

Knowledge Diplomacy Seminar – Cities and Culture

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1. Introduction

The online Knowledge Diplomacy Seminar series is a collaboration between the Goethe Institut, British Council (France and Germany), University of London (London and Paris) and is supported by ICR Research. This Knowledge Diplomacy and Cities Series is composed of online discussions and forms the second phase of the University of London's exploration of the concept of 'Knowledge Diplomacy.' The exploration aims to dig deeper into the dynamics of global city cooperation today, by focusing on three European capitals: London, Paris and Berlin. The aim of the overall series is to bring together leading experts for an exchange of ideas that will contribute to the University of London's approach to its future work on Knowledge Diplomacy and international agenda. This first online seminar of 2022 specifically explored the role of Knowledge Diplomacy, the roles of cities in addressing major global issues, and the crucial importance of the cultural and educational intersection.

2. List of speakers and format of the event

Chaired by **Professor Jo Fox** (Pro Vice-Chancellor and Dean of the School of Advanced Study at the University of London), the panel included presentations and interventions from **Anne Duncan** (President and Director of the British Council France), **Patrick Föhl** (Founder and Director of the Network for Cultural Consulting), and **John Newbiggin**, OBE (Ambassador for the Creative Industries at the Mayor of London Office and Visiting Fellow at the Goldsmiths Institute for Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship).

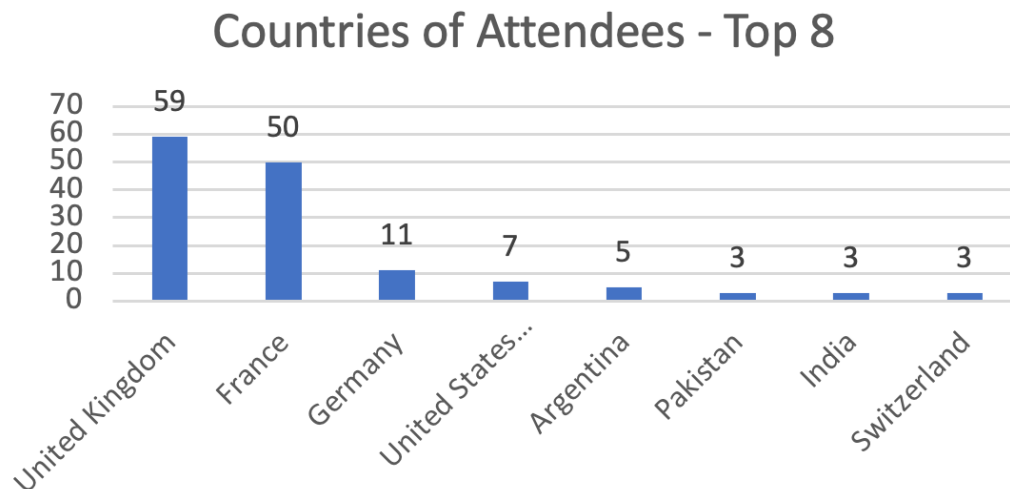
The webinar was one and a half hours long. Each presenter was given 10 to 15 minutes to present, followed by questions from the Chair regarding the presentations from the panellists, then the session concluded by opening the floor for Q&A from the audience.

3. Registration and attendance

The event received 195 registrations via Eventbrite ticketing service. Overall, the registrants were from Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Bangladesh, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Comoros, Croatia, Denmark, Germany, Egypt, France, Greece, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Lebanon, Mexico, Morocco, Nigeria, Netherlands, Pakistan, Portugal, Russia, Singapore, Somalia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, UAE, the United Kingdom, Ukraine, United States of America, and Zambia. The top 8 countries of

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registrations were: the United Kingdom (59), France (50), Germany (11), United States of America (7), Argentina (5), Pakistan (3), India (3), and Switzerland (3).



The online session was hosted on Zoom and 83 unique viewers² attended the webinar. The maximum concurrent views of attendees were 63 attendees³.

4. Panellists' presentations

The online seminar began with a presentation from **Anne Duncan**. The presentation emphasised that culture is inherently based on the social and behavioural aspects linked to customs, beliefs, and heritage, that are gained through knowledge and learning among individuals and groups. National cultural institutions facilitate this exchange and strengthen the link between states, communities, and people. The presentation reflected on the role of national cultural institutions in cities in the following statement:

“The presence and activity of cultural institutions helps to really develop the relationships and networks between peoples and institutions, building a city’s human capital and its knowledge capital. Ultimately, cultural institutions help to create new alliances that build their economies.”

The intervention highlighted the increasing digitalisation and the changing nature of work that many cultural institutions are experiencing. While the recent rapid digitalisation of artistic and cultural works may not have been dispersed around the world, this transition has created new actors and shifts in power in the creative and cultural industries sector that contribute to shaping new cultural and social connections, and how knowledge is created and disseminated.

Another important point raised during the presentation was that while national cultural institutions, like the British Council or Goethe Institute, traditionally focused primarily on representing their respective national cultures in cities around the world, they have

² Users that used their computers to attend the webinar. The figure does not count the panellists or attendees that attended by phone.

³ Maximum number of attendees at a given moment during the online seminar. The figure excludes the panellists.

increasingly become cultural stakeholders connecting diverse cultural actors locally where they are based with those cultural actors in the national cultures with which they are affiliated. In this aspect, the Knowledge Diplomacy framework can contribute to better understanding the roles of higher education institutions and research in facilitating the development of knowledge among people and the cultural exchange not only between states but also between national and local cultures in the context of rapid digitalisation of work.

The next speaker, **Patrick Föhl**, delivered a presentation on cultural planning. The presentation emphasised that cultural planning as a concept is becoming increasingly popular and important across the globe. This process has accelerated with the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in numerous cities, including Berlin, adopting cultural planning policies. Cultural planning is primarily concerned with transformation, to make sure that the cultural infrastructure facilitates the prospering of culture. The presentation summarised the key goal of any cultural policy in the following statement:

“I would say one of the biggest visions, when we talk about cultural planning, is that at the end to have some kind of base for urban development, where culture plays the most important role.”

While several examples of cities with cultural planning programmes were provided, culture and cultural life of a city remains overlooked in these plans. Noting that cultural policy is primarily based on participation with an aim to share and create knowledge, the inclusion of cultural institutions and stakeholders with the artistic and cultural sectors can offer better insights into facilitating cultural planning in a city than the inclusion of traditional actors, such as administration members and ambassadors. In addition, these actors can facilitate better interconnectedness of a city, on a national and international levels. Knowledge Diplomacy by engaging with higher education and research institutions can help us better understand the cultural aspects of a city and facilitate cultural collaboration of a variety of actors across different regions and countries.

The final speaker, **John Newbigin**, provided an insightful perspective from London. The panellist highlighted that in London, culture is essential for the ways in which the city operates. It is also one of the key characteristics that attracts people from around the world. Overall, the creative industry in London makes up approximately 15 per cent of employment in the city and generates around 60 billion euros⁴ each year. Hence, due to this significant contribution of the creative industry, the panellist expressed that:

“In the same way that we have long-term transport planning and housing planning, we need to have long-term culture planning.”

Basing the observation from the panellist’s own experience, the presentation emphasised that London has a long-term cultural strategy that is deliberately designed to complement the long-term plans for transport, infrastructure and physical planning. This strategy has four key themes: 1) to facilitate accessibility of culture for everyone; 2) to ensure that physical facilities would be protected, 3) to guarantee that future skills and jobs would be linked to culture; and 4) to strengthen the image of London as a ‘world city.’ Furthermore, cultural planning and activities can transform societies in cities, which experience even the most challenging issues, such as crime and security. Hence, cultural policies can play a more transformative and long-term positive change than security policies.

The presentation emphasised the contribution of local level decision-making in shaping long-term strategies on a city level, because these stakeholders frequently generate more

⁴ Exchange rate on 4 February 2022.

progressive social policies and are more positive in their cultural, creative and environmental policies than national governments. The presentation noted the example of the Indonesian Creative City Network, which identifies five key players in shaping the cultural and creative strategy, namely: government, community, academia, business and the media.

Regarding Knowledge Diplomacy, the panellist highlighted the disparity of the perception between cities with and without higher education institutions. The panellist provided the example of the 2016 referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union, where the following trends could be observed: cities with universities and cities without universities had polar opposite voting trends, with the former voting strongly in favour of UK's membership in the European Union and the latter voting against it. While noting the power of higher education institutions in this example, the presentation emphasised that academic institutions need better accessibility and communication of their activities. It was suggested that this trend can be addressed with better collaboration with the media sector.

5. Discussion between the Chair and the panellists

The Chair reflected on the three presentations and offered points of connection and tension. The significance of the pandemic was emphasised and the potential of culture in facilitating a post-pandemic recovery. An intervention from **John Newbigin** emphasised on the re-evaluation of the importance of commerce in major cities and pairing this with cultural policy. Here, universities and higher education institutions can encourage this line of thinking and inter-connectedness.

The Chair posed a question about the issues of accessibility to national cultural institutions through traditional face-to-face activities and the new digital mode of connecting with the audiences. **Anne Duncan** emphasised beyond digital offerings now available widely, it may be more interesting to focus on questions of accessibility for wider audiences, and to facilitate better connectivity not only in major cities, but also with those in areas where cultural institutions were traditionally less present. **Patrick Föhl** added to this point and highlighted that there are a lot of discussions on arts and culture, but not enough changes are taking place. However, this is changing after the pandemic due to the major loss of audiences across many cultural organisations. This digitalisation facilitates a learning curve not only in facilitating dissemination of projects and products through digital tools but also in creating projects and products for the digital transmission.

The Chair emphasised the multiplicity of actors and their own agendas, which poses opportunities and setbacks in facilitating cultural lives in cities. The Chair asked: how can this collaboration be managed? **Anne Duncan** observed a new era of experimentation and innovation in cities among diverse cultural actors. Given different agendas and asymmetries, success can depend on the right conveners, good facilitators and intermediaries who have the ability to bring together diverse actors and literally "create and hold the space" in a way that enables collaboration, co-creation and innovation. This aspect needs further exploration to identify lessons learned. **Patrick Föhl** agreed and added that sometimes there is value in not having goals in such spaces, but leaving the outcomes open, since establishing goals for such spaces can be very limiting. He gave an example where being open introduced more space for better participation and better points for consideration in addressing pressing issues. **John Newbigin** supported this idea because having an open goal and being receptive and considerate of change can offer more effective cultural policies and planning.

6. Summary of questions and comments from the audience

During the final part of the webinar, the floor was opened to questions and feedback from the audience. While most interventions were questions to the panellists, some audience members

also provided further examples of how art, fashion, and cuisine have the potential to facilitate the fusion of cultures in cities and beyond. Others noted other examples of cities in Indonesia, in promoting cultural policy, specifically respect for diversity through the creative industry. It is potentially insightful to explore the roles of international higher education institutions, research centres and innovation bodies in facilitating this fusion and strengthening the relationship between countries using the Knowledge Diplomacy framework.

One of the first questions posed by the audience to all presenters urged the panellists to explore whether 'global cities' such as London, Paris, and/or Berlin can become more powerful than the state and whether city diplomacy can replace bilateral state diplomacy. While the panellists agreed that some policy aspects, like culture, have much stronger ambassadors on a city level than on a national level, the possibility of city diplomacy replacing state level diplomacy is not expected in the future. **Anne Duncan** observed a trend in France. Whilst the French state has long played a central role as an actor in cultural diplomacy, cities and regions beyond Paris are increasingly developing dynamic, diverse cultural ecosystems driven by a multiplicity of actors across the cultural sector. These cities are increasingly and intentionally engaging internationally without passing through the cultural prism of Paris.

Continuing on this point, another question to the panellists asked whether cities are at risk of creating a 'global' cultural homogeneity that may become disconnected with the countries the cities are in. The panellists replied that the risk is highly likely, because there is a lot of potential in international cooperation. However, this also poses the risk of possible uniformity among cities. The panellists highlighted the need for a strategy of 'glocalization,' which will ensure the occurrence of processes on a global level alongside meeting specific demands of and benefitting from local level contexts.

Another question to all of the panellists urged to consider whether there are specific links between culture, knowledge diplomacy and the Sustainable Development Goals. The response from the panellists overwhelmingly supported the argument that arts and culture can contribute to better understanding of the local needs of sustainable development, thus shaping the global sustainable development agenda.

Finally, the panellists agreed that Knowledge Diplomacy is about changing perceptions and minds of people and that it can be beneficial in understanding the link between cities and culture. Anne Duncan emphasised that:

"I think that this is what real Knowledge Diplomacy is. It is not the vision of diplomacy as we are trying to unduly influence, but that we are trying to mutually influence and create a new space together that does not exist if we do not come at it with intention."

7. Summary, key action points/recommendations

There is a clear opportunity for higher education, academic institutions and research centres to help shape diplomatic processes. In these processes, cities are key sites for cultural policy creation and the facilitation of better opportunities for open and fruitful collaboration than is often possible with national level collaboration. The inclusion of a diverse range of actors is important and learning from the new ways of engagement and participation of audiences in cultural projects offers key points for consideration of how the framework of Knowledge Diplomacy can be applied in the future. The challenges introduced by COVID-19 are expected to continue to impact the cultural evolution of cities. Academics and policymakers need to understand how to revive and reshape the cultural lives and identities of cities in light of the challenging demands of the commerce revival. There are opportunities for cultural planning and involvement of different stakeholders that encourage innovation and the integration of these two spaces.