

**Dr Christine Fuchs: Cultural resilience**

Dr Christine Fuchs speaking about cultural resilience during the national cultural week (Pekan Kebudayaan Nasional / PKN) Indonesia 2020, at the online event conference cultural resilience on 23.11.2020.

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

Thank you very much for the kind invitation to this conference on the important topic of cultural resilience. I am happy to speak about our experience in this field and how we work on this topic.

I speak with the experience as head of a network of cities in Bavaria, a region in Germany. It is a territory of about 70,000 km<sup>2</sup> and 13 million people. Our network consists of 57 cities of different sizes—the biggest city is Munich with 1.3 million inhabitants. We have some medium-sized cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants and a lot of small ones with 5,000 to 50,000 inhabitants. The task of the network is to promote art and culture. With this goal the cultural administrations of the towns work together in our network. Participation costs a small membership fee, which is calculated according to the number of residents and with which the office is financed. Three people are currently working here.

In the network there are represented only cities, not individuals. This gives a certain direction. The cultural work is focused on the public life of the citizens.

The cities of the network collaborate in projects and cultural festivals and work together with local, national and international artists and institutions.

The network has existed for 45 years and was founded by a political body—the culture committee of the Bavarian City Council—originally with the aim of promoting culture in a rural region. Today the tasks are very diverse, for example promoting intercultural dialogue, developing cultural education and dealing with cultural change with regard to health, resilience and climate protection. At the moment, our main problem is to save the artists, theaters, festivals, orchestras and the whole cultural life from the destruction caused by COVID and the lockdowns for cultural institutions.

I would like to talk about three issues regarding cultural resilience.

1. Cultural resilience as the protection and recovery of cultural traditions in exchange with other cultures
2. Art and culture as a factor of resilience for people and society
3. Resilience in the cultural organization through cooperative structures

**1. Cultural resilience by recovering traditions**

Bavaria, the region of our network, has rich cultural traditions which are strongly influenced by religious festivals and which have developed in almost every place with specific characteristics, from celebrations, dialects, costumes, music, dances, architecture, food etc. The vitality of these local traditions and their high quality are the result of political decisions in the time of industrialization. During this time the industrial workers experienced by moving to the cities a loss of cultural identity. It was compensated by the development of rural traditions in the cities, which became tourist attractions and a source of income. After the Second World War in 1945, public institutions were established that maintained local cultures and cultural traditions and were financed with public funds. With the economic boom and growth and with globalization and migration, new life situations developed. The population and the cultural influences became more diverse. In Germany 50 percent of the children have a migratory background, which means that at least one parent was not born in Germany. All religions of the world and nearly all cultures are represented in the cities. Digitalization forwards this development.

Diversity is, on the one hand, experienced as an enrichment; on the other also as a loss of identity und fear of foreign cultures. There are dangers for democracy, which requires a certain basis of shared values—for example cultural tolerance and respect—but also personal freedom rights. They form the basis for a good and peaceful coexistence.

Cultural resilience in a diverse society. What does it mean? On the one hand, cultural resilience requires security, familiarity and confidence. This can arise from cultural tradition. On the other hand, it demands openness, ability to cooperate, and flexibility. This can be acquired and practiced in the encounter with new arts and foreign cultures. In several collaborative projects our city network focused on both of these aspects of cultural resilience.

In 2004 we started a literature project: the Bavarian Literature Landscapes. In a 2-month festival, literary events took place at 180 locations, each of them presented writers who lived in these towns or wrote about these locations. We repeated the project again in 2006 combined with music. As a result, a database was developed, in which all writers can be found who lived or wrote in Bavaria. Another result was that many cities included the writers in their cultural profiles and established themselves as places of literature.

Another project regarding cultural resilience was the festival LOKALKLANG. We asked: How does home sound to you? Based on this question different concerts and music events took place. No language can be used better for intercultural communication. Music is a universal language and it is able to appreciate what is foreign and different. During many events of the festival, folk and world music were combined as well as light and serious music. During the organization of the project, many prejudices became visible and could be removed.

So the project also had an educational and pacifying function. We discussed the meaning of music for democracy in a conference with scientists, politicians and musicians.

## 2. Art and culture as resilience factors

Art and culture transport the beneficial knowledge of mankind. Everyone knows the calming effect of music and rhythm for crying children, singing for them until they fall asleep. Fairy tales often treat dangerous situations and how we can survive them. Dance improves the health of our heart and our social experience. Creative writing can offer important support in therapies. During the lockdown because of COVID, when people had to stay at home, we felt the big need of cultural practice and communication. I remember the pictures of people in Italy singing together on their balconies or the digital events that took place all over the world in that time.

A year ago, the WHO (World Health Organization) published a major report on the health benefits of the arts and called on health institutions to include cultural programs. Our city network is also dealing with this topic, now in a third project. We are currently testing the establishment of art and art therapy in museums. Workshops that help people in difficult life situations take place in art museums in order to experience themselves and their life as meaningful and being able to act. Writing workshops encourage people to face difficulties and to work on these. In painting workshops people work on questions of identity and their life situation. For example, they paint self-portraits according to historical models or deal with their body by drawing it or dancing.

The subject of resilience is also of big importance for architecture and urban planning. But at the moment I don't want to deal with it any deeper. It's a fact that cultural events are experiences that are very important for people living together. They create social contacts, social interaction and enable people to get to know each other.

## 3. Structures that promote resilience

Resilience—a term used in human and social sciences—can also be applied to organizations. I would like to point out one characteristic that is fundamental to our institution. I am talking about the network character. In our network, cities come together voluntarily and cooperate in a free form, independently and to the extent that they choose. Working together in a cultural network makes it possible to implement projects that one city or one cultural actor would not be able to do on its own.

At a joint festival, every partner creates his program on his own. The inclusion in a joint program strengthens visibility on the one hand, but also helps to see one's own

cultural offerings as part of a larger and diverse whole. This often gives new impulses for the work. It also increases tolerance towards other cultural profiles and—this is the most important thing—promotes solidarity and the awareness of having many like-minded people by your side and being integrated into a network that gives you as well support in times of crises.