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Cultural infrastructure, networking and territorial embeddedness

Living Labs Metropolitan Area of Styria, Mid Wales, Tukums, Valencia

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1. Introduction

Culture has a great societal and economical importance for both urban and rural areas. Most large cultural institutions are however located in urban areas due to historical developments, predominant stakeholders, market concentration and greater financial budgets. Whereas rural areas often focus on smaller and local cultural activities in accordance with the given framework conditions and financial scope. Rural areas are very heterogenous and their types of capital include natural, societal, historical and architectural resources, which can all be considered as endogenous local cultural elements and thus provide decisive development potential for these areas. Therefore, cultural offers in rural areas are dependent on the scope and specificity of its local resources (Bohle et al. 2013; Page and Connell 2006). If the countryside identifies features of its local resources as development potential for cultural activities, it is more likely that rural-urban disparities are reduced and quality of life in rural areas increases.

The term “cultural infrastructure” refers to facilities, where culture is produced and consumed, through facilities such as museums, theatres, libraries and historical cultural sites, as well as architecture offices or graphic designer studios. It includes, however, as well organisational structures and networks among cultural professionals supporting cultural expressions.

This short report is a cross-sectoral output of the Communities of Practices “Public Infrastructure and Social Services” and “Cultural Connections” of the Horizon 2020 ROBUST project (Rural-Urban Outlooks: Unlocking Synergies). It focuses on cultural infrastructure and networks in the rural-urban



context in different European countries. On the basis of four Living Labs of ROBUST, the importance of cultural infrastructure and networks are illustrated and it is analysed how they can create and strengthen rural-urban linkages.

2. Description of thematic relevance

2.1. What is infrastructure?

The term “infrastructure”, as it is used today, was defined around the 1960s. In its original meaning, the term referred to the immovable part of the transport system. With rising awareness of its foundational character, infrastructure refers to facilities such as airports, roads and communication networks, first in the military service and later adopted by the economic sciences, including cultural development (Wagner 2010). In this sense, infrastructure describes durable basic facilities of a country or region that are necessary in order for socio-economic activities to function and serve the purpose of socio-economic development (Jochimsen 1966).

There are three different forms of infrastructure, which are:

- i) material infrastructure,
- ii) immaterial or personal infrastructure and
- iii) institutional infrastructure.

Material infrastructure refers to all built goods, such as transport and communication facilities, educational institutions or the supply of energy and water. Immaterial or personal infrastructure means the number and qualities of people in the market economy. It also includes building or improving human capital, e.g. through education, research institutions, but also health and other social services. Immaterial infrastructure comprises the institutional framework, especially the legal, economic and social order (Jochimsen 1966; Klodt 2018).

Infrastructure is usually regarded as a public responsibility. A large part of the infrastructural development and its maintenance is financed by the state and its associated public-law institutions, since public infrastructure projects, that are acknowledged as a common good, are quite cost-intensive and are not lucrative for private investors. In recent decades, however, valuation shifted and many public-law institutions have been transferred to private ownership or infrastructure provision by Public-Private Partnership. Usually citizens provide resources for infrastructure through paying taxes and can in most cases use facilities, like roads and schools for free or for a small deductible (Wagner 2010).

Public infrastructure often is divided into technical and social infrastructure. Technical infrastructure includes general supply and disposal facilities, public and individual transport systems as well as information and communication technology (ICT). Social infrastructure refers to the education and health care system, sports and leisure facilities as well as cultural institutions (Wagner 2010). In recent decades, the term green infrastructure has increasingly gained in importance. This extension of the scope of “infrastructures” underpins the rising need for green spaces throughout our regions. “Green infrastructure” can be described as a coherent, planned network of green and open spaces and serves

among other things as recreational area and helps to increase biodiversity, to purify air and water and many more (European Commission 2013).

2.2. What is culture?

‘Culture’ is a broad concept that can include various meanings, such as attitudes, values, heritage appreciation, expressions of ways of life, arts and creativity. Culture could include activities we enjoy, food we eat, and particularly the language we speak and other modes of expressions. This means that culture can be as locally distinctive as a festival or costumes, or as widely shared as national identity or common emotions of soccer fanatics. Culture matters in all our lives – and for all places wherever we live (Ryfield et al. 2019).

Because culture is such a broad concept, it can sometimes be challenging to find a practical definition of culture in regional planning or policy. At the same time, this breadth offers a wide range of opportunities to incorporate culture in inclusive and sustainable regional development processes. Some of the ways in which development initiatives engage with culture include, but are not limited to: cultural heritage, rural community revitalisation, tourism and local economies, creative industries, and regional and local identities.

2.3. What is cultural infrastructure?

Cultural infrastructure can be defined as physical space, where culture is consumed, such as museums, galleries, theatres, cinemas, libraries and historical cultural sites, and places, where culture is produced, such as creative workspaces, music recording studios (Greater London Authority 2019) and an architecture or graphic designer office. Albeit, cultural infrastructure also includes premises that are used temporarily or occasionally for cultural events. These locations can be for example vacant buildings, that are used temporarily or administrative facilities, markets and local bars, that host occasionally events (Hamburg Kreativ Gesellschaft 2012). This definition describes the physical or tangible infrastructure. The intangible cultural infrastructure defines networks, databases, concepts, organisational capabilities and other private and common capacities to support cultural development. Bernier and Marcotte (2010), also refer to the information society infrastructure, which is based on the technology, like broadband connections. The outbreak of COVID-19 in spring 2020 suddenly called for many digital solutions due to the restrictions set by governments. Cultural institutions launched new online services, such as virtual tours in museums and online theatre performances. Artists organised free or donation-based music performances on social media, cinemas offered streaming services for selected movies and clubs hosted digital parties (Marques and Giolo 2020, Kantor and Kubiczek 2021). Thus, the pandemic accelerated a development of digital services in this sector, which now allows a larger audience independent from their location to participate in cultural events. Attention must also be drawn to the challenges of this development. An elaboration of these emerging aspects would go beyond the scope of this report. An essential aspect to mention, however, is that “social distancing”, the shutdown of public facilities, and the lack of any kind of live events has narrowed the opportunities of casual encounters. This has a particular impact on networks, which are based on informal conversations, meeting people and cultivating existing contacts. Personal contacts are also relevant for creativity and innovation, which occur when knowledge from different people is combined in remarkable and new ways (Heider 2011). Although the digital age has enabled us to expand networks independent of our location, we see that face-to-face contacts remain indispensable.

The accessibility of cultural events for people from outside is rather unsatisfying due to a weak offer of public transport or due to remoteness of the event site. Therefore, a sound public and private transport system to access cultural activities is seen as part of cultural infrastructure in this report.

2.4. Rural-urban cultural connections

In Europe, cultural institutions and creative scenes are often associated with urban centres. In economic geography and sociology, these assumptions have been reinforced by concepts such as the Creative Class (Florida 2002) or the Creative Milieu (Camagni 1991), which have driven the development of the creative and cultural scene in cities. In recent years, however, the focus of scientific research and political concern has increasingly shifted towards assessing the opportunities of rural areas (Copus et al. 2011) and their potential for cultural activities and creativity (Woods 2012).

Due to historical factors, resources and the availability of artists and audiences the infrastructure of cultural facilities often differ in rural and urban areas. Reasons therefore are the scope of financial resources on municipal and city level, political willingness and demand. Urban and peri-urban areas can often offer big institutional cultural sites like museums, galleries and concert halls. Rural areas, however, often enable the consumption of culture through heritage sites, local products and temporary venues, such as local festivals and seasonal theatre (Tisenkopfs 2017). When it comes to the independent cultural scene, the availability of premises such as rehearsal rooms, workshops, etc. is usually diverse and broad. However, it can be cheaper and less bureaucratic to find and rent a space in rural areas (Metropolitan Area of Styria 2019).

Just as culture matters in our lives and localities, it has an important role to play in bringing people and places together. When it comes to fostering rural-urban synergies, we can ask: How can culture *connect* the rural and urban? Cultural connections can express themselves in many forms and reflect different strategies for facilitating the flow of goods, knowledge, and people.

ROBUSTs' Cultural Connections Community of Practice has identified three lessons for strengthening rural-urban cultural connections which are presented in detail in Figure 1 (Goodwin-Hawkins et al. 2019).



Figure 1 ROBUST's lessons for cultural connections (Goodwin-Hawkins et al. 2019)

2.4.1. How can cultural infrastructure benefit the rural?

Cultural infrastructure facilities and activities can create many positive effects for an area. Depending on the area and its endogenous potential the effects may differ in importance and priority.

- Economic diversification (Duxbury and Campbell 2011; Woods 2012)

- Quality of life (Naylor 2007; Duxbury and Campbell 2011)
- Network and competence effects (Strauf 2010)
- Regional Added Value (Strauf 2010)
- Identity and sense of belonging (Drews 2017)

Moreover, cultural and creative professionals contribute to the diversification of regional entrepreneurship, which can play a crucial role in making rural areas more vibrant. Especially individual artists, such as writers, poets, painters and musicians, appreciate the tranquillity and the landscapes of rural areas, which can be seen as an inspiration. The improvement of the broadband infrastructure in rural areas, allows more and more businesses to work remotely, location independent. Municipalities need to recognise this shift in working structures and create opportunities for new businesses and working models. This has proven to be particularly significant during COVID-19, when many employees unexpectedly started working remotely. There are many examples of young people who create their own business in order to be able to live and work in their home area or another rural area outside the city after qualification or graduation. Very often these entrepreneurs are engaged in the creative sector, such as crafts, design, music, architecture or work as self-employed artists. Such young creatives are often more flexible in their working structures and often work in more than one field and location. This new approach points to the momentum that these creative professionals represent by linking their networks from urban areas with their new places of residence. The diversification of the economic base can attract new residents and other businesses and thus, contributes to improve quality of life in these municipalities (Duxbury and Campbell 2011; Woods 2012). Especially for rural and peripheral areas, culture and creativity can be a means of development and revitalization (Duxbury and Campbell 2011). Qualitative studies have shown that rural economies are enriched by a variety of innovative inputs from the cultural and creative professionals (Naylor 2007). Art, culture as well as creative goods and services add new stimuli to a place and thus contribute significantly to a higher quality of life. Cultural infrastructures are thus an important foundation stone for the future development of rural areas (Duxbury and Campbell 2011). It can also be seen as a competitive advantage over other rural areas (Bohle et al. 2013).

Cross-sectoral interactions between businesses and institutions from different fields of activity within and outside a region, can increase the know-how within a region and create network and competence effects. Competence effects appear when know-how is exchanged and *“transferred to the region by a company or an institution”* (Strauf 2010). This is enormously important for continuous development and creativity and can increase the attractiveness of a region.

Cultural facilities and events are part of urban as well as rural areas. Entrance fees and ticket sales for museums, theatres and other cultural activities can generate income for the respective regions and thus create positive regional effects. Factors such as the number of visitors and financial resources are decisive for the economic effects. The number of visitors varies by target group and if cultural offers only attract a local audience or as well tourists from outside the region (Strauf 2010). By making local cultural offers accessible to a larger audience revenues and local added value can be increased. However, it must be stressed that culture, as a “public good” inherently needs public support.

Rural areas are largely dependent on their endogenous resources. It can happen that a whole village is involved in the organisation and implementation of a cultural event (Drews 2017). These forms of

participation can be seen as an act of empowering for a community, that actively wants to contribute to its own cultural development (Bohle et al. 2013). A common involvement creates connections and shared memories to people participating as well as to the sites of activities. A sense of belonging to a community develops. As a result, cultural infrastructures are given a social and symbolic meaning, which supports regional identity building (Christiaanse and Haartsen 2020).

Further, the image of a region can be strengthened in the long term, which can lead to other regional effects, such as increase in attractiveness and population development (Drews 2017).

3. Examples of cultural infrastructure and networks in rural areas

In this section, examples from four Living Labs in the ROBUST project are presented:

Case study 1: Kultur 24 – A cultural network in the Metropolitan Area of Styria

KULTUR 24 is a network out of people from the cultural field in the eastern part of the Metropolitan Area of Styria, more specifically in the peri-urban municipalities of Graz, Austria. It was founded through a LEADER project in the period 2007-2013 and became a cultural exemplary project of the Local Action Group (LAG) 'Hügel- und Schöcklland'. The LAG 'Hügel- und Schöcklland' includes 12 municipalities and approximately 50,000 inhabitants. Within the current LEADER period (2014-2020) the project focuses on the encouragement of the endogenous potential of the network participants.

The main objective of the project is to fully integrate the potential of the local and regional artists and cultural professionals. With the help of professional group mentoring, the participants of the project should be encouraged to, firstly, exchange information and ideas among each other and secondly, present themselves as one local cultural institution within, as well as beyond the region. A further desired outcome is the implementation of multiple cooperation projects.

The network is active through recurrent meetings in alternating locations of the region. These encounters are professionally guided by the LAG team and external experts, who consult artists, for instance in the field of self-marketing. Besides professional assistance, the artists have the chance for informal exchange among each other. KULTUR 24 has therefore supported the creation of many initiatives and brought cultural professionals together for cooperation. Thus, not only creativity and innovation increased but also a broad cultural programme was established in this rural-urban area.

The activities started from a small community of artists within the region but have now evolved to a broad network beyond the borders of the LAG 'Hügel- und Schöcklland'. The network has expanded to the city of Graz and strengthens cultural exchange on a national and international level. The rural-urban linkage in the field of culture is crucial to many creative professionals. First of all, the artists' network can be expanded towards the urban environment which enhances job and cooperation opportunities and access of new knowledge. The rural environment, however, offers to many creative professionals a high living and working



Figure 2: Maria Puregger, a member of the network produces handmade products from alpaca wool. (© huegelland.at)

quality, a quiet atmosphere and small-scaled structures which can facilitate creative processes, due to informal exchange of knowledge.

The rural-urban linkages enable to broaden the cultural network in the sense of quantity, as well as diversity, since a big variety of professions can be found within the network. Therefore, artists will find an exchange of knowledge and information on an interdisciplinary level.

Further information to the project can be found on the website
<https://www.huegelland.at/gruppen/kultur24/>

Case study 2: 'Papurau Bro' – Community Newspapers as cultural infrastructure – Mid Wales

Papurau Bro are Welsh language community newspapers providing a hyper-local media outlet and calendar for community events and organisations. As cultural infrastructure, the papers support the Welsh language and cultivate a sense of belonging, while stories of people and places connect communities to their heritage.

'Bro' is a Welsh term relating to an area, and can be attributed to a parish, a town locality, or even a valley. Papurau Bro normally cover small towns and their surrounding locality. The majority are based in rural areas, signifying the importance of agriculture and rural communities as strongholds of the Welsh language.

Recently, there have been innovative efforts to develop a digital platform. Bro 360 is now a partnership between the Papurau Bro and Golwg Cyf, the most widely published Welsh language magazine in circulation.

Papurau Bro were first established in the 1960s and 1970s in an effort to strengthen Welsh culture and communities. It was felt that the local English language newspapers of the time did not reflect local Welsh culture. There are over 50 Papurau Bro published all over Wales. Each paper is unique and independent, with its own format. Most offer features such as: updates from local villages, stories of notable local characters, local history and folklore, recipes, and regular columns. Importantly, a social calendar for the area provides details of various upcoming community events, such as concerts, fundraisers and local agricultural shows.

Papurau Bro are run by dedicated teams of volunteer contributors and editors, with a management committee to oversee organisation and finances. The primary costs include design, printing and folding; some papers pay for distribution to local shops, whilst others rely on volunteers to do this. The papers are funded through a variety of business models. Papers sold in local shops generate a circulation revenue, while advertising revenue comes from local businesses. Each paper also receives a small grant from the Welsh Government, administered through Mentrau Iaith Cymru (a national body providing administrative support for local Welsh language organisations). Some papers also supplement their income with fundraising activities.

Recently, there have been efforts to innovate the role of the Papurau Bro through developing an online hyper-local news platform that compliments the newspaper. The project uses digital infrastructure developed by the Golwg Cyf. To date, the project has developed 7 pilot websites for four areas with large rural populations – Lampeter, Tregaron, Aberystwyth and North Ceredigion, and Arfon in North Wales.

More information can be found on the website <https://broaber.360.cymru/>



Figure 3: The front page of Papur Bro Clonc, serving the Lampeter area, Mid Wales (@ clonc.360)

Case study 3: Tukums market

Tukums market is a well-known regional food market located in the western part of Latvia. Up until 2020 it was governed by a kind of public-private partnership. The market itself was run by a private company, but it was located on municipal land. It is currently undergoing significant changes to make it more attractive to local residents and visitors (Tukums municipality 2021).

The market brings together producers and consumers from rural and urban areas, and regional and extra-regional territories. It is frequently described as a space to access high-quality food, while simultaneously providing a way for local farmers to access a wider range of consumers. It covers an area of approximately 1ha and provides pavilions, kiosks and tents for the vendors.

Furthermore, the market is also of great cultural significance to the region. It is built upon local-historical heritage, with the current “new” marketplace being constructed at the beginning of the 20th century in an area that had been known as a marketplace for approximately 600 years. Unsurprisingly, the historical and socio-economic importance of the market has urged the municipality to consider it as an object of the city-region's brand, and the regional tourism agency advertises the marketplace as a tourist destination.

Consequently, the market is a prime example of a multifunctional space. It is believed to be a significant component of maintaining urban-rural relations in Tukums municipality and the surrounding areas. It is likewise a place of historical and socio-economic importance, and a component of the city-region's brand, a space to explore the possibilities for rural tourism in the region, emphasising local cuisine.

At a more local level, however, the market place is one of the central places for regional cultural events and festivities, such as town festivals, traditional celebrations and other events with concerts, dance, theatre and other performances. The Latvian annual harvest festival and market “Mikeldiena” for example takes place every year at Tukums market. Cultural events usually take place all around the year and during business hours, which is an opportunity for vendors to sell more goods. It further enables daily social gatherings that bring together people from the city and the region. Consequently, it exemplifies a form of cultural infrastructure that is only partially tied to the cultural sector, while simultaneously being a significant space for cultural life in the region.



Figure 4: Tukums market (©Tukums municipality)

Case study 4: SARC - Assistance and Cultural Resources Service in province of Valencia

The SARC is the Assistance and Cultural Resources Service of the provincial Council of Valencia (Provincial Government or Diputación, NUTS 3). It is an initiative of the Department of Cultural Heritage and Cultural Resources and was launched in May of 1989. Its main purpose is to support municipalities of the province of Valencia in cultural affairs, having a more active impact on municipalities with fewer inhabitants or less

economic resources, which serve as a model for intervention and territorial redistribution of culture. This cultural service gains relevance as a new way of organising municipal and cultural life as well as accessing public services. Moreover, the service means a new form of organization, collaboration and management of the territory since different administrative structures are involved. Therefore, it can provide new ideas for other European regions. Since its foundation the project is consolidated in the municipalities becoming fundamental to the local culture. Year after year, the administration awards grants that allow to enhance the cultural heritage and provide the cultural resources to the municipalities of the province.

It is the main reference programme that the SARC offers to all municipalities, preferably aiming at a stable municipal cultural programme. It contains financial resources for folk festivals in municipalities with a population of less than 5,000. This includes all cultural activities and events that have been included in the intercommunal project programmes in recent years. Festivals, exhibitions or cultural events; audio-visual projection; classical music and chamber music programme as well as other commemorative events.

The general objectives of these grants are:

- To satisfy the cultural needs and social welfare of the municipalities of the province of Valencia.
- To expand the supply of services to respond to the demand of these municipalities.
- To advice and train in cultural matters and to promote Valencian creativity and culture, as well as its consumption.
- To territorially redistribute cultural activity supporting consumption in those municipalities with less budget and management capacity.
- To promote the creation and cultural artistic production.
- To optimize economic resources that allow multiplying cultural initiatives and to support the strengthening of cultural industries in the province of Valencia.

Figure 5 shows the distribution of subsidies to the different municipalities within the programme dedicated

to the villages. These subsidies are subject to the number of inhabitants of the municipalities which could imply a disadvantage between the rural and urban areas.

The trend indicates a greater budgetary weight in the most populated ones. Despite this, for the most vulnerable municipalities (e.g. Puebla de San Miguel with 62 inhabitants) it could mean the revitalisation of local culture through a grant of 2,044,50 € in 2019 for local celebrations and cultural programmes.

Further information to the project can be found on the website: www.sarc.es

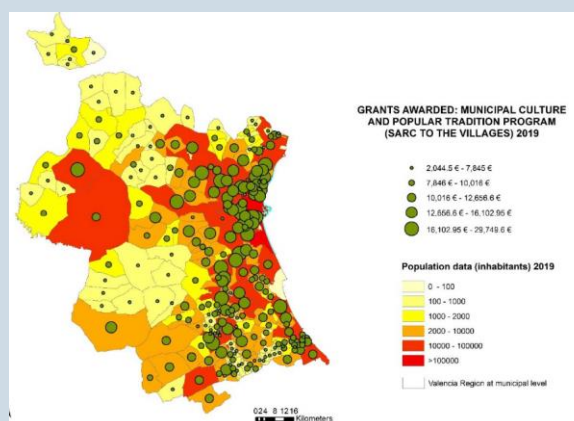


Figure 5: The data of the awarded grants in accordance to the number of inhabitants in 2019. Source: own elaboration from www.sarc.es

4. Summary

This section summarises and compares all four examples and outlines the effects for each initiative resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Table 1: Comparison of examples

Case study	Design	Territorial scope	Goals
1 Kultur 24 <i>Styria, Austria</i>	Intangible cultural infrastructure (CI), Network	Regional and national	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exchange information and ideas • Presentation of members as one local cultural institution • Implementation of cooperation projects and a broad cultural programme in the rural-urban area
2 'Papirau Bro' <i>Mid, Wales</i>	Intangible CI, Newspaper	Local and regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local information on community events and organisations • Cultivation of the Welsh language and culture
3 Tukums market <i>Tukums, Latvia</i>	Tangible CI, marketplace, venue for cultural events	Local and regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linking producers and consumers from rural and urban areas • Historical and socio-economic importance • Part of the city-region's brand • Touristic destination
4 SARC network <i>Valencia, Spain</i>	Intangible CI, Support Service	Local and regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for cultural affairs (advice and grants) • Territorially redistribution of cultural activities • Establishment of a stable municipal cultural programme • Promote Valencian creativity and culture

What we have learned from what has been presented so far is that the term cultural infrastructure is very broad and can range from a classical concert or an architectural office, to networks and support systems. This is also reflected in the presented examples. We introduced four examples from four different European regions, of which three projects are intangible cultural infrastructure and one example is defined as tangible infrastructure. However, the classification of tangible and intangible is rather fluid and not fixed. For example, the network for cultural professionals is intangible, but organises recurrent meetings using physical spaces within the region to broaden the cultural offer in the rural-urban area. We introduced the example of a newspaper cultivating welsh language, but also providing information on events in physical venues, such as theaters, museums or other premises, occasionally used for cultural happenings. Tukums market is classified as a physical space, but a farmer's market itself is usually not about culture. However, in this case it became a cultural infrastructure due to how it is used. It is a multifunctional space not only for sale and purchase, but also for regional cultural events and festivities. It therefore became a significant space for cultural life in the region and an important part of the city-regions' brand. And finally, the example of a support system for municipalities to implement a stable cultural programme,

which aims at building physical cultural infrastructure as well as converting or making temporary use of existing spaces.

Albeit, all examples have started as local initiatives, three cases aiming at benefiting the rural, and in the case of Tukums to foster rural-urban linkages, all examples succeeded in increasing their territorial scope. Kulture 24 meanwhile attracts members beyond the borders of the LAG 'Hügel- und Schöcklland'. There is a strong linkage towards the city of Graz but also to provincial and national networks. One initiative that arose out of the Kulture 24-network even pursues an international approach. Artists from the countries of the 'European Capitals of Culture' are invited to perform in the region of 'Hügel- und Schöcklland'. In the case of 'Papurau Bro' there are meanwhile over 50 unique and independent newspapers published all over Wales. Recently, there have been efforts to innovate the role of the Papurau Bro through developing a digital news platform in order to compliment the Papurau Bro and to reach a younger audience. In Tukums the "new" marketplace was constructed in the beginning of the 20th century and is currently modernised in order to make it more attractive to locals and tourists from outside the city. Over the years, it became a significant component of maintaining urban-rural relations. The Valencian region started with a local initiative to foster culture in municipalities with low economic resources and has today achieved to more evenly balance inequalities in the whole region.

The Covid-19 outbreak and the restrictions introduced during this pandemic have hit the cultural scene severely. For several months, all gatherings of a larger group were prohibited, and later events could only be carried out with a limited number of participants and strict regulations.

Covid-19 has severely affected the project of Kultur 24 and the work of LAG Hügel- und Schöcklland in this field. Physical meetings or joint events have not been possible since the beginning of the crisis. With the exception of one outdoor event by a small group of artists, all events by group members have been cancelled. Regular, digital exchange was only possible to a limited extent. This is because the structure of the group, which has always been kept loose due to the high number of participants, ranging from 100 to 150 people. In addition, the group is very heterogeneous and there is a larger proportion of older people who are very reluctant to use today's technologies. Surprisingly, however, there are also many people who refuse to use technology among younger members. Nevertheless, a smaller number of members have formed a network on a digital level and exchange information on a regular basis. Parallel to this development, another part of Kultur24, together with the LAG Hügel- und Schöcklland, has started to build international networks. The possibilities of video conferences have resulted in physical distances no longer being a hampering factor, and new types of networking have become possible. Thus, there is now an intensive exchange between Kultur 24, the LAG and artists from two German and one Greek LAG. A reactivation of the entire network is planned as soon as possible. Meanwhile, smaller gatherings with a small number of participants are organised.

Papurau Bro was affected as well by the pandemic since many of the older volunteers involved in the production of the papers have needed to shield. Due to the enormous volunteer effort that goes into producing papers that publish monthly editions, there were initially concerns that if the papers stopped due to the measures of the pandemic, they may not gather the momentum to start back again. But with a 'Cefn Gwlad' can-do attitude, electronic versions of 32 of the Papurau Bro (in PDF form) have published online via the Bro360 platform, which has proved successful and led to numbers of downloads exceeding regular circulation numbers.

In Tukums, the market remained operational during the pandemic. Nonetheless, Covid-19-related restrictions had a significant impact on sellers and buyers, and the role of the market as a space for culture also diminished. In the case of food, the Covid-19 pandemic underlined the importance of strengthening the local food supply. According to anecdotal evidence, the pandemic has encouraged local buyers to purchase more local food at the market. Culture, on the other hand, moved online and made extensive use of digital tools, e.g. concerts and plays were broadcast online.

In Valencia, the situation was very similar. The work of the SARC network was limited, since all planned events and activities were cancelled from march 2020 onwards. Some events were organised online like in the other regions. Nevertheless, in some areas it is difficult to switch to an online format, such as for example traditional food markets, that take place in a great number of small municipalities. The resumption of activities was always accompanied by limited capacity and high Covid-19 restrictions, making it almost impossible to plan any cultural event with a high number of visitors.

Certainly Covid-19 has changed the way how we consume culture. In some ways, the pandemic has boosted innovation of digital formats and has thus broadened the term of cultural infrastructure as well as the accessibility to culture. Therefore, it has also gained new target groups and territorial scope. However, some recipients were lost due to the digital offer, either due to reduced sensations and sensory impressions, which are limited in an online format, or due to the lack of digital access or knowledge. Moreover, it is important to note, that a digital event can hardly replace an actual visit to the museum, a live concert or a group of people meeting up to discuss a new concept. To conclude, it can be said, that interpersonal contacts and entertainment are a basic human need and theatres, municipal festivities, and other forms of cultural infrastructure are crucial for social relations, mental health and a high standard of living (Kantor and Kubiczek 2021).

The initiatives featured in this report experienced significant strain during the Covid-19 pandemic, and in most cases cultural work was severely hampered. However, the crisis also generated innovation by developing numerous digital forms of culture, such as the electronic newspaper or the networking of cultural initiatives via LEADER.

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