

**Lessons Learned
from Funding
Culture in
Switzerland
during
the Pandemic**

2022

Lessons Learned from Funding Culture in Switzerland during the Pandemic

Fondation Lombard Odier with CEPS

2022

About Us

This report is the fruit of a partnership between Fondation Lombard Odier and the Center for Philanthropy Studies.



Fondation Lombard Odier the corporate foundation of the Lombard Odier Group, carries out the philanthropic activities of the Group and its Partners. The Foundation funds forward-looking solutions to pressing challenges in the fields of education and humanitarianism. Our goal is to work with grantees where we can have an impact and offer more than just money.



The Center for Philanthropy Studies (CEPS) of the University of Basel is an interdisciplinary research and executive education institute, specialized on the non-profit sector and dealing with the multifaceted topic of philanthropy. The institute was established in 2008 through an initiative by SwissFoundations, the Association of Swiss Grantmaking Foundations. The aim of the CEPS is to improve both the scientific foundation of and the knowledge about philanthropy. In 2021, the CEPS created the spin-off Con-Sense Philanthropy Consulting.

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“Without culture, and the relative freedom it implies, society, even when perfect, is but a jungle. This is why any authentic creation is a gift to the future.”

Albert Camus (1913-1960), French philosopher, author, dramatist, and journalist¹

Preface

In Switzerland, as in most countries, culture was among the sectors hit hardest by the Covid-19 pandemic. Some sub-sectors, such as the performing arts, saw their turnover decline by as much as 90%.² Cultural professionals were not able to perform or exhibit their works, planning for future projects became a challenge, and many artists were thrown into an existential crisis on the personal level.

Culture is often viewed as the glue of society and human civilisation. It is also an important economic activity in its own right. In the European Union (EU), the creative and cultural industries accounted for EUR 413 billion in terms of value added in 2017, or around 5.5% of total EU GDP.^{3,4} In Switzerland, the total value added of the cultural sector amounted to CHF 15.2 billion in 2019, or 2.1% of Swiss GDP.⁵ More than 63'000 cultural and creative enterprises produce and disseminate cultural offerings every day across Switzerland.⁶ In 2021, 281'000 people worked for these entities as their primary job, and another 39'000 were active in the sector as a second (or third) job.⁷ For 9 key facts about the cultural industry in Switzerland that are worth knowing, see **Box 1**.

The Covid-19 pandemic dealt a harsh blow to both the producers of culture and the general public. Fortunately, in addition to the state, non-profit foundations and other private donors stepped in to help the cultural sector survive the pandemic. After this existential crisis, it is now time to look ahead.

This report builds on insights from Fondation Lombard Odier's special two-year (2021-22) programme to support cultural institutions in Switzerland during and after the pandemic. It also incorporates research and sector interviews carried out by our study partner, the Centre for Philanthropy at the University of Basel (CEPS), as well as research undertaken by our advisory unit, Lombard Odier Philanthropy Services.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the interviewees for their insightful conversations and the time they took:

- **Felicitas Ammann**, Head of Performing Arts, Pro Helvetia
- **Mathias Bremgartner**, Co-head of Culture Grants, Percent Culture Migros

- **Peter Brey**, Director, Fondation Leenaards
- **Beate Engel**, Director of the Culture Working Group, SwissFoundations; Culture Programme Manager, Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation
- **Cristina Galbiati**, Co-President, t. Theaterschaffende Schweiz, Director, Author, Performer and independent artist
- **Daniel Imboden**, Manager of Theater Support, City of Zurich
- **Benedikt von Peter**, Director and Artistic Manager, Oper Theater Basel

With this report, we want to provide readers who are active in funding culture, or interested in doing so, with a comprehensive, practical view of the pandemic's impact on the sector in Switzerland, its implications, and the resulting needs and opportunities.

To do so, the report provides a snapshot of the situation and the key trends reshaping the cultural industries, to derive seven recommendations for effective support for funders. Our interest is to figure out what lessons and recommendations for the future can be drawn from the crisis. As we adapt to live with COVID-19, who can help the cultural sector rise to the occasion, and how? How can we make best use of the entire support toolbox, ranging from policy and grants to impact investments? How can funders help unlock the creative industries' power to innovate and unify?

A dedicated chapter looks at impact investing as the frontier of funding the cultural and creative industries. Numerous practical examples seek to inspire our readers, and to give culture a voice. We are especially delighted to present four interviews that we conducted with the following individuals, who partnered with Fondation Lombard Odier during its two-year culture initiative (2021-2022):

- **Lionel Bovier**, director of the Museum for Modern and Contemporary Art (MAMCO) in Geneva;
- **Samuel Schwarz**, founder of Maison du Futur in Zurich, and his colleague **Janet Grab**;
- **Philippe Trinchan**, Head of the Department of Culture for the Canton of Fribourg;
- **Annie Serrati**, Manager of Transformation Projects at the Canton of Geneva's Office of Culture and Sport, and **Cléa Redalié**, Interim Director of the Culture Centre at the Canton of Geneva's Office of Culture and Sport.

At a time of much upheaval around the world, where our societies face numerous challenges, the work on this report reminded us just how creative, inventive and adaptable we all are. With thanks to all who have contributed to this report, we hope that the reader finds it equally stimulating.

Geneva, October 2022

Dr. Maximilian Martin,
Global Head of Philanthropy

The Covid-19 pandemic accelerated or put in perspective several trends that had already begun to transform the arts and culture space. These trends create new challenges and new opportunities; they prompt us to direct our attention to the following questions, and ask what they mean for funding priorities and instruments:

1

What does digitalisation really mean for culture? How can we seize its benefits without falling into the trap of trying to make everything virtual, and thus losing the impact of face-to-face experience?

2

How compatible can we expect cultural production and consumption to become with environmental sustainability? What should we do to help “green” the cultural industry?

3

How can working conditions for cultural workers, who often struggle economically and lack job security, be improved?

4

What about access? What are promising strategies to broaden the reach of the cultural industry so that it can make a larger contribution to achieving social inclusion in an era of growing division and conflict?

5

What innovative funding methods do we need consider if we want finite resources to unlock the greatest social impact?

“Culture is a way of coping with the world by defining it in detail.”⁸

Malcolm Bradbury (1932-2000),
CBE, writer & academic

BOX 1

**THE CULTURAL INDUSTRY
IN SWITZERLAND AT A GLANCE
9 KEY FACTS**

5.7%

Share of Switzerland's working-age population employed in the culture sector as of 2021⁹

-4.7%

Decline in the number of workers in the Swiss cultural sector during the year 2020¹⁰

72%

Share of respondents to a major Swiss government survey in 2020 who reported having gone to at least one concert or musical performance in 2019¹¹

77%

Share of respondents to a Swiss survey in April 2021 reporting that they "definitely wanted to go out to cultural events in public spaces, despite the new cultural offerings available online"¹²

59%

Share of Swiss cultural sector workers who reported earning CHF 40'000 or less per year from 2017-19. During those three years, the average wage for a full-time employee in Switzerland was around CHF 80'000¹³

+14.3

percentage points
Difference, in 2021, between the share of freelance workers in the Swiss cultural sector (28.2%) and in the Swiss economy as a whole (13.9%)¹⁴

94.4%

Share of Swiss cultural enterprises with nine or fewer employees in 2020¹⁵

-13.2

percentage points
Difference between the shares of Swiss cultural workers reporting having a "very secure" job before (57.1%) and during (43.9%) the pandemic¹⁶

+17

percentage points
Difference in the prevalence of tertiary degrees between Swiss cultural workers (60%) and the general Swiss population (43%)¹⁷

*“Art washes
away from the
soul the dust of
everyday life.”*

Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), Spanish painter, sculptor, printmaker,
ceramicist & theatre designer¹⁸

CHAPTER 1

**COVID-19
AND
CULTURE:
THE GENERAL
IMPACT OF
THE PANDEMIC**

A few weeks before the Swiss Federal Council decided on a lockdown in mid-March 2020 and public life came to an almost complete standstill, the Covid-19 pandemic had begun to cast its shadow over the Swiss cultural sector. Once Switzerland reported its first coronavirus case on 25 February 2020, many cultural events could only be organised in a limited fashion. Soon, the question arose as to how culture, and in particular the performing arts, would be able to function without direct contact with the public, and under far-reaching contact restrictions.

This chapter outlines the general impact of the pandemic on the cultural sector, with a special focus on the performing arts, commonly defined to include music, dance, theatre, cabaret, and other facets of the performing arts such as performance, contemporary circus, puppet theatre or street art.

POINT OF DEPARTURE: CULTURE BEFORE THE PANDEMIC

2.1%

Share of Switzerland's gross national product (GNP) produced by the cultural sector in 2018

64'800

Number of cultural and creative enterprises in Switzerland (2019)

281'000

Number of people in Switzerland whose primary job is in the cultural sector (2019)

The cultural sector is dynamic and innovative, with the potential to add significant value to the economy. It is also a networked industry with positive effects on other economic sectors, such as spillover effects on tourism and hospitality.

In 2019, nearly 64'800 cultural and creative enterprises produced and disseminated creative goods and cultural services, according to the latest data from the Federal Statistical Office. In human terms, these enterprises employed around 281'000 people in their primary jobs, roughly 5.7% of Switzerland's 5 million workers (in addition to 39'000 people in secondary or tertiary jobs).¹⁹ Between 2008 and 2018, the Swiss public authorities (the Confederation, municipalities and cantons) raised their cultural expenditure by about 40%.

However, when calculated as a share of total government expenditure, the share of spending on culture has remained relatively stable over the years. In 2018, it amounted to 0.5% at the federal level, 2% at the cantonal level and 3.3% of total expenditure at municipal level. In the area of concerts and theatres, public expenditure was CHF 813.2 million, or about 2.8% of total expenditure on culture.²⁰ In 2018, the total value added of the cultural sector amounted to CHF 15.2 billion, or 2.1% of Switzerland's gross national product (GNP). This figure is lower than the EU average of 2.3%, and represents a decline of 1.3% per year since 2011 (adjusted for inflation; Swiss GDP grew by 2% per year during the same period).²¹

CULTURE DURING THE PANDEMIC A HARD-HIT SECTOR

From March 2020 to the end of March 2022, the cultural sector struggled with uncertainty about the course of the pandemic, short-term cancellations, postponements, and frequent re-planning of activities. The entire sector was severely affected by pandemic measures such as social distancing and lockdowns. A report published in 2021 estimated that turnover in the cultural sector in the European Union dropped 31% from 2019 to 2021, more even than the tourism sector.²² The same report found that the performing arts sub-sector was particularly affected, with turnover dropping an astounding 90%.²³ A survey of 398 Swiss cultural businesses on the effects of the pandemic shows the impact of the fall in turnover on the institutions: 59% of respondents put employees on furlough and 56% received compensation for cancelled activities. For an overview of the impact of the pandemic, see **Graph 1**.²⁴

In terms of funding, the pandemic highlighted the consequences of different financing structures. During the Confederation's successive re-opening steps, those cultural institutions receiving little or no public subsidies were not able to reopen, as the expected financial return proved insufficient. By contrast, highly subsidised cultural enterprises such as the Konzert Theater Bern generated approximately 83% of their operating income from the public sector during the 2019-2020 season. This public funding put them in a position to be able to implement short-term projects to the extent practically feasible, despite losing money on such projects.²⁵

Depending on their type of employment, the consequences of the pandemic threatened cultural workers' professional livelihoods. A pre-pandemic study commissioned by Suisseculture Sociale and the Swiss cultural foundation Pro Helvetia showed that more than 50% of all cultural professionals in Switzerland are self-employed. Around 25% of all artists are simultaneously self-employed and also work for another employer. Moreover, around 40% of cultural professionals are engaged in activities outside the cultural sector. The median income of the respondents is well below the Swiss average, and stands at around CHF 40'000 per year, or half the median Swiss wage. As a result of the pandemic, the incomes of cultural workers in Switzerland have deteriorated substantially. Almost 80% of respondents say that their income has decreased due to the Covid-19 crisis, with half of the respondents reporting an income loss of more than 50%.²⁶

The pandemic stimulated the implementation of innovative projects such as lectures delivered on social media or via telephone, balcony concerts, and the widespread

production of digital content. Maintaining the cultural offer and thus the public's loyalty was one objective. Another goal was to find ways to compensate for the financial losses resulting from the pandemic. The 2021 survey of nearly 400 Swiss cultural institutions mentioned above found that 62% of institutions did not produce much digital content before the pandemic, and 47% increased digital content during the crisis.²⁷ Yet only a small number of institutions (29%) reported planning to further develop their existing digital offerings. Having hosted over 12 streamed premieres to date, the Opera Zürich is considered an international leader in this field.²⁸

A representative survey of 1'200 people over the age of 20 (including a self-identified "cultural audience"), carried out in April 2021 and commissioned by the Swiss Federal Office of Culture, provides interesting information on the success of digital offerings. 87% of respondents said they stream films, series and documentaries. But digital performances were initially only seen or heard by 44% of the public interviewed, and this proportion has kept falling.²⁹ These results align with anecdotal accounts from workers in the cultural sector, who report that while streaming pre-planned cultural events may have worked early on in the pandemic, audiences quickly tired of such offerings, which struggle to compete with made-for-television content. >

Graph 1

The impact of the pandemic on the Swiss cultural sector

Cultural institutions have been severely impacted by the pandemic



59%
of institutions have needed governmental aid to compensate for partial unemployment



56%
of institutions have had to rely on a culture-specific compensation for financial losses



13%
of institutions have had to lay off personnel or not renew contracts



41%
of institutions offering a subscription have lost a significant part of their subscribers. On average, there was a 35% drop in subscriptions during the 20/21 season

Source: L'Oeil du Public (2021).
"Les Institutions Culturelles en temps de Covid.
Juin 2021."

For many, the pandemic has been a catalyst for digital content, but a significant part of institutions remain lukewarm



62%
of institutions offered “virtually no” digital content before the crisis



47%
have increased their digital offering during the pandemic



42%
(excluding libraries) “do not have plans to develop digital content in the future”



29%
want to “place more emphasis on digital content/formats” after the crisis (especially libraries)

The outlook is positive, and financial aids played a crucial role



71%
of institutions say that they will overcome the crisis and return to their pre-crisis level



9%
say that they will leave the pandemic “stronger than before, and that they will even develop further in the future”

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FUNDER RESPONSE

Culture is seen as an economically relevant industry and indispensable for an open society. **Box 2** presents views from the cantons of Fribourg and Geneva.

Beyond the increased presence of online offerings, the Covid-19 pandemic was a time to try new things, some of which have had an impact on access to culture. A good example is how the performing arts are increasingly exploring new performance spaces outside of traditional theatres. Looking to break out of traditional creative structures and strictures, travelling projects have been created in Geneva that bring culture outdoors, with lighter and more mobile stages. These projects favour local audiences and thereby offer as much access as possible to the population of Geneva. The public's positive reaction to these new modes of cultural participation is a good indicator of the sorts of new practices that will undoubtedly persist in the post-pandemic period.

For people whose worlds have been turned upside down and who have often taken a substantial financial hit as a result of the pandemic, culture has become even more important as a vector of meaning and identity. Supporting spectators seems quite relevant today to promote access to culture. This will require detailed work to identify the target groups and their needs, as well as a possible adaptation of existing programmes, all of which should happen in collaboration with cultural actors.

Given its importance, the Swiss government acted quickly after the outbreak of the pandemic to provide monetary support to the sector. On 20 March 2020, the Federal Council adopted a temporary aid package for cultural professionals and institutions amounting to CHF 280 million, which included CHF 195 million for compensation of economic loss.³¹ Time will tell whether the size of the package was sufficient, but it did succeed in throwing a lifeline of rapid support.

In economic emergencies, Swiss cultural workers can apply for emergency aid, which is calculated not on the basis of taxable income, but based on a needs calculation. In addition, the Confederation and the cantons provided financial support to cultural institutions and creators (for example, short-term work grants, bridge loans, liability coverage for uncovered costs in the event of COVID-related losses, and other forms of compensation payments).

At the implementation level, the various forms of employment in the cultural sector, as well as Switzerland's strongly federalist governmental structure, complicated state support for culture. Bureaucratic requirements were often out of proportion to the modest financial support available, and local initiatives struggled to find traction. In the canton of Zurich, for example, Jacqueline Fehr, Head of the Department of Justice and Home Affairs, announced on 15 January 2021 that freelance cultural workers could apply for a basic income of up to CHF 3'840 per month, for three months.³² Fehr's initiative excluded cultural professionals who worked on pro-

ject-by-project bases and who were not permanently self-employed. Just over two weeks later, however, the federal government—which would have been responsible for paying the money—stepped in and put an end to the plan, which it called “unbureaucratic.”³³

FOUNDATION SUPPORT TO THE CULTURAL SECTOR

At the end of 2021, a total of 13'667 charitable foundations were registered in the Swiss Commercial Register, of which 22.4% listed the support of culture among their purposes.³⁴ During the pandemic, numerous grant-making cultural foundations responded in a non-bureaucratic manner, quickly and flexibly to the needs of their grantees, thus illustrating their importance for the cultural sector.

A comprehensive study of the funding by charitable foundations linked to the pandemic does not yet exist, so the following examples are presented for illustrative purposes. The Ernst Göhner Foundation and Fondation Leenaards increased their regular budget by around CHF 3 million and CHF 1 million, respectively, to support cultural professionals in need, as well as partner institutions and project partners. The Albert-Koechlin Foundation made emergency grants totalling CHF 700'000, and the Rahn Culture Fund supports its prize winners by contributing to innovative ideas and projects that deal with the further development of their musical careers in times of pandemic. Similarly, several foundations set up fast-track approval procedures and paid out grants even in the event of the cancellation or postponement of the planned activity. In addition, the Swiss cultural foundation Pro Helvetia and Stiftung Schweiz created online knowledge networks in order to facilitate non-profit organisations' access to bridge funds.

Even foundations that do not normally support culture stepped in to provide assistance. As mentioned previously, Fondation Lombard Odier gave grants totalling CHF 1 million over two years (2021-22) to support cultural actors seeking to transform their output or their organisation to implement Covid-19 related measures or to better face the post-pandemic reality.

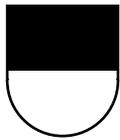
To sum up, the pandemic has resulted in devastating financial losses in the cultural sector, with serious personal and professional consequences for cultural professionals. At the same time, it has accelerated innovation and triggered social and political debates on problems in the sector that predated the pandemic. On balance, once the pain of adjustment is fully absorbed, the medium-term outlook for cultural professionals remains positive. Many are convinced that their ability to create will survive the crisis, and that their field will return to its “old size.” The crisis has also initiated deep thinking about the future; to build this future, in addition to state funding, thoughtful financial support from charitable foundations and other philanthropic actors will be needed.

BOX 2

THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON CULTURE

VIEWS FROM THE CANTONS

In your opinion, has the Covid-19 pandemic had an impact on access to culture? If so, how and to what degree? Which groups have been particularly affected?



FRIBOURG

The pandemic has had a significant impact on access to culture, particularly insofar as, for many months, it led to a significant reduction in cultural offerings accompanied by a generalised fear of large gatherings and many changes in how people consume culture (looking for more flexibility and more of a “last minute” logic). If digital technologies did allow many cultural offerings to go forward, albeit in a modified manner, not everyone was able to access them, particularly the elderly. Young people were also very affected by the situation, at an age where it is critical to confront oneself with different types of art and expression in order to develop a critical viewpoint, question one’s ideas and become open to the world’s richness and diversity. As mentioned in a July 2022 report by the Conseil d’État of the Canton of Fribourg on the impacts of Covid-19 on the cultural sector, “the crisis reminded us of the importance of having access to all forms of culture and cultural practices in order to guarantee general fulfilment and well-being. Culture feeds social cohesion and is part of a sustainable society. Artists offer spaces for reflection and discussion of themes that impact our ability to live together.”³⁰



GENEVA

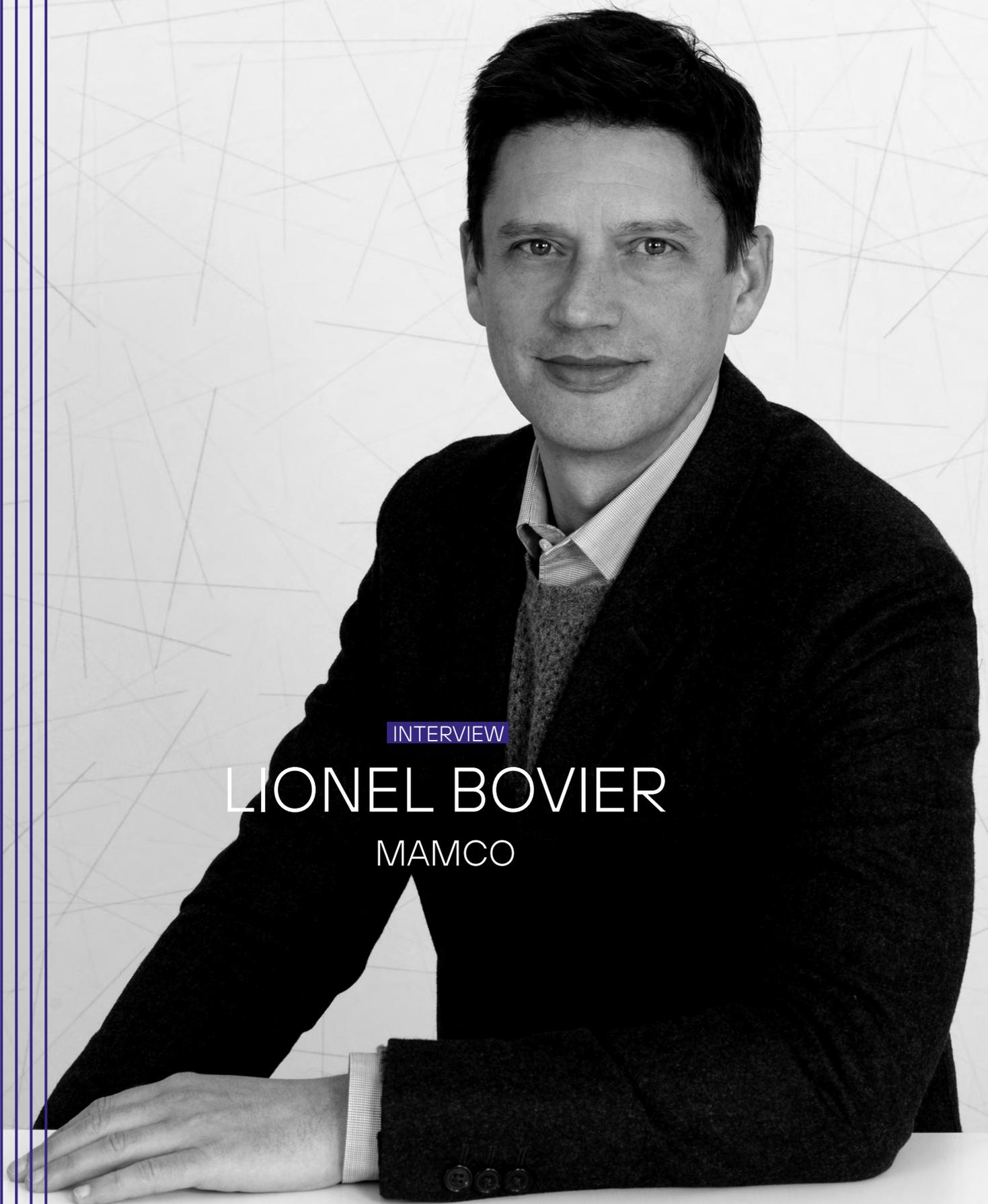
Even though the public can once again access cultural venues normally, the effects of the public health restrictions imposed during the pandemic are still being felt on people’s cultural habits. Digital channels were valuable methods of accessing culture during the different phases of public health restrictions. Nevertheless, we saw people’s habits evolve differently in different cultural milieus.

In the performing arts, for example, a large majority of those who tried watching performances online found them to be a valid substitute for live performances, if no other option is available. That said, this new practice proved to be temporary, and it now seems that audiences are particularly impatient to return to theatres. As far as the cinema is concerned, closures have had a long-term impact on consumption habits. While movie theatres remained inaccessible, we saw a massive increase in the usage of online streaming platforms, and it seems that moviegoers have continued this trend even after restrictions have been lifted. We have also noted that audiences have gotten into the habit of watching shows, particularly concerts, on demand.

“Stop thinking about art works as objects and start thinking about them as triggers for experiences. What makes a work of art good for you is not something that is already inside it but something that happens inside you.”

CHAPTER 2

**CRISIS
MANAGEMENT
WITHOUT
A MANUAL
INTERVIEW
WITH
LIONEL BOVIER,
MAMCO**



INTERVIEW

LIONEL BOVIER

MAMCO

MAMCO, the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Geneva that you lead, is an admired player in the Swiss and international cultural scene. How should we think about MAMCO? How is MAMCO similar or different to other great museums of modern art around the world?

First of all, I must point out that the roots of MAMCO do not lie in politics or patrimony: it is a museum based on Genevan citizens' desire to have an institution in their city dedicated to the art of our times. That is where the name MAMCO derives from. In the 1970s, "modern" art referred to post-war artistic developments; "contemporary" was added simply to indicate that the museum would focus on living artists. It is to an organisation called the AMAM, which was structured at the time as an association, that we owe the creation of MAMCO. The authorities of the City and Canton of Geneva have since backed the museum and now support it in its development.

MAMCO is one of the few museums (maybe the first) to offer a "global exhibition," rather than the traditional separation between permanent collections and temporary exhibitions. It is the museum itself that is put on exhibit, allowing for a renewal of the presentation of its collection as well as an exposition programme. Thus, the rate of turnover of the works shown to the public is much higher than average, since nearly 80% of the objects displayed change three times a year. Indeed, we work primarily for a regional audience, who visits MAMCO repeatedly and whose relationship with our museum is akin to a form of long-term dialogue, where visitors rediscover us each time they visit.

Finally, the MAMCO proposes, via a short timeline (from the 1960s to the present day), a "historical syntax" for the works presented. Each exhibition sequence thus corresponds to a problem or theoretical question that the museum, as a laboratory for the collective writing of history, endeavours to answer. The exhibitions are, in a way, a public presentation of its research. More than a structure dedicated to patrimony, or even (according to the failed attempt in 2019 to redefine "museum" by the International Council of Museums) as an instrument of "inclusive and polyphonic democratization," fundamentally, a museum is a place of research. In this sense, it is much closer to a university or a laboratory than a place of leisure or tourism – after all, the MAMCO presents its collections and interpretations thereof to the public without academic discrimination, and without resorting to technical language. Rather than being offered as a simulation, engagement with the museum aims to promote the visitor's agency by presenting not only results but also the context and research that produced them, in the most transparent manner possible.

On 25 February 2020, Switzerland confirmed the first case of COVID-19. How did you experience the early days of the pandemic? How did you respond at MAMCO? How did you manage?

The pandemic was a unique and novel situation for me and my colleagues. It truly took us by surprise, before becoming the crisis with which we have all struggled. Complying with measures taken by governments to combat the spread of the virus has profoundly changed MAMCO's operations. For several months, we were cut off from our mission to welcome and educate the public; for the last two years, we have been forced to constantly reorganise our activities. Moreover, as pre-existing societal changes and trends have forced us to rethink how we work, we have had to reorganise our priorities and put in place several impact reduction measures.

We first wanted to honour our obligations to our artists, teams and partners, in order to keep the difficulties we faced from spreading beyond our control. Then we spent two years focused on tasks relating to the museum's collection: after completing an inventory, we have made significant progress in documenting it and making it available online. Finally, this crisis has forced us to rethink the museum's role in society, and we have developed new ways of expressing our relationship to a world, which had so quickly become globalised.

Every crisis has the potential to redefine the structures that underlie our practices

The MAMCO team took the opportunity to reflect not only on our ways of working, but also on the dialectic of international and regional affairs as well as the ecological impact of our work. We have therefore established a charter of practices and objectives aimed at clarifying our positions and responsibilities on such varied issues as artist compensation, the accessibility of our programmes, and sustainable development. Every crisis brings to the fore problems whose origins sometimes date back a long time; every crisis has the potential to redefine the structures that underlie our practices; every crisis is also an opportunity to strengthen oneself as an organisation, as a collective and as individuals gathered around a project. I am happy to say that this was the case in our museum.

For the arts and cultural industries, 2020 and 2021 were challenging years. Many artists found it hard to exercise their professions. When a crisis hits, what advice do you have for other cultural institutions and their backers?

This pandemic was a test of our ability to live together. In 2020, I wrote in the editorial of the sixth issue of the MAMCO Journal that we could already see that "we have entered a new era of human relations and political mechanisms. And we may well feel concern, be surprised that the media always echoes political discourse, fear the closure of borders that have taken so many years to open up and be alarmed by states' proposals to combine protection and surveillance. We can reason-

ably fear the coming societal winter.” The spectrum of knock-on effects that I feared from the pandemic has manifested itself in a much more worrying way today. Though the years 2020–2021 were indeed harrowing, they at least seemed to project us fully into the 21st century, pointing to a series of necessary, if sometimes painful, transformations. In 2022, since the invasion of Ukraine and the humanitarian, energy, food, logistics and finance crises it triggered, it feels as if we have suddenly shifted back into a 20th-century paradigm, which we remember was marked by so much conflict and inequality. It was a century marked by incredible technological advances but also by a retreat of identity, a century where all of the Earth’s land was conquered but much of it was also destroyed, a century of societal progress but with inequality sorely felt throughout. At least the Covid-19 crisis brought us closer as a population sharing the same planet, despite social distancing; the crisis that began this year divides us. Both make inequalities more visible; the latter creates new ones, accelerates them and multiplies them.

Crises, by nature, reshuffle the deck—that is, they generate new combinations of

A crisis tests the adaptability of a structure, its coefficient of tension between necessary modifications and normal operations

the parameters that defined how we lived in the previous era. The pandemic has prompted us to reflect on our role as an art institution and to incorporate these new arrangements into our practice. The current state of affairs seems to invite us to take a step back, be a bit more conservative, and return to the societal values contested in recent decades. Perhaps the best response in this context is

to ensure we do not lose sight of the transformational objectives considered in recent years—change the way you carry out your missions, not the missions themselves, as long as they continue to be relevant to society—while adapting the means to achieve them.

In other words, there is no template for managing a crisis. The first step is to analyse the origins and consequences of such a critical situation in order to determine whether the context is conducive to transformation, to persistence or maybe even to resistance. The only common feature to these different modes of sudden change is a test factor: a crisis tests the adaptability of a structure, its coefficient of tension between necessary modifications and normal operations.

Looking to the future, the Covid-19 pandemic brought to the fore several trends that had already been reshaping the arts for some time. They include digitalisation, the quest for environmental sustainability, addressing the gaps in the social protection of cultural workers, and

self-organising bottom-up initiatives such as the Fair Practice Initiative. How are these trends (re)shaping cultural production at MAMCO? What is your vision for MAMCO as a museum of the future, after the Covid-19 pandemic?

During the pandemic, we focused a great deal on access to our museum and its collection, including by increasing digitisation. However, we must not forget that museums are first and foremost conservatories of analogue practices. The experience offered by a museum—and I emphasise the term, which distinguishes a museum’s cultural offering from the various forms of consumption based thereon—cannot therefore be digitalised. In a society that values the digital not simply as a tool, but as another state of being, an alternative to the real, what a museum offers becomes more and more precious: an experience of images, objects, signs and narratives, which we can make sense of ourselves, without any commercial constraint. It is precisely in this free articulation of meaning that the most enriching form of public engagement is found – not based on principles of programmed interactivity or experimental ersatz.

The difficulties encountered by artists during the pandemic, cut off from their production and broadcasting locations, have brought us to formalise the relationships that bind us. Within the Swiss Art Museums Association, we have produced a framework document setting out good practices and proposing a remuneration scheme. Nevertheless, this does not solve by itself the economic problems that the vast majority of artists continue to face. To this end, a great deal of work remains to be done with educational institutions, as well as the establishment of social protection schemes better suited to independent activity.

Implementation of sustainable development criteria within the museum sector has begun and will certainly continue for years. However, the nature of a museum’s activities must be taken into account in order to adapt these criteria to the unique context and to measure the real impact these activities have on other sectors of society.

It has also become clear to me that the demands on the cultural sector have continued to multiply over the past decade, including demands for “reparation,” inclusiveness and representativeness, as well as ecological or societal demands which imply making an example of the sector. The weight of these demands should not be borne by cultural institutions alone. To improve and live up to what is expected of them, institutions need additional resources and support in all areas of society.

The pandemic reminded us that society needs culture. How do you see the pandemic affecting access to culture? How can the arts engage in more and deeper dialogue with the rest of society?

For decades, museums have been working to remove what are often called “threshold effects”: the things that



© Art Keller, Collection Yoon-ja & Paul Devautour, Possibilité d'action, série "Le Crâne d'argent", 1994 acrylique sur toile, 65 x 100 cm. coll. MAMCO, ancienne collection Yoon-ja & Paul Devautour. Inv: 2019-177

prevent people from going to museums, be they cultural, economic or identity-related barriers. That said, what makes a museum more than just a place to exhibit images is the quality of its research and its willingness to forego faster – and therefore more commercially viable – absorption of ideas and concepts in order to maintain the complexity of artistic productions. While the cultural industry has taken on certain elements of the language of museums and proposes some derivatives of art (think, for instance, of places that project images of famous paintings in an immersive manner), it is important to defend both our specificities and our specialisation.

The pandemic highlighted the need for cultural experiences, but also how they are not always equally accessible. Facilitating access—ensuring that museums are visited by whoever wants to go and not just those who can go—therefore continues to be one of our institution's most important tasks, without abandoning what makes us unique vis-a-vis other forms of cultural dissemination.

Among our initiatives, I would like to highlight the most recent one: our new summer programming, which combines exhibitions with events, but also invitations sent to neighbourhood bars, restaurants or shops. The

idea is to create a local and multidisciplinary exchange platform whose programming is open not only to those who work at the museum, but also, through a trickle-down system, to those who are invited. As such, in the summer of 2022, the public was invited to discover local works, films, performances, cooks, winemaking productions, DJs, fashion designers, and others.

Finally, what is the one piece of advice you would give to funders who are new to the arts, and who are keen to engage in philanthropic support that is genuinely innovative? Are there some taboos we need to break?

The most effective, productive and transformative support in the field of culture is based on trust. It was this type of patronage that allowed MAMCO to come into existence, and which today allows it to develop: trust given to the museum to create its own strong foundation and to continue to reinvent itself; trust given to the director, which in turn allowed experimental rather than already-tested programming; trust in artists and in their ability to produce what we do not expect. Success metrics, budget allocation and activity reports, as indicators, pale in comparison to this simple quality that is fundamental in creating what we call society.

*“Art should
comfort the
disturbed and
disturb the
comfortable.”*

CHAPTER 3

**FIVE KEY
TRENDS
RESHAPING
THE CULTURAL
INDUSTRIES**

The cultural industry is in constant evolution and flux, but five developments and their impact on the performing arts during the pandemic are particularly noteworthy. For the most part, the pandemic acted as a catalyst for several shifts that had already appeared in Europe, and, to a lesser degree, in Switzerland.³⁷

Building on the previous chapter's overview of the general impact of the pandemic on the cultural sector, this section discusses five broad trends that are transforming the sector, what needs and opportunities they create, and how funders can get thoughtfully involved. For funders and policy makers alike, the question is the following: **what kind of support do the performing arts need in order to ensure that the innovation boost resulting from Covid-19 is not squandered, and that the pandemic's negative shock does not lead to a stagnation of the cultural industry overall?**

→ See **Graph 2** for the five key trends.

→ See **Box 3** for views from the Cantons of Fribourg and Geneva on sector trends.

BOX 3

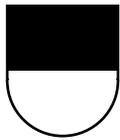
SECTOR TRENDS

VIEWS FROM THE CANTONS

The pandemic highlighted several pre-existing trends in the cultural sector, such as digitalisation, the increasing importance of environmental sustainability, and the precariousness of the lives of those who work in the sector.

How do you see the evolution of these trends in the coming years?

Are you planning any specific initiatives to respond to them?



FRIBOURG

The crisis has accelerated and shone a light on various pre-existing problems, including the social and financial precariousness of cultural actors. This is not a new problem, but the steps taken in recent years to try to eradicate it were severely hampered by the pandemic. As the topic is once again at the forefront, various measures are being or will be put in place: notably, grants will be made conditional on the recipient offering equitable salaries to its employees, and a cultural cooperative will be set up to provide services and information (the “BURO” project). We will also emphasise artistic research and dissemination. To date, production and delivery have been at the heart of our grants; in the future, our goal will be to support fewer projects, but in better conditions. This “less, but better” approach seeks to generate projects that are more stable and sustainable, economically as well as environmentally—an approach recommended by several recent studies. Finally, digitalisation and the digital arts are becoming more and more important. Some digital creations can be supported by existing modes of financing, but others will require us to rethink our procedures and methods to properly take advantage of the opportunities they offer.



GENEVA

The public health crisis did indeed throw light on pre-existing trends in the culture sector. Going forward, given that these trends seem likely to continue, the authorities hope to put in place specific support measures better adapted to the post-Covid reality.

In Geneva, the new priorities of the canton’s cultural policy follow these lines, most notably in proposing longer-term funding that is available to support the whole life cycle of a production. Specific examples include funding research, rethinking rehearsal periods, reinforcing funding for dissemination or creating structures to help cultural actors get back to work. The canton will also commit itself to making culture more respectful of nature and the environment by adapting the terms of its grants and supporting targeted pilot projects.



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Graph 2

The cultural sector of the future



KEY TREND #5

Boosting cultural participation



KEY TREND #1

Digitalising cultural offerings while preserving “analogue rocks”



KEY TREND #4

Mainstreaming fair practice



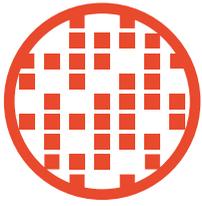
KEY TREND #3

Improving the social security of cultural workers



KEY TREND #2

Improving the cultural industry’s environmental footprint



Digitalising cultural offerings while preserving “analogue rocks”

When all live dance and theatre performances are cancelled, what good options are there for artists to perform? Even before the Corona crisis, it had become apparent that live streams alone could not satisfactorily convey many live experiences. Does good digital theatre even exist? If so, what does it look like?

When the lockdown suddenly hit in March 2020, the pandemic shone light on a situation that players in the Swiss cultural industry had not previously considered problematic: the majority of Swiss cultural enterprises were late to embrace digitalisation. Before the pandemic, around two-thirds of Swiss cultural institutions did not produce any significant digital content. This was not just because the producers would not or could not do so; the audience was also not particularly interested in digital channels. Take the Theater Basel, the municipal theatre of the city of Basel and home to the city's opera and ballet companies. According to its director, Benedikt von Peter, before the pandemic, 70% of the visitors still picked up physical tickets at the theatre, while only 30% used the online shop.³⁸

The deeper questions are how deep the need for face-to-face “analogue” interactions is, where this is concentrated, and which parts of the cultural offering value chain can be made more efficient and effective by using digital tools. A good example of this is theatre. According to Tina Lorenz, an expert in digital theatre who served as Project Leader for Digital Development at the State Theatre in Augsburg, Germany, “theatre is the analogue rock in the digital surge.” For her, theatre has been passed over by the last 30 years of digitalisation. Her ballet production “shifting_perspective” and her digital knowledge of theatre have made her a popular resource in the cultural industry.^{39,40}

Fortunately, many cultural institutions took on the digital challenge and created a series of exciting new formats. Particularly promising were several cases using virtual reality (VR) glasses, including the previously mentioned ballet “Shifting Perspective” at the State Theatre (Augsburg, Germany) in April 2020. For this production, the public received VR glasses upon arriving at the theatre. Once inside, the audience was able to watch the performance from the centre of the stage and turn in all directions, deciding for themselves where to look. To enable this perspective, a 360-degree camera was positioned in the middle of the room. A similar idea was pursued by Gilles Jobin in “La Comédie Virtuelle” at the Comédie de Genève (Geneva, Switzerland) in 2020.⁴¹ In this “virtual theatre,” the public can move through the rooms of a digital version of the Comédie de Genève’s premises by using VR glasses. They can exchange with other visitors and watch a live show presented by the Compagnie Gilles Jobin, which takes place in real time.

THE FUTURE IS HYBRID

Almost half of the nearly 400 institutions surveyed by L’Oeil du Public, a Swiss media agency, state that the Covid-19 crisis has accelerated their digitalisation initiatives.⁴² On the demand side, however, the survey suggests that the public is not very interested in purely digital theatre and dance performances. This suggests that hybrid offerings combining on- and offline features could hold significant potential. A fusion of live experience with digital technologies enables cultural professionals to cross the boundaries of face-to-face and virtual reality, taking the audience along for the ride.⁴³

In addition to offering new possibilities to artists and performers, hybrid performances may help overcome another challenge in the post-Covid world: audience reluctance to return en masse to cultural venues. When L’Oeil du Public surveyed Swiss people in September 2020, two-thirds of respondents said they wanted to visit less frequented places in the future, although this number had dropped to 50% by June 2021.⁴⁴ Happily for cultural institutions, the share of respondents saying that they wanted to reduce the number of cultural outings they undertook dropped even more sharply, from 52% in September 2020 to 31% in June 2021. Nevertheless, when Swiss theatres and other cultural venues reopened at full capacity in early 2022, many reported consistently lower audience turnout than before the pandemic.⁴⁵

Fortunately, there are already enough hybrid formats to get a sense of the value they can offer to engage the public. An example of interactivity and co-determination of the plot is Yan Duyvendak’s “Virus” (2020). Duyvendak, a Dutch-Swiss artist and performer, started working on “Virus” in 2018, before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. Together with gamers and researchers, he invented a participatory play in which viewers must make joint decisions on containing a pandemic. Depending on the choices made, society then evolves into a dictatorship or into a new and free order. See **Box 4** for needs and opportunities in digitalising the cultural offer.

BOX 4

INTELLIGENT DIGITALISATION

THREE SECTOR NEEDS

Given the sheer breadth and depth of cultural expression, what are the performing arts' main needs to continue to promote digitalisation in a useful and interesting way? How can funders be helpful in making this happen?

1

Exchange of experience and knowledge

Digital formats pose significant technical challenges: they are extremely demanding and error-prone, especially when they are integrated into live performances (as anyone who has ever tried to play a video during a Power-Point presentation knows). Exchange of experience and knowledge, analogue or in the form of digital platforms, can make a difference here as cultural organisations add digital features to their offer.

2

Education and training

Simply being able to exchange experience and knowledge cannot replace digital education and training for cultural professionals. To enable the cultural industry to upgrade its digital literacy across the board, universities, technical schools and other training centres must develop their offerings accordingly.

3

Archiving and diffusion strategies

Once produced, culture needs to be disseminated and, where relevant, archived. While digital spectacles may be more easily archived than their analogue counterparts may, this is by no means universally feasible or even possible. Regarding dissemination, it does not make sense for everyone to develop his or her own online platform. It is important for funders to take a close look, offer targeted support where necessary, and bear in mind that shared platforms are often the best way to achieve cost-efficiency.



Improving the cultural industry's environmental footprint

Revenue streams in the performing arts are, by and large, based on ticket sales and tours. It is common practice for tour organisers to negotiate national performances of foreign groups on an exclusive basis. This means that theatre and dance groups do not have the right to take on additional performances in the country, for example by adding a tour to their schedules.

One of the side effects of the pandemic and the resulting travel ban was an unplanned experiment: National tour organisers were unable to invite foreign groups. This raised an important question: how could productions go on tour without their performers actually traveling? This led to significant experimentation with so-called "zero-travel" performances. Jérôme Bel, a French dancer and choreographer, had decided to forgo air travel in 2019 for environmental reasons. He began writing choreographies, which he then studied via videoconference with dancers in far-away locations, who would then perform for their local audiences. His creation "Dances for Wu-Kang Chen" (2020) was performed at the Taipei Arts Festival, among other locations, without Bel ever leaving France. Another zero-travel format is the "Rimini Protocol: Conference of absent persons" (Germany, 2021). This is a production in which local actors play foreign experts invited to a high-level global conference. To render the context dynamic, the actors do not get their script until the beginning of their "talk." The absence of foreign guests serves the purpose of questioning the constant need to be everywhere.

In addition to innovation with individual performance formats, Covid-related travel bans and environmental considerations also stimulated the creation of new organisations with the remit to render the cultural industry more sustainable, paralleling developments in other industries. This is how the Swiss NGO Vert le Futur got its start in the middle of the pandemic. The association seeks to provide guidance to the creators of culture on how to work in a more environmentally sound fashion. With the project "Tatenbank," the association plans to create a digital knowledge platform with tools and best practice examples.

The French counterpart of Vert le Futur is a non-profit called "Décarbonons la Culture!" In 2020, the initiative joined a national French movement aimed at transforming the French economy in an environmentally friendly manner. In a series of reports, the initiators propose a comprehensive range of measures to render cultural creation more eco-friendly.⁴⁶ Also in 2020, the EU launched the project "Perform Europe" to "rethink cross-border performing arts presentation in a more inclusive, sustainable and balanced way." In practice, this means developing a support programme for ecological cross-border tours and digital distribution of performing arts works in Europe. At the same time, examples of best practices will be featured on a newly created online platform.

Reducing the cultural industry's environmental footprint goes beyond simply offsetting or cutting travel-related impacts. Numerous cultural institutions have sought to reorganise their overall operations in an environmentally sustainable manner. Théâtre Vidy in Lausanne, for example, played a pioneering role in Switzerland by setting itself environmental goals in 2019 under the programme "Vidy durable." The sustainability objectives range from the elimination of plastic cups to the selection of local suppliers for the café.⁴⁷ At the same time, the theatre systematically plans for, and discusses, productions with an environmental theme.

The travel ban also had another important consequence: Felizitas Ammann of the Swiss cultural organisation Pro Helvetia notes an increase in collaboration between domestic culture professionals.⁴⁸ In addition, the cultural sector increasingly collaborates with the local (amateur) population, which is very positive in terms of broadening cultural participation and access to cultural production. **Box 5** outlines the key needs in rendering the cultural industry environmentally sustainable.

Key trend #2

BOX 5

BUILDING A CREATIVE INDUSTRY SUSTAINABILITY AGENDA THREE KEY NEEDS

What kind of support and encouragement do the performing arts need so they can continue to build on this environmental momentum after the pandemic? Three types of actions seem pertinent.

1

Linking up the stakeholders

First, in any sector, collective action is a challenge. In the cultural industry, the sheer number of strong personalities and creative geniuses potentially compounds this. That said, environmental protection concerns everyone and can only be achieved together. Only by involving the entire culture ecosystem can we expect organisers, cultural workers and funders to pull together, establish new contract templates, and reduce the environmental impact of culture production.

2

Building national initiatives

Second, national initiatives such as Switzerland's "Showing without Going" – a set of measures to perform at a distance and thereby reduce energy consumption – are a good way to build awareness and set changes in motion. For such initiatives to meaningfully affect cultural consumption and production patterns, though, they need significant financial and human resources to enable them to conduct and scale their awareness-raising and orientation work.

3

Guidance in the form of best practice examples

Third, exchanging examples of best practices and experiences is another useful way to improve practice. A new label for sustainable cultural institutions similar to the "culture inclusive" label could make it easier for these institutions to communicate their efforts.⁴⁹ Looking to the business sphere, labels such as B Corp, which enables companies with ambitious environmental and social sustainability strategies to formulate their commitments holistically and be recognised, could also be a source of inspiration for the cultural sector.



Improving the social security of cultural workers

Even before the pandemic, it was well known that cultural workers generally do not enjoy much stability or security at work. Many live in precarious conditions or are *de facto* subsidised by relatives or pre-existing personal wealth. In 2021, 13% of those whose primary job was in the cultural sector also held a second job, significantly higher than the Swiss national average of 8%.⁵⁰ The issue had been taken up at the political level in Switzerland, but the pandemic revealed that efforts to date have been far from sufficient.

So-called “freelancers” have been particularly vulnerable – a 2021 survey found that only 69% of independently employed cultural actors pay into the Swiss social security system.⁵¹ Under Swiss social security law, they are classified neither as self-employed nor as employees, and thus fell through the cracks of the coronavirus aid measures. Despite the clear need, Swiss politics have recently stymied two attempts to address the situation. First, in 2016 Swiss voters rejected a general basic income plan for the entire population by a wide margin (76.9% against and 23.1% in favour).⁵² Then, as mentioned above, the Canton of Zurich attempted to introduce a basic income for the cultural sector in January 2021, but the Swiss federal government rejected the plan within days of its announcement.⁵³

Unfortunately, this narrow view deprives the sector of some of its potential. Christoph Weckerle of the Zurich Centre for Creative Economies, an international centre of excellence dedicated to research, teaching, and incubation in the creative economies, sees a much larger role for culture.⁵⁴ In his view, by identifying new ways of living together, the cultural industries can help spectators deal with uncertainty about society and the future. They also offer insights that are relevant for other sectors of the economy. The contribution of cultural activities should therefore not be seen exclusively in economic terms, but through the lens of general societal well-being.

A FOCUSED EFFORT TO IMPROVE FRAMEWORK CONDITIONS

Part of the problem facing the Swiss cultural sector is that it has historically seen its representation weakened by fragmentation into branches. The existential nature of the crisis posed by Covid-19 had the beneficial side effect of making possible the association of around 90 cultural associations within the framework of the “Task Force Culture.” The culture sector now has its strongest-ever voice of representation in Switzerland. **Box 6** lists measures to help improve its operating context for cultural actors in Switzerland, which the Task Force Culture could use its newfound lobbying clout to push for.

BOX 6

TWO VECTORS TO IMPROVE CULTURE'S FRAMEWORK CONDITIONS

What kind of support and encouragement do the performing arts need so they can continue to build on this environmental momentum after the pandemic?

Two types of actions seem pertinent.

1

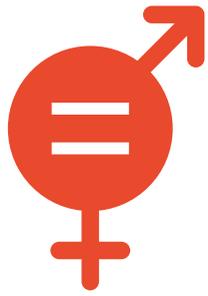
Studies and surveys for evidence-based arguments

Funding research is a powerful way to help demonstrate the importance of the cultural industries and creativity more generally. Philanthropists who wish to help shape the future of the sector could provide funding for such initiatives.

2

A strong voice for the cultural sector

Continuous contribution to societal debates and strong lobbying efforts are essential to ensure that actors at the political level keep improving the precarious situation of cultural professionals. The wider public debate on the role of culture that took off during the pandemic is healthy and helpful, and needs funding support for strategic messaging.



Mainstreaming fair practice

The term “fair practice” covers a variety of concepts, including diversity, social responsibility and sustainability. In Switzerland, the Fair Practice Initiative arose in the context of various longstanding grievances among cultural enterprises. In recent years, abuses of power, rigid hierarchies, structural handicaps and exclusion mechanisms have been a recurrent industry feature, brought to light most notably by the #MeToo scandal in the United States. Fair practice recommendations are addressed to employers, and demand better and more modern working conditions. Fair practice calls for, among other things, just wages (as noted in the previous trend), diverse composition of teams, increased awareness of power relations and transparent handling of information and conflicts.

STUDIES ON GENDER AND ABUSE OF POWER IN CULTURE

The Fair Practice Initiative did not make much progress before the pandemic broke out in Switzerland. However, two seminal studies were released in Switzerland during the pandemic. The first was commissioned by Pro Helvetia, and studied the gender balance in Swiss cultural enterprises. It shows that women are under-represented in management positions and earn less than men, and that they are less visible and win fewer prizes. In other words, the study found an “unconscious bias” that hinders sustainable structural change.⁵⁵ To illustrate the gender balance in artistic management positions, or rather the lack thereof, see **Graph 3**.⁵⁶

SzeneSchweiz, the largest professional performing arts association in the country, carried out the second study.⁵⁷ It studied the issues of abuse of power and sexual harassment, and discovered that about 80% of respondents reported having experienced sexual assault in the two years prior to the study. As a first response measure, the SzeneSchweiz association created an anonymous platform to allow individuals to report abuses, which the association’s management can then follow up on.⁵⁸

Another example are FAIRSPEC’s efforts to establish ethical guidelines and procedures in the performing arts. FAIRSPEC is a bottom-up initiative of representatives from the dance and theatre scene in Switzerland. In August 2021, the group published the so-called *FAIRSPEC Codex*, which formulates guidelines for an ethical and fair way of working.⁵⁹ About 150 artists from theatre and dance scenes as well as representatives from institutions and funding agencies jointly developed the codex during the pandemic.

As highlighted in **Box 7**, progressive funders who wish to push for the continuous advancement of fair practice in the Swiss cultural industry would be advised to support two types of sector needs.

Key trend #4

BOX 7

SECTOR OPPORTUNITIES TO MAINSTREAM FAIR PRACTICE

**What would it mean to turn fair practice into
the norm for the culture sector?
Two main workstreams stand out.**

1

Strengthen association work

First, in order for fair practice to remain on the agenda once the pandemic has passed, several axes of work need support:

- Awareness-raising,
- Systematic exchange among stakeholders
- The co-ordinated development of guidelines, recommendations or labels are all needed.

2

Studies and surveys for evidence-based arguments

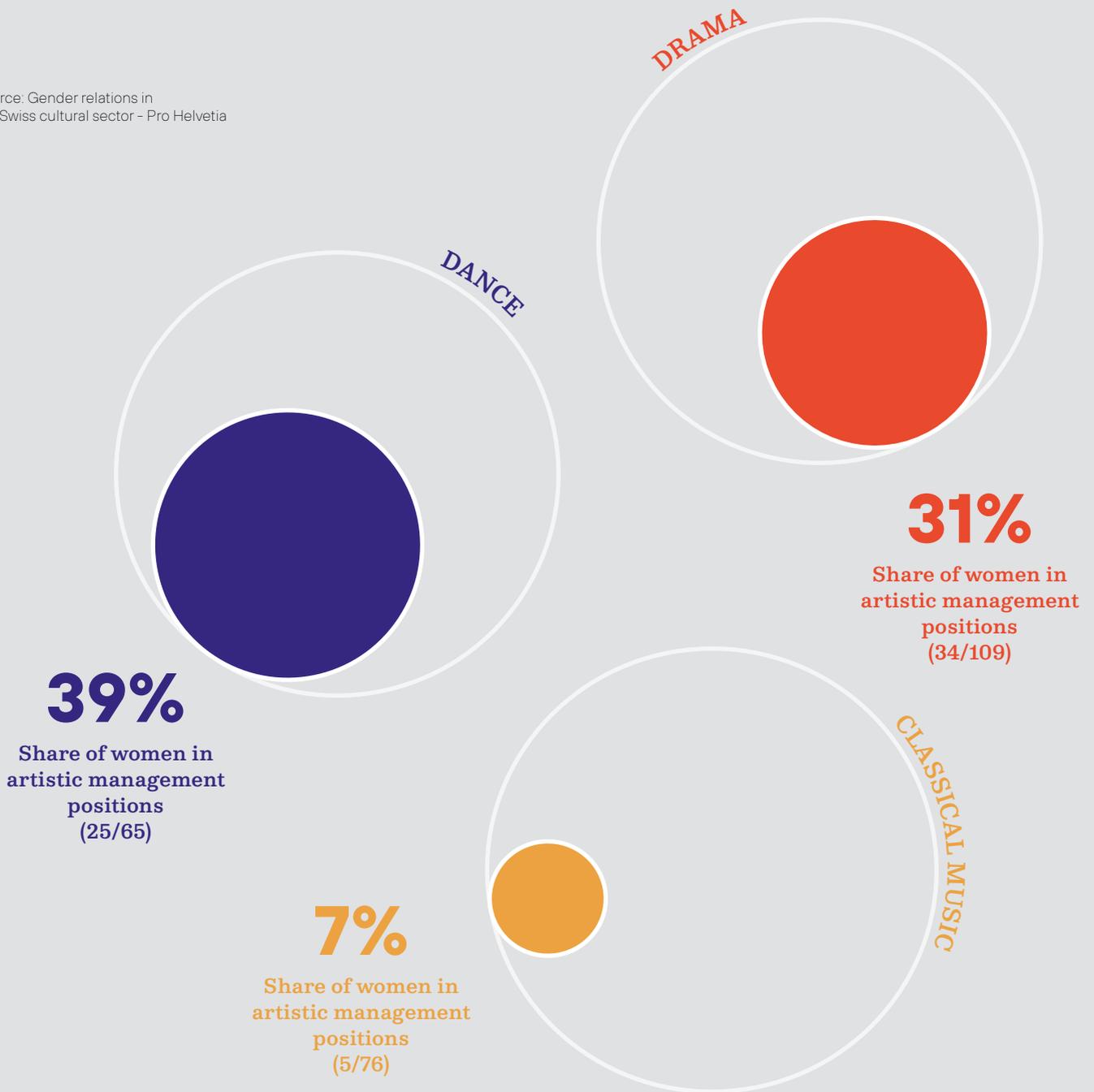
Second, empirical evidence is a powerful way to situate and enable intelligent action. Studies such as the ones mentioned above are a good start, but more research is needed to follow developments and to identify evidence-based actions that can make the greatest contribution to positive change.

Graph 3

Gender relations in the Swiss cultural sector

The positions for artistic direction and writing are largely the preserve of men while women are largely active as performers

Source: Gender relations in the Swiss cultural sector - Pro Helvetia



Graph 4

Transformative cultural projects – nature and type of applications

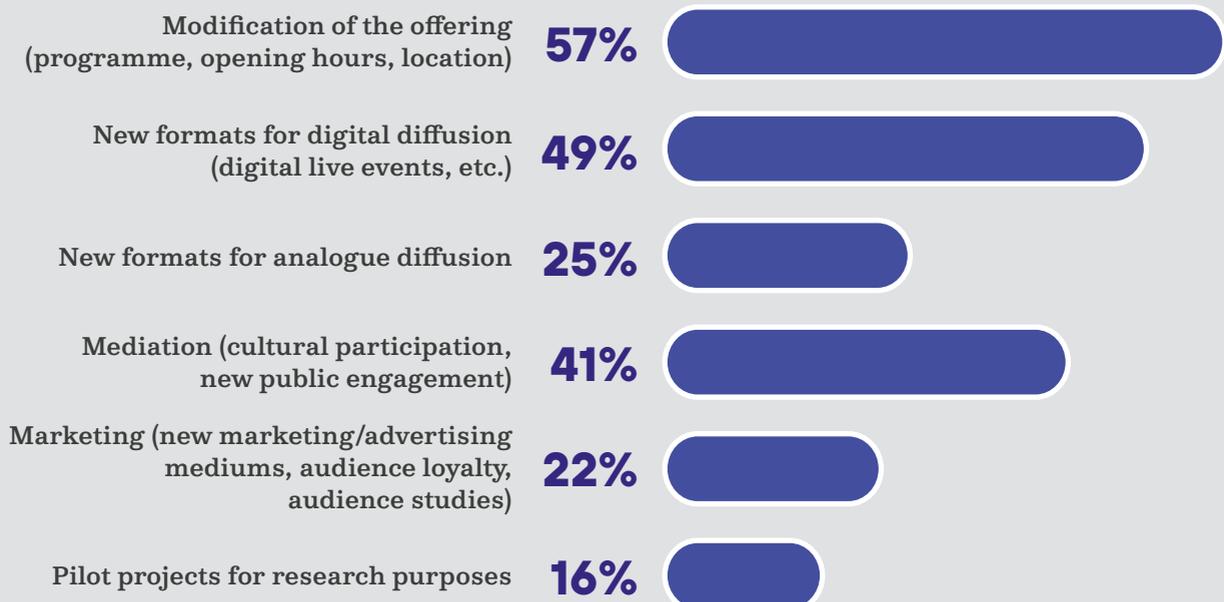
Source, L'Oeil du Public, *Les Institutions Culturelles en temps de Covid*

Percentage of a sample of 51 transformation projects seeking to achieve the listed aims (each project could fall into multiple categories, so the total is greater than 100%)

Structural shift



Audience retention and gain





Boosting cultural participation

In Europe, the debate about the extent to which the cultural industry's offering should target the entire population, rather than just the educated middle and upper classes, dates back at least as far as the Enlightenment. With the implementation of the new Cultural Promotion Act of 2009, the aim of bringing the whole Swiss population into the country's cultural life received new impetus. Within the framework of the National Cultural Dialogue, cities, cantons and the Confederation promoted the topic in a co-ordinated manner.⁶⁰ Among other things, in 2019 the Dialogue issued the *Handbook of Cultural Participation*, in which the current state of knowledge on the subject is presented in a practice-relevant manner.⁶¹

In a changing society, the performing arts have thus long faced the challenge of attracting new audiences and demonstrating their relevance. The Covid-19 crisis invited them to take the step to venture outside of their institutions and into the city. Some examples of how cultural institutions seek out new audiences are particularly interesting.

Beyond choosing non-traditional venues, a way to engage a larger public is to venture out into the streets. This is the idea behind a contemporary dance performance in the public space, the "Domino Race," by Kollektiv F (Switzerland, 2021). Inspired by the game of dominoes, Domino Race was a dance performance that took place in the public space at the *auawirleben* theatre festival in Bern. Six to eight dancers became a "human domino," showcasing chain reactions and bringing contemporary dance to a public that might not normally watch such performances.⁶²

While such exceptional programmes are certainly interesting, they need to happen more regularly if they are to truly engage a wider audience. This is a challenge that the Comédie de Genève chose to tackle with its "*actions culturelles*."⁶³ The theatre runs a programme titled "Bridge of the Arts" (*Pont des Arts*) to help ensure that theatre contributes to the well-being of the local community. The programme consists mainly of classes, reflection seminars and workshops. The activities aim to facilitate community access to the theatre for a variety of audiences: people in less privileged situations, families, and children, with the goal of breaking down barriers and prejudices. This includes giving the floor to community members in an "open theatre" format.

In all such activities, the effort required to reach new audiences should not be underestimated.

Graph 4⁶⁴ provides an overview of the transformation projects put forward during the pandemic; unsurprisingly,

there is a heavy focus on measures to reach existing as well as new audiences.

New communication channels must be used and new partnerships must be formed, both inside and outside the cultural industry. Larger institutions need to consider not only recruiting additional specialists who are well versed in the new target groups and their interests, but also building out their own teams with a diverse staff. Moreover, if a piece is tailored too much to a specific target group, other groups may feel excluded or discriminated against.

One way forward could be the proliferation of semi-managed open cultural spaces offered by recognised local institutions. For example, Theater Basel opened its foyer to the public free of charge in 2021. According to the theatre's website, "in the Foyer Public, you can meet friends, sit together, relax in your own company, read, play cards, work, craft ... or simply stroll through the foyer on your way from the train station to the city centre or vice versa. [...] The Foyer Public transforms Theater Basel into a public, cultural and social space in the heart of the city."⁶⁵

The pandemic fuels debate on the social relevance of culture

Such demands for participation often go with the expectation of social impact. In this view, cultural offerings should not provide purely self-referential aesthetic experiences, but should act as a motor and be socially relevant. The aesthetic experience is merely an enabler; ultimately, cultural creation should offer a space to debate social values, citizen duties and rights, and ultimately contribute to social cohesion. These types of demands are not new: museums, for example, have long been at the centre of debates regarding whether or not it is appropriate to display the products of far-off cultures, and what types of messages are sent by doing so.

This concern also extends to special-needs groups. Take, for example, Pro Infirmis. Founded in 1920 in the northern Swiss city of Olten as the "Swiss Association for Abnormal People," it is today Switzerland's largest organisation supporting and advising people with physical, intellectual and/or psychological disabilities. With their "culture inclusive" label, Pro Infirmis promotes the participation of people with disabilities⁶⁶ in cultural life.⁶⁷ The idea is as simple as it is powerful. Cultural institutions that promote the participation of people with disabilities—be it as audience members or as workers—and commit to a cultural inclusion charter are awarded the label, which highlights and signals their commitment to equality and inclusion.

A logical next step for the emerging social impact agenda of the arts is measuring the impact achieved. Unlike in the UK or the United States, this approach has not yet been embraced by the mainstream cultural industry in Switzerland. The question is: will this change in the coming years, and will it become broadly

accepted that, in order to remain relevant, cultural industries need to proactively report on their impact and discuss with a broad audience how this impact can be increased? **Box 8** highlights several avenues for funders who wish to resource this process.

BOX 8

OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT INCREASED ACCESS TO CULTURE

What do the performing arts need to be ready to engage a wider audience? Below are four opportunities for funders to direct their support.

Finance reflection on the role of culture in society

With or without impact measurement, cultural workers must reflect their own work and their role in society if they want to remain socially relevant. Given that culture is generally (arguably by definition) defined and motivated by its relationship to and its commentary on society, this seems a reasonable ask. Funders can help them by helping create safe and informed spaces to do so.

Build diverse teams with specialist skills

In order to target new audiences, segment-specific expertise and additional time resources are needed. To do this effectively, institutions must live the principles they advocate. Funders can help enable this, not only by giving grants to support new hiring processes and internal reflections, but also by holding grantees accountable.

Exchange knowledge and experience for participation formats

Culture is not a one-way street: social relevance cannot be achieved without involving the public. According to Beate Engel of the Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation, many cultural professionals have had positive experiences with new formats, and want to continue applying them.⁶⁸ Now is an ideal time to support the exchange of new experiences outside the theatre walls, or with digital formats, thereby learning about and replicating successful examples while avoiding mistakes.

Assess the usefulness of labels and awards

Labels and awards can be helpful in creating and strengthening particularly successful examples in the field of diversity, inclusion, or cultural participation. In order to achieve these benefits, though, up-front work needs to be funded first. It also may take time for a new award to become recognised and gain cultural cachet.

*“If we are to
preserve culture
we must continue
to create it.”*

CHAPTER 4

**PARTICIPATIVE
STORYTELLING
PUT TO THE TEST
INTERVIEW
WITH SAMUEL
SCHWARZ AND
JANET GRAB,
MAISON
DU FUTUR**

CHAPTER 4: PARTICIPATIVE STORYTELLING PUT TO THE TEST: INTERVIEW WITH SAMUEL SCHWARZ AND JANET GRAB, MAISON DU FUTUR

INTERVIEW

SAMUEL SCHWARZ AND JANET GRAB

MAISON DU FUTUR

Maison du Futur is a tax-exempt centre of excellence in narration, founded during the pandemic. With partners and service providers from science and technology, Maison du Futur optimises the use of advanced technology for artistic purposes. Its aim is to offer cultural practitioners the infrastructure necessary to test and demonstrate the development and communication of digital technologies in a practical way, through the involvement of the local population and digital mediation.

In this spirit, Maison du Futur established itself during the pandemic with its “Corona Stages,” which guaranteed cultural participation (literature, theatre, dance, film, interdisciplinary projects) for a broad spectrum of the population at all times, even during the most drastic restrictions imposed by Swiss authorities. In 2022-23, Maison du Futur will increasingly focus on the matters of sustainability, digitalisation and strengthening the resilience of societies in the face of pandemics, misinformation and war.

Maison du Futur, the institution you lead, is an innovative player in the Swiss and international cultural scene. How should we think about Maison du Futur? How is Maison du Futur similar or different to other participatory cultural innovation platforms around the world?

Maison du Futur understands literature as being the core of all of its activities. With the help of state-of-the-art technology and internationally renowned partners in the fields of science and technology, we aim to use the power of Swiss and international literature to transform modern storytelling and make it more participative. This mostly includes the use of audio formats with non-linear and augmented reality (AR) elements, which force the audience to actively shape their own experience. I think that what separates us from other participatory cultural institutions is the extent to which we incorporate the latest scientific discoveries. We are very blessed to have a long-standing collaboration with Dr Peter A. Gloor from MIT, which gives us valuable insights into how certain formats might - or might not - engage our audience. The use of modern technology helps us create non-linear cultural formats, which can only be experienced in specific locations (our “walks”) and can evolve differently based on the participant’s choices. So far, we are not aware of any other institutions that experiment with these tools to the extent we do.

All of this seems especially important if you take into account Harald Wolff’s statement that the big challenge for cultural institutions for the next five to ten years will be the creation of formats that facilitate direct interaction—such as interactive walks, gaming, interactive theatre, and the possibility of one-to-one encounters between an audience member and a performer.

On 25 February 2020, Switzerland confirmed its first case of COVID-19. How did you personally experience the early days of the pandemic? How did you respond at Maison du Futur? How did your colleagues react?

I remember having a discussion in early March with the very small team we had back then. Of course, we wondered how the situation would evolve. During this discussion, it became clear that we all thought that it would be just a matter of time until physical presence would be so restricted that cultural institutions would have to change radically in order to continue to function. Many of our peers thought that we were panicking, but we thought our view was justified based on what was happening elsewhere, such as in Italy.

For the arts and cultural industries, 2020 and 2021 were challenging years. Many artists found it hard to exercise their professions. How did Maison du Futur navigate through the pandemic? When a crisis hits, what advice do you have for other cultural institutions and their backers?

As we had anticipated a scenario similar to what ended up happening, by the time the government introduced its restrictions, we were already prepared for many different scenarios. For us, it was important to ensure that cultural events would not be reduced to merely occurring online. Instead, we wanted to provide a safe, hybrid approach, which could be scaled and adjusted even if governmental guidelines changed on a short notice. Based on these conditions, we came up with our “Corona Stages.” Through a collaboration with the Kulturverein Max Frisch Bad in Zurich, we organised concerts, literary and theatrical events, as well as panel discussions in a safe,

outdoor setting. All of our participants wore mobile wireless headphones. With the help of an antenna installed on the roof of the event venue, the performers' voices were mixed live and streamed straight into the participants' headphones. By being exclusively outside and ensuring minimal distance between audience members at all times, it was possible to safely create a meaningful cultural experience in the midst of a pandemic. Other institutions started following our lead.

Looking to the future, the Covid-19 pandemic brought to the fore several trends that had already been reshaping the arts for some time. They include digitalization, the quest for environmental sustainability, addressing the gaps in the social protection of cultural workers, and self-organizing bottom-up initiatives such as the Fair Practice Initiative. How are these trends (re)shaping cultural production at Maison du Futur? What is your vision for Maison du Futur as a participatory cultural platform of the future, after the Covid-19 pandemic?

Maison du Futur grew out of 400asa, which has been doing experiments and large-scale projects including digitalisation, such "Der Polder," for quite some time. Hence, we just continue with our core approach of including digitalisation in our formats. However, I think

that what has fundamentally changed throughout the pandemic is people's relation to, and increased urge to go and experience, the outside world – in a hybrid approach – versus sitting in an indoor theatre space or exclusive online setting. Considering the fact that for many people a daily walk became a fixed routine and the only way to experience something different other than their own living rooms, the urges to move and to walk increased as well.

Based on these changed circumstances, we are in the process of creating a new audio format called "walks," where the audience can experience our productions in an outdoor setting while walking and shaping their own experience. Sustainability and environmental protection have always been important to us. That is why we think that with new ways of modern, interactive storytelling, it is possible to increase the awareness of environmental and sustainability issues, and provide possible solutions that everyone can implement in their daily lives. This is why we dedicated an entire series of our "walks" to these important topics. These "bio walks," as we call them, are made in collaboration with biologists of the Canton of Zurich, as well as with the support of Fondation Lombard Odier.

The pandemic reminded us that society needs culture, and vice versa. How do you see the pandemic affecting the access to culture? How can



the arts engage in more and deeper dialogue with the rest of society?

When we founded Maison du Futur, it was very important to us that our team represent a wide spectrum of society. We have had many conversations with different social groups in different places of the country from whom we have learned a lot. We often cooperate with Verein Mesela, which facilitates cultural exchanges between Swiss artists and artists from the Middle East. Last, but not least, our collaborations with non-cultural institutions such as technology start-ups and universities – which include US universities like MIT, or the University of Southampton in the United Kingdom – provide yet another different point of view. In short, we are in touch with a broad spectrum of society – a society for which we ultimately create all our formats.

Finally, what is the one piece of advice you would give to funders who are new to the arts, and who are keen to engage in philanthropic support that is genuinely decisive? Are there some taboos we need to break?

We think that there are three main factors which are fundamental in the sociocultural context of the arts and thus for an effective philanthropic support: to consolidate the values the arts provide to the society and the structural means that they use to do so; to secure an ongoing process of digitalisation; and to foster resilience in society and the environment.

The positive effect the arts have on our mental and intellectual wellbeing is hard to deny, especially after the Covid-19 pandemic. Many extraordinary formats have been created which otherwise most likely would never have seen the light of day. It also became evident that many of these formats offered a strikingly new approach to certain difficulties that already existed before the pandemic. They should therefore be adapted and developed further even as the pandemic reaches a more “normal” state again.

What we currently observe happening, though, is the exact opposite. Public authorities have unofficially declared the pandemic over, although current developments suggest that this may be overly optimistic. Moreover, support for the arts has been (or is about to be) cut drastically in many countries, which makes it very difficult, if not impossible, to further experiment and develop the potential of certain approaches revealed during the pandemic. Not only is this highly damaging from an artistic point of view, it also means essentially neglecting the shifts in the ways people like to consume and experience culture brought on by the pandemic, and will have a long-lasting economic impact on the entire cultural sector.

In this context, it also becomes apparent why it is of the utmost importance to experiment further with the integration of digitalisation and hybrid cultural formats. First, digitalisation can help push artistic boundaries and find new ways of expressing the cultural zeitgeist. Digitalisation is also directly related to reaching a

broader audience and can bring fairer and more democratic access to the arts. Finally, digitalisation may allow us to connect people around the world to foster discussions and the exchange of knowledge on a much wider scale. This could in turn lead to greater social cohesion, greatly needed in this day and age.

This leads to the last factor mentioned at the beginning: resilience. We understand resilience on the level of the individual as well as that of the ecosystem. We think that social cohesion should be strengthened, especially by reaching out and integrating young people who were often forgotten during the pandemic. The arts are a very suitable medium for doing this. This also emphasises the importance of digitalisation. In addition, as briefly mentioned, in a society which is seemingly more and more divided, it is more important than ever to provoke and encourage meaningful discussions, and easy access to cultural structures for doing so.

Hence, we think that the conception and development of digital and hybrid platforms should be an integral part of such a strategy. We also consider platforms and other formats for the transfer of knowledge as useful to raise awareness and reach a broader understanding of different kinds of environmental issues. This is how Maison du Futur aims to contribute to elevating the resilience of our ecosystem.

“Culture is the name for what people are interested in, their thoughts, their models, the books they read and the speeches they hear.”

CHAPTER 5

**FUNDING
CULTURE
AFTER
THE PANDEMIC
SEVEN
RECOMMEN-
DATIONS**

FUNDING CULTURE AFTER THE PANDEMIC SEVEN RECOMMENDATIONS

The Covid-19 crisis amplified the reach of the cultural sector's voices in the decision-making bodies of public and private support for culture. Ultimately, in addition to the many personal tragedies and dramas it caused, the pandemic also provoked a healthy questioning of established modus operandi as well as experimentation with new forms of funding. Out of sheer necessity, new support measures that might not have been taken seriously before the pandemic could now be tested. In light of the five key trends outlined in the previous section, what have we learned?

Based on the needs previously identified, this section outlines several recommendations for funders who want to support the cultural sector in a thoughtful manner. According to Peter Brey, director of Fondation Leenaards, the pandemic has given rise to serious reflection among private funding organisations on their own funding practices.⁷¹ Once they decide to innovate, they can move forward quickly, while public support mechanisms often first need to create the legal bases for revised practice (and will need to do so again moving forward, as, at least in Switzerland, Covid-19 aid legislation was time-limited). Of course, innovation should not just be new and different, but also better. To be truly relevant, new funding models would ideally be co-created by involving cultural professionals and other funding agencies early on in the process. This point was emphasised by Cristina Galbiati, co-president of the association t. Theater-schaffende Schweiz, the Swiss national association of theatre professionals, and Daniel Imboden, director of theatre promotion of the City of Zurich.⁷²

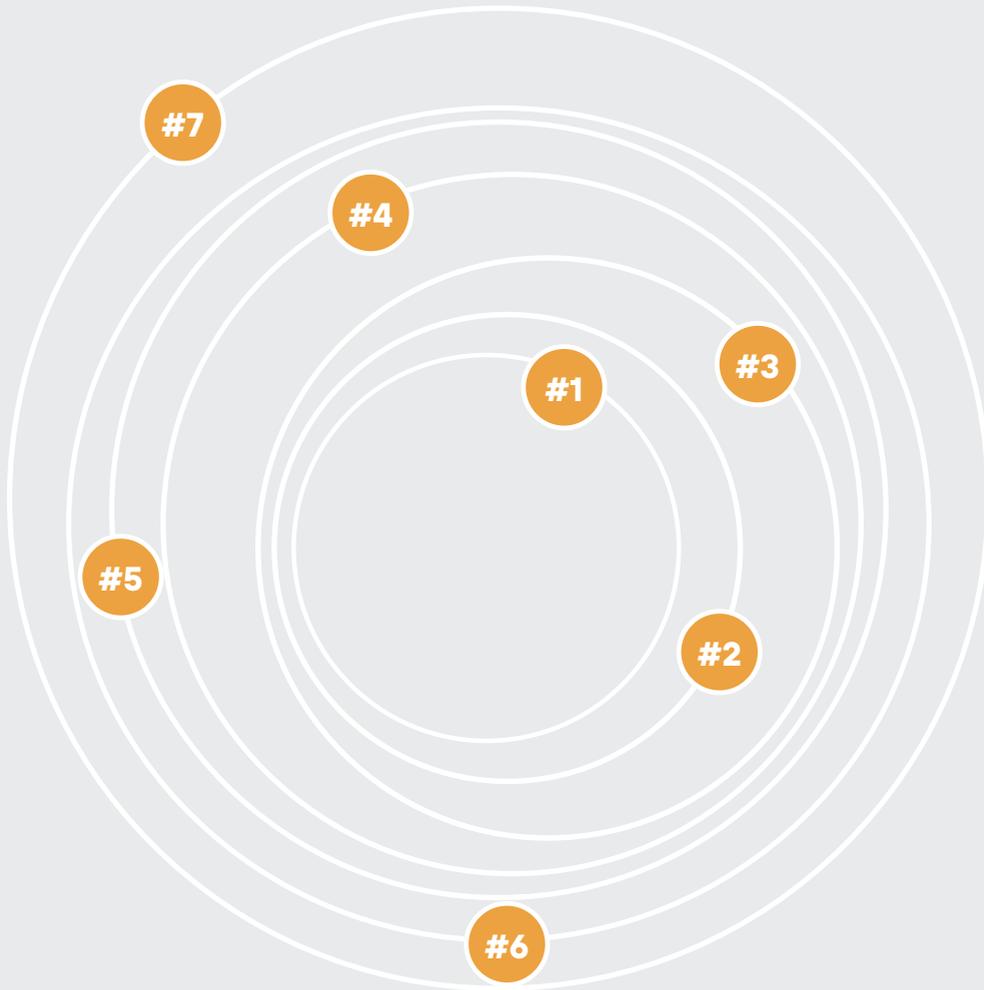
For strategic funders, there is value in considering the following recommendations holistically before deciding how to focus their support in ways that are aligned with their funding objectives and the opportunity to create social impact.

Let us now go through the seven recommendations one by one. For the impatient reader, they are also listed in **Graph 5**.

Graph 5

Building a resilient post-pandemic cultural sector

Seven recommendations



RECOMMENDATION #1

Move away from an exclusive focus on production and include more open-ended support

RECOMMENDATION #2

Finance capacity building to get cultural organisations ready to seize opportunities in digitalisation, environmental sustainability, fair practice and cultural participation

RECOMMENDATION #3

Incentivise social, environmental and/or fair cultural creation through funding criteria

RECOMMENDATION #4

Direct funds to topical agenda setting and visibility

RECOMMENDATION #5

Remain open to alternative formats

RECOMMENDATION #6

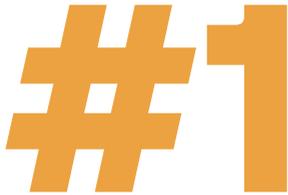
Support knowledge transfer and co-operation projects

RECOMMENDATION #7

Experiment with innovative and impact-oriented funding methods

MOVE AWAY FROM AN EXCLUSIVE FOCUS ON PRODUCTION AND INCLUDE MORE OPEN-ENDED SUPPORT

RECOMMENDATION



Many funding organisations do not want to commit to longer-term funding and therefore choose to promote individual productions. For creators of culture, this means that they only earn revenues when they produce pieces. This leads to over-production, which can have the effect of limiting possibilities for extended tours. In 2017, for example, the roughly 200 different productions put on by independent companies and supported by public funds were staged in an average of only 2.5 venues, including the one where they premiered.⁷³

This structural problem was well-known before the pandemic. When the Covid-19 crisis hit and theatres shut down, a departure from the normal production requirement became not only possible, but necessary. During the pandemic, many private and public sponsors moved from funding single productions to multi-year commitments, or took into account the research and diffusion phases in their production support. In many cases, funders

offered open-ended forms of support,⁷⁴ such as funding the writing of new works or the promotion of research and residences.

These changes also take into account an interesting development in the performing arts space. According to Daniel Imboden, the performing arts are increasingly transitioning away from the traditional three-month rhythm of rehearsals, premiers and performances, moving towards longer and more process-driven working methods.⁷⁵

Funders such as the Albert Köchlin Foundation in Lucerne seek to respond to this trend by starting to fund original works and research contributions.⁷⁶ Their declared goal is to “create space for artistic development.” In response to the reduced number of performances, the thinking goes, cultural professionals of all disciplines should be able to focus more on creating works and research.

FINANCE CAPACITY BUILDING TO GET CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS READY TO SEIZE OPPORTUNITIES IN DIGITALISATION, ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY, FAIR PRACTICE AND CULTURAL PARTICIPATION

RECOMMENDATION

#2

If the cultural industry wants to translate new trends in the areas of digitalisation, environmental sustainability, fair practice and cultural participation into better practices, its institutions will need additional capacity and resources.

For larger cultural institutions, **building additional expertise in-house makes sense**. The situation is different in the independent scene with its smaller organisations, for whom it might be more cost-effective to **use external production and diffusion structures**, such as Tutu Production in Geneva. Such shared structures could, among other things, plan tours for several groups, structure partnerships, or prepare funding requests. Funders should also consider funding such professional organisations directly: while their services are much needed, their business model remains a challenge.

Professional production and diffusion managers are often cited as examples of good practice in the independent scene, but given the resource constraints of the environment in which they operate, many work almost continuously on the brink of bankruptcy. Thus far, support institutions have been reluctant to support such upstream administrative structures. In the context of the pandemic, however, Pro Helvetia decided to buck the trend with its new Fut:our funding programme.⁷⁷ Fut:our offers targeted support to professional diffusion structures, with the goal of strengthening the national and international reach of the performing arts. **Box 9** provides an overview of vocational training opportunities in Geneva offered by the Geneva Centre for Philanthropy in the 2022-23 academic year targeting a civil society sector professional audience.

INCENTIVISE SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND/OR FAIR CULTURAL CREATION THROUGH FUNDING CRITERIA

RECOMMENDATION

#3

Suisseculture Sociale has long recommended that funding institutions **require their grantees to pay fair wages, including social security**. Grant makers in culture can quite easily promote themes such as environmental sustainability, fair practice and access to culture simply by including relevant criteria in their funding guidelines.

BOX 9

CAPACITY BUILDING THROUGH EDUCATION

LEVERAGING THE TRAINING CURRICULUM OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GENEVA'S CENTRE FOR PHILANTHROPY

To enable the cultural sector to seize opportunities in its key fields identified in the report – digitalisation, environmental sustainability, fair practice, cultural participation, and business model innovation – enhancing organisational capacity will be indispensable. Part of the necessary training is primarily technical. Culture professionals will source them via their existing professional networks, and funders can help to render them accessible by underwriting trainings. Moreover, as we have discussed in the preceding chapters, much of the change agenda ahead is multi-dimensional. In many cases, leaders of cultural organisations benefit from additional managerial training that enables them to embrace the resulting complexity and translate the trends into viable operational and business models.

One way to do so is via specialised courses with built-in sector relevance. For example, in 2017 the University of Geneva, in partnership with a number of key philanthropic foundations with an international reach, including Fondation Lombard Odier, established the Geneva Centre for Philanthropy (GCP), recognising the role of the city as one of the most important global philanthropy hubs. The Centre's activities involve different faculties of the University, from behavioural economy to neurosciences to sociology, conducting global inter-disciplinary research and transferring knowledge not only to students, but also to practitioners and the general public.

The Centre's 2022-23 programming includes a variety of courses relevant for

senior professionals in the cultural industry, including:

- **A Diploma of Advanced Studies (DAS) in Philanthropy (in English)** offered in partnership with the Geneva School of Economics and Management (GSEM) and Genevensis communications, consisting of two Certificates of Advanced Studies (CAS), one on strategic philanthropy and one on operational philanthropy. The DAS is held annually, running from September to June.
- **La philanthropie et ses principaux enjeux juridiques** ("Philanthropy and its main legal issues," held in French) by Prof Giulia Neri-Castracane, Faculty of Law, fall semester 2022.



Click to register
online

- **L'éthique de la philanthropie** ("The ethics of philanthropy," held in French) by Dr Emma Tieffebach, Faculty of Humanities, Department of Philosophy, fall semester 2022.
- **La philanthropie culturelle et le droit** ("Cultural philanthropy and the law," held in French) by Dr Anne Laure Bandle, Faculty of Law, spring semester 2023.
- **Innovation and philanthropy** (in English) by Prof Giuseppe Ugazio and Dr Thomas Maillart, GSEM, spring semester 2023.

(For up to date information on vocational trainings offered by the Centre, and ability to access them for non-students, please consult the Centre's website at: <https://www.unige.ch/philanthropie/en>)

DIRECT FUNDS TO TOPICAL AGENDA SETTING AND VISIBILITY

RECOMMENDATION

#4

Issues such as cultural workers' social security, environmental sustainability, fair practice or access to culture are too multi-faceted to be resolved all at once. They must remain on the agenda if we are to achieve long-term progress. This could involve not only supporting lobbying initiatives and activist groups, but also **incentivising the creation of artistic works**—theatre, visual art, etc.—that highlight the problems and suggest solutions.



REMAIN OPEN TO ALTERNATIVE FORMATS

RECOMMENDATION

#5

Unlocking further progress in the cultural industry means continuously testing new ideas and gathering practical experience with different ways of working. Funders would be well advised **to follow these developments closely, and to support new formats that take a certain degree of risk.** We need new criteria for evaluating projects, so that digital and analogue projects can be considered in their own right, rather than being played off against each other. Funders should also be careful about their assumptions: it is not true that digital projects are generally cheaper, nor that analogue projects generally have less reach.

A good way to bundle such innovative support is through special programmes. For example, "culture extra," a funding programme by the

Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation in Bern, specifically supported the continuity of cultural creation and networking among and with the public. To be eligible, applicants had to either propose projects viable during the pandemic, or develop ideas for future works. According to Beate Engel, the foundation's programme manager for fine arts, the funding format had a positive resonance in the cultural scene, because its simplified eligibility criteria left applicants significant freedom.⁷⁸ In normal times, said Engel, such funding formats were rather difficult to implement in the traditionally rather conservative cultural foundation sector. The Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation will now analyse the experience gained with this fairly open support format, and if the evaluation is positive, develop similar open formats in the future.

SUPPORT KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER AND CO-OPERATION PROJECTS

RECOMMENDATION

#6

During the pandemic, many new ideas were tested for the first time, and **Box 10** highlights views from two cantons on collaboration. Given that philanthropic resources are generally much scarcer than government budgets and investment funds on capital markets, it is clear that re-inventing the wheel each time a foundation wishes to support culture would be an unnecessarily costly proposition.

Similarly, it is not resource-efficient for every cultural organisation to develop its own Internet platform and communicate regularly about everything that it does and learns. **Culture funders should therefore back knowledge transfer and collaborations in which cultural professionals work together with other professionals**, both inside and outside the culture field.

EXPERIMENT WITH INNOVATIVE AND IMPACT-ORIENTED FUNDING METHODS

RECOMMENDATION

#7

Finally, one of the conundrums facing the cultural sector is the disconnect between content and funding method. The cultural sector continues to be characterised by a predominance of traditional, point-to-point grant applications (one applicant writing to one funder), and the subsequent pay-out and reporting.

In recent years, however, philanthropists have grown more versatile in how they fund culture. Innovations include matching grants, in which several funders pool their resources for a specific project or programme; the funding of a grantee's operating costs and capacity building; and recoverable

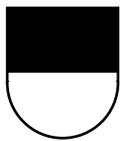
grants. By accessing deeper sector knowledge, participatory decision-making processes can also help to improve project sourcing and funding decisions. Impact investing in the creative industries can also help achieve both a social impact and a financial return. In sum, there are many ways that funders can help accelerate project implementation or increase efficiency and reach. As its most acute phase finishes, the pandemic now offers an opportunity for renewal. **Thoughtfully funding culture will be key to making the necessary resources available and direct them to where they can have the greatest impact.**

BOX 10

PARTNERING TO RESCUE THE SECTOR

VIEWS FROM THE CANTONS

What did you learn from your collaboration with Fondation Lombard Odier, and how can such a partnership prove useful for an organ of the government?



FRIBOURG

The valuable collaboration between Fondation Lombard Odier and the Cultural Service of the Canton of Fribourg has proved beneficial in many ways. To begin with, it showed the clear relevance of public-private partnerships in the cultural sphere. A cantonal cultural service enjoys significant administrative competence and valuable “field” knowledge, but the legal and governmental structures within which it operates can be rigid and limit its operational flexibility. By combining our skills with those of a private partner, we made it possible to act in more targeted and responsive ways. At the end of the day, this benefits three groups: the public-sector partner, which can go further with its existing cultural programmes; the private-sector partner, which benefits from the experience, networks and visibility offered by the public sector; and the cultural sphere, which can take advantage of the new opportunities offered. It is clear that a well-defined partnership, with clear roles, objectives and timelines, can leverage the means and skills of the public and private sectors to produce relevant and successful initiatives.



GENEVA

This partnership allowed us to share relevant projects and diversify the funding sources available to certain cultural entities, be they emerging or well established. By sharing best practices for supporting cultural professionals, it also helped optimise financing, thereby improving working conditions and ensuring living wages. Finally, by asking applicants to provide a single budget, the partnership allowed them to save precious time.

Our exchanges with Fondation Lombard Odier regarding the partnership’s objectives highlighted the importance of the cultural sector’s potential to propose and to innovate, particularly during this period of upheaval impacting all of society.

“Impact investing can be a powerful instrument of change.”

Judith Rodin (1994-2004), former president of the Rockefeller Foundation (2005-2017); seventh permanent president of the University of Pennsylvania⁷⁹

CHAPTER 6

**THE NEXT
FRONTIER
IMPACT
INVESTING
AND THE
CREATIVE
INDUSTRIES**

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the cultural sector, and the performing arts in particular, have been experiencing an existential crisis in Switzerland and elsewhere. Fortunately, the combined efforts of policy makers, cultural professionals and their organisations, public and private funders and many other stakeholders have staved off a total collapse of the country's cultural offerings and creative capacity of the sector.

That said, translating potential into performance requires investment, and much of the cultural sector is resource-constrained or depends on public and private subsidies. As a result, R&D or infrastructure investments can be a challenge in the culture sector. Innovation in the concessionary financing of cultural activities along the lines discussed earlier is part of the way forward, not only to mobilise additional grant capital, but also to allocate it more efficiently to the production of cultural goods.

UNDERSTANDING SECTOR READINESS

The cultural sector has several hurdles to overcome in order to become fully ready for impact investment. One of the key issues is the frequent inability of art and culture companies to convince banks to grant them loans, even if the request is based on good business models.⁸⁴ As a result of the difficulties they encounter, many loan-seekers give up. They do not apply for loans, because they assume that they will not get a loan anyway. The EU sought to address this situation as part of the Creative Europe (2014-2020) funding programme by creating a new financing instrument, the so-called "EU Guarantee Fund."⁸⁵ The aim of the fund is to provide low-cost loans to the cultural and creative industries.

Within individual countries, the situation is similar to the European level: around half of the cultural and creative industries need additional funding. The required amounts are small, often less than EUR 15'000. Access problems include interest costs, poor business plans and difficulties in valuing the intangible assets of the creative industries, as well as a lack of entrepreneurial and management skills in the culture and creative industries.⁸⁶

ACCESS THE POTENTIAL OF MARKET-BASED SOLUTIONS

Another option is increased reliance on market-based solutions to finance culture, including impact investments in culture where they make sense.

This is not a new idea. Using a much wider definition than culture, the "creative economy" comprises the set of industries that reflect the culture, traditions and heritage of a place. In this wide definition, the creative economy consists of numerous segments, including ethical fashion, sustainable food, social impact media, creative places, and any other facility, input, production and distribution businesses in art, design, culture and heritage industries that are run sustainably, provide formal sector jobs, and have a demonstrable social impact.⁸⁰

The eleventh session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD XI), first introduced the concept of "creative economy" at the UN level almost twenty years ago, in 2004. UNCTAD's "São Paulo Consensus" concludes: "Creative industries can help foster positive externalities while preserving and promoting cultural heritages and diversity. [...] The international community should support national efforts of developing countries to increase their participation in and benefit from dynamic sectors and to foster, protect and promote their creative industries."⁸¹

In a 2015 report, EY and UNESCO found that creative industries generated USD 2.25 trillion in revenue worldwide in 2013, formally employing 29.5 million people.⁸² In developing countries, the artisan economy plays a major role in the informal sector. According to NEST, an American non-profit focused on the artisan and maker economy, the global handicrafts market accounted for USD 526.5 billion in revenue in 2017, and is expected to reach USD 984.8 billion by 2023.⁸³

How could impact investments revitalise the cultural industry and help it act on the trends mentioned earlier, without unduly diluting the concept of impact investment as a form of investment that intentionally seeks both a financial return and a verifiable, attributable social impact?

“Creative industries can help foster positive externalities while preserving and promoting cultural heritages and diversity.”

PUTTING CULTURAL IMPACT INVESTING IN PRACTICE: INSIGHTS FROM THE ARTS IMPACT FUND⁸⁷

First set up in 2015 by Nesta, a UK social innovation non-profit focused on designing, testing and scaling new solutions to social problems, the Arts Impact Fund I was an experimental impact investment loan fund focused on the arts and culture sector. The goal was to highlight the possibility of impact investment as a financing method in the arts and culture sector. In collaboration with Bank of America and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, and with support from the Arts Council England and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Nesta announced a total of GBP 8.8 million of loans to 27 enterprising arts organisations between 2015 and 2019.

The fund invested in arts organisations in England with the ambition to grow, achieve great artistic quality and have a positive impact on society. It did so by providing repayable loans of GBP 150'000–600'000. Interest rates were set at 4–7% (comparable to unsecured loans available in the UK at that time), with a three-to-five-year term. Objects of support include bridging financing gaps (e.g., due to seasonal fluctuations or outstanding debts), expansion programmes, transitions to new business models, acquisitions and renovations. To qualify for a loan, arts organisations had to demonstrate how they would repay the loan, and how they would achieve social impact in one of the targeted areas: youth and educational attainment, community development, and health and well-being.

The rationale Nesta and its partners saw for such a fund is applicable to the current situation in

Switzerland. On the one hand, public budgets for arts and culture are not abundant and will potentially shrink in years to come, while facilities and services will still need to be upgraded. On the other hand, the basic prerequisites for profitable investments into parts of the cultural value chain, such as ticket sales and an established market, are in place.

According to Seva Phillips of Nesta, the fund made it apparent that there really is a need for such loans in the arts and culture sector.⁸⁸ One example of a Nesta grantee is the Titchfield Festival Theatre. The theatre, which hosts more than 20 productions a year, needed GBP 150'000 to completely renovate their premises, which are housed in a dilapidated former warehouse. They expected to repay the loan via ticket sales and savings in energy costs.⁸⁹ An example of interim funding to begin construction was that given to South East Dance, an experimental dance company in Brighton with strong community involvement. It had already secured 90% of the funding required to set up a new studio, which would benefit nearly four million people, but needed bridge funding to begin construction.⁹⁰

The impact investment case for the fund and its record of accomplishment led to its renewal, with some modifications. Fund II is a GBP 23 million impact investment fund, again targeting socially driven arts, culture and heritage organisations registered and operating in the UK. From 2020–2023, the fund offers secured and unsecured loans of GBP 150'000–1'000'000, repayable until May 2030 at 3–8% interest.⁹¹

CONCLUSION: GETTING SWITZERLAND READY FOR THE NEXT FRONTIER

In arts and culture, the difficulty is that there will always be projects that cannot sustain themselves financially and need subsidies. This is a simple fact, one that cannot be changed by sophisticated financial engineering. As such, it is preferable to support those projects that have the ability to be financially self-sustaining with repayable grants or via other adequate financial instruments, and to reserve concessional grants for the projects that really depend on them. As a result, the capital pool serving culture can be increased, and its overall financing stabilised.

Similar to the situation in the UK, the Swiss cultural sector is characterised by a large variety of business models in the arts and culture sector, and generally has significant economic potential. Looking at the issue through the prism of the visitor economy, the Arts Council England notes that the cultural sector contributes GBP 4.5 billion of spending by visitors attributable to the UK's culture and heritage sectors, and in 2019, 18 of the top 25 most visited attractions in the UK were in the cultural sector.⁹²

Going forward, the Swiss cultural sector needs to support greater resilience and financial stability for arts and cultural organisations, and improve the sustainability of the sector as a whole. In parallel, the wider economy needs to become more aware of the specific financing needs in the arts and culture space. Impact investing in culture is a relevant option to expand the funding mix. Provided that the focus is more narrowly on culture rather than the creative industries at large, it is likely that, similar to other social financial innovations, a coalition of public, philanthropic and private investors will need to join forces in a strategic project to unlock the potential of impact investing for Switzerland's cultural sector.

APPENDIX

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Support to culture is a multi-dimensional topic, with a large body of evolving research. For donors who want to support cultural activities, here are some interesting seminal texts that help to better understand the field.

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