

Please introduce yourself and tell me a bit about your work.

My name is Kristin Danielsen and I am the Chief Executive of Arts and Culture Norway and I am also currently the chair of IFACCA. Arts and Culture Norway was established in 1965, and it is the National Agency for Culture and Arts in Norway.

And we work with a vision of having a society rich in culture and arts with three aims, which is to have a diverse, innovative and sustainable cultural sector.

We want to increase engagement with culture, and we are also seeking to build a society where culture and arts is highly appreciated – which we think is very important in this day and age, where the world is becoming more complex and we need to go out and build a case for the arts in society.

The theme this year is “Charting the future of arts and culture” – what is an issue you found really important as discussed in the Summit?

So when we parted at the last Summit in Stockholm, we agreed on seeing culture not as a commodity but culture as part of our society, and that we are focusing much on the societal side of culture and arts. And also working with the UNESCO Declaration of seeing culture and arts as a public good.

So when we are together here now with the theme of chartering the future, it is about trying to look into the future of how culture and arts is going to be safeguarded, still publicly funded, still acknowledged, as a sector and as a social good.

So chartering the future is looking at the different challenges that we see in the world today. In Stockholm, we talked about the polycrisis, that we are seeing geopolitical changes, we are seeing financial austerity in the arts, we are seeing climate emergency increasing. And we are also seeing different challenges that we all need to come together to look at.

And, how do we handle that? How do we, as cultural ministries and arts agencies, how do we navigate in times of exponential change? So that is why we come together. Because, as national members, there is only one of us in each country. So we need to meet, to share our knowledge and experience and also to look forward if we can come up with good solutions together.

In the open plenary, I was moderating a conversation with where do you see culture in arts in times of exponential shifts. And we looked at it from a political level, but also from an expert level on, especially cultural rights. There is three things that I am really concerned with.

And the first thing is to fight against this idea that diversity, inclusion and equity is no longer needed or as someone said, they are ‘dirty words’. They are given, they are natural. Diversity is given, and culture and arts really thrives on diversity. So without that, it is going to be very difficult to have a vibrant and interesting culture and arts scene. So I think we need to sort of stand up against the idea that we no longer need diversity. We are diversity. And how do we continue to make use of that and to make that visible in the culture and arts scene.

The second is about cultural rights. Alexandra Xanthaki, the special rapporteur for UN (in the field of cultural rights), was on the panel and she said that we need to make sure that cultural rights

matter. There are international frameworks and that they are there for us to implement, and they are multilayered, but they are there for us as national agencies to really look to and to confer. And I think that is really important.

And then it is the third of really cherishing and continuing to be working internationally. As the world becomes insecure, unstable, where we see financial insecurities, people tend to look inwards. And we have also seen governments wanting to build different kinds of walls, and that is the worst thing that can happen to culture and arts. So still believing and still working for international collaborations. That is the key.

I like to quote Elif Shafak saying, no nation is exceptional, we are all in this together. And I think, the idea of closing in and looking in and thinking that the way we do it is probably the best way of doing it, it just does not work. Because co-existence is what we have, it is natural and it is the only option.

I would like to add one thing, coming from Norway specifically, I would like to highlight the importance of insisting on diverse narratives.

And I come from a nation, Norway, where we have been suppressing the Indigenous people, the Sami people. And we're in the middle of a truth and reconciliation process. So for my work as a national agency, including Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous narratives is very important. And I think the international community should always insist on diverse narratives.

How would you describe the current state of multilateral work within the cultural sector, and what are some opportunities to strengthen it?

I think culture and arts never cared for national borders to begin with. And you know, artists and cultural workers have always come together and learned from each other. So that is natural.

Mobility is increasingly challenging. Visas and all these things that we need in order to collaborate internationally, it is challenging. But at the same time, there are many opportunities because we are connected.

Globalisation and digitalisation has made us a sort of global village, which is not fair and just as yet, but it is still a connectedness that we need to take care of. And I can see also at this World Summit, at IFACCA, having 120 nations coming together for three days, it is extremely powerful. The conversations that we have, what we exchange, it makes me optimistic about holding the hopes up for continued international work and coming together.

I do believe that the connectedness that we have seen through digitalisation, it is impossible to go back. There might be some imperial nostalgia going on. But I think that is something that will pass because as we have been connected and discovered, this world of connectedness is just going to continue.

There are many things to say about technology and digitalisation. It certainly has the backflip because some jobs have been lost and some people have been left behind. And it is not as if

internet access or digital tools is available to everyone, but it has provided connectivity, which I think makes it impossible for us to close down and to go insular and build all these walls. I think we will choose to be connected. It comes natural to us.

With all the sudden shifts that we see, it is more important than ever to come together, to digest the situation and to learn what is going on in the different countries.

It is really interesting because between the IFACCA members, we have so many different ways of doing our work and how we play our roles, but we learn so much from each other. There is not one way of doing it, so just learning from each other is really a bonus in itself.

The IFACCA World Summit is a really good platform for members to come together, to exchange ideas and knowledge. But it is also a very good platform for us to inform and give advice to our sectors and to ministries, but also to the upcoming Mondiacult in Barcelona, in late September this year. So we keep that in mind as we meet.