



WWW.CULTURALINNOVATORS.ORG

Cultural Experimentation for Social Transformation

WHO WE ARE

Cultural Innovators Network (CIN) is a hybrid community of cultural workers from countries across the Mediterranean. CIN members are artists, cultural managers, civil society professionals, media practitioners, activists who use cultural co-production to engage with and provoke social transformation in their communities and the Mediterranean region as a whole.

Through participatory practices and a horizontal organisational approach, CIN bridges people and ideas, provides an open space for collaboration, and promotes mechanisms of democratic, inclusive discourse, exchange of working experiences, embracement of cutting-edge perspectives, and mutual learning and understanding.

PARTICIPATION

CIN is built upon a self-organised and open space model. Participation in the ideation, decision making, and implementation phases is crucial to create a collective intelligence and enhance a mutual learning process. Through an elected Steering Committee and flexible Working Groups, CIN ensures its self-running celebrating and engaging ideas, need, and concerns of each of its members.

EXPERIMENTATION

CIN members come from very different cultural, religious, professional environments, this ensuring the ability of the Network to approach changes from different points of view and find always multiple, experimental solutions. Living daily with uncertainty, instability, insecurity, CIN members challenge the idea of univocal solutions to societal issues, trying instead to deal with a complex environment experimenting and adopting multiple concrete solutions. The possibility to do that in an open, democratic, and participatory environment, together with other peers who are moved by similar motivations is exactly what CIN offers to its members.

TRANSFORMATION

The collaboration between cutting-edge cultural workers challenges the normalised ways of thinking and doing. In this sense CIN is collective and disruptive, with its members using cultural co-production to engage with and provoke social transformation in their communities and the region as a whole.

CIN IN NUMBERS

123 members

28 alumni

30 countries

42 projects

VISION STATEMENT

For an open and collaborative Mediterranean region celebrating diversity, culture, and participation.

MISSION STATEMENT

CIN members are artists, cultural managers, civil society professionals, media practitioners, activists who use cultural co-production to engage with and provoke social transformation in their communities and the Mediterranean region as a whole.

Through participatory practices and a horizontal organisational approach, CIN bridges people and ideas, provides an open space for collaboration, and promotes mechanisms of democratic, inclusive discourse, exchange of working experiences, embracement of cutting-edge perspectives, and mutual learning and understanding.

OUR STORY

2011 – the spark

In 2011, wave of protests swept across the countries surrounding the Mediterranean. From Cairo to Madrid, young people took to the streets demanding freedom, social justice, and equality. The Cultural Innovators Networks (CIN) has seized that momentum to bring together cultural workers from countries across the Mediterranean, young people active in civil society, so that they could exchange knowledge and experiences, and together build new cross-cultural and cross-sectoral ideas to impact their society and the region.

On the crossroads between culture, art, and politics, CIN asked questions about the future of our societies. How can we reorganize our social order? How can we express our demands artistically? How can we generate more participation?

2012 – the start, Learning Journeys and 1st Forum

CIN was born as a communal project between more than twenty Goethe-Institutes in the Mediterranean area, in the context of the German-Arab Transformation Partnership¹, that

¹ The Foreign Office agreed on a Transformation Partnership with Egypt and Tunisia in 2011. The aims of the Transformation Partnership were both support in the building up of democratic institutions and the promotion of constitutional legality and human rights and also the promotion of civil society and an intensification of cultural dialogue. The Foreign Office is therefore identified as an influential actant which defines both the superordinate intended effects and the political and geographical context and also the financial resources, but does not make an active appearance in the practical implementation. On the basis of its core competencies in the fields of education and culture, the Goethe-Institut has been commissioned with special programmes in the context of the Transformation Partnerships to provide qualification and networking for actors in culture and education. The Cultural Innovators Network is mentioned on the Foreign Office website as an example of a project to “establish a regional network of young activists in the countries bordering the Mediterranean”. Evaluation of the Cultural Innovators Network in the context of the Transformation Partnership – Educult, 2015

involved a group of twenty young, socially involved people from Europe and MENA region, to start the project. During three "Learning Journeys" to Egypt, Italy, and Germany in June and July 2012, they visited a variety of successful citizen-led initiatives, at the same time strengthening their network. Their impressions and experiences were the basis for the 1st CIN Forum which took place in Istanbul in December 2012. The forum included 100 participants who discussed the future of their societies and the future of the Mediterranean region. The 1st Forum was also the first ideas incubator of CIN, through which participants built more than 20 cross-cultural and cross-sectoral projects in less than a week. The projects ideas were put into action at a local level in 2013, multiplying the vision of CIN members through their communities. Some of the projects turned into organisations, some of them where transformed into other ideas and projects, and some others are still active today.

2013 – the structure of CIN, 2nd Forum

The 2nd Forum was held in Hammamet, Tunisia, in November 2103 and it put a focus on the future of the Network. During this forum, questions concerning the network's accessibility for new members, inner structural organization, the distribution of tasks as well as the legal framework were being discussed. CIN was starting to grow up.

2014 – new members, 3rd Forum

In 2014 CIN opened its membership for the first time, with 33 new members being invited to the 3rd Forum, that took place in Thessaloniki, Greece. The 3rd Forum was the opportunity to welcome new cultural workers, artists, activists, media practitioners, eager to react to the current social and economic situation, somehow already far from the first sparks that initiated CIN. The 3rd Forum not only created a big, strong, and enthusiast group of 100 people, but also included the second round of CIN ideas incubation. At the end of 5 intensive days, 16 projects were pitched and 10 of them were elected by CIN members themselves to receive seed funding.

2014 – CIN becomes a legal entity and 1st edition of CIDs

In 2014 CIN started the process to become an independent legal entity, a big step for the Network with many exciting opportunities but also many challenges. CIN relationship with the Goethe-Institut remained very strong, receiving support, funding, and step-by-step accompanying the newly formed organisation towards its adult life. In the same year, the first edition of the Cultural Innovation Days was organised, a series of simultaneous events around different countries where CIN members meet local initiatives, share CIN spirit and best practices, and showcase cultural innovation at a local level. In 2014 CIDs were organised in Algiers, Baghdad, Beirut, Berlin and Thessaloniki, becoming one of the new favourite CIN activities for both CIN members and the public.

2015 – CINlab Sofia, Network Management Meeting with members, 2nd edition of CIDs

In 2015, with a decrease of funding and organisational restructuring, CIN decided to focus on smaller and specialised meetings, for its members to keep building new projects or working on the sustainability of old ones. During 2015 CINlab, that took place in Sofia, Bulgaria, 8 new projects received seed funding and 4 old projects received a sustainability grant. In the same year CIN focused on its structure, its challenges, and future, inviting members interested in shaping the future of the project to a three-days-retreat in Izmir, Turkey, in November 2015.

During the meeting, many topics were discussed and a new internal organisational structure was developed. At the same time, other CINers in Alexandria, Amman, Athens, Berlin, Bochum and Ljubljana were organising the 2nd edition of the Cultural Innovation Days.

2016 – New members, CINlab Belgrade, 3rd edition of CIDs

It was time for fresh energy, and CIN opened for the second time its membership in 2016. 16 new members were invited to the CINlab in Belgrade, in May 2016, which was a specialised ideas incubator tackling the refugee issues in the Mediterranean area. 6 new projects received seed funding and were implemented from Cyprus to Palestine, from Greece to Jordan. In November 2016, the beloved Cultural Innovation Days came back with their 3rd edition. This time, CIDs were implemented in Alexandria, Matera, Veliko Tarnovo, Pancevo, and Tirana.

2017 – Culture Open Source Forum 2017

2017 has been an opportunity for CIN to reflect on its work and impact in the past 5 years, share best practices and lessons learned with similar organisations, and together set the basis of participatory approaches in the construction and strengthen of the cultural sector in the Mediterranean area. This goal are the basis of Culture Open Source project, a 10-months project that focuses on participatory approaches and non-hierarchical structures in the production and management of cultural initiatives and organisations. The project has seen three Local Preparatory Meetings carried out by local CIN members to map participatory initiatives north and south of the Mediterranean, a research and CIN impact report carried out by CIN Research Working Group, and will culminate with the [Culture Open Source Forum 2017 in Berlin](#).

WHAT WE DO

PEER EXCHANGE

In 2012 group of twenty young, socially involved people were part of three Learning Journeys to Egypt, Italy and Germany, visiting a variety of successful citizen-led initiatives, mapping the innovative reactions and developments across the regions, and exchange good practices between the participants and their organizations. That was the start of CIN and from that moment, peer exchange has been the main focus of the Network with both online and physical opportunities to learn from each other and create projects together.

IDEAS INCUBATOR

One of CIN tools for cross-cultural and interdisciplinary collaboration is the ideas incubator, face-to-face or online opportunities for CIN members to create collaborative projects and get help in the seed funding and development of their project. Today, more than 40 projects in around 30 countries have been created.

CULTURAL INNOVATION DAYS

CIDs are CIN way to celebrate innovation locally. A series of events around different countries where CIN members meet local initiatives, share CIN spirit and best practices, and showcase cultural innovation at a local level.

Under a common identity, the general context is being adapted to local language and framework achieving to involve and inform local audience, and to attract initiatives, projects and stakeholders. The aim is to inform and motivate the wider public on the importance of cultural innovation and to inspire others to be involved in actions that embodies intercultural dialogue and exchange, thus to cultivate a culture of open experimentation. The format for each activity varies from country to country, providing a flexible platform where conferences, workshops, artistic performances, debates, exhibitions, screenings and digital acts are implemented.

Past year's events:

2014: Algiers, Baghdad, Beirut, Berlin and Thessaloniki

2015: Alexandria, Amman, Athens, Berlin, Bochum and Ljubljana

2016: Alexandria, Matera, Pancevo, Tirana, and Veliko Tarnovo

HOW WE WORK

CIN management model

MEMBERS: main motor of CIN, source of ideas, projects, seismograph of their societies, ambassadors of CIN around the Mediterranean.

(Collective Intelligence, Participation, Ideas Factory)

WORKING GROUPS: team of members working on specific elements of CIN management.

Current long-term working groups are Communications, Research, Fundraising, Monitoring, and Event. Within each WG or independently, CIN can open calls for interest in joining temporary WGs that are usually short-term and project/event related.

(Peer Learning, Team Work, Inter-Disciplinarity)

STEERING COMMITTEE: The Steering Committee (the Committee) is a team of seven CIN members, elected by the CIN members every year. Once elected, they have the mandate to represent the members and steer the organisation for a mandate of two years. Committee members monitor, coordinate, offer advice, and supervise the organisation's processes in order to ensure the smooth running of activities and address members' needs and proposals. The Committee is divided into 5 departments, each of them coordinating the WGs: Communications, Fundraising, Programmes, Community Management, General Management.

(Representative Democracy, Horizontal Management, Transparency)

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Become a member

CIN usually opens its membership every two years. Last time CIN welcomed new members was in 2016. If you want to become a member, stay tuned on our website and social media or subscribe to the newsletter to make sure you will be the first receiving the call for membership when we will publish it. For now, there are many other ways you can get involved.

Become our partner

CIN is always happy to join forces with other initiatives to build new projects and collaborate. If you want to partner up, send us a line at communications@culturalinnovators.org.

Get involved with one of our CINcubated projects

More than 40 projects have been developed through CIN ideas incubators. Many of the teams are active and looking for new partners and opportunities. Have a look at the projects' full list on our website and contact the teams directly.

Support CIN

CIN lives mainly out of dreams, but we also need funds to keep bridging people and ideas. If you feel generous and we have just become one of your favourite organisations, you can support us with donations or some volunteer effort. Get in touch with us to know more.

BRANDING



Please, find here the [branding guidelines](#), and here all [our logos](#).

MUST WORDING

Cultural Innovators Network is supported by the Goethe-Institut as part of the German-Arab Transformation Partnership and is financed by the German Federal Foreign Office.