

Press release

New study offers recommendations on how to create diverse and sustainable cultural capitals, post-pandemic

Research led by Hertie School explores how Berlin, London, Paris, Toronto and New York City responded to protect their cultural ecosystem.

Berlin, 15 February 2021. The pandemic has closed museums, shuttered concert halls and cancelled theatre performances across the globe, threatening the livelihoods of artists, technicians and musicians and leaving many in the cultural industries fighting for survival. A new study by the Hertie School's Helmut Anheier, Katrin Winkler and the Technische Universität Berlin's Janet Merkel explores how five cultural capitals – Berlin, London, Paris, Toronto and New York City – supported their artists, creatives and cultural organisations during this unprecedented crisis.

The research project, supported by the Allianz Kulturstiftung, focuses on the response of each city between March and late summer 2020. While each had to address individual challenges, they also shared similar problems, such as the uncertainty of the pandemic's progression, ever-changing rules and restrictions or coordinating between multiple layers of government.

Where some fared well, others lacked in their response. In Berlin, for instance, local governments reacted quickly and generously to support the cultural scene with special funding grants and adapted emergency programmes based on feedback. In London, the Mayor of London's culture and creative industries team helped distribute aid more efficiently, but at the same time there was a significant delay in financial support from the national government. A coordinated, multilevel response worked best in Paris and Toronto. In Paris, the city could rely on burden-sharing with the national government, and Toronto integrated the broadest spectrum of governmental tools into its response, such as tax relief for cultural organisations. Meanwhile, in New York City, officials worked closely with private foundations to mobilise funds for a cultural rescue effort.

As the authors note, "the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that additional action is needed to ensure the resilience of the entire cultural system, and not only a selected few cultural crown jewels".

Esra Küçük, managing director of Allianz Kulturstiftung, further notes that "in these unprecedented times for democratic societies, policymakers should ensure the survival of the cultural sector and strengthen its diversity. Both civil society and philanthropic actors can play a decisive role to support this effort and are ready for it."

Based on the findings, the researchers have offered several policy recommendations:

1. **Safeguard and foster cultural production by focusing on artist's living and working conditions.** The pandemic has brought to light the precarious work conditions in the cultural sector and worsening affordability for cultural spaces.
2. **Ensure that cultural policy decisions are inclusive and represent a broad range of stakeholders and audiences.** The researchers show that the pandemic has intensified inequalities between cultural workers, institutions, and audiences.

3. **Cultural policy is not a matter of governments alone.** While government is a critical actor in funding the arts, civil society and philanthropic organizations play key roles, and should be enlisted more systematically both in crisis management and in creating more sustainable funding models for supporting the arts and cultural scene.
4. **Urban cultural policy cannot be tackled in a silo.** Instead, its success depends on an effective use of a range of governmental tools and integration into urban plans and policies, which sustainably anchor the cultural ecosystem in wider urban development strategies.
5. **New business models will require investments in digital tools.** It has become evident that cultural ecosystems will have to rely on digital models and approaches more than ever before. During the pandemic, many organizations shifted quickly toward offering content online, without the ability to capture a new, viable revenue stream. Cultural capitals have to invest in serious efforts to develop and test new business models.

Berlin's Senator for Culture and Europe, Klaus Lederer, will discuss the findings of the report at the Re:Writing the Future Festival on 26 February 2021.

You can find more information about the event [here](#).

You can access the full study as well as the executive summary [here](#).

About the authors

Helmut K. Anheier is Professor and past President of the Hertie School, and member of the Luskin School of Public Affairs, UCLA. His research centres on indicator systems, non-profit organizations and philanthropy, culture, and organisational studies.

Janet Merkel is a Senior Researcher at the Technical University Berlin's Institute of Urban and Regional Planning. Her work focuses on creativity as a socio-cultural and socio-material process and brings economic and cultural sociology into urban sociology for a better understanding of creative industries development in cities.

Katrin Winkler is a Research Associate at the Hertie School. Her work focuses on questions of cultural policy and cultural diplomacy.

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The Allianz Kulturstiftung is a not-for-profit cultural foundation for Europe. The aim of the Foundation is to strengthen cohesion in Europe using the tools of art and culture. As a promoter of social change, the Foundation is geared towards achieving impact and it operates independently. The Foundation is committed to translocal art and culture projects in Europe and the Mediterranean region. Over the coming years, it will focus its strategic work on the following thematic areas. It will promote an open society while adopting a decentralised approach to Europe and driving forward digitalisation for the common good. www.allianz-kulturstiftung.de