



# Culture, the Arts and the COVID-19 Pandemic: Five Cultural Capitals in Search of Solutions

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A study by

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# Culture, the Arts and the COVID-19 Pandemic: Five Cultural Capitals in Search of Solutions

**ABSTRACT.** Prolonged restrictions on public life and the closure of many cultural activities during the COVID-19 pandemic affected urban cultural ecosystems profoundly. Cities worldwide responded to this challenge with a variety of policy measures. Yet how do the cultural policy responses to the COVID-19 pandemic compare across major cultural capitals, and what have been the experiences so far? Which cultural policy developments and frameworks helped or hindered their responses? How did the various governance arrangements affect cultural policy agendas and strategies during the crisis? In this study, we review the cultural policy responses of Berlin, London, New York, Paris and Toronto during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic through the lens of their respective governance capacities. Specifically, we seek to identify initial insights and lessons learned for more effective and resilient urban cultural policies in future.

The current COVID-19 pandemic poses severe challenges to culture and the arts in cities around the world. In some places, it threatens the very survival of local cultural infrastructures and the careers of many artists and cultural workers. Social distancing measures, and the resulting closure of art institutions and the suspension of cultural events, have impacted the sector in profound ways. Alongside the tourism and the hospitality industry, the entire cultural ecosystem<sup>1</sup> is one of the fields most affected by the pandemic (Montalto et al., 2020). For example, by November 2020, the economic loss for arts and culture in the United States already amounted to \$14.5 billion (Americans for the Arts, n.d.).

Within this situation, large metropolitan areas have taken on a special role. As both hubs of concentrated and innovative cultural practice, as well as densely populated areas that have historically been more susceptible to disease transmission, they have a special burden to bear (Florida et al., n.d.). In Paris, for instance, the COVID-19 pandemic led to a substantial temporary urban exodus, with 1.2 million residents leaving the city when public life was closed and when many education sites and workplaces moved online (Untersinger, 2020). In short, the COVID-19 pandemic changed the social fabric of cities within a short period of time and did so with profound implications for the cultural system.

This report explores how five internationally recognized cultural capitals – Berlin, London, Paris, Toronto and New York City – responded to this crisis between March and late summer 2020, a period now referred to as the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Examining the governance capacities of larger cities is important, as they have specialized cultural policies that are to varying degrees independent from those of regional and national governments. We have therefore

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<sup>1</sup> We use the term “cultural ecosystem” or “cultural system” for short to refer to the set of people (e.g., artists, producers, etc.), organizations (museums, theatres etc.), events (festivals, performances) and institutions (arts education) that are part of cultural as well as artistic production, distribution, presentation and consumption. It includes other terms like cultural economy, creative industry or the arts and culture scene.

selected these five cities not only because they are major cultural capitals, but also because they differ significantly in their governance and policy approaches to arts and culture, which we already highlighted in a previous study (Merkel, 2015). Based on an update of this study, which considers the objectives, resources, activities and programs of each city, we address three central questions:

- How did policymakers and representatives of major cultural institutions and networks respond to the COVID-19 challenge? What measures were taken, when, by whom and for what purposes?
- What have been the results so far, and what have been some of the major achievements and weaknesses? What opportunities for reform and innovations present themselves, and what are the main challenges ahead?
- What lessons can be drawn from each case in terms of best practices; and, by way of cross learning, what policy measures appear most effective for future crises?

For this investigation, it is important to note that the pandemic hit the cities in different situations: Berlin, Toronto, New York and Paris were thriving, with rising cultural policy budgets and new cultural plans and objectives. Meanwhile, London, in addition to facing Brexit uncertainties, has been harmed by the UK government's decade-long austerity, which has disproportionately affected the cultural sector and involved severe cuts of local cultural services (e.g., libraries) on the municipal and the national level (Cooper, 2020). Yet all five cities had experienced a nearly decade-long real estate boom, corresponding with housing shortages and pressures on the cultural infrastructure, especially artists' workspaces. A worsening affordability crisis triggered the widespread displacement of artists, galleries, and venues and all five cities struggled to cope with the challenge of gentrification and real estate speculation (BOP Consulting, 2018).

As opposed to previous crises, such as the 2008-2009 global financial crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic has not only led to a reduction of private spending on culture. Rather, the crisis brought about a "full stop" to most cultural activity, adding to greater uncertainty on how to respond on behalf of policymakers, administrators, artists and cultural workers alike (Pratt, 2020). Past experience on how to make arts and culture resilient as the crisis unfolded were of little help. Public measures, taken to protect citizens from infection, threatened the livelihoods of millions in the cultural system. Artists and cultural workers saw their professional lives jeopardized, as events were canceled and most "non-domestic sites of cultural production" closed (Banks, 2020, p. 649).

The specific nature of the cultural economy implies a certain fragility, as well as a precarious work environment for many artists and cultural workers in the best of times. In most countries, for instance, the share of self-employed workers in the cultural ecosystem is much higher than in nearly all other parts of the economy. Across Europe, this share is about twice as high as the share of self-employment overall. The unpredictability of freelance labor in the "gig economy" is the root of structural instability for cultural workers, causing them to fall through the cracks of many traditional welfare systems (OECD, 2020). During the pandemic, cutting back on freelancers was often the first measure to economize: in May 2020, three out of five museums had put freelancer

contracts on hold (ICOM, 2020a). By November 2020, 27.5 percent of freelancers linked with museum-related work were considering a career change (ICOM, 2020b).

Yet economic aspects alone are insufficient to fathom the full impact of the pandemic. For this, it is crucial to understand culture as an expression of identities and dissent and as a way of creating real and imagined communities, thereby making it an essential ingredient of a vibrant civil society and lived democracy (Ottone, 2020). Cultural activity is strongly associated with positive outcomes, such as community-cohesion, civic engagement and the quality of life (Carnwath & Brown, 2014). Similarly, participation in cultural activities is associated with personal health and subjective wellbeing (Arts Council England, 2014). As the COVID-19 pandemic forces many people to isolate themselves, culture's potential to bring solace is gaining relevance (v. Radermecker, 2021).

Artists and cultural organizations have already integrated the pandemic into their creations. For instance, an "online museum" on Instagram now collects art pieces inspired by the pandemic, the physical distancing, the constant fears of infection and the perpetual news cycle (Chaves, 2020). Similarly, the Museum of London (UK) has asked Londoners to submit their "COVID-19 dreams" in a cooperative project with the Canadian "Museum of Dreams", which seeks to tell the story of the pandemic through sleeping patterns (Davis, 2020). The political ramifications of the pandemic, too, are highlighted: Amanda Phingbodhipakkiya, artist-in-residence at the New York City Commission on Human Rights, created the "I Still Believe in Our City" art initiative to respond to the increase of anti-Asian racism. Colorful portraits reading the words "I am not your scapegoat" or "This is our home too" now decorate public sites across New York (*I Still Believe in Our City*, 2020).

Yet these and other activities notwithstanding, the resilience of the cultural ecosystem remains an open question. In other words, how can culture and the arts maintain – or regain – some of their pre-pandemic diversity, creativity, and dynamism? And what is more, could the arts and culture benefit from emergent innovations and lessons learned from similar cities to improve governance and policymaking in the field? As we will see, across the five cities, the resilience of the cultural system is closely related to the governance capacities in place, the decisions taken by city governments, and the policies implemented.

## Approach

The five cities present different governance approaches and levels of readiness to respond to the crisis based on their past and present cultural policy stance and engagement, as shown by Merkel (2015). Not least due to their cultural renown, these approaches can serve as benchmarks for other cities (see e.g., BOP Consulting, 2018). Their extensive cultural ecosystems and, thus, the economic relevance of their cultural economy and creative industries, further offer worthwhile ground for comparison (Merkel, 2015; Anheier & Isar, 2012).

To assess the governance capacities of each city in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we use a framework developed by Lodge and Wegrich (2014). In line with their approach, we define governance capacities as the sets of skills and competencies that authorities employ to address a city's public problems. Such capacities are applied across a variety of issues such as traffic congestion, lack of affordable housing, crime reduction, and, most importantly to this report, any problems the city's cultural system might face.

The framework distinguishes between four governance capacities:

1. **Analytical capacity** is 'about the organization and type of advice that informs governmental policy-making' (Lodge and Wegrich, 2014: 44). It refers to the knowledge and expertise that informs decision making and relates to the government's authority over information and data, including their collection, for instance by having privileged access to experts. Analytical capacity relates to nodality as a governing resource and stems for example from the state's access to networks of expertise but also the organization of its knowledge through in-house expertise, think tanks or governmental research institutes. Examples of respective policy instruments are collecting and analyzing data, offering advice and training, as well as directly providing education and information.
2. **Regulatory capacity** is the capacity to sanction by prohibiting or permitting as well as incentivizing or disincentivizing certain actions, often referring to the government's power to constrain or enhance economic and social activities, set standards and enforce compliance (Lodge and Wegrich, 2014: 38). Regulatory capacity is based on the government's authority, which consists of its ability to oversee and control policy actions vis-à-vis their constituencies. Associated policy instruments are regulations, licenses and labeling, as well as entering into treaties and political agreements.
3. **Delivery capacity** is an entity's capability and required legitimacy to "make things happen". It refers to the resources that governments have to execute and manage policy requirements (Lodge and Wegrich, 2014: 36). A state's delivery capacity often relates to the direct dispensation of financial assets, goods and services. Instruments corresponding to this capacity therefore include subsidies, grants and loans, and making available workspace for artists.
4. **Coordination capacity** refers to the administrative capacity of negotiating and mediating between 'interdependent actions of different, often dispersed, actors' (Lodge and Wegrich, 2014: 40) to achieve problem-solving. This administrative capacity is based on organization as a governing resource. The government often acts as the organizer or facilitator of these coordination processes and tries to steer more cooperative behavior and joint working among organizations often under 'tricky conditions', i.e. between representatives of large cultural organizations that are relatively well-funded and the many smaller art organizations receiving little or no subsidies.

The following table summarizes the governance capacities using government actions and practical examples.

<b>Governance Capacity</b>	<b>Governance Action</b>	<b>Examples in Cultural Policy</b>
<b>Analytical capacity</b>	Information provision, advice, training, public networks of expertise, policy analyses, cost-benefit and impact analyses, open data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Collect relevant data</li> <li>▪ Share public information and expertise</li> <li>▪ Conduct consultations</li> </ul>
<b>Regulatory capacity</b>	Constrain economic and social activities, prohibit and permit via regulations and licenses, labeling, treaties, political agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Abolish, adjust and/or develop policy, rules and regulations to support innovation</li> <li>▪ Provide (temporary) permissions</li> <li>▪ Manage risks</li> </ul>
<b>Delivery capacity</b>	Financial support, subsidy and funding schemes, risk and base capital, R&D support, public procurement, organizational and human resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide grants and other types of funding</li> <li>▪ Offer affordable workspace for artists</li> </ul>
<b>Coordination capacity</b>	Network management, bringing actors together, boundary spanning, initiating and maintaining intermediary platforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Organize workshops and meetings with stakeholders</li> <li>▪ Synchronize actions and collaborate with other authorities involved</li> </ul>

(Lodge & Wegrich, 2014)

The data from this report is drawn from available documents including media reports, policy briefs, public statements, and social media accounts from relevant organizations in the cultural system. As this global pandemic is still unfolding, social media and discussion forums provide particularly important platforms for artists, cultural workers, representatives of cultural institutions, and associations and clubs to discuss common issues and to engage with civil society more widely.

There is a wealth of information available for analysis. We apply qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2019) to examine the policy process in each city, systematize the relevant actions of involved organizations and policymakers to understand the implications for the individual



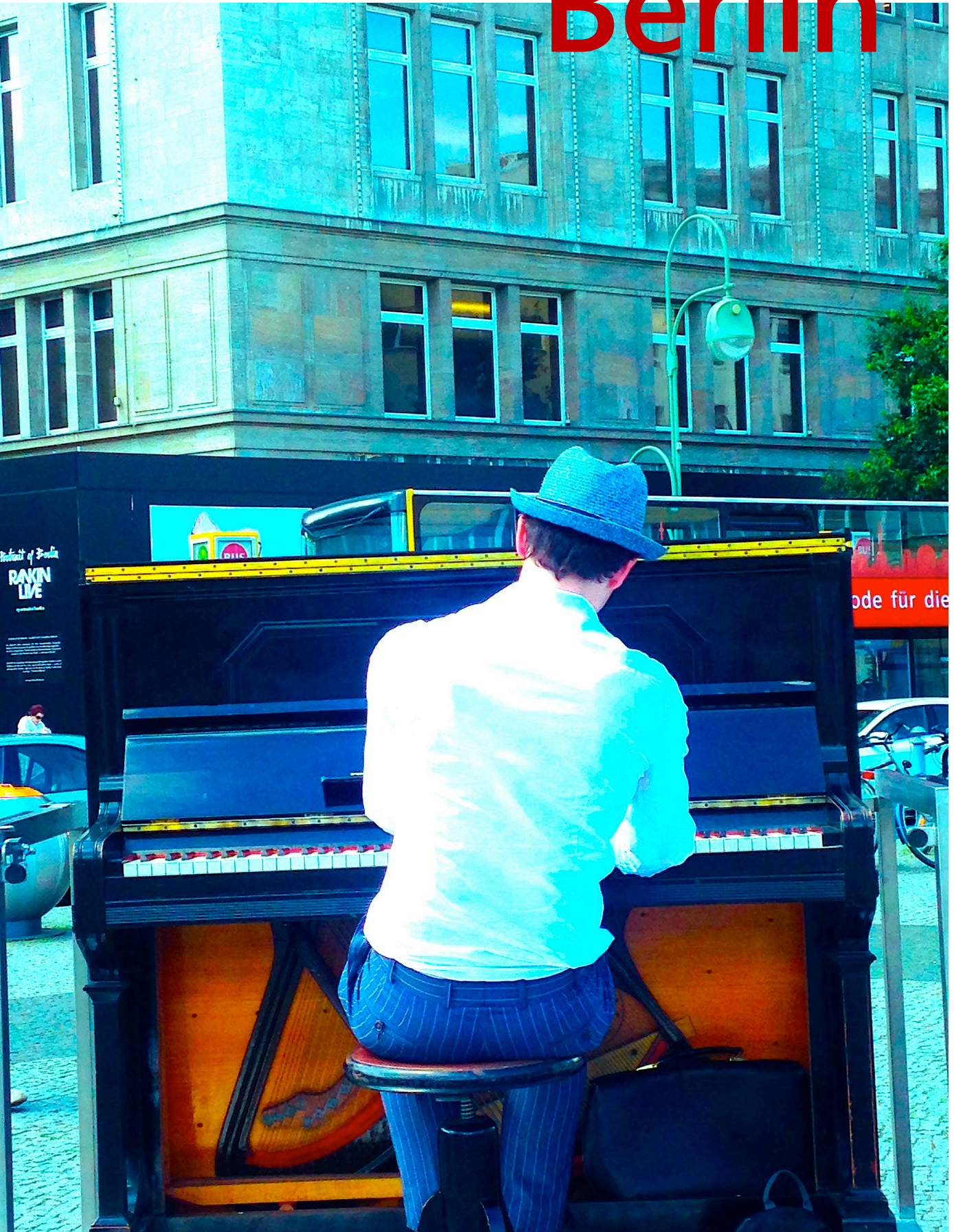
workers, institutions and the specific cultural system. This allows us to contextualize the differences between the cities under comparison, specifically regarding cultural policy priorities, histories, governance models and levels of investment in cultural infrastructure. Where necessary, we also consulted experts to cover data gaps and to verify our interpretations. This approach allows us to gain a more nuanced understanding of why particular instruments were applied, what their objectives were and what potential impacts these policies might have within each city.

## **Overview**

The following five chapters present the case studies, beginning with Berlin and proceeding in alphabetical order. Each chapter includes an overview of the city's governance and general policy approach, followed by recent cultural policy trajectories, thus providing an update of the initial 2015 study by Merkel. On that basis, we examine each city's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of its governance capacities. We conclude the case studies with policy suggestions, addressing opportunities as well as risks. Finally, we offer comparative assessments, distill lessons learned and recommend policy measures aimed at enhancing cultural resilience.

Finally, we would like to remind the reader that the empirical focus of the case studies presented here is the period between March and late summer of 2020 – or the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, it is our hope that the results of this study will be relevant for the further waves of the pandemic, as well as the handling of future crises more generally.

# Berlin



## Berlin

<b>Population</b>	
City limits	3.7 million <sup>2</sup>
Metropolitan area	6.2 million (Berlin/Brandenburg) <sup>3</sup>
<b>Budget for Culture</b>	€600 million <sup>4</sup>
<b>International Tourists</b>	5.5 million <sup>5</sup>
<b>Creative Industries Employment</b>	3.3% <sup>6,7</sup>
<b>Population diversity</b>	21% <sup>8</sup>

Since the German reunification, Berlin's cultural policy has been characterized by major transformations. After the Berlin Wall came down, two separate cultural and political-administrative infrastructures needed to be combined. During this time, the city further regained responsibility for culture from the influence of the Allies, and major institutions underwent reconstruction, organizational changes, and financial restructuring. Simultaneously, Berlin gained attractiveness for artists from all over the world and started its ascent as a "global art center" (Skórska & Kloosterman, 2012). While the future of Berlin's manifold high art institutions is secured through public funding, its independent art scene and the diverse sub-cultural scenes increasingly struggle to make a living. Those dynamic and experimental groups that provided Berlin's fertile ground as a global destination, must now fear the recent economic growth, strong population influx and global financial investments in Berlin's real estate. Accommodating Berlin's

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<sup>2</sup> *Einwohnerinnen und Einwohner, 2020.*

<sup>3</sup> *Regionaldaten, 2019.*

<sup>4</sup> *Berliner Kulturförderung, 2020.*

<sup>5</sup> *Tourismus in Zahlen, 2020.*

<sup>6</sup> Figures available for Berlin capture those employed in the sector, rather those "economically active". According to the Federal Employment Agency, the former number is lower than the latter, as it does not comprise all freelance workers.

<sup>7</sup> *Brancheninformation Medien Und Kreativwirtschaft Land Berlin, 2020.*

<sup>8</sup> *Demografische Daten Zu Berlin, 2020.*

rising living costs with the needs of artists, provides one of the contemporary challenges for cultural policy.

For a long time, Berlin's cultural policy agenda allowed the development of major cultural institutions to be prioritized and accomplished at the expense of more diverse cultural offerings in the boroughs (which were partially filled by independent arts groups). However, the boroughs have only limited financial means to maintain their basic cultural infrastructure with the allocations from the Berlin Senate. Many libraries, municipal galleries, and music schools closed in the last decade, while artists' workspaces are in danger of being sold to investors, where the boroughs can no longer support them. Despite these recent developments, Berlin still lacks a cohesive cultural policy strategy to guide the city's growth. Especially as a stronger focus on a diverse and decentralized cultural infrastructure is needed, the absence of a coherent and transparent blueprint to facilitate sustainable cultural development with palpable goals is sorely lacking.

## Cultural Policy in Berlin

Berlin's current cultural policy framework is shaped by multi-level governance, as Berlin integrates the municipal, the state, and the federal level across its cultural policy field. Berlin is a 'city-state', which simultaneously makes it a municipality as well as a federal state. Therefore, the three important pillars of funding are the boroughs, the federal-state level (referred to as the Senate or Land), and the national level. According to Article 30 of the German Basic Law, "cultural sovereignty", including the power to make cultural policy decisions, lies with the federal states (Bundesländer). Each of the 16 federal states has its cultural policies, which are characterized by their respective legislation, their own priorities, and differently structured funding. In Berlin's special role as both the German capital and a city-state with equal legal functions as other German federal states, the city and its districts possess sovereignty in the field of cultural policy.

## The City-State of Berlin

Following Berlin's city-state elections in 2016, the cultural administration was once again rearranged, a decade after it had been amalgamated with the Senate Chancellery in 2006. This resulted in the creation of the Senate Department for Culture and Europe (SenCultEU), headed by the Left Party's (Die Linke) Senator Dr. Klaus Lederer. Although cultural policy is legally anchored in Berlin's city parliament, the administration's own orientation holds extraordinary weight in Berlin. The newly created Senate Department allots approximately €600 million annually to culture in Berlin, of which the majority is allocated to the institutional funding of seventy cultural organizations. The remaining funds are flexibly dispensed through a variety of sponsoring schemes, ranging from jazz stipends and national and international art residencies to venue funding for the performing arts (*Berliner Kulturförderung*, 2020). The major objectives of Berlin's cultural policy agenda can be summarized as supporting excellence in arts and artistic production

and cultural vitality of the city, safeguarding lively heritage (like historical buildings and architectural design), developing cultural participation and inclusion (for example through staggered ticket prices), providing cultural education (through libraries, music schools, etc.) and facilitating cultural diversity (for instance with funding and institutions for migrants) (*Infrastruktur für Kunst und Kultur*, 2019).

Since Berlin's Mayor Michael Müller (heading a coalition of the Social Democratic, Left, and Green parties) assumed office after the 2016 election, cultural policy has seen some dramatic changes. First and foremost, Berlin regained the leadership of a distinct cultural senator, which it did not have in the previous administration. As a result, the appointment of Senator Lederer granted the cultural ecosystem greater political representation than in the years prior (*Ein Senator Für Die Berliner Kultur*, n.d.). This was paralleled by a substantial increase in the city's cultural policy budget.

## Representation of the Federal Government

As the German capital, Berlin holds representational functions, anchored in a 'capital-culture-treaty' (Hauptstadtkulturvertrag) between the federal government and Berlin. Adopted in 1999, it outlines responsibilities for culture that arise from Berlin's capital city status and its function to represent Germany. In 2017, the agreement provided 600 million euros for cultural spending in the city. Through the contract's provisions, the German government agrees to share the financial responsibility for several of Berlin's landmark institutions. Among these are the Jewish Museum, the Academy of Arts, The Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, the German Historical Museum, and several heritage sites on city grounds. The contract newly adds support for the Barenboim-Said-Academy, a conservatory founded with the vision of linking young Israeli and Arab musicians (Hauptstadtfinanzierungsvertrag 2017).

In addition to those capital projects, the financing contract establishes Germany's commitment to the Capital Culture Fund ("Hauptstadtkulturfonds"), a flexible project fund to support "significant individual cultural and artistic projects and events in the German capital" (*Hauptstadtkulturfonds*, 2020). Even more, the contract increased the fund's annual endowment from nearly €10 million in 2007 to €15 million in 2017. For instance, this way, the German government awards annual funding to several of Berlin's well-known festivals, such as the Young Euro Classics and the International Literature Festival Berlin (ibid.).

German Federal Culture Minister Monika Grütters' involvement in Berlin has been demonstrated by way of the large-scale projects supported in the capital. With the renovation and reopening of the Staatsoper Unter den Linden in 2017, Berlin regained its third prominent opera house and concluded an arduous renovation process, to which the national government contributed 200 million euros. Ongoing building investments with national funds also include the National Library ("Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin") and the renovation of the New National Gallery ("Neue Nationalgalerie"). The continuous renovation of Berlin's large cultural institutions is slowly recreating an updated Prussian splendor along the showpiece boulevard "Unter den Linden". The

newly reconstructed Berlin Palace, housing the new Humboldt Forum, will open in early 2021. By expanding the U5, one of the city's underground train lines, to stretch from the historically noteworthy Alexanderplatz along with these new institutions to Berlin's central train station, these cultural landmarks are embedded in Berlin's city planning.

## Berlin's Boroughs

Berlin's boroughs constitute a third governance level. The twelve boroughs are administrative districts that work under the principle of local autonomy without the legal entity of a municipality. They fulfill local administrative tasks, are led by district mayors and have their own cultural affairs offices. Although they enjoy a certain degree of independence in their expenditures, they receive their financial means through allocations from the Senate. The twelve boroughs are responsible for providing fundamental cultural infrastructures such as local libraries, music- and adult education schools, municipal galleries, sports facilities, and children and youth development projects about education and empowerment (Röber et al., 2002). Almost 50 percent of their budgets (approximately 1 million euros for all boroughs in 2020) are bound to voluntary socio-cultural purposes and are referred to as 'district-related cultural work'. This refers to projects supporting specific social or ethnic groups in the borough, its local history or facilitating civic involvement (*Kultur in den Berliner Bezirken*, 2020). This decentralized form of cultural policy in the boroughs fulfills important tasks concerning the quality of life, social cohesion, equal opportunities, and contributes significantly to Berlin's overall cultural diversity.

Beyond these public bodies, various organizations additionally support and fund culture in Berlin. For instance, the German Lottery Foundation is very active in funding projects ranging across different sectors. In 2019, they dispensed €14.1 million in funding for projects pertaining to "Culture and Europe" in Berlin (*Jahresbericht 2019*). They are joined by a host of corporate, private, and non-profit endowments made to Berlin's cultural system every year.

In the following, some of Berlin's prevalent policy trajectories are sketched briefly:

**Support for independent cultural production:** Alongside the Senate's stable political representation of Berlin's culture, the independent arts scene has also increased its engagement and interaction with the SenCultEU. The overarching Coalition of the Independent Arts ("Koalition der Freien Szene") joins several sector-specific associations under its umbrella. With the specific department for independent artists, anchored in the SenCultEU, the coalition has its own point of contact (*Berliner Kulturförderung*, 2020). A more formalized consultation between the associations and the administration has arguably resulted in a more participatory decision-making and budget allocation process. This is for instance demonstrated in the grant distribution process, which has increasingly been delegated to the sector associations with discipline-specific expertise, such as project grants for modern music, which are administered by the Initiative for New Music (*Projektförderung im Bereich der Neuen Musik*, 2016). These exchanges have led to the development of guidelines and lower limits for artists' remuneration (*LAFT Berlin Honoraruntergrenzen-Empfehlung*, 2019). Although this commitment is certainly a sign of

progress, to many of the Berlin artists who rely on insecure sources of income, these recommendations are still insufficient (Koalition der Freien Szene, 2017).

**Funding spectrum:** Despite these conditions, Berlin's cultural system has been flourishing and inviting a vastly differentiated landscape of artists. Accordingly, the spectrum of public funding available has been widened significantly. In doing so, funding has ventured into previously unexplored disciplines. The introduction of comic drawing-scholarships, for instance, may perhaps be seen as the symptom of a city grappling with the area of conflict between traditional notions of "high culture" and cultural innovations from a grassroots level (*Comicstipendien*, 2020). Notable strides have also been taken to sponsor cultural research, with the Society for Artistic Research in Germany ("Gesellschaft für künstlerische Forschung") administering 2-year scholarships using Senate funding (*Kulturelle Bildung in Berlin*, 2020). Faced with heightened demands for strong digital infrastructure and competences, the SenCultEU additionally created funding streams aimed at digitizing Berlin's cultural heritage and supporting the workers' and institutions' readiness to create digital innovation (*Digitalisierung*, 2020). What is more, in the aftermath of the refugee influx of 2015, SenCultEU sought to accentuate Berlin's openness to newcomers by creating the Weltoffenes Berlin ("Berlin, open to the world") fellowship, which facilitates entry into Berlin's arts scene for those who have sought refuge in the city (*Weltoffenes Berlin*, 2018).

**Cultural participation:** Besides the addition of new funding streams, Berlin has prioritized enhancing cultural participation through the formation of new permanent initiatives. The city-funded Foundation for Cultural Education and Cultural Consulting functions as the umbrella organization for three bodies. Diversity Arts Culture fulfills the role of a "conceptual and advisory office for diversity development" for Berlin's culture (*Diversity Arts Culture*, n.d.), based on the finding that Berlin's cultural sector must take proactive measures to address its diverse population (Aikins & Gyamerah, 2016). Beyond the diversity of the workers and institutions, the Institute for Research on Cultural Participation was founded to investigate cultural participation in Berlin's cultural offerings (*IKTf*, n.d.). The SenCultEU's funding of a permanent body to deliver information for evidence-based policies on cultural participation demonstrates the political will to strengthen the inclusivity of the cultural system.

**Affordability:** The last years have seen a massive spike in rent prices and a decline in room availability, especially in Berlin's central districts. The Senate's consultations have brought political attention to the fact that the cost of living has risen dramatically in Berlin with less and less suitable spaces for artistic work and performances available. Particularly smaller, independent initiatives are continually driven further away from the city center. What is more, nearby Leipzig increasingly presents an alternative, as it is also a flourishing cultural city with lower costs of living than Berlin. Consequently, the Coalition of the Independent Arts has steadily lobbied on behalf of Berlin's artists who are either at risk of losing their spaces or have already lost them. In 2019, the association organized the "Raumkampagne" to draw attention to the problem, highlighting that Berlin is losing approximately 350 art studios every year (Messmer, 2018). With increasing costs of living, but stagnant wages for artists, a 2018 study calculates that 90 percent of Berlin's art population are or will be affected by old-age poverty (Institut für Strategieentwicklung, 2018).

Consequently, the process surrounding the future usage of Berlin's city property "Alte Münze" attracted some attention. The vast block of buildings functioned as one of Germany's mint factories throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. After production moved to Berlin's outskirts in 2006, the disused building was considered for a variety of purposes. Ultimately, its potential as an interdisciplinary hub for the creative community prevailed (*Geschichte - Alte Münze*, n.d.). The creation of a strategy was structured as a large-scale and very public participatory consultation with representatives from the independent cultural system. However, the inefficient process of bringing different stakeholders on one page has since resulted in some disillusionment concerning the use of vacant public spaces for the independent arts (Koalition der Freien Szene, 2019b).

To address this set of problems and combat displacement of Berlin's artists and cultural workers, the city has further created "Berlin Cultural Space". The subsidiary company follows the goal to secure 2000 city-owned artist workshops to offer at affordable rent (*Kulturraum Berlin GmbH*, 2020). In doing so, the city is slowly moving away from the practice of subsidizing artist workshops to promote affordability – a method that has become increasingly unsustainable, as commercial rent prices continue to soar (Kröger, 2019).

**Club culture:** Similarly, Berlin's famous clubs, which must compete in the city's appreciating real estate market, have become the object of greater political focus. Senator Lederer has voiced his support for their inclusion in Berlin's definition of culture as both crucial live music venues and as the loci of Berlin's socio-culture (Schließ, 2019). Political representation for clubs has also profited from the dedicated "Clubcommission". In its 2019 "Club Culture Study", the sector association emphasized the club scene's vital role for Berlin as an internationally attractive city. At the same time, the study's results demonstrate how spatially and financially fragile these clubs are, with many having to close or relocate due to the fiercely competitive real estate market (Clubcommission, 2019).

## Berlin's Response to COVID-19

When the magnitude of the COVID-19 pandemic was felt in Germany in the early days of March, discussions about the closures of public life emerged. As corresponding regulations were left to the individual states, Berlin (in its function as a city-state), was thus responsible for decreeing distancing measures, mask policies, and the shutdown of cultural activities. Consequently, all indoor cultural activity, whether public or private, came to a halt on March 14, 2020 (*Kultureinrichtungen des Landes*, 2020). Nevertheless, by way of Berlin's dual role as the Germany's capital and a city-state, the city had the advantageous power to take measures for the aid of its cultural system. The city implemented simplifications of the public procurement law to address those grants that were already dispensed. Correspondingly, the bureaucratic hurdles for rescheduling or adapting the projects appropriate to the new context have been lowered. Though emergency funding for the cultural ecosystem was initially embedded in wider aid measures across all sectors, targeted scholarship programs in cooperation with the Department's subsidiary



organization Kulturprojekte Berlin GmbH soon followed (*Stipendienprogramm*, 2020). The Senate's public funding measures were joined by a variety of non-profit initiatives.

After a rush of freelance workers' applications for the city's emergency programs depleted the "Soforthilfe"-program's budget, Berlin's government advocated for a transition to national Bridgeover Funds ("Überbrückungshilfe"). This change revealed a social precipice for freelancers. While the program covered the artists' operating costs, freelancers had to fall back on unemployment benefits to cover their living expenses. Though the access to these benefits was facilitated, their essence includes a readiness to rejoin the job market – often in vastly different sectors. This announcement triggered several responses challenging Berlin's role in the delivery of these measures. Berlin's arts organizations signaled outrage at the notion of leaving artists to rely on social security benefits and reproached the government for a lack of appreciation for the arts (*LAFT Berlin: Corona Update #18*, 2020). Even Berlin's SenCultEU spoke out against the solution offered by the national government offered. After its announcement, the Senate appealed to the German government, claiming:

"The state of Berlin considers the preservation of the arts and the cultural landscape as a task of national significance, at least, which necessitates the concerted efforts of the national, regional and municipal governments" (*Kultur Trotz(t) Corona!*, 2020, p. 7; translation by the authors).

Following Berlin's draft law in the German Council ("Bundesrat"), the German states voted in favor of implementing salary compensation for artists. However, this ruling was met with reluctance on the part of the federal government (Biesler, 2020). Instead, Minister for Culture Grütters proposed that the solution to the freelancer's difficulties lies within the provided mechanisms. By supporting structures and institutions nationwide with an impressive 1-billion-euro bailout entitled "Restart Culture" ("Neustart Kultur"), funds are intended to trickle down to freelancers that are being contracted for their work (*Eine Milliarde Euro für Neustart Kultur*, 2020). The much-needed funds were disseminated quickly: in mid-November 2020, €600 million were already allocated across Germany (*Mehr als 600 Millionen Euro*, 2020). As cultural events remain severely restricted in their scope and institutions uncertain in their ability to plan, this approach is, however, far from comprehensive.

Amidst the national government's hesitancy to act on the part of freelancers in the cultural system, Berlin's SenCultEU assumed responsibility for its artistic population. In July 2020, the Senate announced a scholarship program endowed with €18 million to fund 2,000 scholarships for Berlin-based cultural workers. Among the representation of the independent artists in the city, the program – and its additional financial consideration for workers with disabilities – was welcomed. Within this second wave of policy measures, SenCultEU was visibly less sweeping in its response, employing measures specifically targeted to emergent needs after months of altered cultural practices. Correspondingly, the supplementary budget included funds for the "Outside City Initiative" ("Initiative Draußenstadt"), aimed at artistic practice in public spaces and decentralized art objects throughout the city (*Stipendienprogramm*, 2020). To specifically support decentralization, Senator Lederer has also created partnerships with three peripheral boroughs to

establish specific advisory bodies to facilitate art events in their boroughs (*Kultur Trotz(t) Corona!*, 2020).

In addition to the financial measures, Berlin's SenCultEU further provided strategic guidance with the cultural policy emergency strategy "Culture despite Corona" ("Kultur trotz(t) Corona"). The document demonstrated Berlin's political will to assume responsibility in a time of crisis. It concisely portrays the city's emergency funds, projected reopening perspectives, and the consequences for Berlin's cultural policy. Among its key policy priorities, the report highlights the necessity for solidarity among and with civil society, focusing on cultural activity outside, and proposes to efficiently use the shutdown for previously planned renovations (as exemplified by the Friedrichstadtpalast, where renovations were moved up from 2022 to 2020; *Kultur Trotz(t) Corona!*, 2020). The publication was accompanied by a steadily updated hygiene framework, which outlines detailed technical information. This, however, was accused by some of Berlin's cultural organizations of creating new problems: with the loss of income from ticket sales and rising expenses to implement government-issued hygiene guidelines, a financial gap is created – making cultural practice less and less affordable for artists.

Berlin further engaged with the cultural system by creating new digital frameworks. Soon after the shutdowns, SenCultEU published the platform "Berlin (a)live". The website functioned as an events calendar with live-streamed events or online activities from Berlin artists. Alongside these performances, Berlin (a)live facilitated online donations to the participating artists (*What Is Berlin (a)live?*, 2020). In a similar vein, Berlin's Clubcommission shaped the cultural response to COVID-19 not just for Berlin, but internationally. A mere five days after Berlin's club scene came to a halt, the association partnered with Reclaim Club Culture to release "United We Stream", an online portal to access daily live streams of concerts and DJ sets. In exchange, this site, too, collects donations to distribute to the struggling club scene – €1.5 million worldwide to date. The page has since been used internationally, featuring streams from 93 cities from across the world (*United We Stream*, 2020).

Just as cultural activity had recommenced and institutions were amid their 2020/2021 programming, the German government reacted to the rapid growth of infections by imposing a sweeping shutdown of cultural activity starting on November 2, 2020. This shutdown excluded that which the government entitled "the economy", meaning that many workplaces and stores would remain open. However, counting culture as "entertainment", the regulation resulted in the closure of all cultural institutions for at least four weeks across all 16 states. The far-reaching hygiene adaptations and new investments in cultural institutions were not enough to convince the German government to exclude the cultural system from the measures taken (*Corona-Pandemie*, 2020). While the details concerning renewed emergency programs for the arts have to date not been finalized, the renewed shutdown the potential to devastate Berlin's cultural and creative ecosystem (*Grütters*, 2020). Previously planned measures through the "Outside City Initiative", too, had to be canceled (*Kulturhäuser und Galerien*, 2020).

A selection of notable programs that benefited Berlin's landscape included:

- Berlin's "Soforthilfe" programs, available in different editions for freelancers, small, medium-sized and large institutions, made available starting March 27, 2020 until February 2021 at least
- Berlin's transboundary cultural scholarship program worth €18 million, announced in July 2020
- Germany's Restart Culture was announced on May 28, 2020 and consequently passed by the German government with an endowment of 1 billion euros to cover, among others:
  - 250 million euros for renovations and adaptations to the hygiene guidelines to facilitate reopening
  - 480 million euros for retaining the critical cultural infrastructure across the country
  - Continued payment for teachers in conservatories or art schools in Berlin.

## Impact of COVID-19

Berlin's shutdowns caused by COVID-19 have posed existential threats to large parts of Berlin's cultural system. The measures outlined above were taken as a consequence of this threat, though their long-term effects cannot be ascertained, yet. The second shutdown, commencing in November 2020, has demonstrated that reopening periods for cultural events cannot be deemed stable until a definitive cure to the virus is found. SenCultEU's strategy, too, acknowledges the spectrum of Berlin's cultural ecosystem and refers to the dangers of keeping the city's institutions closed for an extended period. Further, the national government's strong involvement in Berlin's questions of cultural policy has continued in the context of the pandemic. With the announcement of the Restart Culture program, Germany's cultural emergency measures under Grütters were disseminated to all regions of the country, with no special emphasis on Berlin. Encouragingly, the national budget for culture will experience a further boost in the FY2021; COVID-19 does not appear to have altered this trajectory (*Rede von Kulturstaatsministerin*, 2020).

**Support for independent cultural production:** Berlin's engagement with the independent cultural producers and institutions has, even more than before, become a matter of ensuring economic survival. In consequence of this threat, as proven in the years before the COVID-19 outbreak, the ecosystem has organized its activity remarkably well, acting in concert to obtain the common goal of economic survival. Initiatives like "Niemand kommt, alle sind dabei" (2020), a cultural festival where people can purchase tickets for not attending, or the protest march "Help! Artists! Now!" ("Künstler! Hilfe! Jetzt!") with core demands on behalf of the cultural system, demonstrate a fiercely political lobby (Künstlerhilfe Foundation e.V., 2020).

**Precarious work:** Despite this strong lobby, the influence of the independent arts is stacked against the devastating effects of prolonged closure. Consequently, the cultural ministers and senators from all 16 German states joined together to call for economic support that expands beyond the operating costs freelance workers in arts and events (Kultusministerkonferenz, 2020). As Minister for Culture Grütters expressed, “It is not only a question of money but primarily a question of appreciation” (Grütters, 2020). Though it appeared to arrive at the last possible moment, a nation-wide discussion about securing the economic survival of freelance workers was borne from the crisis. However, whether the discussion can yield improvements for the cultural ecosystem is yet to be seen.

**Affordability:** Similarly, as most cultural organizations and independent artists have encountered cash flow problems as a result of the pandemic, Berlin’s loss of affordable real estate has even more traction as a political issue. Under Senator Lederer’s leadership, SenCultEU’s priority in the pandemic was to secure the cultural system’s basic needs for economic survival (*Kultur Trotz(t) Corona!*, 2020). Nevertheless, the city’s rising rents pose an even greater threat now, where any studio, workshop, or project space lost because of the pandemic will likely be lost for future cultural use forever. Just before the impact of COVID-19 unfolded, Berlin’s Senate passed a rental cap on residential properties that took effect for five years starting in February 2020. However, this does not apply to commercial spaces, implying that independently run gallery spaces, studios, and clubs are still at the mercy of rising market prices (*Mietendeckel*, 2020). This, too, exposes inequalities between publicly funded institutions, who are not as affected by this existential threat, and independent institutions. Although the aftermath of the pandemic may be difficult to fathom, matters of affordability and gentrification are likely to accelerate, as SenCultEU’s influence over Berlin’s private real estate market, especially for commercial spaces, is limited without severe policy intervention.

**Cultural participation:** In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the availability of reliable data has become an issue of utmost importance to track its impact on the cultural sector and consequently make sustainable political decisions. The Institute for Research on Cultural Participation has already forecasted an adverse effect of the pandemic on the progression of cultural participation in Berlin. This is because the pandemic is likely to deter those groups that were already less likely to make use of Berlin’s cultural offer, as well as creating additional economic burdens on large parts of the city’s population (Allmanritter & Renz, 2020). What is more, the increased health risks for older populations have already generated lower proportional attendance to Berlin’s museums and heritage sites in the summer of 2020 (Renz & Allmanritter, 2020). These preliminary findings indicate that the share those groups that are most affected by the health risks and the economic impact of the pandemic is in the process of regressing. To track these effects, Berlin’s in-depth city-wide survey of cultural participation can now be utilized as a reference data set to compare the impact of the pandemic with renewed surveys.

## Assessing Berlin's Cultural Policy Response

In the following, the strengths and weaknesses of Berlin's administrative capacities with respect to the city's cultural policy action are assessed (Lodge & Wegrich, 2014).

### Strengths

#### Analytical:

Based on the information disseminated centrally through a health institute based in Berlin, it was in the hands of the German states to make decisions about their cultural policy measures. Knowing of the uncertainty the city's cultural institutions were facing, Berlin swiftly used its publicly funded sites as a target for first closures, leaving independent institutions to follow suit. Further, the SenCultEU became the first point of contact for those seeking information on COVID-19 and culture. In publishing its own "Culture despite Corona" strategy, Berlin shared priorities and a plan of action with the public (*Kultur Trotz(t) Corona!*, 2020). The participatory revision of Berlin's hygiene guidelines, as demonstrated by the lifting of the ban on communal singing in closed rooms, testified to a willingness to adapt the city's policy approach to newly emerging findings (*Expert\*innengespräch Zum Gemeinsamen Singen*, 2020). To make available the administration's expertise, its subsidiary consulting center "Creative Culture Berlin" ("Kreativ Kultur Berlin") offered consultations on the available funding mechanisms and their eligibility.

Moreover, as repeatedly emphasized by Senator Lederer, Berlin's policies seek to include a forecasted long-term perspective, for example through temporally staggered funding rounds or the allocation of funds to the adaption of cultural operation to COVID-19. In doing so, Berlin has gone beyond merely demonstrating the political will to act on behalf of its cultural population, but also attempted to afford these cultural workers and organizations some ability to plan ahead. The additional investments into data collection through the Institute for Research on Cultural Participation support this long-term perspective by offering evidence on the status quo ante to strengthen post-pandemic cultural research.

#### Regulatory:

Due to its legal standing and budgetary power as a city-state, Berlin's regulatory capacities have permitted a rapid response to this public health crisis. Berlin's mayor Michael Müller enforced a city-wide shutdown of cultural activity within a matter of days while overseeing available resources and aid programs. The relative administrative independence of the city further allowed for their specificity to Berlin's cultural infrastructure.

Similarly, Berlin demonstrated flexibility in its budgetary policies. As certain budget lines set aside for the FY2020 could not be used for their intended purpose, the city quickly repurposed these funds to a new, pandemic-related scholarship program and project grants for outdoor cultural activity. In the context of the pandemic, Berlin's government has demonstrated a quick reaction

and willingness to provide the cultural system with support where it is needed. Even in the foreseeable future, there will be an increase in cultural budgets. Berlin's projected budget for 2021 features a substantial increase in the cultural expenditure: 817 million euros, up from the originally planned 790 million euros in 2020 (*Haushaltsplan von Berlin, 2020, p. 9*). This will be complemented by national funding, as Germany's cultural budget for FY2021 endows the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media with €1.94 billion, an increase of 6.6 percent from 2020 (*Bund plant deutlich höhere Ausgaben, 2020*).

#### Delivery:

In response to COVID-19, Berlin's Senate demonstrated a remarkably fast response: Indeed, the "Soforthilfe" programs were in effect merely two weeks after the cultural shutdown was put in place. In the period from March 27 and April 1, 2020, the Senate efficiently dispensed funds to approximately 50,000 applicants in the category of "Arts, entertainment and recreation" (*Kultur Trotz(t) Corona!, 2020*). The speedy creation and efficient execution of the program stands in contrast to accusations of clumsiness the administration is usually met with. It has set the city apart both from other capitals, as well as from other German regions, who were far more leisurely in reacting to the threat.

Both the German and the Berlin governments recognized the danger the cultural system was facing and mobilized significant funds. Beyond that, though, Berlin has taken additional steps to compensate for the national government's initially hesitant response on the part of freelance workers. While the federal government offered economic assistance for cultural workers upon renewing the cultural shutdown in November 2020 (amounting to 75 percent of their income in November 2019), Berlin's SenCultEU recognized the precarity of freelance workers and offered assistance in the spring of 2020 including scholarships, which can also be used for living expenses (*Außerordentliche Wirtschaftshilfe, 2020*).

Additionally, through the prompt launch of Berlin (a)live, the city offered additional resources to facilitate crowdfunding and connect Berlin's citizens with culture. Not only did the online platform offer coverage of cultural activities, but it also recognized the financial distress to artists that can result from making this offer available for free. As a result, the website includes the capacity to monetize these digital offers.

#### Coordination:

Berlin's cultural policy action was centrally coordinated by SenCultEU. Thereby, it was integrated into the wider emergency scheme offered by the Senate. For instance, cultural workers profited from the "Soforthilfe" program, which was provided by the Senate Department for Economics, Energy and Public Enterprises and the city's investment bank. This task-sharing with the cross-sectoral Senate programs and the schemes provided by the national government allowed Senator Lederer's department to complement the measures provided with very specific measures targeted towards Berlin's cultural system. To devise these tailored actions, SenCultEU included a variety of non-profit organizations and associations in the planning process. With the information

gathered, the Senate was able to advocate for its city's interests both in internal budgetary negotiations, as well as impact national politics through its seat in the National Council. Similarly, Senator Lederer has created the "Culture Despite Corona" strategy through a participative process:

Countless situation analyses, pieces of advice, and proposals from Berlin's associations and initiatives have allowed the Senate Department for Culture and Europe to gain a timely overview of the crisis' impact on overarching cultural issues and the sections (*Kultur Trotz(t) Corona!*, 2020, p. 2; translation by the authors).

The consultations during this process build on mechanisms of exchange for the independent arts and the administration that have been employed progressively over the past years.

## **Weaknesses**

### Delivery:

Though the delivery of Berlin's first emergency response programs was praised for its efficiency, significant criticism concerning the communication of these measures remained. The measures were charged with being too ad-hoc with scant guidance on how the variety of measures may be combined, as well as who is eligible to apply for them (Koalition der Freien Szene, 2020a). Its further delivery also fell victim to the intricacies of German public procurement law, which, for those programs that went beyond the immediate "Soforthilfe", required an abundance of documents and effort to apply.

### Coordination:

Berlin's COVID-19 response revealed some of the weaknesses of the city-state's role within national governance arrangements. Though Berlin's mayor advocated for measures to support freelance workers in the National Council, the city alone does not possess the political weight to implement a national emergency response that can parallel its own. Therefore, when the preliminary "Soforthilfe" funds were depleted, the transition from the funding opportunities at the city-level to the national level created some hurdles and discontentment. Similarly, the German government's decision to implement the second closure of all cultural establishments sought a harmonized approach from all states. In this arrangement, Berlin had little leverage to seek out an individual solution most suited to its cultural landscape.

Due to the weight attributed to culture in public budgets, emergency responses aimed at Berlin's cultural sector did not include much engagement from foundations. Beyond the German Lottery Foundation, the coordinated philanthropic effort for Berlin's culture is limited. The crisis, too, has revealed that philanthropic funding was mainly channeled towards other purposes. This way, Berlin misses out not only on additional financial support, but also on actors with the potential to coordinate and drive forward innovations.

Berlin's multilevel administration also holds difficulties for cultural coordination of the city's districts, which are responsible for delivering the "Outside City" funds. This is primarily caused by the very differentiated cultural orientations and administrative capabilities present. Indeed, Berlin's Coalition of the Independent Arts warned that the district bureaus have a lack of readiness to implement a program of such a scale and are vastly differential in their cultural expertise and personnel (Koalition der Freien Szene, 2020b).

## Opportunities

### Analytical:

The context of the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the urgency of access to up-to-date cultural research to make evidence-based decisions. This prioritization might incentivize SenCultEU and Europe to invest more resources in data collection on the cultural ecosystem in the future. This information may be of special importance to track the evolution of cultural participation over the next few years. With in-depth data collection and analysis, the most vulnerable groups in the cultural system can be identified and incorporated into evidence-based policy action.

### Regulatory:

Berlin's discussion about the social security of artists working in the cultural system had already begun before the pandemic. As enduring shortcomings in the ecosystem have attracted nationwide notice during the pandemic, enough momentum has been built up to lobby for a nation-wide solution. With the specific scholarship programs created for freelance workers and the advocacy work on behalf of the independent cultural system, Berlin could take over a leadership role among federal states when it comes to addressing the socio-economic precarity of artists and cultural workers. With the first steps made, Berlin could spearhead the campaign to push for a national social security approach.

Similarly, as SenCultEU has already developed lower-wage bounds for artists for their project funding, the crisis offers an opportunity for the administration to publicize these standards more widely and emerge from the crisis with harmonized minimum pay. Although it is only a small step, it is an advance to permit its recipients the ability to pursue their craft in dignity.

### Delivery:

As the months of pandemic-related closures saw a mass migration of cultural activities online, many Berliners – arts-related or not – increased their interaction with online interfaces. The resulting capacities in the digital sphere with specific, consumer-oriented platforms, offers an opportunity for Berlin's future. In the aftermath of the crisis, we will likely see heightened digital literacy, both on the creator and the consumer side. The delivery of new cultural activity may in the future take a multi-level approach and combine streaming with presence-based art forms. This



provides not only multiple platforms to connect creators with audiences and “consumers”, but also has the potential to extend the target group of Berlin’s cultural activities.

#### Coordination:

Following the participatory process surrounding the “Alte Münze”, the city’s use of its properties will most likely play a much larger role in the coming years. After experiencing the challenges of such a public process, it remains to hope that future negotiations will permit impartiality regarding the usage on the part of Berlin. For the city, the creation of such coordination processes may offer an opportunity to tackle the lack of space, as the unused properties are coming to the fore. It also allows the city to make further use of the participatory communication channels SenCultEU has established over the last years.

The German government’s engagement and high-caliber investment in Berlin’s cultural system have the potential to increase the city’s international renown and influence even further. Over the duration of Culture Minister Grütters’ term (since 2013), the German budget for culture has been expanded by 60 percent (*Bund plant deutlich höhere Ausgaben, 2020*). In light of this significant budgetary increase and the political will to put it into action in Berlin, Berlin should now see greater cooperation with the national government concerning these projects. To ensure some oversight of these developments, Berlin’s administration needs to insert itself into the conversation and establish itself as a cooperative partner. Otherwise, the city risks being a passive bystander to the national cultural agenda.

### **Threats**

#### Analytical:

Even though Berlin’s government has announced reopening prospects and hygiene measures, conditions are precarious, as all cultural activity needed to consider the possibility of closing again – a scenario that eventually came to pass. Therefore, the uncertainty about how long COVID-19 will impact Berlin requires the city’s administration to continually make decisions concerning the demands and challenges of the future, with only limited expertise. The threat of unexpected changes to the situation, which includes a continual stop-and-go of cultural activity, always the first on the chopping block, is looming until a definitive end to the pandemic is in sight.

Furthermore, as Berlin is searching for answers to these threats, other issues on the cultural policy horizon are at risk of being abandoned. For instance, while the effects of climate change are discussed in the city, their connection to cultural policy has not taken place yet. As the dangers stemming from climate change have permeated several of Berlin’s economic sectors, this neglect on the part of SenCultEU puts the cultural system at the risk of being stragglers in a field that requires comprehensive policy action.

### Regulatory:

The sudden loss of revenue for workers in Berlin's cultural system has made cultural work unsustainable for many of those who have not been able to accumulate substantial savings over the last years. The resulting financial hardship many of these workers have faced threatens to bring about a loss of diversity, with fewer and fewer people being able to afford to be an artist in Berlin. As a consequence, Berlin is risking that its artistic population will leave the city, or will have to permanently switch labor markets to make a living. The talent and creativity lost to Berlin's culture have the potential to leave a mark in the years to come.

What is more, Berlin's real estate market with rapidly rising prices and new upscale housing developments will likely pose an existential threat to Berlin's cultural system. This is especially true among independent cultural workers, who are increasingly priced out of their neighborhoods (Koalition der Freien Szene, 2019a). In a similar fashion to the developments already detected in many cultural metropolises over the last years, the rise in prices, combined with the revenue losses due to COVID-19, threatens the loss of long-standing landmarks of Berlin's cultural infrastructure. With artist studios becoming scarce, we risk seeing a movement away from the production of art towards a greater emphasis on the profitable dissemination of art.

### Delivery:

Berlin's far-reaching cultural policy response was not paralleled in all of Germany's regions (Deutscher Kulturrat, n.d.). The variance of measures across the country may pose a threat to the German cultural ecology, ultimately feeding back to the functioning of Berlin's ability to deliver cultural policy.

Furthermore, Berlin's unique cultural fabric is, in part, a result of its large population of international artists. This composition must necessarily be considered for emergency measures and be adequately reflected in the structure of social security measures. If the city cannot remain attractive to its global community and offer support in the face of an uncertain future, these valued "creatives" might turn their backs on Berlin. This development would pose a clear threat for newcomer artists, who have already faced significant disadvantages during the crisis.

The cultural output of the next several years is now under threat of damages resulting from the COVID-19 responses. Since various cultural activities usually performed in groups could not be produced in their usual form, production cycles, for example in film, were slowed down – indicating fewer releases in the coming years. Furthermore, in an effort to attract visitors in the midst and aftermath of a crisis of health and the economy, cultural workers may run the risk of turning to content that will appeal to the largest number of visitors. This might indicate both a turn away from aesthetically or politically controversial art, as well as the increased production of well-known content that can dependably draw in a large turnout, for instance in theaters.

### Coordination:

The past decade has seen a steady increase of the role of the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media in Berlin's cultural institutions and support of the arts – a trend that will likely continue, considering the COVID-19 measures and ongoing construction projects in the nation's capital. Similarly, there are several large-scale institutions, which are bound to impact the city's cultural fabric – such as the construction of the "Museum of Modernity" ("Museum der Moderne"), as well as the opening or reopening of the "New National Gallery" and the Humboldt Forum. Berlin, however, already applies 95 percent of its budget to fund large institutions. The necessity for new museums, rather than offering some institutional securities to the independent arts is not always popular. The national government's capital investments strengthen the inner-city focus of cultural policy in Berlin and do little to ameliorate the existing divides in cultural infrastructure provision between the inner-city and the outer boroughs. This threatens to exacerbate the differences of opportunity within the same city even further.

In light of the pandemic, Berlin's cultural senator has demonstrated the much-needed analytical, coordination and delivery capacities to act quickly to attenuate the income and revenue losses for cultural workers, businesses and organizations. Those measures were flanked by several support programs of the national government to sustain cultural businesses – yet those leave many smaller businesses with little operating costs and freelance workers ineligible, exposing the vulnerability of independent artists and cultural workers, existing inequalities and the fragility of the city's cultural sector. While the bigger publicly funded institutions will navigate the crisis unscathed, it is the smaller organizations and independent institutions that will need special cultural policy attention in the months to come.

### **Policy Recommendations for Berlin:**

Considering the analysis of Berlin's governance capacities above, several policy courses are recommended:

1. **Create a more comprehensive evidence base:** Berlin must expand its **analytical** capacities to cover the full range of organizations, artists and cultural workers. To this end, a joint effort from the city's newly-established administrative unit "Berlin Cultural Space", the city's Institute for Research on Cultural Participation and representatives from the independent arts must track ongoing changes such as the loss of cultural spaces, and assess ways to respond proactively.
2. **Develop a cultural plan for Berlin:** While Berlin has a cultural policy framework, it has no long-term strategy that brings together the city's general urban plan with cultural policy objectives and needs. To heighten Berlin's **regulatory** clout, the city must now create such a strategy to navigate acute and emergent issues, such as the precarious economic situation of many artists or changes in real estate markets affecting its cultural ecosystem. Although an ambitious endeavor, the other cities have shown that

this plan must involve a broad-based consultation process to cover all facets of the city's rich cultural landscape. Critically, such a plan should involve Berlin's boroughs in its development as well as implementation.

3. **Use broader spectrum of governance tools:** While Berlin provides scholarship to artists and project funding to many cultural organizations, examples from the other cities demonstrate that a wider portfolio of measures may contribute to a degree of continuity amid fluctuating public budgets. Berlin, too, must explore additional instruments such as loans specific to culture or tax incentives for the owners of cultural venues to enhance its **delivery capacity**.
4. **Respond to inequalities between institutions:** To enhance the **delivery capacity**, Berlin must create more shorter term funding streams for small-scale and independent artistic and cultural production, which severely suffered from cash flow problems as a consequence of the lockdown. In particular, short-term funding for the performing arts is necessary, as those were forced to suspend their activities almost completely. For instance, a city-wide post-pandemic performing arts festival that invites people back in the streets of their neighborhoods and into the arts and cultural organisations could provide a much-needed stimulus. Here, the ideas for the program "*Draussenstadt*" provide useful impetus to explore other options.
5. **Restart cultural activity:** The longer the pandemic lingers, and the cultural ecosystem is affected by closures and social distancing measures, the more difficult it will be to restart the public cultural life in the city. Therefore, to enhance **delivery**, Berlin's cultural administration and key stakeholders must address audience concerns by communicating clearly existing safety measures while encouraging renewed participation in the arts and culture. Devising programs and measures specific to pandemic situations is important to make sure that as much of the city's cultural ecosystem survives extended periods of partial or full closure. New membership schemes, marketing campaigns, online activities and smaller targeted events are just some of many examples.
6. **Invest in development of new business models:** The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that many artists and cultural workers could shift their performances online, yet for only few this meant actual income generation. To enhance Berlin's **delivery capacity**, the city must therefore integrate the development of new business models into its strategic plan and begin supporting their application. This also means that the city engages in market-making to connect artists, cultural producers, organizations and audiences in finding sustainable revenues.
7. **Enable more shared governance:** Berlin must expand its **coordination capacity** by creating a permanent and representative cultural advisory board, as demonstrated in London. This body allows the city not only to make use of its expertise of the cultural ecosystem but also to take leadership and develop ideas for the future of cultural policy in Berlin. The board could convene a summit on the future of cultural policy in

Berlin after the COVID-19 pandemic, review available research, develop joint proposals and help assess policy options.

8. **Foster ecological thinking of culture:** In order to enhance Berlin's resilience to future crises, the **coordination capacity** within the cultural ecosystem must be intensified across genres and fields. Both, the various sector associations and members of the ecosystem themselves, must encourage more solidarity and collaboration between the institutions, artists and cultural workers. This approach also strengthens a more ecological thinking in cultural policy where interrelations and interdependencies are emphasized.
9. **Engage philanthropy and civil society:** Berlin must enhance its **coordination capacity** and **delivery capacity** to form new partnerships with philanthropy and civil society, which offer diverse social, economic and cultural resources and considerable expertise. Yet much of this rich resource and expertise remains untapped, even unrecognized. For example, next to a smaller number of larger philanthropic foundations, Berlin hosts a much larger number of smaller ones with a focus on arts and culture. They could be approached and encouraged to contribute to a collective effort to see Berlin's cultural ecosystem through the pandemic. There are also many nonprofit associations supporting culture that could be enlisted and encouraged to mobilize funds and resources in kind. Currently, there some 864 such support associations in Berlin that could be called upon (*Kulturfördervereine*, 2019), leaving aside many more informal groups, clubs and circles.

# London



## London

<b>Population</b>	
City limits	8.96 million <sup>9</sup>
Metropolitan area	14.26 million <sup>10</sup>
<b>Budget for Culture</b>	£21 million (2019/2020) <sup>11</sup>
<b>International Tourists</b>	
	21.7 million <sup>12</sup>
<b>Creative Industries Employment</b>	11.9 % <sup>13</sup>
<b>Population diversity</b>	
	37% <sup>14</sup>

London is an extremely culturally vibrant and diverse city, with over 300 spoken languages and 37 percent of its population born outside the United Kingdom (UK) (BOP Consulting, 2018). Heralded by its administration as “the cultural capital of the world” (Mayor of London, 2018b, p. 6), London is home both to renowned cultural heritage sites, such as the Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre, and flourishing design, fashion, and film industries. This landscape is populated by thousands of newly graduated creative professionals from the city’s distinguished art universities. Each year, London’s cultural highlights are joined by new additions, such as a major new film studio in Dagenham in 2020, spurring the city’s creative industries (*Mayor Gives Go-Ahead*, 2020). Yet the future of the city’s creativity remains uncertain, as increasing gentrification and pollution pose threats to its prized cultural ecosystem.

The city further plays a large cultural role for the entire country. Indeed, London’s cultural and creative industries account for approximately 40 percent of those employed in the UK’s entire creative ecosystem, generating an economic output of £42 billion (GVA) in 2015. In the period

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<sup>9</sup> *Population of London 2019*, 2019.

<sup>10</sup> *London Metropolitan Area Population 2019*, 2019.

<sup>11</sup> Mayor of London, 2018a.

<sup>12</sup> *Inbound Visitors to London 2009-2019*, 2019.

<sup>13</sup> BOP Consulting, 2018.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

between 2012 and 2016, London's jobs in the cultural and creative system have grown by 24 percent, reaching a total of over 880,000 (Rocks, 2017).

## **Cultural Policy in London**

Three tiers of cultural policy governance run together in London: the national Department of Culture, Media and Sport, supported by the Arts Council England, the Greater London Authority, and London's boroughs. To a large degree, London's cultural policy and the national cultural agenda run parallel courses. This is not merely because of its role as the capital of the UK, but also because of the typical "institutional assemblage" (Allen & Cochrane, 2007) that makes a division between governance levels, as well as the interaction with private funders and stakeholders, increasingly complex.

### **Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)**

At the national level, the DCMS, located in London, oversees the creation and implementation of a national cultural policy course for the UK. This duty is combined with the maintenance and funding of several non-departmental public bodies. Among these are some of London's most famous cultural institutions, such as the British Museum, the National Gallery, and the network of Tate museums. Since the "New Labour" under Prime Minister Tony Blair removed general admission charges to national museums and galleries in 2001, the DCMS has contributed significantly to fostering cultural participation (Selwood & Davies, 2005).

Over the past years, and particularly in the aftermath of the 2007-2008 financial crisis, the DCMS has often been at the receiving end of severe austerity policies and budget cuts. These have impacted both the administrative side of the cultural system—with the suspension of staff in the DCMS—as well as the practicing side of the system—with the abolishment of several cultural organizations due to lack of financial means. These budget cuts have demonstrated that the UK's cultural policy is understood in relation to its economic profitability. Correspondingly, cultural institutions across the country have been pressured to generate high shares of their income through their revenue via ticketing or sales funding (Gordon et al., 2015, p. 51f).

### **Arts Council England (ACE)**

Following an "arm's-length" model in the funding decisions that support artistic creativity, the DCMS disseminates public funding to the Arts Council England, which functions as a "national development agency for creativity and culture" delivering the long-term policy goal of "excellence and access" in the UK's arts policy (Arts Council England, n.d.-b). The ACE administers national funds and donations from the National Lottery to offer support to individual artists and institutions based on "autonomy and independence from ministers and legislators" (Upchurch, 2016, p. 2).



Between 2018 and 2022, the ACE allocated £407 million per year to 828 arts organizations, museums, and libraries in the National Portfolio (a four-year funding scheme, for which arts organizations can apply). This figure includes £336 million of grant-in-aid and £71 million of National Lottery funding. By way of its National Portfolio Organisations (NPO), the ACE is strongly represented in London by supporting 244 organizations in the city (*London*, n.d.). In addition, the National Lottery contributes £97.3 million per year to create an open-access project grant fund (Arts Council England, n.d.).

As a mouthpiece for the DCMS, the ACE has set the tone for cultural policy debates with its longtime strategies, such as “Great Art and Culture for Everyone” (2010-2020) and the recently introduced strategy “Let’s create” (2020-2030; Rex, 2020). In cooperation with London’s Southbank Centre, the UK’s largest arts center, the ACE further owns the substantial Arts Council Collection, which purchases contemporary British art to both safeguard it for future generations and lend it to exhibitions (Arts Council Collection, n.d.).

### **The National Lottery**

The introduction of the National Lottery Act in 1993 and the launch of the UK’s first national lottery in 1994 represented a significant change in arts funding, as a share of the proceedings from the National Lottery were annually dedicated to a variety of organizations active in common welfare and culture. While those shares were initially intended as supporting capital projects (for construction, investment and film production) in the cultural system, the 1998 National Lottery Act also enabled grants to a greater variety of art projects (Creigh-Tyte & Gallimore, 2000; Hewison, 2014). The ACE is among the largest recipients of the lottery grants (Arts Council England, n.d.-a). Since the introduction of austerity policies in 2010, the ACE has become increasingly reliant on National Lottery funding, because direct government grant-in-aid funds have decreased (Harvey, 2016).

### **Greater London Authority (GLA)**

The Greater London Authority (GLA) is the administrative body responsible for the strategic administration of Greater London with its 32 boroughs and the City of London Corporation. It was created in 1999 and consists of a directly elected Mayor to represent London’s interests and 25 members in a London Assembly with scrutiny powers, both elected on a four-year cycle. As determined by the GLA Act, the Mayor must publish seven ‘statutory’ London strategies to guide London as a whole. The resulting strategies span the policy fields of Environment, Spatial Development (the London Plan), Transport, Economic Development, Housing, Health Inequalities and Culture (Röber et al., 2002).

The Culture and Creative Industry unit is responsible for delivering the Mayor’s cultural strategy. Under Mayor Boris Johnson (2008-2016) the permanent position of a “Head of Culture for the

Mayor of London” was introduced. Sadiq Khan, who was elected mayor in 2016, further anchored cultural governance by introducing the position of Deputy Mayor for Culture and the Creative Industries, filled by Justine Simons, OBE. Simons was previously “Head of Culture” in the GLA, steadily representing London’s culture under all three mayors London has experienced since the creation of the GLA (Ken Livingstone, Boris Johnson, Sadiq Khan). She was involved with the cultural program surrounding the 2012 London Olympics and founded the World Cities Culture Forum (*Justine Simons, OBE, 2016*).

In 2018, Mayor Sadiq Khan put forward a draft culture strategy “Culture for all Londoners”. After its initial presentation, the document was presented for public consultation and finalized with four priorities for London’s cultural policy: “Love London”, intended to decentralize cultural activity and increase participation, “Culture and Good Growth”, aimed at safeguarding London’s cultural sites from gentrification, “Creative Londoners”, seeking to diversify London’s cultural workforce and “World City”, directed towards safeguarding London’s global capital status despite its challenges (Mayor of London, 2018b). With the creation of several strategies and reports concerning London’s cultural landscape, including the first-ever “London Cultural Infrastructure Plan”, Mayor Khan has since taken some notable steps in pursuit of these priorities. As their response, London has pursued a deliberate mix of policies that frame culture in the context of wider urban policies, which have also emphasized principles of good growth and inclusion (Mayor of London, 2019d).

Compared to the budgets overseen by the DCMS and the local councils, the GLA’s culture budget might appear insignificant. However, upon closer consideration, this does not quite hold true. The funding available to London’s culture and creative industries has increased significantly since 2016 to reach a budget of £21M in 2019/2020 (Mayor of London, 2018a). With most “big” institutions funded by various national funding bodies and the infrastructure such as libraries funded by the boroughs, the mayor can more flexibly pursue novel approaches in urban cultural policy. Accordingly, the Mayor of London has set ambitious goals for the city’s cultural policy, which has continually shifted the focus away from an elite cultural approach. Rather, Mayor Khan has emphasized cultural participation across all boroughs, not least to address London’s widening socioeconomic gap, which leaves 28 percent of the population living in poverty (Leeser, n.d.).

### **Culture in London’s Boroughs**

Although cultural policy is technically a voluntary task for local governments, each of London’s 32 boroughs has selected to follow a cultural strategy. These are often closely tied to sociocultural priorities and correspondingly emphasize community-oriented measures and neighborhood vitality programs (Gilmore, 2004). To pool resources in a field that is not often at the top of local government’s priority lists, London’s local councils have created the “London Culture Forum”. Representatives from the individual councils unite in this setting to share information on cultural provision and to identify areas for beneficial cooperation between their local authorities (*London Culture Forum, n.d.*). In addition, the councils are represented by the UK-wide “Local Government

Association". As cultural work in the boroughs has been sensitive to budget cuts ordered by the central government since 2010, this pooling of resources provides a representation of local cultural interests to the national government (Centre for London, 2019) – especially as local councils invest more than £2 billion in arts and culture every year and constitute the most important funder for the cultural system (Local Government Association, 2020a).

Next to London's boroughs, the City of London Corporation constitutes an additional local government district within greater London that develops and delivers its own cultural strategy. With more than £100 million the city is the fourth largest funder of culture in the UK and supports institutions like the Barbican, the Museum of London, the London Symphony Orchestra, and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, as well as arts programs throughout the City (City of London, 2018).

In the following, some of London's prevalent policy trajectories are sketched briefly:

**Brexit:** London's role in the post-Brexit UK is double-edged. On the one hand, the city is bound to the policy negotiations between the UK parliament and the European Union (EU). On the other hand, 59.9 percent of Londoners voted to remain in the EU and thereby follow London's self-concept as an open and cosmopolitan city (London Assembly Labour, 2017). As a result of the referendum, Londoners could miss out on the significant growth potential of their creative industries. Therefore, Mayor Khan launched the #LondonIsOpen campaign, which positions London's post-Brexit identity as an internationally attractive and tolerant city. In doing so Mayor Khan takes special note of the city's European diasporic and professional population and their ties to London (Mayor of London, 2016). These links are particularly important, as London's creative industries profit greatly from exporting goods to the EU and, in turn, receiving international professionals to work in the culture and creative system (BOP Consulting, 2018).

**Cultural Participation:** In line with the priorities established in London's Culture Strategy and its fitting title "Culture for all Londoners", cultural participation has been at the forefront of City Hall's cultural policy measures. With the introduction of pilot programs like "Culture Seeds", a fund that offered micro-grants to community-oriented cultural projects, London has further paved the way for increased engagement with specific target groups identified as underrepresented, such as the elderly or Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) citizens (Mayor of London, 2020b). In addition to reaching a greater audience, City Hall has attempted to reinterpret what defines the "cultural". Indeed, the GLA highlights that a diverse landscape of legal street walls, community arts centers, rehearsal rooms, pubs, libraries and more are interweaved to form creative neighborhoods, thereby creating a sociocultural understanding of "culture". In advocating for these full cultural ecologies in London's neighborhoods, Mayor Khan aims to make accessible the cultural excellence and vibrancy that tourists get to experience to every Londoner (Mayor of London, 2019b). Lastly, London is home to the Audience Agency, an ACE-funded charity aimed at data-collection on cultural participation and reach. Correspondingly, the GLA is able to make decisions based on

updated information about cultural attendance and audience behavior (*The Audience Agency*, n.d.).

**Decentralization:** Relatedly, Mayor Khan's "London Borough of Culture" program was introduced in 2017 to expand London's highly centralized cultural opportunities to all boroughs (Mayor of London, 2019c). The program responds to imbalances and regional inequalities in cultural funding, which affect both London vs. the rest of the country, as well as the inner-city London vs. primarily residential boroughs further away from the city center (Dorling & Hennig, 2016; Stark et al., 2013). In doing so, London actively utilizes culture to make its neighborhoods more attractive places to work and live. Every year, the Mayor of London awards one borough with this distinction, accompanied by £1.35 million in funding for a comprehensively planned cultural concept for the respective year. Additionally, City Hall funds up to three individual projects planned in relation to their boroughs' communities annually. Its first iteration in 2019 took place in Waltham Forest, followed by Brent in 2020 (Mayor of London, 2019c). The title is awarded through a competition, in which 22 of London's 32 boroughs applied to host the first year (BOP Consulting, 2018).

**Gentrification:** Yet these initiatives of decentralization must not be considered divorced from their context. With spikes in rental costs across the city, the extremes living alongside one another in London are becoming starkly visible. The city is home to the UK's largest population of urban people living in poverty, as well as the majority of the UK's richest 1 percent. The migration of professional elites from the center to certain neighborhoods has therefore often resulted in the displacement of residents (Yee & Dennett, 2020). As an immensely popular destination not only for tourists but also for professionals in the UK, London's real estate market has steadily become less and less affordable to those seeking entry into the arts. Specifically, gentrification has progressed such that there remain nearly no affordable neighborhoods to move to within London's city limits (BOP Consulting, 2018). Revitalizing neighborhoods through culture to make them more attractive can succeed in making culture more accessible to the entire city population. However, delivering a policy solution without fueling displacement might become a tightrope walk.

**Recognizing Culture at Risk:** The drafted New London Plan, concerning the Spatial Development of the city, finds in 2017 that by 2019, "London is projected to lose 35 per cent of its affordable creative workspace, 35 per cent of its music venues, 58 per cent of LGBT+ and night-time venues and 25 per cent of its pubs" (Mayor of London, 2019d). The city has identified a "'perfect storm' of adverse underlying conditions", in which venues are falling victim to residential development plans, rising rental prices and increases in business rates (Mayor of London, 2019b, p. 25). In recognition of this threat to London's cultural infrastructure, City Hall commenced the "Culture at Risk" desk to counteract these losses. The newly established contact point allows venues finding themselves at risk of closure to register with the city centrally. This affords the Office of the Mayor an overview of the city's spatial dilemma but provides the basis to offer targeted assistance to alleviate registered venues.

In an additional measure to counter worsening gentrification and rising real estate prices, Mayor Khan has introduced the "Creative Enterprise Zones" (CEZ). Due to the projected heavy losses of

London's art studios, an effective solution for the city to remain an attractive place for artistic production was urgent. The resulting CEZ-project seeks to provide protected spaces designated for artistic practice, which can be offered at competitive rates. Their idea also posits that these spaces should be embedded into the fabric of their neighborhoods. Thereby, creative workers are encouraged to put down roots in a new CEZ, while at the same time promoting the regeneration of the surrounding neighborhoods. Given this social function, the process to identify suitable spaces for this project is participatory in its design, with City Hall calling on boroughs and artists to suggest additional locations. These CEZ were already established in six different boroughs, individual focus points that make each CEZ unique (Mayor of London, 2020b). Their generally positive response indicates London's artists had been waiting for the type of security new zoning measures can offer (Blake, 2019; Romer, 2018).

Similarly, in a cooperation between the Office of the Mayor, Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Arts Council England and the Outset Contemporary Fund, the city founded the Creative Land Trust, which aims to safeguard affordable workspaces across London. Its initial goal consists of making available 1,000 creative workspaces by 2024 (Mayor of London, 2019e). With this plan, Mayor Khan emphasizes a "good growth" standard to urban planning. Corresponding measures are defined by a cross-sectoral approach and rely on new public-private alliances.

**Nighttime Economy:** Lastly, as the nighttime economy is particularly affected by displacement and the complaints from newly constructed residential real estate, Mayor Khan instated the new position of "Night Czar" as City Hall's delegated liaison with London's nightlife establishments. Amy Lamé, the first representative in this position, was tasked with implementing the recommendations outlined in London's 2017 report on the nighttime in its neighborhoods, as well as advocating for the inclusion of the industry's perspective into cultural policymaking (London Night Time Commission, 2017). In doing so, London has demonstrated a further move away from a highbrow understanding of the culture that has historically shaped much of the city's appeal.

**Environmental Emergency:** In 2018, Mayor Khan announced that the city was facing an environmental emergency. Specifically, air pollution levels were declared to pose a substantial threat to the city's buildings, infrastructure and the health of animals, plants and people. Additionally, London had been experiencing extreme weather events like droughts and heavy rainfall, which made climate change palpable in the city. In response, London has published a set of goals for future mayors to combat air pollution and adverse climate effects to create a zero emission-London by 2030 (London Assembly, 2020). The strategy spans across a variety of sectors and was notably also perceived as an important task for organizations in London's cultural system. Consequently, in 2019, the World Cities Culture Forum, created and chaired by London's Deputy Mayor Simons, examined how the participant cities interweaved environmental matters with their cultural policies for the first time (World Cities Culture Forum, 2019). London's pioneering position in this policy field is not without reason: In the city, the environmental emergency poses a particular threat for its heritage sites, several of which were already visibly damaged by air pollution (BOP Consulting, 2018).

## London's Response to COVID-19

London's reaction to the pandemic's onset was accompanied by strong restrictions to public life, which were decreed centrally by the DCMS. These included a mandate to stay indoors, with only limited time out of one's own home permitted. Consequently, cultural activity was heavily restricted for a prolonged period. Analogous to the closures of public life, reopening plans for the UK's cultural institutions were also announced centrally. DCMS Secretary of State Oliver Dowden divided the timeline to resume cultural activities into a five-step plan, which culminated in returning to indoor performances with reduced audience capacities. Though voices from the cultural system welcomed the guidance, the blueprint's utter lack of details concerning dates attached to the different stages, or concrete reopening models, did little to reduce the severe uncertainty prevalent in the cultural system (*Culture Secretary Announces a Roadmap*, 2020). Especially since most cultural activity cannot be restarted on short notice and many cultural institutions require a substantial lead time to resume full operations, this lack of information could be understood as an existential concern for many of London's institutions not covered by the National Portfolio (Local Government Association, 2020a).

In addition to the reopening plans, Secretary Dowden commissioned a "Cultural Renewal Taskforce" with supporting working groups, tasked with planning how to reinvigorate the cultural and athletic sectors. Under their management, several test performances and sporting events were conducted during London's summer months, which aimed at piloting appropriate models for reopening as quickly as it was safely possible. Though the task force was staffed with a variety of experts from the cultural system, it is notable that it entirely dismisses the municipal level, leaving London's interests lumped together with the rest of the UK's (*Culture Secretary Announces Cultural Renewal Taskforce*, n.d.).

With a late announcement in July, the DCMS complemented these coordination measures with a cultural emergency fund of £1.57 billion, targeted specifically at culture, arts and heritage institutions across the country (*£1.57 Billion Investment*, 2020). Alongside this fund, Secretary Dowden instated a "Culture Recovery Board", which was put in charge of delivering the program to cultural organizations. The board was comprised of representatives from several state-supported organizations, including the British Film Institute and the ACE (*Culture Recovery Board*, 2020). These funds, to be dispensed in loans and grants to those affected by closures, were designed to be a lifeline to the industry. The sheer magnitude of the program, "the biggest ever one-off investment in UK culture" provided an unexpected financial stimulus (*£1.57 Billion Investment*, 2020). Nevertheless, the DCMS' announcement was criticized for coming far too late. By July, many organizations had already suffered financial losses that made recovery uncertain. Similarly, the fund's dissemination was marked by further delays, leaving many organizations waiting while being at risk of shutting down completely (Thorpe, 2020).

The DCMS straggling emergency funds were preempted by the ACE. In March, the ACE responded to revenue shortfalls across the cultural ecosystem with the creation of a £160 million emergency funding package (mainly provided through the suspension of National Lottery project grants). These emergency funds consisted of £70 million to individual artists and organizations and £90

million of support for the NPOs. Using the channels of the ACE, the National Lottery has further facilitated access to their grants for individual cultural practitioners and groups by, for example, removing the necessity to match funds (*Emergency Response Funds*, 2020a).

In response to DCMS' hesitation, London has been home to some collaboration of the cultural system to protest their disproportionate burden. The #WeMakeEvents campaign, for instance, saw more than 300 cultural venues in London illuminated in red to remind the public of the precariousness of cultural workers (PLASA, 2020). The protests are aptly located: A study conducted by the Creative Industries Federation found that 409,000 jobs in UK's creative industries are at risk, out of which 27 percent are in London (Oxford Economics, 2020). Freelancers, who make up 70 percent of the workers in the creative industries, were additionally found to be most at risk of losing their employment (Creative Industries Federation, 2020). A government program for freelancers allowed eligible workers to claim a grant worth 70 percent of their average trading profits for three months (UK Government, 2020). However, thousands of cultural workers were not eligible for this scheme (Banks & O'Connor, 2020a). As reopening perspectives remain uncertain, though, these measures are likely to be insufficient to support many.

In an attempt to compensate for these shortcomings, the ACE has contributed £2 million to Theatre Artists Funds and Help Musicians' Financial Hardship Funding as measures on behalf of freelance workers. Notably, the ACE has continually broken down the sums dispensed to reflect the share of disabled-led and Black and minority-ethnic led organizations in the operation of these programs. In doing so, the ACE not only demonstrates their commitment to data collection but also their mission to increase the inclusivity of their aid. Their numbers reflect that 42 percent of grants awarded to individual artists went to London – an expected figure, given that 38 percent of the self-employed persons working in the cultural system are based in London (*Emergency Response Funds*, 2020b).

With this information in mind, the GLA set up more targeted emergency structures. As London is projected to lose one in six creative jobs, the stakes are high for City Hall to set the appropriate cultural policy priorities (World Cities Culture Forum, 2020a). Using the previously collected knowledge of the city's most vulnerable establishments, the Office of the Mayor dedicated £2.3 million to the "Culture at Risk Business Support Fund". Besides the public funds provided by City Hall, the fund also included a private contribution by Bloomberg Philanthropies. Through this program, the GLA specifically targeted those vulnerable cultural sites most at risk of falling through the cracks of national emergency measures. This fund is distributed via sector-specific umbrella organizations (the Music Venue Trust, the LGBTQ+ Venues, the Creative Land Trust and the British Film Institute) to support approximately 320 of London's independent cultural venues and retain their diverse infrastructure<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Personal communication with a representative from the Greater London Authority on November 13, 2020.

In addition to this financial relief program, London has acknowledged the spatial difficulties many cultural organizations are facing at this moment. To counteract rental conflicts, City Hall not only instated a ban on evictions until September but also offered support in facilitating conversations with landlords (Mayor of London, 2020c). However, those tenants that were protected through the eviction ban are slated to face bailiff procedures starting in January 2021 – though the renewed lockdown of public life in the fall of 2020 has put pressure on the UK government to extend the eviction ban (Cowburn, 2020).

These measures demonstrate that many of the problems resulting from the pandemic intersect with those other sectors face and are closely tied to the well-being of the surrounding economy. Indeed, Deputy Mayor Simons made use of her position to advocate for holistic emergency measures that acknowledge the codependences between London’s creative world and the surrounding economic ecosystem (Jacobs, 2020). Although culture’s intersectoral nature has made eligibility for funding programs a perpetually complex issue, it has, in this case, ensured access to a variety of non-cultural funding programs directed at London. Among these, City Hall has particularly highlighted the “London Community Response Fund”, primarily intended for civil society organizations, and “Pay it Forward for the Future of London Businesses”, a crowdfunding platform for small businesses.

Yet even when cultural activity in London is restarted, uncertainties relating to persisting health hazards play a role. A DCMS-led study found that by late September 2020, attendance of their sponsored institutions dropped by an average of 19.2 percent, compared to the three prior years. This drop was partially attributed to visitor caps, but also to the significant reduction of international tourists, which constituted 48 percent of visitors to these establishments in the year prior (*Daily Visitors*, 2020). What is more, the restrictions have had prompted Londoners to alter their behaviors, with 44 percent signaling they were unwilling to travel to a cultural site by public transport post-lockdown (World Cities Culture Forum, 2020b). This indicates that the road to cultural recovery is a long one, yet, with safe reopening by no means the ultimate stop along the way. Renewed restrictions across England in November 2020 confirmed these fears and made the continued threat to the cultural ecosystem palpable (Harris, 2020).

A selection of notable programs that benefited London’s landscape included:

- March 24, 2020: Arts Council England announces £160m emergency funding for artists and organizations
- April 30, 2020: The Mayor of London launches the “Culture at Risk Business Support Fund” endowed with £2.3 M to support the city’s independent cultural infrastructure.
- June 25, 2020: The DCMS presents a roadmap for reopening arts establishments in the UK.
- July 5, 2020: The Government of the UK announced a £1.57 billion emergency package geared towards cultural institutions in the UK.



## Impact of COVID-19

**Cultural Participation:** The government-imposed isolation most UK citizens were finding themselves in created an upswing in cultural consumption across different media. Indeed, the phase has resulted in an increase of content creation for 38 percent of UK citizens, with 17 percent of these making their first artistic attempts during the COVID-19-related lockdown (Bakhshi, 2020). Nevertheless, this increase cannot be understood as an equitable increase in cultural appreciation. Rather, the same data found a significant divergence between socio-economic backgrounds in the ability to turn to culture for comfort. With unequal access to digital opportunities, and unequal ability to protect oneself from the virus indoors, Mayor Khan's egalitarian standards are far from reality during the pandemic.

**Decentralization:** The value of culture as a regenerative force has repeatedly been highlighted – whether it comes to the revitalization of London's neighborhoods or the reemergence from the state of emergency that the COVID-19 pandemic has imposed on many Londoners. Here, too, the decentralized aspect of London's cultural offerings plays a fundamental role. The ACE highlights that 75 percent of the cultural establishments they support across England are either on or within a 5-minute walk from the local high streets. Therefore, the ACE emphasizes its role in resuscitating local businesses and fostering new presence-based community cohesion in a post-COVID-19 world (Arts Council England, 2020). Indeed, should London's financial endowment for culture endure the crisis, Mayor Khan's decentralizing agenda will likely intensify, as the crisis has demonstrated the value of culture close to home. An early cultural reaction to the pandemic (in the context of the London Borough of Culture) came from a Brent-based artist who selected books in the Brent Libraries to be decorated with memorial plates, which reflect the exact number and names of locals who have died from COVID-19 (Brent 2020).

**Recognizing Culture at Risk:** London's previous goal to identify and protect culture at risk in the city was put to a test through the large-scale economic losses due to COVID-19. Upon months of closures with little hope or guidance on a reopening timeline, London's nightlife businesses put into question the function of their Night Czar Amy Lamé, some even asking for the abolishment of her position altogether (Haycocks, 2020). Indeed, UK Music estimates that 90 percent of grassroots live music venues across the UK are at immediate risk of closure, while government aids are insufficient to balance out the £900 M losses the industry is set to accrue if it remains closed for 2020 (*Let The Music Play*, 2020). Although it is not sufficient to protect the diversity of London's cultural system, the GLA used the provided £2.3 millions of emergency assistance through the Culture at Risk Business Support Fund to specifically help up to 290 nightlife establishments. In

this context, the also GLA partnered with the Music Venue Trust to mediate landlord and supplier disputes, as well as provide legal advice to organizations at risk (more than 140 to date<sup>16</sup>).

As Deputy Mayor Simons highlights, London's cultural system is overall heavily dependent on revenue generated through ticket sales. Correspondingly, while it may be economically feasible for establishments in other cities to reopen at a 50 percent capacity, London's institutions could not realistically survive with the reduced revenue (Jacobs, 2020). This demonstrates that in a crisis such as the pandemic, much higher government subsidies are necessary. However, this fact does not correspond with the reality of the GLA's budget. While London does recognize the most vulnerable links in its cultural landscape, such as its grassroots music and LGBTQ+ venues, the speed at which the emergency aid was dispensed, as well as its volume, does match the cultural system's needs.

**Environmental Emergency:** With COVID-19's long-term impact still uncertain, voices calling to drive forward systemic changes to the cultural system in favor of the environment are emerging (BOP Consulting, 2020; *Environmental Programme*, n.d.). Certainly, as the lockdown brought to a halt some of the largest factors contributing to London's pollution – such as a reduction in traffic and air travel – the benefits of Mayor Khan's "London Environment Strategy" have become even more apparent. Correspondingly, in May, central London instated several car-free areas to increase space for proper distancing, as well as reducing air pollution to protect residents from further respiratory problems (Taylor, 2020). This initiative coincides with a national £2 billion package to support cycling and walking throughout the country (*£2 Billion Package*, n.d.). However, it remains to be seen whether cost-intensive adaptations to more climate-friendly cultural production come to pass amid the economic downturn resulting from COVID-19 – and whether the environmental emergency will be on the agenda, at all.

## Assessing London's Cultural Policy Response

### Strengths

#### Analytical:

A notable characteristic of City Hall's response to COVID-19 has been the administration's access to previously gathered information. London's cultural policy approach is markedly influenced by "New Labour's" pursuit of evidence-based policymaking. This has been demonstrated by the highly participative development process surrounding new strategies, which collect the public's insights with great publicity (Mayor of London, 2019c). Similarly, institutions funded by the DCMS are tasked with an in-depth investigation into their activities, which are subsequently published. Hence, this data-driven approach permitted more targeted policymaking with information on the

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<sup>16</sup> Personal communication with a representative from the Greater London Authority on November 13, 2020.

city's most vulnerable venues already available, which resulted in the specific creation of the "Culture at Risk Business Support Fund".

London's reaction to the crisis is further grounded in the findings of the GLA's recent study investigating the creative supply chain (Mayor of London, 2019a). In doing so, the city's cultural administration demonstrates an understanding of the interlinkages from its cultural system to the wider economy and seeks to understand the disruption to its supply chain – even though the COVID-19 response package was not large enough to safeguard all these interlinked organizations and freelance workers. Similarly, the UK-wide Audience Agency has monitored altered audience behavior throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, which has delivered insights to devise evidence-based policy measures (*Bounce Forwards*, 2020)---

Lastly, London's administration has been in a privileged position to benefit from international best practices and data. As the chair of the World Cities Culture Forum, the city has access to considerable expertise from comparable world cities, both in terms of their day-to-day business, as well as their reactions to the COVID-19 pandemic. With the specialized expertise from this forum, the city can benefit from exclusive data collection and forecasting.

#### Regulatory:

Because of the GLA's unique governance set-up, Mayor Khan is awarded the flexibility to address very specific areas of cultural policy. With a limited budget for culture, the GLA's responsibilities do not include the funding of London's large cultural attractions and museums. Rather, its assigned role affords City Hall relative freedom to use its budget in the implementation of its cultural strategy. This arrangement has resulted in the creation of targeted policy programs responding to Mayor Khan's "Culture for all Londoners", such as the London Borough of Culture Award or the creation of Creative Enterprise Zones. Accordingly, creating safety nets for the city's largest institutions need not be a priority in London's cultural policy response to the pandemic. Rather, the GLA's response could be tailored to the city's strategic aims through the Culture at Risk Business Support Fund.

#### Delivery:

Although the losses incurred in London's culture and creative industries (with an estimated drop of £14.6 billion in GVA throughout 2020) far exceeded the measures the GLA could provide, the targeted nature of London's emergency funds further helped to identify where support was needed the most. Its delivery was strengthened by the previously collected experience in mediating rental disputes, offering letters of support for funding to vulnerable organizations and offering

training for grant writing. These exact capacities were scaled up in the crisis context, joining the grantmaking measures deployed by Mayor Khan<sup>17</sup>.

#### Coordination:

London's ability to gather financial resources across different sources – including private foundations, such as Bloomberg Philanthropies, local resources from the Mayor's budget, and national resources through ACE and National Lottery Funds – has much increased the limited margin for maneuver with which the city's cultural budget alone would have operated. The coordination of resources on the municipal level is paralleled on the national level by the appointment of the new Culture Commissioner Neil Mendoza, in charge of advising the British government on the cultural recovery from COVID-19.

Further, by delegating some of the Mayor's responsibilities to the Deputy Mayors Justine Simons and Amy Lamé, the GLA is employing an additional measure to reconcile the different positions present. These deputy mayors are charged with forging connections with the stakeholders in their respective areas of expertise. Because of the creation of their positions, London's cultural system had concrete contact persons for their concerns throughout the crisis, who have been tasked with reporting back to City Hall.

Over the past years, London has deliberately included cultural policy aims – specifically those on good growth – into its new urban development plans. By creating the detailed London Plan, which functions as a "Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London" (2019d) and the "Cultural Infrastructure Plan" (2019b), the Mayor examined the status quo and established a seven-point action plan to provide unique solutions to the disappearance of cultural space. Consequently, the GLA, in cooperation with the South East Local Enterprise Partnership, the London Economic Action Partnership and the South East Creative Economy Network introduced plans for the new Thames Estuary Production Corridor. This area, reaching from London to England's eastern coast is planned to function as a new hub for culture and creativity, thereby drawing in investments to support 50,000 new jobs (Mayor of London, 2020a).

### **Weaknesses**

#### Regulatory:

The very same mechanisms that afford London its flexibility to devise its own cultural policy strategy are limiting Mayor Khan's capacity to implement it. With the GLA's overarching function, City Hall is constructed as a *networker* between levels of governance rather than a large funder for culture. Indeed, with a culture budget of approximately £21 million in 2020, London's governing

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<sup>17</sup> Personal communication with a representative from the Greater London Authority on November 13, 2020.

body is hardly equipped with the funds or the administrative capacity to match its global city status (Mayor of London, 2018a). Though London's boroughs all possess small departments for culture, they only have a voluntary mandate for cultural policy while navigating their declining budgets. Therefore, although the GLA oversees the cultural policy strategy, the corresponding budget does not ordinarily allow the city much budgetary flexibility to do so, which became visible once COVID-19 led to revenue shortfalls.

#### Coordination:

Within its regulatory position between the DCMS and London's boroughs, the GLA could not deliver a solution for many of the cultural workers. Rather, Londoners in the cultural system were reliant on the national welfare measures under Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak. The Treasury's response, however, demonstrated a lack of consideration for the reliance on freelance workers common in creative work. Due to the GLA's limited budget, these shortfalls cannot be compensated on the city level. This will undoubtedly impact London's cultural system for years to come as it is set to reduce the strides in the diversity of voices made over the past years (Thorpe, 2020).

Lastly, although the UK government has created several advisory bodies, local representatives from London, such as Deputy Mayor Simons, were sorely lacking on these boards. This imbalance, however, is not representative of the cultural role that London assumes for the entire country. As no other municipal actors were included in these mechanisms, either, it is notable that the DCMS seems to only consider culture within its disciplines, rather than understanding the specific problems cities are facing. This lack of a voice from London's administration – or any local administration – concedes the ability to use their cultural weight to shape the national cultural response.

### **Opportunities**

#### Regulatory:

In consideration of the substantial expertise and interconnectedness already present in City Hall, the regulatory disadvantage of the GLA is a lost opportunity. Rather, London's know-how and ambition to oversee its cultural strategy could profit from the corresponding cultural budget, far increased from what London has at its disposal now. Therefore, if London wants to continue to pursue its strategic trajectories, the aftermath of the pandemic must be used to appeal to the DCMS for closer cooperation and pooling of resources. While the DCMS could profit from London's significant expertise at the city-level, the GLA, in turn, is in dire need of greater financial room for maneuver in the implementation of its strategies.

### Coordination:

As the pandemic put the entire city to a test, a spirit of solidarity for one another was invoked repeatedly. This solidarity is now offering new opportunities for the governance of London's cultural system. It offers the chance to forge new connections in the cultural ecosystem, such as between newcomers and established artists, or between small independent institutions and large household names. In this spirit, there is now the opportunity to create a permanent forum for such collaboration between London's institutions and foster stronger connections within the cultural system. This could yield meaningful solutions to questions ranging from the creative to the logistical, generated through a bottom-up approach.

Similarly, as a cultural capital, London has not only strong institutions but also a potent community of already successful artists. For instance, the Theatre Community Fund has collected donations from several well-known theatre and film artists, who have jointly created grants for theatrical workers in need because of COVID-19. Though this fund operates nation-wide, the abundance of illustrious artists originating from London offers particular opportunities. In the spirit of solidarity, the future might hold stronger integration of high-earning celebrities into delivering cultural opportunities for the next generation. As the foundation for new cooperation between distinguished alumni and other theatrical workers has been established, the city could now take the reins to formally connect young talent with the industry.

### **Threats**

#### Analytical:

London has repeatedly proven its proficiency with data-driven decision-making for culture. Nevertheless, the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged the ability to make decisions for public life with any confidence. Despite understanding the composition of the cultural economy, there remains the risk that London's limited budget will be used ineffectively. As it is currently dispensed to institutions at risk, but not necessarily those with the biggest multiplier effect for the economy, the city government is deciding to value retention over innovation and economic regeneration. The effects of these measures are, yet, uncertain.

#### Regulatory:

High rents and rapid population growth are elements that pose a considerable threat to London's creative population. The city hall initiatives concerning CEZ have already created some much-needed space for artists to put down roots. Considering the progression of gentrification in London, though, these programs will have to be scaled up significantly. Further, as they continually rely on private sector investment, the possibility that the willingness to invest in culture may decline in COVID-19-related uncertainty poses a large threat to the viability of the strategy. What is more, London is in the unfortunate position of facing several shocks simultaneously. With Brexit being finalized on January 1, 2021, new rules for citizens and businesses are coming into

effect amid the COVID-19 crisis. This may enhance the uncertainty of London's economic environment and complicates investments from the EU.

These very same shocks have an impact on international students and researchers working in London. The city's universities possess highly internationalized student bodies, with many newcomers from the EU joining every year. Due to the confluence of the pandemic with Brexit, London is faced with the reduction of both EU and other overseas students, which are constrained by travel restrictions and border closures. As international students are estimated to have contributed £3.4 billion to London's economy in the 2016-17 academic year (*The Economic Impact*, 2018), their exclusion will certainly impact London's economy. Similarly, though, there is also a threat that young creative talents could be kept from participating in London's cultural system.

The reduction of financial resources will also be felt throughout other parts of the city's economy and budget. Because of the COVID-19-related containment policies, large budget deficits will impact the GLA. Transport for London, alone, projected a loss of £4 billion throughout 2020, with income reduced by 90 percent during lockdown periods ("Coronavirus," 2020b). With additional discounts on local council taxes and business rates, the next years will likely see the impact of this loss of revenue on London's boroughs and the GLA. As past financial shortages have resulted in cuts to the cultural budget, financial security will be a core concern over the next several years.

This uncertainty will likely affect the future generation of creative workers in London. As employment, and especially freelance employment in the cultural system has become insecure, the next generation of cultural workers – reportedly the most diverse in London's history – is left to its own devices with few opportunities to find fruitful employment. The creation of practical ties between education and cultural institutions was further complicated, as many internship opportunities and work experiences could not take place. This substantial loss of potential innovation, diversity and creativity could accompany London's cultural system for the next few years.

#### Coordination:

The future of London's cultural budget lies in the hands of those who coordinate alternate modes of funding for the ecosystem. This might, on the one hand, be the previously proposed greater coordination with the DCMS to create additional funding sources for the GLA's budget. On the other hand, it might be London's ability to find alternate partnerships and sponsorships to complement its cultural funding. Either way, the cultural system's financial viability depends, in part, on the GLA's strategy to coordinate funding sources. Should this task fall short, London may be unable to live up to its strategic goals.

In summary, while the GLA has shown a strong coordinative approach and speaks regularly on behalf of its culture sector and their needs, the Greater London administration has in fact only limited budgets to create new financial support for the struggling cultural businesses, organizations and workers. Instead, it has to rely on the delivery and regulatory capacities of the national government to ameliorate the devastating effects on London's culture sector. This

financial dependency will likely work against the cultural capital, as the DCMS has been very slow to create the specific support programs needed.

### Policy Recommendations for London:

London's cultural policy action over the past years, as well as the city's response to COVID-19, has been impacted by the immense uncertainty the city's facing through their confluence with Brexit and an economic downturn. Within this unstable environment, the city has demonstrated several courses of action that should be continued:

1. The amount of data available to the GLA has allowed the city to make targeted policy decisions in response to COVID-19 and to appeal to the national government in those areas where their responses were not sufficient. Therefore, the GLA should further strengthen its **analytic** capacity by creating strategies and studies based on in-depth data collection in the mission to pursue evidence-based policymaking.
2. London's capacity to **coordinate** policy solutions has brought together a variety of actors to interweave cultural policy aims with urban development plans. Particularly as many more cultural workers and institutions are at risk of being displaced because of the COVID-19 crisis, the GLA must continue to pursue – and scale up – its ambitious spatial development plan.

Resulting from this analysis of London's governance capacities, additional policy recommendations to strengthen London's capacities in cultural policy emerge:

3. To increase the city's **regulatory** capacity, the GLA needs to secure new funding for the city's cultural system to compensate for declining tax income and increased expenditure through emergency measures. One possible new instrument, though it requires a ruling at the national level, is a bed tax with a small percentage of overnight stay costs being dedicated to culture. Similar policy measures have been implemented in Berlin, as well as several European countries.
4. In a further effort to heighten London's **regulatory** capacity, the GLA should advocate for stronger financial independence in cultural matters. This will likely be the subject of a longstanding political campaign. However, the reward – a city with the cultural budget and agency to match its world city status – will allow London to pursue its cultural policy aims with far more autonomy.
5. Lastly, the COVID-19 crisis has so far shown that London has considerable untapped potential when it comes to its **coordination** capacity. Exchanges that have taken place on a smaller scale during the pandemic should now be made permanent. Under the helm of the GLA, regular sectoral roundtables joining representatives of large and small organizations could now be launched to weather the way forward in the



community, but also to create lasting partnerships within London's cultural ecosystem. Through this exchange, London could coordinate new solutions to space allocation, resource pooling and best practices.

# New York



## New York

<b>Population</b>	
City limits	8.5 million <sup>18</sup>
Metropolitan area	19.2 million <sup>19</sup>
<b>Budget for Culture</b>	\$211.6 million (2020) <sup>20</sup>
<b>International Tourists</b>	
	12.7 million <sup>21</sup>
<b>Creative Industries Employment</b>	5.38 % <sup>22</sup>
<b>Population diversity</b>	
	38% <sup>23</sup>

As the cultural capital of the United States, and perhaps the world, New York combines a large group of highly capable creative workers and institutions with a dense population of cultural “consumers”. With more than 290,000 workers employed in the cultural and creative industries, a substantial portion of the city’s economy depends on culture (New York City Comptroller, 2019). Indeed, the economic impact of New York’s nonprofit cultural system alone amounts to \$8 billion (CreateNYC, 2017). The city’s cultural trajectory over the past two decades has been marked by former three-term Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s extensive cultural campaign to boost New York’s attractiveness as a tourist attraction (Goldberg-Miller, 2017). As 30 million tourists in 2015 claimed they were attracted by the cultural offer, former Mayor Bloomberg’s plan has proven successful. This course of action has coincided with strong job growth in the arts and creative industries (Dvorkin, 2020).

With the election of Mayor Bill de Blasio in 2014, the city’s cultural policy focus shifted beyond the borough of Manhattan towards a more decentralized and democratized approach. Similarly, under Mayor de Blasio’s leadership, New York created its first-ever cultural strategy. The city obtained a “roadmap” designed to “ensure that every resident, in every neighborhood, has the

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<sup>18</sup> 2020 Population, 2017.

<sup>19</sup> New York Metro Area Population 2019, 2019.

<sup>20</sup> Pogrebin, 2020.

<sup>21</sup> BOP Consulting, 2018.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

same access to cultural opportunities” (*Mayor de Blasio Announces CreateNYC*, 2017). Mayor de Blasio’s participatory creation of this strategy specifically responded to previous accusations that New York presents an enormous cultural economy, which, however, lacks any perceivable cultural agenda (Goldberg-Miller, 2017).

Yet, as Shoshanah Goldberg-Miller describes, “there is an aspect of New York’s cultural sector that is Darwinian in nature, in that there is an element of survival of the fittest and domination of the biggest” (Goldberg-Miller, 2017, p. 19). This foregrounding of the economic aspects of New York’s culture has resulted in a highly competitive cultural system. Due to affordability issues, this competition has created a distinct focus on the dissemination of arts, with amateur or experimental cultural production becoming steadily less feasible (*ibid.*). Indeed, despite Mayor de Blasio’s cultural plan, New York may already have surpassed the tipping point of affordability for artists in the city’s cut-throat real estate market, with community-oriented cultural organizations bearing the brunt (BOP Consulting, 2018). At a time when three of the city’s five boroughs, which were previously known to be more affordable – Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx – are listed among the ten least affordable counties to rent in the United States, New York’s art world is faced with a situation that might yet be irredeemable (Stricker, 2020).

New York’s cultural model relies on public-private partnerships, in which the city provides land and facilities for cultural use, which are operated by private non-profit organizations. Over time, this model has evolved into the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG), which today comprises 34 cultural institutions spread across all five boroughs (Manhattan, Staten Island, The Bronx, Queens and Brooklyn, *CreateNYC*, 2017). The first addition to the group in over 20 years was announced in 2019: the Weeksville Heritage Center in Brooklyn, which preserves the African American history of the community in which it is located (*CreateNYC*, 2019). Despite this recent addition, there are some regional funding disparities within this group. For instance, in 2017, per capita spending for the CIGs was ten times higher in Manhattan than in Queens (The People’s Cultural Plan, 2017b).

## **Cultural Policy in New York**

Cultural policy in New York City is supported on four levels of funding: the national level, the state level (New York State), the city level and the borough level. These levels of public provision are complemented by a complex landscape of private foundations, charities, nonprofit organizations and corporate engagement for the arts, as New York is a world-renowned magnet for cultural excellence and an innovative creative economy.

### **National Support for the Arts**

Cultural administration on the national level in the US is highly decentralized, with no national ministry of culture. The US model depends on providing funding rather than imposing a cultural policy agenda. As an “arms-length” organization, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) is

funded by the US Congress to disseminate funding for the arts across the country. The NEA's budget amounted to \$162.5 million in 2020, of which 40 percent is distributed to fifty state art councils and six regional arts councils. The remaining funds are disseminated to organizations and institutions directly, with a designated portion reaching underserved communities (National Endowment of the Arts, 2020). Funding decisions from the NEA reflect the decisions of peer review juries. Beyond these instruments, the US government primarily influences culture through the creation of tax incentives for private donations or charitable organizations (National Endowment of the Arts, 2012).

### New York State

The state of New York's principal public funding body for culture is the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA), founded in 1960 as the first state art council of its kind. Its budget amounted to approximately \$43 million in 2020, which were distributed primarily in the form of grants to about 2,500 arts organizations throughout the state. The NYSCA further contributes part of its budget to capital investment programs (*About NYSCA*, 2020). At the state level, New York is pursuing funding decisions that advance cultural participation for all New Yorkers, with a specific focus on involving equity-seeking groups. Further, the NYSCA values putting artists "at the center of the creative endeavor", particularly visible through the creation of fellowships for individual artists (*ibid.*).

New York State is additionally eligible for funding from the regional Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation (MAAF), Inc., which awarded \$1.96 million in grant-funding among its eligible states and territories in 2019. The MAAF's specific focus is to provide grants that allow artists and groups to tour nationally and internationally and to foster cultural exchange – measures that have already benefited many New York City residents (*FY 2019 Annual Report*, 2019)

### New York City

At the city level, cultural matters are coordinated and funded in the hands of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA), the US' largest public funder for culture (with a larger budget than the National Endowment for the Arts; Goldstein, 2019). The city department is advised by a Cultural Affairs Advisory Commission and led by a commissioner, who oversees its operation and the implementation of its goals. Throughout Commissioner Tom Finkelpearl's tenure, the DCLA's budget has grown from \$156.1 million in 2014 to \$211.6 million in 2020 (Pogrebin, 2020). Notably, the grant funding supplied for individual artists and small non-profits increased from less than \$1 million in 2015 to roughly \$4 million in 2020 (*CreateNYC*, 2019). After the Commissioner's sudden departure in late 2019, the selection of Gonzalo Casals to fill his post was an indication that the city is using its cultural policy to further access and diversity. Commissioner Casals is reputed to be a passionate and activist advocate for cultural democracy and the inclusion of diverse perspectives into New York's art world. His appointment may

therefore herald a more insurgent kind of agenda-setting for New York's cultural policy (Pogrebin, 2020).

The DCLA follows the objectives set out in the "CreateNYC – A Cultural Plan for All New Yorkers". This strategy, drawn up under Commissioner Finkelppearl in 2017 after months-long consultations with 200,000 citizens, artists, cultural managers and business owners, was New York's first-ever cultural blueprint (*CreateNYC*, 2017). Its corresponding action plan, published in 2019, streamlines the strategy's ambitious 90 individual policy recommendations into five major goals:

1. "Increase equitable funding and support for culture, especially in historically underserved communities.
2. Cultivate inclusive practices in the cultural system.
3. Strengthen connections between the cultural system and government.
4. Address the affordability crisis for the cultural community.
5. Provide high quality arts education for all New York City public school students."

(*CreateNYC*, 2019).

The in-depth participatory process that resulted in this strategy has also yielded the creation of New York's first-ever Office of Nightlife in 2017. The office is tasked with coordinating policy measures and conflict mediation between New York's approximately 25,000 nightlife establishments (with an economic impact of more than \$35 billion) and the relevant city agencies (*NYC's Nightlife Economy*, 2019). The first appointed Nightlife Mayor Ariel Palitz is charged with safeguarding New York's famous subcultures from gentrification while taking the increasingly decentralized distribution of nightlife establishments into consideration (Feuer, 2018).

Recent years have seen the financial broadening of the DCLA's portfolio in line with the city strategy. Expanded funding structures include the Cultural Development Fund (CDF), created in part to balance out funding inequalities across the boroughs. In 2019, the fund allocated \$51.3 million to 985 organizations across all boroughs. Since some organizations, such as the Bronx Council on the Arts, used the funds to bolster local artists' grants, the CDF also indirectly provided funding for individual artists (Bishara, 2019). Through the public art program "Percent for Art", the city offers further support for artists, based on a requirement that one percent of city funds for building projects must be spent to commission local artists for new public artworks (*Percent for Art*, n.d.). This emphasis on public art is complemented by the "Public Artist in Residence" program launched in 2015, which pairs artists with the city's public service agencies. Through these residencies, artists are creatively integrated into finding participatory solutions to pressing civic problems. For instance, Laura Nova's residency at the Department for the Aging has resulted in several art and community projects promoting anti-ageism and healthcare (*PAIR*, n.d.).

In response to the city's publication of CreateNYC, an independent grassroots collective of artists and cultural workers from the city joined together to formulate "The People's Cultural Plan" (The PCP). Their counterproposal criticizes that Mayor de Blasio's strategy disregards the urgency of providing affordable spaces to work and live in the city. Further, the group condemns "the lack of concrete funding commitments, and the absence of adequate anti-displacement policies", thereby accusing Mayor de Blasio of maintaining a close relationship with the cultural elite and private real estate developers akin to his predecessor Mayor Bloomberg (The People's Cultural Plan, 2017b). The initiative's counterproposal consequently offers concrete policy measures centered around housing/land, equitable labor and funding equity within the DCLA's budget.

### Arts Councils in the Boroughs

Each of New York City's five boroughs has its own local arts council, which administers grants and fellowships for artists. The Bronx Council on the Arts, Brooklyn Arts Council, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, Queens Council on the Arts and Staten Island Arts distribute funding provided by the DCLA, the NYSCA, the NEA and a variety of private and non-profit donors (*2019 Annual Report*, 2019).

In the following, some of New York's prevalent policy trajectories are sketched briefly:

**Increasing Diversity:** New York's cultural strategy put a key focus on increasing the diversity of the cultural ecosystem. Among the progress already made since the plan's publication in 2017 was the decision to enlist a Disability Inclusion Associate for the DCLA. This position further helped to deliver the "CreateNYC Disability Forward Fund" to support equal access to culture for people with disabilities (*CreateNYC*, 2019). Additionally, the DCLA commenced the new SU-CASA in 2016, a community-oriented program targeting senior citizens to facilitate "Creative Aging" (*Creative Aging*, n.d.). These specific programs are geared toward widening both the target group of the arts in New York, as well as the group of people actively participating in them.

Another important step towards increasing the diversity of New York's cultural ecosystem was made with the appointment of the "Mayoral Advisory Commission on City Art, Monuments and Markers" in 2017, which was charged with examining the state of monuments in the city regarding the consistency of their portrayal of New York's history and values. The resulting report published in 2018 assesses discourses surrounding controversial city monuments and recommends a supplementary future approach (Mayoral Advisory Commission, 2018). Towards this goal, City Hall has committed to up to \$10 million in capital funds (*Mayor de Blasio Releases Monuments Commission's Report*, 2018).

**Diversity in New York's CIGs:** Further, all CIGs were required to submit diversity, equity, and inclusion plans in line with New York's cultural strategy. These plans included short- and long-term goals to be monitored closely and reported to the DCLA annually (*NYC Department of Cultural Affairs*, 2019). The objectives emphasized in these diversity plans differed between different institutions and were deliberately left in their hands. However, local experts have criticized the

city's decision to forego specific prerequisites for these plans, claiming that this effectively cancels their potential for real change (Dafoe & Boucher, 2019). Upon their submission, the city commissioned a study to investigate the demographic make-up of DCLA-funded organizations profiting from CIG or CDF, including 65 organizations overall.

This research has found that the city's quest for a more representative arts world is far from over. For instance, while 66 percent of the organizations' cultural workforce is white, only 32 percent of New York's overall population are. This comes at the cost of representation for nearly all other groups, but especially Latinx residents, who make up 29 percent of the city's population and only 11 percent of the examined art world (SMU DataArts, 2019). Previous research had already found that the share of white employees was even more disproportionate in higher-ranking positions (Schonfeld & Sweeney, 2016). The study also found that certain groups were overrepresented in the organizations, including women, people with a disability and those identifying as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or queer (SMU DataArts, 2019).

**Focus on Immigrant Communities:** Establishing trust between the city's manifold communities and its government has been an important point on New York's agenda (WCCF, 2018). Under the leadership of Mayor de Blasio, New York started the free ID membership program in 2015. The initiative issues government IDs for all New York City residents over the age of ten. Applications are handled irrespective of the person's immigration status and are made easily accessible for non-English speakers by offering information in 35 languages, as well as for people with disabilities. With these measures, New York residents without legal immigration status can access city services. Alongside many other benefits, ID cardholders are eligible for membership programs and discounts at museums and other cultural institutions across all boroughs. Already in 2016, more than 800,000 people had signed up for the IDs, with 77% of immigrant New Yorkers claiming that the "stigma-free" ID gave them a sense of belonging (Daley et al., 2016, pp. ii–iii).

Additionally, New York has supported a competitive grant program designed to provide multiple language access for cultural audiences ("CreateNYC Language Access Fund"). This also includes the provision of American Sign Language translations for cultural programming (*Language Access Initiative*, n.d.). Programming in multiple languages is considered a prerequisite for the inclusion of underrepresented groups, as half of New York's population speaks a different language than English at home and 200 languages are spoken overall (*NYC Department of Cultural Affairs*, 2020). This course of action is also backed under the new cultural administration. Commissioner Casals has explicitly highlighted his own immigration background and made it clear that democratized culture requires the inclusion of all perspectives that define New York's cultural vibrancy (Pogrebin, 2020).

**Affordability Crisis:** As New York's costs of living have rapidly outpaced wage growth, more and more residents have been displaced. Indeed, the crisis of affordability has jeopardized the city's arts and culture for several decades – yet this report would be remiss not to highlight its worsening severity. Faced with a dire shortage of artistic workspaces and affordable housing units available, the DCLA has included this emergency in its cultural strategy. Mayor de Blasio even claimed that



the “affordability crisis threatens who we are, threatens the very soul of this city” (de Blasio cited in *CreateNYC*, 2017, p. 93).

Consequently, the mayor announced the creation of “Affordable Real Estate for Artists” (AREA) in 2015. This program consists of the creation of 1,500 new affordable housing units and 500 new artistic workspaces, to be completed within a decade. The program is the result of the close cooperation of different city agencies with private real estate developers and housing agencies. In addition to pledging \$30 million in capital investment, New York is also offering some of the city’s very own properties for the program (*Affordable Real Estate for Artists*, n.d.). Despite some praise for these commitments, Mayor de Blasio’s plans are criticized by New York’s representatives of independent cultural organizations. Considering the record-breaking homelessness levels and decreasing housing security in New York’s boroughs, the Mayor’s proposal – to be implemented over an entire decade, no less – may only make a small dent in the problem. Indeed, in 2014, 53,000 artists applied for 89 designated artists’ apartments, indicating that the offer cannot possibly meet the city’s needs, which have only heightened since then (The People’s Cultural Plan, 2017b).

Private investors play a double-edged role for affordability. Although Mayor de Blasio’s cultural strategy banks on further public-private partnerships, the PCP is warning against additional privatization of available public spaces (The People’s Cultural Plan, 2017b). The group accuses Mayor de Blasio’s plans of contributing to “artwashing”. This refers to the creation of designated art spaces within private developments, which does not address the root problem, but rather pits artists against other residents in need. As a result, the private developments gain value, posing a threat to surrounding tenants - something that could be observed in all boroughs over the last years. Therefore, the PCP stresses that any satisfactory solution to the affordability crisis must include all the city’s at risk-tenants, not merely artists or cultural organizations (The People’s Cultural Plan, 2017a). Unregulated reliance on private partnerships may therefore exacerbate the affordability crisis, rather than alleviating it.

**Cultural Education:** Though New York’s education outcomes have increased over the last years, with higher numbers of graduates and those proceeding to tertiary education, entrenched disparities corresponding with neighborhoods and race or ethnicity prevail (*Better Evidence for Better Schools*, 2018). Considering the apparent inequality of access to opportunities, the DCLA has put a focus on providing equitable cultural education. This focus underscores the urgency of high-quality arts education in public schools, which ranges from early childhood through high school graduation and considers the needs of equity-seeking groups. Funding increases attached to this agenda exist in the context of the city’s strategy to increase cultural participation and democratize access to it (*CreateNYC*, 2019).

To combat the vastly differential career opportunities in the cultural system, New York has further targeted initiatives on the tertiary education level. For instance, the city fostered partnerships between higher education institutions and cultural institutions. In cooperation with the City University of New York (CUNY) and the Rockefeller Foundation, the DCLA launched the “CUNY Cultural Corps”, which matches promising students from equity-seeking groups with renowned institutions from New York’s cultural system for paid internships. The initiative, launched in 2016,

expanded to 44 participating institutions in 2019 and has already placed hundreds of students (*CUNY Cultural Corps, 2019*).

### **New York's Response to COVID-19**

New York's population was strongly impacted by COVID-19, with high numbers of infected and lethal cases of the virus. In response, Mayor de Blasio issued a state of emergency on March 13, 2020, which was subsequently supplemented with strict regulations for social activities and public life, including the arts (*Mayor de Blasio Issues State of Emergency, 2020*). Consequently, 95 percent of New York's non-profit arts organizations canceled at least some of their activities, though only 11 percent stopped their services completely, rather than adapting their format (Fonner & Voss, 2019). As many arts organizations, particularly smaller ones, rely heavily on grants and/or donations, fears that corporate and individual charity will recede as the crisis persists have been prevalent (Savitch-Lew et al., 2020).

An evaluation of the layoffs and furloughed workers in New York's non-profit arts shows that the pandemic had an especially large effect on two groups: firstly, the visitor services and the security personnel, whose occupation is tied to the opening times of cultural institutions, and secondly, artists who working as freelancers or have an otherwise unstable income (Fonner & Voss, 2019). Additionally, while some art forms can be continued virtually or in isolation, the performing arts, who draw a large share of their income from live shows and tours, were the hardest-hit economic sector in New York. Between September 2019 and October 2020, jobs in the performing arts were reduced by 72 percent (Dvorkin, 2020).

The economic impact of the pandemic on the cultural system has been most sorely felt by smaller organizations with budgets below \$250,000, whose income has suffered the greatest proportional loss (Fonner & Voss, 2019). Indeed, small and mid-sized arts organizations are forecasting income losses amounting to 50 percent or more of their annual operating budgets (Dvorkin, 2020). Similarly, numbers from May indicate that 11 percent of New York's non-profits do not believe they will survive the crisis – a number likely to have skyrocketed in the difficult months following the initial outbreak. The situation is exacerbated by the comparatively small amount of savings that smaller organizations have accrued. In most cases, this makes continued operations with reduced or no income only feasible for a few months. Additional expenses aggravate their position: besides the cancellation of activities and reduction of income via ticket prices, many organizations had to manage significant unanticipated costs, such as through renovations and adaptations to COVID-19 hygiene requirements (Fonner & Voss, 2019).

A welfare response at the national level was needed, as more and more workers had to file for unemployment benefits. For New York's cultural system, these measures offered some relief. Most notably, the CARES Act (Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act), which was signed by President Donald Trump on March 27, 2020, made \$2.2 trillion available for workers and businesses across the country. Many New York non-profits and commercial arts entities were eligible for the programs developed under this umbrella (*Cares Act Table, 2020*). The CARES Act

further allocated funding of \$75 million to the NEA. A (Fonner, 2020a) portion of \$30 million was immediately disseminated to the regional and state arts agencies (Carter, 2020). The MAAF, responsible for nine states and territories, awarded 26 of the 79 available grants (up to \$20,000) to organizations located in New York City (*CARES Arts Organization Relief Grants, 2020*). The New York State Council of the Arts received \$585,100 through these means. The remaining funds were directly distributed to selected arts organizations (\$50,000 each), with \$6.3 million awarded to applicants in the state of New York and a majority of these to New York City (*National Endowment for the Arts, 2020*). However, the demand far exceeded their supply: nation-wide, more than 3,100 eligible organizations applied for these grants, with only 846 organizations receiving aid (Ulaby, 2020).

The protection of jobs was frequently put at the forefront of these efforts – both salaried workers, as well as self-employed. For instance, the nationwide “Paycheck Protection Program” (PPP) offered low-interest loans to keep workers employed. Across the country, approximately \$1.1 billion in loans were handed out to nonprofit recipients from the category of arts and culture . Access to this program was not impartial though: particularly new-coming institutions reported being at a disadvantage to obtain these loans, as they had a shorter track record with the relevant banks (Fonner, 2020a). For New York, these PPP loans were able to support 8,420 jobs in the cultural system (also including zoos and botanical gardens), unfortunately only a fraction of those projected to be lost. Indeed, several recipient organizations remarked that the loans cannot suffice for financial security and by no means ensure their survival (Fonner, 2020b). The CARES Act further provided up to \$600 per week (for up to 39 weeks) for the period until July 31, 2020, to self-employed workers in the cultural system. Particularly for workers accustomed to precarious conditions, these contributions can succeed in offering some temporary stability, though their expiration date does not allow for a long reprieve (*Cares Act Table, 2020*).

On the city level, an emergency assistance program from the DCLA was sorely lacking. The DCLA’s website, too, functioned as a collection of resources and vowed to use their online outreach to promote struggling artists presenting their activities online (with the use of hashtags #CulturefromHome and #MuseumMomentofZen). To improve the city’s decision-making, the DCLA also commissioned a study to examine the impact of COVID-19 on the cultural system (*COVID-19 Coronavirus Resources, 2020*).

In light of the DCLA’s shortcoming, some aid was offered by private donors and non-profit foundations, instead. For instance, the New York Community Trust targeted the city’s non-profit sector through the “NYC COVID-19 Response & Impact Fund”. The fund was based on private and corporate donations amounting to \$110 million, which were distributed as grants or zero-interest loans to organizations in need. The fund explicitly acknowledged the city as the “cultural capital of the nation” and argued that it needed protection. Accordingly, many organizations from the arts and culture were among the 768 recipients (Lipp & Nagler, 2020). A similar fund to help individuals, entitled “Artist Relief”, was created at the national level through a coalition of nonprofit arts organizations. The program disseminated \$5,000 grants to individual artists who are in “dire financial emergencies” because of COVID-19 (*Artist Relief, 2020*).

As artist grants and fellowships in New York are also provided by the five local arts councils, some of the emergency mechanisms were administered here, as well – though funds were visibly tight. The Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, for instance, created a new partnership with the Trust for Governors Island to create three-month artist residencies on the island for city-based artists affected by the crisis (*Arts Center Residency*, 2020). Other councils, such as the Bronx Council on the Arts and the Queens Council on the Arts, offered online spotlights for local artists and attempted to raise awareness for resources available to artists.

Considering the way New York handled the pandemic, the PCP once again held Mayor de Blasio accountable while pointing out the city’s distressing condition. While the demands are primarily addressed to the DCLA, the PCP also makes note of the weight that private funders of culture carry in New York. In interaction with the changed context of the pandemic, the plan calls for civic and corporate mobilization on a similar level as during the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy to save the people (*The People’s Cultural Plan*, 2020). It is, however, notable that this scale of this community mobilization must be massive to compensate for the massive shortfalls incurred due to COVID-19.

A selection of notable programs that benefited New York’s landscape included:

- The CARES Act, with \$75 million distributed through the NEA and additional cross-sectoral welfare programs to benefit employees.
- The NYC COVID-Response & Impact Fund, channeling donations to nonprofits across the city, many of which are in the cultural sector.
- Artist Relief, a nation-wide program offering grants to artists in need.

**Impact of COVID-19**

**Increasing Diversity:** For many of New York’s institutions, the most pressing matter during the pandemic has been to ensure survival. The future of the city’s diversity plans is now dependent on how a cultural recovery can be organized – and whether the pursuit of institutional diversity plans can still be warranted. Initial indications, however, paint a grim picture. Amidst the crisis, the killing of George Floyd by a police officer in Minneapolis set off a resurgence of Black Lives Matter protests across the country, which again brought problems of institutionalized racism to the forefront of public discourse (Fonner & Voss, 2019). Similarly, communities read as Asian have suffered from a strong upsurge in anti-Asian discrimination in relation to COVID-19, with a nearly sevenfold increase of reported incidents compared to the prior year (*I Still Believe in Our City*, 2020).

As COVID-19 disproportionately affects ethnic minorities in New York, the role of diversity became more prevalent during the COVID-19 lockdown. Indeed, COVID-19's fatality rate was more than twice as high among African American New Yorkers than among white residents (92

lethal cases per 100,000 people vs. 45 per 100,000; Tucker, 2020). Additionally, the layoffs along the cultural supply chain have disproportionately affected employees with ethnically diverse backgrounds, making a specific focus on diversity in the future especially important. The discourse on institutionalized racism set off by the events during the pandemic made the outcomes of cultural institutions' inequitable layoffs sorely visible (Fonner & Voss, 2019). What is more, in many institutions, the most diverse workforce was among the most recently hired, making them particularly susceptible to layoffs (Bahr, 2020).

What is more, the crisis also revealed that organizations that serve more diverse audiences tend to come from sectors and institutions with smaller budgets, making them prone to be overlooked in emergency funding budgets (Voss & Robinson, 2020). The fear that reopening measures cannot offer financial relief due to additional costs and lowered footfall, is posing an existential threat for these institutions with small profit margins (Dvorkin, 2020).

The future reveals no linear path to recovery. DCLA's 2021 budget includes significant funding cuts for programs targeted at diversity. While reductions will be implemented across the board, programs such as the Cultural Development Fund or the SU-CASA program have been particularly affected (Louloudes, 2020). This is demonstrating the discouraging trend: those groups, which were particularly hard hit by COVID-19 – specifically those from ethnic minorities and the elderly – are facing disadvantaging budget cuts in the future, as well. Without an ambitious recovery plan, New York is likely to regress in the pursuit of its diversity objectives. By contrast, SMU DataArts emphasizes that “resilient organizations will be those whose work is meaningful to a sufficiently large segment of the local community that cares whether they exist” (Voss & Robinson, 2020, p. 7). Although the economic losses may indicate a much bleaker outlook, the resilience of New York's intricate landscape of organizations serving specific groups and art forms remains to be seen.

**Focus on Immigrant Communities:** The course of COVID-19 has revealed that large parts of New York's immigrant communities are still not eligible for federal economic stimulus measures. Nonprofits serving these communities report that as many as 75 percent of their clientele are experiencing food insecurity. Since there were at least 192,000 out-of-work undocumented residents in the city in June, the crisis has temporarily morphed the mandate of several cultural nonprofits from the focus on the arts into food and emergency assistance (Amandolare et al., 2020). What is more, organizations and initiatives serving immigrant communities similarly profited from the Cultural Development Fund, making the projected 2021 budget cuts doubly dangerous for their inclusion. This demonstrates that New York's trajectory is facing a rocky path ahead, as the sheer fight for survival, housing and food security is endangering immigrant communities.

**Affordability Crisis:** In New York, the COVID-19 pandemic hit a city where the loss of a single paycheck renders many tenants unable to pay their rent and housing consumes a progressively higher share of median wages (Haag, 2020). In this extremely precarious environment, massive wage shortfalls, particularly among the most vulnerable residents, may have disastrous consequences. Prolonged closure, particularly for nightlife establishments and live music venues,

has forced many New York venues to give up their leases, as little hope of reopening is in sight (Dvorkin, 2020).

On the state level, New York thereby implemented a rent relief program, where households can apply for up to four months of assistance with their rent. This is done through a subsidy that reinstates the tenant's rent burden to its level before income shortfalls (New York State, 2020). Additionally, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention has put an eviction moratorium in place, which is valid until December 31, 2020 (*Eviction Moratoria, 2020*). However, these securities only offer a temporary reprieve, which cannot match the wage insecurity of the future for many tenants and the enormous revenue losses for many institutions (Fonner & Voss, 2019). In New York's already-stressed real estate market, COVID-19 and the DCLA's correspondingly reduced budget may have catastrophic effects on the city's affordability.

**Cultural Education:** While the loss of employment for artists was one of the most heavily affected areas in New York, this was most visible in arts education. A survey published in June 2020 has found that there had already been a 78 percent decrease in artist staffing in education (Fonner & Voss, 2019). Additionally, the DCLA budget hearing for 2021 adapted to cut the budget for 2021 severely. In this context, funding allocated for the NYC Council Cultural After School Adventure Initiative was reduced by \$3 million (Loulouides, 2020). Further, the Arts Education program, executed by the Department of Education's budget, has been forecasted to undergo a budget cut of approximately 30 percent compared to 2020 (Bishara, 2020a). While the provision of high-quality arts education for New York's public schools remains one of the city's objectives, the Department for Education's ability to realize this target is now critically limited.

## Assessing New York's Cultural Policy Response

### Strengths

#### Analytical:

Early on during the pandemic, New York's DCLA partnered with Americans for the Arts and SMU DataArts to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on the city's non-profit cultural system. Through this quick decision-making, public and private funders in New York were able to consult the study's results and identify underprivileged issue areas already in June 2020. Though this engagement cannot compensate for the DCLA's lack of hands-on emergency assistance to the cultural system, the report delivered critical numbers that can facilitate follow-up studies to trace the pandemic's further progression.

In addition, the city's exceptionally well-connected and well-informed group surrounding "The People's Cultural Plan" has been watching Mayor de Blasio's every move since the publication of his cultural strategy – whether during the pandemic or during business as usual. The activism and awareness training this initiative is pressing ahead is a clear strength for New York's cultural policy. Though the PCP functions primarily to point out the DCLA's weaknesses, the group formulates

clear demands and calls concrete commitments to strengthen New York’s cultural policy – something the DCLA has so far shied away from.

#### Delivery:

When the DCLA introduced its first strategy for culture in 2017, it made the needs and concerns of the city’s cultural system visible and sent a strong signal in favor of cultural democratization. Especially after years of foregrounding cultural excellence and capital investments in large institutions by Mayor Bloomberg, this realignment was a well-defined turning point for the DCLA. Specifically, its participatory creation ensured that it was more attuned to the cultural system’s stakeholders and needs. The city’s formulation of its cultural policy strategy and the subsequent addition of an action plan has therefore heightened the city’s capacity to deliver targeted policies where the cultural system needs them most.

#### Coordination:

As the DCLA itself created no emergency relief program specific to culture, New York City’s local organizations had to resort to the private, non-profit and other bailout schemes provided. The city’s organizations were visibly well-organized and fared well in the supra-municipal funding schemes. Additionally, programs like the New York Community Trust, as well as many other non-profit assistance projects, were able to attract a wide array of donations. This demonstrates a coordinative advantage to New York’s cultural system over the rest of the country. As it ordinarily relies on large amounts of private and corporate contributions, the mechanisms to provide this funding and corresponding grant-application skills were already in place.

### **Weaknesses**

#### Regulatory:

Unfortunately, the financial aid made available to Americans via the CARES Act proved to be immensely insufficient to cover the cultural system’s needs. Out of \$2 trillion, only \$75 million were allocated specifically to cultural institutions through the NEA. Though several of New York’s organizations profited from these grants, its overall volume was far too small to offset revenue losses or effectively combat the mass loss of jobs across the cultural system, and particularly in the performing arts (Bishara, 2020b). In the face of this shortage of funds, the DCLA demonstrated serious regulatory weakness, as it did not possess the capacity to compensate for the relatively small contributions from the federal government. This exposed those institutions outside of the CIGs to face the economic downturn without much support from the city.

This economic downturn has proved particularly harmful to individual artists, who have even fewer grant opportunities at their disposal than organizations, particularly from publicly provided means. Even if they were eligible for the welfare provisions by the national government, benefits for freelance workers likely bear a time limit, while their income losses do not (Dvorkin, 2020).

Indeed, as the Center for an Urban Future estimates, many of these artists will experience cancellations of their activities for a year or more (Bishara, 2020b).

#### Delivery:

The dramatic gentrification of many of the city's previously more affordable neighborhoods has left economically disadvantaged residents – among them many workers from the cultural system – with nowhere left to move to. Even more dramatically now than five years ago and with another economic recession on the horizon, this lack of affordability is pushing artists from the city. New York's capacity to deliver a suitable solution is grounded in the funding decisions made over the past years. The city's failure to prevent the loss of affordable cultural space to private developers has reduced its capacity for action during this pandemic, while at the same time making the crisis' effects more urgently felt.

The pandemic has also hampered New York's pursuit of increased diversity in culture. Some of the most dramatic effects of this are damage to the cultural resources for immigrant communities and a reduction in funding for cultural education, which would ordinarily provide more democratic opportunities for all New Yorkers.

### **Opportunities**

#### Regulatory:

The appointment of the city's new Department of Cultural Affairs Commissioner, Gonzalo Casals, is encouraging, given his notable track record of engagement for diverse artistic practice. This personnel choice presents a strong signal that the city intends to continually pursue the strategy defined in the CreateNYC Cultural Plan, despite the significant drawbacks COVID-19 has effected. The new commissioner's reputed activism and passion to be an advocate for the arts may be exactly what the city needs and will be an asset when it comes to difficult budget negotiations in the crisis recovery.

Indeed, the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic will be a restarting moment in many areas of New York. It lays within the city's hands – and the negotiation skills of both Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Casals – to use this moment of disruption to spur positive regrowth. Different organizations, including both municipal and supra-regional institutions, have collected considerable amounts of data on the organizations and sectors most at risk. Starting in 2021, the DCLA must now use this data to set clear targets for their engagement. With clearly communicated measurable goals and commitments, for example considering the hiring practices of publicly funded institutions, the DCLA can rethink how it can more effectively achieve the goals set out in its strategy.



### Delivery:

As many of the well-known art institutions from New York have been able to switch their cultural offerings online, several of them have managed to expand their outreach countrywide (Fonner & Voss, 2019). The Met Opera, for instance, has conducted nightly streaming offers. With this new program, the institution's new viewership increased by 2,000 percent, while nightly viewer numbers increased by 1,500 percent (WCCF, 2020). As an institution with notoriously high ticket prices, the online offer also allows viewers who could not afford a visit to the Met Opera to benefit from its programming. With these numbers in mind, the digital capacities developed due to COVID-19 hold the potential to let the rest of the country partake in the activities of its "cultural capital" more easily and could become an additional offer for the Met Opera and the many other institutions who have expanded their online presence in the years to come.

An opportunity for New York's cultural institutions also arises from the relationship tourists have with the city. Mayor Bloomberg's campaign to increase New York's appeal to tourists has not been popular among everyone. Indeed, the policies associated with Mayor Bloomberg's place-marketing have reinforced the already progressing gentrification of New York's neighborhoods, with only a few "trickle-down benefits" for the working class (Moss, 2018). Although this is likely no comparable consolation to New Yorkers, this history of city-branding has succeeded in contributing to a certain reputation the city now enjoys. New York and its art world's international standing may increase the likelihood that a touristic recovery will take place once safe travel is possible. Additional revenue for the culture, as well as the tourist sector, are sorely needed. Therefore, a renewed tourism campaign for New York once safe travel is possible could provide much-needed income, as public budgets remain strained.

### **Threats**

#### Regulatory:

The last two decades have seen New York use arts and culture as an important economic motor, which has spurred job growth not only in the creative industries but also in tourism. At a time when both sectors are in a state of emergency, further massive job loss seems inescapable. Besides the detrimental social impact this will likely entail, the reduced taxable sales also impact the city's future ability to provide enough funds to its cultural ecosystem to support recovery (Dvorkin, 2020). Indeed, fighting the COVID-19 pandemic has been a very costly undertaking both for New York City and New York State, with public disputes featuring Mayor de Blasio New York Governor Andrew Cuomo against President Trump concerning their level of indebtedness. State Senator Liz Krueger already announced that there will be little budget left for the cultural system in the future (Bishara, 2020b). Therefore, the State offers little hope for an economic stimulus package to spur the recovery of the state's cultural ecosystem. The DCLA budget cuts for 2021, too, arrive at exactly the point where *more* funding is needed, exacerbating the threat of bankruptcy for many organizations or only very slow economic recovery over the long term.

What is more, as private and corporate donations have played an important role to fund the arts in New York, the fear that their goodwill has been exhausted in this year's emergency measures is prevalent. During recessions in the past, donors have reduced their giving and seemed to prefer bigger institutions than small non-profit organizations (McCambridge & Dietz, 2020). Should economic concerns cause their engagement for additional emergency measures or future grants to fall short of its past levels, New York's independent cultural system would be in an even worse situation.

#### Delivery:

Lastly, the uncertainty and psychological impact of the crisis may complicate the path to recovery. The pronounced impact of COVID-19 on the city, with extremely high levels of casualties, cannot – and should not – be easily forgotten. Rather, the lethal course of the pandemic is likely to leave an identity-defining trauma on New York, potentially akin to the effects of crises like 9/11 or Hurricane Sandy. While the arts are needed now more than ever, there is uncertainty about what long-term effects this trauma might have on the city's art world. Uncertainty about the economic wellbeing and the recovery course of the cultural system, where the employment will likely remain insecure for years to come, contributes to these concerns. In an already competitive environment, the overall reduction of the cultural workforce is exacerbating an already tense environment. The graduating classes of 2020 and the years to come, reportedly the most diverse and technologically savvy classes ever, are in an extremely difficult situation to break into the art world (Bishara, 2020b).

While the city of New York demonstrated strong analytic capacities through its tightly interconnected cultural sector and, thus, quick access to networks of expertise, it was less able to deliver the necessary financial support and relief for its cultural workers, businesses and organizations. The city had to rely on other tiers of government to provide support for income and revenue loss. Yet those measures were insufficient and put the city's diverse community of cultural workers into jeopardy. Consequently, creative occupations in the fine and performing arts will be disproportionately affected, with an estimated third of wage employment loss (Florida & Seman, 2020).

### **Policy Recommendations for New York:**

Considering the damaging effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the cultural system, there are several successful policy actions that New York should continue:

1. Though there has been some disagreement about the specificity of the pledges and the speed of their implementation in New York's cultural strategy, the city's agenda-setting has been in tune with the demands of the population. New York must therefore continue to enhance its analytic capacities by monitoring closely the developments of

its policy aims. In cultural recovery from COVID-19, this includes honestly documenting the losses in infrastructure, personnel and organizations incurred.

2. The new DCLA Commissioner Casals' capacity to deliver tailored policy measures must build on the progress made by his predecessor and intensify the city's pursuit of its policy objectives relating to cultural democracy. For a cultural ecosystem harmed by the pandemic and threatening to regress in diversity, recovery efforts must be guided by an unyielding champion for their cause.

Given the evaluation of New York's governance capacities above, some additional steps are recommended:

3. New York needs a sector-wide solution to combat the wide-spread job loss. With budgets being cut simultaneously for cultural education and arts funding, the city must increase its **coordination** capacity by rallying private sector and non-profit support behind a newly created program connecting out-of-work artists and cultural workers with cultural education programs across the boroughs.
4. With the regression of progress made in the CreateNYC policy goals due to the pandemic, the DCLA must use 2021 to take stock of COVID-19's impact on the trajectories. The cultural strategy was already equipped with supplementary details and actions once before, in 2019. Based on the collected data and the progression of the crisis in 2021 the city must conduct an in-depth consultation process with representatives from the cultural system like the PCP. In doing so, the DCLA can increase its **regulatory** capacity by adding further detail to its strategy with specific numbers and policy commitments for the next years, outlining what a recovery must look like and honing its capacity to implement it. This way, the DCLA must make sure that its overarching objectives are not lost in an economically driven recovery process.
5. The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed a welfare precipice for many of New York's residents, especially among immigrant communities. Particularly in the recovery period, the city must therefore strengthen its **delivery** capacity to enhance its status as a city of cultural production for people from all backgrounds. To do so while following core policy goals (namely to increase equitable funding and support affordability), the DCLA must use this moment to increase funding opportunities provided for individual artists. As municipal budget cuts for FY2021 have already been announced, the new Commissioner of Cultural Affairs must lobby at the municipal, state and federal levels for an enhanced grant budget to implement this. The announcement of President-Elect Joe Biden, who has been a consistent proponent of national funding for the arts, as the next president of the United States, might herald a newly amenable climate for this mission (Bowley, 2020).

# Paris



## Paris

<b>Population</b>	
City limits	2.2 million <sup>24</sup>
Metropolitan area	12.1 million <sup>25</sup>
<b>Budget for Culture</b>	€177.4 million (2020) <sup>26</sup>
<b>International Tourists</b>	21.5 million (Greater Paris) <sup>27</sup>
<b>Creative Industries Employment</b>	9 % <sup>28</sup>
<b>Population diversity</b>	19% Foreign born population <sup>29</sup>

For centuries, the city of Paris has maintained a status as one of the world's preeminent cultural centers. Bolstered by high-end creative industries and world-renowned institutions, Paris is a world-beating cultural hub in nearly every respect. Paris-based household names in the fashion industry, such as Louis Vuitton, Chanel, and Hermès, contribute to its notoriety as a hub of glamour and cultural excellence, with Paris Fashion Week as an annual highlight. These factors certainly contribute to Paris ranking as the second most visited city in the world in 2019 (*Mastercard Global Destination Cities Index, 2019*), and the capital city of the country most visited by international tourists (The World Bank, 2018). This attraction is supported by unparalleled levels of central government spending on the city's culture. As a result, the French Ministry for Culture ("Ministère de la Culture") spends about 139€ per capita for residents of the Île-de-France, where Paris is located, while the per capita spending for the rest of the country amounts to 15€ (Jaeglé, 2018).

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<sup>24</sup> *The Greater Paris Region Demography*, n.d.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Direction des Finance et des Achats, 2019.

<sup>27</sup> *Paris Region Key Figures 2019*, 2019.

<sup>28</sup> BOP Consulting, 2018.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

Despite Paris' fame and well-known highbrow cultural beacons, such as the Louvre, the Centre Pompidou or the Musée Picasso, the city's succession of left-wing mayors since 2001 have set the city on a cultural democratization course. Mayor Anne Hidalgo, in office since 2014 (and reelected in 2020) vowed to continue this path (*Carine Rolland, 2020*). In this context, cultural education, as well as a cultural provision in the neighborhoods through libraries or art spaces to further amateur arts, have been important lifelines for Parisian culture. Correspondingly, while many cities are experiencing the disappearance of public libraries, Paris has opened three new branches since 2014. Even further, initiatives are advocating for their right to stay open on Sundays, positioning them as cultural third places with low barriers to entry (Hidalgo, 2018).

## Cultural Policy in Paris

Parisian cultural policy is created through several interwoven levels of governance. From the national governance level, Parisian cultural policy is impacted by the agenda established in the French Ministry for Culture. The Ministry's implementation is complemented by the Regional Directorates of Cultural Affairs ("Direction Régionale des Affaires Culturelles", DRAC), decentralized agencies tasked with representing national cultural policy directions in heritage and culture (*Missions et organisation, n.d.*). On a municipal level, cultural policy in the city of Paris is represented through the Cultural Affairs Division ("Direction des Affaires Culturelles de la Ville de Paris", DAC), subordinate to a Mayor and a Deputy Mayor for Culture.

## National French Cultural Policy

As the French capital and the recipient of substantial funds from the national cultural budget, Paris' cultural policy is significantly influenced by the French Ministry for Culture. Indeed, the Ministry for Culture has greater influence over Paris than any other French city. Paris is home to an immense cultural infrastructure including institutions of worldwide renown, such as the Louvre, the Opéra National de Paris or the Musée d'Orsay, which are funded by the national government. With the publication of the 2020 budget, the Ministry has highlighted five priorities for French cultural policy:

1. Making arts and culture an instrument for the emancipation of citizens,
2. Mobilizing the arts at the service of the regions,
3. Making France a country of artists and creators,
4. Reaffirming French cultural sovereignty, and
5. Positioning women and men in the pursuit of a new trajectory for the Ministry

(Budget 2020, 2019).

Roselyne Bachelot-Narquin assumed the role of culture minister in 2020, amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Bachelot-Narquin is assuming office following a long succession of Culture Ministers that only held the position for an average of fewer than two years since 1969, apart from Minister Jack Lang's governance for nearly 10 years in the 1980s and 1990s (Chaverou, 2020).

Similarly to the Parisian focus, President Emmanuel Macron prioritized democratization and participation in culture at the national level. The 2019 launch of the "Culture Pass" by the Ministry for Culture was intended as a way to introduce adolescents to cultural events. The program provides a free app for 18-year-olds that locates cultural activities in their vicinity, including an account balance of 500 € for respective tickets. Though not all French regions qualify – including the city of Paris itself – several of the *départements* of Greater Paris are eligible (*Pass Culture*, n.d.). Funding for his project was continually increased, though the project is subject to some criticism from arts organizations. Primary points of contention include that the program was developed without consulting the cultural system, as well as accusations of its ineffectiveness. Considering President Macron's overall silence on cultural topics, fears have arisen that this is suggestive of his indifference on the matter (Le Conseil national du Syndeac, 2019).

In accordance with the French constitution, which requires that French ministries work in cooperation with decentralized regional administrative bodies, the Ministry for Culture is regionally represented with the DRAC Île-de-France, which contains Paris. In addition to implementing the national cultural policy vision, the DRAC is involved in the care of local archaeological and heritage sites. The DRAC Île-de-France is involved in funding a variety of museums, theaters, opera houses and art academies in the city of Paris. One of its largest projects in recent years was coordinating the restoration of the cathedral "Notre Dame de Paris", which had caught fire in 2019, leaving large parts of the structure destroyed. As the cathedral is one of Paris' most beloved and visited attractions, these rebuilding efforts were heavily publicized (*Bilan d'activité*, 2019).

### **"Métropole du Grand Paris"/Greater Paris**

Former French President Nicolas Sarkozy commenced the planning process for the amalgamation of Paris' metropolitan region into Greater Paris ("Métropole du Grand Paris") in 2007. This referred to the consolidation of the city of Paris with three surrounding *départements*: Seine St Denis, Val de Marne and Hauts de Seine. The project was ultimately implemented on January 1, 2016, with the creation of the Metropolis of Greater Paris, comprising 7.2 million inhabitants. Culture was identified as an integral ingredient to create social cohesion within this new metropolitan region (Janicot, 2013). Therefore, the "NOTRe" law grants Greater Paris authority over major cultural events and facilities of national or international renown. Correspondingly, the newly created entity harmonizes the cultural facilities of all municipalities comprised within, barring the city of Paris itself.

While the consolidation might be fulfilled on paper, promoting an idea of a mutual bond in the minds of Parisians is a different matter altogether. Correspondingly, the DAC under Mayor

Hidalgo was involved in several measures that sought to stretch the meaning of “Parisian” beyond the concentrated city center. For instance, the “Metropolitan Hiking Trail of Greater Paris” (“Sentier Métropolitain du Grand Paris”) was created, which links local cultural landmarks to demonstrate their cultural connectivity. In 2019, the Nuit Blanche—one of the city’s annual festivals—pursued this goal of decentralization, as it expanded into the periphery for the first time, thereby broadening its potential audience (*Soutien à la culture*, n.d.). However, this cohesion is a longer-term cultural policy trajectory, which will likely accompany Paris for several years to come.

A notable step towards the Greater Paris project is embedded in the preparations for the 2024 Olympic Games, which will take place in Paris. With this international highlight on the horizon, the city is investing nearly 35 € billion in the extension of the city’s public transportation to integrate its suburbs better (BOP Consulting, 2018). This is of paramount importance, as the Olympiad will expand throughout the Greater Paris region, with a particular focus on Seine-Saint-Denis, a previously less-connected suburb north of the city. Seine-Saint-Denis will highlight lesser-known cultural attractions intended to draw in tourists and locals alike. Paris is availing itself of the opportunity to show off its ability to compete internationally by creating an extensive event to demonstrate France’s cultural treasures next to its sports (*Regional Development*, 2019). The exposure given to Seine-Saint-Denis and investments in public transport have the potential to advance the idea of Greater Paris substantially.

Already, the decentralization of new building projects to the periphery is starting to counteract the dense concentration of the cultural offerings – though it comes with a price. In 2015, Jean Nouvel’s Philharmonie de Paris provided a shiny new landmark close to the city limits, where it sought to become a meeting place for artists (*La Philharmonie*, n.d.). With the “City of Theatre” project (“Cité du Théâtre”), initiated in 2018 and located just at the city limits, the Federal Ministry for Culture, too, is contributing to this decentralization. The new public theater is a collective and future-oriented project by the prestigious Comédie-Française, the Odeon Theater, the Conservatory of Paris and the Paris Opera (*La Cité du théâtre*, 2016). Though it is a decentralized project, the Ministry for Culture’s additional funding to the Parisian cultural infrastructure incurred the anger of several French arts advocacy groups. Their reaction demonstrates that creating and strengthening a cultural Greater Paris is a process that already has and will require some investments. Should the French government contribute to these required funds, a Greater Paris could also mean the further weakening of the regional cultural endowment in favor of Paris.

### **The City of Paris**

The municipal Parisian DAC is an administrative department subordinate to Mayor Hidalgo. The division is chaired by Deputy Mayor Carine Rolland and accounts for several of the city’s museums, libraries, theaters and conservatories. Further, the DAC supports independent arts in Paris through scholarships and grants, as well as with the contemporary art fund (“Fonds d’art contemporain – Paris Collections”), which annually purchases artworks from Parisian artists for the city’s collection and dissemination. In 2020, the Parisian budget for culture amounts to €177.4 million, much of



which is spent on the maintenance and salaries of public cultural institutions. Further, €19.1 million are spent on the support of independent artists in the city, as well as €8.3 million on the support of the cultural economy (Direction des Finance et des Achats, 2019).

Mayor Hidalgo has put culture at the heart of her vision for Paris over the duration of her term and continued her predecessor Bertrand Delanoë's democratizing cultural policy course. However, for Hidalgo, cultural participation is not merely a matter of democracy, but a crucial response to the societal tensions and questions of identity which have occupied Paris in recent years (Hidalgo, 2018). The resulting plan to make Paris' culture accessible to all Parisians includes several steps. First, the city's cultural focus over the last years has not only included the creation of new landmarks of historic scale, such as the new Philharmonie de Paris but also institutions geared towards hip-hop music or circus arts (BOP Consulting, 2018). Secondly, there are policies that seek to facilitate access to cultural production. For instance, the city endeavored to offer additional spots for musical education in its conservatories.

Similarly, part of Paris' participatory budget – a mechanism introduced by Mayor Hidalgo, where 5 percent of Paris' budget can be voted on by its citizens – is devoted to the acquisition of new musical instruments for community art centers. In their support, the city expanded its digital presence by creating a portal to view the activities planned by municipal conservatories (under the name "Paris Conservatoires"). Furthermore, continual support for the "House of Amateur Artistic Practice" ("Maisons des pratiques artistiques amateurs") is lowering barriers to get involved in the city's art scene (Hidalgo, 2018). Paris' participatory budget mechanism has also enabled making available unused spaces waiting for renovation for cultural purposes – a measure used to tackle the city's lack of space (BOP Consulting, 2018).

In the following, additional policy trajectories are sketched briefly:

**International Status:** With these policy objectives, Paris has demonstrated its objective of strengthening its international profile. The city's culture is already exceedingly attractive to tourists, and as Paris is the home of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), it is arguably also a "center of world cultural governance" (Sawyer & Rouet, 2012). Yet Mayor Hidalgo aims at the expansion of first-rate international exhibitions and programs in Paris' institutions (Hidalgo, 2018). This priority is also supported by London's departure from the EU through Brexit, which has kicked off the "Choose Paris Region" campaign to attract formerly London-based businesses to Paris. In this context, Paris is seeking to position itself as a viable alternative, priding itself on being a culturally attractive city with a high quality of life (*Why Paris Region?*, n.d.). There are several indications that Paris is already exerting great cultural influence over the world, with international outposts of the city's defining institutions, such as the Louvre Abu Dhabi and the Sorbonne in Dubai (Sawyer & Rouet, 2012).

**Affordability:** Over the past decades, the Parisian real estate market has continuously evolved to price out innovative artists from the city center. Indeed, the lack of affordable living and working space has left a mark on Paris' reputation among young artists, causing many to pursue artistic careers in smaller cities or abroad, instead. Paris' historic center is shaped by monumental cultural

institutions, as well as commercial mega-companies in the field of fashion and entertainment (BOP Consulting, 2018). Mayor Hidalgo has thereby pronounced it a matter of utmost concern to preserve a city of artistic creation rather than merely dissemination. With specifically tailored funding opportunities, Paris' cultural policy targets young artists to incentivize working in the city. For instance, Mayor Hidalgo has introduced a day of Open House for city-funded workspaces to sensitize visitors to the importance of artistic creation (Hidalgo, 2018). To address its affordability problems, the city has further experimented with alternate income streams. Newly established programs include PACT(e), run by the city-owned cultural and sports institution "Carreau du Temple", which organizes artist residencies with private-sector companies in cooperation with cultural organizations (*Pact(e)*, n.d.).

**Corporate Patronage:** The other side of the coin shows that large-scale capital investments by the owners of internationally renowned luxury brands have been transforming the cityscape. The "Fondation Louis Vuitton", located in an impressive structure created by Frank Gehry, opened in 2014, while "Bourse de Commerce – The Pinault Collection" is in the finishing stages and will open in early 2021 (BOP Consulting, 2018; *Bourse de Commerce – Pinault Collection*, 2020). In both extravagant new institutions, the city has gained two establishments committed to the presentation of contemporary art, rendered possible by the private sector. As they will, in part, exhibit the private collections of their patrons, they are a counterweight to the publicly funded structures in the city. On a smaller scale, too, corporate patronage of the arts has been on the rise. In 2017, 38% of French companies have engaged in donations for the arts, up from 31% in 2012, and made up 25% of the total donations (*Le Mécénat d'Entreprise*, 2018).

**The Future of Heritage:** In 2013, fourteen Parisian municipal museums were grouped to create the Paris Museums ("Paris Musées"), which allowed the institutions to pool resources and implement Parisian cultural policy decisions. Previously managed under the City of Paris, their newly independent status aimed to "greater visibility and dynamism" to city museums (*The Public Institution Paris Musées*, n.d.). Since its creation, the group has made headway in the digitization of their collections and making them openly accessible through their website. More than 330,000 works from the joint collections were already digitized and 150,000 are freely available online to facilitate access, teaching and research (*Open Content*, 2020). Digitized collections are also used to offer topical tours online, which join artworks and artifacts from across the fourteen collections. This way, the city seeks to safeguard its artistic heritage for the future. This trajectory is further underscored with Mayor Hidalgo's pledge to invest 220€ million in the city's heritage and renovations (Hidalgo, 2018). In 2020, City Hall specified that future renovations to the city infrastructure are set to follow a larger Parisian climate plan to create sustainable updates (*Carine Rolland*, 2020).

## Paris' Response to COVID-19

After closures of cultural events and institutions commenced in March, the French government was quick to take action to support its cultural workers. An emergency fund of 22 € million for

culture was announced on March 18, mere days after public life was restricted (Koenig, 2020). Despite the Ministry for Culture's initial bursts of activity, though, emergency funds were soon depleted, with no further engagement from the government. To draw attention to this condition, representatives of France's cultural system organized themselves and rallied the support of French cultural heavyweights to charge President Emmanuel Macron with abandoning their ecosystem. Roused by this public denunciation, the president announced a range of policy measures to the effect of 5 € billion for culture and media (Koenig, 2020). The president's pledge formed a solidarity fund, loans, project grants and further discipline-specific emergency measures targeted at protecting existing jobs, which were disseminated through the respective national cultural competence centers (*Crise sanitaire*, 2020). Lastly, the cultural economy was considered with a special 50 € million endowment to the film and TV sector, which aims to compensate for financial losses incurred through the interruption of productions (Riester, 2020).

Indeed, the cultural system's concern was justified: The National Union for Performing Arts and Entertainment (Prodiss) estimated that 37,900 workers in the cultural system were affected by prolonged inactivity nationally, with €590 million lost in revenue between March 1 and May 31, 2020 (Prodiss, 2020). Estimations in July 2020 forecasted a loss of approximately 22.3€ billion in 2020 compared to 2019, a decrease in turnover of 25 percent across the cultural ecosystem (*Analyse de l'impact*, 2020, p. 23). Consequently, the Ministry's €5 billion may seem extraordinary, but considering the losses incurred by the cultural system in consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the necessity for large national investments becomes ever more apparent (*Présentation du budget*, 2020).

In the face of revenue losses and substantial damage to its cultural workers, France offered a sweeping relief effort. Most of the work in the French cultural ecosystem is filled by so-called "*intermittents du spectacle*" – workers with temporary contracts, often moving from one cultural commitment to the next. As a result, France has an intricate social welfare system to accommodate their unstable work situations (Fabre, 2015). During an ordinary year, the "*intermittents*" are required to provide evidence that they have worked 507 hours to obtain access to their social security payments. Knowing that this would be difficult to fulfill without the high-impact summer events, on May 6, 2020, the French government announced to suspend the quota during this "white year" ("*année blanche*"). Renewal of the "*intermittents*"-status and payments amounting to 84% of their net wages, were agreed to be disbursed without any confirmations until August 2021 (Riester, 2020). This extensive policy response allowed the artists and cultural workers a perspective for the future with some ability to plan. Workers of certain disciplines were further specifically exempted from their social security payments for a limited period (König, 2020).

In September 2020, the Ministry for Culture announced a "Cultural Revival Plan" ("*Plan de relance*") endowed with €2 billion. Among other functions, this fund aims to revitalize the events sector and encourage new productions and fine art exhibitions. In doing so, a large-scale public contracting program is geared at supporting individual artists and young creators (*Plan de relance*, 2020). Even before this focus on reopening was set, the Ministry has provided guidelines to do so, which are specifically designed for the individual sectors (*Recommandations sanitaires pour la*

*reprise d'activité*, 2020). Alongside this plan, the Ministry also made available a map tracking the gradual reopening of its cultural institutions.

The city of Paris, too, has acted on behalf of its cultural population – although the public commitment at the national level put the city at an advantage. The city surveyed its cultural workers in April to gauge the civil society response to the pandemic (*Culture Paris COVID-19*, 2020). As a result, Mayor Hidalgo announced a suspension of rent payments for all city-owned workshops and properties for six months on May 19, 2020 (*Paris: Plan de Soutien*, 2020). In cooperation with the DRAC Île-de-France, the Parisian DAC has also decided that grant recipients would not have to repay the funds for canceled events (*Culture Paris COVID-19*, 2020). Following the financial assurances from the national government, Paris, too, pledged 15 € million to support the city's arts institutions and individual artists and contributed to several national relief funds. However, the largest share of this pledge (12€ million) was allocated to regularly supported institutions (*Paris: Plan de Soutien*, 2020).

Aside from these financial alleviations, the Mayor's office communicated a four-step reopening plan for the city's cultural venues ranging from adopting new hygiene measures starting May 11 to full events and performances with security measures in August (*Culture Paris COVID-19*, 2020). During this period, the city started the "A Special Summer" campaign ("Un Été particulier"), which collects the cultural events taking place in adherence to COVID-19 restrictions, with a notable focus on innovative outdoor activities. Until September 15, 2020, 115 French artists and groups performed in the public space, putting on more than 200 free shows. Part of this program also functioned as a display of solidarity with the "OFF Festival" in Avignon, which was canceled this year. Instead, many of the intended performers and artists were given the opportunity to present their work as part of "A Special Summer".

Further, the organization of this cultural summer program ensured that the "Paris Beaches" festival ("Paris Plages"), which turns the Seine's riverbanks into a series of beaches, could take place (*Un été riche*, 2020). In partnership with other cultural organizations, Paris specifically commissioned several artists and groups for their work, thereby offering them some support (*Un Plan de Soutien*, 2020). In preparation for a summer spent outside, Paris temporarily created or extended bicycle lanes throughout the city, where traffic controls have observed twice the number of cyclists in July 2020 than in July 2019 (*L'essor des pistes*, 2020).

Despite these measures, as ticket sales for cultural events became less profitable due to reduced capacities (or even impossible during full cultural shutdowns) private institutions reliant on ticket revenue for their income were under pressure. For instance, cinemas had already been obligated to close for 100 days when the second shutdown, commenced on October 30, 2020, forced them to do so again. To protect the 35 independent cinemas across Paris, the DAC provided 400,000€ overall to preserve the diversity of the Parisian cultural landscape (*Un demi-million d'euros*, 2020). Similarly, knowing that the second lockdown would affect the end of the year – the most important months for book sales – Paris organized a map of bookstores across the city to encourage citizens to purchase from them, instead of multinational online retailers (*Soutenez les librairies*, 2020).

Lastly, the Greater Paris administration offered an economic stimulus package with a budget of 110 € million across all sectors. Within this, the cultural economy is considered in its function to foster social cohesion within local neighborhood contexts. This program highlights the importance of smaller cultural and artisanal establishments in creating lively neighborhoods (*Plan de Relance*, 2020).

A selection of notable programs that benefited Paris' landscape included:

- The continuation of social security payments to the "*intermittents du spectacle*", as announced May 6, 2020
- On May 19, 2020, Paris allocated 15€ million to cultural relief, primarily for regularly supported organizations and associations using them for grant funding.
- On September 3, 2020, the Ministry for Culture's creation of a "Cultural Revival Plan" endowed with 2 € billion offered a forward-looking strategy for the cultural system, which was supplemented with 115€ million for cinemas and the performing arts on October 22, 2020.

## Impact of COVID-19

**Strengthening Greater Paris:** Paris' reaction to COVID-19 has resulted in prolonged closures of the cultural offer and a city-wide shutdown of public life. For the creation of a common vision in Greater Paris, this crisis has likely posed a challenge – after all, despite its ambitions to become the "Quarter Hour City" (i.e. a city where one can find all destinations within fifteen minutes from one's home, including workplaces and schools, but also cultural offerings), Paris still does not offer equal cultural opportunities in all its neighborhoods (Martínez Euklidiadas, 2020). In fact, Parisian living situations show a deepening inequality, which is closely linked to neighborhoods (*Gentrification et Paupérisation*, 2019). A crisis such as the pandemic, which is forcing people to remain in their homes, highlights these socioeconomic differences.

Responding to the specific requirements of this crisis, the response to COVID-19 has demonstrated close cooperation between the city, the metropolitan region and the national level. Regular meetings and the consultation of various representatives from the cultural ecosystem have attempted to ensure the complementarity of the measures provided<sup>30</sup>. Based on this positive collaboration, the cultural revitalization process could be uniquely positioned to include the entire Greater Paris region. Indeed, while an international event of the scale of the Olympic Games

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<sup>30</sup> Personal communication with a representative from the City of Paris on November 20, 2020.

seems unimaginable during times of crisis, the city will have to continue with its preparations, potentially offering fora for cooperation.

**Affordability:** The already present affordability crisis has become even more difficult to manage in the context of the pandemic. Though Paris offered some reprieve to several cultural organizations by suspending their rent payments, this could not approximate city-wide protection. Many private establishments and individual artists do not work in city-owned properties and were therefore not exempt from rent payments. At the same time, private Parisian tenants, too, were affected by the crisis. By October 2020, Parisian unemployment levels were 20 percent higher than pre-crisis levels, causing people from affected sectors and businesses to struggle with their rents (*Coronavirus*, 2020a). Though France's "winter ban" on evictions was extended during this year to accommodate those affected by COVID-19, these bans often merely delay the expulsion (*As Health Emergency Ends*, 2020). In addition, the city-wide lockdown forced residents to stay inside their homes for weeks, with only limited time to leave the house. Consequently, particularly the suburbs have seen an increase in real estate prices, as people have moved out of the city center for more living space (*What's Happening to House Prices*, 2020).

**Corporate Patronage:** The economic effects of the crisis did not bypass Parisian companies, either. On the one hand, commercial partnerships and charitable giving have seen an increase due to the pandemic. A nation-wide study conducted by Admical found that 95 percent of surveyed companies have made charitable commitments during the year, with 86 percent creating specific donations or sponsorships related to COVID-19. On the other hand, the study also highlights that charitable spending on culture is playing a proportionately smaller role (with spending on social issues and health taking the lead), perhaps as it is perceived as less threatened. Additionally, charitable giving will likely not continue at this level, as the economic effects of the crisis are catching up with companies (*Étude COVID-19*, 2020). Although one cannot be certain as the impact of the crisis is still unfolding, corporate patronage for the arts in Paris may suffer in the long-term decline.

**The Future of Heritage:** Paris' path towards digitizing its cultural riches proved to be a fruitful choice during the pandemic. When visiting museums and exhibitions in person became impossible, offering online programming became a popular alternative for cultural sites in Paris. The digitization agenda implemented by the group of Paris Museums ensured that they already had a large catalog of digitized content to utilize. This was used to offer online exhibitions, often specifically targeted to children and families. Similarly, municipal libraries, too, expanded their online offer, which was accessible for free (*Culture Paris COVID-19*, 2020). Other museums followed this trend: The Louvre, for instance, created the "Au Louvre!" series on the museum's YouTube channel, which attempts to simulate a museum visit using thematic foci. Additionally, the museum launched an online series telling stories for children using the artworks in the Louvre (*Le Louvre Chez Nous*, 2020).

Moreover, when physical access to the city's museums was impossible, the "Micro-Folies" project, a digital museum allowing people to access and interact with famous artworks online, gained momentum. The project, initially funded by the Greater Paris administration to facilitate access to

cultural opportunities in the periphery, happened to be perfectly suited to the environment created by COVID-19 (*Les Actions Culturelles*, 2020). These innovations will likely remain important in times when Paris' cultural institutions have reopened, as there might be a prolonged path towards full recovery to prior visitor levels – especially when tourism falls short.

## Assessing Paris' Cultural Policy

### Strengths

#### Delivery:

Paris' ability to deliver an emergency response to the city's cultural system was strengthened by its general scheme of "burden-sharing" with the Ministry for Culture. Though hesitant at first, the French Ministry for Culture's emergency fund to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 was very well endowed. It ranged across a variety of measures that the Parisian cultural system could apply for, such as grants and loans, which are contextualized by detailed, sector-specific information on the ministry's website (*Aides et soutiens*, 2020). The non-bureaucratic introduction of the "White Year" lifted a burden off the city's shoulders and allowed Paris to deliver more targeted policies aimed at regularly funded cultural institutions that were facing income losses. Therefore, Paris once again profited from being backed by a strong Ministry for Culture on the national level.

Though the real estate market will likely worsen in the long-term, Paris also demonstrated the capacity to deliver some housing security within the cultural system. The city's suspension of rent payments for publicly owned properties was an efficient way to reduce the impact of cash flow problems and curbed the danger of potentially losing the properties for cultural use. Paris' implementation of this measure demonstrates appreciation for its cultural landscape and highlights the importance of its survival throughout this crisis.

#### Coordination:

Especially regarding the timing of COVID-19 responses, the DAC harmonized the policy measures with the announcements from the national government and Greater Paris. This efficient collaboration created a three-pronged cultural policy response benefitting Paris' cultural system. On the national level, the French government supports the city's publicly funded institutions and famous French landmarks. In doing so, the government is doing its part not only for the survival of the cultural history but also for Paris' further attractiveness for international tourism. The Ministry for Culture further provided funding to restart France's cultural economy, much of which is located in Paris or the city's vicinity. The Greater Paris administration appears focused on sustaining local cultural economy infrastructure in the individual neighborhoods. Lastly, the city of Paris is ensuring continual cultural programming, coordinating reopening efforts and offering targeted support to its cultural organizations through docked rent payments and direct financial aid.

The Parisian cultural system can profit from a further budgetary increase on the part of the Ministry for Culture, which has announced that resources for 2021 would be raised by 167€ million to 3.818€ billion (*Présentation du budget*, 2020). Additionally, the French ministry is active in proposing a thematic switch. Starting on January 1, 2021, the ministry's activities will prioritize restarting cultural activity (*Un soutien exceptionnel*, 2020). After a cultural advocacy campaign shook President Macron out of his lethargy in May 2020, the Ministry's response has been exceptionally well planned and communicated, with in-depth guidance for the sectors and the emergency procedures. While it is unclear to what extent these rather arbitrary cutoff points may be followed, it enhances Paris' ability to create strong policy responses when the city is on the same page as the Ministry. These guaranteed commitments and proposed timeline from the Ministry for Culture signal some constancy and help the cultural system, as well as the DAC, to think ahead.

## Weaknesses

### Regulatory:

The reprieve to the "*intermittents du spectacle*", offered through the "White Year", has faced some criticism from the cultural ecosystem. As the mechanism will require proof of filling the quota of hours worked starting on August 31, 2020, there are allegations that the system is merely deferring the problem, rather than solving it. Across France, workers falling into this category are uncertain about how to accumulate these hours, as very few paid opportunities emerge, and many professionals are waiting for them. Additionally, fears are pervasive that opportunities will steadily decrease as institutions or recurring festivals must shut down indefinitely (Siméone, 2020). These fears may be well justified: Ordinarily, the city is the location of 360 events per night, among them 100 concerts. Paris nighttime entertainment and cultural system alone employs 83,000 people (*Unusual figures Paris*, 2016). Paris' lack of regulatory impact on these vitally important aspects of its cultural system points out the limits of the city's capacity.

### Delivery:

Paris' capacity to deliver a satisfying solution to the cultural system, and particularly the performing arts, was impaired by an already financially weakened ecosystem. In the context of the "yellow-vest protests" in 2018 and 2019—which were sparked by rising gasoline prices but quickly expanded to a range of issues pertaining to economic justice—Parisian institutions canceled several events. Later in 2019, Parisians took to the street again to protest a new pension reform. Hundreds of the city's employees in the performing arts went on strike for weeks. The cumulated cancellation of events as a result of these civic movements incurred losses of several million euros (König, 2020). With COVID-19-related cancellations now hitting the cultural ecosystem, some of their reserves have already been reduced due to the prior years, which may complicate city hall's ability to assist.



## Opportunities

### Regulatory:

To overcome the devastating impacts of the pandemic, Paris' strong set of cultural institutions has initiated several digital resources, making available the cultural riches of the city's collections to the public. With Mayor Hidalgo's goal to further cultural democratization, it appears likely that she will continue to use these digital resources for that purpose. Especially in peripheral regions, these digital opportunities can be incorporated into creative training and arts education. While this cannot remain the only mode of interacting with the outer regions of Paris, the trend which began with the "Micro-Folies" may demonstrate how digital opportunities can unlock new tools for driving forward cultural education and identity-building based on the city's cultural heritage.

### Delivery:

Due to the deteriorating real estate affordability, action from the office of Mayor Hidalgo on the part of Paris' cultural ecosystem is required. While evictions were halted temporarily, 2021 may show the disastrous effects of the income losses from COVID-19. Faced with this crisis, the mayor has a unique opportunity to create a lasting impact on the city's real estate. The widespread affordability crisis worsened by COVID-19 could provide the city administration with just cause to intervene in the real estate market in favor of the city's tenants and implement rent controls. In consideration of her previous engagement for sustaining Paris as a city of creators and artists, this is a consistent next step towards protecting cultural diversity. In fact, similar legislation was passed in Berlin in 2019 (Knight, 2019). However, it is likely a step that needs to be justified within the right context, which the COVID-19 crisis may provide.

### Coordination:

Additionally, the international attention that will accompany the 2024 Olympic Games presents a unique opportunity for Paris. Mayor Hidalgo already emphasized wanting to hone the city's international standing and ability to compete. This major sports event thus offers the opportunity to present Paris in the desired light. Additional investments in culture within the framework of a "Cultural Olympiad" provide the space to represent Paris as a culturally vibrant and innovative city of cultural production beyond its world-famous luxury brands and beacon cultural sites. The success of this endeavor depends on the current city administration's ability to coordinate an expertly strategized blueprint for "Paris 2024", drawing in all relevant cultural workers and organizations. These include the Greater Paris administration and the Ministry for Culture, but also artists, associations and smaller institutions to create the very best representation of the city.

## Threats

### Delivery:

The consolidation of Greater Paris, one of the most important administrative developments for the City of Paris over the last years, has been established on paper. However, the cultural decentralization to accompany its consultations has not yet occurred. Save a few exceptions, Parisian cultural activity and the city's manifold institutions are still concentrated in the historic center. Therefore, when a cultural recovery from COVID-19 is on the minds of Paris' city hall and the Ministry for Culture, this dimension must not be forgotten. The next years, especially in the aftermath of this health crisis, will decide if the barely begun process of cultural cohesion within the metropolis may prove successful, or may yet fail in its infancy.

Further, as one of the most-visited cities in the world, the Parisian cultural institutions and economy can ordinarily benefit from \$14.06 billion of international tourist expenditure per year (*International Visitor Spending, 2018*). The international travel restrictions imposed across the world have put a stop to visitors from usually well-represented countries like the United States and China. As the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) forecasted, the decline in tourism could lead to a drop of 82 percent in international spending by the end of 2020, a loss of €48 billion for the whole country (*France Lack of Tourism, 2020*). Additionally, inland tourism increasingly favored country-side destinations over Paris, putting the Parisian tourist sector at yet another disadvantage (Gaudicheau, 2020). This shortfall and the potentially long period until its full recovery are a risk to Paris. The city's iconic cultural heritage sites will most likely contribute to a recovery of the tourist sector. However, the question remains: How much of the cultural and touristic infrastructure will have survived by then?

### Coordination:

Many of the notable emergency programs that benefitted Paris' cultural landscape stemmed from the national level. While this cooperation between different levels of government has been a positive force for Paris' cultural system, it also makes the city heavily dependent on large endowments from the national level. Due to this dependence on the Ministry for Culture, Paris' response to COVID-19-related closures is inextricably tied to the quality of the national response. For instance, when the Ministry for Culture fell silent in the early weeks of the pandemic, Paris was left to wait for their action, as the city, alone, cannot even come close to safeguarding its cultural ecosystem. This dependence demonstrates a threat, as well. If indeed, the suspicion of President Macron's indifference to culture is correct, this does not bode well for future cooperation between the governance levels.

There are also threats to Paris' ability to navigate reduced funding for culture from the private sector. Previous crises in France have demonstrated that private cultural spending is often sensitive to economic changes, where private household spending can drop much lower than many other sectors (Benhamou & Ginsburgh, 2020). Correspondingly, there is now the fear that in the medium-term, both private and public spending on culture will falter. As charitable giving from companies is also projected to fall – and already, a smaller share is attributed to culture – another

source of income is reduced (*Étude COVID-19, 2020*). Considering Paris' overstretched municipal budget, it remains unclear if such a decline could be compensated with increased subsidies or grants.

In conclusion, the city of Paris has demonstrated the capacity to act – yet more in its coordinating role than in regards to the delivery, analytical or regulatory capacity. Paris can rely on a strong national effort to care for the country's culture sector during the crisis and after it. It remains to be seen how the enormous earmarked budget support in 2021 will be used for rebuilding Paris' culture sector.

### **Policy Recommendations for Paris:**

Both over the last five years, as well as during the COVID-19 pandemic, the city of Paris has adopted several policy courses worth continuing in the future:

1. Paris' long history of Socialist mayors has ensured some continuity for the city's cultural policy objectives. The democratization of culture – an ongoing policy course the city has pursued for 20 years now – remains as integral to Paris' future now as it did then. In light of a rising socio-economic divide, Paris must continue to invest in community-oriented cultural institutions, such as amateur arts centers and libraries, to ensure that this disparity does not further impact access to education, expression and cultural participation. In doing so, the city will enhance its **delivery** capacity, especially in underserved neighborhoods.
2. Both the response to COVID-19 and cultural policy over the past five years have shown that culture is a matter of priority for Paris. The French Ministry for Culture already has a comparatively large annual national culture budget. By spending this on the capital to a disproportionate degree, the Ministry has notably contributed to the world-city status Paris holds today. On a municipal level, too, Paris has repeatedly put culture at the heart of its policies. To strengthen the **regulatory** capacity of Paris's cultural policies, Mayor Hidalgo must continue to coordinate funding for Paris with the Ministry for Culture and equip her DAC with the funds to meet ever-increasing cultural needs during her second mayoral term.

Based on the analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats above, the following additional policy actions are proposed:

3. To safeguard Paris' working creators and cultural workers and regain some regulatory oversight over the city, Mayor Hidalgo must find a sustainable solution to the rapid rise in rents. While some rent controls already exist, they have not halted rent increases,

as they allow for new prices to be set at 20 percent above the area's average (Encadrement, 2019). As large parts of Paris' population were negatively affected by income losses or decreases, this crisis can function as a justification to intervene in the inflated real estate market. For instance, the flood of evictions could be tackled through a further extension of the ban on evictions on those affected by COVID-19 throughout Paris. Additionally, a private and commercial rent freeze for the temporary period until the Parisian economy has regained some footing could remove some of the burden on working artists (as well as other residents facing economic hardship). Should the city fail to take responsibility for its already dwindling population of working artists in this crisis, it risks eroding the most vital parts of its cultural fabric.

4. In the longer term, city hall must consider how opportunities presented through the presence of luxury brand heavyweights can be leveraged for the grassroots culture in the city, as well. As the last decade has seen these brands pour millions into cultural prestige projects, Mayor Hidalgo needs to convincingly convey, likely undergirded with tax incentives, how ventures such as the creation of artist residences or studio space in the city can deliver similar renown, while keeping alive Paris' cultural production.
5. Paris has undergone the consolidation of Greater Paris since 2016. However, the cultural element of this newly created metropolis is not yet sufficiently utilized to create cultural cohesion within – something that Daniel Janicot specifically warned about. To increase Paris' capacity to **coordinate** a sustainable cultural consolidation of Greater Paris in the minds of Parisians, the city must invest in permanent practices to do so, beyond the support for new cultural beacons or the "Cultural Olympiad. Akin to the pooling of resources that took place for the Paris Museums, the DAC, joined by the Greater Paris authority must advocate for a closer exchange among the cultural associations serving Parisian neighborhoods. With an intensified permanent exchange facilitated by the City of Paris, this group must help to integrate a collective perspective to future cultural policies. This mission could be further supported through the creation of an advisory board to cooperate with the DAC.

# Toronto



## Toronto

<b>Population</b>	
City limits	2.6 million <sup>31</sup>
Metropolitan area	6.2 million <sup>32</sup>
<b>Budget for Culture</b>	CA\$ 63 million (2020) <sup>33</sup>
<b>International Tourists</b>	4 million <sup>34</sup>
<b>Creative Industries Employment</b>	6.9 % <sup>35</sup>
<b>Population diversity</b>	47% <sup>36</sup>

Long overlooked in favor of other, more famous, creative capitals of the world, Toronto has undergone a thorough transformation of its cultural policy agenda during the past two decades. This change had its roots in a structural reconfiguration of the local governmental structures: Due to budgeting cutbacks, the Province of Ontario fused six communities to form the new metropolis of Toronto in 1998 (Boudreau et al., 2009). At this moment of urban reincarnation, Toronto increasingly demonstrated consciousness of the potency of arts and culture as tools of urban regeneration and economic development (Goldberg-Miller, 2015). The city positioned itself as a creative hub and desired destination for Canadians and international tourists alike throughout the early 2000s. Toronto's successful campaign to assert the contribution of arts and culture to economic and social wellbeing has tied culture to the Torontonion identity (Silver, 2012). Indeed, 89 percent of the city's population believe that arts and culture make Toronto a better place to live (*Arts Stats 2019*, 2019). The quest to embed arts in the Torontonion identity is supported by the work of the city's rotating poet laureates and photo laureates, who seek to capture the city's spirit through their work. In 2017, Toronto's comprehensive efforts further secured the city's admission into the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, where it was distinguished as a Creative City of Media Arts (*Toronto UNESCO*, 2017). The distinction heightens the international standing of a city already

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<sup>31</sup> *Toronto, Canada Population, 2020.*

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> *2020 Budget Notes, 2020.*

<sup>34</sup> *Tourism Economics, 2019.*

<sup>35</sup> BOP Consulting, 2018.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

world-renowned for its music and screen sector, with the annual Toronto International Film Festival as its figurehead.

Although Toronto is not Canada's capital, it is the country's most populous city and understood as its cultural capital (akin to the cultural role New York City plays in the United States). The city is home to a remarkably diverse population, where nearly half of the city's citizens were born abroad (BOP Consulting, 2018). Additionally, the Toronto region is home to 46,320 indigenous people (*Toronto at a Glance*, 2017) and is located on the traditional territory of the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, the Mississaugas of the Credit and the Wendat peoples (*Indigenous Peoples of Tkaronto*, 2018). Within a city of such diversity, cultural production and participation are connected to civic missions of social cohesion. Indeed, Toronto's Mayor John Tory claims that "The arts are the ultimate unifying force in the world's most diverse city" (Tory, 2017 cited in *2020 Arts Funding*, n.d.). However, due to the still heavily centralized concentration of the cultural offerings and decreasing affordability of artistic production, Toronto is now facing fundamental threats to this unifying effort.

## **Cultural Policy in Toronto**

Since Toronto's amalgamation in 1998, multiple levels of governance have acted in concert to further the city's creative process: the national level (the Department of Canadian Heritage), the provincial level (Ontario's Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries) and the municipal level (with the Economic Development & Culture Division of the City of Toronto). On all these levels, cultural policy is complemented by the arms-length provision of respective arts councils. With a strong strategic emphasis on economic growth and public welfare, Toronto's cultural plans profited from an overall uncontroversial collaboration between the three levels of government (Goldberg-Miller, 2015).

## **National Cultural Policy**

On the national level, Canada's cultural policy is determined by the Department of Canadian Heritage, directed by Minister Steven Guilbeault. The department follows annual reporting frameworks with goals in the fields of arts, creativity and culture, heritage and celebration, sports, diversity and inclusion, and official languages. Within these frameworks, Canada's current strategy for culture is centered around fostering successful digital growth, expanding access to cultural activity for all Canadians and promoting diverse representation of the country's people in the arts. In support of these cultural goals, the department manages several different funding structures, through which more than CA\$1 billion in grants are dispensed annually (*Departmental Plan*, 2019).

To accommodate Canada's growing cultural industries, the Department of Canadian Heritage further launched the sub-agency "Creative Canada", which aims to increase the creative sector's

contribution to the Canadian economy. Through this channel, Canada renews the ambition to strengthen globally competitive creative industries with a “Creative Export Strategy”, endowed with CA\$125 million (*Creative Canada*, 2017, p. 35). The Department of Canadian Heritage is supported by the Canada Council for the Arts (CCA) as the arms-length funder for the arts on the national level. Their mandate receives annual funding from the Canadian Parliament supplemented by additional contributions from donations and endowments (*Governance*, n.d.). The strategic plan also makes provisions for a budgetary increase by CA\$550 million until 2021 (*Together with a Purpose*, 2019). Since 2017, the CCA has implemented a slimmed-down, artist-centric approach to funding, which reduced previously 137 discipline-specific funding streams to six to better accommodate interdisciplinary projects (*Canada Council*, 2015). Participatory consultations concerning the strategic plan for 2021-2026 with a “Reimagine the Arts” campaign are now underway, demonstrating the CCA’s commitment to engage the public in cultural policy decision-making (*Reimagine the Arts*, 2020).

### **Cultural Governance of Ontario**

The Province of Ontario provides a detailed framework for arts and cultural support through its Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries. In 2016, the ministry led a public consultation process to identify priorities for Ontario’s first-ever cultural strategy. The identified objectives follow a similar blueprint as the national Department for Canadian Heritage, mainly reflecting a democratizing trend and the value of Ontario’s creative economy. Ontario’s cultural policy objectives are leveraged through the Ontario Arts Council (OAC), which distributed CA\$61.1 million through individual and group grants for a spectrum of disciplines and priority groups in 2018/2019 (*Ontario Arts Council*, 2019).

Notably, Ontario’s strategy was created in the wake of a study highlighting how Canadian public schools have systematically disadvantaged Indigenous identities for decades (*The Ontario Culture*, 2016). The Province therefore simultaneously launched a strategy to further Ontario’s reconciliation process with its Indigenous peoples. The blueprint identifies the support of Indigenous culture and art among its core fields of action. Priorities specifically include the promotion of Indigenous languages and community-oriented cultural projects aimed at cultural revitalization (*The Journey Together*, 2016).

The Province government has also established the subsidiary agency Ontario Creates, which aims at attracting creative industries and investments to the area using specific tax incentives and funding programs. Ontario Creates further functions as a networker to create an interconnected cultural ecosystem that is sustainably grounded in the region (*Lead. Connect. Grow.*, 2017).



## City of Toronto

Despite these national and Province-level goals, Toronto's cultural policy is primarily guided by its municipal objectives. On the local level, it is implemented and planned through the "Economic Development & Culture" division of the city government. This pairing means that in Toronto, "arts and culture [have] learned the economic development vocabulary" (Goldberg-Miller, 2017, p. 16). Merging these two policy fields is in line with Toronto's transformation agenda and has created favorable conditions for the city's strong creative economy. Through this combination, the city deliberately underlines how Toronto's creative industries have been an economic motor for the city (Goldberg-Miller, 2015). The division oversees the operation of several museums located in the city, the preservation of local cultural heritage, as well as the financial support of independent artists, groups, and community-oriented arts organizations.

The city division, spearheaded by Mayor Tory, took the lead in Toronto's campaign to join the UNESCO Creative City Network. They were backed by a number of stakeholders, among them local universities, arts associations, festivals, and non-profit organizations. By way of this cooperation, Toronto's campaign was also a testament to the density of actors engaged in its cultural ecosystem. Following this international recognition, Toronto aimed to interweave cultural policy action and urban development to preserve cultural space and include sector-specific approaches for the music and film industry to enhance their international competitiveness (*Toronto UNESCO*, 2017).

In addition to the administrative division of the City of Toronto, the Toronto Arts Council (TAC) is a crucial point of contact for the city's creatives. The TAC is an arms-length organization in charge of supporting the independent arts in the city, provided in the form of grants to individuals or collectives across a range of disciplines. Among these, the council makes specific provisions for indigenous arts and artists with disabilities – highlighting the strategic trajectory to include all Torontonians. In addition to discipline-based project grants decided through juried decisions, the council offers a variety of specific programs tied to strategic objectives. For instance, the project "Animating Historic Sites" aims to inspire visitors to "think about historic places differently, and to provide alternative methods of historic interpretation" (*Animating Historic Sites*, 2020), while "Newcomers and Refugees" seeks to lower the barriers to work in Toronto's cultural system. Additionally, the TAC is involved in several partnerships with other cultural organizations across the city. In cooperation with the Toronto District School Board, for instance, the TAC regularly organizes tdsbCREATES, a four-week festival that connects Toronto-based artists with schools outside of the downtown core (*Artists in the Schools*, n.d.). In doing so, the TAC addresses some aspects of cultural education, as well.

The TAC is funded through an annual allotment from the "Economic Development & Culture" budget. For 2020, the city's budget allocated to arts and culture has once again been lifted by CA\$2.5 million. CA\$500,000 of this increase was apportioned to the TAC, raising its budget for 2020 to more than CA\$25 million (*Toronto Budget 2020*, n.d.). Though the city council also appoints two delegates to the TAC's Board of Directors, the organization is stringent in its dedication to peer-review and artistic independence (*About Us*, n.d.-a).

Even though there is close collaboration and a shared vision with the TAC, the Toronto Arts Foundation (TAF), formally created in 1995, is a separate charity, deriving its funding from private-sector donations. The charity has since devoted its work with an annual budget of CA\$2.5 million to a variety of initiatives with the primary focus on community-oriented arts across Toronto's neighborhoods. The most notable among these project lines is "Arts in the Parks", which provides free cultural summer programming set in different parks across the city, and the "Neighborhood Arts Network", which fosters connections between artists and the communities in which they operate (*About Us*, n.d.-b).

In the following, some of Toronto's prevalent policy trajectories are sketched briefly:

**Struggle to Retain Cultural Spaces:** Toronto's downtown King-Spadina area became the "Entertainment District" of the city because of zoning laws and investment initiatives even before the city amalgamated. The area became the most culturally condensed neighborhood of Toronto and, as such, a magnet for visitors and new residents alike (Darchen, 2013). However, its increasing tendency for mixed use, with a growing residential population, has posed a threat to local cultural establishments. With an additional 25,000 residents expected by 2027, the neighborhood's affordability for cultural organizations and artists is now decreasing and putting the cultural character of the neighborhood at risk (*King-Spadina*, 2017). This neighborhood demonstrates, on a small scale, the difficulties the entire city is facing. As an initial response, Toronto and the Province of Ontario have jointly introduced the "Creative Co-Location Facilities Property Tax Subclass" to safeguard cultural institutions and creative hubs in 2018. It offers a tax reduction to proprietors renting space to artists below the market price. The initiative aims at reducing the fixed cost burden that tenants face and protect the potential for creative innovations (*Mayor John Tory*, 2020).

**Struggle to Retain Cultural Workers:** As Toronto has been in a constant state of transformation and population growth, affordable housing has become scarce. Artists and other citizens alike are being displaced from central to suburban neighborhoods, with the inequality of outcomes often following racial lines (BOP Consulting, 2018). Toronto has therefore emphasized the retention of cultural workers in the city. The necessity for a concerted approach to rescue the city's arts became especially apparent through a study conducted by the TAF in 2019. It found that 80 percent of Toronto's workers in arts and culture did not perceive that they were making a living wage, with 73 percent even claiming that they have considered leaving the city (*Arts Stats 2019*, 2019). Indeed, workers in the cultural system have one of the highest rates of poverty in Toronto, with a strong disadvantage for non-white and female workers (*Toronto's Vital Signs*, 2019). In a climate where working in the arts and feeding a family appears contradictory, new initiatives from the city government become a matter of particular urgency.

Further, the Toronto-based creative placemaking agency Artscape was founded in 1986, when Toronto's real estate boom caused a rise in housing prices that forced many artists to abandon their homes. During this period, the nonprofit organization was able to secure art spaces to rent out. As the affordability crisis deteriorated over the past years, Artscape's role has increasingly shifted to an urban development organization, which has consulted in projects such as the

Artscape Youngplace, a multidisciplinary arts hub (*Artscape 5.0*, 2017). The organization was further involved in the development of the Artscape Triangle Lofts, which includes 68 affordable housing units and shared gallery space, aimed at the retention of talented artists in the city (*Artscape Triangle Lofts*, 2018). However, the provision of affordable housing for artists with a median wage far below that of the rest of the economy's cannot be guaranteed by Artscape alone. With more than 90,000 potential tenants waiting for affordable housing provided by the city, the scale of the challenge to retain Toronto's valued residents and creative minds is enormous (BOP Consulting, 2018).

**Inclusivity of Perspectives:** Toronto takes pride to be one the most diverse cities in the world, with 160 spoken languages and the second-highest number of foreign-born citizens (Migiro, 2019). Though this is anchored in the city's motto "Diversity Our Strength", Toronto, too, has seen the structural disadvantage of equity-seeking groups (*Regularizing Toronto*, 2017). Consequently, cultural strategies have foregrounded to reflect in the arts and include the full spectrum of Toronto's perspectives. This is accompanied by a multi-faceted public education campaign "Toronto For All", which seeks to break down barriers of discrimination against specific groups, thereby strengthening the civic resilience of the city's communities (*Toronto For All*, 2017). The role of racism in the arts has increasingly found its place at the center of Toronto's cultural discourse. The city's 2017 "Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism" notes the importance for the city to invest in Black arts, as well as to offer reliable funding mechanisms for Black cultural activities in the city (2017). Resulting actions so far have primarily targeted youth engagement, for instance through creative mentorship programs led by cultural institutions (*1st Annual Report*, 2019).

Additionally, as a step towards reconciliation with the Indigenous peoples, the city's agencies and organizations have since 2014 included an official land acknowledgment, which recognizes that the land on which Toronto was built is an official territory of several First Nations (*Land Acknowledgement*, 2018). For enhanced visibility and opportunities for indigenous artists in Toronto, the city has also launched the "Indigenous Arts & Culture Partnerships Fund", specifically targeted at allowing the recipient artists and organizations to foster new partnerships (*Indigenous Arts*, 2019).

**Decentralization of Cultural Activities:** An important aspect of the consolidation of Toronto is to ensure that Toronto's benefits reach all its neighborhoods. Correspondingly, the past years have seen intensified efforts to expand events and city-funded projects to all districts. Specifically, public art has been identified as a particularly suitable way in which underserved neighborhoods could profit from culture - not least because it is free to access. Consequently, 2021 was announced as Toronto's Year of Public Art. The celebratory year kicks off the pursuit of a ten-year public art strategy (2020-2030) that follows the motto of "Creativity and Community – Everywhere" (*ArtworxTO*, 2019). Especially as Toronto's residents are priced out of the central neighborhoods, the city has increased its cultural engagement in suburban areas, as well. Through the program "Cultural Hotspots", the city deliberately targets the promotion of diverse artistic practice in sections of the city with more social inequality. The initiative, now in its eighth year, emphasizes the creation and capacity-building of local cultural infrastructures (*Cultural Hotspot*, 2017).

In the path towards decentralization, Toronto's cultural landscape is notably supported by the Toronto Public Library (TPL), whose branches offer a specifically community-oriented dimension to the city's arts provision. TPL programming is geared towards a diverse target group, often including overlooked perspectives. For instance, a new partnership program uniting TPL and the nonprofit CanAge aims to engage Toronto's senior citizens in library programming, as well as providing them with helpful tools such as digital literacy education (*Toronto Public Library, 2020a*). Beyond organizing author readings, book clubs and bookmobiles, the TPL branches function as inclusive community centers with topics as diverse as career services, health and personal finance.

**International Competition:** Toronto is home to a world-renowned television and film industry, contributing CA\$2 billion investment to Toronto's economy and employing more than 30,000 people (*Spotlight on Toronto, 2017, p. 8*). However, in recent years, Toronto's status as a famed location for international film production has been threatened by competing cities, most notably Vancouver, Atlanta, and Chicago. Vancouver, for instance, is hard at Toronto's heels, ranking in the fifth position of the most filmed-in cities in 2018 (while Toronto holds the fourth position; Tencer, 2018). Correspondingly, one of the priorities identified in Toronto's cultural strategy for 2018-2022 aims to "improve industry competitiveness for emerging and established business and cultural sectors" (*Economic Development, 2017, p. 6*). Toronto is planning to retain its market share by working closely with private actors from the industry and all three levels of government to develop further tax credit programs and promote advocacy for the sector. The industry's demands are outgrowing its physical infrastructure, necessitating higher investments in studio facilities, which are now underway (Fox, 2020; *Spotlight on Toronto, 2017*).

**Nighttime Economy:** As the center of Canada's music industry, Toronto's live music venues, alone, had an economic impact of CA\$852.2 million in 2019, large parts of which are attributed to tourist spending (Nordicity, 2020). To further strengthen resilient and diverse nighttime industries, Mayor Tory introduced the position of a Night Economy Ambassador in 2019. This position, filled by Deputy Mayor Michael Thompson, aims to proactively tackle issues such as noise and public safety. By establishing Toronto as a city with 24-hour activities and an inclusive and respectful environment, the city aims to set the framework for cultural innovations and creative programming that will attract visitors and stimulate economic growth (*Toronto Nightlife, 2019*).

## Toronto's Response to COVID-19

Toronto's suspension of public life and, thereby, communal artistic practice, in response to COVID-19 was decided on the province level. The Province of Ontario announced a state of emergency on March 17, 2020, in response to a rising number of infections. With cultural activity at a standstill, the TAC projected that restrictions would lead to an overall cancellation or rescheduling of 25,000 performances across Toronto and a forecasted loss of CA\$183 million through foregone ticket sales (*COVID-19, 2020*). These shortfalls caused an immediate impact: already in May 2020, the 130,000 workers in the sector – approximately 1 in every 20 Torontonians – had seen their hours decline by 38 percent compared to only three months prior (Better Toronto Coalition, 2020). While

many organizations postponed their planned events to the next season or next year, the Canadian Association of for the Performing Arts pointed out that this would merely result in a “cascading effect”, which creates temporary liquidity but eventually reduces income in subsequent years (*Postponements and Cancellations*, 2020). Arguably, this effect makes postponements no better solutions than cancellations.

Responding to potential widespread job loss in the cultural sector, the Canadian government implemented economic assistance through the Department of Canadian Heritage. The “Emergency Support Fund for Cultural, Heritage and Sport Organizations”, endowed with \$500 million (CA\$72 million of which is allocated to the sports sector), was apportioned to the sector through multiple funding streams. While a first phase only considered organizations that were already funded by the institutions listed above, a second phase, completed in September 2020, was opened to all cultural organizations (*Emergency Support*, 2020). To spark innovation in this moment of stasis, the CCA additionally launched the “Digital Originals” program, which offered CA\$5,000 micro-grants to adapt cultural content for online dissemination and innovate prior practices. The program set aside a specific allotment for emerging artists, one of the most vulnerable groups in the cultural sector (*Digital Originals*, 2020). Additionally, the Department of Canadian Heritage profited from corporate donations from Netflix Media (US\$1.5 million), Canadian Broadcasting (CA\$2.2 million) and Facebook (CA\$100,000), all applied to specific grant funds (*COVID-19 Response*, 2020).

Some artists and cultural workers were further eligible for social welfare assistance through the “Canada Emergency Response Benefit” (which provides a payment of CA\$2,000 every 4 weeks for up to 28 weeks). Notably, this fund included many self-employed and freelance workers, who were affected by income losses due to the instability of their work (*Canada’s COVID-19*, 2020). In April, the CCA found that 61 percent of Canada’s artists found that government means can assist them to withstand the pandemic’s effects. Other cultural workers have found that the exclusion of certain fixed costs, like production and venue expenses, from these emergencies’ measures, will inflict severe financial pressure on them. Unfortunately, eligibility for these programs was not always clear-cut, making some groups and individuals uncertain whether they could apply (*Input on Measures*, 2020).

The Canadian Artists’ Representation/Le Front des artistes canadiens (CARFAC), an interest representation group for professional artists in Ontario, has taken the crisis as an opportunity to place core demands to the Canadian government to act on the part of the country’s artists. Demands specifically tackle the fragile social security system, which leaves many freelance artists falling through the cracks. CARFAC is therefore calling for establishing a Guaranteed Basic Income for all Canadians, and expanding individual and group grants for equity-seeking groups through the Canada Council for the Arts (*Positioning the Arts*, 2020). Although the idea of a basic income has certainly gained traction in the context of the crisis (where unemployment rates in October 2020 were at 9 percent), Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has not yet indicated that this path will be followed. Indeed, the creation of such a program would not be an easy feat, as it would require a complex restructuring of the country’s welfare system (Jamal, 2020).

Toronto's cultural ecosystem further benefited from emergency assistance at the Province level. The OAC used resources freed up by temporarily suspended programs to make available \$1.6 million in grants for Ontario artists and groups. These are specifically planned with an eye to the future and prioritize projects seeking to innovate cultural production (*COVID-19 Updates*, 2020). Toronto's non-profit arts organizations that are centered around community-engagement were also eligible for grants from the "Resilient Communities Fund" from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, which could be as well-endowed as CA\$150,000 (*Resilient Communities Fund*, 2020).

On the local level, where Toronto's CA\$9 billion cultural system was directly affected, the national and Province efforts were complemented with specific, though little-endowed, measures (*COVID-19*, 2020; *The National Arts Centre*, 2020). The TAC created the "TOArtist COVID-19 Response Fund" in cooperation with the TAF and the City of Toronto. While the fund started with CA\$450,000, it collected an additional CA\$380,000 through private, corporate and non-profit donations, eventually assisting 982 artists. However, the fund provided grants for up to CA\$1000. The small size of these contributions is notable, especially in consideration of the precarious income levels already experienced before the crisis. The TAF, on the other hand, received a CA\$1-million-dollar contribution from the charitable Hal Jackman Foundation, which was passed on to 80 smaller arts charities in Toronto (*TAC Response*, 2020).

In response, to budgeting shortfalls, which were threatening the economic survival of Toronto's cultural infrastructure and events, Mayor Tory kicked off additional emergency measures through the Division of Economic Development and Culture. With the "Cultural Festivals Recovery Program" endowed with CA\$565,000, the city offered one-time payments to many cultural festivals throughout the city in compensation for their cancellation (*City of Toronto*, 2020). Additionally, recognizing that nighttime venues were particularly at risk, Mayor Tory further expanded Toronto's "Creative Co-Location Facilities Property Tax Subclass Designation" to support live music venues around the city. The selected 45 live music venues benefited from a property tax relief of 50 percent (*2020 Creative Co-Location*, n.d.).

Knowing how difficult it is to keep cultural activity alive while physical contact is prohibited, the city further offered different formats within the realm of what was allowed. Spearheading the switch to outdoor activities, the Toronto History Museums, for instance, offered walking tours around the city. The cityscape will soon bear the markings of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well: the "StreetARToronto Front Line Heroes Art Project" consisted of a new series of murals around Toronto, which depict the essential service providers who guide the city through the pandemic. With an array of themes, ranging from portraits of nurses to the word "Thank you" in many languages, the City of Toronto has directly included local artists in the commemoration of COVID-19 (*StreetARToronto*, 2020).

Beyond the financial assistance provided, the TAC also advertised that Toronto's arts were, indeed, continuing, by providing an overview of cultural activity that has moved online. Similarly, the TAF started to give exposure to artists through their social media, attempting to keep the public engaged with the arts using the hashtag #TOArtsTogether (*COVID-19 Response*, 2020). These measures are complemented by cultural events scheduled by Toronto's cultural

organizations themselves. In an effort to join resources and deliver digital online experiences for Toronto, a variety of arts organizations and experts located in the city banded together to deliver Arts@Home (2020).

Further constructive partnerships emerged on several levels. On the national level, a striking ad-hoc collaboration of sector leaders and industry specialists formed the “Leadership Emergency Arts Network”, where they offered pro bono consultation on matters pertaining to the crisis (*Announcement*, 2020). On the municipal level, Toronto made use of its prior partnership with Ryerson University on the UNESCO Creative City campaign. The research institution formally took on the role of providing hygiene guidelines, creating studies and conducting stakeholder meetings to best enhance the resilience of the city’s cultural ecosystem (*TAC Response*, 2020). The joint project is future-oriented to provide a strategic path towards recovery from the crisis. To do so, Ryerson University offered online workshops with experts on facets of the cultural shutdown ranging from “Digital Content Creation” to “Audience Cultivation and Engagement” (*The Creative Innovation*, n.d.).

A selection of notable programs that benefited Toronto’s landscape included:

- May 8, 2020: The Minister for Canadian Heritage Steven Guilbeault announced a CA\$500 million COVID-19 Emergency Support Fund for Cultural, Heritage and Sport Organizations
- Canada’s Emergency Response Benefit offers benefits for up to 28 weeks (or until October 3, 2020), with many cultural workers eligible, as well.
- The TAC created the “TOArtist COVID-19 Response Fund”, benefiting 982 Toronto artists.

## Impact of COVID-19

**Struggle to Retain Cultural Spaces and Workers:** Across the Province of Ontario, an early survey conducted by the OAC found that 71 percent of respondents were forced to make personnel adjustments in response to revenue shortfalls, which included laying off employees, reducing hours, or reducing employee compensation. Freelance workers were particularly affected by these personnel changes (*Early COVID-19 Impacts*, 2020, p. 7). If workers were eligible for Canada’s Emergency Response Benefit, the financial stability of CA\$500 per week exceeded what many of them had been making earlier. With a median income of CA\$23,926 for Torontonians in 2015, the government benefits succeed in providing some security (Better Toronto Coalition, 2020). However, for those workers who did not fit the eligibility criteria of the program, though, the outlook was much bleaker, posing a threat to their continued career in the cultural industries.

After the crisis revealed how many of Toronto's citizens were living on the brink of poverty, Mayor Tory responded with the "COVID-19 Housing and Homelessness Recovery Response Plan", which includes 3,000 new affordable housing units to be built within 24 months (*COVID-19 Housing*, 2020). In addition, through the "HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan", Toronto intends to invest CA\$2.1 billion in capital funding for the creation of new affordable housing units and CA\$2.6 million in operating funding to assist residents facing evictions over the next decade (*HousingTO*, 2020, p. 15). Whether these efforts will significantly benefit the cultural system, however, is unclear. Although the below-market rental opportunities provided by Artscape are an immense asset to the city, their scale alone cannot suffice to retain Toronto's cultural ecosystem. As Toronto's real estate market leaves behind even more cultural workers who are faced with the sudden loss or reduction of income, the city's campaign to retain its creative workforce is facing an uphill battle.

**Inclusivity of Perspectives:** In response to COVID-19, several emergency funds were targeted specifically at underserved groups. For instance, the emergency support provided by Canadian Heritage included an apportioned amount of CA\$7.8 million for organizations from "designated equity priority groups", a label that applies to a variety of communities (*COVID-19 Emergency*, 2020). It is also noteworthy that the CCA, the Aboriginal Curatorial Collective, Indigenous Performing Arts Alliance, the Indigenous Screen Office and the Inuit Art Foundation pooled their resources to create the "Community Cares" initiative, delivering grants of CA\$1,000 to indigenous people working in arts and culture (*Community Cares*, 2020). Additionally, the Association for Native Development in the Performing and Visual Arts kicked off the "COVID-19 Emergency Support Watch Parties", which pay indigenous elders or artists CA\$1,000 for an online presentation of their craft (Better Toronto Coalition, 2020). Despite these ongoing efforts to ameliorate inequalities, Toronto's COVID-19 outbreak revealed sharp, persistent socio-economic divisions. Minority groups composed 79 percent of the total cases, though their share of the city's population only amounts to 50.7 percent overall (Kurek, 2020).

**Decentralization of Cultural Activity:** Toronto's centralized cultural concentration once again became apparent when Torontonians had to put themselves at risk of infection to travel to the city center on public transport. In order to compensate and serve the communities outside of the central neighborhoods, the TPL branches scaled up their community engagement and their civic duties significantly. Throughout the periods of the pandemic when strict restrictions were in place, the TPL expanded its mandate to deliver free book hampers to children in underserved neighborhoods (*Toronto Public Library*, 2020b), set up food banks at their local branches (*Toronto Public Library*, 2020c) and provided free internet connectivity kits to vulnerable residents (*Free Internet*, 2020). Although these activities may not always be directly focused on decentralizing cultural activity, they strengthen the TPL's positions in these neighborhoods and draw attention to their offer.

Additionally, one means of decentralizing culture was to move many core activities on Toronto's annual cultural calendar online. Among these is the annual Nuit Blanche festival. This Paris-imported nocturnal event ordinarily intends to make contemporary arts accessible to all of Toronto. Following its two-year curatorial theme "The Space Between Us" (2020-2021), the event



made its entire 2020 program available either online or at a distance outside. With “Nuit in Your Neighborhood”, it is expanded city-wide (*Artistic Director Julie Nagam, 2019*). Similarly, ImagineNATIVE, Toronto’s annual film festival highlighting indigenous voices across media arts, was able to take place in an online format, while at the same time keeping all employees (*ImagineNATIVE, 2020*). One of Toronto’s most important cultural events, the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), had to make significant adaptations of its usual form to take place in COVID-19 times, with most scheduled screenings and panel discussions moving online. This allowed a wide audience to partake in TIFF for the first time, though the central organization still had to reduce 31 full-time staff positions (*About TIFF ’20, 2020*).

**International Competition:** Toronto’s capacity to perform well in its television and film industry was impaired by COVID-19, as pandemic-related measures necessitated the shutdown of all its productions for several weeks. Even after the strictest contact restrictions were lifted, productions were slowed down by rigorous hygiene measures. International productions were especially impaired by travel restrictions and the closed border to the United States. However, due to the sunk costs of already commenced productions, Mayor Tory expected many of the projects to return to Toronto’s studios in addition to many new films and TV series that have applied for permits since the summer of 2020 (Fox, 2020). Additionally, the city’s capacity to compete internationally is not only impacted by its own developments, but also by the respective responses from industry competitors. While this year will have yielded much lower profits than anticipated for the screen sector, this development was likely mirrored in those cities Toronto competes with.

## Assessing Toronto’s Cultural Policy Response

### Strengths

#### Analytical:

Through the partnership between Ryerson University and (primarily) the TAF, Toronto acknowledged the importance of tracking the pandemic’s impact on the cultural ecosystem and creative industries early on. With this partnership, the city is building on the intensive data collection on their cultural ecosystem, which has been used to investigate the threats Toronto is facing. This data will likely improve the city’s capacity to identify the best possible preparation for the cultural recovery from the pandemic. Creating this mandate and outsourcing the respective task demonstrated quick and decisive decision-making on Toronto’s part.

The city further used several digital tools to inform the public about important COVID-19 related updates. For instance, a specifically created resource app (also available on desktop) was used to share important contact information and all pandemic-related updates. This app also included relevant information concerning funding for the city’s cultural system and its self-employed and freelance workers. The quick provision of the platform revealed an already-present digital literacy that facilitated this move online.

### Regulatory:

The City of Toronto's recognition of the special role of the live music sector and subsequent expansion of the "Creative Co-Location Facilities Property Tax Subclass Designation" to include live music venues has had several positive effects. Firstly, it provided tax relief amounting to CA\$1.7 million to the venues (*Mayor John Tory, 2020*). Secondly, it has recognized the live music industry's role as a stepping stone to foster future talent and support Toronto's music industry – in line with the Toronto Music Advisory Council's goal to "Support an environment friendly to music creators" (Toronto Music Advisory Council, 2016, p. 5). Lastly, the announcement of the recipient venues was supplemented by the outlook that live music venues may remain in this tax subclass beyond 2020 (*Mayor John Tory, 2020*). In doing so, Toronto has utilized the unique circumstances of COVID-19 to provide a longer-term policy measure and solidified the role of live music in Toronto's cultural policy portfolio.

### Delivery:

The programs available to the cultural system in Toronto have very specific foci. Often, they contain distinct emphases in their funding approach, by setting aside certain amounts for identified target groups. Their emphasis on disadvantaged groups is based on Toronto's prior recognition of these group's specific precariousness (with the average worker already being more likely to have precarious employment than the average worker in other sectors). Such quotas are an attempt to preempt the widening inequalities in the cultural system. It is most likely that an economic downturn will have a disproportionate effect on those already at a disadvantage. Although these programs may not be sufficient to counterbalance this disadvantage, Toronto's programs do acknowledge the inequalities and signal commitment to tackle them.

Additionally, the TPL's delivery of community-targeted projects, such as their book hampers for children, is doing valuable work to demonstrate that Toronto's cultural infrastructure is not an added luxury for an elite few, but the nerve centers of their communities. At a time when many cities are closing library branches, Toronto's libraries are consolidating their role as community centers and providers of digital education. By affirming their worth to the city's cultural portfolio, they are also enhancing Toronto's capacity to deliver cultural events and democratic cultural access to the community in a decentralized manner.

### Coordination:

A notable characteristic of Toronto's cultural policy response to COVID-19 is the number of stakeholders who acted in unison. This is indicative of the already well-connected cultural landscape of a city that values its creative character. Even further, support for Toronto's cultural system came from the city-level, the province level and the national level. With the entire multilevel governance system working in unison and public, private, and non-profit funds coming together, the City of Toronto's capacity to rally various stakeholders behind a common objective was strong. Additionally, by outsourcing the provision of expert workshops and online guidance to Ryerson University, Toronto arranged to delegate responsibilities while combatting this crisis.

Similarly, Toronto's delivery capacity was also enhanced by several large-scale private donations, both on the local level (through the Hal Jackman Foundation), as well as the national/international level (through Netflix Media, Canadian Broadcasting and Facebook). The city's quest to position itself as a hub for Canada's creative industries has likely contributed to the attraction of private and corporate donations.

## **Weaknesses**

### Regulatory:

Despite the emergency funding provided, COVID-19's adverse effects could prove to be ruinous to many of Toronto's practicing artists - particularly if they were ineligible for Canada's social welfare mechanisms. This strong financial impact, however, is not merely due to the stark reduction of income in the context of the pandemic. Rather, it is indicative of the high levels of precarious work that the city's artists were living in previously. With very low median wages and increasing living costs in Toronto, many of these cultural workers had likely been unable to accumulate savings to fall back on. Additionally, had Toronto, Ontario or Canada taken decisive action to offer a secure welfare system to Canadian artists before this moment, their threat of poverty would not have been so immediate upon the start of the crisis.

### Delivery:

The socio-economic inequalities across the city's neighborhoods have made access to cultural opportunities more difficult for some Torontonians than others. When cultural offerings were transferred to the digital sphere in the context of the crisis, this, too, created a challenge for already disadvantaged citizens. Though the TPL's programs were of assistance to tackle these problems, internet access and food security were not always a given across the city. Further, while some employees were able to work from home, essential workers had to work in sometimes dangerous conditions. Correspondingly, the citizens' ability—and willingness—to participate in cultural opportunities provided by the city cannot be taken for granted, as Toronto's residents fight for economic survival.

## **Opportunities**

### Delivery:

Although the COVID-19 pandemic was harmful to Toronto's cultural ecosystem it might now function as a warning sign to the city's administration. Although the TAF's study had already found that 80 percent of Toronto's artists and cultural workers did not perceive that they were making a living wage (*Arts Stats 2019*, 2019), their precariousness became impossible to disregard as a result of the pandemic. This condition provides a window of opportunity for Toronto's institutional landscape and cultural workers to lobby for new, sustainable solutions. New proposals, such as the

creation of a universal income on the national level, stronger guidelines for tenant protection, or the further creation of tax incentives or welfare benefits for cultural workers, might finally assert themselves, as the inability to return to the status quo ante becomes clearer.

## Threats

### Regulatory:

Canada's cultural funding model and Toronto's intricate creative economy landscape have typically secured large amounts of donations and other private sector funding to benefit its artists. Such revenue streams, however, may be more sensitive to economic shocks than public funding. Over the next years, Toronto's independent cultural organizations are thus under threat of losing valuable income streams, partnerships or donations that could help to withstand the adverse effects of recovery from the pandemic and economic hardship in the future.

### Delivery:

Despite positioning arts and culture at the center of what it means to be Torontonians, the city is not providing sufficient resources that allow the arts to thrive anymore. The high levels of precarious work among Toronto's artists pose an existential threat to the city's cultural vibrancy. In addition to the progressing affordability crisis, a key determinant of the city's identity is jeopardized by Toronto's economic boom. The proximity of other cities and towns with more affordable cost of living may well make the retention of cultural workers difficult in the future. Considering that nearly three-quarters of Toronto's artists and cultural workers claim to have already contemplated leaving the city, this threat is by no means hypothetical.

The threat of losing the city's cultural workforce is aggravated by the intense competition of Toronto's screen sector, which is crucially important for its status as a media city and the economic vitality of its creative industries. With attractive opportunities for the screen sector in cities like Chicago, Atlanta and Vancouver, Toronto's capacity to provide effective and efficient recovery models for the film and television industry may become a matter of paramount economic importance.

In conclusion, the City of Toronto has demonstrated the necessary regulatory measures and a strong analytical capacity during the pandemic. Yet Toronto is only able to provide little additional resources for emergency relief and has to rely on state-level and national support for the cultural sector. Despite the introduction of various programs, many cultural workers were not eligible. Existing precarious conditions and inequalities among cultural workers are thereby exacerbated, as many already are priced out of Toronto's housing market.

## Policy Recommendations for Toronto:

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, several successful policy decisions to benefit Toronto's cultural system were made:

1. Toronto's policy action on behalf of its live music venues included the expansion of a property tax subclass to include 45 new institutions. This emergency action demonstrates the city's **regulatory capacity** and political will to use the instruments at its disposal on behalf of its cultural system. Considering the decreasing affordability of real estate, including artist workshops and rehearsal spaces in the city, this instrument is of vital importance to Toronto's cultural ecosystem and should be applied more widely – not just as a last resort.
2. The Toronto Public Library has proven to be fully prepared to extend its mandate and flexibly respond to pressing civic needs. The City of Toronto should advocate for cultural institutions to similarly realize their potential for civic recovery measures from the pandemic and flexibly adapt their cultural offer to the unpredictable situations at hand. In understanding their identity-defining role in the wider recovery of Toronto, the city and its cultural organizations can thereby sharpen their **delivery capacity**.

Through the analysis of Toronto's governance capacities above, these further policy actions are suggested:

3. Toronto is esteemed for its cultural vibrancy – yet at the same time, it is defined by the income precariousness of the artists who are to thank for the city's international renown. To pay tribute to the country's diverse creative workforce and live up to Toronto's self-identification as a city defined by culture, Toronto must switch from thinking about how artists can help the city and start thinking about artists' needs. Toronto needs to enhance its **delivery** capacity by advocating for a functional social security system for the arts at the national level, which will foster income smoothing and promote economic stability for the city's creative population. Should this fail, Toronto must take the responsibility for its cultural workforce into its own hands and invest in a municipal social security program for the arts.
4. Toronto needs to tackle the problem of urban flight. While the issue is connected to the city's larger affordability dilemma, the arts may require a specifically targeted solution. Therefore, Toronto should reinforce its **coordination** capacity by striking up new partnerships with rural communities and smaller towns that are often the destination of leavers (for instance in Toronto's neighborhood or popular rural destinations, such as Prince Edward Island). Through these partnerships, Toronto can offer residencies, as well as rotation schemes. Accompanied by a public campaign, a scheme like this could offer new perspectives and inspiration for artists and can boost cultural tourism to the selected partner cities, including spotlighting their cultural attractiveness.

# Conclusion



## Culture and the Pandemic: Initial Insights and Implications

How did the five cultural capitals respond to the challenges the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic presented to their cultural ecosystems? In this chapter, we review some of the key issues that emerge from our analysis and examine lessons learned, especially in terms of the governance capacities, as the cities continue to confront the pandemic. Finally, based on the five case studies, we will propose initial policy recommendations aimed at enhancing the future resilience of cultural systems in larger metropolitan areas more generally.

As the introductory chapter remarked and the case studies demonstrated, the cities' capacities to act differ significantly because their cultural systems involve different cultural policy regimes, organizational frameworks, political responsibilities and local political cultures. Paris, for instance, is strongly embedded in the national cultural policy agenda, which also carries the responsibility for most of the city's cultural infrastructure. Berlin, London, and Toronto similarly benefit from national investments. By contrast, New York City bears the sole responsibility for its infrastructure and given limited resources, must therefore partner with private organizations such as philanthropic foundations for investments and cost-sharing.

Furthermore, before the pandemic all five cities expected rising budgets for cultural policy and substantial economic growth of their cultural economies. They were on a path to widen their cultural policy agendas generally, and to address existing inequalities in cultural production and consumption in particular. For example, they have introduced policies to broaden cultural participation, increased support for projects and professional artists, and aimed at enhancing cultural diversity among artists and the staff of cultural institutions as well as programming content and audience composition. They also recognized the need to secure and support spaces for cultural production in the face of housing shortages, gentrification and real estate speculation (Aalbers, 2020).

### Common Challenges

In the context of the pandemic, three sets of common challenges stand out, which we group under the headings of **uncertainty, governance and economy**.

#### Uncertainty

Given the profound impact and progression of the pandemic, the cities and their cultural administrations have had to navigate significant uncertainty in finding adequate policy measures and future budgets for culture. Policy decisions were often made ad-hoc, with an emphasis on preserving existing infrastructures – namely prominent venues, institutions and organizations

(Banks & O'Connor, 2020a). Their loss of revenue and the anticipation of future reductions in private spending and public investments will impact how cultural productions can be planned, as they will lead to a restructuring of the cities' cultural ecosystems (OECD, 2020). Fluctuating lockdown regulations subjected the cultural system to further unpredictability, especially considering that cultural programs and activities may not be able to resume from one day to the next (Local Government Association, 2020b).

Of course, city government officials and representatives of major cultural institutions and organizations had to react quickly and find responses amid conflicting information about the COVID-19 pandemic. This prevailing uncertainty, however, was made worse by the lack of a clear vision and strategy, or at least the failure to communicate them to the artistic and cultural community. This failure continues to impact the ability as well as the credibility of politicians and policymakers to offer reassurance to the thousands of artists, workers, board members, consumers, etc. that make up the cultural ecosystem. As a result, there has been and continues to be, widespread contention and suspicion as well as a sense of being overlooked and under-appreciated, especially among smaller cultural organizations, artists and freelancers. In other words, we are dealing with a substantial loss of trust in the coordination and delivery capacities of these city governments.

## **Governance**

In all cities examined in this report, the multilevel governance of cultural responses to the COVID-19 pandemic added complexity to their crisis management, but also relief from responsibilities. For instance, all national governments helped with income support for artists and cultural workers who lost engagements. However, the involvement of the national government often demonstrated the prominent budgetary position that larger cultural institutions enjoy, as government bailouts disproportionately aided prominent players in the cultural system. Additionally, the pandemic came less than a decade after the 2008-2009 financial crisis and the subsequent economic austerity policies, which have left many small arts and cultural organizations underfunded and vulnerable (Comunian & England, 2020). With the possibility of renewed budget cutbacks looming on the horizon, both city officials and the representatives of cultural institutions have remained cautious. The trade-off between bailing out large entities with representative functions or safeguarding several independent cultural institutions, which are part of the city's cultural ecosystem, has left these city governments struggling to determine the best path forward.

## **Economy**

The economic damage that the COVID-19 pandemic inflicted on the cultural system of the five cities was often not the top priority for politicians and policymakers, even though it gained media attention. This is perhaps unsurprising, given other economic and social challenges, even though



the cultural economy is a \$2 trillion industry that employs 30 million people worldwide (World Cities Culture Forum, 2020d, p. 6). Policy measures to combat the pandemic, such as lockdowns, have disrupted cultural supply chains, resulting in substantial decreases in tax income and revenue for most of cultural production. This has necessitated increased government spending and made cultural organizations respond, for example, by making costly adaptations, such as the installation of air cleaners or changed seating arrangements. Additional spending was needed for staff costs and operating expenses. Nonetheless, the income losses left the cultural system particularly economically vulnerable, as cultural production is heavily reliant on an interconnected ecosystem of artists, freelancers, and small companies, many with limited organizational slack, let alone financial capacities (OECD, 2020).

Cities with high concentrations of jobs and businesses in this cultural ecosystem are bearing the brunt of the economic impact on culture (OECD, 2020). For instance, New York reported a median financial impact of \$67,500 per organization by November 2020 (Americans for the Arts, n.d.). Similarly, London expects to lose one in six jobs in the field in 2020, as well as a £14.6b billion (25 percent) drop in creative industries gross value added. The effect on London alone amounts to 51 percent of the UK's total estimated impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the cultural economy (Oxford Economics, 2020). What is more, the absence of international tourists creates a double burden for cities that are heavily dependent on tourism (Montalto et al., 2020). As levels of tourism are forecasted to remain below pre-crisis standards for the next few years (OECD, 2020), the economic challenge for these cultural capitals is intensified.

Moreover, problems of gentrification and displacement continue to affect all five cities (BOP Consulting, 2018). Pricing out artists and independent organizations has created a risk to their diverse cultural landscapes, while the inequalities between and within neighborhoods have risen. This development has pushed artists towards the city's outskirts and many cultural workers have contemplated leaving cultural capitals altogether (Eikhof, 2020). The problem of affordability once again came to the fore in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, causing some cities, like Toronto and Paris, to instate temporary eviction bans.

### **How did Cities Respond?**

Faced with these challenges, none of the examined cities failed entirely to address the pandemic and the challenges it has posed for arts and culture. At the same time, however, their varied responses reflect established policy preferences and patterns, as well as existing problems. With different multilevel governance arrangements, the pandemic hit these cultural capitals across levels of preparedness and uneven governance capacities. Although all five cities are renowned for their cultural wealth, the relative importance placed on arts and culture compared to other urban policy fields varied. This resulted in unequal availability of public funding for the arts and culture as the overall policy salience differed.

**Berlin's** response to the COVID-19 pandemic was characterized by relatively strong delivery. No other city government mobilized equivalent amounts of funds for the cultural systems or

dispensed them so quickly and efficiently. However, the city's response was greatly influenced by the perspectives and needs of large cultural institutions, fulfilling purposes of both status and representation for Berlin. Further, while its scholarship program for artists and cultural workers showed great commitment, it was not comprehensive and left many with mere moral support. Although the city attempted to compensate for needs not covered by the German federal government, Berlin's case also demonstrated some disagreement between levels of governance.

The case of **London** has highlighted the Greater London Authority's regulatory capacity. Actions such as the creation of its in-depth cultural plan allowed for a targeted local policy approach within an otherwise highly centralized system, governed through the national Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and interacting with the cultural system through the Arts Council England. However, financial resources available to the Greater London Authority were much lower than Berlin's, although they could be more flexibly spent. Emergency assistance to smaller venues demonstrated London's ecological approach to its cultural system. At the same time, actual resource flows to arts and culture remained inadequate to the challenge at hand.

**New York**, with its dense landscape of cultural workers, organizations and internationally renowned arts, has demonstrated a well-developed analytical capacity in response to the crisis. In line with the city's long-standing reliance on public-private partnerships, its approach to the pandemic, too, was largely dependent on mobilizing private philanthropic resources. Yet the lack of emergency assistance delivered by the Department of Cultural Affairs demonstrated clear limits of New York's response. Additionally, it failed to address the city's widening socio-economic inequalities, as poorer populations were disproportionately affected both by the virus and by its economic consequences. Lastly, New York's cut of cultural budgets and an ordinarily strong emphasis on tourism generated substantial uncertainty for the next years.

**Paris'** response to the pandemic was enhanced through burden-sharing with the national government. The Ministry for Culture demonstrated high levels of engagement and provided a well-endowed cultural recovery plan for France, which Paris was dependent on. Alongside this plan, the French government also provided the continuation of welfare payments to the "*intermittents du spectacle*" – a notable financial relief for the cultural workers and the city of Paris alike. After the consolidation of Greater Paris, the COVID-19 pandemic was tackled by a complementary approach on the metropolitan and the municipal level. However, many Parisian institutions were already weakened following extended periods of inactivity due to protests during the prior years, leaving few financial reserves.

**Toronto** integrated a spectrum of governmental tools into its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, taking note of avoiding a diversity mismatch in applicants and recipients of financial aid. In addition, the city demonstrated a high level of coordination capacity, as the provision of emergency aid and cultural consultation was assisted through its arts council, philanthropic foundations, and the analytical assistance provided by a university continually monitoring the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the arts. However, only small amounts of direct funding were provided to artists and small organizations on the city level. As 80 percent of Toronto's

cultural workers already lived precariously before the pandemic, their future in Toronto has become even more uncertain.

## What are the Issues?

**Discontinuities:** When the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the cultural system became clear and received more policy attention, several unfinished, yet important debates about the future of arts and culture in each of the cities were halted in their tracks. Attention and, ultimately, funding was directed and redirected to alleviate the impact of the pandemic. Most notably, enhancing cultural democratization ranked high in the urban cultural discourse before the crisis. This discourse had increasingly shifted to highlight the inclusivity of the cultural system regarding issues such as ethnicity, migrant communities, languages, disabilities, and gender. To facilitate wider cultural participation, Paris, for instance, has expanded support for mixed-use and amateur art centers. London and New York have given their outer boroughs more attention through new festivals and cultural education programs (BOP Consulting, 2018). However, as public budgets have been strained, it looks as though cities will regress on these strategic paths and undo some of the progress previously achieved. The most prominent example may be New York's DCLA budget cuts for 2021, including approximately \$15 million in cuts to programs following objectives of diversity and inclusion (Loulouides, 2020).

**Precarious work:** While artists are often portrayed in a certain romantic, if not a glamorous image, most are poorly paid and many struggle economically even in the best of times. In many cities, most cultural workers had already experienced precarious economic situations prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (Comunian & England, 2020). High proportions of temporary contracts, seasonal work, part-time work, multiple jobs, and "gig economy" arrangements make their eligibility for traditional social security schemes difficult (OECD, 2020). While France has created a system for the "*intermittents du spectacle*", this remains an exception among the five cases, with the partial exemption of the German artist social protection scheme (*Künstlersozialkasse*). Most bailout packages in response to the COVID-19 pandemic favored cultural institutions and their employees rather than individual artists and workers. What is more, the example of the UK, where 70 percent of the cultural economy is composed of freelancers, showed that they were often ineligible even for social security schemes specifically designed for freelancers or the self-employed (Banks & O'Connor, 2020b). These and other instances caused commentators to label the pandemic as the "great unequalizer" (Therborn, 2020; cited in Banks & O'Connor, 2020b).

**Digital consumption:** Shortly after lockdowns were introduced in the spring of 2020, thousands of better-known, lesser-known and amateur artists made recorded plays, films, songs, concerts and multimedia experiences available online. Digitally, artists and institutions unlocked the potential to reach entirely new audiences, often in innovative ways. For instance, New York's Met Opera's nightly streaming offer received about 250,000 visitors per day (period between March 12 and May 7, 2020; Tarmy, 2020). Berlin's *Schaubühne* theater similarly experienced favorable viewership numbers from around the world, even though performances were primarily in German

(Bürger, 2020). Indeed, since many people were confined to their homes, there was a “growing demand for cultural content in a situation of anxiety and isolation” (v. Radermecker, 2021, p. 11). A study successively tracking consumer behavior in the UK found more hours spent daily on music, film, TV, video games, and e-published media such as magazines and books during lockdown periods (*Digital Culture*, 2020). Nevertheless, digital offerings are not a panacea: around the world, 46 percent of people have no access to the internet (*The State of Broadband*, 2020). Further, not all cultural systems and activities can easily continue remotely using digital platforms, creating a disadvantage for certain disciplines.

**Audience expectations:** Short-term changes of cultural consumption on such a large scale are rare and present new challenges, notably ensuring fair artist remuneration and preserving the value of intellectual property. As many artists temporarily offered their work with open access, the permanent availability of large amounts of content has resulted in consumers’ expectation that these products of artistic labor should be made available online for “minimal or low cost” (*Cutting-Edge*, 2020). Additionally, the wealth of available content has brought a rapid turnover of the art consumed online, suggesting the equivalent of channel-surfing on cable TV with only short time spans spent on particular pieces of visual arts, musical or other kinds of performances.

**Business models:** The pandemic may well prove to be a tipping point for many established business models in the cultural system, largely triggered by a massive move online within a relatively short period. This move, however, has not always secured the fair remuneration of artists for the work displayed digitally. While the expectations of cyber audiences have shifted to free access, the longer-term impact on the business model for arts and cultural products remains uncertain (*Cutting-Edge*, 2020). Very likely, new ways and means are needed for audiences to express a willingness to pay, and for artists and cultural producers to demand and meter remuneration. Longer-term changes to cultural consumption patterns have the potential to frame the value placed on culture in cities entirely anew, making their close monitoring a crucial ingredient for effective urban cultural governance (v. Radermecker, 2021).

**Cultural exchange:** Culture’s potential to create bridges across countries, regions and communities has taken a hit as a result of the pandemic. Due to the closure of many international borders and the inability to travel, many modes of cultural exchange were restricted and remained substantially reduced even after borders were reopened and travel made easier. Similarly, cross-cultural learning opportunities, such as residences and tours abroad or the work of national cultural institutes like the British Council or the Goethe-Institut, saw their potential for interaction much reduced (*Global Impact*, 2020). While some organizations, such as the German Martin Roth Initiative, seek to continue a sociocultural discourse through virtual residencies (*Virtual Residencies*, n.d.), this was not common practice. Indeed, the international emergency has often led to a focus on the local, as questions of economic survival were frequently addressed at the national and regional levels (Eder, 2020).

**Innovations:** In the face of disrupted cultural activity, a spectrum of organizations are pointing towards innovative potentials arising from the crisis (*Coronavirus Response*, 2020; see e.g. OECD, 2020). In the UK, for instance, the prioritization of an environmentally friendly cultural economy is

gaining traction, particularly regarding the large carbon footprint incurred by “globe-trotting cultural programming” (BOP Consulting, 2020). Meanwhile, in New York, unions are calling to utilize the crisis to decrease persisting inequalities and to lead a recovery of the cultural economy from the ground up (The People’s Cultural Plan, 2020). Other proposals were promptly integrated into responses to the COVID-19 pandemic: for instance, a suggestion by Berlin’s Council for the Arts to use the crisis to test new modes of outdoor events in different open spaces around Berlin was already taken up by Berlin’s cultural administration (Neugebauer, 2020). As many of the resources made available to combat the crisis were intended for the preservation of existing structures, though, the margin for innovation, let alone a strategic approach to restructuring remained unrealized.

**Sharing best practices:** To some extent, but not much as would be possible, the crisis encouraged cities to share best practices and benefit from mutual advice. The most notable case is the platform provided by the World Cities Culture Forum, which unites 38 key cities (including all cities studied in this report, except for Berlin). Over the course of the pandemic, the group has frequently convened online and enlisted mayors in a global call to speak out for the role of culture in global capitals. Each of the five cities was highlighted with best practice examples, what set them apart and what common challenges they faced. By creating an international dialogue, the forum shows commitment to resource-sharing and collaboration, acknowledging that cultural policy is not always the highest priority in their home cities (Simons, 2020).

In Berlin’s case, the forum pointed out how district administrations facilitated obtaining permits for grassroots open-air events throughout the city in the context of the “Outside City” initiative (World Cities Culture Forum, 2020c). Further, London’s ecological understanding of the cultural economy was highlighted, which the city demonstrated by investigating the impact of pandemic-related economic losses on the creative supply chain (World Cities Culture Forum, 2020a). A best practice from New York emphasized the city’s ability to rally a well-organized philanthropic community, as an alliance of more than 500 donors raised over \$100 million—by necessity, one might add (World Cities Culture Forum, 2020b). Further, Paris’ responsive infrastructural adjustments were featured: to reduce daily passengers on public transport and promote social distancing, the city offered more than 650km of new bicycle lanes. Lastly, Toronto’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic received mention for its StreetARToronto Frontline Heroes Art Project, which creates public murals to celebrate the service first responders and essential workers have done the city (World Cities Culture Forum, 2020a).

**Role of Foundations:** Clearly, not all cities possessed the budgets to support their cultural ecosystems using public funds, be they municipal, regional or national. Especially in cities where public funds were limited, the burden to provide emergency assistance fell on the non-profit organizations and philanthropic foundations serving the arts. This is most prominently exemplified by New York, where coalitions of private donors and foundations, such as the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation or Bloomberg Philanthropies, made multi-million-dollar contributions to emergency aid for arts and culture. With public budgets not only strained but comparatively low, the role of philanthropy in particular and civic society engagement for the arts, in general, has assumed great importance. Yet foundation grants are often limited in scope and time, while

nonetheless providing a flexible and quick response (Barney & Yee, 2020). At stake is the coordination capacity to make sure that philanthropic funds go beyond alleviating immediate needs and contribute strategically to changes in the cultural system of cultural capitals.

A related issue is the use of endowments or reserve funds that cultural organizations may have and would enable them to respond to the crisis. However, this option only applies to a few well-endowed institutions, as major cultural organizations are usually cash-poor and asset-rich, such as world-renowned museums, with limited opportunities to generate higher cash flows in a short time. This complication has resulted in contention in London, where organizations such as the Royal Opera House Covent Garden Foundation laid off hundreds of staff rather than using the foundation's endowment (Salazar, 2020).

## Lessons Learned and Implications

Going forth, strained public budgets, limited options, and deepening uncertainties necessitate an examination of lessons learned. Although the full social, psychological and economic repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic may only become apparent in the medium-term, these initially proposed lessons learned may enhance the resilience of urban cultural life and the people who depend on it.

## Governance Capacities

The four selected governance capacities—analytical, regulatory, delivery and coordination capabilities—helped shed light on how city governments managed the pandemic and their success in responding to it. While regulatory capacities are often tied to a city's role in the multilevel governance arrangement (the shifting of which would require national or regional intervention), heightened attentiveness to the other capacities may support stronger coherence in policy responses overall.

The case studies demonstrated that coordination capacities are often applied inefficiently, which has created untapped potential. Berlin's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, was often done in rather less than transparent ways, where representatives of the independent arts community were informed of details of planned programs in retrospect, rather than including them throughout the process (e.g., *Koalition der Freien Szene*, 2020b; Messmer, 2019). Similarly, the UK's creation of advisory boards, such as the "Cultural Renewal Taskforce" and the "Culture Recovery Board", left out the inclusion of cultural policy experts representing London, disregarding the prominent cultural role the capital plays for the entire country (*Cultural Renewal Taskforce*, 2020; *Culture Recovery Board*, 2020). Yet the integration of a spectrum of stakeholders representing voices from inside and outside established circles is necessary to achieve policies safeguarding the diverse cultural landscape. Even if the financial means to deliver cultural policy

solutions existed, neglecting such stakeholders may miss crucial trends and lessen the impact of measures taken.

In order to ensure efficient coordination generally and the creative economy, in particular, the cities might create permanent task forces, including representatives from prominent institutions and grassroots organizations alike, to inform policy decisions. These advisory bodies can enhance the validity of their policy propositions based on a greater diversity of voices and expertise. For instance, the Toronto Arts Council, as an arms-length funder for the arts, responds to the city's needs with a volunteer Board of Directors, which reflects Toronto's diverse cultural community with artists, cultural managers and academics. While the onus of facilitating these taskforces may fall on city hall and its administration, their success is also dependent on the commitment of arts associations like New York's "The People's Cultural Plan" or Berlin's Coalition of the Independent Arts to seek out a cooperative and long-term partnership.

Similarly, resilient policy propositions must be based on an accurate and up-to-date understanding of the full range of cultural organizations, stakeholders, venues, and their losses represented in these cities. In order to obtain such an evidence base, cities taking pride in their status as "cultural capitals" require enhanced analytic capacities. Investments in cultural research and data collection can help to identify the interplay between the cultural system and the policies governing it, as well as monitor their progress. For instance, London's meticulous data collection over the past decades and prompt evaluation of provided emergency assistance have ensured that the Greater London Authority was well-informed about which venues and organizations were most at risk<sup>37</sup>. By way of supporting such research, cities can create adequate monitoring capacities, an appropriate evidence base for policies, and make well-informed decisions over the framing of their cultural policies.

### **Tools of Government**

As budgets have tightened and point to considerable uncertainties in public funding over the next years, the cities must turn to a variety of governance tools to assist their cultural system. While the direct provision of support for culture, for example through institutional funding for opera houses or theaters, as well as the use of grants, may be the most straightforward measures, they are also sensitive to budgetary adjustments. Other tools may not take effect as immediately but can instead offer more comprehensive assistance to the cultural system, not just a select few.

For instance, Toronto has demonstrated one such tool with the creation of a tax subclass for cultural establishments. Though the eligibility is not yet comprehensive (as many cultural nightlife establishments were only included in response to the pandemic), the regulation addresses

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<sup>37</sup> Personal communication with a representative from the Greater London Authority on November 13, 2020.

problems of affordability through a 50 percent reduction in property taxes (*Mayor John Tory, 2020*). Similarly, the German parliament responded to the mass cancellation of live events with the permission to award vouchers instead of full refunds for canceled performances (*Unterstützung für Kultur, 2020*). The latter would have introduced massive cash flow problems for the event organizers and institutions. In the UK, this cash flow issue was addressed by dedicating £270 million of the nationwide Culture Recovery Fund to specific loans targeted at the cultural system, including museums, independent cinemas, and night clubs (*Culture Recovery Fund, 2020*). Lastly, prior to the pandemic, New York used the tool of standard setting to advance the inclusion of diversity in internal business planning through conditionalities imposed on its Cultural Institutions Group (*CreateNYC, 2019*).

The examples given demonstrate only a small selection of actions taken on behalf of the cultural system and exclude future measures that may currently be under consideration. Although some of these tools, such as the extent of the loans available, may still be subject to annual review and alterations, the usage of a wide portfolio of measures may contribute to a degree of continuity. Especially as workers and organizations comprised in the cultural system are navigating significant instability in the context of the crisis, it can be crucial for cities to signal constancy, even as the financial prospects are dire. A city's ability to harness the full range of governmental tools for its cause may therefore become vital to the cultural system in the coming years.

### **Integration of Cultural Policies**

As the COVID-19 pandemic has sharply exacerbated the risk of permanently losing parts of their cultural infrastructure, the cities must take stock of the extent to which they embed their cultural policies in the context of wider urban planning and spatial development. This, for instance, also refers to zoning laws, tax incentives and property policies. These constitute infrastructure development regulations that are also conducive to sustainable cultural development, where the availability and affordability of land and space create challenges for cultural practice. Too often, culture is an afterthought, rather than a self-evident component of urban planning, while other necessities, such as sports facilities, hospitals and administration buildings are included, as London's cultural infrastructure plan rightly observes (*Mayor of London, 2019b; McDonough & Wekerle, 2011*).

This hierarchy neglects how culture and artistic achievements can perpetuate a positive public image (see e.g., *Carnwath & Brown, 2014*). Although culture was identified as an important mechanism to link residents with their cities in meaningful ways, create social cohesion, and enhance wellbeing, there are still deficiencies in the operational implementation of this profound policy insight (*Duxbury et al., 2016*). This role of culture is an important component of resilience, as the strong spatial inequalities that have developed in the cities examined will likely not be countered by cultural policies as they currently exist. More systematic and stronger connections between cultural policy and other policy fields are called for – be they housing, tourism, economic development, taxation or others. Correspondingly, cultural administrations must be sure what



conditions, assets and infrastructures are needed to allow the cultural system to thrive and must consequently employ this knowledge to advocate for adequate agreements.

London, for instance, has embedded the cultural and creative economy into the Greater London Authority's spatial planning, culminating in the creation of a "Cultural Infrastructure Plan" (2019b). This strategic advance includes a "Cultural Infrastructure Map", which offers a holistic, spatial overview of establishments and their access to public transport. The plan also sets out Mayor Khan's investments into new developments that include a clear cultural mandate, such as the development of the East Bank at the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, a new hub uniting universities with institutions of arts and culture. Other notable examples, such as the "London Borough of Culture Award", as well as the cultural cluster-approach advanced with the Thames Estuary Production Corridor, further underline this strategic trajectory integrating both community-oriented culture, as well as the creative industries (Mayor of London, 2019b).

Toronto and Paris have shown similar developments, although their trajectories and outcomes differed. Since Toronto's amalgamation in 1998, the city has integrated cultural policy in city-planning and economic development, where public spaces were made available to the arts and culture, spearheaded by the local non-profit Artscape. However, despite the strong legacy of culture in the city, rising affordability problems have demonstrated that these policies are no longer sufficiently prioritizing room for grassroots innovations – necessitating adjustments to the exchange of cultural policy and urban planning (Goldberg-Miller, 2017). Ahead of the Olympic Games in 2024, Paris, too, is integrating a cultural approach to the city-wide preparations for the event. The "Cultural Olympiad" will highlight lesser-known cultural sites in Seine-Saint-Denis, the center of the Olympic Games, and connect them to the city center with improved public transport connections (*The Paris 2024*, 2020). These examples demonstrate that embedding cultural policies into urban planning cannot be done by cultural administrations alone. Rather, they must advocate for the wider support from city hall, using the greater urgency created by the COVID-19 pandemic for momentum.

### Strategic Planning

Irrespective of whether these cities already followed cultural policy strategies before the COVID-19 pandemic, the shortfalls and losses of this crisis have inevitably impacted their previous trajectories. In response, the cities are now finding themselves at a juncture, where the selected priorities for the future of their cultural systems will shape strategic and budgetary policies for years to come. At this precarious point, the creation of a strategic plan for their cultural recoveries becomes indispensable. A path towards a cultural recovery must, for instance, establish the measures targeted to restart cultural activity and stimulate audience participation for its institutions and events. To this end, cultural administrations, in conjunction with the city governments, must take stock of any changes to consumer behavior that have taken place as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic – as the UK's "Innovation Foundation" Nesta has already endeavored to track.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further exposed the vulnerabilities present in the five cultural capitals – highlighting, for instance, disparities in social security, access to opportunities and work conditions. In 2021, the accumulation of these findings must press the cities to examine the resilience of their cultural systems to future crises. Over the course of the pandemic, parts of the cultural systems have continually had to lobby for themselves to draw attention to their precarious state. Too many of the more vulnerable stakeholders were left out and had little voice. It is now in the hands of civic actors and politicians to ascertain that the importance of the cultural system and its part in the local economy and society are understood, should future crises occur. A possible first application of these findings is the emergence of climate change resilience plans (see for instance *Plan Climat*, 2018; Mayor of London, 2018c). Establishing strategic “game plans” to guide their recovery processes and work towards readiness for future crises – akin to the “Recovery Plan” proposed by the French Ministry for Culture – will be an indispensable component to full cultural recovery.

Beyond the recovery, these plans must also take note of the stakeholders involved in their implementation. At this crucial point, especially the role foundations play within their urban contexts must be examined. Their expertise and financial backing could assume an important position within the implementation of new urban cultural policy objectives, but only do so to varying degrees thus far. Specifically, from the perspective of the third sector, foundations could anticipate effective areas of intervention and encourage innovative responses. Ultimately, it is up to the foundations to define their roles and the desired levels of cooperation with the public sector. To entice them, however, cultural administrations may employ their coordinating function to encourage new models of public-private partnerships, allowing foundations and local government entities to work together on specific projects.

### **New Models**

Switching to virtual cultural activities has identified new modes of cultural production, collaboration and integration into digital marketing strategies, as well as enhancing dissemination and reach (Gross et al., 2020). Although the transfer to the digital sphere is not equally accessible to all cultural disciplines, the emergence of new business models, mentioned above, must not go unnoticed by policymakers. Rather, synergies must be created between urban cultural policy and economic development departments to strengthen their analytic capacities concerning new ecological models of value creation and dissemination, which are emerging and gaining traction through the pandemic. This requires taking stock of emergent business models (for instance streaming services) and partnerships (such as with universities or private companies) and mapping how the reshuffled ecosystem can be integrated into the cities’ futures. Correspondingly, the cities must examine and shape their policies around the implications of these business models for cultural organizations and especially also for independent artists, freelancers and the cultural “gig economy”.

## Towards Greater Resilience

Even beyond the policy recommendations identified above, the pandemic has demonstrated that the cultural system is facing fundamental issues that must be addressed to enhance its overall resilience. Most prominently, the deficiencies of present social security systems available to artists and cultural workers have demonstrated that a return to the status quo ante seems even riskier. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, some talent will be permanently lost, since artists and cultural workers were forced to abandon their professions. Meanwhile, the next generation has a difficult time establishing a foothold in the field (World Cities Culture Forum, 2020b). France's social security model for the "*intermittents du spectacle*" specifically targets the atypical way in which artists work, thereby signaling that they are valuable members of the economy and society. Going forth, it will be indispensable that other countries and city governments, too, appreciate that the arts and culture are part of the metropolitan ecology, including many connections with, and contributions to, the overall vitality and quality of urban life.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also demonstrated that additional action is needed to ensure the resilience of the entire cultural system, and not only of a selected few cultural crown jewels. Each of the funding decisions made in the context of the crisis implicitly decides over an organization's chance of weathering the pandemic (Banks & O'Connor, 2020a). While younger and not-yet recognized artists and small organizations have become more organized in recent years, most notably in Berlin, all five case studies have depicted significant inequalities. As Florida and Storper point out, "[it] would be naïve to believe that policies to address the unique conundrums of the pandemic will create greater urban justice without major and specific attention to systemic injustice" (Florida et al., n.d., p. 24). For the future of diverse, cultural cities, this will require strategic and systematic mechanisms of participation to ensure that cities base cultural policy decisions on all available information and an appropriate representation of stakeholders and audiences across the landscape of arts and culture.

Urban cultural resilience is also tied to the availability of spaces for cultural production. Some measures to regulate the residential affordability crises have been taken, such as different forms of rental caps in Paris and Berlin. Some measures to regulate the residential affordability crises have been taken, such as different forms of rental caps in Paris and Berlin. However, non-residential spaces are often not similarly protected. The future of cultural production in these cities – particularly those, where the displacement of artists is far advanced, such as New York – will also depend on the solutions the cities devise and the actors they can enlist. Whether they facilitate the temporary cultural use of vacant spaces in different neighborhoods, as Paris has tried, provide mixed-use art spaces, as in Toronto, or expand creative activity beyond the city limits, as London is endeavoring to do: a variety of approaches exist, though none have yet begun to match the scale of the problem at hand.

At the time of writing this report, renewed and new restrictions of public life have been introduced in all five cities, during the "second wave" of the COVID-19 pandemic. Every day of closures imposes an additional strain on the cultural system, which has already undergone months of restrictions, uncertainty and economic hardship. Especially clubs,

music venues and the performing arts more generally are at high risk of closure (“Cultural Diversity,” 2020). Already, the loss of smaller establishments and venues for artists is tearing holes in the cultural landscapes of the five cultural capitals. At this vital juncture, the informed and strategic policy interventions of city governments are critical determinants of the role the arts and culture can play in the urban fabric of the future.

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