



CULTURE AND  
SUSTAINABILITY LAB

*Culture as a pillar of transformation*

# Culture and Sustainability Lab

Brno Cultural Forum

Culture Tomorrow: Sustainability in Culture and  
Creativity

May 27, 2025

Aleksandra Bajde





***ENDURING EFFORTS AND  
SUSTAINABLE EFFECTS IN  
CULTURAL PROJECTS***  
**Policy Brief**

Policy Brief from CREDO Cultural Practice and Engagement Seminar 2024

Authors: Aleksandra Bajde (Culture and Sustainability Lab) & Stefano Jacoviello (University of Siena)

Key Message: Cultural sustainability requires structural transformation beyond instrumental uses of culture

# Core Challenges Identified

Implementation of Cultural Sustainability remains fragmented and instrumentalized

Culture is subordinated to economic, social, or climate objectives

EU policies emphasize short-term, quantifiable outcomes over long-term value

Precarity of cultural labor undermines sustainable cultural work

Growth-based policy paradigms obscure culture's intrinsic, relational role

Lack of structural support and inclusive evaluation frameworks

# Policy Recommendations (1/3): Strategic Foundations for Cultural Sustainability

## 1. Invest in Social and Cultural Innovation

- Support long-term experimentation and community-rooted initiatives
- Facilitate collaboration between cultural actors and educators, researchers, and civil society
- Encourage prototyping of socially transformative formats

## 2. Promote Intercultural & Cross-Sectoral Collaboration

- Fund interdisciplinary projects across culture, education, environment, and health
- Support intercultural dialogue in diverse and marginalized communities
- Incentivize systems-thinking across policy domains

## 3. Develop Inclusive & Qualitative Evaluation Indicators

- Use ethnographic methods, storytelling, and self-assessment
- Focus on empowerment, participation, and social cohesion
- Train evaluators to recognize emergent, non-linear impact

# Policy Recommendations (2/3): Redefining Values and Success in Cultural Policy

## **4. Align Internal and External Sustainability Goals**

- Integrate both SDGs and Inner Development Goals (IDGs)
- Promote self-reflection, empathy, and ethical collaboration within organizations

## **5. Shift from Quantitative to Qualitative Values**

- Value trust-building, relevance, and belonging over visibility and growth
- Support slow, durational, and co-creative cultural processes
- Adapt funding systems to reflect locally meaningful success

## **6. Rethink Growth: Focus on Needs and Sufficiency**

- Prioritize right-sized, circular, and locally relevant initiatives
- Emphasize care, repair, and community-building as strategic outcomes

# Policy Recommendations (3/3): Structural Support and Global Equity

## **7. Improve Cultural Working Conditions**

- Ensure fair pay, transparent contracts, and mental health support
- Support residencies, cooperative models, and peer networks

## **8. Expand Practice-Based Learning & Capacity Building**

- Integrate sustainability into arts education
- Recognize informal and peer-led learning
- Fund ethical project design training

## **9. Increase International Funding Access**

- Lower access barriers for small and grassroots organizations
- Enable equitable collaboration with non-EU and Global South actors

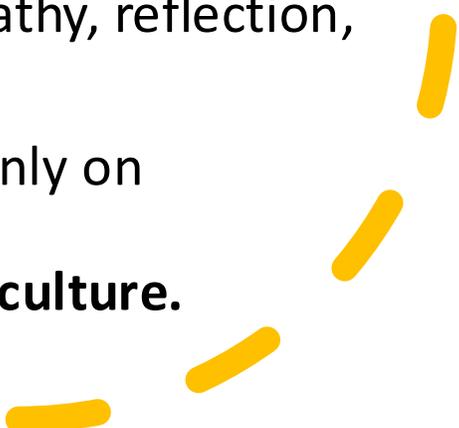
## **10. Support Sustainability Strategy Platforms & Mentoring**

- Offer toolkits, consultancies, and peer mentoring
- Make sustainability planning fundable

## **11. Enhance Policy Coherence & Coordination**

- Foster coordination across institutions (EU, municipalities, NGOs)
- Enable flexible and responsive cultural policy tools

# Conclusion: Culture as a Pillar of Transformation

- Culture is not only a decorative element— it is a powerful **driver of systemic change**.
  - Sustainable cultural projects can **reconfigure relationships, foster belonging, and challenge hierarchies**.
  - We must move beyond short-term thinking, growth-driven logic, and the instrumentalization of culture.
  - Structural transformation requires:
    - Long-term, inclusive, and non-instrumental support
    - Recognition of the **emotional, ethical, and relational dimensions**
    - Integration of **inner development**: empathy, reflection, and care
  - The future of sustainability depends not only on what culture can do for sustainability— but also, on **how sustainability can serve culture**.
- 

# Culture and the SDGs: enhancing creative cross-sectoral collaborations

This project was funded by the **European Union** through the [Cultural Relations Platform](#). The residency programme of the project was organised with the kind support and collaboration of the [Austrian Cultural Forum Istanbul](#).

The project team comprises alumni of the EU-funded Global Cultural Relations Programme 2021:

**Aleksandra Bajde**, Slovenia (in Austria) – *host organisation*

**Pravali Vangeti**, India (in France)

**Nisa Ashila Ghaisani**, Indonesia

**Saidakmal Ikramov**, Uzbekistan

In collaboration with

avusturya kültür ofisi<sup>int</sup>

Supported by



An initiative  
funded by the  
European Union

cultural  
relations  
PLATFORM



CULTURE AND  
SUSTAINABILITY LAB

# About the Project

*Culture and the SDGs: enhancing creative cross-sectoral collaborations* is an experimental project that sits somewhere between action research, capacity-building training, and a creative residency.

## **Aims:**

- Raise awareness of the SDGs within the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs)
- Highlight the interlinkages between culture and sustainable development
- Encourage open collaboration models between culture and sectors like education, environment, and policy
- Develop publicly accessible tools to support cross-sectoral collaboration
- Explore culture's potential role in the post-2030 SDG framework





# Why is this relevant?

## The Gap in the 2030 Agenda:

- The 17 SDGs cover diverse global challenges—but **culture is absent as a dedicated goal**.
- Culture is mentioned only in **Target 4.7** (cultural diversity in education) and **Target 11.4** (heritage protection).

## Why This Matters:

- Culture is often **seen as separate from sustainable development**
- Within CCIs, **awareness of the SDGs is fragmented** and sector-specific.
- Other sectors are often **unaware of the value of arts and culture** in achieving their own SDG objectives.

## Our Response:

- The project seeks to **make culture's contribution to sustainable development explicit**.
- It calls for **interdisciplinary collaboration** and **policy-level recognition** of culture as an essential enabler of holistic sustainable development.





CULTURE AND  
SUSTAINABILITY LAB

# Online & Residency Programme

**Online Programme** with expert speakers: Violeta Bulc (Ecocivilisation), Jordi Pascual (UCLG), Anupama Sekhar (IFACCA), Julia Lagahuzère (Opera for Peace), Anaïs Roossens (Education for SDGs).

**Residency Programme:** A 5-day in-person residency at the Austrian Cultural Forum Istanbul in Turkey, attended by 16 professionals from the culture sector and other domains, exploring models of collaboration to work toward more effective sustainable development.



# Results

## 1. International Collective of Community-Activator Incubators

Strengthen community resilience by activating local leadership and participatory dialogue.

### Key Actions:

- Facilitate creative conversations between communities, policymakers, and technical experts
- Apply cultural methods to support inclusive decision-making
- Co-create pathways for the emergence of community leaders through arts-based facilitation

## 2. Shanasi Entertainment: Culture and Mental Health

Advance children's mental health through creative, preventive tools.

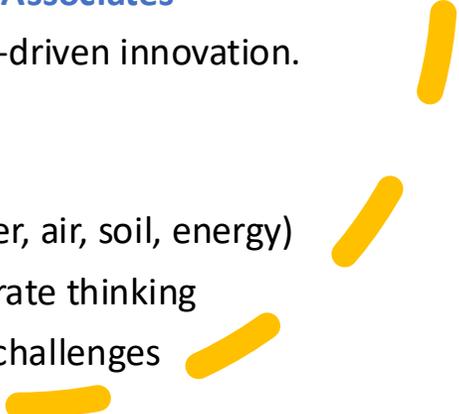
### Project Highlight:

- A digital, interactive game for children aged 7–12
- Focused on emotional intelligence and mental well-being
- Multiplayer and peer-to-peer learning formats
- Encourages creativity, empathy, and resilience through play

## 3. Sustainable residency as enablers for corporate innovation – V Associates

Bridge the creative and corporate worlds through sustainable, arts-driven innovation.

### Model:

- Corporate needs assessment and mapping
  - Residencies with artists addressing environmental themes (water, air, soil, energy)
  - Creation of a 5th element: synergy between creative and corporate thinking
  - Fosters innovation through artistic exploration of sustainability challenges
- 



CULTURE AND  
SUSTAINABILITY LAB

# Why Cross-Sectoral Collaboration Matters



## **Knowledge Transfer**

Mutual learning between cultural practitioners and sectoral experts (e.g., from policy, education, or the environmental field)



## **Awareness Raising**

Fostering greater understanding of the SDGs within CCIs, while highlighting culture's role in achieving them



## **Co-Creation of Solutions**

Developing creative, community-rooted responses to global challenges—together



## **Inclusive Dialogue**

Connecting communities, institutions, and policymakers through shared cultural engagement



## **Systems Thinking**

Enabling holistic approaches by connecting artistic methods with civic, scientific, and social insights



## **Capacity Building**

Empowering diverse actors to engage meaningfully in sustainability efforts



## **Prototype Development**

Designing adaptable models for collaboration across sectors and borders



## **Policy Impact**

Contributing to global agendas that recognize culture as a vital force for sustainable development



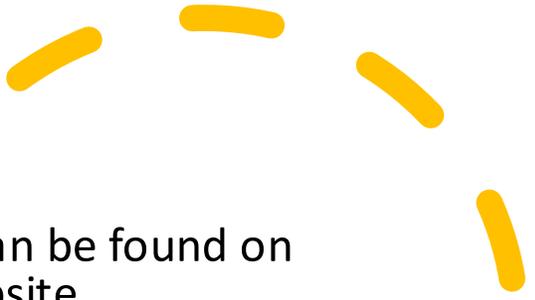


## CULTURE AND SUSTAINABILITY LAB

*“Through the Programme, I was able to meet an amazing group of talents with diverse backgrounds with like-mindedness and affinity in tackling the development issues through culture as “means.” I hope that we can expand our network to make a positive impact from the ground level on the possibility of utilizing culture to revisit what sustainable development provides to society.”*

– Aya Miyazaki

Thank you for  
your  
attention!



More information about the project can be found on  
the [Culture and Sustainability Lab](#) website.

### Contact

Founding Director: Aleksandra Bajde



office@cultureandsustainabilitylab.org

Follow us on [Facebook](#) | Follow us on [Instagram](#) | Follow us on [LinkedIn](#)