many conversations are ongoing, and they are in themselves a crucial step towards understanding how minority groups are prevented from participating in societal communities or participating under terms that overrule significant parts of their existence. [...] The very exposing and description of structures can be liberating for those who experience minorisation on their own body, and in many cases the clarification itself is an important piece in enabling the change. However, change rarely comes without also being followed by difficult conversations, investigations into complex relationships and often also some resistance to the new and unknown.'*<sup>28</sup>

Discussions, initiatives, and implementations on this subject have happened and are happening, but they are not yet fully mainstream, and the implementation is far from complete and not without pushback.

*Diversity* is in itself a broad term that encompasses gender, age, ethnicity, physicality, sexuality and more. **Our focus here is mainly on geographical/ethnic diversity and representation**, although intersectionally, as this is of interest to our aspect of the SIRIUS4all project. We will give examples that can help highlight the state of the practices/discussions happening in Copenhagen currently and for the past few years - without claiming to be all-encompassing - with examples from film, theatre, museums, music, and literature.

These examples can help highlight the challenges and artistic suggestions for solutions, and they have served as sources of knowledge and inspiration in developing our own project

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<sup>28</sup>Aspegren, Astrid (Ed.), Niels Righolt & Søren Mikael Rasmussen (2024): Audiences – 15 stories about audience development, Copenhagen, Center for Kunst & Interkultur and Rasmussen Nordic, p 74



SIRIUS4all. These examples, like our project, aim to find a next narrative, new perspectives, understanding, change, decolonization, and a higher level of inclusion and conversation.

## Why this focus on diversity?

In recent years, the topic diversity has found its way into mainstream conversations, it has become a 'buzzword', a box that needs to be checked. But diversity for diversity's sake does not combat racism and discrimination, on the contrary, it can end up maintaining stereotypes and prejudices, promote 'tokenism', and make a person a color first, and person second.

It is important to be critical of 'diversity for diversity's sake' while also acknowledging that we in Denmark, as will be described in the following examples, have a problem when it comes to representation and stereotyping, both within the arts and in the structures that uphold them. Therefore, we wish to highlight the art, artists and initiatives who have been frontrunners in these discussions, many of whom had no choice, because of the boxes they were put in. We focus on diversity in the arts because art can hold up a mirror to society, and either cement already existing prejudices, fears, and alienation, or create space for new ideas, norms, and understandings.

## Film

*'With ET STØRRE BILLEDE (A BIGGER PICTURE), we want to shine a light on the still very one-sided notion of what and who can represent 'the norm' in Denmark. We are a diverse people. But the diversity is not reflected, neither on or behind the screen, and does not correspond to the population or the audience. We want to create change.'*<sup>29</sup>

These are the first sentences from a press release issued on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2023, signed by more than 40 actors. The press release was issued together with the remakes of three film posters from three major Danish film directors. These remakes were made as an 'artistic comment' on the lack of diversity in Danish film, and thus featured a variety of actors with differences in skin color, age, size, gender etc.

*'We are a large group of actors who dream of change in our industry, to attain greater diversity and richer representation in Danish TV and film. That change is already in full swing on a global level and has really picked up speed in the wake of the MeToo movement and Black Lives Matter. It started a worldwide, collective conversation about power structures, inequality, discrimination, and the importance of broad representation, highlighting that there are voices that are not given space or being heard. "We invite the industry to catch the ball and continue*

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<sup>29</sup> The authors translation from Danish. <https://www.filmdir.dk/da/et-st%C3%B8rre-billede>



*the conversation, so that together we can find constructive solutions and ways to create better films and art," says Malaika B. Mosendane<sup>30</sup>*



ET STØRRE BILLEDE. Photos: Marie Hald and Per Morten Abrahamsen

This way of using art, and to an extent also humor, to highlight a serious issue within the Danish film industry, gained the statement a lot of attention, both in the Danish press and within the film industry. Especially after film director Lars von Trier, whose work one of the posters was based on, responded with the following: *'Fuck that! I only work under total artistic freedom. Any form of censorship or quotas in the area is a restriction of freedom of expression and thus ultimately leads to fascism.'*<sup>31</sup>

The reactions to the campaign were many and varied – from anger and fear of mandatory quotas, like the abovementioned quote, to surprise, disbelief, support, and relief. A large number of professionals within the film industry expressed a willingness to implement changes but did not know how or where to begin.

As a reaction to this, two of the people behind ET STØRRE BILLEDE, Sandra Yi Sencindiver and Laura Allen Müller, published a book titled 'Dinosaurer i Rummet' (The Dinosaur in the Room), a handbook/ dictionary for the Danish film- and tv-industry, illustrated by Kauli Green, in

<sup>30</sup> The authors translation from Danish. <https://www.filmldir.dk/da/et-st%C3%B8rre-billede>

<sup>31</sup> The authors translation from Danish. <https://soundvenue.com/film/2023/02/efter-provokation-af-trier-vinterberg-og-paprika-steen-dansk-film-boer-pakke-de-fornaermede-miner-vaek-507410>



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November 2023. With a lot of humor, irony, and children's book-like illustrations, the book offers tools and guidance on how to create a more inclusive industry.

*'We find that although people would like to create a film industry without discrimination, there are many who simply have no idea how to start the change [...] It can be deeply uncomfortable, both for the minorised and for the colleagues who want to participate in the conversation, but lack the knowledge: some are afraid of saying something wrong, some are afraid of being canceled and some just don't have the language which is needed to create a fruitful dialogue. We hope that 'The Dinosaur in the Room – A dictionary for the Danish film & TV industry' can initiate the change towards a bigger picture.'*<sup>32</sup>

The book is freely available online and is supported by DFI – The Danish Film Institute.<sup>33</sup>

The Danish Film Institute published a report in 2022 in which they had collected data on ethnic diversity in Danish film. They have been monitoring progress both behind and in front of the camera since 2013 and have found 'limited progress'. The Danish Film Institute acknowledges that this is a problem, and they will continue to monitor this, and create new initiatives and further conversations.

One of the things the report contains are statistics on how many 'Danish characters', 'New-Danish characters', 'Western new-Danish characters' and 'non-Westerns new-Danish characters' that featured in Danish feature films from 2018-2021. The statistics show that the largest numbers of 'non-Western new-Danish characters' were featured in two thrillers about terrorism and in the film 'Shorta', an action film about Danish policemen working in the 'violent ghetto'. The statistics also showed that 'non-Western new-Danish characters' were rarely featured in other genres and not as a lead.<sup>34</sup>

Some actors have decided to take matters into their own hands and create the films they wish to see. An example of this is the 35 minutes long short film 'Vågn op med Danmark' (Wake up with Denmark) from 2022, directed by Joseph Valentino Palau.<sup>35</sup> The film follows an Afro-Danish comedian played by Hervé Toure, who is struggling because he only finds success when he makes fun of his own ethnicity and culture. The short film won the Ekko Audience Award in 2022. As Palau wrote on his social media: *'Together with Hervé Toure we wanted to write a film that exhibited a character's internal conflicts of being a minority in the Danish entertainment industry. Though this film is fictional, it is made up of true experiences.'*

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<sup>32</sup> The authors translation from Danish. <https://www.dfi.dk/nyheder/nyt-vaerktoej-mangfoldighed-i-dansk-film>

<sup>33</sup> [https://www.dfi.dk/sites/default/files/docs/2023-11/Dinosauren%20i%20rummet\\_0.pdf](https://www.dfi.dk/sites/default/files/docs/2023-11/Dinosauren%20i%20rummet_0.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> Det Danske Filminstitut (2022): Undersøgelse af Etnisk Mangfoldighed i Dansk Film

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.ekkofilm.dk/shortlist/film/vagn-op-med-danmark/>



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*Vågn Op Med Danmark. Photo: Nikolai Linares*

## **Theatre / Performance**

The theatre and performance industry shares a lot of the same issues as the film industry when it comes to diversity – both off and on stage. Actors in this field have also come forward to protest against typecasting – i.e. Black, Brown and Asian women being cast as prostitutes, au pairs or enslaved, Black and Brown men being cast as terrorists, gangsters, pirates etc. Thus, a skewed image of certain non-European minorities has been able to contribute to stereotypes and prejudices amongst certain majority groups, creating further division.

Within the last decade, different theatre organisations/ individuals/ collectives have tried to counterbalance and challenge the primarily white Danish theatre scene, and to use art to create different narratives, to ask questions and to build bridges.

In 2024, one of the most well-known of these is probably Blaagaard Teater.

Blaagaard Teater is located in Nørrebro, Copenhagen, an area of the capital known for its diverse population. Under the leadership of Sargun Oshana (Theatre Director at Blaagaard Teater from 2021-2023) the theatre decided that its profile should reflect that of the surrounding population, so that these could mirror their own stories in what they saw on stage.



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*The Wedding, Blaagaard Teater. Photo: Catrine Zorn*

*'We believe that theatre is a reflection of reality. In a way, it's also a distortion of reality. At our theatre, we think that the performing arts can depict reality and the dilemmas and issues that color us as human beings.[..] We do this in many ways - such as curating Black to Normal at our theatre. It's an Afro-Danish drama festival created by Marie-Lydie Nokouda, and we are holding it for the third time now.*

*We also do this by hosting Pink Pavilion, where, through an Open Call, we find new international dramas to explore what's happening in the world beyond Denmark's borders because it's essential to look outward.'*<sup>36</sup>

In the same article Oshana also expanded on the dogma the theatre has of casting color consciously, instead of color blind, as a way of always being aware of their own biases, not only on stage, but also when it comes to the sound designer, scenographer, production manager etc. Blaagaard Teater also made an effort to include the surrounding neighborhood by inviting them to special events at the theatre, hosting get-togethers etc.



*Black to Normal, Blaagaard Teater*

<sup>36</sup> Handeland, et al (2024): AUDIENCES – 15 stories about audience development, p 162



Another example is the performance Roma. In 2017, Paradox Theatre staged a documentary theatre/ walking tour/ debate hybrid with and about the Roma population in Denmark. There is a lot of stigma and prejudice concerning the Roma population in Denmark, and the aim for the performance was for real Romas (and one actor, Özlem Saglanmak) to tell their stories and interact with the audience to create understanding and to nuance the public debate. Research ahead of the performance showed that 72% of the Danish population had a negative view of the Roma people.<sup>37</sup> Instead of a headline in a newspaper, or someone asking for money on the street, the aim of the performance was to nuance the image and give the participating Romas a platform, and a space to talk and share stories, and the team behind the performance experienced how conversations between the Romas and the audience would continue after the performance had ended.<sup>38</sup>



Roma, Paradox Teater. Photo Søren Meisner

Amongst other prominent voices are theatres such as DanskDansk – whose premise is that ‘identity and Danishness are concepts that are up for constant negotiation’ and they wish to ‘reflect and include more citizens in the performing arts’,<sup>39</sup> Batida – a local, global touring theatre with a focus on music as a universal language<sup>40</sup> and C:NTACT – who use theatre as a

<sup>37</sup> <https://via.ritzau.dk/pressemeddelelse/10003384/oplevel-romaernes-kobenhavn?publisherId=6838473>

<sup>38</sup> Paradoxteater.dk

<sup>39</sup> The authors translation from Danish. <https://www.information.dk/kultur/anmeldelse/2018/11/udvandrertingbjerg-slags-teater-kan-kalde-vigtigt-uden-foeles-floskel>

<sup>40</sup> Batida.dk

democratic, social and cultural tool by creating plays with and about youth groups with different social and cultural challenges.<sup>41</sup>

## Museums / Visual Art

*'We are only told one story. A story by the white man, about the white man, for the white man.'*<sup>42</sup>

*'We have a strong, national narrative that we in Denmark are a small, homogeneous society where everyone is equal, and that narrative is challenged by the fact that there are groups in society who not only feel, but can demonstrate that they are underrepresented in museums, on boards; all the places that deliver the story of who we are and where we are as a society. These groups go against the folklore we have about ourselves - they reveal the myth,'* says researcher Ida Lunde Jørgensen, who is an expert in national museums, organisations, and national identity at the Center for Corporate History at Copenhagen Business School, *'The discussion we see in Denmark is seen in many countries that struggle with what their national identity should be.'*<sup>43</sup>

According to The Association of Danish Museums (ODM), which represents 170 Danish museums, lack of diversity is a national and international problem, and they acknowledge that current power structures in museums might be contributing to the creation of limited artistic expressions. They are therefore encouraging their member museums to have an active focus on diversity, but the actual planning, programming and curation remains up to the individual museums.<sup>44</sup>

The exhibition Close Encounters: Embodied Journeys at Den Frie Udstillingsbygning in 2023 in Copenhagen managed to create a high degree of diversity on both the curatorial and artistic level, as well as on the audience level. Curated by dancer, choreographer and producer Julienne Doko, the exhibition featured six pieces, each within their own room, created by Copenhagen-based pan-African/ Afro-European artists. With a mix of performance, dance, textiles, installation-art and visual art, the pieces explored the identities of the artists and the 'othering' they have faced in Denmark, to *'broaden the perspectives of Danish-ness, decolonization and objectification of the Black and Brown bodies'*<sup>45</sup>, with a focus on empowerment and healing.

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<sup>41</sup> Contact.dk

<sup>42</sup> The authors translation from Danish. <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/kultur/er-danske-museer-hvide-nu-svarer-de-paa-kritikken>

<sup>43</sup> The authors translation from Danish. Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> <https://denfrie.dk/udstilling/close-encounters-embodied-journeys/>



*'Based on what baggage we each carry, we experience the world differently. Everyone is made into 'the other' in certain situations. Some on more levels than others. I have chosen to focus on the Black body, but it is a general trend that everyone can relate to. [...] The intention is to expand the audience's perspective on Danishness. With the exhibition, I challenge the Danish population in the year 2023 to look inward by asking: 'Am I able to deconstruct my colonial mind?'*<sup>46</sup>



*Close Encounters: Embodied Journeys. Photos: Christian Brems*

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<sup>46</sup> Says Julienne Doko. The authors translation from Danish. <https://kunsten.nu/journal/intentionen-er-at-give-et-udvidet-perspektiv-paa-danskhed/>



With SMK KOM, The National Gallery of Denmark have created an evening once a month where anyone who wished to learn/practice Danish and anyone who wished to help others learn, can meet for free at the museum to have coffee/tea, to speak Danish and to look at the exhibited art. The intention behind SMK KOM is to create new communities across nations and cultures.<sup>47</sup>

*'Many of the participants have not previously been regular users of art museums but see opportunities here that alternative language education does not offer them.[..] As a niche activity with no associated income, it can have great strategic importance, not only for what it already means to those involved, but also because, by the gesture of hosting, it can inspire other parts of the museum to think of the audience, not as one, but precisely as a non-homogeneous, multicultural public consisting of people with different needs, backgrounds, expectations and capacities.'*<sup>48</sup>



SMK KOM. Photo: Kristoffer Juel

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.smk.dk/event/smk-kom-oev-dit-danske-2/>

<sup>48</sup> Aspegren, Astrid (Ed.), Niels Righolt & Søren Mikael Rasmussen (2024): Audiences – 15 stories about audience development, Copenhagen, Center for Kunst & Interkultur and Rasmussen Nordic



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## Music

*'The overall pattern (in society) is that ethnic minorities experience negative discrimination to a greater extent than majority Danes. When they have to answer what the reasons are, it is typically about skin color and religion.'*<sup>49</sup>

The organisation Another Life, a non-profit organisation that works with mapping representation and discrimination in the Danish music industry and cultural sectors, have released several reports mapping the Danish music industry through data collection by survey, the latest being 'Representation & Discrimination in the Danish Music Industry 2022'. In it, they conclude that 9/10 ethnically double scale minoritised respondents have been exposed to negative differential treatment. The report also shows that ethnically minoritised respondents have experienced a higher amount of sexual harassment within the music industry.<sup>50</sup>

In 2023, the Danish music industry responded with a codex that is meant to help combat these issues:

- 1. Bias-awareness in managers and employees** - You train managers and employees to work with and challenge their own stereotypes and prejudices to counteract ingrained and limiting notions.
- 2. Broad representation in gatekeeper roles** - You aim for broad representation in the positions and decision-making roles that function as gatekeepers and exercise special power in relation to assessments, distributions, bookings and hiring.
- 3. Role models** - You work with diverse role models in your internal and external work.
- 4. A safe and inclusive culture** - You undertake to define and spread a safe and inclusive culture and a working environment where no one encounters unfounded discrimination.
- 5. Professionalisation of the organisation or company** - You undertake to work to establish, implement and maintain the necessary processes and guidelines to strengthen the professionalisation of management, processes, structures and operations.
- 6. Data and transparency** - You undertake to make the effort measurable and to annually follow up and communicate about activities and results to ensure progress and transparency.<sup>51</sup>

*'The codex is a call to action and a proposal for how the many players in the music industry, small and large, can concretely start promoting social sustainability.'*<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> The authors translation from Danish. <https://www.dr.dk/musik/det-er-voldsomme-tal-kvinder-og-minoriteter-oplever-markant-mere-diskrimination-i>

<sup>50</sup> Another Life (2022): Representation & Discrimination in the Danish Music Industry 2022, p 55

<sup>51</sup> The authors translation from Danish. <https://www.csr.dk/musikbranchen-vil-tackle-diskrimination-med-nyt-kodeks>

<sup>52</sup> The authors translation from Danish. Ibid.



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When looking at the need for role models, a good example from the current 2024 music scene is musician JJ Paulo. He is a young, up and coming musician born in Tanzania and raised in Silkeborg, a small Danish city, where he, as he said, was the only African in his school.

*'I was teased so much that I had to skip a year at school. When I became a teenager, I just wished I was white. I simply lacked a role model - others like me. Today I have become one myself. I have been back to my school and talked about it and hopefully I can open doors for others.'*<sup>53</sup>

In an interview with a local newspaper, he explains how he had to teach himself how to produce, how to write songs and how to record, because he could not get a manager or a producer.

*"I am going to be one of the world's greatest performers and I will travel around the world. I am not annoyed by closed doors, but I think one day I'll buy the whole building that door is in, and then I'll open it," he chuckles.'*<sup>54</sup>

In 2023, he toured Denmark with the show 'Mama I Made It', and in the same year, he won the Danish Music Awards Roots 'Concert Experience of the Year' Award.



JJ Paulo. Photo: Maria Fremmin

<sup>53</sup> The authors translation from Danish. <https://aarhus.lokalavisen.dk/kultur/musik/ECE15045110/jeg-blev-mobbet-og-oenskede-bare-at-jeg-var-hvid-men-et-eneste-sted-var-jeg-stjerne/>

<sup>54</sup> The authors translation from Danish. Ibid.

Another institution with a strong focus on role models is Turning Tables. The Danish branch of the organisation was established in 2016. It is part of an international non profit organisation that *'works to empower socially, politically and economically marginalised youth by providing them with the means to express their grievances, hopes and dreams in music and film.'*<sup>55</sup> From 2016-2018, they focused on children in the Danish asylum camps, and have since grown and expanded their reach. With a large team of mentors, they work locally by creating youth-driven culture labs. The mentors are professional artists with diverse backgrounds, who guide the children/youth in creating their own art.

*'Our activities are open to all young people, but we have a special focus on those who are outside the communities. Young people who don't usually speak up. Young people who, if met with respect, interest and opportunities, will develop and not only grow stronger themselves, but also let the rest of us grow with them. It is about what arts and culture can do for young people. But just as much about what young people can do for arts and culture in Denmark. [...] Our work shows that cultural life in Denmark is expanded and strengthened when we dare to make room for young people who normally do not find their way into culture. They have something on their minds, new ideas and expressions and a special drive that 'cultured Denmark' lacks.'*<sup>56</sup>



Turning Tables. Photos: Turning Tables

<sup>55</sup> <http://www.one-life-foundation.org/turning-tables>

<sup>56</sup> The authors translation from Danish. Turningtables.dk

## Literature

In literature, we have chosen to highlight two writers who are using the written word to shine a light on the need for multiple voices and stories.

The first one is Naiha Khiljee, psychologist, spoken word artist and poet. She has published two books of poetry, 'Kære Søster' (Dear Sister) and 'Læg en Besked' (Leave a Message). With poems such as 'Farveblind' (Colourblind), 'Flying while muslim' and 'Oprør er også for pæne piger' (Rebellion is also for nice girls), she has become a strong voice in the public debate on islamophobia and representation and uses poetry and art as a tool to articulate the nuances and problems that she has encountered, all the while infusing her writing with a lot of humour.

*'If there is to be a space for me, I feel that I must create it myself. No stage has been set to tell my story. But that's what I'm fighting for. [...] I'm often told that I'm a frontrunner. I have a special relationship with that. Because of course it's a privilege, but it's also hard to be the first. It requires you to put yourself on the line and listen to stupid comments once in a while. But when I stand out there and perform, I find that what I can contribute with is in short supply.'*<sup>57</sup>

Another literary voice is Moussa Mchangama. He is a prominent activist and debater, and co-founder of In Futurum, a consultancy company with special focus on sustainability, diversity and inclusion. He has published 'Tekster om hjem' (Writings about home), which explores his childhood growing up with a mother from Denmark and a father from the Comoros.

*'I've tried to fit in, constantly changed shape, so I didn't hurt myself on a world arranged in boxes. But it's over now, it's not enough to fit in. Now is the time to belong, to create something new; a heartland, connected by values that let us be what we were born to be: human beings, wonderfully complex human beings.'*<sup>58</sup>

With his writings, one of his aims is to make the reader reflect on their own privileges, so that we can move forward together, towards a more inclusive future.

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<sup>57</sup> The authors own translation from Danish. <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/kultur/boeger/naiha-paa-25-vil-skrive-en-bog-hvis-der-skal-vaere-plads-til-mig-skal-jeg>

<sup>58</sup> The authors own translation from Danish. <https://www.elle.dk/agenda/moussa-mchangama-en-meget-vaesentlig-del-af-min-analyse-er-de-bredeste-skuldre-maa-baere-det>



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Naiha Khiljee, Photo: Betina Garcia



Moussa Mchangama. Photo: Kavian Borhani

## Where do we go from here?

With SIRIUS4all, we hope to continue this conversation, to shine a light on exclusion and othering, and through art continue this conversation, create spaces for new stories, reflections, and movements. Our aim is to explore, ask questions, learn from others, and move forward together through art and art-based research.

*'If we are to dismantle the systematic inequalities and power hierarchies, we must first of all understand each other's humanity. We understand this best by creating recognition, even if we don't look like each other, because we can recognize each other's feelings. Most people find it uncomfortable to feel left out. Well, let's talk about it, because there is a whole group of people in Danish society who feel left out.'*<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> The authors own translation from Danish. <https://www.elle.dk/agenda/moussa-mchangama-en-meget-vaesentlig-del-af-min-analyse-er-de-bredeste-skuldre-maa-baere-det>

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A project by: Freeartus, CKI, A25, Luoghi Comuni

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# The GERMANY Perspective

**Partner: FreeArtus gGmbH**

This research was undertaken and written by:

Prof. Dr. Ulrich Wunsch, SABAA education gGmbH

## A first glance

A graphic evaluation and representation of the following Germany research document visually showing the statistical value of the word-count (indicator: frequency) in this document as a “Word Cloud”:





***Hell is empty and all the devils are here.***

*(The Tempest by William Shakespeare with Ariel speaking)*

## Introduction, general remarks

This research part of the SIRIUS4all project strives to open and deepen (our) understanding of the underlying notions, prejudices, assumptions, facts, data, interpretations, hopes, fears, and more from a Germany perspective. Meaning: it draws on the collective and individual memory and history of a German researcher, combining German sources with European ones, focusing on German judgments, assumptions, prejudices – as far as this is possible at all.

The scope is limited by the theme and topic of the application, dealing with aspects of a next narrative of and for the European Union.

The research strives to provide the local event in Berlin and the local events in Sofia, Copenhagen, Perugia, Piazza Armerina with their participating artists, their members of the civil society, and all involved with some material, some ideas, some metaphors, something to play with, something to ponder for discourse and dialogue.

Research conducted within this project is divided into two phases:

- a) Preliminary research leading to a research report in April 2024 (as documented here)
- b) Continuous research done via meetings, survey, events and handovers leading to filling the website and the Online-3-D-Gallery as a result to be then evaluated in December 2025.

## Methodology

This document represents a naturally limited research – limited in time and resources and by the individual researchers mental/ideological restrictions. The methodology reflects the researcher's interest and capabilities as an academic and concerned citizen of 67 years of experience and training.

The document provides insights stemming from anecdotal evidence, from limited sources, the choice of such afflicted by chance – thus, a “fragment” and an “essay” seem to be the right classifications of such an approach. A fragment understood in the sense of the term and its usage developed in the German early romantic literature and theory of perception / cognition. There a fragment was seen as the appropriate form of cognition to create and represent insight in a time just after the French revolution, a formative “Zeitenwende” (turning point) of this saeculum. As the revolution came as a “flash” of violence and change, the fragmented insight was seen as an inspiration arising from binging multilayered and diverse and non-fitting ideas and objects together letting them react. An essay understood as the subjective exploration into the individual circumstances, opinions and prejudices of an individual mind.

Thus, the following applies:

- a) Desktop research in various scientific fields (sociology, psychology, political sciences, ...) via online research in online books and articles
- b) Desktop research in various scientific fields (sociology, psychology, political sciences, ...) via reading “real” printed books
- c) Desktop research in various quality media represented by newspapers and magazines for the four partner countries and beyond via online research in articles
- d) Evaluation of the texts collected via standardized key word search and simple statistical representations (excel, word clouds, AI, ...)
- e) Evaluation of the representation of the idea of the individual territory collected via standardized graphic representation – collected at the events and integrated in the final report
- f) Conversations revolving around selected key words with experts and non-experts, artists and non-artists in the four cities of event implementation – to be included in the final report
- g) Using aesthetic and artistic research methodologies for exemplary singular evidence and anecdotal evidence.

Collecting and curating further data and evidence in the 3-D-Online Gallery during the two years of the project for comparison, mirroring and cross-fertilization to provide a corrective measure for a final evaluation.

A final note: It seems that answers are not so much in need as are valid and flexible formulations of good and open questions that call for “new” answers beyond the worn-out mantras of the old answers.

## ***What's past is prologue***

*(The Tempest by William Shakespeare with Antonio speaking)*

Some initial underlying, maybe unconsciously present questions for conducting this research and writing this report

- What are the main, the defining “troubles” of our times?
- Is there pressure mounting from the interconnected crises and challenges of our times on a global scale on all levels of a societal organisation; is there a deep gap and change (Zeitenwende / turning point) – or is it just another crisis in the chain of crises in the modern economic and societal system, inbuilt in its very workings?
- Did something change during the 12 months between the application written and the start of the project (facts, moods, narratives, opinions) in general in Europe – and if so, what?

- What changed during the 12 months between the application written and the start of the project (facts, moods, narratives, opinions) specifically in each of the four project countries and cities?
- Did certainties, schemes, formulas, grids, that provided security and safety vanish or weaken – and are new ones in sight?
- Is the climate crisis an overarching factor to all of this – and if so, what is there to do?
- Does the European Union recognize and integrate all its member's (individuals, families, tribes, groups, companies, parties, territories, nations) different historical experiences – and how could it be done?
- Is ART an answer or a question?
- Is realism realistic?

## Guiding aspects, considerations and questions

- ◇ Is “Europe” a continent or an idea?
  - ◆ Check the history of the terminology, the term
  - ◆ Check old maps of the geographical destination “Europe”
  - ◆ Did “Europe” exist in the Middle Ages, during the Roman Empire, during the Renaissance, during ...
  - ◆ When did the “modern Europe” begin
    - with what did it begin
    - what gave birth to this “Europe”
- ◇ Is the idea, the image of “Europe” a closed one or an open one?
  - ◆ Does open mean inclusive?
  - ◆ Does closed mean exclusive?
  - ◆ Who defines this image?
  - ◆ Did it change over the decades?
  - ◆ Did it change once the EU was created?
  - ◆ Did it change once the enlargement of the EU with eastern states happened?
  - ◆ Did it react to the multiple crises of the last 20 years?
- ◇ Our society
  - ◆ Theories in society by Andreas Reckwitz, Hartmut Rosa, Nikolas Luhmann as guidance?
  - ◆ What does represent strong ties, what good comes from weak ties?
  - ◆ Is Europe constituted by a similarity of societies in structure and values, does it strive towards one, is it forced towards one?
  - ◆ Who is the player and who is being played?
- ◇ Migration
  - ◆ How to tell facts and fiction regarding migration apart?

- ◆ How to take the worries of Europeans (politicians, citizens, organizations, companies) serious and listen to them?
- ◆ What is the perspective of those arriving?
- ◆ What is the perspective of those already on site?
- ◆ How does “Europe” cope with the fact, that it turned from an emigration continent to an immigration continent and with the fact that some countries of the EU are still emigration / remigration countries?
- ◇ Decolonialization, Climate-Catastrophe
  - ◆ How deeply rooted in colonialist thinking is the idea of “Europe”, is the European Union?
  - ◆ How to integrate findings and ideas of scholars such as Dipesh Chakrabarty on decolonizing Europe?
  - ◆ How to integrate findings and ideas of scholars such as Bruno Latour on climate change and the rights of “Nature”
  - ◆ How to transcend the duality of “Nature” versus “Culture” with its notions of supremacy?
- ◇ Eastern European perspective
  - ◆ Does “Western Europe” and its nations recognize different historical experiences in “Eastern Europe” and truly integrate those?
- ◇ A next narrative?
  - ◆ Narrative and framing this: how to create an open integrative frame?
  - ◆ How to tell a good story?
- ◇ Art, ART, “Art”
  - ◆ Is art an overarching term, or is it culture?
  - ◆ Is sensuality pragmatic?
- ◇ A Sound of Europe (for the Berlin gathering)
  - ◆ What constitutes a / the sound of Europe?
  - ◆ Which sound bites are in the foreground, which in the background?
  - ◆ Can there be various, different mixes?
  - ◆ Is a multilayer uncomposed in the end cacophonous?

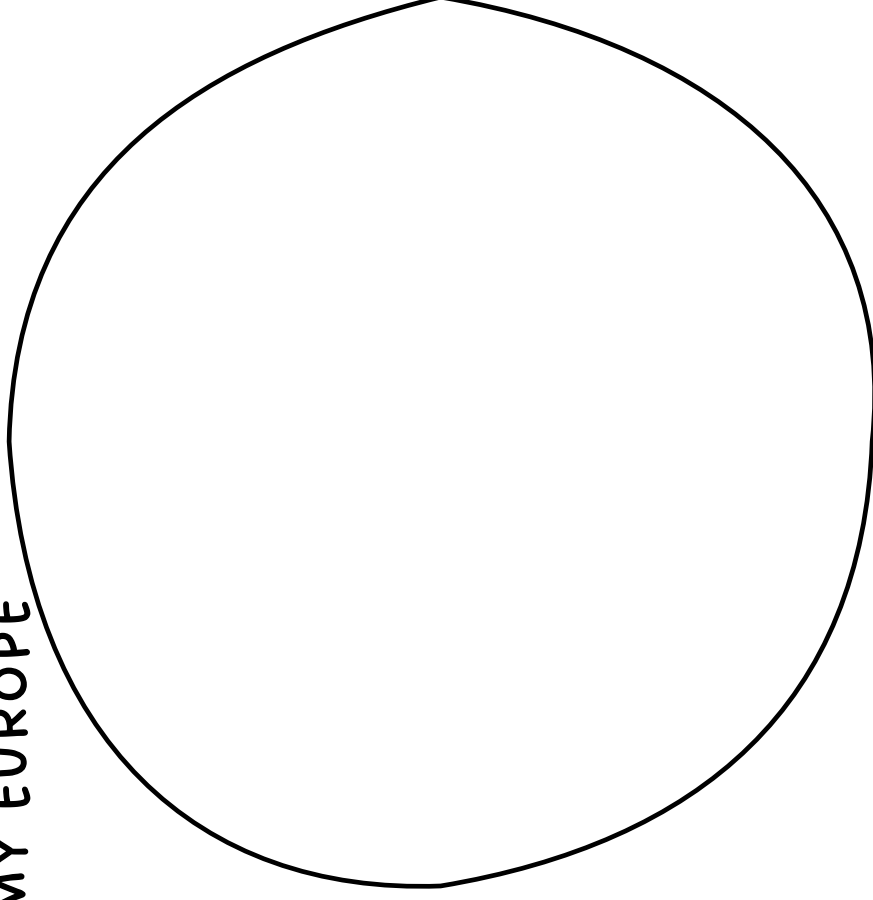
## Graphic Survey

As a special form of a survey and evaluation of representations (experiment, test), a graphic tool was created around the question of “your personal mental map of EUROPE”. It will be used at all events and the results documented at the end of the project.

The paper and pencil survey document’s front page:

Please portrait your mental map of EUROPE: Your personal, individual landscape, idea and image of "EUROPE" (whatever "it" is to you) – an example is shown on the backside. The document is anonymous.

## MY EUROPE

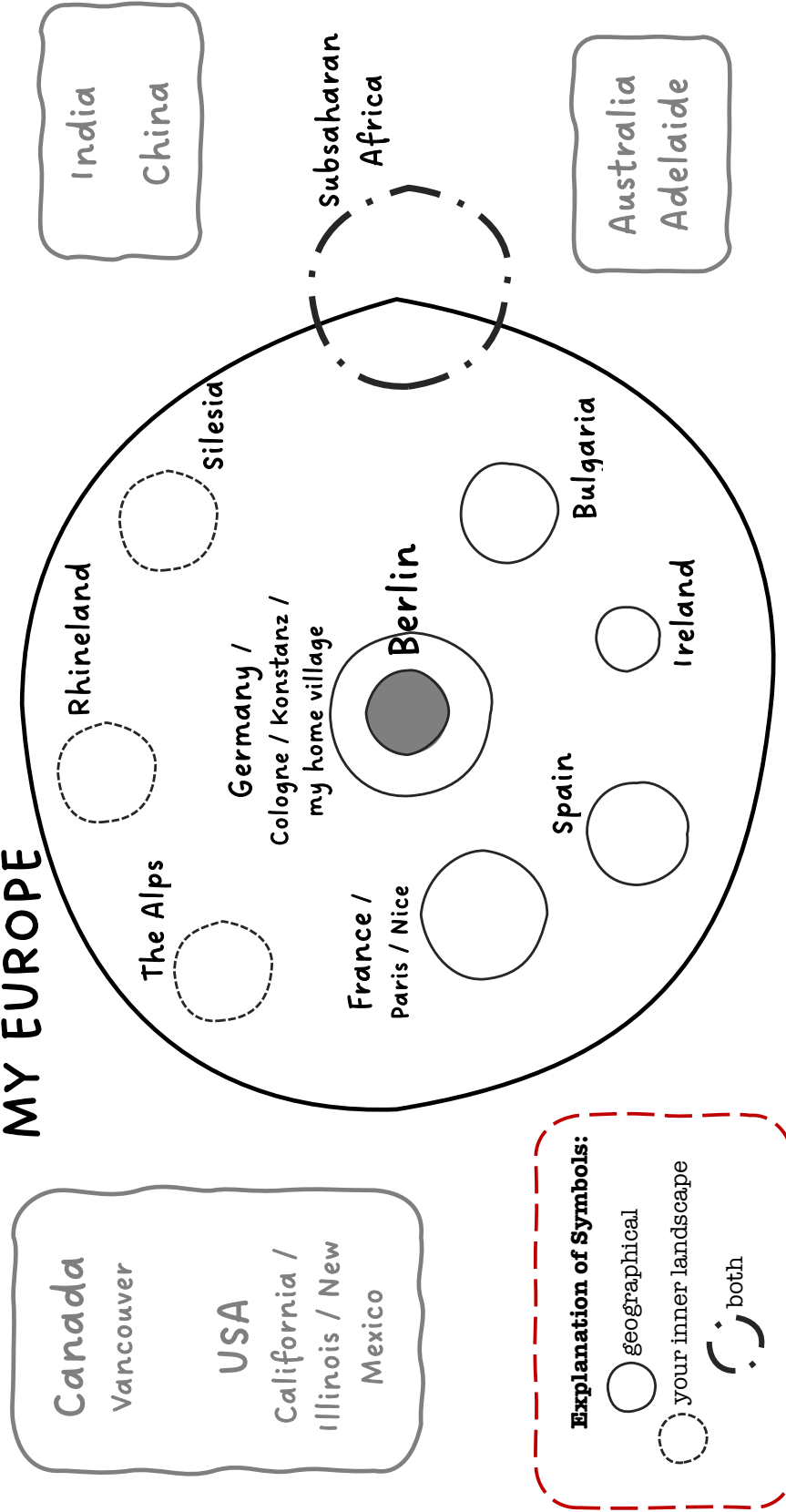


My background: a) passport(s), age: \_\_\_\_\_ // b) my parents, grandparents come from: \_\_\_\_\_

c) partner, relatives, friends from: \_\_\_\_\_ // d) living in (country, city): \_\_\_\_\_

Please portrait your mental map of EUROPE: Your personal, individual landscape, idea and image of "EUROPE" (whatever "it" is to you) – an example is shown on the backside. The result is kept anonymous.

## MY EUROPE



My background: a) passport(s), age: German, 66 // b) my parents, grandparents come from: Silesia (now Poland, until 1945 German-Prussian, before 1750 Austria-Hungarian, before 1400 Polish-Latvian, ...

c) partner, relatives, friends from: Rhineland, Silesia, East-Prussia ... world-wide // d) living in (country, city): Germany, Berlin

And the back page: A filled out survey, depicting an example of a completed survey image providing explanation and an example for guidance:

*O brave new world, / That has such people in 't!*

*(The Tempest by William Shakespeare with Miranda speaking)*

## PART 1. Specifically General Issues

### Results | Hypotheses

This research, to start with at a societal and field-related macro level, has to deal with issues of history, of remembering history, of projecting history; it will deal with terminology and the history of words, with narratives; and it has to deal with various conflicting approaches of trying to understand and get to terms with our today's societal structures and conditions.

#### A fragmented portrait of fragmented times

To begin with, some more general reflections on these issues, some facts and ideas to ponder, some questions to be put forward in the form of selected quotes from contemporary experts, thinkers, literati, artists:

The Indian historian and academic [Dipesh Chakrabarty](#) in 2000 put forward an essential text on "Provincializing Europe – Postcolonial Thought and Historical Differences", followed in 2021 with another text on "The Climate of History in a Planetary Age". In 2005 a group of historians came together to discuss contemporary effects of a politics of recognition (and misrecognition). From this Dipesh Chakrabarty formulated the idea and concept of the "historical wound". A past event or a series of events or a generalized opinion on something that searches for recognition which is not answered, constitutes a historical wound:

*"Historical truths` are broad, synthetic generalizations based on research collections of individual facts. They may be wrong, but they are always amenable to verification by the methos of historical research. Historical wounds, however, are a mix of history and memory, hence their truth is not always verifiable by historians. Historical wounds cannot come into being without the prior existence of historical truths, but they exceed these by mobilizing history in embodied forms, in the stigmata of present generations."*<sup>2</sup>

This proposal among others led to the recognition of non-academic forms of studying and dealing with history, especially in artforms of solemnly and individually created aesthetic artifacts/experiences:

*"However the productive tension between the values of academic history and those that are rehearsed in institutions of public life is still insufficiently understood. Museums today increasingly tend to foreground "experience", not just in terms of what spectators get out of*

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<sup>2</sup> Bain Attwood, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Claudio Lomnitz: The Public Life of History - Foreword, in: Public Culture 20:1, 2008 Duke University Press, page 2.

*their visits to the museum – a “museum experience” that gives “experience” in a commodity form – but also as a way of accessing the past. The performances of history in the present have suffused public life and the media, and it spills into legal debate and policy formation. In this regard, the role of representational art forms, various genres of performance, and nonacademic nonfiction writing is significant.”<sup>3</sup>*

This research on SIRIUS4all relates to the concepts and ideas of Dipesh Chakrabarty in regard to the position of “Western” thinking about “decolonialization” and the concept of “recognition” in formulating a working plan for the project in search of a next narrative.

## **Hypothesis 1:**

The phenomena, traumata, of “historical wounds” are still active and virulent within the European Union, its nations, its organizations, its people. To address these, acknowledge these, integrate these in order to “heal” them, would form one constituent of a next narrative.

The concept of “loss” as presented by the German sociologist Andreas Reckwitz is connected to the idea of the “historical wound”. Since 2022 Reckwitz publicly talks and writes about “loss” as a significant phenomenon and shaping power of our today’s societies. In an article for the Los Angeles Review of Books on this topic he describes some aspects<sup>4</sup>:

*„Loss is everywhere. Present-day, late-modern societies in the West are confronted with collective experiences of loss to an unprecedented degree. This raises a fundamental challenge, because modern society since the eighteenth-century Enlightenment has thrived on a big promise — the promise of progress. However, experiences of loss contradict this promise. How can a society that is fixated on the promise of “better” and “more” put itself in a position to deal with loss? This will be a political and cultural key issue of the twenty-first century.“*

What factors of phenomena constitute the danger of loss for late-modern societies?

*„Without doubt the most powerful impact comes from climate change, its experience and its anticipation for the future. (...) the anticipation of future loss in society is even stronger than the experience of present loss. In addition, the political measures to combat climate change promise losses of a different kind, as it becomes obvious that societies could be put into a position in which they renounce some elements of the consumer-friendly lifestyle they become accustomed to.“<sup>5</sup>*

Reduction, conscious downsizing, limiting possibilities in order to save a place to live appear as demands by youth, by poorer nations, by poorer people, by non-Western people on the horizon, by conscious others. The idea of a promise of progress, the idea of endless “growth” and the moral position of universal rights is criticized more and more in an academic and political context. It is seen as just another way of ostracizing and marginalizing

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, page 3

<sup>4</sup> Los Angeles Book Review, article by Andreas Reckwitz, January 10, 2023 - <https://lareviewofbooks.org/short-takes/the-challenge-of-loss/> - accessed January 10, 2024.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.



the majority of Earths' inhabitants. The United Nations, created by Western nations as a world council, seem not able to mitigate and moderate these disruptions and the process and outcomes of climate change. Answering the failures and shortcomings of this supranational organization, the European Union with its smaller number of members might find ways to overcome its internal quarrels and misunderstandings and its (supposedly) non-descript, volatile external form to navigate the expectations of its members and its partners. These at the same time are on the outside as well as on the inside of the system named "EU". In the duplicity of their members' roles – and of all inhabitants of this planet they represent roles as consumers and producers at the same time – as active defining factors and decision makers combined with being more passive profiteers and observers combined with passive recipients and ones just enduring.

## Hypothesis 2:

Climate change is the major driving force of (more and more radical) changes in the societal, social, political, and economic landscape(s) in the coming decade(s). The next narrative of the EU might incorporate a true, feasible, pragmatic, and mindful approach presenting congruent actions for a common good that encompasses the well-being of all constituents of this EARTH: organic, and perhaps non-organic too.

The ambivalences and multi-sidedness of all human endeavors and their interpretations is hard to accept, especially when acting or having to act and decide. Once a decision is taken and acted out, in this moment the multi-sidedness is gone – yet right afterwards it rushes in again as the need for the next action immediately arises. Having to deal with uncertainties, with fuzzy, liquid realities, with open-ends most of the time, with mediating diverse realities in the spirit of a tolerance of ambiguity seems to be an advantage of the European Union as a system and as an actor. Nevertheless trust is needed to survive longer periods of uncertainty. And trust, a much used (and trusted ...) mechanism to reduce social complexity,<sup>6</sup> is the potent bonding agent in politics and society. The question thus is: How can today's EU-democracies create this much needed glue? And how can deepening gaps be overcome, how can more and more diverging tendencies, needs, sympathies, qualities, fears, wealth structures be understood and assessed; how can all these variant landscapes be navigated?

*"The paradox, however, is that Western modernity, throughout its history, has in fact not only reduced losses — for example, thanks to medical intervention — but at the same time has created new experiences of loss: Accelerated social change also always creates losers. Global interconnectedness entails cascades of unintended consequences that can be quite negative. The history of violence in the modern age has inflicted deliberate pain and suffering. As a result, there have been ways of dealing with loss since the beginnings of*

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<sup>6</sup> See Niklas Luhmann on trust in: Vertrauen. Ein Mechanismus zur Reduktion sozialer Komplexität (Trust. A mechanism for reducing social complexity), 4. Auflage, Frankfurt 2000.

*modern society: for instance the genre of nostalgia, the economics of risk management and prevention, the politicization of loss, and psychotherapy, to name just a few.”<sup>7</sup>*

“Loss” needs to be acknowledged and the fears related to this fact. Accepting vulnerability is a path towards resilience<sup>8</sup>:

*“The classically modern idea of progress which is based on the notion of an infinite process of increase and improvement has to be replaced by a more subtle and ambivalent concept that both acknowledges the painful losses of the past and of the probable future. Climate change, the structural shifts of the economy, the violent history of the West and new geopolitical constellations do demand such a reality check. If modern politics made empty promises about the inevitability of increase and improvement which can only be disappointed, then it would indeed undermine trust in the democratic process. To face the truth with open eyes and make loss, the experienced and the anticipated a legitimate and crucial topic of debate does not necessarily weaken democracy but could strengthen it. However, to reach this aim, modern society has to develop an awareness of its vulnerability.”<sup>9</sup>*

In Reckwitz’ last major publication “The Society of Singularities” (published 2017) on structural changes in modernity provide further insight into today’s situation. His remarks relate to a somewhat generalized yet specific “Western” capitalist, social-democratic, libertarian, market-addicted, consumerist system with its formative lifestyle that since and via pop culture’s rise in the 1960ies seems to be a defining global phenomenon. Different developments (regarding values, attitudes, politics,) in other parts of the planet are being mainly neglected. The mighty vacuum of a generic “Western” consumerism is able to attract and integrate and aestheticize a fascinating amount of contradictions<sup>10</sup>. Reckwitz’ findings point to a shift from the general to the specific, from rules and regulations to individual solutions and exceptions, from rationality to aesthetics.

*“Regardless of where we look in contemporary society, what is socially and culturally expected on both the local and global levels is not the general but the particular. What is increasingly being advanced and demanded and what has become the focus of people’s hopes and longings is not the standardized and regulated but the unique, the singular.”<sup>11</sup>*

All fields of society are affected by this shift:

*“ (...) this displacement of forms of generality by those of particularity also extends to the social, collective, and political realms. Formal organizations, major political parties,*

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<sup>7</sup> Los Angeles Book Review, article by Andreas Reckwitz, January 10, 2023 - <https://lareviewofbooks.org/short-takes/the-challenge-of-loss/> - accessed January 10, 2024.

<sup>8</sup> Which is especially hard for German-raised locals with their tendency to have an insurance against everything.

<sup>9</sup> Los Angeles Book Review, article by Andreas Reckwitz, January 10, 2023 - <https://lareviewofbooks.org/short-takes/the-challenge-of-loss/> - accessed January 10, 2024.

<sup>10</sup> As Karl Marx already in the 19<sup>th</sup> century stated about capitalism thriving by chaos with crisis being the essence and nature of capitalism.

<sup>11</sup> The Society of the Singularities; Open Access. © 2020 Andreas Reckwitz, published by De Gruyter. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110669398-009>, page 141 – translation done by DeepL, non-authorized.

*ultimately even the modern form of the bureaucratic state are on the defensive, having lost some of their appeal. On the rise are those particularistic and temporary forms of sociality that are not universally identical but claim instead to be unique. (...) And it is, finally, true in a different sense of neo-collectives – the new religious, national, or regional imagined communities that promise to endow members with identity in a way that bureaucracies or institutional churches do not seem capable of (see Castells 1997).”<sup>12</sup>*

To stimulate more and more consumer demands and nourish their dreams, in a rational, sober, bureaucratic, demystified society (the “iron cage” or the “shell as hard as steel” defined by Max Weber in “The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, 1904) individualization in the form of a lifestyle-oriented social formation is needed.

*“The basic precepts of classic modernity were generalization and standardization, which were associated with the process of formal rationalization (see Wagner 1994). The antithesis to modernist rationalization is culturalization, and the phenomena of singularization and culturalization are inextricably connected to one another.”<sup>13</sup>*

Reckwitz describes two initial mainstays that he sees at the center of late modern society:

*“One is the transformation of the capitalistic economy from industrial mass production to cultural production, that is, to an economy of singularities (Karpik 2010), with the associated restructuring of markets, labor, professions, and forms of consumption. The second is the digital revolution of media technologies, which in turn also fosters singularities in subjects, images, texts, and other cultural elements. This is a decisive insight that I would like to emphasize: while in classic modernity the economy and technology were the most important motors of the standardization of the world, that is, of a social logic of generality, the most advanced forms of this same modern economy and this same technology have become powerful generators of singularities and culturalization. The second is the digital revolution of media technologies, which in turn also fosters singularities in subjects, images, texts, and other cultural elements. This is a decisive insight that I would like to emphasize: while in classic modernity the economy and technology were the most important motors of the standardization of the world, that is, of a social logic of generality, the most advanced forms of this same modern economy and this same technology have become powerful generators of singularities and culturalization.”<sup>14</sup>*

Further on Reckwitz describes the losses of this move to a consumerist paradise from the realm of necessity to a guarded fenced-in land of plenty (for a very limited few, nevertheless):

*“In contrast to organized modernity, the society of singularities gives thus rise to a new range of societal problems. The society of cultural singularities does not in any way imply that the classic modern realm of necessity has been replaced by a post-modern realm of liberty, free of cultural expediency. Instead, the societal preference for the unique is associated with a*

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid, page 142.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, page 142.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, page 142.

*devaluation of the general, which yields, in turn, new problems: not least of which are problems of equality.*<sup>15</sup>

## Hypothesis 3

With migration and the enlargement of the European Union different “time zones / collective memories” of “reality” clash. Poorer regions face richer regions and vice versa. The “1950ies” mingle and mix with the “1920ies” and the “1990ies” for example in the long shadow of the first financial crisis in 2007 and the ongoing crises since then (another financial crisis, war in Europe, climate crisis, global pandemic,). Promises of a paradise for all to be fulfilled at once (instant satisfaction by just in time production) are not and cannot be kept by the EU. The next narrative might have to portrait a-synchronicity and incorporate something pragmatic beyond dreaming to synchronize some form of collaboration.<sup>16</sup>

A humble combination of pragmatism and dreams could point to a way out of the distortions of the today’s existences on the individual and on the societal or political level. ART – understood as aisthesis (contemplation, conception, intuition within the bodily perception of an object by a subject not constructing the difference but performing an act of mere experience and realization of a presence of something) – could be a signpost. The US-American pragmatic philosopher John Dewey in his work “Art as experience”<sup>17</sup> (1934) developed his aesthetics from the point of view of the perceiver, not the creating artist. Thus, he could turn his back to the romantic cult of the genius, still vivid in the attraction, the terms “Cultural Industries and Creativity” exude. Dewey states<sup>18</sup>:

*“Experience in the degree in which it is experience is heightened vitality. Instead of signifying being shut up within one’s own private feelings and sensations, it signifies active and alert commerce with the world; at its height it signifies complete interpenetration of self and the world of objects and events. Instead of signifying surrender to caprice and disorder, it affords our sole demonstration of a stability that is not stagnation but is rhythmic and developing. Because experience is the fulfillment of an organism in its struggles and achievements in a world of things, it is art in germ. Even in its rudimentary forms, it contains the promise of that delightful perception which is esthetic experience.”<sup>19</sup> (...)*

*“The very existence of art as an objective phenomenon using natural materials and media is proof that nature signifies nothing less than the whole complex of the results of the interaction of man, with his memories and hopes, understanding and desire, with that*

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, page 153.

<sup>16</sup> All men will not become brothers as the “Ode to Joy” prophesizes, but all men and women and agents of this planet might collaborate to save this EARTH for all and the OTHERS.

<sup>17</sup> 1934 Dewey created a bulwark against the fascist aesthetics of “overloading the senses”(which has returned in events such as the opening of the Olympic Games and other products of the entertainment sphere) by pointing to the “common man” and his and her experiences as represented in Aaron Copland’s composition “Fanfare for the Common Man” (1942).

<sup>18</sup> Open access document: <https://archive.org/details/deweyjohnartasanexperience> / Identifier: deweyjohnartasanexperien / Identifier-ark:/13960/t40s8dx4v / assessed January 29, 2024.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, page 23.

*world to which one-sided philosophy confines “nature.” The true antithesis of nature is not art but arbitrary conceit, fantasy, and stereotyped convention.”<sup>20</sup> (...)*

*„An instantaneous experience is an impossibility, biologically and psychologically. An experience is a product, one might almost say a by-product, of continuous and cumulative interaction of an organic self with the world. There is no other foundation upon which esthetic theory and criticism can build. When an individual does not permit this process to work itself out fully, he begins at the point of arrest to supplant experience of the work of art with unrelated private notions. What ails much esthetic theory and criticism is accurately described in the following: “When the continuously unfolding process of cumulative interaction and its result are neglected, an object is seen in only a part of its totality, and the rest of theory becomes subjective reverie, instead of a growth. It is arrested after the first perception of partial detail; the rest of the process is exclusively cerebral—a one-sided affair that acquires momentum only from within. It does not include that stimulation from environment that would displace reverie by interaction with the self.”<sup>21</sup> (...)*

*The impregnation of the characteristically new art of a period with a sense of different values than those that prevail is the reason why the conservative finds such art to be immoral and sordid, and is the reason why he resorts to the products of the past for esthetic satisfaction. Factual science may collect statistics and make charts. But its predictions are, as has been well said, but past history reversed. Change in the climate of the imagination is the precursor of the changes that affect more than the details of life.<sup>22</sup> (...)*

*While perception of the union of the possible with the actual in a work of art is itself a great good, the good does not terminate with the immediate and particular occasion in which it is had. The union that is presented in perception persists in the remaking of impulsion and thought. The first intimations of wide and large redirections of desire and purpose are of necessity imaginative. Art is a mode of prediction not found in charts and statistics, and it insinuates possibilities of human relations not to be found in rule and precept, admonition and administration.”<sup>23</sup>*

This position on doing ART has been supported by other today’s philosophers such as Georg W. Bertram, stating in his “aesthetics”: “Genau dies ist das wesentliche Moment von Kunst: Sie stößt eine Selbstbestimmung von Praktiken weit über im engeren Sinn sprachliche oder begriffliche Praktiken hinaus an. Genau dazu bedarf es der Kunstwerke. Als vermittelnde Objekte. In der Kunst arbeiten wir uns an Gegenständen ab, aber dies nicht um der Gegenstände, sondern um unsere selbst willen.”<sup>24</sup> (*Unauthorized machine translation by DeepL: This is precisely the essential aspect of art: it triggers a self-determination of practices far beyond linguistic or conceptual practices in the narrower sense. This is exactly what artworks are needed for. As mediating objects. In art, we work on objects, but not for the sake of the objects, but for our own sake.*)

ART as a field of practice and a field of perception is not identical with culture, is not identical with the creative industries. The acknowledgment that culture plays an important

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, page 152.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, page 310 f.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, page 436.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, page 439.

<sup>24</sup> Georg W. Bertram, Kunst als menschliche Praxis. Eine Ästhetik (Art as human practice – on aesthetics), 2014, page 219.

role in the economic fabric of the present cannot hide the fact that culture is the basis of all human existence – economy or economic enterprises are in their way of doing (business) part of a specific culture. How to do business is a cultural choice – it can always be done in a different way. ART is a specific way of doing stuff (a handcraft) with a certain sensitivity and awareness, it is a way of perception by both, the artist and the perceiving other. ART is understood as the performance of a collective and participative craft, skill; not as a solely genial emission, not as a normative set of values (high art versus popular art).

A “nature” of “art” is visible in the various mostly Latin composita related to “art”: *ars amatoria* (the art of loving), *ars vivendi* (the art of leading a life), *ars moriendi* (the art of dying). ART is a human practice that interacts with the given “now” to author experiences and imaginations. Thus, ART is close to the realm of play with its actor, *homo ludens*. Here the circle bends back to the lost words of the European anthem “Ode to Joy”. Friedrich Schiller, who wrote the lyrics Beethoven used in his symphony, 1793 in his “On the aesthetic education of man” states: “Der Mensch spielt nur, wo er in voller Bedeutung des Wortes Mensch ist, und er ist nur da ganz Mensch, wo er spielt”.<sup>25</sup> In play as in ART, human beings can experiment, they can test forms of potentiality. Then ART is this modern mode of prediction, Dewey envisions.

## Hypothesis 4

The ARTS represented by the diversity of their individual actors+artifacts+positions=ART) with their inbuilt capacity for ambiguity and ambivalence, for open searches and humble expeditions, for answers with no questions or vice versa, can be a valid stepstone for the formulation of the next narrative. Another kind of “Renaissance”, a truly inclusive one with a creation and recognition of different perspectives, with a sensibility for submerged cultural assets from all corners of the globe, with a unifying open-mindedness and curiosity might give rise to content and form of a next narrative for the European Union.

## Climate Change | Climate Catastrophe

To remember, what is really happening concerning climate, without further ado, the “Summary for Policymakers of the Synthesis Report of the International Panel on Climate Change” by the [International Scientific Community for the United Nations](#) (published: 19.03.2023) is quoted. Since these March 2023 findings things got worse:

*“Based on scientific understanding, key findings can be formulated as statements of fact or associated with an assessed level of confidence using the IPCC calibrated language as each finding is grounded in an evaluation of underlying evidence and agreement.*

### On Observed Warming and its Causes

*A.1 Human activities, principally through emissions of greenhouse gases, have unequivocally caused global warming, with global surface temperature reaching 1.1°C above 1850–1900 in*

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<sup>25</sup> Man only plays where he is human in the full sense of the word, and he is only fully human where he plays. (machine translated).

*2011–2020. Global greenhouse gas emissions have continued to increase, with unequal historical and ongoing contributions arising from unsustainable energy use, land use and land-use change, lifestyles and patterns of consumption and production across regions, between and within countries, and among individuals (high confidence).*

## Observed Changes and Impact

*A.2 Widespread and rapid changes in the atmosphere, ocean, cryosphere and biosphere have occurred. Human-caused climate change is already affecting many weather and climate extremes in every region across the globe. This has led to widespread adverse impacts and related losses and damages to nature and people (high confidence). Vulnerable communities who have historically contributed the least to current climate change are disproportionately affected (high confidence).*

## Current Progress in Adaptation and Gaps and Challenges

*A.3 Adaptation planning and implementation has progressed across all sectors and regions, with documented benefits and varying effectiveness. Despite progress, adaptation gaps exist, and will continue to grow at current rates of implementation. Hard and soft limits to adaptation have been reached in some ecosystems and regions. Maladaptation is happening in some sectors and regions. Current global financial flows for adaptation are insufficient for, and constrain implementation of, adaptation options, especially in developing countries (high confidence).*

## Current Mitigation Progress, Gaps and Challenges

*A.4 Policies and laws addressing mitigation have consistently expanded since AR5. Global GHG emissions in 2030 implied by nationally determined contributions (NDCs) announced<sup>16</sup> by October 2021 make it likely that warming will exceed 1.5°C during the 21st century and make it harder to limit warming below 2°C. There are gaps between projected emissions from implemented policies and those from NDCs and finance flows fall short of the levels needed to meet climate goals across all sectors and regions (high confidence).*

## Future Climate Change

*B.1 Continued greenhouse gas emissions will lead to increasing global warming, with the best estimate of reaching 1.5°C in the near term in considered scenarios and modelled pathways. Every increment of global warming will intensify multiple and concurrent hazards (high confidence). Deep, rapid, and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions would lead to a discernible slowdown in global warming within around two decades, and also to discernible changes in atmospheric composition within a few years (high confidence).*

## Climate Change Impacts and Climate-Related Risks

*B.2 For any given future warming level, many climate-related risks are higher than assessed in AR5, and projected long-term impacts are up to multiple times higher than currently observed (high confidence). Risks and projected adverse impacts and related losses and damages from climate change escalate with every increment of global warming (very high confidence). Climatic and non-climatic risks will increasingly interact, creating compound and cascading risks that are more complex and difficult to manage (high confidence).*

## Likelihood and Risks of Unavoidable, Irreversible or Abrupt Changes

*B.3 Some future changes are unavoidable and/or irreversible but can be limited by deep, rapid and sustained global green-house gas emissions reduction. The likelihood of abrupt and/or irreversible changes increases with higher global warming levels. Similarly, the probability of low-likelihood outcomes associated with potentially very large adverse impacts increases with higher global warming levels (high confidence).*

## Adaptation Options and their Limits in a Warmer World

*B.4 Adaptation options that are feasible and effective today will become constrained and less effective with increasing global warming. With increasing global warming, losses and damages will increase and additional human and natural systems will reach adaptation limits. Maladaptation can be avoided by flexible, multi-sectoral, inclusive, long-term planning and implementation of adaptation actions, with co-benefits to many sectors and systems (high confidence). (...)*

## Mitigation Pathways

*B.6 All global modelled pathways that limit warming to 1.5°C (>50%) with no or limited overshoot, and those that limit warming to 2°C (>67%), involve rapid and deep and, in most cases, immediate greenhouse gas emissions reductions in all sectors this decade. Global net zero CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are reached for these pathway categories, in the early 2050s and around the early 2070s, respectively (high confidence). (...)*

## Urgency of Near-Term Integrated Climate Action

*C.1 Climate change is a threat to human well-being and planetary health (very high confidence). There is a rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a livable and sustainable future for all (very high confidence). Climate resilient development integrates adaptation and mitigation to advance sustainable development for all, and is enabled by increased international cooperation including improved access to adequate financial resources, particularly for vulnerable regions, sectors and groups, and inclusive governance and coordinated policies (high confidence). The choices and actions implemented in this decade will have impacts now and for thousands of years (high confidence). (...)*

*C.3 Rapid and far-reaching transitions across all sectors and systems are necessary to achieve deep and sustained emissions reductions and secure a livable and sustainable future for all. These system transitions involve a significant upscaling of a wide portfolio of mitigation and adaptation options. Feasible, effective, and low-cost options for mitigation and adaptation are already available, with differences across systems and regions (high confidence).*

## Equity and Inclusion

*C.5 Prioritising equity, climate justice, social justice, inclusion and just transition processes can enable adaptation and ambitious mitigation actions and climate resilient development. Adaptation outcomes are enhanced by increased support to regions and people with the highest vulnerability to climatic hazards. Integrating climate adaptation into social protection programs improves resilience. Many options are available for reducing emission-*



*intensive consumption, including through behavioural and lifestyle changes, with co-benefits for societal well-being (high confidence)."*<sup>26</sup>

Actually there is not much to add on the factual side to the report quoted before. Yet some aspects dealing with the framework in which these climatic changes occur, might provide further insights. They are quoted without comment as they in their collage comment each other.

Parables for a Planet in Crisis, by Amitav Gosh (Indian writer and activist)

*"Colonialism, genocide, and structures of organized violence were the foundations on which industrial modernity was built. (...) While it is certainly true that the West bears much of the responsibility for global warming, that does not mean that it can, at this juncture, address—much less solve—the planetary crisis without the active and willing participation of the great majority of the world's population. A necessary first step toward finding solutions is to find a common idiom and a shared story—a narrative of humility in which humans acknowledge their mutual dependence not just on each other, but on "all our relatives."*<sup>27</sup>

We Have Never Been Modern, by Bruno Latour (French political scientist and philosopher)

*„But time is not a smooth, homogeneous flow. If time depends on associations, associations do not depend on time. We are no longer going to be confronted with the argument of time that passes for ever based on a regrouping into a coherent set of elements that belong to all times and all ontologies. If we want to recover the capacity to sort that appears essential to our morality and defines the human, it is essential that no coherent temporal flow comes to limit our freedom of choice. The third guarantee, as important as the others, is that we can combine associations freely without ever confronting the choice between archaism and modernization, the local and the global, the cultural and the universal, the natural and the social. Freedom has moved away from the social pole it had occupied exclusively during the modern representation into the middle and lower zones, and becomes a capacity for sorting and recombining socio-technological imbroglios."*<sup>28</sup>

*"We scarcely have much choice. If we do not change the common dwelling, we shall not absorb in it the other cultures that we can no longer dominate, and we shall be forever incapable of accommodating in it the environment that we can no longer control. Neither Nature nor the Others will become modern. It is up to us to change our ways of changing. Or else it will have been for naught that the Berlin Wall fell during the miraculous year 1989, offering us a unique practical lesson about the conjoined failure of socialism and naturalism."*<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), for WMO, UNEP: Synthesis Report on the Sixth Assessment Report; Summary for Policymakers; 19.3.2023

<sup>27</sup> Amitav Ghosh, *The Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis*, (English Edition), kindle version.

<sup>28</sup> Bruno Latour: *We Have Never Been Modern*, translation Catherine Porter, Harvard University Press, 1993, / open access Identifier pdfy-ZdffgmZe8g1wwjxr , Identifier-ark:/13960/t8x952h4v, <https://archive.org/details/pdfy-ZdffgmZe8g1wwjxr>, accessed: January 29, 2024 – page 147.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, page 151.

The Climate of History, by Dipesh Chakrabarty (Indian historian and philosopher)

*“Thesis 1: Anthropogenic Explanations of Climate Change Spell the Collapse of the Age-old Humanist Distinction between Natural History and Human History. Man is a biological entity before he is a Roman Catholic or a capitalist or anything else. (...)*

*To call human beings geological agents is to scale up our imagination of the human. Humans are biological agents, both collectively and as individuals. They have always been so. There was no point in human history when humans were not biological agents. But we can become geological agents only historically and collectively, that is, when we have reached numbers and invented technologies that are on a scale large enough to have an impact on the planet itself.*

*Thesis 2: The Idea of the Anthropocene, the New Geological Epoch When Humans Exist as a Geological Force, Severely Qualifies Humanist Histories of Modernity/Globalization.*

*The Anthropocene, one might say, has been an unintended consequence of human choices. But it is also clear that for humans any thought of the way out of our current predicament cannot but refer to the idea of deploying reason in global, collective life.*

*Thesis 3: The Geological Hypothesis Regarding the Anthropocene Requires Us to Put Global Histories of Capital in Conversation with the Species History of Humans. (...)*

*Geologists and climate scientists may explain why the current phase of global warming—as distinct from the warming of the planet that has happened before—is anthropogenic in nature, but the ensuing crisis for humans is not understandable unless one works out the consequences of that warming. The consequences make sense only if we think of humans as a form of life and look on human history as part of the history of life on this planet.*

*Thesis 4: The Cross-Hatching of Species History and the History of Capital is a Process of Probing the Limits of Historical Understanding.*

*Who is the we? We humans never experience ourselves as a species. We can only intellectually comprehend or infer the existence of the human species but never experience it as such. There could be no phenomenology of us as a species. Even if we were to emotionally identify with a word like mankind, we would not know what being a species is, for, in species history, humans are only an instance of the concept species as indeed would be any other life form. But one never experiences being a concept. S. 213f (...) Yet climate change poses for us a question of a human collectivity, an us, pointing to a figure of the universal that escapes our capacity to experience the world. It is more like a universal that arises from a shared sense of a catastrophe. It calls for a global approach to politics without the myth of a global identity, for, unlike a Hegelian universal, it cannot subsume particularities. We may provisionally call it a “negative universal history.”<sup>30</sup>*

Die Ökologie der Anderen. Die Anthropologie und die Frage der Natur / The Ecology of Others; by Philippe Descola (French anthropologist and philosopher)

*„Schließlich wird man sich fragen, wie sich diese Schwierigkeiten vermeiden lassen. Wie sich Natur und Gesellschaft vermeiden lassen. Wie sich Natur und Kollektive zu einem neuen*

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<sup>30</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, *The Climate of History: Four Theses*; *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 35, No. 2, (Winter 2009), pp. 197-222 Published by: The University of Chicago Press; <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/596640>

*Gefüge zusammensetzen lassen, dem sie sich uns nicht mehr als gleichsam zwischen Substanzen, Prozessen und Vorstellungen verteilt darstellen, sondern als instituierte Ausdrucksformen von Beziehungen zwischen vielfachen Entitäten, deren ontologischer Status, deren Handlungsfähigkeit je nach den Positionen variieren, die sie zueinander einnehmen. Es ist also eine Ökologie der Beziehungen, die Anleihen bei unterschiedlichen Wissenschaften des Lebens und des Verhaltens macht, zu der dieses neue Gefüge auffordert, dessen Prämissen man hier und dort erkennt und zu der die Anthropologie nur dann wird beitragen können, wenn sie willens ist, auf einen großen Teil ihres Anthropozentrismus zu verzichten.“<sup>31</sup>*

*(Unauthorized machine translation by DeepL: "Ultimately, the question will be how these difficulties can be avoided. How nature and society can be avoided. How nature and collectives can be assembled into a new structure in which they no longer present themselves to us as distributed, as it were, between substances, processes and ideas, but as instituted forms of expression of relationships between multiple entities whose ontological status and capacity to act vary according to the positions they occupy in relation to one another. It is thus an ecology of relationships that borrows from different sciences of life and behaviour, to which this new structure invites us, whose premises can be recognized here and there and to which anthropology will only be able to contribute if it is willing to renounce a large part of its anthropocentrism to renounce a large part of its anthropocentrism.)*

*„Erst seit dem letzten Drittel des 19. Jahrhunderts setzt sich in Europa der Dualismus von Natur und Kultur als epistemologisches Instrument durch, das es ermöglicht, eine Unterscheidung zu nennen und zugleich zwischen unterschiedlichen Mitteln sie zu erkennen. Zwar erfährt die Idee der Natur ihre ersten stammelnden Äußerungen im antiken Griechenland, und sie bildet den Angelpunkt, um den sich im 17. Jahrhundert die wissenschaftliche Revolution entfaltet. Diese legitimiert die Idee einer mechanischen Natur, in der sich das Verhalten jedes einzelnen Elements durch Gesetze innerhalb einer Totalität erklärt, die als die Summe der Teile und als Interaktionen dieser Elemente betrachtet wird. Doch diese Natur, sowohl autonomer ontologischer Bereich wie Forschungs- und Experimentierfeld der Wissenschaft und verfügbarer Gegenstand für die Ausbeutung und Verbesserung, hat noch kein kollektives Gegenüber.“<sup>32</sup>*

*(Unauthorized machine translation by DeepL: "It was not until the last third of the 19th century that the dualism of nature and culture became established in Europe as an epistemological instrument that made it possible to name a distinction and at the same time to recognize it between different means. The idea of nature had its first stammering expressions in ancient Greece, and it formed the pivot around which the scientific revolution unfolded in the 17th century. It legitimizes the idea of a mechanical nature in which the behaviour of each individual element is explained by laws within a totality that is seen as the sum of the parts and the interactions of these elements. But this nature, both an autonomous ontological realm and a field of research and experimentation for science and an available object for exploitation and improvement, does not yet have a collective counterpart.")*

*„Gleichzeitig ist es schwierig geworden, weiterhin zu glauben, dass die Natur ein vom sozialen Leben völlig getrennter Bereich ist, je nach den Umständen hypostasiert als Nährmutter, als nachtragende Rabenmutter oder als zu entschleiende geheimnisvolle Schöne, ein Bereich, den die Menschen zu verstehen und zu kontrollieren suchten und dessen Launen sie zuweilen ausgesetzt seien, der jedoch ein Feld autonomer Regelmäßigkeiten bilde,*

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<sup>31</sup> Philippe Descola: Die Ökologie der Anderen / The Ecology of Others; Die Anthropologie und die Frage der Natur, Erste Auflage Berlin 2014, page 11.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, page 36.

*in dem Werte, Konventionen und Ideologien keinen Platz hätten. Dieses Bild gilt heute nicht mehr: Wo hört die Natur auf, wo fängt die Kultur an bei der Klimaerwärmung, bei der Verringerung der Ozonschicht, bei der Herstellung spezialisierter Zellen aus omnipotenten Zellen? Man sieht, dass die Frage keinen Sinn mehr hat. Vor allem erschüttert dieser neue Tatbestand, ganz abgesehen von den vielen ethischen Problemen, die er aufwirft, alte Auffassungen von der menschlichen Person und ihren Bestandteilen wie auch der Beschaffenheit der individuellen und kollektiven Identität; zumindest in der westlichen Welt, wo wir uns, anders als es anderswo der Fall ist, angewöhnt haben, das Natürliche im Menschen und seiner Umwelt sehr klar vom Künstlichen darin zu unterscheiden. Auf anderen Kontinenten, beispielsweise in China und in Japan, dort, wo die Idee einer Natur unbekannt ist und wo der menschliche Körper nicht als Zeichen der Seele und Nachbildung eines transzendenten Modells – einst als göttliche Schöpfung, heute als Genotyp – aufgefasst wird, stellt sich dieses Problem nicht.“<sup>33</sup>*

*(Unauthorized machine translation by DeepL: "At the same time, it has become difficult to continue to believe that nature is a realm completely separate from social life, hypostatized, depending on the circumstances, as a nurturing mother, a resentful ravenous mother or a mysterious beauty to be unveiled, a realm that people try to understand and control and whose whims they are sometimes subject to, but which forms a field of autonomous regularities in which values, conventions and ideologies have no place. This image no longer applies today: where does nature end, where does culture begin with global warming, with the depletion of the ozone layer, with the production of specialized cells from omnipotent cells? You can see that the question no longer makes sense. Above all, this new fact, quite apart from the many ethical problems it raises, shatters old notions of the human person and its components as well as the nature of individual and collective identity; at least in the Western world, where, unlike elsewhere, we have become accustomed to distinguishing very clearly between the natural in man and his environment and the artificial in it. On other continents, for example in China and Japan, where the idea of nature is unknown and where the human body is not seen as a sign of the soul and a replica of a transcendent model - once a divine creation, now a genotype - this problem does not arise.")*

In this 21<sup>st</sup> century there is no chance, no excuse left to avoid a post-colonialist turn, a decolonization of theory and practice. Proposing some “new” “Western” or “Global North” approach will not suffice. Decolonization is inseparable from considering and guaranteeing the rights of the OTHERS (other beings on this planet), the rights of all the humans and entities beyond humans, yet intimately connected to humans in our survival system EARTH. Decolonialization is about giving up power, not snatching up more. It means system building, not empire building. For the "West" and the "Global North", this means accepting the existence of its limited world view and explanation of the world, which constructs and constitutes power relations that cannot claim universal validity. It means examining the presuppositions, the prejudices, the structures and interdependencies inherent in certain positions. It means abandoning the concept of "development", whether it has biological, social or economic connotations. The disparity that this term constructs, the superior parental pose, the devaluation of all those who do not belong and only arbitrarily fit in, are simply unbearable. They obstruct possibilities of togetherness that would certainly open up other paths for the current problematic situation. Close to the concept of "development" is that of "progress"; this too is obsolete. When confronted with the realities of climate

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, page 87f).

change, “progress” shows its problematic backside: The concept of "growth". “Growth” infinitely aims at the limitlessness of progress towards more and ever more. To recognize, that this concept is an illusion, a false promise and a poisoned decoy, is mandatory for change – for the transformation to come. This is obvious now: These transformative changes will mean “much less” for a very limited number of inhabitants of the EARTH and a "little less" for a greater number, and on the other hand then even “a bit more” for a fair sized number. Of people on this planet. “Giving”, once a moral obligation preached by various religions as a valve to societal inequality, has been exchanged for “purpose driven funding” with the purpose of in the end safeguarding Western wellbeing<sup>34</sup>. One result: Resource allocation conflicts are already taking place, within and outside of the European Union – they will continue to dominate the near future.

The question for us humans on this planet, now/today, is something like: "As we as "humanity" have created the epoch of the Anthropocene, a question arises for all of us: What kind of actor(s) are we? With and in which system(s) do we engage, do we act? Furthermore: Can we achieve a reasonably fair and reciprocal solution for everyone/everything in system EARTH? The answer surely involves aspects of quality, not just quantity, of approaching answers and solutions with an appropriate modesty, with a different openness, and perhaps even a sense of humility. Modern dichotomies, those logics of "either - or", are long gone and out of date. Those have been (among others): developed – un(der)developed / future - past / progressive - conservative / left - right / black - white. They obscure the view of meaningful reconsiderations of what is currently real and given. Today humans need to think and perceive in systems and networks and interdependencies, with a focus on the common good.

## Hypothesis 5

The union of European citizens, societies, states and nations will have to transform more radical (if that’s possible at all once an organization is formed ... that was somewhat radical in its beginnings) for the common good and out of historical responsibilities – within the EU and globally. Proof will be in action and results, not in speeches and documents stored on the internet or in drawers. Proof will be in the participation of the citizens, of locals of all corners of the globe. Providing real chances for participation, for involvement in EU-matters by owning them will support a next narrative. These expeditions into uncharted territory by individuals, informed citizens beyond bureaucracy can bring back bits and pieces of this next narrative in the form of objects, artifacts, questions, demands, songs, threats, cognitions, wounds, and more.

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<sup>34</sup> See also Wladimir Iljitsch Lenin, master-strategist of power-struggles and intimate connoisseur of organizational zest: “Trust is good, control is better“ (1917).

## Europe (Form, Function, Imagery)

To start with, in the year of an election for the European Parliament, aspects of the history of the narratives of “Europe” will be briefly recapped.

Origins lie within the geographical domain as a subcontinent of the bigger continent “Eurasia”, thus constituting a “cultural” divide not reflected in the geographical domain.

In Greek mythology, the story goes as such: A Phoenician princess, living somewhere in Asia Minor, was robbed and raped by Zeus (father of gods and murderer of his father) and brought to Crete from the Levantine side of the Mediterranean costs. Her name supposedly was “Europe”. Thus, a violent act was the founding stone of this culturally segregated subcontinent.

As “culture” establishes EUROPE, one might ask if there is a common, unifying “culture” in or for Europe? Proposals for this position of an unifying factor over time came and come from the domains of religion (Christian – catholic, protestant, orthodox), of philosophy (enlightment, idealism, universalism), politics (democratic, liberal, social), skin color (white) – just to name a few. In Germany during the fascist period, “race” (whatever that meant and means) was used as a segregating factor, thus revealing some of the underlying beliefs of a true German aka Arian blood as the basic “European” nation. Some of those notions resonated with other nations as well. Yet no true connector or common denominator covering all of the diversity of the locals, the natives (which came from all parts of the globe over time to settle on this subcontinent) can be found.

Yet: Any form needs its boundaries to be recognized as such, its counterparts to establish and realize itself. “Europe”, after turning its back on the Asian part of its continental landmass, in the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century reimagined itself by “discovering” the Sub-Saharan part of the African continent. Circumnavigating the most western point of this continent in today’s Senegal to reach and reap the gold of the Gold Coast (today’s Ghana), done by Portuguese sailors first, a consciousness of something newly “European” emerged. Further “discoveries” followed by Spain, Britain, France, Holland, Denmark, Russia to shape a mental representation of EUROPE in contrast to the locals/natives of anywhere else. The framing of a “modern Europe” used narratives of superiority and salvation that in the eyes of the European conquerors justified violence and extinction combining this with brining the “light” to the rest of the now spherical planet. Trans-Atlantic slavery was a well-accepted and welcomed result of this phase of the formation of “Europe”.

“Europe” (or at least those who belonged to the defining profiteers at this time) then moved on to establishing its form, idea, image, and content in the political-scientific formation of the Enlightenment triggering an economic and technical path that is being followed (somewhat) until today. The declaration of the universal human rights, coined at that time, can be seen both as a grandiose achievement and long needed step of mankind towards a more just society, and it can be seen as an imperial gesture neglecting any intellectual stances from other parts of the globe. The proclamation might be seen too as a result of the bad conscious of European profiteers of who called themselves Christians and needed some kind of relief and absolution in words for their deeds – or related to the tensions in the ideological superstructure of capitalism.

## Dipesh Chakrabarty: On Provincializing Europe

*“No country, thus, is a model to another country, though the discussion of modernity that thinks in terms of “catching up” precisely posits such models. The universal concepts of political modernity encounter preexisting concepts, categories, institutions, and practices through which they get translated and configured differently. It is that the so-called universal ideas that European thinkers produced in the period from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment and that have since influenced projects of modernity and modernization all over the world, could never be completely universal and pure concepts (so long as they were expressible in prose —I am not concerned here with symbolic language like algebra). For the very language and the circumstances of their formulation must have imported into them intimations of pre-existing histories that were singular and unique, histories that belonged to the multiple pasts of Europe.”<sup>35</sup>*

## **Hypothesis 6**

Europe from its very beginning has been a territory where people of various backgrounds arrived and mixed. This variety of cultures, of locals and new-comers, was and is an asset. The later formation of “nations” reduced this vitality and diversity. Nevertheless, this diversity reemerged in territorial regions and socio-cultural scenes. EUROPE only can thrive when it rediscovers and welcomes its diverse basis in all walks of life and in all parts of its terrain and culture in a next narrative.

An assessment of the current state of Europe as opposed to “Africa” seen through the eyes of the Cameroonian political scientist Achille Mbembe reads:

*„Wenn die Afrikaner aufstehen und gehen wollen, müssen sie früher oder später woandershin blicken als nach Europa. Europa ist zwar keine untergehende Welt. Aber es ist müde und repräsentiert mittlerweile nachlassende Lebenskraft und purpurne Sonnenuntergänge. Sein Geist hat an Gehalt verloren, extreme Formen des Pessimismus, des Nihilismus und der Leichtfertigkeit haben ihn aufgerieben.“<sup>36</sup>*

*(Unauthorized machine translation by DeepL: "If Africans want to get up and go, sooner or later they will have to look somewhere other than Europe. Europe is not a declining world. But it is tired and now represents fading vitality and purple sunsets. Its spirit has lost its substance; extreme forms of pessimism, nihilism and frivolity have worn it down.")*

The universalist ideas of Europe’s cantered moral philosophy and politics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have proven to be a façade for mercantile profiteering of a caste that first cares for its own belly before, after a while, maybe, or maybe not, it starts caring for (some) others.

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<sup>35</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference - New Edition* (Princeton Studies in Culture/Power/History), 2000 by Princeton University Press.

<sup>36</sup> Achille Mbembe: *Ausgang aus der langen Nacht / Exiting the long night*, Berlin, 2016, page 302.

## Hypothesis 7

“Europe”, the EU does not need another reform; it needs a transformation to become EUROPE. Not a new religion (for this now agnostic subcontinent) is needed, but a kind of movement arising bottom-up within and from the civil society of EUROPEANS. A next narrative is an integral part of this.

Remembering a EUROPE that once was before World War I, Austrian author Stefan Zweig<sup>37</sup>, having escaped the Nazi regime, formulates a prophesy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century on the subcontinent: “Ich wurde das unheimliche Gefühl nicht los, daß die kommenden Jahrzehnte und Jahrhunderte Verwandlungen und Umstellungen dieses absurden Verhältnisses bringen müßten, von dem wir in unserem behaglichen und sich sicher wägnenden Europa gar nichts zu ahnen wagten.”<sup>38</sup> (*Unauthorized machine translation by DeepL: „I could not shake off the eerie feeling that the coming decades and centuries would have to bring changes and transformations to this absurd relationship, of which we in our cozy and secure Europe dared not even suspect.“*).

Presenting the Europe that is and maybe a Europe of the future is the task given to the European Houses situated in the capitals of the Union’s members. The European House in Berlin actually performs as a better tourist office. Yet who are those “tourists” that are targeted?

The three photos down below show the Berlin European House on the evening of January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024. Its exterior functional and unappealing, the setting uninviting. “Experience Europe” is the slogan of the interior exhibition. An exhibition that brings together the boredom of state-of-the-art technocratic show design that pretends to be meaningful, to offer playful interaction, and to stimulate a wish to be “European” with the demand of pleasing all and no-one. The presentation is aloof, unimaginative, cold, sober, confirms stereotypes, and out of touch with human beings visiting. It portrays the helplessness or distractedness of an abstract system towards non-abstract components.



<sup>37</sup> Stefan Zweig : Die Welt von Gestern: Erinnerungen eines Europäers - Das goldene Zeitalter der Sicherheit (The World of Yesterday: Memoires of a European), written 1939 to 1941, published posthumous 1942.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, page 135.





## Migration | Homelessness

The much debated topic of “migration” is put into a valid fact-based evaluation by Hein de Haas, a Dutch sociologist and geographer. He recounts, puts into perspective facts and destroys public myths about migration, nourished not only by a far right, a conservative clientele, but as well by media outlets and international organizations, who all have some interest in presenting a crisis that they might benefit from. His research “sets out to present a holistic vision of migration – not as a problem to be solved, or as a solution to problems, but as an intrinsic part of broader processes of social, cultural and economic change that affect our societies”<sup>39</sup>. Main statements from the book are quoted here without comment as the findings speak for themselves:

*“Politics strives to control immigration, economic interests in more migration, and fundamental human-rights obligations towards migrants and refugees. These conflicting*

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<sup>39</sup> Hein de Haas: How Migration Really Works: A Factful Guide to the Most Divisive Issue in Politics, English Edition, kindle version, 2023.

*policy goals seems impossible to resolve satisfactorily, and that largely explains why immigration policies can be incoherent and therefore often ineffective or even counterproductive.” (...)*

*“The welcoming European response to the millions of Ukrainian refugees fleeing the Russian invasion in 2022 showed that ultimately this is about political will, not about numbers. Seven years earlier, popular support for Germany’s relative openness towards Syrian refugees was undermined by most other European governments having a free ride on Germany’s hospitality, not because one of the world’s richest economic blocs, comprising half a billion people, couldn’t numerically handle such a refugee inflow.” (...)*

*“Public support for asylum systems stands or falls with the ability of these systems to distinguish between people who have a valid reason to seek protection, and those who don’t; and those whose claims are rejected should be sent back home.” (...)*

*“To be effective, immigration policies should be consistent with general economic policy, and labour market policy in particular.” (...)*

*“It is not only about politicians wanting to win the next election. It is also about interest groups like trade unions and business lobbies that exaggerate the harms – or benefits – of migration. It’s about UN agencies like the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) exaggerating or misrepresenting migrant and refugee numbers in an apparent bid to generate publicity and funding. It’s about politicians portraying migrants and ‘bogus’ asylum seekers as job thieves or welfare scroungers, to distract attention away from the real causes of declining job security, wage stagnation, growing financial insecurity, and increasingly expensive education, housing and healthcare. It’s about corporate lobbies portraying migrants as heroes that will ensure nations retain their competitiveness in the global race for talent. And humanitarian organizations denying the ability of migrants and refugees to think for themselves and act in their own best interests, by unilaterally depicting them as victims who needed to be ‘rescued’ from smugglers and traffickers. And climate activists hijacking the migration issue and fabricating myths about waves of climate refugees to help make their (otherwise justified) case for drastically cutting greenhouse-gas emissions.” (...)*

Some numbers on migration from his research:

*“Although the idea that migration is at an all-time high has gained the status of an almost unquestionable truth, the facts tell quite a different story. Current levels of international migration are neither exceptionally high nor increasing. In fact, over the past decades, global migration levels have remained remarkably stable. In fact, there is evidence that global migration levels were actually higher in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. To put this in perspective, approximately 48 million Europeans left the continent between 1846 and 1924 alone. This was equal to about 12 per cent of the European population in 1900. Between 1869 and 1940, about 16.4 million Italians emigrated to destinations in northern Europe and South and North America – no less than 50 per cent of the Italian population in 1900. Refugees represent between 7 and 12 per cent of all migrants in the world, which is equivalent to about 0.3 per cent of the world population – and refugee numbers in the mid-twentieth century were arguably much larger than current numbers.”*

*“Immigration is at an all-time high? These transformations have little to do with numbers, but rather with changes in the dominant geographical direction of global migration since the end of the Second World War, which explains why, at least from a European or North American perspective, immigration may appear to be at an all-time high. This is particularly true when seen from the cities, neighbourhoods and towns where immigrants concentrate. However, the data clearly defies the idea that global migration is even accelerating, let alone spinning out of control. In fact, this idea reflects a Eurocentric worldview, which casts the immigration of non-Western, non-white populations as particularly problematic, but which is blind to European emigrations and immigrations of the past.”*

*“With most people staying close to home, long-distance migration across continents is the exception rather than the rule. Between 1985 and 2021, the estimated size of the total international refugee population fluctuated between 9 and 21 million, which is roughly between 7 and 12 per cent of the total number of international migrants in the world. The real refugee crisis is in origin regions.*

*Refugee numbers are highest in Germany, the fifth-most important refugee-hosting country in the world (after Turkey, Colombia, Pakistan and Uganda), with 1.15 million refugees in 2019 representing 1.38 per cent of the total German population.*

*For instance, in 2020, about 521,000 people applied for asylum in the EU, or 0.12 per cent of the total EU population of 448 million (excluding the UK). Of these applications, 40.7 percent resulted in initial positive decisions. Of these 212,000 positive decisions, half were granted official refugee status. If we include positive outcomes of appeals procedures, in total 281,000 asylum seekers were granted permission to stay in 2020. This is 9.5 per cent of the 2,955,000 people who legally migrated to the EU from non-EU countries in the same year.”*

On real and realistic development aid:

*“Migration increases as poor countries get richer. Migration is an intrinsic part of development. Skeldon argued for the need for a new paradigm on migration – to see it not as the antithesis of development but as a constituent, and therefore in many ways inevitable, part of development. ‘Migration is development’.*

*Instead of viewing migration as the outgrowth of poverty, underdevelopment or inequality, or ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors, in my work I have argued that we can achieve a better understanding of the causes of migration if we see migration as the function of people’s aspirations and capabilities to migrate. Ironically, building schools seems the best recipe to spur rural out-migration in the longer term, because after having attended school for several years, local youth can no longer imagine living as peasants, and they increasingly wish to move to urban areas within their own countries or abroad. As poverty decreases, and incomes and education increase, emigration rises because it simultaneously increases people’s aspirations and capabilities to migrate. Societies that are in the middle of the transition from agrarian-rural to industrial-urban economies produce the highest volumes of rural-to-urban migration.”*

*“The switch from rural to urban lifestyle has been the most fundamental transformation humanity has gone through over the past one to two centuries, and that process is still ongoing in many low- and middle-income countries. Migration is the most effective form of*

*development aid. According to official data compiled by the World Bank, in 1990 migrants sent back the equivalent of \$29 billion to lower- and middle-income countries. This amount had more than doubled to \$74 billion in 2000, after which it quadrupled to \$302 billion in 2010 and reached \$502 billion in 2020. To put this in perspective, in 2020 remittances sent to developing countries were almost 2.6 times higher than the \$193 billion in official development assistance (ODA), and 94 per cent of the \$536 billion in foreign direct investment (FDI).“*

On inequalities within and without the EU:

*“Labour demand, not inequality or poverty, is the main driver of international migration. Migrants typically do jobs that native workers are no longer able or willing to do. These low-status roles are also known as ‘3D’ (dirty, dangerous and demeaning) jobs and the supply of local workers able and willing to do them has decreased. The same goes for essential behind-the-scenes work in agriculture, food processing, meatpacking, warehousing, transport, hotels, restaurants, construction, maintenance, landscaping and gardening. Sometimes it is about more visible jobs, in the taxi, delivery, beauty and hospitality sectors. Many sex workers are migrants, too. The reality of migration contradicts political narratives claiming that ‘we don’t need lower-skilled workers’. There is a real and consistent demand for lower-skilled migrant labour. In fact, the demand exists at all skill levels.*

*The truth is that our wealthy, ageing and highly educated societies have developed a built-in structural demand for migrant workers that is impossible to eliminate as long as economies keep growing.”*

Questions put to us Europeans and to our representatives:

*„How much do we want to live in societies where busy, double-income couples increasingly outsource household – cleaning, cooking, washing, ironing, gardening and house maintenance – to migrant workers? Do we really want to create a society where elites are being served by a new underclass that mainly consists of migrant workers? Do we increasingly want to outsource the care of children and the elderly to foreign workers, or do we think that governments should be responsible for providing subsidized care facilities?*

*This is all the more important for the future, as we cannot assume the existence of an unlimited supply of cheap labour ‘out there’ in poor countries willing to come whenever we snap our fingers. In fact, because of global demographic changes, and as many parts of the world are running out of children and ageing is becoming a worldwide phenomenon, the future question may no longer be how to stop ‘them’ from coming, but how to attract migrants who are still willing to do the jobs that native workers shun.*

*If governments are serious about ‘taking back control’, they should re-regularize labour markets and rein in the gig economy.”*

## Hypothesis 8

Facing unwelcome issues/facts to later include and integrate these into the self-concept, helps transformations. Foreigners arriving and locals/natives looking out of their windows while locking their doors are a common phenomenon across all continents and ages. Even as the Greek root of the term “stranger” means “guest”, hospitality was limited and a stranger, travelling (and hopefully leaving soon) is not the migrant foreigner of our times. These migrant foreigners come to stay, to become locals themselves after a while. Once they are natives, the will mistrustingly look at the next arrivals. To face and enjoy diversity without fearing to lose an identity (and these losses need to be taken very seriously) is central to a next EUROPE. Artistic expeditions that pay into a next narrative will support the formation of an identity in unexpected ways. The end is open – as always.

German nationality and citizenship is awarded because of the blood lineage of German parents, not from being born in the country. Thus, well over 2 million “Russlanddeutsche” (Germans from Russia with German roots) emigrated from Russian provinces to West Germany since the second half of the 1980ies. Before this, from about 1945 to 1947, about 12 million then German citizens were forced to leave former German Reich’s territories in its Eastern parts (now Poland, Russia, Czech Republic) to resettle in the West or the East of rest Germany. They were regarded as “foreign”, as strangers when arriving<sup>40</sup>. Their religion, dialect, habits were too different from those in the arrival areas. Tensions between those populations ran well into the 1960ies. West German politics in 1952 conceived a law, that regulated a “Lastenausgleich (Burden Equalization), which until 1982 transferred over 70 billion € to those who lost everything due to their expulsion or flight from the Eastern parts of the “Reich”. In East Germany nothing similar was conceived; the reparations paid off to the USSR counted as a balance. In 1990, one year after the fall of the Berlin wall and the reunification of then East and West Germany, “Aufbau Ost” (Rebuilding the East) was installed as a program named “solidarity pact one and later two”, ending 2020. The total costs of this program are still highly controversial and reach from 250 billion € to 1,2 quadrillion €, depending on who counts and what is counted in. Furthermore: Since 2022, 1,01 million Ukrainian citizens fled to Germany. One might argue that Germany is a migrant country, with now almost 40% of its inhabitants having a migratory background (counting the all these inner-German movements too).

## Excursion 1: “Europe” from an AI-perspective

With the Artificial Intelligence tool named “ChatGPT” there is an opportunity to statistically evaluate semantic systems in a different way. As in “Word Clouds”, ChatGPT represents an entity of data. Here, a larger part of the internet (with a focus on English language documents) has been searched and integrated into the processing of the AI-bot. The results are a reaction to a question formulated in words. This process is called “prompting”, as in theatre, where the prompter sits in the first row, in case the actress/actor forgets her/his text. The results, coming in the form of a written document within seconds, represent a

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<sup>40</sup> Anecdotal evidence by the author and his family, beyond desk-top research.

median of all the documents (social media integrated too) ChatGPT digested so far. Here the public and free version 3.5 of Chat GPT was used.

The prompt used, reads:

*"Create a frame for a new narrative of Europe from the German perspective."*

The answer reads:

*Title: "Echoes of Unity: Germany's Vision for a Renewed Europe"*

*Introduction:*

*In the wake of historical challenges and the evolving dynamics of the European continent, Germany stands at the forefront, envisioning a narrative that redefines Europe's path towards unity, cooperation, and shared prosperity. Grounded in the lessons of the past and a commitment to shaping a resilient future, Germany presents a compelling frame for a renewed narrative that transcends borders and fosters collaboration among European nations.*

*Chapter 1: Lessons from History*

*Explore Germany's acknowledgment of its historical responsibilities and the lessons learned from the turbulent 20th century. Emphasize the importance of remembering the past to build a Europe that is rooted in shared values and committed to preventing the recurrence of past conflicts. Highlight the significance of reconciliation and the establishment of trust as foundational elements for a united Europe.*

*Chapter 2: Economic Strength as a Catalyst*

*Examine Germany's economic success as a driving force for European integration. Illustrate the benefits of a robust economic foundation that not only sustains Germany's growth but also supports the prosperity of its European neighbors. Emphasize the need for equitable economic policies and initiatives that uplift all member states, fostering a sense of solidarity and interdependence.*

*Chapter 3: Innovation and Sustainability*

*Explore Germany's commitment to innovation and sustainability as key pillars for a renewed Europe. Highlight initiatives in technology, renewable energy, and environmental conservation that can propel the continent towards a greener and more resilient future. Emphasize the role of shared goals in addressing global challenges and positioning Europe as a leader in sustainable development.*

*Chapter 4: Social Cohesion and Inclusivity*

*Delve into Germany's emphasis on social cohesion and inclusivity as essential components of a united Europe. Showcase initiatives that promote cultural exchange, social integration, and the protection of human rights. Illustrate the importance of diversity as a source of strength, fostering a sense of belonging for all citizens across the European landscape.*

*Chapter 5: Collaborative Governance*

*Examine Germany's vision for collaborative governance within the European Union. Highlight the importance of transparent decision-making processes, effective communication, and strengthened institutions that empower member states while ensuring collective responsibility. Explore mechanisms for resolving conflicts and navigating the diverse interests within the European community.*

*Conclusion:*

*Wrap up the narrative by summarizing Germany's perspective on a renewed Europe. Emphasize the interconnectedness of nations, the strength derived from diversity, and the shared commitment to a*

*peaceful and prosperous future. Invite other European nations to join in shaping this narrative collectively, fostering a sense of unity and purpose that transcends national boundaries.*

A book, or at least a lengthy essay is envisioned by the AI-bot, using all the key words and catch phrases, being used in conversations revolving around the said topic. The document reads like the release of the PR-department of a German ministry. It is full of goodwill and potentialities. Yet, how come that in the face of these well-intentioned utterances of a generic benevolent bland nature not so many citizens seem to be convinced by them? Is it because of the presentation? Or the daily observation that talking is the one thing, yet acting is another?

ChatGPT offers the chance to regenerate the text of the prompt, providing a second version, This one reads:

*Version 2 (regenerated)*

*Title: "Emissaries of Unity: A German Odyssey through Europe's Tapestry"*

*Introduction:*

*In the heart of Europe, where history weaves a complex tapestry of triumphs and tribulations, the German perspective on the continent emerges as a dynamic and pivotal thread. "Emissaries of Unity" unfolds a narrative that transcends borders, inviting readers to embark on a journey through Germany's lens, exploring its evolving role in shaping the collective destiny of Europe.*

*Chapter 1: "Resilience and Reconstruction"*

*The narrative begins with a reflection on Germany's post-World War II journey, exploring the nation's resilience and commitment to reconstruction. From the ruins of devastation, Germany rises as a beacon of hope, seeking not only its own recovery but also fostering a spirit of unity among European nations.*

*Chapter 2: "The Berlin Wall: Breaking Chains, Building Bridges"*

*Delve into the Cold War era and the symbolic collapse of the Berlin Wall. This chapter explores how the reunification of East and West Germany marked not only a historic moment for the nation but also a catalyst for fostering a united Europe. Germany becomes a bridge between the East and West, navigating the delicate balance of diplomacy.*

*Chapter 3: "Economic Powerhouse: The German Engine of Europe"*

*Explore the economic ascent of Germany, tracing the roots of the "Wirtschaftswunder" (economic miracle) and the subsequent rise to become the economic powerhouse of Europe. The narrative delves into Germany's role in shaping the European Union and the challenges and opportunities that come with such influence.*

*Chapter 4: "Cultural Diplomacy: From Goethe to Globalization"*

*Unravel the cultural fabric woven by Germany across the continent. From the literary works of Goethe to the modern influences of German art, music, and film, this chapter examines how Germany's cultural diplomacy contributes to the European tapestry, fostering a sense of shared identity and interconnectedness.*

*Chapter 5: "Challenges and Controversies"*

*No narrative is complete without acknowledging the challenges and controversies. Addressing topics like the Eurozone crisis, migration issues, and debates on national identity, this chapter explores how*

*Germany grapples with its own imperfections and navigates the complexities of maintaining unity in a diverse Europe.*

*Chapter 6: "Future Horizons: Germany and the European Dream"*

*Concluding the narrative, this chapter looks towards the future. What role will Germany play in the evolving landscape of Europe? How will the nation contribute to addressing global challenges and shaping a harmonious future for the continent? The narrative invites readers to ponder these questions, leaving space for reflection and anticipation.*

*Epilogue:*

*The epilogue serves as a reflection on the journey, emphasizing the symbiotic relationship between Germany and Europe. It highlights the ongoing commitment to unity, cooperation, and the shared pursuit of a brighter future for the diverse nations that make up this continent.*

This version now reads more empathetic. The wording used, the phrasing is more „colorful“, more metaphoric, pressing emotional buttons. The path envisioned here as a „journey“ in the end leads – as it should – to a „brighter future“. What else could a member of the European Union want in times of war, digitalization, climate catastrophe, financial instability, deepening gaps of wealth distribution? In this period of acceleration, of rapid changes (once greeted as “disruptions” – with just a few profiting) something to hold on is provided. Nevertheless, it is still a “bloodless” narrative.

Nevertheless, these middle of the road utterances or findings of ChatGPT provide us with a shallow read. They come across as lifeless, missing a certain “roughness” of the daily reality, its contradictions, poetics, poesis, and flavors; they read, in short, like a lullaby mumbled by bureaucracy.

An image generating AI of German origin ([www.ki-bild-erstellen.de](http://www.ki-bild-erstellen.de)) answers the prompt **“Image of a future Europe – dystopic”** with the image to be seen on the next page.

First of all, without prompting specifically, the image created by deduction by the AI is a) a painting, and is b) “realistic” in its style. It is not a photo, not an abstract image, not a map. The image answers to romantic artistic traditions, incorporating the twilight of failure, the sunset of a subcontinent, the autumn of a patriarch. The AI created image displays subdued colors, some wreckage and torn down building beneath a towering cathedral. Humans are missing yet their artefacts are visible. Naturally a river runs through the painting and some cliffs and alpine mountains occur. The image provides a feeling of something fenced in, the viewer via the perspective is drawn into a caged in space.

Is this how “Europe” on the average sees itself, reflects itself, feels itself? And is romanticism dystopic – is Europe stuck in its past?





*(image created by Ulrich Wunsch, using the artificial intelligence at [www.ki-bild-erstellen.de](http://www.ki-bild-erstellen.de))*

## Hypothesis 9

Somewhat well-phrased, generalizing and non-committal utterances by institutions are just that: non-committal. They are not taken seriously; they do not convince. The different experiences of North, South, West, East, of rich and poor, do not communicate, do not relate. Its actors completely lack understanding of the other perspective. ART might open up channels of mutual recognition.

To finish off researching the fields “Europe and Migration” on a human note, the Nobel Prize laureate Herta Müller (literature, 2009) is quoted. Stemming from the German-speaking part of Romania, the Banat, she experienced a Stalinist type dictatorship and a migrant fate moving to Germany in 1987:

“Der Weg nach Europa, von dem die Menschen in Rumänien wie vom Weitsprung reden, hat Meilenstiefel nur in der Vorstellung. Und jenseits der Stirn trägt er klobige Schuhe tritt auf der Stelle. Und zertrampelt viel. Lässt die Preise: hochschnellen und sich zwanzigmal

überschlagen. Löhne Renten kommen nicht nach. Da bleibt der Schuh an eigenen Füßen halb zerrissen und schmal. Und geht auf dünnen Sohlen in die Armut.“<sup>41</sup>

*(Unauthorized machine translation by DeepL: The road to Europe, which people in Romania talk about as if it were a long jump, only has mile boots in the imagination. And beyond the forehead, he wears clunky shoes and treads on the spot. And tramples a lot. Lets prices soar and roll over twenty times. Wages and pensions don't keep up. The shoe on his own feet remains half-torn and narrow. And walks on thin soles into poverty.)*

„Bei den Behörden muss ein Ausländer als erstes seine Biographie offenlegen. Statt ihr noch einmal zu vertrauen und sie zu erzählen, muss er sie offenlegen. Dies ist das Gegenteil von Erzählen. Und angesichts der Chance, die ihm damit gegeben oder genommen wird, ist Offenlegen schon Infragellen“<sup>42</sup>

*(Unauthorized machine translation by DeepL: The first thing a foreigner has to do with the authorities is to disclose their biography. Instead of trusting her once again and telling her, he has to disclose it. This is the opposite of telling. And in view of the opportunity that is given or taken away, disclosure is already questioning.)*

“Biographien von Flüchtlingen sind nichts als gelebte unzählbare Einzelheiten. Man müsste sie nicht von Tausenden kennen, man müsste nur wissen, was an wenigen mitgebrachten Lebensläufen dranhängt, um zu begreifen. Einzelheiten sind Genauigkeit. Nur sie lassen sich vergleichend auf das eigene Leben beziehen. Nur sie stellen sich der Verachtung von Fremden. Denn beides sind Vorurteile. Sie reden sich aneinander wund. Sie treten gegeneinander an und machen einander nötig.“<sup>43</sup>

*(Unauthorized machine translation by DeepL: Refugee biographies are nothing but countless details that have been lived. You don't need to know thousands of them, you only need to know what is attached to a few biographies in order to understand them. Details are precision. Only they can be compared to one's own life. Only they confront the contempt of strangers. Because both are prejudices. They talk at each other. They compete against each other and make each other necessary.)*

“Die Menschen aus der Ex-DDR sind nicht „Deutsche zweiter Klasse“, sondern Westdeutsche an der Oberfläche und innen im Kopf Osteuropäer. Das ist keine Ausgrenzung, es ist die Wahrheit der Fakten. Doch es klingt neben der einstudierten Heuchelei vom Gleichsein wie ein Sakrileg.“<sup>44</sup>

*(Unauthorized machine translation by DeepL: The people from the former GDR are not "second-class Germans", but West Germans on the surface and Eastern Europeans on the inside. This is not exclusion, it is the truth of the facts. But it sounds like a sacrilege alongside the rehearsed hypocrisy of being the same.)*

## Decolonialization

What does “Decolonialization” stand for? What is the relation of “Decolonialization” to “Migration” and to “Europe”?

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<sup>41</sup> Herta Müller, Hunger und Seide – A collection of Essays, München, 2015 (published in the 1990ies), p. 140.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, page 24.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, page 25.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, page 48.

The works of Dipesh Chakrabarty<sup>45</sup> provide a needed non-European external view and a theoretical basis for a up-to-date perspective on the history of humanities and its theories. The ignorance towards non-European thinking and reasoning throughout the formation of Europe and throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century is astonishing. “Decolonization” could mean or become a hermeneutic act: Acknowledging and reflecting the individual horizon of each individual cognition in relation to the coordinates of the observer’s belief system; reasoning within the knowledge of facing a limiting horizon. This might clear reflection from blind spots as much as possible while signaling the basis of the observer’s reasoning. It necessarily is a slow process; and a never-ending process. As an open process, this hermeneutic way balances the result-an-progress-oriented “Western” way – it is similar to systems thinking with its awareness of contingency plus emergence; and to quantum physics with its awareness of the simultaneousness of varying states depending on the standpoint of the observer.

The “civilizing mission” of the forming European nations, used as an excuse based on first religious fervor than imagined secular superiority, has come to an end. The “white saviors” weren’t able to save “others”. And they were not able to even save themselves – which was the very core of their mission. EUROPE today might be a subcontinent that needs to be civilized again by opening to Asian and African cultural influx. Beyond “fashion”. “Identity” then becomes an artful mix of fluctuating components, with their composition even changing daily. This, a resilient easy-going self-conscious, will appreciate and welcome an exchange, surprises and positive challenges. “Unity in Diversity” was chosen by the Canadian government as a slogan signifying the basis of this immigrant-based nation<sup>46</sup>. Not a bad motive for the European Union either.

For quite a while, German politicians and the German public regarded Germany not as a (former) colonial power. This might have been due to having lost the colonial possessions following the defeat in the 1<sup>st</sup> world war, due to the predominance of the East-West partition in a divided nation, due to the coma of prosperity and the active will to forgetfulness following the defeat in the 2<sup>nd</sup> world war in the Western part and a state-required moral superiority of the communist Eastern part, due to the low number and relative “invisibility” of people of color in both Germanies beyond the then visible influx of so-called guest-workers (not here to stay) from Italy, Portugal, Spain, and later Turkey, in the East from North-Vietnam mainly in the 1960ies.

Decolonialization only became a topic when the awareness of such a topic reached a non-debatable international level. For Germany the relation to Namibia, a former colony from 1884 to 1915, was significant as the German Reich’s troops affected a genocide on the native Herero and Nama people. It was the first genocide of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Payments, never labeled as “reparations” but as development aid, were made over the years. In 2021 a first agreement between the nations and a recognition of the genocide including an official

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<sup>45</sup>For example: Dipesh Chakrabarty, *The Climate of History: Four Theses*; *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 35, No. 2, (Winter 2009), pp. 197-222 Published by: The University of Chicago Press / Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference - New Edition* (Princeton Studies in Culture/Power/History), 2000 by Princeton University Press - quoted at other chapters in this research.

<sup>46</sup>A nation created by European conquest, that finally in 1999 granted some of its First Nations their own semi-independent territory: Nunavut.

apology by the German government has been reached. Decolonization in Germany today is regarded as the restitution of artifacts of colonial origin in German museums. Following the French example anthropological museums start to sift their possessions and create agreements with former owners. The first step followed in 2022: Benin bronzes were restituted to the Nigerian state.

Hans Kundnani (political analyst of many nationalities)<sup>47</sup> in his book “Eurowhiteness” reflects on the importance of the color “white” for the European project:

*“Eurowhiteness argues that we should think of the EU as an expression of regionalism, which we should in turn think of as being analogous to nationalism—something like nationalism but on a larger, continental scale. Just as there are different kinds of nationalism, there are different kinds of regionalism. There are different ways of thinking about these differences, but I use the distinction between ethnic/cultural and civic nationalism and apply this to regionalism. (...) I argue that since then (beginning of the Euro crisis in 2010), and especially since the refugee crisis in 2015, this civic regionalism has given way to something much more ethnic/cultural.”*

Kundnani sees the focus on a European culture – with the EU’s current key priority of “Promoting our European way of Life” as problematic, not focusing on social balance and equality any longer. “Culture” with a focus on ethnicity is exclusive, raises borders and highlights differences. Something that deepens the voids among the member states too, instead of building bridges.

*“The deep causes of this shift, I suggest, have to do with the (neo-)liberalisation of the EU, particularly from the creation of the single market onwards, which had the effect of hollowing out the socio-economic idea of what the EU previously stood for. This left a void which was then filled by culture and ultimately produced what I call “the civilisational turn” in the European project. (...) I argue that, in particular after the refugee crisis, the threats to the EU were perceived in cultural terms as the EU focused on defending what it called the “European Way of Life”. Thus an ethnic/cultural version of European identity—what I call “Eurowhiteness”—seemed to be becoming stronger.”*

“White”, in European thought, is seen as the default position, the invisible center in the fabric of reality from which all other perceptions and value judgments stem and are calibrated with. The non-color (or the color mixed of all colors) “white” with its constructed opposition “black” (a color and a flaw in unison) constitute the European modernity:

*“(...) this modern European identity formation based on the Enlightenment also took place in the context of the encounter of Europeans with the populations of Africa, Asia and the Americas from the fifteenth century onwards—and is impossible to separate from it. In this context, the emerging idea of Europe was more racial than religious. In particular, the development of modern European identity coincided with the emergence of the idea of whiteness and overlapped with it to a large extent. (...) The term “white” was used differently at different times and in different places; in particular, those whom it included and excluded*

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<sup>47</sup> Hans Kundnani: Eurowhiteness: Culture, Empire and Race in the European Project (English Edition) kindle version, 2023.

*varied. Nevertheless, throughout European colonies in Africa, Asia, and the Americas, it had a broadly similar function as it did within the United States: to designate people of European origin and identify them as superior—more advanced or developed, more rational, in short more “civilised” than the native populations of the other parts of the world in which they had settled—and to justify a system of differentiated privileges and rights.”*

Yet the division between “black” and “white” is embedded in the very fabric of the European Union. It can be found in the prejudices of western and northern European nations towards the southern and eastern ones. And it can be found in the experience of the eastern European nations, being occupied territories of a larger empire themselves:

*“Nor did central and eastern European countries have the colonial histories of western European countries. / Rather, they had themselves been part of the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires. In fact, the creation of small nations in central and eastern Europe after the end of World War I and the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires can be seen as the first decolonisation of the twentieth century.”*

Integrating these widely neglected aspects of Europe’s whole history, a next narrative would be more realistic, pragmatic, and yet poetic and inclusive. It will represent the diverse totality of dreams, hopes, fears, ideas.

## Hypothesis 10

ART can defeat hatred and ignorance. ART can create fruitful, open-minded and open-hearted evaluations of the past. ART can integrate different experiences by portraying them, by reenacting them. Art as part of CULTURE, the inclusive whole of human interaction, not of culture as the excluding guardian of territorial gains, can stimulate interest. The next narrative of EUROPE will be based on decolonized ART and CULTURE.

A post-migrant society is envisioned by Naika Foroutan, a German social and political scientist and director of the Berlin Institute for Empirical Integration and Migration Research. In her publication „Es wäre einmal deutsch: Über die postmigrantische Gesellschaft“<sup>48</sup> (*It would be German once: On the post-migrant society*) she states:

„(...) nach harten Aushandlungen um eine sich verändernde, nationale Identität, um gesellschaftlichen Zusammenhalt in hoch pluralen Zusammenhängen und um die Rolle Deutschlands als migrationspolitischer Akteur in der Welt – reflektierte Bundespräsident Frank-Walter Steinmeier in seiner Rede zum 60. Jahrestag des Anwerbeabkommens mit der Türkei darüber, was die Konstitution Deutschlands ausmache: Wer ist denn dieses »Wir«? fragte er in den Raum, um die Frage dann entspannt selbst zu beantworten: »Wir sind ein Land mit Migrationshintergrund!« Dies kann durchaus als Zusammenfassung dessen gelten, was Deutschland zu Beginn der 2020er Jahre beschreibt.“<sup>49</sup> (*Unauthorized machine translation via DeepL: After tough negotiations about a changing national identity, social cohesion in highly pluralistic contexts and Germany's role as a migration policy player in the world, Federal President Frank-Walter*

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<sup>48</sup> Naika Foroutan: Es wäre einmal deutsch: Über die postmigrantische Gesellschaft, Berlin, 2023.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, page 9.

*Steinmeier reflected on what constitutes Germany in his speech on the 60th anniversary of the recruitment agreement with Turkey: Who is this "we"? he asked the room, only to answer the question himself in a relaxed manner: "We are a country with a migration background!" This can certainly be seen as a summary of what describes Germany at the beginning of the 2020s.).*

Today, 2023, about 30% of the German population do have a migration background. If you add the migration from the once eastern German territories after WWII in 1946 and count it as a "migrational" background (as such it was observed by the natives/locals of the western German part<sup>50</sup>), you will arrive at or above 50% with second and third generation members of the migrant body counted in. Thus:

*„Migration steht nicht mehr für das temporäre Kommen, sondern für das langfristige Bleiben, und das, was nach der Einwanderung passiert: eine postmigrantische Neuordnung etablierter Strukturen, Prämissen, Privilegien und Perspektiven.“<sup>51</sup> (Unauthorized machine translation via DeepL: Migration no longer stands for temporary coming, but for long-term staying, and what happens after immigration: a post-migrant reorganization of established structures, premises, privileges and perspectives.).*

In times of uncertainty (yet when were "times" anything else but "uncertain"?) something to cling on (physical or metaphysical) seems to help fighting off existential dread. The construct of a national identity, or a regional one, or a tribal one, or a family one, or anything else draws a line against an intuition of dissolving and of liquidation. The institutional construct of the European Union does not help in this case, in these times of distribution wars; it is (so far) neither a physical nor a metaphysical attractor as – so far – there is no "sense of belonging" created by this construct. The European Union (so far) is a means to a specific end (often defined in rational economic terms), not a subject to identify with. True participation might support the needed integration of disparities as opposed to an impression of being administered by a somewhat kafkaesk bureaucratic system.

*„Dass schließlich eine identifikatorische Zugehörigkeit, die für die soziale Kohäsion in postmigrantischen Gesellschaften von Bedeutung ist, einsetzen kann, ist allerdings nicht nur von den Integrationsbemühungen der Migranten abhängig – auch die Mehrheitsgesellschaften müssen sich an ihrer Integrationsfähigkeit messen lassen. Denn Zugehörigkeit ist nicht allein eine Frage des Erlangens, sie ist vor allem eine Frage des Gewährens. Diese Dimension der Integration kann nicht allein von Migranten erbracht werden, vielmehr müssen Zugehörigkeitsangebote von den Mehrheitsgesellschaften kommen, um auf migrantischer Seite einen *sense of belonging* entstehen zu lassen.“<sup>52</sup> (Unauthorized machine translation via DeepL: However, the fact that an identificatory sense of belonging, which is important for social cohesion in post-migrant societies, can finally take hold is not only dependent on the integration efforts of migrants - the majority societies must also be measured by their ability to integrate. After all, belonging is not just a question of attaining it, it is above all a question of granting it. This dimension of integration cannot be provided by migrants alone; rather, offers of belonging must come from the majority societies in order to create a sense of belonging on the migrant side.)*

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<sup>50</sup> Beyond research documented in books as sources, the author can add anecdotal evidence as his mother related her experiences when arriving in the western German part in 1946, as well as other members of the author's family did.

<sup>51</sup> Naika Foroutan: Es wäre einmal deutsch: Über die postmigrantische Gesellschaft, Berlin, 2023, page 20.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, page 165.

Referring to Germany and the sentiments of the German Population, Foroutan (the daughter of a German mother and an Iranian father) states:

„Heute wird die deutsche Identität – eingebettet in den europäischen Kontext – als demokratisch, tolerant und aufgeklärt definiert. Das Andere ist hingegen antidemokratisch, intolerant und hat nicht die Phase der Aufklärung durchlaufen. Genau diese Zuschreibungen werden besonders häufig mit dem Islam und den Muslimen verbunden. Die Aufklärung wird dabei wie eine Impfung wahrgenommen, die – einmal verabreicht – vor antidemokratischem und intolerantem Verhalten schütze, ganz so, als habe es Kolonialverbrechen, europäische Weltkriege und den Holocaust nicht erst nach der Aufklärung gegeben.“<sup>53</sup> (*Unauthorized machine translation via DeepL: Today, German identity - embedded in the European context - is defined as democratic, tolerant and enlightened. The other, on the other hand, is anti-democratic, intolerant and has not gone through the enlightenment phase. It is precisely these attributions that are frequently associated with Islam and Muslims. The Enlightenment is perceived as a vaccination that - once administered - protects against anti-democratic and intolerant behavior, just as if colonial crimes, European world wars and the Holocaust had not only occurred after the Enlightenment.*)

Yet identity is something different than the feeling of having a HOME, of being at the right spot. HOME, at least for „Germans“, is very much defined by people one loves and associates with:

„Auf die Frage »Inwiefern verbinden Sie die folgenden Aspekte mit dem, was für Sie Heimat bedeutet?« antworten die allermeisten Menschen (92 Prozent), dass sie Heimat stark oder sehr stark mit Menschen, die sie lieben bzw. mögen, verbinden, zum Beispiel mit Familie, Freunden, Verwandtschaft. 88 Prozent antworten, dass Heimat für sie da ist, wo sie leben, also ihr Zuhause. Und fast genauso viele (86 Prozent) antworten, dass sie Heimat stark oder sehr stark mit Gefühlen und Empfindungen verbinden: mit Wohlsein, Geborgenheit, Sicherheit, Zufriedenheit.“<sup>54</sup> (*Unauthorized machine translation via DeepL: In response to the question "To what extent do you associate the following aspects with what home means to you?", the vast majority of people (92%) answered that they associate home strongly or very strongly with people they love or like, for example with family, friends and relatives. 88% answered that home for them is where they live, i.e. their home. And almost as many (86%) say that they associate home strongly or very strongly with feelings and sensations: with well-being, security, safety, contentment.*).

## Hypothesis 11

To frame EUROPE as a homogenous, narrow cultural sphere, as a monolithic ethnicity and thus closing off to the love, beauty and the abundance of – in the end – all the OTHERS and EARTH will end EUROPE. Existence is about “giving” not “taking” – as in ART. In “giving” we reach out to an ideal place, where we come from and where we want to go and will end: HOME.

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid, page 177.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, page 208.

## Culture-CULTURE | Art-ART | Aesthetic(s)

“Culture” is more than “art”. CULTURE is the basis of all activities’ human. It embodies the way humans live, relate to each other, make war or love, the way how humans conduct economic interactions, or invent and use technology, do science, do politics – all this is part then of a specific culture, which develops and changes over time. This knowledge seems to be forgotten when the neo-liberal paradigm of economics and quantification is chosen as the one and only valid measure for human activities; when the GDP-measurement forms the secular religion; when “progress” is emphasized as an endless movement towards a “betterment” of everything, defined by a few who really profit. In contrast to this, CULTURE means the overarching sphere and networks of actors that in their actions create “reality” not knowing what the outcome will be, driven by individual hopes and desires and ideas. It means citizens organizing and taking part in networks of expression, of resonance, of sharing. It means the daily repetitious low-key activity of being alive in rural areas; it means the skills of handcraft and agriculture, of working the land and the sea for subsistence. It means the sometimes faster repetitious activities of being alive in cities, mega-cities even, the skills of working the offices and the factories, of working the streets for subsistence.

CULTURE means the lessons learned over generations, engraved in a collective subconscious of families and groups, engraved in communal and individual bodies. Those lessons are represented in stories, with a dominant lesson learned over time by the mainly “poor” part of humanity: “Nothing is for free”. If things go bad, if supply is tight (be it imagined or real) the individuum looks for safety. A safety provided by those to really rely on and being in a reciprocal contact: the closer or extended family, some friends that owe something. And beyond this, now somewhat airy and uncertain, an imagined community of an ethnicity, a tribe, a region, an empire, a nation. These loose connections need narratives to be shaped and glued together.

Stories of “loss” are more significant, closer to experience, and stick more – as they are related to “fate” – than stories of “gain” – related to “luck”. In statistics, these “poor” in economic terms looking for safety in multiple crises which they experience directly, are measured in assets of less than 10.000 US-Dollar. They are very slowly getting less, yet still represent 52,5% of humanity, yet only 1,2% of humanity’s financial assets. The “super-rich” with assets of more than 1 million US-Dollar represent 1,1% of humanity and 45,8% of all the assets available to mankind<sup>55</sup>. For the European Union data<sup>56</sup> show that the gap between “rich” and “poor” as such: The wealthiest 5% of households own 43% of net-assets, the poorer ones, representing 50% of European Union households, own 5% of net-assets. These experiences of imparity, of hunger, of war, of injustice span generations and are an integral part of CULTURE. Only in truly addressing them, in listening to them and acknowledging them beyond an idea of “progress” and “development” that just hurries along senselessly, a convincing connection can be made to the past and the present experiences to provide a future that integrates instead of pretending to forget or neglect<sup>57</sup>.

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<sup>55</sup> Global Wealth Report by Credit Suisse, 2022.

<sup>56</sup> European Central Bank evaluation of January 2024.

<sup>57</sup> The specifically German „Erinnerungskultur“ (culture of remembering), coined after the horrific deeds of the Third Reich does not function. After decades now – as it was to be expected – it became a mere ritual and lip-



Places of remembrance (of the future as well) and containers of culture, such as artifacts that by whoever are defined to be worth of being kept and shown are called "museums" (among others). These "temples of the muses", understood once in baroque times as places of wonder(s), later then as fortifications of cultural pride and identity, and nowadays often seen as a valuable location-factor in the globalized fight of cities for industry-settlements with their employees as well as for tourists, being institutionalized can still provide room for reflection, change, merriment. As democratic, open, non-canonized, non-colonized vessels of a civil society they collect and concentrate CULTURE as a contingent, emergent heap of "stuff" with its intrinsic connections. The next museum answers to this:

Bonaventure Ndikung: The Globalized Museum? (Cameroonian biologist, curator, art critique; director of House of World Cultures in Berlin)

*"Looking at most efforts to "diversify" the museum in particular and the "art world" at large in regard to gender, race, class, geography, and sexuality, one notices that very few such initiatives are intrinsic. More often than not, they are initiated and championed by either funding bodies or governmental apparatuses, according to their more or less transparent cultural and political agendas. This is not per se a negative thing, but three questions are worth considering here.*

*First, if one looks at the bigger picture, what political or cultural agendas are guiding such initiatives? Second, do the museums that take part in such projects have a genuine interest in diversifying their collections and programs, as well as questioning the canonical artworks and discourses that prevail within their institutions? Or is the fact of guaranteed funding the bigger bait that enables participation, but does not result in substantial engagement in pursuing this interest in diversification post-funding? Third, how can one explain that very few museum institutions think of the intersectionality of race, gender, class, geography, and sexuality when it comes to diversifying their programs and collections, but rather focus on one of the aforementioned before proceeding to another? (...) One often hears of a museum's claim of doing its "Africa show", "Arab show," or something of the sort as an effort toward diversification. Beyond the usual arguments of ghettoization, it is also legitimate to question the intent and objectives of such exhibitions when for example an "African show" is done, and then in the next years no artist of African origin is ever invited to participate in a show at that same museum. Or when in such projects there is little engagement with the local context and communities, let alone engagement that takes into consideration shared colonial histories. (...) Every society develops its canon. And it is fair to say that no canon is superior to another and none can or should supersede another, as canons are formed in the wake of particular historical and social givens or myths. But it is also fair to acknowledge that canons, just like History with a capital H, are epistemic, cultural, political, and social power tools, whose mechanisms have to be scrutinized and critically questioned. (...) This seems to be the task that lies ahead of us all.*

*Decanonization is that possibility of unmasking and revealing the inner workings of the canon - whether from the West, East, North, or South. Decanonization is the possibility of making the canon more elastic by bringing in works from indigenous people, PoC, LGBT*

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service performed by institutions, not by people. Narrativized rituals that are CULTURE realize themselves in deeper layers: in songs, in myths, and in deeds in the end.

*people, and those from “other” geographies, and not seeing these new additions only through the eyes of the works that already inhabit the canon. We must entertain the possibility of reviewing, rejecting, and declassifying some works that were thought to have been canonized. An ultimately flexible and elastic canon is akin to a non-canon.”<sup>58</sup>*

The usefulness of cultural activities (such as visiting a museum or even organizing an exhibition oneself among others) has again caught the eye of the European Commission in 2023<sup>59</sup>. Yet here the definition of “culture” seems erratic and unclear: “... including a broad range of cultural and community experiences, such as choral and theatre groups, fairs, festivals, galleries, music events, carnivals, storytelling, literature, and dance.”<sup>60</sup>. These “experiences”<sup>61</sup> represent a narrow idea and sense of “culture”. Culture seems to be solemnly tied to a performative aspect, to a specific community. The focus of the study on “Culture and Democracy and Participation” understandably rests on activities that are community resonant, on activities within the societal domain, that can be tied to or labeled „cultural“ and somehow labeled “creative”. Yet “culture” and CULTURE are more. Surely, participation is the path to involvement with “participatory” meaning that all participants are equally recognized and the organization of such activities is democratic. Yet the individual solemn activity such as painting a picture, taking a photograph, composing a song, writing a book, preparing a meeting, ploughing a field, crafting a pot, weaving a tablecloth, programming a robot, prompting an AI, cooking a meal and eating it, travelling, holidaying, and more – are those not part of “culture”?

EUROPE needs to reclaim “culture” in its deep and wide sense, to create a European CULTURE that allows the true integration of all facets and directions of its geographical, social, and emotional compass. This then will give way to the unplannable emanation of something loosely connecting, of a 21<sup>st</sup> century sense of belonging, born out of the multiple crises of the last and this century. So much can be guessed: CULTURE will be of a self-evident participatory and feedback-looped nature as it is the product of all the processes and networks that exist on EARTH. With this, the self-proclaimed “civilizational mission” of Europe really will finally come to a much deserved end.

## Hypothesis 12

With “reclaiming CULTURE”, the European Union can reinvent itself in a EUROPEAN sense by including more participatory elements of citizens skills on a regional level, thus fostering curiosity, acceptance and in the end: integration.

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<sup>58</sup> Bonaventure Ndikung, May 2017, in: Mousse 58, <https://www.moussemagazine.it/magazine/the-globalized-muse-um-bonaventure-soh-bejeng-ndikung-documenta-14-2017/> page 177, 178; accessed 12/08/2021.

<sup>59</sup> Culture and Democracy: the evidence, How citizens’ participation in cultural activities enhances civic engagement, democracy and social cohesion; independent report for the European Commission, Luxembourg 2023.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, page 29.

<sup>61</sup> One should bear in mind that human beings, as long as they live and breathe, always and all the time do have “experiences”. Otherwise they would be dead.

What “art” is and how is “art” used and seen in this context here? For this research, “art” is understood as any activity of a human being producing specific and individual artifacts, coined in time as “high art”, “popular art”, “craft”, “performative ritualistic usage with a spiritual meaning of the object involved”. The Western viewpoint of a secular society often neglects the last position. Christian objects are being placed in museums without further ado; yet objects of spiritual significance to a community and still in use (be it practical or in memorial spaces) cannot be exposed in the same way. Beyond this, the categorization of the museal field and its departmentization might need some changes.

Then, what can “art” “do” in this context of excessive demands and fluidity? What is its task, its role? Is “art” a healer, a mythologist, a seer, a scientist, a rogue, an outsider, a money-maker, a pathfinder, an annoyance, just rubbish, of importance, ...? What does “art” signify and achieve in the system of the human social organization?

Sociologist and systems theorist Niklas Luhmann decisively points to the peculiar potential and specific function of art and focuses on the difference between sheer perception and its linguistic fixation for the ineluctable communication-nexus of society:

*„Man könnte von der Feststellung ausgehen, daß die Kunst Wahrnehmung in Anspruch nehmen muß und damit das Bewußtsein bei seiner Eigenleistung, bei der Externalisierung packt. So gesehen, wäre es die Funktion der Kunst, etwas prinzipiell Inkommunikables, nämlich Wahrnehmung, in den Kommunikationszusammenhang der Gesellschaft einzubeziehen. Schon Kant hatte die Funktion der Kunst (der Darstellung ästhetischer Ideen) darin gesehen, daß sie mehr zu denken gibt, als sprachlich und damit begrifflich gefaßt werden kann. Das Kunstsystem konzidiert dem wahrnehmenden Bewußtsein sein je eigenes Abenteuer im Beobachten der Kunstwerke - und macht die dafür Anlass gebende Formenwahl dennoch als Kommunikation verfügbar. Anders als die sprachliche Kommunikation, die allzu direkt auf eine Ja/Nein-Bifurkation zustrebt, lockert die über Wahrnehmung geleitete Kommunikation die strukturelle Kopplung von Bewußtsein und Kommunikation. (selbstverständlich: ohne sie zu zerstören). Die in der Wahrnehmungswelt vorhandenen Bewegungsfreiheiten werden gegen die Engführungen der Sprache wiederhergestellt.“ (...) Was die Wahrnehmung auszeichnet, ist vor allem ein eigenständiges Verhältnis von Redundanz und Varietät. Sie ermöglicht in einer Weise, die durch kein Denken und keine Kommunikation einzuholen ist, eine gleichzeitige Präsenz von Überraschung und Wiedererkennen. Wahrnehmungsmöglichkeiten benutzend und steigernd, sie gleichsam ausbeutend, kann die Kunst die Einheit dieser Unterscheidung präsentieren; oder anders gesagt: das Beobachten zwischen Überraschung und Wiedererkennen oszillieren lassen, und sei es nur mit Hilfe der Weltmedien Raum und Zeit, die Kontinuitäten verbürgen.“<sup>62</sup>*  
*(Unauthorized machine translation by DeepL: ““One could start from the observation that art must make use of perception and thus grabs consciousness by its own power, by externalizing it. Seen in this way, it would be the function of art to incorporate something fundamentally incommunicable, namely perception, into the communication context of society. Kant had already seen the function of art (the representation of aesthetic ideas) in the fact that it gives more to think about than can be grasped linguistically and thus conceptually. The art system concedes to the perceiving consciousness its own adventure in observing works of art - and yet makes the choice of form that gives rise to this available as communication. Unlike linguistic communication, which tends all too directly towards a yes/no bifurcation, communication guided by perception loosens the structural coupling of consciousness and communication. (of course: without*

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<sup>62</sup> Niklas Luhmann: Die Kunst der Gesellschaft / Art as a Social System, Frankfurt 1997, page 227f.

*destroying it). The freedom of movement existing in the world of perception is restored against the constrictions of language." (...) What characterizes perception is above all an independent relationship between redundancy and variety. It enables a simultaneous presence of surprise and recognition in a way that cannot be caught up with by thought or communication. Using and enhancing perceptual possibilities, exploiting them as it were, art can present the unity of this distinction; or in other words: allow observation to oscillate between surprise and recognition, even if only with the help of the world media of space and time, which guarantee continuity."*)

Perception in its immediate presence is before and beyond cognition and cognitive reflection: it is marked by surprise and recognition of something basic to cognition, to emotions, to primal elements and evidence. Art taps into the collective memory of an aggregation of whatever kind (or the collective unconscious proposed by C.G. Jung in dependence of Sigmund Freud); and art expresses segments of this collective memory while shaping it at the same time.

The role of the "artist" in this process is being defined by philosopher Wolfgang Hogebe in recourse to the function of midwifery and to the basic function of a seer in ancient times. Hands-on knowledge of the route by knowing the stars was crucial for early seafarers with the seer in the bow providing this skill and knowledge. Functioning as a second in giving birth, unearthing, unveiling, bringing to light is the way and skill of the midwife. Such are the basic functions of an artist with no fixed task, topic, or goal or result to be had. Driven by intuitions and empathy steering towards deepening insights and spontaneous realizations, the artist dreams of being a butterfly, is the butterfly, and is dreamt of by a butterfly (Zhuangzi) at the same time, or sometimes the artist wakes up transformed into a beetle (Franz Kafka). The artist exists into a realm of potentialities (Robert Musil) balancing on the tightrope between all of them thus letting them or "it" be (The Beatles). Doing ART is just this.

Hogebe states on human and artistic perception: „Wir ahnen die Präsenz von etwas durch *Wahrnehmungsschleier* hindurch.“<sup>63</sup> (*Unauthorized machine translation by DeepL: We sense the presence of something through veils of perception.*) And: „Ahnungen stellen sich je nach individuellem Resonanzkörper einer erkennende Registratur variierend ein, die Veranlassungen von Ahnungen und ihr tatsächliches Sich-Einstellen bilden eine Ereigniszusammenhang, der kausal nicht geschlossen ist, aber je nach Situation doch typisch.“<sup>64</sup> (*Unauthorized machine translation by DeepL: Intuitions arise in varying ways depending on the individual resonating body of a cognizing register; the causes of intuitions and their actual occurrence form a context of events that is not causally closed, but is nevertheless typical depending on the situation.*).

This intuition constitutes an aesthetic experience. It is an aesthetic perception<sup>65</sup> experienced as the relation and reference to the world/EARTH that initiates and forms a world of wonder(s)/of amazement, of riddles, brings back memories of a paradise lost: „Es muß in diesen Zeiten, in den das Bewußtsein sich im Wissen um die Welt noch nicht in Sicherheit gebracht hatte, die Intensität des ästhetischen Weltbezugs den kognitiven noch dominiert

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<sup>63</sup> Hogebe, Wolfgang (1996): Ahnung und Erkenntnis. Brouillon zu einer Theorie des natürlichen Erkennens, Frankfurt/M., page 7 (Intuition and cognition. Brouillon on a theory of natural cognition).

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, page 7.

<sup>65</sup> Aistesis – Greek: perception from the senses, feeling, ability to discern.

haben.“<sup>66</sup> (*Unauthorized machine translation by DeepL: In those times, when the consciousness had not yet become secure in its knowledge of the world, the intensity of the aesthetic relationship to the world must still have dominated the cognitive one.*”). This sense of presence in its self-creation in the present is an element of the Aesthetic Experience. Being able to realize it, is a skill, is an aesthetic and aisthetic competence:

This aesthetic perception is a sensual experience, a perception of presence and reality as well as attitudes towards this reality. These are defined as art, be it socially and/or culturally. The Aisthetic as the basis of the Aesthetic forms an intriguing network of sensual interdependencies. The original broad meaning of the term aesthetics, the Greek aisthesis, is not restricted to a concept of beauty and art. The "Beautiful / Art-Beautiful / Genial" of a later aesthetic starts to be formed around the 17<sup>th</sup> century, with the Creativity Dispositive (see Reckwitz) of modern society as its latest formulation.

A useful path for narration born out of the sensory density of aesthetic perception leads from aesthetic experience to aesthetic competence(s). These can be trained or at least nourished as humans are aware of these or can be made aware of these again. The question of content (especially but not exclusively for aesthetics) is always a question on form as well. This underlines the importance of the processes of perception, after all, the (competent) framing of perception is the ineluctable, inescapable foundation and givens of the creation of meaning, of making sense, of coming to terms with the surrounding situation.

Aesthetic competence is gained from sensual experience and realized within it as another form of knowledge and as the basis for intellectual knowledge. Aesthetic competence also refers to the human being's ability to pay attention to patterns (see G. Bateson). It is realized in the affect-related and emotion-guided actions of the psychophysical system named "the Human Being". The goal of aesthetic experience and competence is ultimately an ethical one. Via these experiences, the foundation can be laid for an ethics of successful living (not "life" as a stasis but "living" as a process). The metaphor "successful living" is suitable for a narration because of two reasons:

Firstly, it may be assumed that there is a general and universal interest in living a successful life. This does not have to be defined in tight boundaries and form, to keep the shape open within some guiding factors of EARTH even is mandatory. "Success" is on the one hand individually defined (as one reaching something aimed at); on the other hand, socially defined (as in coherence with ethical standards). The evaluation of one's own living as "successful" presupposes that some individually important goals can be achieved under those rapidly changing living conditions. Volatility loses its threat. The postulated "art of living" (see Schiller) meaning "successful living" stems from resonating relationships (see Rosa); it does not mean "hedonism", a self-centred escapism.

Secondly, "living" insinuates an open process, the never-ending challenge of existence. It means acceptance of an evolution that is not anthropocentric at all. "Humans" are of no importance to EARTH – they are not a solution or an end to anything. Nevertheless, the "art of living" means resonance with EARTH in a sensual, aesthetic way, which can be an ongoing practice of awareness and self-education.

"Living" can only be labelled as "successful" in the interference of self- and external attribution, including the attribution of the OTHERS, of EARTH as a breathing system. The

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<sup>66</sup> Högrefe, Wolfram (1992): *Metaphysik und Mantik. Die Deutungsnatur des Menschen*, Frankfurt/, page 83.

attribution is based on "successful" interaction processes. These reality-producing processes necessarily create attribution and awareness by means of love, affection, relatedness and by means of alienation, irritation, questioning. This duality is a constitutional part of ART and aesthetic experience. Only this duality will in effect stipulate a next narrative.

## Hypothesis 13

Maybe ART is kind of a Zen-riddle about giving up, about actively losing control – as the ultimate form of control. The domain of ART relates to “the sound of the one hand”, about a humble way to consent with EARTH. The domain of Business-Economics thrives by intensifying control, by two hands loudly clapping, not by the sound of one hand. ART is prolific in voluntary self-control. Business-Economics centers on the control of others. The cost-benefit-perspective is no perspective of ART; its “horizons” are of another kind. Maybe “control” is not a category to deal with EARTH as evolution is beyond control. Ambiguity and multiple bifurcation constitute “living”, which is just all humans can do here and now. ART does just this, finding a path towards a next narrative.

The execution of “art”, focusing on the manual aspect rather than the intellectual one, the handmade production of artifacts (initially all things human) connects “art” to “crafts”. Those skills can be trained, learned – there is nothing secret or wonderful about it. The “genius” in Roman times primarily is acting as a household spirit, a manifestation of the divine aspect in every woman/man. Even places own a spirit as their “genius loci” (EARTH). A master craftsman/-woman would do quality work and produce artifacts, that only a few others might be able to. Yet she/he was a “master” (with apprentices) and not a “genius”. A divine spirit might be involved in assisting the process, yet no attributable individual “creativity” was involved. In the age of enlightenment, centering on the individually individualistic individual and its potency, Immanuel Kant defined that “genius” is an individual talent for producing something for which no determinate rule can be given, not a predisposition consisting of a skill for something that can be learned by following some rule or other. The human “genius” was born – evolving out of the “spirit” of EARTH.

Much attention in these definitions of “art” is placed on the artist, little on the “artifact”, the thing that is the very end of “art”. The craftsman/-woman – and the artist – produce simple things that in themselves are pleasing in multiple ways, depending on their use and on the user. Those things were in use for longer periods, they were not quickly substituted or thrown away. They became part of the “household”. They stabilize the individual and communal every life via their duration and continuation as the same. These three-dimensional “things” since the 1940ies (seen as a starting decade of the digital transformation) are becoming more and more virtual entities and non-entities. The concrete object is becoming an non-entity, being replaced by virtual information<sup>67</sup>. Rituals of physical and spherical handling of the presence of the concrete world and connecting it to its related spiritual world are exchanged for rituals of a non-dimensional physicality. This is combined with a non-dimensional and “grounded” cerebral mobility to seamlessly connect any presence with any non-location. Nothing is of

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<sup>67</sup> See Villem Flusser, *Dinge und Undinge. Phänomenologische Skizzen*, München 1993.

importance within this system, nothing is really needed. Yet, to be “used” (as a thing or a person) or “needed” is of value. This mindful use was inherent in cultural practices, is present in ART. Elsewhere it is vanishing: “Früher verabschiedeten sich die Japaner von den Dingen, die lange im persönlichen Gebrauch waren, wie Brille oder Schreibpinsel, mit einem Zeremoniell im Tempel. Heute gibt es wohl kaum mehr Dinge, denen wir einen würdigen Abschied angedeihen lassen würden. Dinge werden nun beinahe tot geboren. Sie werden nicht gebraucht, sondern verbraucht. Erst ein langer Gebrauch gibt den Dingen eine Seele. Nur Herzensdinge sind beseelt.”<sup>68</sup> (*Unauthorized machine translation by DeepL: In the past, the Japanese used to say goodbye to things that had been in personal use for a long time, such as glasses or writing brushes, with a ceremony in the temple. Today, there are hardly any things that we would give a dignified farewell to. Things are now almost born dead. They are not used, but consumed. Only long use gives things a soul. Only things of the heart are soulful.*)

## Hypothesis 14

Maybe ART can level a path for reclaiming the lost “soul”<sup>69</sup> (the essence, the spirit,) of things, of all entities organic or non-organic. This might mean doing without the plentitude of objects brought by “premium” digital platforms. On the other hand: The last coat has no pockets (popular wisdom). Why not listen to this ancient insight? A next narrative will have to deal with these aspects.

The framings of our future society are currently being tinkered with. From hack to hack, the future is continuously shaped in a process with no clear or even planned outcome. The aesthetic experience(s) help to navigate these dire straits. The actors, the seafarers thus should be trained, so they are able to experience and contribute to the creation of a world that still is EARTH.



„The Universe“ as seen by a  
Japanese Zen-Master

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<sup>68</sup> Byung-Chul Han, Un-Dinge. Umbrüche der Lebenswelt (Un-entities. Upheavals in the life-world), Berlin 2021.

<sup>69</sup> The way back to childhood constructed and remembered as the lost paradise is locked (see Heinrich Kleist) we need to proceed – but a Teddy bear brought along as a transitional object (see Odo Marquardt) might be of help.

## Excursion 2: A tiny bit on aesthetic research

“Art” here is seen as an aesthetic process of perception and cognition simultaneously. Within a transdisciplinary approach, an “aesthetic turn” was talked about in academia since the late 1980ies, referring back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century with Baumgarten, then Kant and Hegel, then Nietzsche with his theory of the guidance of the body and the transcendental status of corporeality.

In 2012, “Perspectives on Artistic Research and Academia” was published by Henk Borgdorff<sup>70</sup> - based on discussions since the year 2000. The same year saw a German publication<sup>71</sup> and seminars and a conference centered at the Berlin University of the Arts. In 2013, “Art as a Thinking Process”<sup>72</sup> was published. The overall goal was to enrich the production of knowledge, attributed to science, by additional ways and modes of perception and research. The discussion reaches into the very theory of science, its foundations and its epistemology. It draws on the energy that centers around the maybe obsolete differentiation between the houses of “humanities” (social sciences, historical sciences, ) and of “natural sciences” (Physics, Chemistry,) with for example Biology, as a “life science”, covering both realms and “Philosophy” still doing the groundwork for both.

Borgdorff relates three recommendations on artistic research which are integral to the project here too:

*“1. Artistic processes or products are essential components of and in artistic research. The choice of research methods is free and will vary with the research questions. The methodological diversity referred to above, however, is always complementary to the use made of the medium itself. 2. Research results consist partly of one or more artistic productions or presentations. The results communicate the artistic outcomes both cognitively and artistically. Far from being a mere illustration accompanying the research, the artistic outcomes thus form an indispensable component of it. 3. Critical reflection on the research process, and documentation of it in discursive form, is also part of the research results. The researcher is obligated to the research community to situate each study in a broader research context and to elucidate both the process and the outcome in accordance with customary standards.”*

The essay on “Art as a Way of Thinking”, paraphrases the German philosopher Robert Jaus and his phenomenological approach:

*“Robert Jaus described this as two parallel dimensions of the artistic experience: poiesis—poietic power—consisting in art’s capacity to free the world from its grudging extraneousness and, in this manner, to allow man to satisfy his essential need to transform the world into his own dwelling, to inhabit the world; and aesthesis, the work of art’s ability*

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<sup>70</sup> Henk Borgdorff, *The Conflict of the Faculties – Perspectives on Artistic Research and Academia*, Leiden University Press, 2012.

<sup>71</sup> Martin Tröndle and Julia Warmers, *Künstlerische Forschung und akademische Forschung’ in Kunstforschung als ästhetische Wissenschaft: Beiträge zur transdisziplinären Hybridisierung von Wissenschaft und Kunst*, Bielefeld Transcript, 2012.

<sup>72</sup> Mara Ambrozic and Angela Vettese, *Art as a Thinking Process – Visual Forms of Knowledge Production*, Venice, Sternberg Press, 2013.



*to renew an experience of the world and to free it from the habits of daily life and from practical necessities, sometimes even granting it a condition of cathartic freedom.”<sup>73</sup>*

To explore this human dwelling on EARTH, to explore it on the subcontinent of Europe in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century via aesthetic research, is the focus of SIRIUS4all. The project undertakes this journey with the knowledge, that artists are researchers and that artifacts are valid results of research. These – as all other results of science – need to be and will be interpreted, thus being open to all forms of errors again as an ongoing permutation that is inherent to empirical methods done by human beings. The project is a form of action research formulating and reflecting along the way in an open process integrating the impulses along the way. Every now and then, a specific question – used as the title of the exhibition of the project SIRIUS4all – will arise. It reads: “This Way, Or That?”

## Storytelling | Frames | Narrative(s)

The start is a story, always – in the beginning, there was “naming”, providing meaning and sense. There was: narration and with it, there was framing. Take, for example, the bible, John 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Naming, structuring is made possible by language as a mode of exchange, named „communication“ later. Communication with its root in the „communal“ demonstrates the community building aspect of interaction in proximity via language. The “word” is uttered by a “supreme being” – a solo world builder – or a parental duality of world builders, or multiple other “forces”. “Naming”, i.e. controlling the narrative, gives power to these “forces. Storytelling via anything symbolic, be it words (related oral or written) or pictorial forms, is the way in which followers (or subjects being subjected) of this being, relate this “naming” event to others.

The start is a story:

### **Richard Powers: The Overstory**

*“First there was nothing. Then there was everything.*

*Then, in a park above a western city after dusk, the air is raining messages.*

*A woman sits on the ground, leaning against a pine. Its bark presses hard against her back, as hard as life. Its needles scent the air and a force hums in the art of the wood. Her ears tune down to the lowest frequencies. The tree is saying things, in words before words.*

*It says: Sun and water are questions endlessly worth answering.*

*It says: A good answer must be reinvented many times, from scratch.*

*It says: Every piece of earth needs a new way to grip it. There are more yeas to branch than any cedar pencil will ever find. A thing can travel everywhere, just by holding still. (...)*

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<sup>73</sup> Marco de Michelis, Art as a Way of Thinking, in: Mara Ambrozic and Angela Vettese, Art as a Thinking Process – Visual Forms of Knowledge Production, Venice, Sternberg Press, 2013, page 68.

*That's the trouble with people, their root problem. Life runs alongside them, unseen. Right here, right next. Creating the soil. Cycling water. Trading in nutrients. Making weather. Building atmosphere. Feeding and curing and sheltering more kinds of creatures than people know how to count. A chorus of living wood sings to the woman: If your mind were only a slightly greener thing, we'd drown you in meaning. The pine she leans against says: Listen. There's something you need to hear."*<sup>74</sup>

*Homo sapiens* can be, and is labeled *Homo narrans*, the one being able to create stories and tell them (and having an interest in listening to them). This points to the usage of stories and narration as a container of sense-making and history in the oral tradition. In their construction narratives are based on and related to a pattern instinct that "sees, hears, feels" order in structures, constructing those once perceived or already in the process of perception with inbuilt mechanisms.

The frame and the processes of framing, of fencing in something to make it appear in an image is defined by erecting borders, separating an "inside" from an "outside". This is a necessary action of the human system – it seems – and the way we communicate about "reality", or better: construct "reality". Only by existing unconscious prejudices (mental representations) being applied within a split second upon encountering something we could survive, could orientate ourselves. Those prejudicated perceptions rule behavior. Yet we humans as the perceptive system are not surrendered under prejudices. We can reflect them, make them conscious. This applies to individual communication as much as to medial communication in any mass-media. A phrase, a slogan, an image, a metaphor, a symbol coined quickly or elaborately by experts, is then the concentrate of the often much more complicated mental representation or problem. Reduction of complexity is needed to act in situations; yet this reduction very often hinders encounter, understanding, reflection<sup>75</sup>. In the discourse on "migration" this can be experienced permanently.

## Hypothesis 15

ART might open a space for slowing down, thus allowing for closer inspection, for detailed perceptions, for cognitive reflection in an open process. A process that is not result and action oriented from the beginning and thus under pressure. ART provides just a different frame, one that transcends borders and maybe dissolves them. Something that sometimes is hard to endure. A next narrative will be an offer, an invitation. It will be an open proposition, that offers all and others to (re)connect.

To differentiate further: Narration is the product of the act of storytelling producing an answering frame for "bigger" questions and such as "life", "origins", "identity". And narrations are at the core of larger groupings such as nations, tribes, families, institutions, companies. And each individual contains narrations of her/his being. All of these change over time – as humans are storytellers in relation to themselves. These stories adapt to changes in belief systems, in circumstances, in "life".

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<sup>74</sup> Richard Powers: *The Overstory*, 2018, page 3.

<sup>75</sup> As seen in the Brexit slogan: „Take back control“.

Narratives are stories or narrative structures that affect communities and are reproduced again and again over time and space. Their function lies in the construction and reproduction of a collective memory. They construct the past and thus the present reality. Narrations resulting in framings are central for the representation of identity, for individual memory, for the collective state of mind of families, friendships, networks, groups, regions, nations, for ethnic and gender identity. First of all: they are constructed, they are virtual, not “real” in the sense of “truth”, as in “it happened this way and no other”. They can be reconstructed, changed, amended – and they are. All the time. And: They are convincing. They heighten connectivity. They resonate. They are artifacts and highly artistic. They integrate. They segregate. They can be misleading. They can be pointing the way. They bring recollections and memories. They neglect, exclude and cover up. They cannot be trusted. They are all we have. Hannah Ahrendt, much tested in her time and distrustful of literature, having experienced totalitarianism, still sees chances in storytelling: “Storytelling reveals meaning without committing the error of defining it.”

A “Germany” of 2024, having undergone the reunification as a merger of West and East (somehow an early example of mirroring the European experience of late) has its very own perspective on its narrative – like every nation, it consists of all the stories, its inhabitants tell each other. “Outsiders” may and will construct different “stories”. Especially in connection to the German nation and German national identity in relation to migration and newcomers into Germany, perspectives and “stories” differ in Germany, and outside too.

Naika Faroutan (sociologist and head of the Berlin institute for empirical research on integration and migration at Humboldt University ) a scientist of multinational origins states on the integration of new-comers from wherever and for whatever reason via narratives pointing out, that narrations are rather “liquid” and thus able to change the past too in the collective memory:

„Vielmehr müsste ein Einschluss in die Erzählung von Gemeinschaft erfolgen, um ein über Jahrzehnte etabliertes Ausschlussstrauma aufseiten der migrantischen Bevölkerung zu beheben. Dies könnte über narrative Neudeutungen ermöglicht werden. Narrationen sind Geschichten, die nur teilweise auf historischen Erfahrungen beruhen. Sie entwickeln zwar einen Moment von immer schon Dagewesenem und dadurch nicht Veränderbarem. Wir vergessen dabei aber, dass Narrationen immer wieder neu erdacht und in die Zeit zurückgedacht werden können.“<sup>76</sup> (*Unauthorized machine translation by Deepl: Rather, inclusion in the narrative of community would have to take place in order to remedy a trauma of exclusion that has been established over decades on the part of the migrant population. This could be made possible through narrative reinterpretations. Narratives are stories that are only partially based on historical experiences. They develop a moment of something that has always existed and therefore cannot be changed. However, we forget that narratives can always be re-imagined and thought back in time.*).

Yet narrations that are not rooted in „reality“, in the social and political fabric of their time, are “weak”, they lack “connectivity”. Purely constructed stories are of little use. The art of storytelling weaves facts and fictions, knows dreams and all the daily toiling. For example: in

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<sup>76</sup> Naika Faroutan: Es wäre einmal deutsch: Über die postmigrantische Gesellschaft (It would be German once: On the post-migrant society), Kindle version, Berlin 2023, page 108.

referring to the past, a story would have to acknowledge that Germany always has been a country at the crossroads in the middle of Europe (a realistic metaphor in itself). Situated in the center (some say: heart) of Europe, it received influx from all parts of Europe during its history. Its homogeneity is a pure construct, used in nation-building. Then, Germany was an emigration country (to the Americas mainly) until the 1950ies with German migrants experiencing the same kind of mistrust, prejudices and depreciation their German contemporaries now apply on new-comers, migrants to Germany. These shared experiences can be and should be part of a narrative of a 21<sup>st</sup> Germany, thus strengthening a realistic view of a nation, a society, a terrain, and its citizens<sup>77</sup>. Shared traumatic experiences connect as much as shared acts of kindness and other beneficial experiences do.

All these experiences trickle down from the first generation to the second and third and fourth, then into “history”. These spaces of experience build the basis for the joint narrative of the family, the group, the region, and more. The development from the one massive nation, seen as a block, to a network of dense and light connections with multiple centers and crossroads produces new, other narratives. Meaning and sense reaching out to an open, unknown terrain, are in need: “Europe” might be a container for this.

### **Amitav Gosh: The Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis**

*“Which is only to say that what the Earth is really exhausted of is not its resources; what it has lost is meaning. Conquered, inert, supine, the Earth can no longer ennoble, nor delight, nor produce new aspirations. All it can inspire in its would-be conqueror’s mind is the kind of contempt that arises from familiarity. (...) The very nature of this crisis is such that in order to deal with it the world will have to think like a forest; (...) This is the great burden that now rests upon writers, artists, filmmakers, and everyone else who is involved in the telling of stories: to us falls the task of imaginatively restoring agency and voice to nonhumans. As with all the most important artistic endeavors in human history, this is a task that is at once aesthetic and political—and because of the magnitude of the crisis that besets the planet, it is now freighted with the most pressing moral urgency. / While it is certainly true that the West bears much of the responsibility for global warming, that does not mean that it can, at this juncture, address—much less solve—the planetary crisis without the active and willing participation of the great majority of the world’s population. A necessary first step toward finding solutions is to find a common idiom and a shared story—a narrative of humility in which humans acknowledge their mutual dependence not just on each other, but on “all our relatives.”<sup>78</sup>*

The actual experiences of loss of relevance of Europe, of war in Europe, of the multiplying effects of the climate catastrophe, combined with the experience of helplessness, of frustration foster despair and constriction. For the German society, for the European Union, these are toxic. Thus the issue might be: How to focus on a realistic way towards the next decades that integrities the positive without neglecting the difficulties ahead. Will someone listen to such narratives? And how to formulate them?

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<sup>77</sup> Compare Faroutan, page 122.

<sup>78</sup> Amitav Ghosh; The Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis, English Edition, kindle version.

## Hypothesis 16

ART is a reality check. With wars (on nature, on humans) raging on the subcontinent, collective national/individual historical experiences, so different across the territory, clash. North and South, East and West have to negotiate a common understanding and recognition. All, truly all, will have to give, otherwise everyone and everything will lose. Fears rule. EUROPE needs a next narrative to keep existing. The question is: This Way – Or That? ART is a reality check. The question is: Which reality are we talking about?

## Conclusion:

Doing ART is hard work.

Doing EUROPE is hard work.

## Part 2. Specific Issue: Sound(ing) Europe

The title of the Berlin event refers to a state of mind, to a form of research in marine environments, to the quality of one sense bestowed on the humans (among others): sound. Sound studies, which we address with this brief tentative research to form a foundation of a shared understanding, deals with the sensual qualities and with a sound-related art form, particularly in cultural studies, musicology, aesthetics, sound art, sound design, sonic fiction, and media production.

Central terms for this approach, stemming from a cursory reading, are: soundscapes, communities of sound, acoustic spaces, noise, listening in social media, the voice, sonic reality. The researcher, not considering himself an expert on sound and sound studies, presents a collection of quotes from academic and non-academic backgrounds to shed some light on the topic of the Berlin event: Sound(ing) Europe.

The idea that the imagined community of “Europe” might be represented by a common or differentiated “sound” or “music” gave way for initiatives such as:

- Sound of Europe, a national festival in various European countries (<https://www.sound-of-europe.nl/>)
- Sounds of Europe, a platform for field recording (<http://www.soundsofeurope.eu/>)
- A collection of European bird sounds
- Digital radio stations with the focus on a sound of Europe
- A piano builder who claims to own and produce “The Sound of Europe”
- ...

A sound evolves when a listener is around, when being listened to. “Listening” is an active act. The listener decides what he listens to, what he lets into his “ears”, or better conscience. Listening is a selective process, the choices filtered by assumptions, prejudices, default settings. In sounding one needs to be aware of these being an active listener.

The auditory dimension, the soundscape:

“What is it to listen *phenomenologically*? It is more than an intense and concentrated attention to sound and listening, it is also to be aware in the process of the pervasiveness of certain “beliefs” which intrude into my attempt to listen “to the things themselves.” Thus the first listenings inevitably are not yet fully existentialized but occur in the midst of preliminary approximations.

Listening begins with the ordinary, by proximately working its way into what is as yet unheard. In the process the gradual deconstruction of those beliefs which must be surpassed occurs. We suppose that there are significant contrasts between sight and sound; thus in the very midst of the implicit sensory atomism held in common belief we approximate abstractly what the differences might be between the dimensions of sight and of sound.<sup>1</sup> We “pair” these two dimensions comparatively. First we engage in a hypothetical and abstract mapping which could occur for ordinary experience with its inherent beliefs.” ... The movement from that which is heard (and unseen) to that which is seen raises the question of

its counterpart. Does each event of the visible world offer the occasion, even ultimately from a sounding presence of mute objects, for silence to have a voice? Do all things, when fully experienced, also sound forth?”<sup>79</sup>

“For twenty-five centuries, Western knowledge has tried to look upon the world. It has failed to understand that the world is not for the beholding. It is for hearing. It is not legible, but audible. / Our science has always desired to monitor, measure, abstract, and castrate meaning, forgetting that life is full of noise and that death alone is silent: work noise, noise of man, and noise of beast. Noise bought, sold, or prohibited. Nothing essential happens in the absence of noise. Today, our sight has dimmed; it no longer sees our future, having constructed a present made of abstraction, nonsense, and silence. Now we must learn to judge a society more by its sounds, by its art, and by its festivals, than by its statistics. By listening to noise, we can better understand where the folly of men and their calculations is leading us, and what hopes it is still possible to have.”<sup>80</sup>

“We will not argue for the priority of the ear. In the West the ear gave way to the eye as the most important gatherer of information about the time of the Renaissance, with the development of the printing press and perspective painting. One of the most evident testaments of this change is the way in which we have come to imagine God. It was not until the Renaissance that God became portraiture. Previously he had been conceived as sound or vibration.”<sup>81</sup>

“The soundscape of modernity is a history of aural culture in early twentieth-century America. It charts dramatic transformations in what people heard, and it explores equally significant changes in the ways that people listened to those sounds. What they heard was a new kind of sound that was the product of modern technology. They listened in ways that acknowledged this fact, as critical consumers of aural commodities. By examining the technologies that produced those sounds, as well as the culture that consumed them, we can begin to recover more fully the texture of an era known as “The Machine Age,” and we can comprehend more completely the experience of change, particularly technological change, that characterized this era. ... The sounds themselves were increasingly the result of technological mediation. Scientists and engineers discovered ways to manipulate traditional materials of architectural construction in order to control the behavior of sound in space. New kinds of materials specifically designed to control sound were developed, and were soon followed by new electroacoustic devices that effected even greater results by converting sounds into electrical signals. Some of the sounds that resulted from these mediations were objects of scientific scrutiny; others were the unintended consequences—the noises—of an ever-more mechanized society; others, like musical concerts, radio broadcasts, and motion picture sound tracks, were commodities consumed by an acoustically ravenous public. The contours of change were the same for all. / Accompanying these changes in the nature of sound were equally new trends in the culture of listening. A fundamental compulsion to control the behavior of sound drove technological developments in architectural acoustics, and this imperative stimulated auditors to listen more critically, to determine whether that control had been accomplished. This desire for

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<sup>79</sup> Don Ihde, *The Auditory Dimension*, in: Jonathan Sterne, *The Sound-Reader*, 2021, p. 23-29.

<sup>80</sup> Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, in: Jonathan Sterne, *The Sound-Reader*, 2021, p. 29-39.

<sup>81</sup> R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape*, in: Jonathan Sterne, *The Sound-Reader*, 2021, p. 95-103.

control stemmed partly from new worries about noise, as traditionally bothersome sources of sound like animals, peddlers, and musicians were increasingly drowned out by the technological crescendo of the modern city. It was also driven by a preoccupation with efficiency that demanded the elimination of all things unnecessary, including unnecessary sounds. Finally, control was a means by which to exercise choice in a market filled with aural commodities; it allowed producers and consumers alike to identify what constituted “good sound,” and to evaluate whether particular products achieved it. / Perhaps the most significant result of these physical and cultural changes was the reformulation of the relationship between sound and space. Indeed, as the new soundscape took shape, sound was gradually dissociated from space until the relationship ceased to exist. The dissociation began with the technological manipulations of sound-absorbing building materials, and the severance was made complete when electroacoustic devices claimed sound as their own. As scientists and engineers engaged increasingly with electrical representations of acoustical phenomena, sounds became indistinguishable from the circuits that produced them. When electroacoustic instruments like microphones and loudspeakers moved out of the laboratory and into the world, this new way of thinking migrated with them, and the result was that sounds were reconceived as signals.”<sup>82</sup>

“The landscape, as opposed to the earth as a physical entity, is a perception, a specific and ultimately confined view of a portion of the land that seems “worth” viewing because it is somehow noteworthy. Thus landscape is the different within the same; it is what draws attention to itself. What we define, and separate out, as a landscape appears in our consciousness as something at once “itself” and a representation of itself. That is, when a portion of land is raised in our consciousness to the status of *landscape*, the physical entity is reconstituted in our minds as something in excess of the factual. This excess is experienced as a representation—and as such is discursive. By the phrase “sonoric landscape” I wish to evoke the ubiquity of sonority—a sweep of sound as broad as the land itself. But I also wish to evoke the particularity of *musical* sonority in the larger agglomeration of sounds and the particularities of different musical sonorities. / Sonoric landscapes are both heard and seen. They exist because of human experience and human consciousness. Music (the part of the larger sonoric landscape that interests me) connects to the *visible* human body, not only as the receiver of sound but also as its agent or producer. The human embodiment of music is central to any understanding of music’s socio-cultural agency. The semantic content of music—its discursive “argument”—is never solely about its sound and the act of hearing. It is instead about the complex relations between sound and hearing as these are registered and as they mediate the entire experience of being. That experience is physical; intellectual, in the broad meaning of the word; and spiritual, though hardly restricted to the religious or the mystical. But it is especially to be understood as the result of mediations between the ear and the eye. The sonoric landscape is peopled and hence interactive. It is external to the human subject yet internalized by its sight and sound.”<sup>83</sup>

On body and sound, on imaginary communities, on people’s voices:

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<sup>82</sup> Emily Thompson, Sound, Modernity and History, in: Jonathan Sterne, the Sound-Reader, 2021, p. 117-129.

<sup>83</sup> Richard Leppert, Reading the Sonoric Landscape, in: Jonathan Sterne, the Sound-Reader, 2021, p. 409-418.



“At the very least, listeners’ tuning in by the tens of thousands to one specific program airing at a specific time created that shared simultaneity of experience crucial to Benedict Anderson’s concept of the modern “imagined community” of nationhood.” ... Radio, more than any other agency, possessed the power not only to assert actively the unifying power of simultaneous experience but to communicate meanings about the nature of that unifying experience. Radio not only responded to the dominant social tensions of its era but, by addressing its audience’s situation directly in music, comedy, and narrative drama, made those tensions the subject of its constructed symbolic universe. / Events in the last decade of the twentieth century have given us pressing new reasons to think about notions of nation and identity, and the roles that race, ethnicity, and communication play in creating them. Anderson locates the beginning of the modern sense of nation and nationality in the profit-driven spread of the medium of print—“print-capitalism, which made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways. / The spread of print, driven by commercial motives, overthrew the dominance of restrictive official languages, allowed circulation of vernaculars to a wider audience, and eventually led to the overturning of traditional authority and to a whole new concept of the relation of citizen to state, of citizen to citizen, that characterizes the modern age. This “imagined” relationship resulted from the “half fortuitous, but explosive, interaction between a system of production and productive relations (capitalism), a technology of communications (print), and the fatality of human linguistic diversity.”<sup>3</sup> And in such an imagined relationship, based on nothing so tangible as concrete geographic boundaries, common ethnic heritage, or linguistic homogenization, but instead on assumptions, images, feelings, consciousness, it is not only the technical means of communication, but the central narratives, representations, and “memories”—and strategic forgetfulness—that they circulate that tie the nation together.”<sup>84</sup>

“It was at the end of 1956 that the real shift occurred. At this time tracts were distributed announcing the existence of a Voice of Free Algeria. The broadcasting schedules and the wavelengths were given. This voice “that speaks from the *djebels*,” not geographically limited, but bringing to all Algeria the great message of the Revolution, at once acquired an essential value. In less than twenty days the entire stock of radio sets was bought up. In the *souks*<sup>1</sup> trade in used receiver sets began.”<sup>85</sup>

„The mayday signal of Black Atlantic Futurism is unrecognizability, as either Black or Music. Sonic Futurism doesn’t locate you in tradition; instead it dislocates you from origins. It uproutes you by inducing a gulf crisis, a perceptual daze rendering today’s sonic discontinuum immediately audible. ... You are not censors but sensors, not aesthetes but kinaesthetes. You are sensationalists. You are the newest mutants incubated in womb-speakers. Your mother, your first sound. The bedroom, the party, the dancefloor, the rave: these are the labs where the 21st C nervous systems assemble themselves, the matrices of the Futurhythmachinic Discontinuum. The future is a much better guide to the present than

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<sup>84</sup> Michelle Hilmes, Sound and the Imagined Community, in: Jonathan Sterne, the Sound-Reader, 2021, p. 351-362.

<sup>85</sup> Frantz Fanon, This is the Voice of Algeria, in: Jonathan Sterne, the Sound-Reader, 2021, p. 329-335.

the past. Be prepared, be ready to trade everything you know about the history of music for a single glimpse of its future."<sup>86</sup>

„The reliance on reverberation and delay devices is certainly one of the most pronounced stylistic traits of dub music, and the sensations simulated by reverb and digital delay devices—either cavernous spaces or repeated sounds, respectively—can be subsumed under the commonly used term *echo*.<sup>5</sup> In the sonic culture of humans, the sensation of echo is closely associated with the cognitive function of memory and the evocation of the chronological past; at the same time, it can also evoke the vastness of outer space and hence (by association), the chronological future. Most obviously, dub is about memory in the immediate sense that it is a remix, a refashioned version of an already familiar pop song; as such, it derives much of its musical and commercial power from its manipulation of the listener’s prior experience of a song. In a more abstract sense, however, I am speculating that, suffusing their music with the sensation of echo during a period when the symbol of Africa was being consciously revitalized in diasporic consciousness, the creators of dub managed to evoke a cultural memory of ancestral African roots through heavy use of the reverb and echo effects and various musical strategies of African origin. (...) ... dub may be one of a number of diasporic musics on which a traumatic history and turbulent present has left its structural imprint, “converting the outrage of the years into a music” ( Here I am paraphrasing the words of Jorge Luis Borges) through an aesthetic of broken, discontinuous pleasures that may represent a synaptic adaptation to long-term historical trauma,<sup>56</sup> but that also fit into a broader global pattern in which collage forms join the search for new realities to define the twentieth century.”<sup>87</sup>

“Sound is not weightless. It is not bodiless, not ethereal, it is not immaterial. The opposite is true. Sound goes through my body, through your body – right here, right now, wherever we are. In any given moment of my or your life manifold vibrations go through our bodies: vibrations that come to us out of the environments we are situated in. Sound is thoroughly material, it is a vibration, a disturbance in a material continuum: a disturbance that moves through elastic materials. All molecules in motion are reverbed and remixed – an airquake, a stonequake: a trembling and quaking of bodies and beings.”<sup>88</sup>

Different bodies construct different sounds (listen and hear differently, react differently according to their default settings. Decolonizing perception would try to acknowledge differences by treating these as equally valid and enlightening. For example: A “fugitive” in opposition to a “settler” is seen as a state of mind reaching into the sonic sphere of expression of the sonic color line:

„Fugitivity is being separate from settling: being together in homelessness, the state of dispossession that we seek and that we embrace. Fugitivity therefore represents a starting point of resistance that first of all accepts its own dispossession, its being discarded and disavowed. This uncommon appositionality represents a constant state of being alienated: a state from which any activity of resistance, of demanding and of building another framework of social, economic or cultural life can only set in. To set this as the

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<sup>86</sup> Kodwo Eshun, *Operating System for the Redesign of Sonic Reality*, in: Jonathan Sterne, *the Sound-Reader*, 2021, p. 449-453.

<sup>87</sup> Michael Veal, *Starship Africa*, in: Jonathan Sterne, *the Sound-Reader*, 2021, p. 454-468.

<sup>88</sup> Holger Schulze (2012), *The Body of Sound: Sounding out the History of Science. SoundEffects*, 2(1).

ground of blackness and ultrablackness frames it in a way that doesn't ignore the sonic colour line (Stoeber 2016) reconfirmed here but that reflects upon it and results in acknowledging the involuntary trajectory towards fugitivity, towards questioning the social commons, and hence also working towards a revolutionary state."<sup>89</sup>

"Taking auto-affection as the exercise of the voice, auto-affection supposed that a pure difference comes to divide self-presence. In this pure difference is rooted the possibility of everything we think we can exclude from auto-affection: space, the outside, the world, the body, etc. As soon as it is admitted that auto-affection is the condition for self-presence, no pure transcendental reduction is possible. ... Auto-affection is not a modality of experience that characterizes a being that would already be itself (*autos*). It produces sameness as self-relation within self-difference; it produces sameness as the nonidentical. ... Why, in fact, is the concept of auto-affection incumbent on us? What constitutes the originality of speech, what distinguishes it from every other element of signification, is that its substance seems to be purely temporal. And this temporality does not unfold a sense that would itself be nontemporal; even before being expressed, sense is through and through temporal."<sup>90</sup>

"In one of his last, ingenious texts, Italo Calvino leaves us the extraordinary figure of a king who listens. Part of a collection dedicated to the five senses, the king in question represents hearing. He is seated immobile on the throne, ears pricked in order to intercept and decipher the sounds that surround him. Besieged by the logic of his own power, the only activity of the monarch consists in an acoustic control of the realm. In the palace, which, like "a great ear," has "pavilions, ducts, shells, labyrinths," every sound is a sign of either fidelity or betrayal. There are many hidden spies to interpret: whispers, rumors, vibrations, crashes, oceans of silence. Naturally, there are also human voices in the palace. But "every voice that knows it is heard by the King acquires a cold glaze"; it becomes a courtly voice, artificial, false—not so much for what it says, but in its very sonorous materiality. The king who listens knows this, or better, he hears it [*lo sente*]. ... Every voice "certainly comes from a person, unique, unrepeatable like every person," Calvino assures us. He calls our attention to what we might call a vocal phenomenology of uniqueness. This is an ontology that concerns the incarnate singularity of every existence insofar as she or he manifests her- or himself vocally. Ontology and phenomenology are, of course, just names (perhaps they are too technical, or too indulgent of a certain philosophical idiom) that indicate how the human condition of uniqueness resounds in the register of the voice. Moreover, the voice shows that this condition is essentially relational. The simple truth of the vocal, announced by voices without even the mediation of articulate speech, communicates the elementary givens of existence: uniqueness, relationality, sexual difference, and age."<sup>91</sup>

From these statements one might jump to the physical, biological and romantically idealistic phenomenon of "resonance". A resonance within the body-mind-soul construct, often

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<sup>89</sup> Holger Schulze (2020), *Sonic Fiction*. Bloomsbury Academic. <https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/sonic-fiction-9781501334795/>.

<sup>90</sup> Jacques Derrida, *The Voice that keeps Silence*, in: Jonathan Sterne, *the Sound-Reader*, 2021, p. 495-503.

<sup>91</sup> Adriana Cavarero, *Multiple Voices*, in: Jonathan Sterne, *the Sound-Reader*, 2021, p. 520-532.

connected to rhythmic structures, to patterns, to sounds, to a musical piece such as a national anthem or a song of soccer fans at a game.

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# The ITALY<sup>2</sup> Perspective

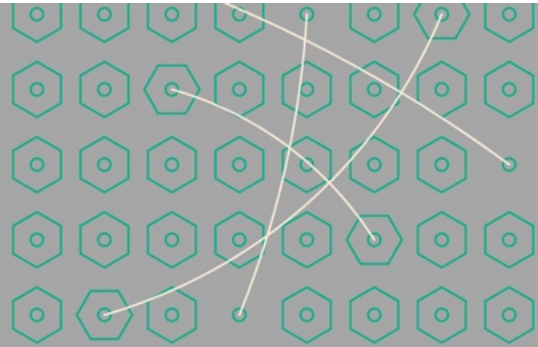
Research conducted by Luoghi Comuni, Perugia, Italy

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<sup>2</sup> ITALY, BULGARIA, GERMANY or DENMARK are framings of an ideal/subjective state. The territory and/or the nation, the state represents much less than this collective and at the same time individual term signifies.

# Perugia and Umbria

Outskirts in the middle



## Politics

Until 2008, politics in Perugia had one certainty: the consensus of left-wing parties, a political orientation consolidated over the years that, however, gradually lost approval. The turning point came with Andrea Romizi's victory in 2014, which immediately appeared to be the end of an era, because since the postwar period the city had never had a mayor who was not from the left.

Throughout Umbria, municipalities administered by the center-right took the upper hand, perhaps also because of the particular historical moment, experienced both in Italy and throughout Europe, characterized by profound transformations, political and economic changes that intercepted a desire for change among citizens. Radical change as a way of reacting to old ways of being, in which perhaps the city no longer recognized itself, or an outcome of increasingly entrenched social trends, such as thinking and acting individually.

# About the research

Is it possible to  
consider - and  
narrate-  
Perugia as a  
city of the  
future?

Our idea is that of  
investigating how Perugia  
has changed in the last  
decade, focusing on  
migrations, ecology,  
access to healthcare,  
private and state  
educational options,  
employment, cultural  
events, real and perceived  
safety.

In which sense  
can Perugia be  
a sample of a  
next narrative  
of Europe?



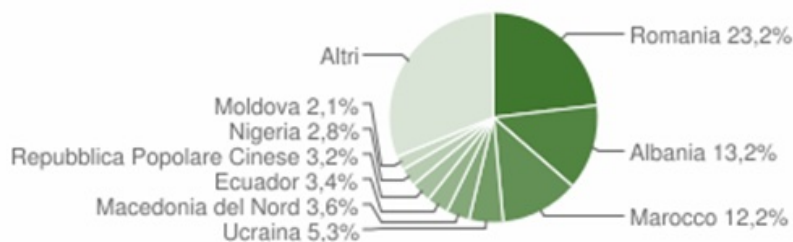
# Foreign population

An Istat note from 2022 mentions “Resident population and population dynamics Year 2022”. Published on December 18, 2023, it shows that the census population in Umbria has 856,407 residents. Compared to 2021 there is a decrease of -0.28%, which is higher than that recorded at the national level (-0.05%) where, on the other hand, there is a positive dynamic of the foreign population (+2.2% compared to 2021).

The Foreign Resident Population in Perugia (province) as of January 1, 2023 is over 67 thousand, of which 55.2% of the total are women.

The Municipality of Perugia has the largest share of the foreign resident population with 20,548 out of a total of 162,367 people, representing 12.7 % of the resident population.

The foreign community is varied but the largest in the Umbrian territory is from Countries such as Romania with 23.2%, followed by Albania (13.2%) and finally Morocco (12.2%).



The distribution by age and sex on ISTAT 2023 data, shows that in the age pyramid the highest incidence is from 30 to 40 years for men and from 35 to 50 for women. The majority of foreign residents in the territory are therefore young (born between 1973 and 1988), and confirming this is the second most present age group, which is between 20 and 29.

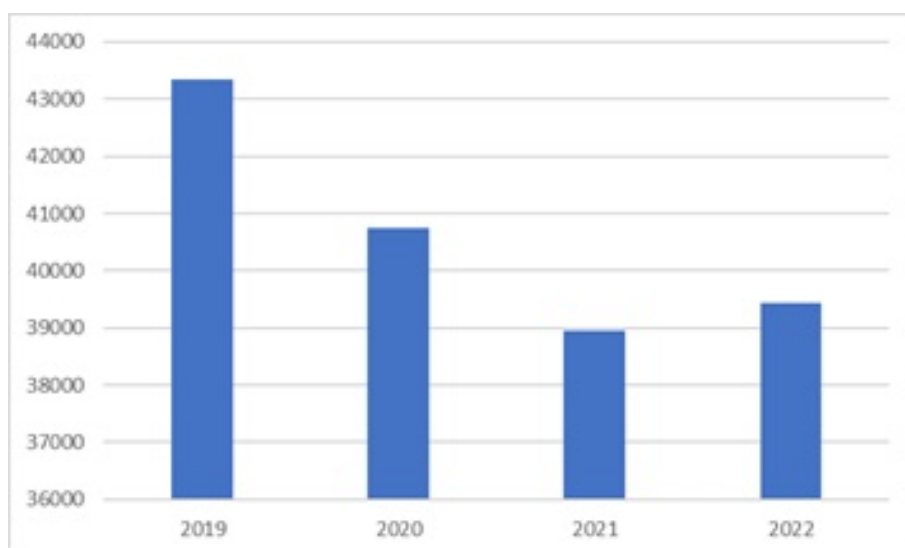
These data do not differ from the regional data that indicate a young age distribution of the foreign population (greater to the Italian media) detected in the low values of the structural dependency (30.6 vs. 67.4 of Italians) and old age indices (45.1 vs. 252.1 of Italians).

Foreigners are in Umbria a young population that seems to contrast with the general demographic trend: in the Municipality of Perugia for example, the old-age index in 2023 is 207.9 elderly (over 64) for every 100 young people.

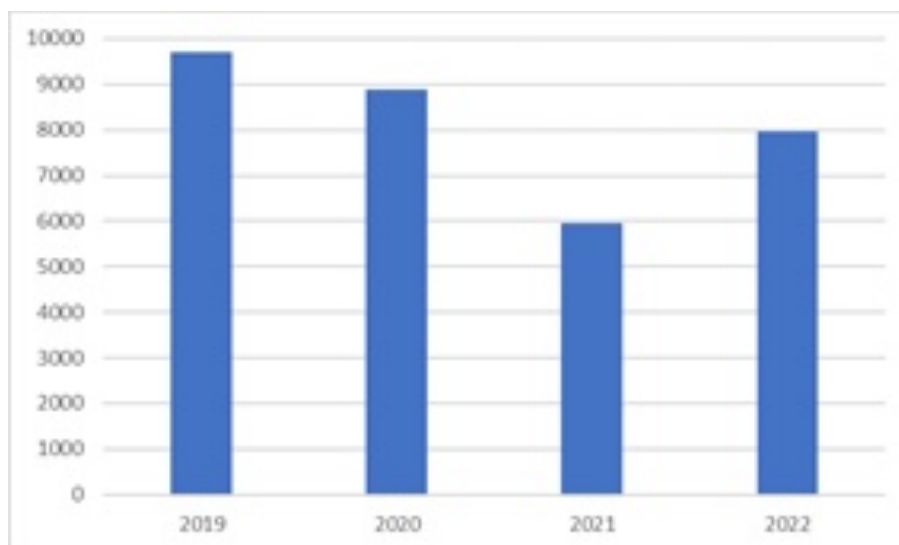
In 2022 the foreign population is smaller than that recorded in the Italian average, it amounts to about 39 thousand units, with an increase of 1.2% compared to 2021 ( in Italy the growth is of +5.2%).

Then it is necessary to consider how these people manage to have an adequate lifestyle through labor integration. The number of unemployed foreigners is 7,968, an increase of 33.6% compared to 2021 (in Italy they are down 14.2%).

*Historical values of annual foreign employed - Umbria:*



*Historical values of annual foreign unemployed - Umbria:*



According to ISTAT data from 2022 analyzing contract employment, the most common types of employment are household and cohabitation activities as employers for domestic staff (5,562) and restaurant activities (3,161).

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## **Employment**

Umbria's production base has different characteristics from the national average: Perugia has a more pronounced occupational specialization in industry (18.7 %, 1.8 percentage points higher than the average in Italy) and in agriculture where there are 4.2% of the employed (0.6 percentage points higher than the Italian average and +1.6 compared to the Center of Italy). However, it is lower than the regional and Italian average in the Services.

In 2022, Umbrian Companies increased employment by 10 thousand 437 (+4.1 percent), from 255 thousand 875 employees in December 2021 to 266 thousand 312 in December 2022. Employment increased the most in the province of Perugia (+4.2% and +8 thousand employed).

This is in contrast to the figure measuring the incidence of poor families, which in 2002 was 6%, while today it has risen to 1 in 10.

Lower unemployment rates than those of females are observed for males in all the territorial areas considered, the sharpest difference being in the province of Perugia where the male unemployment rate is 4.1% and the female rate is 7.8% (+3.7% ), data that give pause for thought about equality of opportunity in access to the labor market.

Last but not least data, In Umbria there're many young people under 29 who are neither working nor studying (also called NEET).

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# About the methodology

Communication, reporting and storytelling are Luoghi Comuni's core skills: through them we are going to explore the international interactions in Perugia on a cultural, artistic, economic, social, political, university level. We are going to bring together different **points of view** through conversations with residents - may they be artists, politicians, migrants, students.

## **Danilo Cremonte, *theater director***

A small town and an international city at the same time. This is Perugia, where multiculturalism is much older than the migratory flows of the last thirty years. This is thanks to the University for Foreigners, the oldest Italian institution involved in promoting Italian language and culture worldwide.

Danilo Cremonte grew up in the surroundings of the magnificent building of the University for Foreigners, in the heart of the city: he is the artistic director of Human Beings, an intercultural theater laboratory founded in 1994 with the aim of bringing together the many souls of Perugia. "The city used to do nothing to narrate, and enhance, the cultural and human richness given by its interculturality: that used to make me upset", says Cremonte. Its theater has reflected, over the years, the transformations of foreign communities in town: from the immigration from Eastern Europe and South America in the 1990s, to the ones from Africa, Pakistan and Afghanistan in the last decade. Like many other nonprofit

organizations, Cremonte's association plays a crucial role in promoting cultural activities and diversity, overcoming institutional voids.

The Europe that Cremonte glimpses from his laboratories is a fortress, increasingly repelling, despite the positive opportunities for artistic and cultural exchanges. Perugia, for its part, has all it takes to be a model town: it is necessary, however, to break down the boundaries between foreign people and the city.



*Danilo Cremonte, February 2024*

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## **Giulia Gamboni, *physician***

Healthcare services in Perugia have proven to be excellent in the past, being characterized by excellent organization, capillarity and intercommunication skills. Despite the isolation of the hospital, public healthcare used to work well, also thanks to various organizations mediating between hospital and local services. This is stated by Giulia Gamboni, infectious disease specialist at the Santa Maria di Misericordia Hospital in Perugia and president of Anlaids Umbria organization.

“But Covid and privatization swept away everything”, she says. In recent years, access to healthcare services has become harder and harder, leading to a mass flight, both of users and professionals, towards private services. “Yet the public system is the winning one, in terms of quality of care and from all other points of view”, explains the physician. It is important to promote government policies and educational programs orientating people towards public services. It is important to restore civility among people. Gamboni, originally from Marche, chose Perugia twenty years ago for its interculturality. What she sees today is a "golden cage": on the one hand, the healthy lifestyle, the greenery, the simple relationships; on the other hand, communication with what stands outside seems to be poor, although there are lots of people showing interest in the potential of this authentic land. Perugia: Europe is still far away, nevertheless, from the inside, things keep on moving.



*Giulia Gamboni, March 2024*

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## Massimo Monni, *politician*

According to Massimo Monni Perugia has lost its international attitude. Monni, a 65 years old politician, grew up in the new part of the city, but two years ago decided to move downtown. He's going to run to become the new mayor of Perugia at the elections of June the 9th as an independent candidate. He's a moderate. He thinks that Perugia should play a stronger role as an attractor for start-up and corporations of hi-tech and logistics sector.

“Perugia and Umbria could be the Italian Ireland”: no bureaucratic shackles, more opportunities for the big enterprises. Perugia, Monni says, should look at international models. “It's like if ruling classes, here, wouldn't travel too much”. A stronger synergy among the two universities, the Art Academy and the musical conservatory is needed. “And someone should lead a coordinating process”. In his opinion people from Perugia are divided in two main kinds: a conservative self-referred kind and a more progressive and open-minded kind. Two cities in the city that should have a better dialogue, trying to share a common point of view of Perugia's future.



*Massimo Monni, February 2024*

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## **Simona Marchesi, *union officer***

Simona Marchesi is a 46 year-old-worker and a union officer. She was born in Lisciano Niccone, a little mountain village close to the edge between Umbria and Toscana. When she attended the technical institute in Perugia, in the Nineties, “Perugia looked like New York”. She’s been working for 26 years at iconic company Perugina, belonging now to the multinational corporation Nestlé. According to Marchesi “Perugia, today, is an empty city. Without real attractions for young people and investors”.

As a union officer she travels a lot, and she meets colleagues from all over Europe. “It’s important to know their problems and their needs. Our meetings help us to feed a solidarity spirit and to inspire common actions”. Marchesi thinks that Perugia has lost its traditional international attitude. She thinks that chocolate could be the key for a virtuous development: “There are many companies producing chocolate. We should build a sort of chocolate district, a synergy among companies and public administration, to share know-how and to create new jobs”.



*Simona Marchesi, March 2024*