



Create Cultural Change



The Unlearning Notebook

Learnings of the Unlearning Talks

by Maria-Louiza Laopodi & Argyro Barata

November 2020

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Inhalt

1.	Introduction.....	3
2.	Notes from the talks.....	5
2.1.	PREMIERE: And now, what?! The current relevance of Futures Literacy & Systems' Resilience	5
2.2.	CYCLE 1: COPING WITH EMERGING CRISES, CHALLENGES & TRENDS	6
2.3.	CYCLE 2: RESILIENT MODELS OF SOCIOCULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP.....	9
2.4.	CYCLE 3: BUILDING NEW COLLABORATIVE METHODS OF COOPERATION AND NETWORKS	12
3.	Thoughts for the future	15
3.1.	<i>For supporters – funders</i>	15
3.2.	<i>For policy makers</i>	16
3.3.	<i>For field practitioners</i>	17
3.4.	<i>For networks</i>	17
4.	Annexes	19
4.1.	UT program & speakers.....	19
4.1.1.	PREMIERE	19
4.1.2.	CYCLE 1: COPING WITH EMERGING CRISES, CHALLENGES & TRENDS	19
4.1.3.	CYCLE 2: RESILIENT MODELS OF SOCIOCULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP.....	20
4.1.4.	CYCLE 3: BUILDING NEW COLLABORATIVE METHODS OF COOPERATION AND NETWORKS	22
4.2.	Speakers per country.....	24

1. [Introduction](#)

The Unlearning Talks were a series of talks designed and implemented online as part of the celebration of the [START – Create Cultural Change](#) program and took place in autumn of 2020 during the months of September and October. START was a capacity building and fellowship program for aspiring cultural managers in Greece that ran from June 2015 until October 2020 between Germany and Greece. The program supported creative minds to kick-start cultural initiatives that generated a positive social impact on their local communities. By facilitating growth and exchange in the sociocultural sector, START aimed to create new perspectives for young professionals in Greece and foster social cohesion in Europe. Each year the program had 3 consecutive phases in Germany and Greece, enabling START Fellows to develop an innovative project idea into a cultural initiative and acquire the entrepreneurial skills to scale it up to become a sustainable creative venture. START was a program of the Robert Bosch Stiftung, conducted in cooperation with the Goethe-Institut Thessaloniki and the German Association of Socioculture, supported by the John S. Latsis Public Benefit Foundation and the Bodossaki Foundation.

In May 2020, just after the end of the covid-19 lockdown in Greece, the START program team decided to design and launch a series of virtual talks on the topic of resilience and sustainability in the sociocultural sector, instead of a real time conference that had initially been planned as the final event of the START program. The main aim of this series of talks was to identify best practice, map resources available, and envision the prerequisites and ingredients for sustainable cultural interventions tackling sociocultural issues in local communities.

During the process of preparing this series of talks, the editorial team puzzled around many notions focusing at the end on the process of unlearning. Sustainability has been an important issue since the first year of the START program and through the years it has become ever more important, not least because of the climate and economic crisis. START's main challenge was to support the Fellows in setting up a project, which was a learning process for the majority of them. Then the program guided them through the implementation of their project, during which they had to adapt their innovative ideas to reality and therefore unlearn how to navigate new processes in order to produce tangible results, as the program requested. Adding to this challenge, the program's scaling awards offered some of the fellows the playground to relearn a new path towards turning their initial ideas into scalable and long lasting sustainable projects.

Furthermore, the covid-19 crisis brought to light the diachronic value of resilient models of practice and the challenges of unlearning established practices and relearning new ones to adapt; specifically, the challenge of seeing things unfold through different perspectives and making the most from it.

The talks were curated around the idea of reviewing these challenges and the solutions discovered during 5 years of the START program, by inviting three different groups into dialogue: a) START alumni cultural managers from Greece, b) START alumni representatives of the sociocultural centers from Germany, and c) change makers from South Eastern Europe. One could wonder why the talks involved those three groups, the rationale being that START involved cultural professionals from Greece and Germany only, focusing on the exchange between the two communities and the capacity building of the Greek cultural managers visiting and collaborating at German sociocultural centers for two months. Throughout the implementation of the program, it was at times obvious that the Greek and German professional realities were quite different - which was interesting but also challenging. Through the research conducted by external evaluators for the START program, participants from Greece and Germany recognized different levels of understanding and ownership of the value gained through their participation in the program. This was the tipping point that brought a third view into this equation. The idea of the Unlearning Talks came to life as the materialization of the need to go beyond the disparities of German and Greek professional realities and focus on the realities of the neighboring geographical region to Greece, while at the same time offering to all the alumni an opportunity for exchange and connection with like-minded professionals from SE Europe.

Although culturally very varied and different from one area to another, SE European cultural professionals usually face similar challenges. Thus, bringing in the voices of similar communities could not only identify dis/similarities but also remind to every one of the fragility or stability of our social and cultural systems. The degree to which each national cultural sector is developed varies between the countries (sometimes a lot) and this is why it was all the more important to learn what our neighbors do and can exchange as a way to open our professional perspectives.

Following a careful and eye opening curation, the Unlearning Talks ended up with a cohort of 42 speakers from 14 countries that contributed their input creating 14 hours of live content, running through from September 10 until October 1, 2020. Based on this concept, the Unlearning Talks were designed around 3 cycles and developed into 3 steps each: a) coping with emerging crises, challenges & trends, b) resilient Models of sociocultural entrepreneurship, and c) building new collaborative methods of cooperation and networks. The focal context of resilience and sustainability was presented first in order to set the common ground of understanding for the three cycles that followed. As the START program is a firm believer in cross-sectoral collaboration, the approach of setting the building blocks for resilience came from research and lessons learnt from other sectors. In more detail, two different lenses were provided:

Firstly, the framework was explained through the lens of Futures Literacy. Futures Literacy is a capability, it is the skill that allows people to better understand the role that the future plays in what they see and do. It is important because imagining the future is what generates hope and fear, sense-making and willingness to invest or to change in order to be able to adapt in all future scenarios of an endeavor, a business sector or a local community.

The second lens was provided by the Resilience Wheel, as developed by The Global Resilient Cities Network, which puts in the center the added value of seven capabilities needed to drive action in the development of resilient systems. These capabilities are: Robust - Inclusive – Reflective - Redundant - Flexible - Integrated – Resourceful. This framework, even though it was developed for the adaptability of cities experiencing shocks from acts of nature or societal crises, can be applied in any case that is perceived as a system, such as any sociocultural intervention.

This document is meant to collect the best takeaways and thoughts for future consideration about sociocultural work in some parts of Europe. This is why, the last section of the Unlearning Notebook is designed to be used as a reading of suggestions and considerations for the future of the sector. The focus of the talks was the sociocultural profession in SE Europe and Germany and for this reason the Notebook is organized in 4 different subcategories representing the main stakeholders in the sector, rather than the participants or audiences of cultural work.

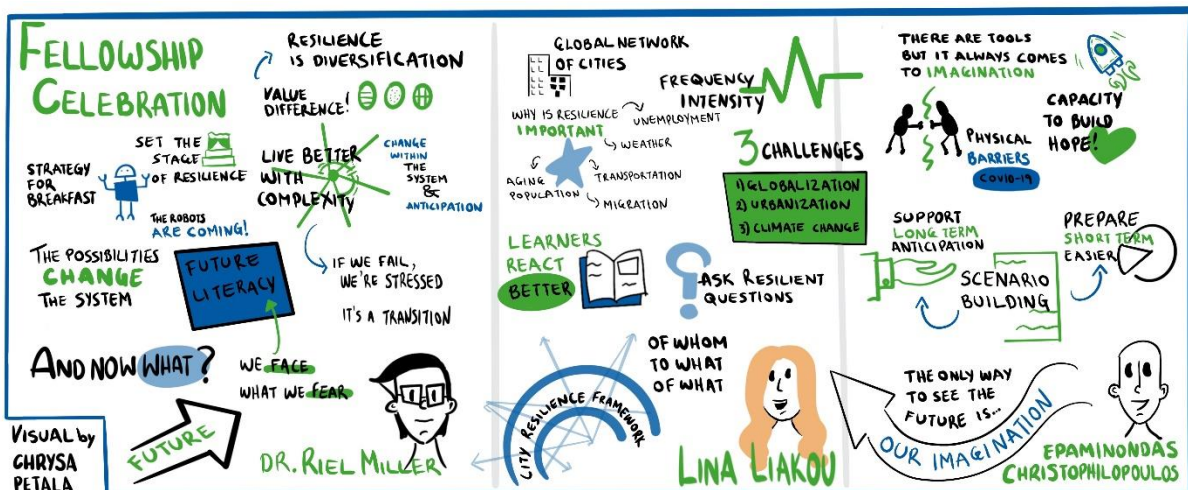
The Unlearning Notebook is based on the contributions of speakers and the collected notes of the talks' moderator. We would like to thank Chrysa Petala, a START Alumni, for her wonderful illustrations and we hope that some of the points collected will help readers make more sense of the meta-covid-19 professional reality and create more thirst for resilient and sustainable collaborations and cultural exchange.

Enjoy the reading!

The Co-Curators

Maria-Louiza Laopodi & Argyro Barata

2. Notes from the talks



2.1. PREMIERE: And now, what?! The current relevance of Futures Literacy & Systems' Resilience

The [premiere](#) launching the Unlearning talks aimed at deepening the collective understanding of the fundamental issues of adaptability and resiliency. Two different approaches on how to navigate uncharted waters and adjust to continuous changes were presented by three prominent speakers, who shed light on how to build a resilient system and incorporate Futures Literacy principals in the sociocultural sector.

The speakers took first a theoretical approach to the themes of futures literacy, scenario building and resilience in order to later explain with concrete examples how these theories are useful.

Dr. Riel Miller explained the transitory and thematic role of culture in engineering the future. The goal is to have the necessary skills to get better at living with complex emergences. To achieve this goal, we need to understand the unknown and how systems change, and the relations between exogenous and endogenous change. At the core is anticipation. How we anticipate matters as it changes the present. It helps us have a diversified approach to resilience as embracing difference depends on creativity.

Epaminondas Christofilopoulos compared scenario building for the future with how science uses tools for evidence based research. In the futures literacy case, in our effort to be resilient, we can perceive our imagination as a tool to anticipate changes. He explained how supporting long term anticipations help us navigate the world with confidence. Culture is needed as an enabler of creativity which in turn is needed to unleash imagination to foresee the future. "The talent of imagining, of asking uncomfortable questions, of having a rare peripheral vision, of being able to understand the signals of change" is in practice what futures literacy work is all about.

Lina Liakou explained what resilience is and tools developed to navigate into scenario building and preparedness in cities. The point is to learn from experiences and consciously incorporate this learning in the future interactions. She emphasized on how important it is to center on the interdependence of systems where compounding changes can happen. The resilience framework presented could be applied in all sorts of project design as its applicability is very wide and supports the achievement of the 17 goals of sustainable development: the global blueprint for a better and more sustainable future for all.

2.2. CYCLE 1: COPING WITH EMERGING CRISES, CHALLENGES & TRENDS

The first cycle opened the discussion on sustainability through tackling emerging crises such as a global pandemic. For instance, the covid-19 crisis, the global threat during which the shortcomings of recent decades have quickly become apparent, poses major challenges for all. Not yet visible are many new concepts practitioners all over the world are implementing right now to help cope with this situation. However, the current situation creates a lot of confusion in a broad spectrum of sociocultural work. But confusion can also be the mother of innovation, leading to new solutions and new policies. A whole host of new practices are currently emerging – most of them simply out of creative necessity. Many will disappear again, but some have the potential to change the system.



The [first talk](#) of this cycle focused on long-term structural changes in the sociocultural sector. Contributions developed around best practices for ensuring culture has a central role in public policy and how they contribute to a sustainable future. Furthermore, they focused on the difference between the practice and advocacy for culture. These were:

From the starting point of lobbying and advocacy practitioners' groups, their role during the last months focuses on collecting and redistributing information between their community and politicians. An association's role was to transfer the energy that leads to resilience for its members. Trust building between both sides is a pillar of sociocultural work and all stakeholders must take a leap of faith.

Local/Regional/National politicians on the other hand, missed the design of cultural strategies to support the creation of cultural jobs which keep younger populations in place. In addition, there was a lack of knowledge for the sector when decision making was taking place. In a few cases, there were participatory processes with professionals and citizens, asking them to prioritize which problems to tackle first to facilitate a sense of justice and fairness, but in general a top-down approach to designing relief packages was insufficient to support the sociocultural sector was the norm.

From the creatives' perspective, the socioeconomic dynamics in the art market seem in some countries to block artists beyond the classic possible lack of inspiration. Where lack of financial support was the case, this led to new methods of cooperation and network building. In a changing global/local society the question of how art can improve real life is in many times raised. It is also a question to the cultural community if improvement can be learned. Through art advocacy, issues such as the appropriation of public space or

meaningful ways to engage the local communities can be unlearned.

In the [second talk](#) the focus was on how confinement measures during covid-19 affected culture and education, and the speakers reflected on the conditions of this transition from physical to digital, the unlearned lessons they took, and discussed whether this crisis could lead to a transformative change.

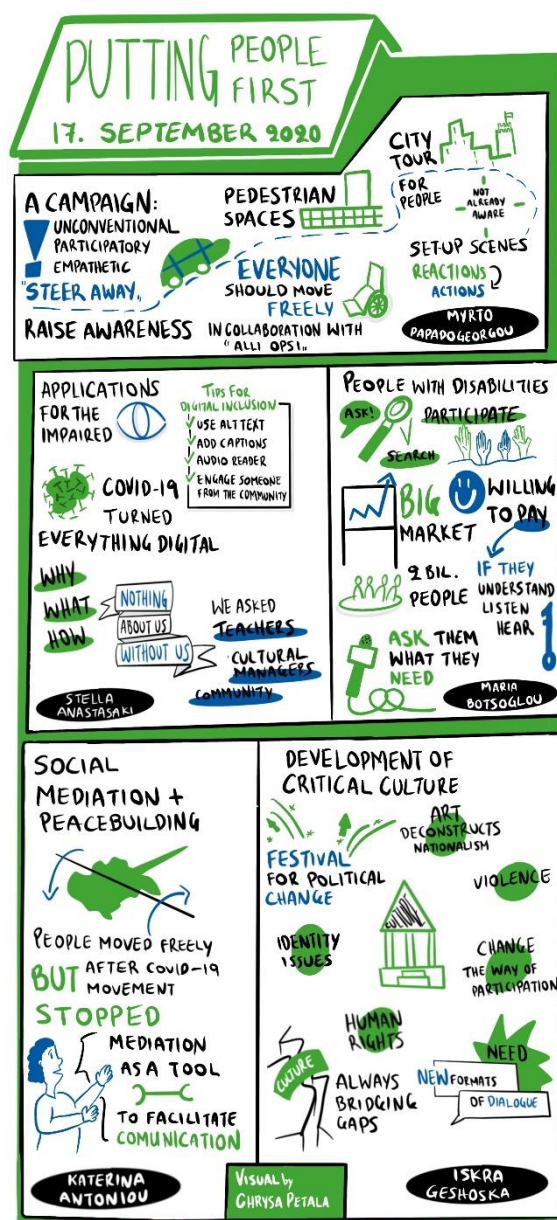


When trying to adapt to a new way of working, it is imperative to employ new skills and partners who can enrich the team's skillset. Testing with content what works best for audiences is very important. More and more an overload of digital content was reported, which distances audiences from cultural consumption. That in turn creates uncertainty for independent artists and a disconnect from audiences who stop spending on culture to only consume it for free by digital means.

In the case of a government support program for the cultural field during covid-19, contributors mentioned that a support mechanism was undertaken by advocacy groups acting as intermediary between practitioners and government. In Germany, the support to re-open the cultural sector after the first 'wave' of covid-19 focused on economic development packages that led to intervention to "digitally" proof venues with renovations, equipment and set up to support the expansion of cultural activities with digital formats. It was the first time that the federal governments trusted the applicants which could be used as a new currency in the exchange with politicians.

In this digital shift, many organizations moved faster towards their goals. It was imperative to include the core team in solution finding and have many stakeholders involved in designing new products. In addition to this, everyone had to show flexibility, rethinking their expectations and understanding the balance between accomplishment and ownership of this change. Unfortunately, this change excluded those with less digital interest or access and created frustrations.

In the [third talk](#) the focus was on people and especially how marginalized communities experienced social distancing and the shift to digital environments. The contributions tried to offer valuable insights on how to surpass obstacles for sociocultural interventions.



It was recognized that vulnerable communities were more resilient due to their condition. Creative participatory experiences were proposed as a solution to inclusiveness in designing new cultural products, since every project should be open to contributions from various communities in order to see different perspectives and claim to be inclusive.

Culture has an experiential character which during covid-19 was totally lost through digital means.

This new situation has questioned how inclusion can be achieved in digital content as till now only a small percentage is technically inclusive. Yet, it is easier and cheaper to turn digital rather than physical content inclusive. In this respect, contributors offered suggestions for making digital content accessible. For example, add alt text to images, add captions and screen reader apps on webpages or for cultural events provide translation, add sign language interpretation, the use of applications and web platforms that are accessibility ready. These suggestions automatically create an opportunity for audience development in the community of people with disabilities.

An inclusiveness approach can be further enhanced with social mediation for effective collaborations among communities. One way it was achieved in Cyprus was by widening the public space and offering discussions through cultural practices. It seems that a new blueprint on solidarity was created and focused on people first.

More policy measures around inclusion were recognized as necessary during a crisis exacerbating further the isolation of vulnerable communities.

Yet, the fear of future changes while transitioning back from digital to physical was evident among practitioners, who

argued that some sociocultural interventions already planned cannot transcend seamlessly into a digital realm. While others, pointed out that without the proper time for testing and experimenting, digital formats will remain the caption of analogue work with digital means.

2.3. CYCLE 2: RESILIENT MODELS OF SOCIOCULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The second cycle gave the floor to social innovators and community leaders, who during the pandemic were navigating a broad range of interrelated issues that span from keeping their community safe to reorienting operations and sense-making in complicated government support programs. It gave them the space to suggest more resilient entrepreneurial solutions in order to seize progress and equity for the societies at large.



In the [fourth talk](#), contributions focused on operating processes within cities to support the wellbeing of the people. The speakers investigated methods to activate neighborhoods and analyzed functional and dysfunctional models of social entrepreneurship.

In many countries of SE Europe there is a lack of public space and subsequently of the offer of relevant cultural activities. Thus, during the pandemic where the need for more public space was imperative, practitioners had to collectively design and build public infrastructure from scratch. This demanded unconventional but functional collaborations and in cases where those collaborations will remain effective after the end of pandemic, it can be perceived as a sign of real impact.

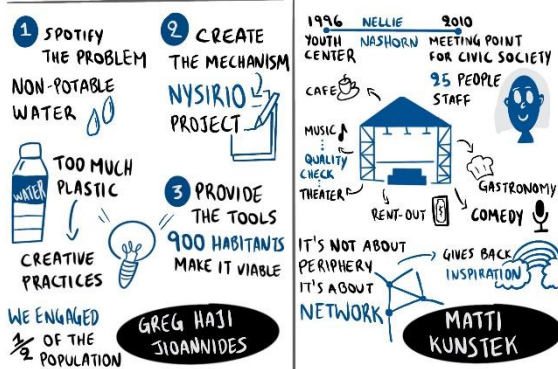
During covid-19, particularly in countries lacking state support such as Moldavia, practitioners invented radio podcasts to go beyond the cities, where cultural production is usually offered, to reach rural areas as well. They transformed theatre performances into radio shows or copied them into letters sent to various citizens.

Another contribution from a location with state support presented the case of building a cinema as a means to help people meet and exchange and develop new ideas for how co-living can work, while keeping to the social distancing measures.

In the case of practitioners acting as connectors, reinforcing their personal wellbeing was also fundamental in order for them to remain fit to help others. In general, practitioners survived during all the crises of the last decade with imagination and by supporting each other.

AN OUTLOOK IN THE PERIPHERY OF SE EUROPE

23.09.2020

VISUAL by
CHRYSA PETALA

The goal of the [fifth talk](#) was to collect challenges and successful operating models in the rural/peripheral locations of the region. Contributors analyzed methods to engage people and models that can offer long term services to communities.

Access to culture in the periphery was recognized as a necessity and as a tool to populate isolated communities. All the contributors stressed out that there is a momentum to create a new narrative for the "rural".

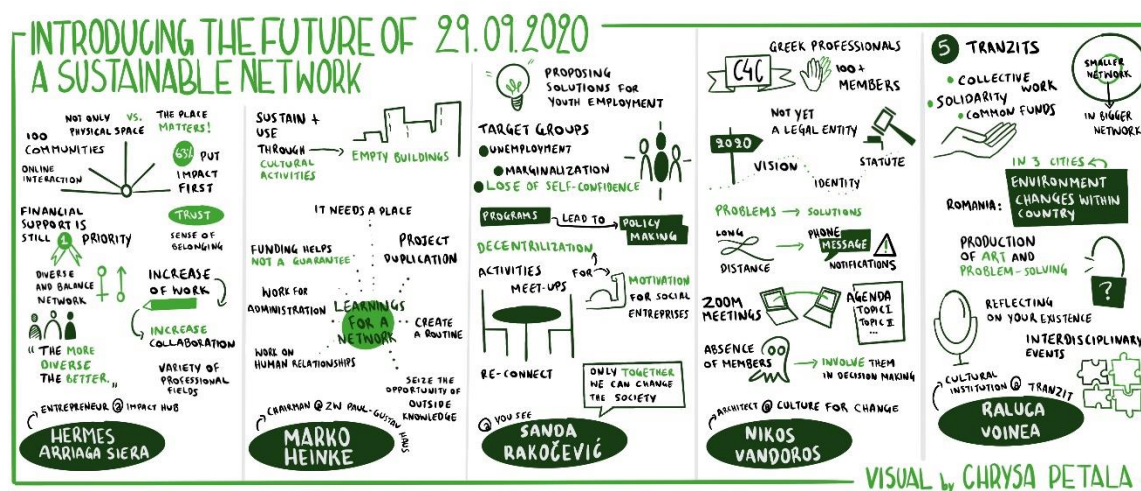
One speaker from Greece pointed out that people in the periphery need tools, not activities, to create what they wish for. Similarly, they need not only access to artists but also to cultural managers to help them manage change and attract audiences for sustainable cultural activities.

Art's intrinsic vs instrumental value was questioned. In order to be successful and long lasting the approach has to include the local authorities of such rural communities, as they can replicate any successful model in more than one location.

Structure and trust building take time. Professionals can be the connectors and public community centers the facilitators acting in informal groups. However, it is seen at times that power games disrupted this connection but practitioners and citizens turned difficulties into tools. Local deficits become creative solutions as they move from process oriented to human centered practices. This shift in perceiving the needs of rural communities asks for professionalization of practitioners.

2.4. CYCLE 3: BUILDING NEW COLLABORATIVE METHODS OF COOPERATION AND NETWORKS

The last cycle of the Unlearning Talks addressed the importance of building networks of collaboration and shined the spotlight on the parameters of a good partnership and the different attributes of local, regional and international examples in South Eastern Europe.



The

[seventh talk](#) focused on identifying the challenges of adapting the collective knowledge fostered within networks and on how to structure lasting partnerships. The contributors discussed what assets and barriers exist in network building processes and pointed out the following:

One of the cases presented was a network that grew from a European funded project in SE Europe. The impact was so big that laws on volunteering changed in several countries and working conditions changed for many young people. An advocacy process that can be multiplied in other areas of the region can be used as an example, or evidence, to show that what sustains a network is the quality of the work and its activities.

In another case of a European art network, participation multiplied capacities for its members. The openness of both the pre-planned and the spontaneous program as well as the co-hosting from other people brought new collaborations with institutions. Processes were organic but also relevant to what was actually happening in that time and place.

For some contributors, space was a fundamental reference point for developing their networks, since a space can offer a safe zone for interactions to happen and for interdisciplinary exchanges. For others the use of facilitators and toolboxes helped speed up the process of building a new network. While for others, the harsh reality of financial challenges forced them to continue to rely on volunteers as they play an important role in sustaining a network and having them onboard helps to cultivate togetherness and opens up to external knowledge. But there is a consideration in place; the administrative back office needed to manage them.

An important parameter of lasting partnerships is that trust is being built with time and with it comes a sense of belonging. In other words 'engineering serendipity'. That is what partners need to produce together.



Challenges of network building at regional and international level were discussed in the [eighth talk](#). The focal question was how can we collaborate effectively with our neighbors and below are the main points from the contributors.

Networks can be perceived as facilitators, offering a greater sense of belonging and potential for transformation to members.

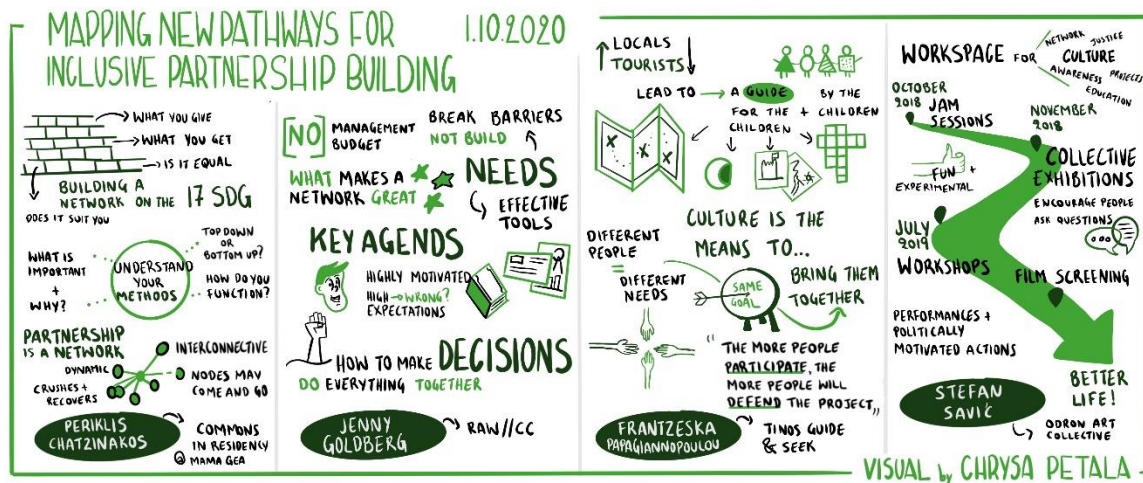
The most important prerequisites of a good network are emanating from closed triangles that spark micro-collaboration, cultivating periphery and sharing learnings. Leading such networks is like being the caretaker of serendipity.

Networking as a process is another approach to collaborating. In such cases, networks can offer access to education, explain diversity and shape society.

Networks can fail because of the vulnerability of connectors, the disconnection of the influencers with the periphery, and when bridge-builders become brokers. A dark side of connectivity and collaboration is the illusion of openness and democracy it creates since they can end up in a clique. At other times competition and conflict clashes with leadership. Yet networks can act as platforms and offer transparency of methods, build trust and unity.

Social distancing didn't affect networking and advocacy in the EU as it was mostly happening through digital means, i.e. for projects.

Networks can connect with information, allowing new knowledge to flow. They can be perceived as innovation hubs to widen their scope. Those hubs can act as a platform for services and connect a mix of audiences. They can be formed by expanding on existing collaborations by including technology as a crucial asset.



In the [ninth and last talk](#) speakers exchanged over the challenges of sustaining and attracting membership interest in networks. They talked about administrative and other challenges as well as on-boarding new members to foster cross-sector development.

Network building can be seen as a self-organized process focusing on common needs. Members are perceived as agents and initiators. The cause alone isn't enough to sustain a network. It is necessary to create a process for the governance scheme as well. However, members should accept that there is always a core group that will create the multi-dimensional hub for inclusiveness.

A fundamental parameter in this process is finding commonalities and gaining trust. Local networks need to clarify the deal of give-and-take, help partners to understand their importance, and bring people into the common purpose. In order to sustain this commitment, networks need to embrace the common cause, adapt to changes, be present and visible in society and be innovative. It is very important to stick to one's mandate towards stakeholders but also be willing to give ownership.

Creating collaboration clusters can help networking as very often there is high interconnectivity among partners and networks act as facilitators.

Keeping the doors open to a network without processes for entering is imperative to harvest their dynamic and organic development.

Using existing networks can help a lot as a base for new networks or as an alternative to creating new ones. Having like-minded people together can develop further collaborations.

Within such open networks, there is freedom to experiment and encourage young people to participate. Through the combination of art, politics and their intersections, young people can access society and question authority. Especially, in cases where no state support is available, only the community's members exchange is available. In the Western Balkans, in particular, social agreements for non-established initiatives have a long way to go.

3. [Thoughts for the future](#)

From the very beginning, the Unlearning Talks intended to map best practices, resources and prerequisites of resilient sociocultural work in South Eastern Europe and offer its findings to START's program stakeholders at large as takeaways for future interventions. The aforesaid aim became more urgent as the covid-19 pandemic hit the cultural sector harder than was initially expected.

Throughout the contributions of 42 speakers and the topics discussed in the three cycles, the notion of trust was identified as a common thread. Trust is the key to positive interpersonal relationships in various settings because it is central to how we interact with others and it becomes even more central and critical during periods of uncertainty. However, not everyone determines trustworthiness in the same way and not everyone in the region has the same levels of trust built into their different systems of creation, support and policymaking.

Trust is the social glue that holds relationships together and below there is a list of takeaways that will assist the process of building trust within the sector. The findings and suggestions are categorized by the major stakeholders' groups and aim to increase the collective consensus among these players.

3.1. *For supporters – funders*

- Trust is built with time and with it comes a sense of belonging, whether this refers to users or the funders/supporters. Think of it as the process of 'engineering serendipity' with all the players involved.
- Funding schemes continue to drive and nurture innovation in the independent cultural sector.
- Everyone is investigating the new normal. Within this changing situation it is imperative that exchange among peers is not secluded and the discussion among stakeholders remains active at all times.
- Diffuse power to field practitioners to test and innovate with the final outcome/deliverable of a funded project. Applications should be more process oriented rather than product oriented. Today's situation does not favor creativity and innovation, even less experimentation.
- A policy of 'open doors' to do network building is crucial, since at the end there is a risk of cliquing.
- The question of Art's intrinsic vs instrumental value reveals the risk of falling on one side or the other, resulting in less impact. Recalibrate and rethink the performance indicators that matter.
- Support rural communities with tools and access not only to artists but cultural managers as well to help manage change and attract attention. This could lead to growing trust in own abilities and more sustainable activities at local level after the practitioners leave a project or a location.
- Risk and failure should be embraced when designing support mechanisms.
- While discussing the pros and cons of digital transformation, a very important issue that came up is that people expect to get digital content for free. This in turn is a barrier for sustaining activities and organizations through digital services in the sociocultural field. In addition to this, the move to digital tools has to be accompanied with wellbeing considerations.
- For the independent media sector there remains a big challenge to survive. One new mechanism that is gaining ground is to be perceived as a knowledge instrument for young people. This new role could be translated into an alternative income generator in their effort to remain sustainable. One example

is to take the form of a combined model such as becoming a training center offering workshops on investigative journalism and fake news spotting as well as raising grants and/or doing crowdfunding.

- Support mechanisms and systems that center on transparency are needed. Practitioners have recognized that during covid-19 state and private funders have showed more trust to beneficiaries while the balance between trusting the people applying and the project proposed remained somewhat unclear. In situations of scarcity of funds, many practitioners identified their own human capital acting in a transparent and open way as essential resources. They understand transparency as an attitude. This is why they suggested that trust in time and spaces to experiment is needed.

3.2. For policy makers

- Enable cross sector collaborations through redesigning policies, and supporting more independent and informal work as it nurtures experimentation that leads to inclusion, social and cultural development, and growth.
- Design transparent support mechanisms with participatory processes both from the practitioners' and citizens' points of view.
- Widen the public space for discussion through cultural practices.
- Offer space to communities and support a culture of commons so that communities feel included. It is not just about trusting a group of professionals or informal group of citizens, but about trusting the combination of resources between people, the idea, the tools to be employed, and the ultimate goal to align with society's needs.
- As trust building takes time, it is important for local municipalities and other public organizations to join in at the right time and not later in the process.
- Impact comes through involvement and policies should not perceive public sector organizations only as regulators and money distributors, but as active participants in sociocultural processes.
- Networking as a process is another approach to collaborating and understanding the other side. Networks can offer access to knowledge, explain diversity and shape society, which helps built empathy for all the stakeholders involved, when designing new policies.
- Continue to enhance the ownership of decision making and democracy with civil participation. The ground is more fertile now to be done through digital tools or through the use of media as a knowledge instrument for young people, since the pandemic enriched the digital skills of the citizens.
- When talking about digital transformation, the move to digital tools has to be accompanied with wellbeing considerations both for the general population and among different age groups.
- Spaces can offer the safe zone for interactions and interdisciplinary exchanges to happen. It also offers a sense of belonging as trust is being built over time. If collaborations between policy makers and practitioners spur out of such structures and remain after a project is over, it can be perceived a sign of real impact, which can in turn be used for designing better and more inclusive policies.
- Trust can be perceived as a new currency in the exchange with citizens and cultural practitioners.

3.3. *For field practitioners*

- Explore cross-sectoral collaborations as it was recognized that the sociocultural sector is quite introvert at times and that innovation and opportunities lie in joining efforts. Those can bring different perspectives and create more inclusive and innovative cultural offerings.
- Help all stakeholders understand how creative and cultural industries actually work. It is of high priority for the resilience of the sector. Navigate politicians and other professionals into the cultural vocabulary to get the message across easier, and on the other side use a simple language for all audiences.
- The digital transformation of cultural goods excludes those who are non-digital. Public authorities are the allies to solve this problem.
- Rural and peripheral areas need both artists and cultural managers in order to create the change they wish to see in the long-term. It is essential for these communities to learn how to use and manage tools and stop being the recipients and consumers of activities. Due to the pandemic lies an opportunity to define the new rural for younger audiences.
- The isolated artist role is long gone, practitioners need to go back to the people in other ways. When it comes to getting out of a cocoon, for some contributors covid-19 pushed them faster to become the organization they wanted to be. It also pushed them and raised their responsibility to share information about what happens in their country.
- It is important to frame what solidarity means for the sector and in which context. Power games can at times disrupt solidarity efforts but practitioners have the ability to turn difficulties into tools.
- Fighting corruption and working towards transparency is of essence during covid-19 where governments impose behavioral rules for everyday life and create support mechanisms.
- The question of Art's intrinsic vs instrumental value reveals the risk of falling on one side or the other, resulting in less impact. Consider both pathways before proposing an evaluation process in a funding application.
- Talking about sustainability in rural areas, it was recognized that including local authorities in the process design can replicate successful practices and models in more than one location and maximize impact organically.
- It is easier and cheaper to turn digital rather than physical content inclusive. In this respect, contributions offered suggestions for making digital content accessible. For example, add alt text to images, add captions and screen reader apps on webpages or for cultural events provide translation, add sign language interpretation, the use of applications and web platforms that are accessibility ready.

3.4. *For networks*

- Joining a network is like having a hub for oneself. Participating in them multiplies capacities, offers new knowledge.
- Capitalize on transferring the energy, cohesion and organizational processes that lead to resilience.
- A network is sustained mainly by its activities.

- Diversify the collaborations in various levels; one being through virtual or informal exchanges and another being through physical spaces.
- Invest in spaces that can offer a safe zone for interactions to happen and for interdisciplinary exchange.
- Keep the doors open without processes for entering and harvest from its dynamic and organic development.
- Use facilitators and toolboxes to speed up the process of network building.
- There are four main principles in networks: mission, trust, the others, and network constellations. Managing these principles and being the new leader of today's networks means to be the caretaker of serendipity.
- Networks can be connectors with information and become innovation hubs to widen their scope. Those hubs can act as a platform for services and connect a mix of audiences. They can be formed by expanding on existing collaborations and by including technology as a crucial asset.
- In the covid-19 period, many practitioners suggested that social distancing gave space for content development and research through digital means in view of future collaborations. A network can speed up the connections for this process.
- There is also a dark side to connectivity and collaboration: the illusion of openness and democracy it creates when very often a community can end up as a clique. This raises important questions about partnerships: how much do you give and what do you expect to gain, what is the role of equality, which is the common vision, do you all align with the same goals? It is therefore very important to decide who to network with. This can be done by clustering potential collaborators and focusing on some categories, i.e. universities, civil society, local governments, private sector, by taking into account the overall goals of both sides.

4. [Annexes](#)

4.1. UT program & speakers

4.1.1.PREMIERE

PREMIERE

[And now, what?! The current relevance of Futures Literacy & Systems' Resilience](#)

The first talk that will launch the series of the Unlearning talks seeks to deepen our collective understanding of the fundamental issues of adaptability and resiliency. Two different approaches on how to navigate uncharted waters and adjust to continuous changes will be presented by three prominent speakers, who will share light on how to build a resilient system and incorporate Futures Literacy principals in the sociocultural sector. Right afterwards, a fishbowl conversation with the 2020 START Fellows will follow to discuss their personal experiences in setting the building blocks of their resilient endeavors that will “bounce forward” to a better more equitable future.

Riel Miller, Head, UNESCO Chair on Futures Research, Germany

Lina Liakou, Managing Director for Europe and the Middle East, Global Resilient Cities Network, UK

Epaminondas Christofilopoulos, Head in Greece, UNESCO Chair on Futures Research, FORTH/PRAXI, Greece

4.1.2.CYCLE 1: COPING WITH EMERGING CRISES, CHALLENGES & TRENDS

The covid-19 crisis, a new global threat during which the shortcomings of recent decades have quickly become apparent, poses major challenges for all humankind. Not yet visible are many new concepts people all over the world are implementing right now to help us cope with this situation. However, the current situation creates a lot of confusion in a broad spectrum of sociocultural work. But confusion can also be the mother of innovation that leads to new solutions and new policies. A whole host of new practices are currently emerging in many places in our region – most of them simply out of creative necessity. Many will disappear again, but some have the potential to change the system.

TALK ONE

[Overcoming uncertainty in the cultural sector during the covid-19 crisis and beyond](#)

During the past six months uncertainty on the scale of disruption in the cultural sector has been tremendous. Pre-existing vulnerabilities, like the precarious livelihoods of artists and cultural workers or the tight budgets of many public cultural organizations that fuel the creative industry with less commissions every year, are now magnified. As the crisis develops around the world, everyone working in this field is pivoting from the immediate impact of the crisis towards examining the long-term structural changes that should be seen in the cultural sector. In this talk we will hear from a diverse group of changemakers their efforts and point of view on how to ensure culture has a central role in public policies and contributes to a sustainable future.

İpek Çınar, Cultural Manager, Turkey

Olga Daskali, Roots are Roots, Greece

Corinne Eichner, StadtKultur Hamburg, Germany

Filip Jovanovski, Faculty of Things that can't be Learned, North Macedonia

TALK TWO

Culture, Education, and Engagement in the era of social distancing

Confinement measures around the world and in the region of South Eastern Europe in particular have shown the importance of culture in order to connect, learn and entertain. Schools have modified their curriculum, whilst cultural institutions such as galleries, museums and theatres have rapidly developed new digital cultural products and educational materials and made them available online. These initiatives helped local communities to build resilience and supported the cultural sector with a new portfolio of activities. During this talk our speakers will reflect on the conditions of this transition from physical to digital, the unlearned lessons they took, and will share their input of whether this crisis could lead to a transformative change.

Maria Asteriou, The People Behind, Greece

Milena Berbenkova, Intercultura Consult, Bulgaria

Valentina Socratous, Emerge, Greece

Jennifer Tharr, Neustart, Germany

TALK THREE

Putting people first: The new stresses of sociocultural practice in a post pandemic world

In almost every country of South Eastern Europe cultural life has taken a hit in one way or another, in terms of both social and economic impact. The covid-19 pandemic has exposed some structural vulnerabilities within and between countries. Within countries, the pandemic has further revealed inequalities facing vulnerable groups, in particular women, refugees and people with disabilities. The line-up of speakers in this talk will reveal their experiences adapting to the new conditions and offer valuable insights on how to surpass obstacles and always keep putting people first.

Stela Anastasaki, Mind's Eye, Greece

Katerina Antoniou, University of Central Lancashire, Cyprus

Maria Botsoglou, Greece

Iskra Geshoska, Kontrapunkt, North Macedonia

Myrto Papadogeorgou, Drastic Awareness Campaigns, Greece

Sebastian Schlueter, Actors of Urban Change, Germany

4.1.3.CYCLE 2: RESILIENT MODELS OF SOCIOCULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The impact of the covid-19 is being felt by all businesses around the world. Social innovators and community leaders are navigating a broad range of interrelated issues that span from keeping their community safe to reorienting operations and navigating complicated government support programs. This cycle of the Unlearning Talks will try to take stock of the aftermath of a pandemic and how the sudden external shocks stresses social entrepreneurship. It will also look at ways in which more resilient entrepreneurial solutions to problems can be crafted and the opportunity for progress and equity seized for the societies at large.

TALK FOUR

[Achieving Social Impact I: Working on more equitable cities](#)

As the lockdown unfolded, culture was perceived as a source of well-being, solidarity and resilience as witnessed, for example, by the spontaneous concerts performed from balconies in different cities all around the world. Yet, harnessing culture and creativity in the cities of our region as a vehicle to become more inclusive, more just, and in general happier places to live, is something that still has not been achieved. In this talk, obstacles, pitfalls and new inventive ways to reshape our cities with sociocultural work that put people at the center will be explored.

Nora Dorogan, teatru-spălătorie., Moldavia

Malve Lippmann, Bi-Bak, Germany

Diana Malaj, ATA Group, Albania

Predrag Milić, Škograd, Serbia

Violeta Tsitsiliani, The Language Project, Greece

TALK FIVE

[Achieving Social Impact II: An outlook in the periphery of South Eastern Europe](#)

Action at the regional level is a vital lever for achieving social impact in the countries of South Eastern Europe. Communities in the periphery of our region address specific challenges with different constraints and different levels of scalability in their impact. At the same time, change in the outskirts of Europe, and not only, can be achieved with less resources and a lot of imagination. A number of regional initiatives will be presented during this talk that created an unorthodox solution mix for their challenges.

Greg Haji Joannides, Nysirio, Greece

Matti Kunstek, Nellie Nashorn, Germany

Rania Mavriki, Cutlopa, Greece

Yanina Taneva, Baba Project, Bulgaria

TALK SIX

[Transformation of the media landscape in the region. Is it doable?](#)

According to a survey by the World Economic Forum about media consumption during the covid-19 lockdown, 80% of people said that they are more likely to be willing to pay for subscription to access online cultural

platforms and media outlets than before the pandemic. Could this shift in media consumption be the beginning of changing the media landscape in the region? Three representatives of independent media, operating within the region will discuss whether they can come out of the covid-19 pandemic stronger than before.

Ștefan Ghenciulescu, E-Zeppelin, Romania

Elvira Jukić - Mujkić, Media.ba, Bosnia & Herzegovina

Fanis Kollias, Solomon, Greece

4.1.4.CYCLE 3: BUILDING NEW COLLABORATIVE METHODS OF COOPERATION AND NETWORKS

Beyond the dramatic impacts of covid-19 confinement on the levels of human interaction, networks of collaboration are the key to overcoming turbulence and change in the 21st century. START's increasing focus on partnership building has long been guided by the belief that no single business, or NGO acting alone can address the increasingly complex challenges in our societies. Collaboration for changemakers that seek to be sustainable with their cultural interventions and are better able to act and to innovate at scale is a critical capability. This cycle is shining a spotlight on the parameters of a good collaboration and the different attributes of local, regional and international networks in South Eastern Europe.

TALK SEVEN

Introducing the future of a sustainable network

As the wave of the covid-19 crisis has landed on our communities, workplaces, and economies, we are discovering that our collaborative initiatives are becoming even more important as a way to maintain momentum on important sustainability issues. However, building lasting partnerships in the region has always been a challenge. How can stronger partnerships be fostered? What are the main pillars for their sustainability? Join this discussion with a diverse group of changemakers.

Hermes Arriaga Sierra, Zagreb Impact Hub, Croatia

Marko Heinke, Zukunftswerkstatt Paul – Gustavus Haus, Germany

Sanda Rakočević, SeeYou Network & Upbeat Hub, Montenegro

Nikolaos VANDOROS, Culture for Change, Greece

Raluca Voinea, Transit Network, Romania

TALK EIGHT

[Restoring and accelerating international collaboration in South Eastern Europe](#)

Culture can be the vehicle for new conversations to ensure the collaborative development of the region. However, the challenges vary considerably from place to place, thus building resilient networks of collaboration that are operating beyond borders, is more complex than it seems. This discussion maps the characteristics that define a fruitful international collaboration and together with our five panelists we will present practical strategies that improve a network's ability to catalyze growth in South Eastern Europe.

Kleri Bakoura, Institut of Entrepreneurial Development, Greece

Jonida Gashi, Debatik Center, Albania

Michalis Karakatsanis, European Agenda for Music, Cyprus

Darius Polok, International Alumni Center, Germany

Valentin Schmehl, Other Music Academy, Germany

TALK NINE

[Mapping new pathways for inclusive partnership building](#)

While collaboration cannot always prevent crises from arising, changemakers with strong networks between peers, their stakeholders, and other sectors such as local government, are better able to act fast, innovate, and recover at scale. Especially community-led networks have the ability to grasp the collective intelligence and propose resilient solutions. But most importantly, these partnerships build new kinds of collaborative strategies in which communities play a central role.

Periklis Chatzinakos, Commons in residency, Greece

Jenny Goldberg, Raw, Germany

Frantzeska Papagianopoulou, Tinos Guide & Seek, Greece

Stefan Savić, Odron Art Collective, Bosnia & Herzegovina

4.2. Speakers per country

Albania

- Diana Malaj, [ATA Group](#), Albania
- Jonida Gashi, [Debatik Center](#), Albania

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- Elvira Jukić - Mujkić, [Media.ba](#), Bosnia & Herzegovina
- Stefan Savić, [Odron Art Collective](#), Bosnia & Herzegovina

Bulgaria

- Milena Berbenkova, [Intercultura Consult](#), Bulgaria
- Yanina Taneva, [Baba Project](#), Bulgaria

Croatia

- Hermes Arriaga Sierra, [Zagreb Impact Hub](#), Croatia

Cyprus

- Katerina Antoniou, [University of Central Lancashire](#), Cyprus
- Michalis Karakatsanis, [European Agenda for Music](#), Cyprus

France

- Riel Miller, Head, [UNESCO Chair on Futures Research](#), France

Germany

- Corinne Eichner, [StadtKultur Hamburg](#), Germany
- Jennifer Tharr, [Neustart](#), Germany
- Malve Lippmann, [Bi-Bak](#), Germany
- Matti Kunstek, [Nellie Nashorn](#), Germany
- Marko Heinke, [Zukunftswerkstatt Paul – Gustavus Haus](#), Germany
- Darius Polok, [International Alumni Center](#), Germany
- Valentin Schmehl, [Other Music Academy](#), Germany
- Jenny Goldberg, [Raw//cc](#), Germany

Greece

- Epaminondas Christofilopoulos, Head in Greece, [UNESCO Chair on Futures Research, FORTH/PRAXI](#), Greece
- Olga Daskali, [Roots are Roots](#), Greece
- Maria Asteriou, [The People Behind](#), Greece
- Valentina Socratous, [Emerge](#), Greece
- Stela Anastasaki, [Mind's Eye](#), Greece
- Maria Botsoglou, Artist, Greece
- Myrto Papadogeorgou, [Drastic Awareness Campaigns](#), Greece
- Violeta Tsitsiliani, [The Language Project](#), Greece

- Greg Haji Joannides, [Nysirio](#), Greece
- Rania Mavriki, [Cutlopia](#), Greece
- Fanis Kollias, [Solomon](#), Greece
- Nikolaos Vandoros, [Culture for Change](#), Greece
- Kleri Bakoura, [Institut of Entrepreneurial Development](#), Greece
- Periklis Chatzinakos, [Commons in residency](#), Greece
- Frantzeska Papagianopoulou, [Tinos Guide & Seek](#), Greece

Moldavia

- Nora Dorogan, [teatru-spălătorie.](#), Moldavia

Montenegro

- Sanda Rakočević, [SeeYou Network & Upbeat Hub](#), Montenegro

North Macedonia

- Filip Jovanovski, [Faculty of Things that can't be Learned](#), North Macedonia
- Iskra Geshoska, [Kontrapunkt](#), North Macedonia

Romania

- Ștefan Ghenciulescu, [E-Zeppelin](#), Romania
- Raluca Voinea, [Transit Network](#), Romania

Serbia

- Predrag Milić, [Škograd](#), Serbia

Turkey

- İpek Çınar, Cultural Manager, Turkey

United Kingdom

- Lina Liakou, Managing Director for Europe and the Middle East, [Global Resilient Cities Network](#), UK



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