



# CS Brief #6



“The old ways of addressing burning issues (such as climate change) have proved insufficient to instigate a deep behavioural change; therefore, new strategies to convey urgent messages are on demand”<sup>1</sup>

## Culture & climate change: the future of EU international cultural relations

The awareness that humanity has entered anthropocene (a geological phase wherein human’s behaviours are at the source of complex pressures on the environment<sup>2</sup>) is fundamentally transforming the ways we live: value, meaning, beliefs and engagement will never be the same and are being rethought worldwide and across all sectors and societies. The climate crisis and its environmental facets are questioning the roots of human culture and creativity. They also require paradigmatic shifts in government policies and thereby EU policies.

This Brief aims to identify policy priorities for an “EU global culture and climate change initiative” and opportunities for future action and research on the transforming relationship between EU (international) cultural policies and environment.

### An EU intercultural approach to climate change

The climate crisis is an emergency that is transforming the relationship between culture (worldviews and aesthetical creation) and nature, between EU policies and environment. The new Commission’s President seems very aware of this transformation as she made climate change and the environment a top priority with the new

Green Deal<sup>3</sup>. This is already being taken forward by the EU institutions although the Covid 19 crisis will likely delay the process.

Our relationship with the environment and nature is culturally-rooted and follows a range of social representations and habits that vary from one group or society to another<sup>4</sup>. We therefore have diverse views and understanding of the ways humans should interact with nature (this term itself being understood and used – if

1. IETM and European Dancehouse Network (EDN), “Position paper on the mid-term evaluation of Creative Europe and recommendations regarding its post-2020 successor”, Brussels, July 2017, [https://www.ietm.org/sites/default/files/attachements/news/position\\_paper\\_eu\\_final\\_with\\_edn.pdf](https://www.ietm.org/sites/default/files/attachements/news/position_paper_eu_final_with_edn.pdf)

2. Oxford Dictionary, 2014. <https://public.oed.com/blog/june-2014-update-new-words-notes/>

3. European Commission, “The European Green Deal”, Communication, COM (2019) 640, 11 December 2019, [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/european-green-deal-communication\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/european-green-deal-communication_en.pdf)

4. Van der Wurff R., Climate Change Policy of Germany, UK and USA, in Boersema, J. J., Reijnders L., Principles of Environmental Sciences, Springer, 2019, pp 459-471. Arnold, A., Böhm, G., Corner, A., Mays, C., Pidgeon, N., Poortinga, W., Poumadère, M., Scheer, D., Sonnberger, M., Steentjes, K., Tvinnereim, E. (2016). European Perceptions of Climate Change. Socio-political profiles to inform a cross-national survey in France, Germany, Norway and the UK. Oxford: Climate Outreach.

at all – differently). In numerous cases, societies have maintained very strong links with their environment and nature according to their beliefs and ways of life. Harmonious relationship with nature is actually part of their intangible cultural heritage. “Protecting the environment” in that case equals to protect cultural heritage. Understanding and managing this diversity thus requires a multidisciplinary and intercultural approach of some EU environmental and climate-related policies.

This also has a lot to do with what government leaders consider as priorities and their belief or not in the reality of the climate crisis. The scientific evidence of climate transformation is not enough to convince some developing countries’ leaders that it is likely their societies will not become ‘developed’ in the way rich nations became ‘wealthy’ in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In other words, while EU leaders call for “green growth”, this narrative is not attractive to partners whose demographically growing societies still suffer from widespread poverty and inequality.

Western countries were able to de-pollute themselves by outsourcing pollution (e.g. car manufacturing, textile, waste disposal) to developing countries. This creates dilemmas about i) what paths developing countries should take ii) the direction taken by developed countries to make sure we live all well within the means of the planet (to quote Kate Raworth)<sup>5</sup>.

Between rich (this includes the EU) and less rich nations, further - interculturally aware - dialogue will be necessary and inevitable. Intercultural literacy will have to be mobilised to help overcome misunderstanding and mistrust. And cultural production will also have a role to play.

## The arts and the climate change crisis

The artistic and creative side of culture also has many roles to play in climate-related action: the arts are an endless source of imagination and invention of new approaches to complex changes, they are a powerful mobilisation and awareness-raising tool, they provide us with ideational instruments that help to think of potential futures<sup>6</sup>.

Cultural and creative industries themselves have started to go through climate change adaptation and mitigation processes. The digitalisation of cultural production and consumption on smartphones rely on “two heavily polluting activities: the storage of data and the manufacturing of devices”<sup>7</sup>.

CCIs are now taking measures to become more climate-sensitive. They are looking for more ethical and climate-aware businesses<sup>8</sup>. Practices and design in architecture are increasingly influenced by environmental constraints. Some artists and creative companies or social businesses are now taking some distance from polluting or anti-climate sponsors such as oil and gas partners<sup>9</sup>. Cultural mobility in general is being rethought<sup>10</sup>. The potential of environment-friendly cultural tourism has become a new trend.

**A multidisciplinary  
intercultural  
approach to  
EU environmental  
and climate-  
related policies.**

5. Monbiot G., Finally a breakthrough alternative to growth economics - the doughnut, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/apr/12/doughnut-growth-economics-book-economic-model>.

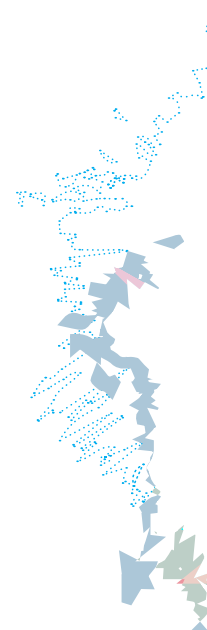
6. Lavery C., Performance and Ecology: What can Performers Do, 2019.

7. De Beukelaere C. and Spence, Global Cultural Economy, 2019, p. 171.

8. See The Guardian ‘Culture and Climate Change’ pages. <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/culture+environment/climate-change>

9. Gayle, D., Climate Activists Bring Trojan Horse to British Museum in BP Protest, The Guardian, 7 February 2020.

10. Janssen J., Kunstenpocket #2, (Re)framing the International, Flanders Arts Institute, 2019.



## EU initiatives in the field of “culture and environment”

In Europe, the EU has for long supported climate-related initiatives and actions that rely on or have specific cultural components. The Urbact network has started to develop a platform on cultural cities and climate change<sup>11</sup>. The European Commission has also funded research programmes on heritage protection and climate change. The European Commission has promoted knowledge sharing on sustainable cultural tourism<sup>12</sup> and certification schemes targeted to the European tourism sector<sup>13</sup>.

Making (fast) fashion sustainable has been a specific area of work. Voluntary measures such as the EU Ecolabel and Green Public Procurement aim to incentivise sustainable and circular design and production of textiles through the application of a range of criteria, covering environmental and social concerns and the full life cycle of a product<sup>14</sup>. At the international level, DEVCO has funded the International Trade Center’s Ethical Fashion Initiative which aims at providing a fair remuneration of textile workers, thus going against the predominant practices of the fashion industry which rely on low paid workers in unsafe working conditions and are often polluting<sup>15</sup>. However the question of consumerism remains untouched.

Some culture and creative industries are now taking measures to become more climate-sensitive.

More recently, as part of European Houses/ Spaces of Culture initiative, some EUNIC projects focused on the culture and environment nexus, such as the Eco-Art Festival Nagoonbaatar Mongolia. Three of the fifteen selected projects of the 2019 EUNIC Cluster Fund deal with environment-related topics and sustainability: a capacity building programme on sustainability within the 2nd European Cultures Week in Athens, a comics project on the future of environment in Uruguay<sup>16</sup> and an initiative on social design for Sustainable Cities in Warsaw<sup>17</sup>.

On the global stage, EU climate policies have been at the forefront of successive carbon reduction negotiations, yet reaching mixed results in the last COP conferences. One notable experience mixing the arts and policy-making has been philosopher Bruno Latour’s theatre play experiment organised back to back with Paris COP21 (see Focus box below).

In Europe, the EU has for long supported climate-related initiatives and actions that rely on or have specific cultural components.

11. Programmes CLIMA, E-RHIS, HEAT, HERAKLES, PROTEGO, SMARTS, STORM, summarised in a booklet presented at a policy seminar in Brussels on 7 December 2016. [https://europa.eu/sinapse/webservices/dsp\\_export\\_attachement.cfm?CMTY\\_ID=0C46BEEC-C689-9F80-54C7DD45358D29FB&OBJECT\\_ID=0AFB78EA-D0F2-C50B-CC7D053E985B0D5A&DOC\\_ID=4621E608-F3FA-FDB0-71FB55AEA69D0693&type=CMTY\\_CAL](https://europa.eu/sinapse/webservices/dsp_export_attachement.cfm?CMTY_ID=0C46BEEC-C689-9F80-54C7DD45358D29FB&OBJECT_ID=0AFB78EA-D0F2-C50B-CC7D053E985B0D5A&DOC_ID=4621E608-F3FA-FDB0-71FB55AEA69D0693&type=CMTY_CAL)

12. European Expert Network on Culture and Audiovisual (EENCA), “Sustainable Cultural Tourism: A mapping document for the OMC”, 2017 <http://www.eenca.com/index.cfm/publications/sustainable-cultural-tourism-a-mapping-document-for-the-omc/>

13. European Parliament, European Parliamentary Research Service, Halleux V., “Sustainable tourism: the environmental dimension”, March 2017, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2017/599327/EPRS\\_BRI\(2017\)599327\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2017/599327/EPRS_BRI(2017)599327_EN.pdf)

14. <https://www.sustaineurope.com/the-transition-from-fast-fashion-to-sustainable-fashion-20181008.html>

15. International trade centre. <http://www.intracen.org/itc/projects/ethical-fashion/>

16. EUNIC Global, “E(uropean) U(ruguayan) Comics para el futuro de nuestro medioambiente”, Projects, 2020, Accesible Online, <https://www.eunicglobal.eu/projects/eunic-uruguay-e-uropean-u-ruguayan-comics-para-el-futuro-de-nuestro-medioambiente>

17. See also our culture Solutions brief #8 2019/2020 on EUNIC.



## FOCUS

## Bruno Latour's culture & environment policy experiments A source of inspiration for culture Solutions Europe

Bruno Latour is a contemporary French philosopher and anthropologist who has inspired numerous scholars, academics and cultural professionals in addressing today's world's complexity

### Theoretical background on culture & environment

Latour has elaborated on concepts originating from philosophy (the modern),<sup>18</sup> geology (anthropocene), ecology (Gaia, terrestrial), mythology and the arts (composition) to propose new approaches to complexity and the climate crisis.

### Culture & environment

According to Latour, the new political rift of today's world is between those who have realised that the climate crisis requires to be "down to earth" in support of the earth (he calls it "the Terrestrial") and those who still see the world through the lens of global modernisation in denial of new environmental realities<sup>19</sup>. "The modern world is just not possible. Either you have a world—and it will not be modern. Or you are modern, but without a real world."

Latour has explored optimal interrelations between the arts, culture, science and the environment. He launched several groundbreaking initiatives that have become a source of reference for future work on the culture and environment nexus:

- SPEAP<sup>20</sup>, a masters on political arts experiments at Sciences Po, Paris.
- CLIMAT<sup>21</sup>, a theatrical simulation by students of Paris COP21 climate negotiations
- Moving Earths<sup>22</sup>, a theatre play on climate politics

### Europe and the EU

Latour carefully distinguishes the EU (an institutional machinery) from Europe (the land where Europeans live and work). He uses the term "European motherland". He considers that under Trump the US have left Europeans alone and that it is up to Europeans to defend themselves in a world where a) global modernisation has become a utopia and b) the return to nationalism is equally illusory.

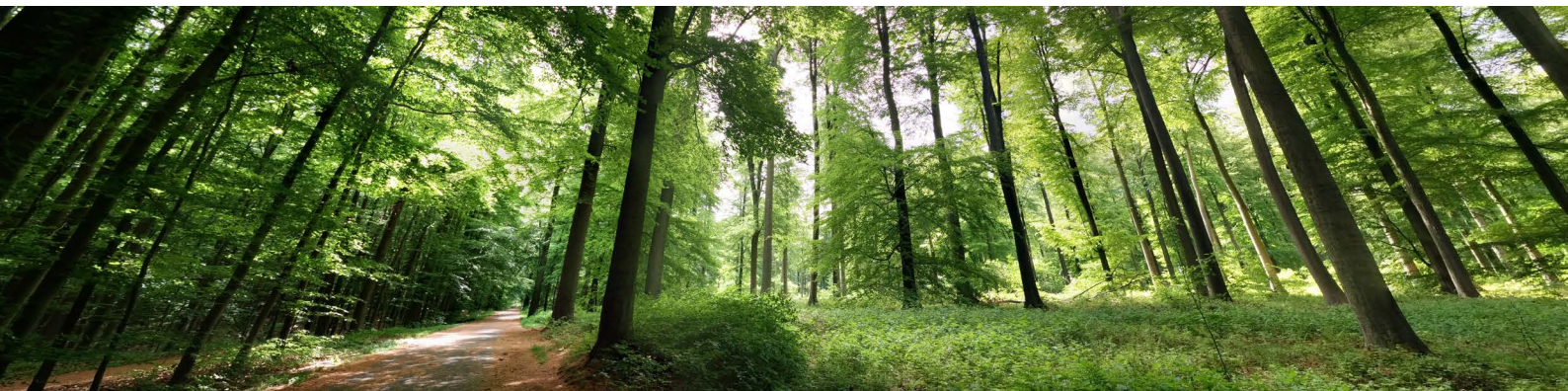
18. Sciences Po Médialab, "How do we compose a common world?", AIME: An Inquiry Into Modes of Existence, 2015, <https://medialab.sciencespo.fr/en/activities/aime-an-inquiry-into-modes-of-existence/>

19. Latour B., "Europe alone - only Europe", 2017, <http://www.bruno-latour.fr/sites/default/files/P-178-EUROPE-GB.pdf>.

20. Sciences Po, Master d'Experimentation en Arts Politiques, <http://blogs.sciences-po.fr/speap/>

21. CLIMAT, "Le théâtre des négociations", 2016 (video), <https://vimeo.com/143874181>.

22. Théâtre des Amandiers, Latour B., Ait Touati F., "Moving Earths", Nanterre Amandiers, 2019, <https://nanterre-amandiers.com/evenement/moving-earth-bruno-latour-frederique-ait-touati-2019/>.



## 6 ideas to prepare for a future “EU global culture and climate change initiative”

### Towards a future “EU global culture and climate change initiative”

This brief gave a very superficial overview of the “culture and environment nexus” and its implications for EU international cultural relations policies. Culture Solutions will invest, if resources allow it, in deeper research and collaborations initiatives to inform and co-design future EU external policies in that realm. To do so, we have identified the following suggestions that could inspire work towards a future “EU global culture and climate change initiative”:

1. A mapping of existing “culture and environment/climate change” initiatives in the EU that could be a source of inspiration for future EU external policies in that realm.
2. A mapping of initiatives worldwide with which the EU could connect to develop synergies with partners outside Europe.
3. A policy-making analysis of EU institutions on the potential for an “EU global culture and environment initiative”.
4. Develop training and multidisciplinary workshops gathering environmental experts/professionals and artists/cultural workers to enhance EU staff skills in this field.
5. Produce knowledge and information material to inform future EU programming on “culture and environment” in Brussels as well as in EU Delegations.
6. Collaborate with organisations already working on the culture and environment nexus (such as Julie’s Bicycle, Sciences Po SPEAP, etc.) to develop synergies and joint initiatives with EU institutions and policies.



The background of the page features a complex, layered graphic design. On the right side, there is a stylized map of the United Kingdom in shades of blue and green, overlaid with a network of black lines. To the left of the map, there is a large, abstract tree-like structure with green foliage and a network of black lines. The text 'com-po-sing Trust' is overlaid on this graphic in a pink, outlined, sans-serif font. The word 'com-' is on the first line, 'po-' is on the second line, 'sing' is on the third line, and 'Trust' is on the fourth line. The background is a solid light green color.

com-  
po-  
sing  
Trust



culture Solutions Europe (cS) is an independent and non-for-profit social innovation group serving all those involved in EU international cultural relations.

We contribute independently to the excellence of EU international cultural relations with the opening of creative trust-building spaces, the production of commons and the brokerage of know-how.

We follow a specific **Theory of Change**.

## Support us

culture Solutions Europe was created as a French association on 23 October 2018.

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