

Report of the Symposium, Mons, May 26th 2015



By Olivier Le Guay, Editorial Manager of the Forum d'Avignon (moderator of panels 1 and 2)

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'Daring new models of cultural life sharing'

It is with this positive and ambitious incentive that **Yves Vasseur, Chief Commissioner of Mons 2015** opened the symposium dedicated to “**Crossovers between culture and technology**” on May 26th, 2015. Rather than a ‘content’, which disregards the pleasure that an artwork, a book, a movie, a video game, a theatre play, a comics or an exhibition brings, it is rather the values that culture embodies in all its dimensions - artistic, economic, and social - that must be at the heart of innovation. **Michel Magnier, Director for Culture and Creativity of the DG Culture in the European Commission** recalled that the famous ‘positive externalities’ of the whole cultural field are not new and are being better economically evaluated (cf. the study *Creating Growth* by GESAC EY in December 2014 that evaluates the impact of culture contributing for 4,2% of the European GDP, and 7 million jobs). But beyond the economic value now appreciated, and especially popularized by the Forum d'Avignon, it is the social value of culture that must be recognized. In this perspective, we are calling for a reflection of the impact of cultural footprint (on the model of the ecological footprint) for future generations.

Divided into three round tables, about thirty speakers – Ministries of Culture, Commissioners, artists and entrepreneurs – have brought evidence, support and perspectives, including: **Joëlle Milquet**, Ministry of Education and Culture, Wallonia-Brussels Federation, **Jorge Barreto Xavier**, Secretary of State for Culture, Portugal, **Arnost Marks**, Prime Minister and Secretary for Culture, Czech Republic, **Lucia Recalde Langarica**, DG Connect, MEDIA Program Manager, **Mario Campolargo**, Director Net Futures DG Connect, **Catherine Ramus**, digital artist and researcher at Orange Labs, **Medhi Tayoubi**, VP Interactive Strategy, Dassault Systèmes, France, **Eric Joris**, Artist, Brussels, Belgium, **Armelle Pasco**, Director of cultural and institutional

partnerships, Orange, France, **Alain Liedts**, Chairman of Gluon Board, Gent, Belgium...

The values of culture are the key to favor transversality of social innovations in civic practices. Around new social opportunities initiated by cultural practices and digital innovations, numerous successes show the potential for social innovations, especially in terms of access, sharing and collaborative initiatives for culture. We should mention the **French Tech culture's regional ambition initiated by Avignon**, the calls for projects' effervescence by **Museomix** or even the civic mobilization for the project **'Street View Mons'** by the artistic collective **XTNT**.

These dynamics illustrate digital virtues. To remain sustainable, they must get into a triple cultural and civic perspective:

- Favoring a culture of attention, not only to attract an audience or new publics, but to integrate the lay and disadvantaged ones, in order not to add a digital divide to a cultural one;
- Linking and reinforcing all the stakeholders of the cultural ecosystem and sectors (from funding to dissemination) integrating many levels of territorial cooperation; from local – from the neighborhood to the city – to regional, from national to continental;
- Finally, valorizing the responsibility and *“autoregulation”* (**Rémy Rieffel**, sociologist) of the stakeholders to “allow to build a bridge between all cultures” (**Paul Rondin**, Executive director, Festival d'Avignon).

Creativity is the key in the crossover between culture and arts for the dissemination of innovation in society and industry. More than ever, culture is a 'systemic factor', like education and environment, for the future of our societies, according to the professor **Luigi Sacco** (IUU, Milano University). Over the interventions of political leaders, culture appeared as a positive investment, especially through the *“cultural and creative transversalities to boost innovation, sustainable economic development and social inclusion”* mentioned by **Mario Campolargo**, Net futures, DG Connect. We should also mention the successes of the **Playa Hub** handled by the Kotka-Hamina region in Finland and the techno-ecologic project **RIXC** developed in Riga (Lithuania). Three dynamics emerged from these fruitful exchanges:

- A positive utopia, dreaming of the decompartmentalisation of science, digital technologies, and culture,
- The importance of the collective investment in education, creativity, and innovation,
- Finally, the essential commitment of public policies to initiate a change of mentality.

Replay of the morning's panels:

The European program STARTS, or how to boost innovation by reinforcing the links between science, technology, and the artist.

Wishing to dynamize the virtues of Sciences, Technology, and **ARTS** at the heart of companies, the STARTS program that will be presented in

the next weeks at the European Commission aims, according to **Ralph Dum** (Senior Expert, DG Connect), to ease the integration of artists within the companies by betting on three added values: multidisciplinary, creativity and services.

Culture: it works! Several testimonies illustrated the relevance of the integration of artists in companies to push back the boundaries and the links while underlining the difficulty to shake the silo organizations – and their short-term logics. However, Ralph Dum insists, “these are innovation catalysers”

“The rehabilitation of intuition leads to unexpected alliances and projects in the company” underlined **Medhi Tayoubi**, VP Interactive strategy of Dassault Systèmes, France. The “experiential strategy” that the cultural projects initiate (such as the reconstitution of the Egyptian pyramids construction, the cartography of a 17th century’s wreckage pieces or of the Allies landing barges) allows positive benefits for the company such as patents, new technological solutions... In short, culture is no unnecessary expense since it is at the heart of business innovation. This is confirmed by **Catherine Ramus**, alias **Albertine Meunier**, digital artist and researcher at Orange Labs, and **Armelle Pasco**, Director of cultural and institutional partnerships, Orange. It is no longer about patronage but about the research of new responses to given issues: visual representations of the subscribers’ travels during a specific event; immersion in a painting by Courbet; sending of messages in the sky: some meaning for senses and our everyday life actions... Engaged in coproduction approaches, the supported projects “*are often self-explanatory*”. “*After the digital, now being lived and applied transversally, culture must follow the way*” **Medhi Tayoubi** insists.

Transversality remains a challenge within a company. To take it up, Laure Kaltenbach, moderator of the panel 3 and Managing director of the Forum d’Avignon mentions four keys to success:

- Embodying creativity: the narratives of European successes must be promoted and widely disseminated;
- Targeting a large audience so that the link between culture and innovation or between art and company goes beyond the insiders and clichés’ confidential framework to develop projects at the heart of business strategies;
- Stimulating exchange between disciplines and profiles;
- Finally, getting involved in the change of mentality, on the side of companies and artists. All companies – from start-ups to major groups – that overperform have understood the end of silo organization.

When will a general awareness – that would benefit to the conjugated interests of companies and employees – happen? STARTS gives reasons to hope by betting on intuition, talent, passion and tenacity. It will only succeed with the commitment of the whole cultural and creative sector.

Les Ateliers de la Cité: Le Forum d'Avignon, Le Festival d'Avignon,
Technocité, Le Théâtre National Bruxelles, Mons 2015

The Minister of Culture of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation,
The Representation of the European Commission in Belgium,
The European Commission - DG Culture,
The European Commission - DG Connect - Directorate General for
Communications Networks, Content and Technology