

# A CAPABILITIES APPROACH TO CULTURAL POLICY

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**Traction**  
Opera co-creation  
for a social  
transformation

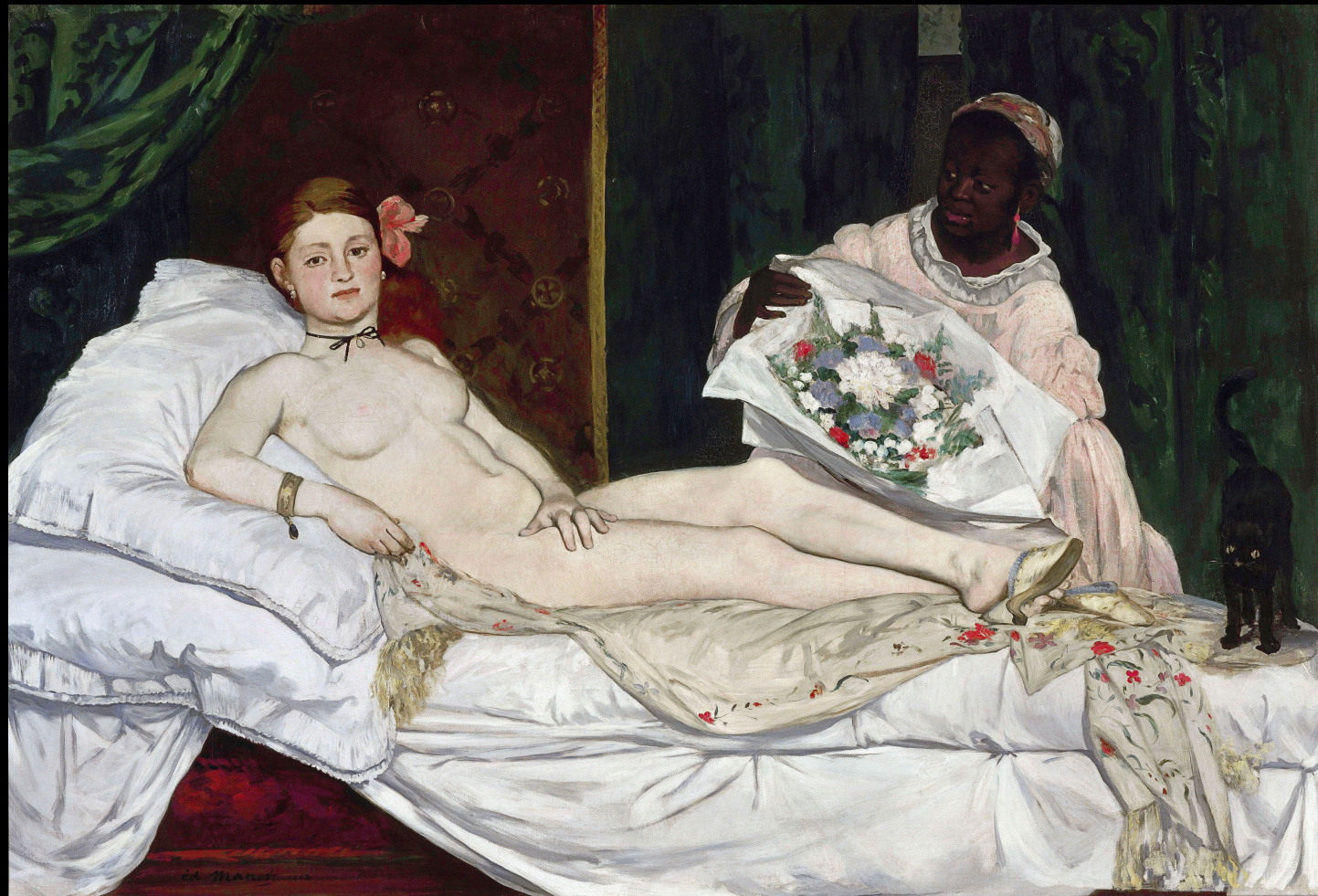
1. The human right of cultural participation
2. The policy consequences – and their limitations
3. How the Traction project is researching alternatives
4. Traction, the 2020 Rome Charter and cultural capabilities

# Culture is a human right

Everyone has the right freely to **participate in the cultural life of the community**, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

Article 27. (1) Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

# Why make cultural participation a human right?



# Human rights into policy

The steps to be taken by the States Parties to the present Covenant to achieve the full realization of this right shall include those necessary for **the conservation, the development and the diffusion** of science and culture.

Article 15. (2) International Covenant on Economic,  
Social and Cultural Rights (1966, 1976)

# From the person to the state

The Declaration is concerned with a person's right to participate in the cultural life of the community.

The Covenant is concerned with state actions in provision of culture.

# Policy implications of the Covenant

The Covenant can be interpreted to support the democratisation of culture, or a laissez-faire cultural policy.

Opera Bastille, Paris) Photo François Matarasso

# Democratisation of culture

A photograph of an orchestra performing in a grand, wood-paneled concert hall. The conductor is visible on the right, and the musicians are seated in the foreground, playing their instruments. A large organ is visible in the background.

El Sistema, Venezuela and elsewhere  
(Photo Creative Commons)



A large-scale theatrical production set in a stadium at night. The scene is dominated by several tall, brick industrial chimneys and large, dark metal wheels. A massive crowd of people, dressed in period-appropriate clothing, is gathered on the stage and in the foreground. The stadium seating is filled with spectators, and the lighting is dramatic, with blue and red hues. A sign in the upper left corner reads "#SAVE THE SURPRISE".

What's the problem?

# What's the result?



Museum Insel (Berlin) Photo François Matarasso

# What's the solution?



The Sharing Arts Society (Utrecht, NL)



traction

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# TRACTION

Opera co-creation for a social transformation

# Three community opera trials

## EL GRAN TEATRE DEL LICEU

Spain

Urban neighbourhood

Opera house

People with disabilities, students, people with a migrant experience, former sex workers, residents of Raval

Opera house

Co-creation space

Co-creation stage

## IRISH NATIONAL OPERA

Ireland

Country

Opera producer

Irish speakers living in remote areas, teenagers in rural communities, adults in Tallaght and South Dublin

VR and festivals

Co-creation space

Virtual reality

## SOCIEDADE ARTÍSTICA MUSICAL DOS POUSOS

Portugal

Provincial city

Music school

Young prisoners, family members, former inmates, guards, residents of Leiria, justice ministry officials

Prison and concert hall

Co-creation space

Co-creation stage



# Focus on Portugal

# SAMP Project

The image shows a tablet displaying a digital score for the opera "TRACTION". The score is for the "1º MOMENTO" and includes parts for Coro 1 (Tenors & Basses), Coro 2 (Tenors & Basses), Clarinete Baixo, Trompete (C), Percussão, and Piano. The tempo is marked "♩ = 88". The score includes musical notation for each instrument and vocal lines with lyrics in Portuguese. The lyrics are: "O-Item", "p quase misterioso", "O-Item a mãe", and "Nino da Rocha". The score is displayed on a tablet with a black case, resting on a wooden surface. The battery level is 87%.

# SAMP Project

Co-creation Stage allows the project to include people inside and outside the prison in the co-creation of a new opera



'Nós. Vocês. Toda a gente.'



A 40 minute performance linking a concert hall in Lisbon with the Leiria youth prison on 2 and 3 June 2021

# How is this different?



SAMP aims for cultural democracy – not cultural democratisation.

How is this about human rights?



# How is this person-centric?

Traction shifts the focus from access to cultural goods and services to people's capabilities for participation in cultural life

# Traction and the 2020 Rome Charter



## **THE 2020 ROME CHARTER**

THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE FULLY AND FREELY IN CULTURAL LIFE  
IS VITAL TO OUR CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

# Cultural capabilities

to cherish and preserve what  
has been made so that it can  
be discovered again

to appreciate, distinguish  
and make your own taste



to find out about yourself  
and learn about others

to express yourself through  
what you've learned

to show what you've done  
and participate in cultural life

# Just a beginning



Traction's thinking about opera co-creation, the right to participate in the cultural life of the community, and cultural capabilities as a foundation of human rights is work in progress.



Thanks for your attention

<https://www.traction-project.eu>