

## OBSERVER'S REPORT

FORUM Lyon 2013

25 May 2013



### ABSTRACT:

*The Forum Lyon 2013 addressed the question of how immigration, and more broadly EU international relations, are linked with the core issues of **A Soul for Europe**: European identity, culture, and citizenship. How can culture and the arts foster the integration of immigrants and a wider community-building process? How do we define “citizenship” when faced with individuals who do not have legal citizenship? It became clear during the Forum that culture has a two-fold identity, and can simultaneously be both the cause and the cure for division. On the one hand, culture is still tightly intertwined with power and domination. On the other hand, the social role of culture was apparent in the many projects from Europe and beyond that presented their work at the Forum. It was agreed that citizenship cannot be seen merely as a list of rights and obligations, based upon who possesses a European passport, but should rather be measured against active participation in society. In addition to these broad topics, a number of very concrete questions were debated: artists’ visa policy, cultural funding, and cultural translation all emerged as key themes of the day, with appreciation for the value of artistic work in community-building revealed as a fundamental concern when debating the link between immigration, cultural work, and the question of citizenship. The Forum Lyon was formed of two round tables – ‘Culture as an Invitation to Citizenship, as a Space of Intervention and Participation in Common Values’, and ‘Culture as a Vector of International Cooperation and Democratic Development’ – along aside a keynote speech and a round of conclusions. Rather than summarising the*

content of each of these panels, the following report brings together under thematic headings the debates and action points raised across the entire Forum, relating them, where appropriate, to the wider work of **A Soul for Europe**, the **Cultural Coalition for a Citizens' Europe**, and the **Decisive Deal 2014**.

## **CULTURE, COMMUNITY, TERRITORY**



In his keynote presentation on communities and territories, **Claude Jacquier** (researcher, **Grenoble**) proposed that we should see culture in terms of a climate: a climate that can be a) in equilibrium; ii) a dynamic force; and iii) in a state of instability. Jacquier argued that this 'cultural climate' was formed of a cultural 'atmosphere', itself the result of the interactions between different components of a community: *places* (the environment), *people and gender* (the social aspect) and *institutions* (public and private; economic and political). Jacquier went on to suggest that we have lost to a large extent the traditional relationship between community and

society, and thus he proposed a range of cultural zones in which cultural and political projects could be developed that can both build communities and bridge the gap between community and society. These zones were: i) Daily life; ii) Urban management; iii) Culture and leisure; iv) The environment; v) Cross-border communities. Key for fostering the functioning of a community is the necessary know-how of social workers and social agents. Jacquier argued that we need to train people actively for these roles – so far, these are not skills taught in school or university. We thus need to develop community actors that could form Local Area Teams (LATs), which cross-fertilize the skills sets across multiple contacts and groups. Many of Jacquier's points are reflected in the programme of the **Decisive Deal 2014**, not least this final demand for cross-sector collaboration, enshrined in the **Decisive Deal's** use of different societal nodes for the development of its projects and policy: Artists and Intellectuals, Civil Society, and Politicians. A practical example of such a cross-sector LAT was also provided later in the day by the Slovenian "[Bunker Institute](#)", which stressed the need to understand culture not just as artistic performance, but social performance, integrated across sectors in a community. Bunker stressed how such networks are a key aspect when developing our relationship to space, and provided a practical example of artistic and urban cross-fertilization that helped people become engaged, and thus part, of their own area.

## **IMMIGRATION, MIGRATION, CITIZENSHIP**

Opening the Forum, **Nicolas Ehler** (Goethe Institute Lyon) noted how the key themes of the Forum – immigration, migration and citizenship – are also of fundamental interest to cultural institutions, as well as to politicians, artists and civil society. But, he argued, we need to interrogate these questions and the terms of the debate. On the political level, many speakers at the Forum felt that Europe's self-acclaimed cultural values of freedom and humanity are being rendered void in the face of current European immigration policy (not least in the notion of "fortress Europe"). **Marie-Christine Vergiat** (MEP) emphasised that the gap between European institutions and European citizens also derives from the fact that EU institutions underline the citizens' rights as the core of our European identity, yet those rights are limited only to those in

possession of European citizenship. This again brought discussions back to the question of the definition of “citizenship” we want to establish. In the face of migration a broader concept of citizenship was deemed necessary: a citizen is not only someone who possesses legal citizenship of a nation state, but someone who *behaves* as a citizen, actively participating in society. Arts and culture can help in creating active participation in community life and should be taken into account in migration policies insists **Malika Benarab-Attou** (MEP). Yet, when considering all this, one has to keep in mind that we cannot ask more of migrants that we ourselves are willing to do (as **Paul Scheffer** has so powerfully noted in many of his writings). It is clear that in creating new narratives which help us re-imagine and re-create Europe, the **Decisive Deal 2014** must further explore not just this issue, but how existing definitions of citizenship are challenged when one moves away from legal towards cultural notions of belonging.

### **CULTURE: FORCE OF DIVISION – FORCE FOR CURE**

Throughout the day, the paradigm of culture as both a force for division, as well as the cure for that division, was repeatedly brought to light by the focus on immigration issues. The fact that culture can create factions was stressed in many statements, such as from **Rina Cela Grasset** (**Iliria Albanese Association, Lyon**), who sketched the stigma that is attached to the Albanese nationality, as well as **Aadel Essaadani** ([Abattoirs de Casablanca - Fabrique culturelle de Casablanca](#)) and **Kamel Salih** ([Festival Pop-In Djerba](#)), reporting from their experience in North African–European cultural cooperation projects. The different cultural background in North African countries (for example illiteracy; a different conception of public space) is often forgotten when European cultural institutions come in contact with these countries, leading to misconceptions and divisions. One also cannot ignore the connection between culture and (economical) power in national cultural policy. A negative example brought forward was the suspicion that cultural funds from Europe to North African countries are given to create a market for European countries, rather than using culture for the people of those neighbouring countries. **Renaud Lescuyer** noted that culture can be a vital lifejacket for society, but that we also often defend certain cultures, while attacking others. We were also warned that cultural values can be used to define who is properly European, and who is not, rather than as a form of glue that can bring people together.



Yet while we have to acknowledge that culture is a cause for division, it is also the cure for it. The famous saying was noted: *‘Although a painting can never stop a bullet, a painting can stop a bullet from being fired’*. Culture as a factor of division can only be overcome by continuous dialogue - it is particularly true in the Mediterranean area stated **Delphine Borione** (Union pour la Méditerranée). Many projects introduced during the day showed how this can be successfully achieved. The [“Festival Pop-In Djerba”](#) brings together Europeans and Tunisians through culture. The [“Abattoirs de Casablanca - Fabrique culturelle de Casablanca”](#) aims to create clients for culture through an activation process aimed at the wider population. The Slovenian [“Bunker Institute”](#) explores the social role of culture through a whole range of community and





artistic work. In the difficult environment of the theatre's area, the [First Floor Theatre Nottingham](#) aims to give visibility to unseen social groups, to empower, activate and integrate through cultural activities. The arts are used as a tool of empowerment, giving young people confidence and teaching them how to be a leader. A successful example was the First Floor Theatre project "Baking Bread", which by baking bread together succeeded in creating communication within disparate groups in a diverse community.

### **CULTURAL CHALLENGES, CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS**

Throughout the day, the panels repeatedly returned to the challenges facing cultural contact and cultural integration. The importance of *language*, or more precisely of multilingualism, became clear in **Michel Bataillon's** (Président of Maison Antoine Vitez, Paris) presentation of his work on subtitling theatre plays. The subtitling of plays is a linguistic gesture that can be a tool for democratic development. The multitude of member languages is very important in the EU's slogan "United in Diversity", and despite some polemical points on the use of English as a common European language, it was felt that the freedom of expression provided by speaking in one's own language as practiced in the EU is central, as language is the expression of a way of thinking and may be the founding principles of a new integrative european identity points out **Helena Kovarikova** (EUNIC, Bruxelles). Similarly, learning and speaking a foreign language was also seen as key, since it provided access to, and understanding of, different ways of expression and thinking.

While it was stated that *money* is not an essential factor for cultural activities, only defining the size of a project, the lack of appreciation for cultural workers' efforts – also frequently expressed in little or no pay – came through in the discussions. The exchange within the cultural sector, in particular between institutional and independant organisations is key for developing knowledge about each other and assuring us of our common values, and thus is clearly of value, both monetary and more broadly.

The role of the *media* in establishing our vision of other countries and nations was also repeatedly highlighted. The at times divisive role of European media became clear in **Ralitsa Kovacheva's** study on European media coverage of migration issues. The study on the case of Bulgarian immigrants to Great Britain showed that in the European media, the distinction between 'us' and 'them' often persists. Culture, using the force of imagination, and the fear of immigration being something imaginary, was raised by **Valérie de Saint-Do**, as a means with which to combat such alarmist reports.

### **FORUM CONCLUSIONS: TOWARDS THE DECISIVE DEAL 2014**



How are we to read the debates of the Forum Lyon through the eyes of **A Soul for Europe** and the **Cultural Coalition for a Citizens' Europe**, as we move towards the **Decisive Deal 2014**?

The aim of the Forum Lyon was to inspire, trouble, and refine our questions and actions, as we move towards the **Decisive Deal**. It also raised some unique aspects, which had not yet held centre stage in the projects of the **Cultural Coalition**. Above all else, this uniqueness could be seen in the stress



placed during the Forum on migratory pressures from neighbours near and far – a significant emphasis on the social-political aspects of citizenship. Similarly, stress was placed on the cultural and civic dimensions of international and transnational relations and institutions. It is clearly vital for the **Cultural Coalition** to build such socio-political aspects into its discussions as we move towards the **Decisive Deal**. Time and again we heard of the need for transversal strategies: for the activation of the work of **A Soul for Europe** and the **Cultural Coalition** across different spheres of activity (culture, politics, economics, education, research). As noted earlier, this transversal approach is now reflected in the three nodes (artists and intellectuals, politicians, civil society) within the framework of the **Decisive Deal**.

Ultimately, the Forum Lyon raised a series of need, and a series of action points.

**Needs:** The Forum opened with the need of cultural institutions to interrogate precisely those questions we are posing. It stressed the need for new spaces – or the need to re-define existing spaces – for dialogue and collaborations. This was in turn reflected in the need for Local Area Teams, and the need to cross-fertilize contacts and groups and to share know-how. This debate was held on both the abstract and the concrete local level, with multiple examples from artistic practice which demonstrated the need for communication across borders (national, but local too); across generations, and across social groups.



### **Action Points:**

**Christine Vericel** opened the Forum Lyon with the image of the stage as a place for presenting and crossing symbolic frontiers; the stage as a place for bringing the 'bits and pieces' of Europe together for an act of mass border crossing and mass integration. The Forum closed with the image of the debate on European cultural diversity being similar to the debate around biodiversity: Just as we must protect fragile ecosystems, we have to protect the fragile cultural and linguistic systems we have. In the discussions that took place between these two images, the following **key questions** were raised:

- i) How do we create new narratives which help us re-understand and re-imagine Europe, especially when foreign affairs and immigration policies increasingly direct our attention to the borders of Europe?
- ii) How should we re-define our existing notion of democracy and citizenship in Europe, given the pressures of migration?
- iii) How can we re-develop cross-sector models for collaboration that specifically target the migratory pressure of the European model?



- iv) How can we continue to translate the narrative of a cultural Europe into policy, that is not simply cultural policy, but, say, policy on migration?

A number of **common themes** were identified:

- i) Crossing borders – yet borders are both physical and psychological.
- ii) The visibility and invisibility of communities and debates. Which communities are visible, which are not? How can we give a voice to those that do not have one?
- iii) The need for a dialogue to continue the process of European integration
- iv) The need to find new spaces for a new kind of collaboration, which will be cross-cultural, cross-generational, and multi-linguistic.

Finally, a number of **action points** were identified:

- i) Culture is currently at the periphery of Europe. It has to be taken back to the centre, because it is at the centre of our being.
- ii) Culture has to become a transversal issue. It should be in *all* ministries, not only the ministry for culture.
- iii) How can we ensure that the cultural, political, and social spaces we develop, or reactivate, are there to mobilise, elaborate and transmit European values – but also remain spaces where challenges can be posed to those values?

Europe's cultural diversity can be both constructive and destructive, but we can invest our huge cultural resources and our cultural diversity into this citizen's Europe, built from the bottom up – the core aim of the **Decisive Deal** 2014.

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