

Welcome art projects in the great reset post-Covid era

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Culture has long been perceived as a specific multifaceted domain of human activities, characterized by its very special nature that goes well beyond the business model, with its underlying nature related to original creativity, individual expression and societal outreach. It is particularly desirable to distinguish cultural, from other domains in economic activities, in view of its very specific nature- not only does it appear as a profit generating business operation, but also has a strong element of a non-profit activity related to self-expression, emotional expansion and identity sensitizing and development. Historically, cultural endeavors enabled deep human expressions and have been welcomed as a strategic means with a great importance and power for societal development, and also as something essential for satisfying the basic needs of human beings- cultural hunger.

According to UNESCO: *“The cultural and creative industries are among the fastest growing sectors in the world. With an estimated global worth of 4.3 trillion USD per year, the culture sector now accounts for 6.1% of the global economy. They generate annual revenues of US\$ 2,250 billion and nearly 30 million jobs worldwide, employing more people aged 15 to 29 than any other sector. The cultural and creative industries have become essential for inclusive economic growth, reducing inequalities and achieving the goals set out in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.”* An analysis of labour market data for culture and arts professionals provides an insight into the nature of employment and livelihood. Some might be surprised to know, that cultural and creative industry activities accounted for nearly 3.7% of EU employment in 2015 (8.4 million), more than the automotive industry.

It has been acknowledged, that the individuals engaged in employment in the cultural and creative industry, benefit on multiple dimensions. In addition to the unique



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employment conditions in this particular sector, beyond the standard material, financial, and inspirational aspects of the jobs, engagement in art projects adds to traditional economic results, contributes to self-expression, well-being, social cohesion, and identity.

The city of Geneva, recognized world capital for peace, global governance and human rights, has a long tradition of hosting international and non-governmental organizations, scientific and academic actors, civil society and the private sector. According to the data from the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, the home of multilateral diplomacy and development cooperation, “International Geneva” accommodates: 42 international organizations in the Lake Geneva Region (45 in total in Switzerland); 177 states; About 750 Non-governmental organizations (NGO); About 32,000 international civil servants, diplomats and representatives of the civil society; More than 4,700 annual visits of heads of state and government, ministers and other dignitaries; More than 3,400 meetings annually with a total of 182,000 delegates from all around the world.

Our City World deserves a place open to everyone and to the Canton’s schools for events and educational activities. And, on 13 June 2021, the population of the world’s most culturally cosmopolitan city of Geneva,

that I have had the pleasure to call my home for the past 20 years, will express its will about the destiny of, what I consider to be an extraordinarily innovative project, called *Cité de la Musique!* While the environmental impact assessment (preservation of the forest and century-old oak trees and two new trees planted for every tree removed) of the project suggesting rainwater harvesting, rooftop solar panels, and connection to the GeniLac renewable energy system and other technical evaluations of this unique gift to the population: that involves 0 cost to taxpayers, where building construction and park layout costs are 100% funded by sponsors and by the Confederation, seem to have been to the satisfaction of the Municipal Council of the City of Geneva, justifying their favorable opinion, the approaches of some interest groups, have been divergent, leading to a municipal referendum against the project.

As a long standing admirer of art and a devoted advocate of music and culture, as a mother of a 12-year old, future violinist, who had the privilege to start learning music from her 5th birthday at the Conservatoire de Musique de Genève, as a representative of Petit-Saconnex that will be accommodating this wonderful project, if the population of the commune decides favorably, and as a global citizen and a Funding President of the Geneva Consensus Foundation, that is devoted to the promotion of sustainable development, I have

asked myself two questions:

How can anyone vote "NO" to this innovative, exemplary, flagship project – a genuine manifestation of United Nations-Private-Public Partnership, that promises to create sustainable decent work, when the entire world is in a search of new solutions for employment generating activities as all societies are suffering immense job cuts resulting from Covid and ongoing transformations of the labour market?

How long can we leave two major players in the field of music in Geneva, the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande and the Haute École de Musique, currently dispersed over seven inadequate sites, without a roof, could they have a better home than by the Place des Nations, at the heart of Geneva international?

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, in his briefing to the Security Council on Global Governance Post-COVID-19, stated that **the Covid-19 pandemic is one of the most dangerous challenges this world has faced in our lifetime. It is above all a human crisis with severe health and socio-economic consequences.**

As we are embarking on the path of "Great Reset", there is an urgent need for all development stakeholders to mobilize their efforts for managing the negative consequences of the Covid crisis. At the current stage of the post-Covid rehabilitation, the world, well underway on the 4th Industrial Revolution, will need to look for new, innovative and more sustainable employment generation activities. The advent of information and communication technologies, the emergence and spread of artificial intelligence and unmanned system technologies, call for design and implementation of a new cohort of projects that will address not only the mere economic dimension of development, but also, and most importantly, the human dimension of the new transformation. A new generation of activities will be required to address the physiological dimension of the post-Covid world, and to educate the growing population and the future labor force with a solid competences in emotional intelligence.

The adoption of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, in 2005, was a milestone in international cultural policy.

This historic agreement **is at the heart of the creative economy** recognizing the dual nature, both cultural and economic, of contemporary cultural expressions produced by artists and cultural professionals. There is a wide consensus, that culture can play an important role in the world economy and contribute to the implementation of Agenda 2030 and the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals: SDG 11 refers to sustainable cities and communities, includes 'efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage' putting safeguarding biodiversity and cultural diversity on the same level; SDG 8 on decent working conditions mentions 'sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products', as well as 'productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation'.

The important role of culture in local development has been, and continues to be, at the center of political deliberations of multilateral system and regional organization. In its efforts to 'promote policies that will improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world', the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) addresses the role of culture, or the ways of measuring economic and social importance of culture, including employment. The Council of Europe relates culture to democracy, highlighting its importance for democratic governance and sustainable democratic societies and encourages the programmes on intercultural cities, promotes cultural diversity via its cultural routes across the whole continent. The European Union devoted an entire Briefing note entitled "Employment in the cultural and creative sectors".

The ILO approaches employment and labour relationships in the media and cultural sectors, as well as arts and their impact on decent work in the sector. It also looks at technological and market developments in the media and entertainment industries and their impact on the future of the press, public service broadcasting, the music and film industry and other segments.

The Rome Convention for the Protection of Performers, Producers of Phonograms and Broadcasting Organizations, adopted jointly by UNESCO, the World Intellectual Property Organization, and the ILO in 1961 provide

grounds for securing performers' rights, regardless of the technologies employed.

Cultural diversity in the EU Member States is reflected in the EU motto 'United in diversity' Article 167 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). Article 13 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights attached to the TFEU focuses on artistic freedom. International organizations and the EU approach cultural and creative activities from rights and diversity perspectives. Given the sectors' economic role, they also adopt a statistical perspective.

The Article. 67a of the Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation, adopted by the popular vote on 23 September 2012 is dedicated to **Musical education**. It stipulates: *(1) The Confederation and Cantons shall encourage musical education, in particular that of children and young people. (2) They shall endeavour within the scope of their powers to ensure high-quality music teaching in schools. If the Cantons are unable to harmonise the goals of music teaching in schools by means of coordination, the Confederation shall issue the required regulations. (3) In consultation with the Cantons, the Confederation shall set out principles to help young people to engage in musical activities and to encourage musically gifted persons.*

The Article 69 refers to Culture, saying that *(1) Cultural matters are a cantonal responsibility. (2) The Confederation may support cultural activities of national interest as well as art and music, in particular in the field of education. (3) In the fulfilment of its duties, it shall take account of the cultural and linguistic diversity of the country.*

In view of the above, moral and legal grounds, I find it difficult to reconcile the arguments of those opposing this promising project. Our beautiful City needs more quality and creative decent jobs, and as a responsible mother and citizen, I can only thank those behind this excellent initiative and invite the representatives of the Geneva International Community to join me in saying:

YES to a campus for music education;

YES to more culture for Geneva;

YES to a place open to everyone,

YES to a new place for entertainment and leisure at la Place des Nations. ■