

# On digital ethics for cultural organisations

advice on developing a website and making it accessible, why this type of project should not be obsessed with purity, how this document came to be and how to respond to it.)

The European Network of Cultural Centres (ENCC) was founded in 1994 to promote dialogue and cooperation between social-oriented cultural centres throughout Europe. It is both a network of direct members and a "network of networks". In 2022, its coordination office launched a project to transform its communication, website and office tools. The process is designed as an open-ended experiment; this document is part of it.

D. Haraway, *Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective*, *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (Autumn, 1988), pp. 575-599. It is an answer to *The Science Question in Feminism*, 1986 by Sandra Harding.

Freibourg declaration on cultural rights: [www.unifr.ch/ethique/en/assets/public/Files/declaration-eng4.pdf](http://www.unifr.ch/ethique/en/assets/public/Files/declaration-eng4.pdf)

"Promiscuity" is used here to mean that our relationship to digital technologies is both intimate and indiscriminate in terms of choice of partners.

## a. Digital?

When you enter the offices of a cultural centre, you mostly find people sitting in front of computers and interacting with them. It is indeed hard to imagine a cultural organisation functioning without digital tools. Yet, thirty years after computers and office software emerged in our lives, the overwhelmingly digital aspect of cultural work is still rarely highlighted. It is seen as a technicality, a matter of trivial convenience, rather than a cultural material, in spite of the fact that we all recognize its massive impact on our lives.

## c. Culture?

Culture is "what is common to a group of individuals" and "what bonds them together", in other words every single thing that is learned, passed on, produced or invented. Today, the situated knowledges of digital are intimately intertwined with learning, heritage, production and invention.

Culture as a "densely linked, more or less formalised set of ways of thinking, feeling and acting, which, being acquired and shared by a plurality of people, help constitute these people, both objectively and symbolically, as a particular and distinct community" is recognised as a right by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the Freiburg declaration on cultural rights (2007)<sup>6</sup>. Because of the growing importance of digital in the exercise of these rights, and the confusion surrounding the concept of culture, often reduced to a "sector" producing goods and services, it is essential to both clear up this misunderstanding and replace digital technologies at the heart of these issues. (Guy Rocher, *Culture, civilisation et idéologie*, 1969, p. 88 [our translation])

## b. Ethics?

"Ethics is not morality. It does not tell us what to do. It helps us position ourselves and invites us to be tolerant. It uses reflection and consultation to open up a possible path. It can never be an authority delivering judgement. It does not give answers, it produces questions. Its mission is to problematise. What do we win, what do we lose? Ethics is about proposing ways for science and human experimentation to respect human dignity. It's about imperfect compromises in which doubts and suffering subsist. Ethics is an exercise in discerning conflicts of values." (notes from a seminar with Roger Gil, bioethics practitioner)

Is "digital ethics" the best term to use in approaching the complex question that is at stake here? Some practitioners prefer to speak about "digital dignity" or "software dignity". This difficulty in finding the right words probably points to how vast the digital field has become. The present guidelines will not, of course, be able to cover this immensity. To attempt to limit their scope, we will try to approach them through the prism of culture, which should be understood in its dimension of situated knowledge<sup>7</sup> - dimension often overlooked when discussing digital issues.

## d. Cultural centres?

What better places and environments than cultural centres to unfold the conflicts of values, the doubts, the bonding elements and the endless questions that are embedded in digital and that become glaring as soon as we open the hood that industry uses to cover its organic cables and assemblages? How can a cultural centre make tangible, for itself and for its users, the overwhelmingly cultural aspects of digital tools and practices? What if they were to invite a group of local hackers to lead a workshop where participants could learn to take control of the multiple layers of software inside their telephones and to install new apps that are more respectful of their private lives? What if cultural centres became places for lifelong learning where we could educate ourselves about our promiscuity<sup>8</sup> with living and effervescent digital matter, which is also extremely young on the scale of human history?

To look more practically at the links between digital, ethics and cultural organisations, let's start with the list of questions in the next section. →

# 1. Questions in progress

This document attempts to answer some of the questions listed below. There are, of course, many further questions that it fails to answer or, in some cases, even to address.

- Why should cultural organisations try to make their communication more ethical, accessible, sustainable?  
— See parts 2 to 7, this is one of the main points of this document !
- Why would they want to question their everyday digital tools and move away from Big Tech?  
— See parts 2 to 7, it's another main point of this document!
- Are digital ethics relevant to cultural organisations? Are they related to cultural rights (and how)?  
— Yes, they are very relevant. And yes, digital dignity is related to cultural rights. Just as the human human rights movement has brought attention to the needs of individuals throughout the world, the cultural rights movements attempts to bring attention to the rights of groups of people, in other words their culture. In fact, we do not see a single aspect of digital that is not related to culture and cultural rights. See parts 6 and 7, mainly.
- What is important in terms of sustainability/carbon footprint? What is significant in terms of impacts of our digital actions? Should we think twice about posting videos, photos, photo galleries, meeting recordings, etc?  
— Digital sobriety is a growing concern, also in terms of ecologies of work and attention. When looking at individual and everyday choices, however, it's a bit more complex. See part 13, which offers some paths towards action.
- Accessibility: what key issues should we start with and keep in mind?  
— See part 12.
- Inclusion: what social issues surrounding tech (in terms of diversity, equality, gender) should we focus on, be concerned about?  
— This is an important question that goes beyond what we've been able to cover in this document. We touch on it briefly in part 6 and plan to come back to it in the future.
- How to start a parallel strategy on alternative social media?  
— This is a huge question, closely related to questions of democracy, among others. Many people and organisations are experimenting with different practices, but no one - as far as we know - has found an ideal solution yet. Part 10 very briefly describes a possible path. Communication is approached more globally in part 13.
- How to protect our users' data and privacy? How to deal with storage of recordings and other archives containing personal data?  
— Reading concrete examples of GDPR implementations could help. Start with part 2.
- Which suppliers can (start to) offer more respectful and interesting services in response to the issues described by this document?  
— See part 10, listing the shift of services planned by the ENCC, as a mini-case study.

- How much does it cost to improve digital ethics ? Can cultural centres and other small cultural organisations afford it?
  - It is difficult to measure, but our experience shows that most of the time it is not more expensive. Sometimes it can even help save money, as the switch usually offers options towards digital and environmental sobriety.
  
- What could we decide not to make digital?
  - This is probably the very first question to ask ourselves when thinking about digital ethics. It is also a huge and deliberate blind spot of this document. Briefly, the right of citizens to have non-digital options in everyday and cultural life is fundamental. Beyond that, highlighting non-digital cultural practices, especially to approach digital issues, is clearly more interesting and joyful! See the meditations mentioned at the end of part 13 for further thoughts on this.
  
- What will we not solve with this project?
  - Many things. All issues related to democracy, solidarity and the environment have links with digital technologies. They need to be approached head-on, in their full complexity - which can no longer be considered as avoidable nor optional.

## 2. An elephant in the room

The questions described in the previous section, made especially acute by the COVID-19 health crisis, brought Constant-vzw, a non-profit media organisation in Brussels, to write in 2022:

Dear cultural institution,  
There is an elephant in the room! You and many of your colleagues entrusted your institutions' networked communication, some of your digital archives and also your collaboration tools to tech giants. You rely more and more on so-called 'free' services provided by Google, Apple, Amazon, Microsoft and Facebook. You already know that these tools and platforms are infused with capitalist values, modernist ideas of progress and dreams of seamlessness. You are of course aware that the Terms of Use you once agreed to do not give you any agency over your data, let alone over the organising logic of the infrastructure. This raises issues of institutional framing and sustainability. What does it mean that you communicate through commercial platforms? What would become of your documents if Dropbox / YouTube / Google Drive / Facebook / WhatsApp ... radically changed their terms of service? [...]  
This is not just about replacing one set of tools with a 'fairer' one, although that is part of it, obviously. It is first of all about taking time to foreground processes that tech giants want to keep out of sight. To learn together how to experience technology differently, to develop convivial and critical relationships that foreground vulnerability, mutual dependency and care-taking. That means studying, discussing and experimenting. Collectively, we can develop other imaginaries for what technology could mean. It is a process of transition: from expecting efficiency to allowing curiosity; from scarcity to multiplicity and from solution to possibility.

It can be as simple as taking a moment to read the terms of use. Or sitting together with your team to discuss what could be different in your workflow. You can start using community-run, decentralised services offered by one of the organisations listed below. You can replace some of your proprietary software with free and open source tools, or install non-proprietary operating systems like Ubuntu on your office machines. You can start using an independent mailing service, share files through services hosted on your own servers or on those of neighbouring organisations. You can quit Facebook, or cancel your Google accounts. You can report bugs, and collaborate with developer teams to give valuable feedback about the tools you use or need for your institution. Of course someone has to take care of these processes and sustain them, but you can collaborate with other organisations to make this happen.

This is where you as a cultural institution present an opportunity. The beginning of a transition towards affective infrastructures of people, tools, protocols, platforms, and practices.

→ [constantvzw.org/wefts/elephant.en.html](https://constantvzw.org/wefts/elephant.en.html)

### 3. Different digital fields: a museum as case study

Is it useful to divide the digital into different fields? Let's give it a try:

1. Data
2. Hardware
3. Software
4. Network and internet
5. Servers, clouds and platforms

This division can be interesting, as each of the above fields has developed its own specificities in terms of practices and culture. But these practices are so entwined that we can also look at them in a transversal way. As an exercise, let's take an example. Imagine that a museum accepts to entrust the digitalisation of its collections to a global corporate tech company - as museums frequently do.

1. In terms of data, the following questions arise: Is it acceptable for this data to leave common ownership and move towards the private sector? Will the corporate platform include communities and citizens in the process and involve them in authoring information and knowledge about the digitalised objects? What if the objects are ritual objects (or human remains!) plundered from distant communities, who do not have any option to control the way this data is shown and shared? Cultural institutions can start to tackle these issues by foregrounding questions of reparations, for example.

→ [www.meg.ch/en/research-collections/reactivation-collections](http://www.meg.ch/en/research-collections/reactivation-collections)

In each of the other four dimensions listed above, a multitude of other interrelated questions will emerge.

2. In the material field, scanning museum objects to create 3-D representations brings up questions about the purposes of these technical demonstrations. They tend to both universalise the cultural specificities of the digitalised objects, and to focus on fascination for contemporary representations rather than the cultural importance of the original objects. They may also bring us to question the value of the multiple simplifications made necessary by software computation, which are not always immediately visible. In the end, the spectacular images that they offer tend to serve the interests of the technologies that produce them rather than the cultures they are supposed to represent. Cultural organisations such as museums may want to challenge these types of spectacular practices.

3. We could mention additional questions related to software freedom and autonomy of chosen file types, collaborative vs. individual professional practices created by software mutations promoted by the industry and highlighted by the 2020-2022 sanitary crisis, as well as the abyss of questions related to what the industry promotes as "artificial intelligence" (which is actually just another form of machine learning). Then there are of course legitimate questions raised by creators related to how algorithms plunder their creations in order to "learn" from them (for instance, AI image generators that produce illustrations in response to text). As well as, on the other hand, the perverse effects of further restrictions and enclosures in reaction to this plundering (for instance, demands by artists to severely restrict access to their creations, which is detrimental to all). These burning questions are ripe with opportunities for a museum, or any cultural organisation, to programme hands-on workshops related to the aspects of these issues that the organisation is most familiar with.

Web standards are the formal, non-proprietary standards and other technical specifications that define and describe aspects of the World Wide Web. In recent years, the term has been more frequently associated with the trend of endorsing a set of standardized best practices for building web sites, and a philosophy of web design and development that includes those methods. Web standards include many interdependent standards and specifications, some of which govern aspects of the Internet, not just the World Wide Web. Even when not web-focused, such standards directly or indirectly affect the development and administration of web sites and web services. Considerations include the interoperability, accessibility and usability of web pages and web sites.

4. In the neighbouring field of networks, uncountable questions arise in relationship to access and open data. Certain technological choices knowingly or unknowingly disregard accessibility standards<sup>6</sup> and keep some users at a distance (people with disabilities, for instance, or people challenged by language fluency or financial difficulties - in the case of software pricing, for instance). On the other hand, surveillance logics, embedded in platforms funded by advertising, threaten privacy and individual freedom. Mainstream users can feel the real effects of how European institutional bodies offer resistance to Tech Giants through, for instance, the GDPR<sup>6</sup>, even if this set of regulations raises issues of democracy that are sometimes considered distant from culture. But there are also, of course, massive issues linked to how cultural organisations use social media, all of which are controlled by giant tech companies, and how this use shapes their relationship to their local audiences and communities, in a way that is far from neutral, and completely out of control in terms of decision-making. Our imaginary museum can choose to tackle or not these questions on many different levels, which are of course important non only for their institution, but for the more global relationship between citizens and heritage.

GDPR : The General Data Protection Regulation is a Regulation in EU law on data protection and privacy in the EU. The GDPR is an important component of EU privacy law and of human rights law. It also addresses the transfer of personal data outside the EUs. The GDPR's primary aim is to enhance individuals' control and rights over their personal data and to simplify the regulatory environment for international business. The regulation became a model for many other laws across the world, including in Turkey, Mauritius, Chile, Japan, Brazil, South Korea, South Africa, Argentina, Kenya and California.

5. Lastly, in the connected fields of servers, platforms and economies, questions of energy consumption go hand in hand with questions of autonomy towards very distant server farms<sup>6</sup>, as well as questions of flattening of practices (and thus of cultures) that become almost unavoidable because of interface standardisation. Cultural organisations such as museums could start to work on this by deliberately making visible their usually inconspicuous interconnections with these issues.

A server farm or server cluster is a collection of computer servers, usually maintained by an organization to supply server functionality far beyond the capability of a single machine. They often consist of thousands of computers which require a large amount of power to run and to keep cool. At the optimum performance level, a server farm has enormous financial and environmental costs.

# 4. Confiscated culture — a short history

To understand the related tensions described above, it is useful to take a look backwards. This can help understand, at least partially, how digital culture has been confiscated by industry since its inception. The history of this movement is little-known, yet simple. It can be explained in three paragraphs.

Before 1940, computing machines had fixed programs. Changing their functionalities required re-wiring and re-structuring of the machine.

○ During WWII, the introduction of the stored-program computer kick-started a growing series of innovations that deeply impacted computation. Transistors replaced vacuum tubes, then integrated circuits appeared, and finally microprocessors ushered in a boom in the commercial and then personal use of computers.

a. Computers° and computation were developed in universities, among researchers, from the 1940s onwards. They mainly involved science and mathematics, but also language. The digital and the cultural fields were interwoven right from the start. During these first decades, hardware remained the main source of income for the tech industry. Software was specific and joined to each computer, not a separate product. Data and network issues were even more subterranean. Platforms did not exist.

b. From the 1970s onwards, software ecosystems increasingly communicated with each other, thanks to the development of networks, standards and software building bricks compatible with several types of computers. Later on, with the appearance of personal computers, the same logic of compatibility started applying to hardware. But in order to avoid anti-trust lawsuits, the American industrialists who developed these products as side projects, along their main business, did not market them massively, as legislation against monopolies was still based, at that point, on the US culture of common property. This allowed researchers (in universities and industry) to continue to conduct scientific collaborations for the benefit of all, and to develop a collaborative digital culture, made up of subcultures among which hackers are perhaps the best-known example.

c. In the early 1980s, policy changes radically watered down antitrust legislation, to ban only those monopolies that could be shown to significantly increase prices for the end consumer. Despite the fact that it is impossible to prove that a price is too high, and despite the fact that monopolies inflict many other problems on society than just price increases, this paradigm spread and solidified into a dogma. It profoundly transformed digital culture by introducing intellectual property for software, a concept invented in 1967 and largely unheard of up to that point. This soon became an essential strategy for companies to make profits. The concepts of collaboration and common good were pushed to the back seat, along with a cultural understanding of the digital.

→ [ploum.net/lhistoire-du-logiciel-entre-collaboration-et-confiscation-des-libertes](https://ploum.net/lhistoire-du-logiciel-entre-collaboration-et-confiscation-des-libertes). This short history is inspired by this much more in-depth article. Read it in French or translate it with a machine!

# 5. Open source and the web

Since time immemorial, mathematicians have refused closure around their discoveries and conceptual tools, preferring to publish them and ask for attribution. In the 1960s, libertarian and communitarian cultures, especially in the United States, started questioning many forms of authorship. In their own ways, a small minority of artists began to invent different types of free licenses, known as "copyleft", which coexisted with copyright. In this polymorphic hacker culture, software-sharing practices provided the necessary ingredients for shaping computer programs. Indeed, these programs combined many small software blocks, dedicated to doing one thing extremely well. It was therefore important that the whole chain of software blocks was available, free and shared under fair conditions.

In the 1980s, some American and then European universities reacted strongly to changes in anti-trust laws. They invented the free licence, the General Public Licence (GPL) applied to software, which took the name of "free software". These licences guaranteed: the freedom to run the software for any purpose; the freedom to study how it works and adapt it to one's needs; the freedom to redistribute copies of it (which implied the possibility of both giving and selling copies); the freedom to improve it and distribute improved versions to the public, so that the whole community could benefit from them. There were two conditions to these four freedoms: source attribution and a commitment not to redistribute the software under a licence more restrictive than the original one. This second condition, sometimes described as "viral", prevented industry actors from using these often valuable software bricks, because doing so would have required opening up the code on which they capitalised.

The GPL led to the birth of other copyleft licences, but above all to a very rich free software environment and, in the early 1990s, to GNU/Linux, a complete operating system. Industry reacted in different ways to this difficult-to-control culture. Allied with some of the most libertarian hacker circles, it started using and endorsing more permissive licences, such as the MIT licence, and, in the early 2000s, began to successfully promote the term "Open Source".

This term stems from a different approach or philosophy. For the Open Source Initiative it has the same meaning as "free software", and the two terms can be used interchangeably in almost any context. They simply prefer the "open source" label because they believe it provides a clearer description of the software and its creators' intent as to how it should be used. For "free software" proponents, however, the term "open source" does not fully convey the importance of their movement and the potential long-term social issues caused by proprietary software. Indeed, it promotes the practical benefits of open source software, rather than pointing to the ethical issue of restricting rights of users to modify and improve code on their own terms. This new term actually helps blur predatory movements by Big Tech on rich open source software blocks.

These questions of vocabulary are gradually disappearing as a result of massive changes over the past thirty years. The development of the web since the 1990s, and then of smartphones from the 2010s onwards, have added to the confiscation and predation described in the previous two chapters with the advent and massive development of the platform economy. Software is gradually disappearing from computers in favour of servers. The extraction of users' private data is suddenly converted into value on a market so gigantic that it has produced the five most valuable companies in the world. Data commodification has become the main problem, the elephant in the room, along with all of the issues of democracy and culture that it carries with it and abuses.



## 6. Why react through culture?

This massive predatory process is not inexorable. The increasingly visible hegemony of GAFAM (Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon and Microsoft) poses such a threat to democracy that mainstream media and the political world are starting to react with initiatives that invest time and energy in developing different approaches, practices and imaginaries.

These initiatives retain the memory of, among other things, the countercultures of the 1960s and the confiscations and predations that followed. Some of them have understood that the huge problems of GAFAM tend to mask overall Big Tech and industrial culture, and that they should not become the only focus. Approaching them from a cultural perspective is probably more interesting. The decentralised locations of cultural centres makes them valuable threads in the democratic-cultural fabric that is necessary to produce positive imaginaries, involving the widest local communities possible, about the digital autonomy that we need to recover.

There are many paths to explore here for cultural organisations:

- Uphold ethical practices. Tech Giants have been accused of unfair commercial practices, a lack of transparency and abusive behaviours towards their employees. If cultural organisations want to promote ethical values, they may prefer to use more responsible and ethical alternatives... and let their audiences and communities know about it.
- Protect confidentiality and privacy. Corporate tech is very often criticized for the way it collects and employs users' data. If cultural organisations wish to protect their users and their community, they may prefer using less intrusive alternatives in terms of data collection. This is a very positive signal to send both to the general public and to those who are more specialised and aware of the stakes.
- Avoid dependency on a unique provider. If a cultural organisation uses the services of one of the dominant tech companies, it relies entirely on that company for its online activities. If the tech company decides to change its users conditions or pricing, or if it runs into technical or security problems, that can have a negative impact on the cultural organisation. By using alternatives, organisations can diversify their tech sources and reduce their dependency.
- Reduce expenses. Services provided by corporate tech can be expensive, especially for small cultural organisations with limited budgets. By using free or less expensive alternatives, organisations can save money and channel their savings towards other cultural projects.
- Enjoy freedom of choice and modularity. Tech Giants offer "all-in-one" services that can be difficult to personalise or modify. If cultural organisations want more freedom to choose and modify their tools, they may prefer more modular alternatives.
- Have more accessibility and compatibility. Certain alternatives to corporate tech may be more accessible and compatible with technologies used by the cultural organisation. For instance, if the organisation uses free or open source software, it may prefer using tools that are compatible with that technology.

- Reduce environmental footprint. Certain alternatives to dominant solutions may have a less negative impact on the environment, for instance by using renewable energy sources, encouraging sustainable practices or offering greater sobriety. If a cultural organisation wants to minimise its environmental footprint, it may prefer those alternatives.
- Prioritise community-based practices. If a cultural organisation is committed to local or community action and support, it may prefer tools that are developed and managed by local businesses or supported by non-profit organisations. More generally, it may choose to advocate for community-based, rather than corporate-based, practices in terms of digital cultural life.
- Determine own communication style. Corporate social media and newsletter apps, targeted towards commercial use and practices, push cultural orgs towards marketing and evaluation methods that do not necessarily fit cultural organisations' purposes nor the reality of their work. If cultural organisations wish to align their communication on their own objectives, they may choose to use or develop alternative tools and evaluation methods.
- Care for relationships with users, communities and audiences. By streamlining these relationships through one-size-fits-all platforms and tools made for and by large-scale industry, cultural centres can see these relationships lose density and even slip out of focus as one of their most important missions. If they wish to centre these relationships and their specificities, they may prefer tools and platforms that do not flatten their exchanges to the level of simple conveniences or services.
- Uphold cultural rights. Culture is increasingly produced, mediated and shared through digital, though the infrastructures used to do so are certainly not designed to respect cultural rights, and actually impact them adversely. If a cultural organisation wishes to uphold these rights (which is indeed one of their missions according to the Freiburg declaration), including the right for all to develop and share a diversity of knowledge and cultural expressions, they may decide to question the adverse effects of corporate tech and advocate for limiting or bypassing it.
- ... And guarantee them for minoritized groups. One of cultural centre's key missions is to guarantee the cultural rights of minoritized people and communities. If cultural organisations are committed to this mission, they may decide that it is incompatible with tools, platforms and corporations that are very often highly detrimental to or even dangerous for these groups.
- Finally, be autonomous in terms of aesthetic choices. The choices made by the designers of the dominant social media and office suites determine an increasing proportion of our aesthetic choices, regardless of continent or context. But other choices are possible. Offering alternatives to a local audience helps sustain a healthy visual and textual diversity.

# 7. Cultural centres as actors of the necessary ethical digital transition

Industry needs to operate universally, or at least on the largest possible scale. Exactly the opposite of culture, which is local, specific and situated. Industry needs consumers to be individual, not grouped. Culture works best in collective environments, where different community dimensions intersect. Digital infrastructures operate in the middle of these contrasts. Its very collective character, on a global scale, is submitted to standards for the sake of economy. Here, empowerment and conviviality<sup>6</sup> are to be found in learning and in the free, joyful and collective modification of global technologies. An install party<sup>7</sup> is a moment of connection and elucidation. It is also a moment to realise that getting to grips with simpler tools can often mean more pleasure! The tools we use do not have to feel forced on us. The aesthetics of the collective and modified tools are perhaps less smooth and uncluttered, but they are charged with energy from the different intersections that created them. Software is a tool, of course, but it is not neutral, it also carries a lot of cultural elements within it.

Digital is a bit like cooking! With its recipes, its essential nourishing dimension, which however never comes alone, as it is always accompanied by a collective dimension, by pleasure, discovery. Cooking is also an economy. There are the key questions of where the food comes from, the interactions with ecology and health. But also the question of changes, which are both efforts and rewards. Going from ready-made and frozen meals to making your own, for example. It's a metaphor that works on so many levels. The industry is starting to push what it calls "artificial intelligence", which is in fact a set of learning algorithms that plunder cultural productions. And this gives us an idea of the amount of autonomy that can be lost with the field of knowledge being reduced by the smoothing out of all sources through software computation. And also of how conflicting movements are tearing apart intellectual property issues between those who legitimately want to protect their creative work, and those who see their efforts to open up access to cultural productions attacked by the plundering of a few Big Tech actors.

Tools for Conviviality is a 1973 book by Ivan Illich about the proper use of technology. In this work Illich generalized the themes that he had previously applied to the field of education: the institutionalization of specialized knowledge, the dominant role of technocratic elites in industrial society, and the need to develop new instruments for the reconquest of practical knowledge by the average citizen.

An install party or Installfest (a portmanteau of installation and festival) is an event, generally sponsored by a local Linux User Group, university, or LAN party, at which people get together to do mass installations of computer operating systems or software, most often Linux and other open source software.

Cultural centres have a very active role to play in tackling each of these issues!

→ [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tools\\_for\\_Conviviality](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tools_for_Conviviality)

## 8. Inspirations and fresh air

There are a large number of sources detailing issues that that have often been summarised for the purposes of this text. Below you will find some references to deepen and broaden its main points. They may seem problem-oriented, but culture is directly affected by the weakening or absence of democracy. And it is precisely culture that has the best chance of sustaining struggles to keep democracy alive and robust. It is therefore important to relate the following sources to a perspective where culture and democracy reinforce each other in resisting the most harmful effects of abusive technologies.

- A Catalogue of Digital Discomfort and other ways to resist totalitarian zoomification, by Jara Rocha and Seda Gürses.  
→ [titipi.org/projects/discomfort/CatalogOFFDigitalDiscomfort.pdf](https://titipi.org/projects/discomfort/CatalogOFFDigitalDiscomfort.pdf)
- The EDRI Digital Dignity Document Pool is a good resource on the impact of digital technologies on marginalised groups.  
→ [edri.org/our-work/digital-dignity-document-pool](https://edri.org/our-work/digital-dignity-document-pool)
- The EDRI's Coalition for Digital Dignity is focused on creating an "informal space in the EU advocacy landscape where we can get to know each other more, share experiences, strategies, reflect, and also share specific knowledge on digital topics, individual and collective harms, as well as our own digital skills and safety".  
→ [edri.org/our-work/building-a-coalition-for-digital-dignity](https://edri.org/our-work/building-a-coalition-for-digital-dignity)
- Manifesto in favour of technological sovereignty and digital rights for cities, developed by the City Council of Barcelona.  
→ [barcelona.cat/digitalstandards/manifesto/0.2](https://barcelona.cat/digitalstandards/manifesto/0.2)
- At the confluence of digital rights and climate and environmental justice: A landscape review.  
→ [fordfoundation.org/media/7356/ter-final-report-07-07-22.pdf](https://fordfoundation.org/media/7356/ter-final-report-07-07-22.pdf)
- A very rich shared listing of tools, practices and readings for digital solidarity, conviviality and togetherness initiated in March 2020.  
→ [pad.vvvvvaria.org/digital-solidarity-networks](https://pad.vvvvvaria.org/digital-solidarity-networks)

And also :

- European Small And Midsize Enterprises (SMEs) stand up to Microsoft, urging the EU to open antitrust investigation. Nextcloud has filed an official complaint with the European Commission's Directorate-General for Competition about the alleged anti-competitive practices of Microsoft related to OneDrive.  
→ [www.digitalsme.eu/europe-an-sme-stands-up-to-microsoft-urging-the-eu-to-open-antitrust-investigation](http://www.digitalsme.eu/europe-an-sme-stands-up-to-microsoft-urging-the-eu-to-open-antitrust-investigation)
- Facebook's new whistleblower is renewing scrutiny of the social media giant. A data scientist named Frances Haugen has revealed herself to be the whistleblower behind a massive exposure of the inner workings at Facebook.  
→ [www.npr.org/2021/10/04/1042921981/facebook-whistleblower-renewing-scrutiny-of-social-media-giant?t=1633454159361](http://www.npr.org/2021/10/04/1042921981/facebook-whistleblower-renewing-scrutiny-of-social-media-giant?t=1633454159361)
- An Australia With No Google? The Bitter Fight Behind a Drastic Threat. The big tech platforms are facing a challenge unlike any other as Australia moves to make them pay for news. (About the Google-Facebook blackmail)  
→ [www.nytimes.com/2021/01/22/business/australia-google-facebook-news-media.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/22/business/australia-google-facebook-news-media.html)
- Zoom Lied About Security Measures, End-to-End Encryption. The lawsuit claims that Zoom never had end-to-end encryption, despite it telling customers that it did.  
→ [www.legalreader.com/lawsuit-zoom-lied-security-measures-end-to-end-encryption](http://www.legalreader.com/lawsuit-zoom-lied-security-measures-end-to-end-encryption)
- Employees, civil rights groups blast Facebook inaction on Trump statements. The platform's tiny and occasional blocks do not stem the greater tide it permits.  
→ [arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2020/06/employees-civil-rights-groups-blast-facebook-inaction-on-trump-statements](https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2020/06/employees-civil-rights-groups-blast-facebook-inaction-on-trump-statements)
- The Manifest-No is a declaration of refusal and commitment. It refuses harmful data regimes and commits to new data futures.  
→ [www.manifestno.com/home](http://www.manifestno.com/home)
- "Dear student, teacher, worker in an educational institution, together we witnessed how the recent move to 'distant learning' has meant that educational institutions have almost without exception turned to online commercial platforms."  
→ [constantvzw.org/wefts/distant-elephant.en.html](https://constantvzw.org/wefts/distant-elephant.en.html)

## 9. The switch

As we write this document, the ENCC is in the process of switching to more ethical and dignified digital practices and environments.

Its coordination office started to think about the topic in 2018 with a training course on approaching audiences through digital tools, where questions of ethics and authenticity emerged. As is often the case, real and concrete situations fuelled the discussions.

On the table was the question of whether or not to leave Facebook, at a point when changes in its algorithms were clearly no longer serving the needs of non-profit cultural organisations. This debate took place on a small island in the Cyclades, in Greece, where the training session was hosted by a local member of the network. As an exercise, the group discussed how interesting it would be for the island to develop a tourist application where web users could browse portraits of the island's elderly inhabitants, bearers of its history and folklore, to encourage them to travel there for a holiday, or whether it was better to reserve to real-life visitors the possibility of non-digital, more embodied encounters.

Two years later, the COVID-19 pandemic abruptly intensified the shift towards digital tools, bringing members of the network and the coordination office to question their skills and their relationship with those tools. During periods of confinement, the office shifted to platform-only contacts. Daily work was focused on managing compatibility between platforms, moving from one to another smoothly, retrieving data from Google Forms to import it into Mailchimp to remind people to meet on Zoom, without losing any participants in the process.

It soon became apparent that in the absence of informal critical discussions during coffee breaks, online events lose nearly all potential for fertile conflict. Even the most divisive issues, such as the lack of diversity in white-dominated culture, faded into the background. And while staff and members of the network were kept at distance by machines, continuous teleworking invaded their private spaces like a filter that prevented reflection and questions.

As live encounters became a thing of the past, communication with the ENCC community was exclusively channelled through social media and newsletters. How to find the right tone, not too pessimistic nor too insensitive, nor too focused on the cultural sphere (because of constant reminders that "others were suffering more")? Our expressions of empathy and feeling seemed to be addressed only to Mailchimp algorithms, with feedbacks such as "We have tips to improve your title". Actual feedbacks from network members were reduced to automatic monitoring carried out by the platform as a matter of course.

For the network, as for the rest of the Western world, the crisis was a painful moment that clearly demonstrated the massive influence of digital infrastructures on relational styles between organisations, institutions and people. And yet these relationships, which are eminently cultural, are the very reason for cultural organisations to exist

In non-digital, non-platform relationships, there tends to be a greater degree of uncontrollability. This vibrancy can actually be a useful disturbance to the sometimes self-righteous atmosphere of cultural centres. Logically enough, these are places where most participants know what to say and how to react. But there is always the possibility that others show up with more radical positions, offbeat questions, unconventional behaviour, surges of emotion or enthusiasm. Among these users, some may have had too much to drink, occupy the entrance of the space because they are homeless, or have psychiatric issues. It is a rare quality of cultural centres that they allow these unscripted events and encounters to take place. One could say that they are in fact deeply cultural and situated moments of democracy.

And indeed, the borderline and very fertile moments described above occur much more rarely in the controlled and smoothed environments of digital collaboration platforms. For these interfaces, control is a massive focus. Technical disruptions already create enough friction, without allowing further layers of complexity to host the richness found in real-life interactions.

In 2022, the network supported the ENCC coordination office in engaging in a process to transform its communications, website and office tools. This process is conceived as an experiment, a work in progress, with several phases of feedback and discussion before reaching conclusions.

Part of the switch could be extending to members the coordination office's experimentation with digital tools used in office and production work. Another part could be awareness-raising towards cultural centres' audiences and communities.

The project is in progress, it will be long and, we hope, exciting. It is a necessary work of both digital resilience (which also means that we will be doing it with our fingers), and collective intelligence (since doing it individually makes much less sense). The goal is clearly not purity, but rather a type of empowerment that offers keys, a learning process that does not seek closure.

Note : "We cannot ignore that it takes effort, and a great amount of privilege, to walk away from these corporate tech solutions once and for all. Ease-of-use in times of urgency; network effects; family members whose contact is dependent on the usage of mainstream social networking platforms; complicated political situations where these are sadly the most convenient choice; the need for an online presence in times of structural precarity; etc.; are all considerations that should not be discarded and are the reality for most of us. In fact, and precisely because of such considerations, we are not advocating a purist approach. We are all entangled with Big Tech, but we would prefer to critique it, put limits and eventually choose our dependencies without being forced."

→ [vvvvvvaria.org/etherpump/p/digital-solidarity-networks.raw.html](https://vvvvvvaria.org/etherpump/p/digital-solidarity-networks.raw.html)

# 10. On tools that can be replaced

See this very complete resource base

→ [vvvvvvaria.org/etherpump/p/digital-solidarity-networks.raw.html](http://vvvvvvaria.org/etherpump/p/digital-solidarity-networks.raw.html)

And a simpler ressource

→ [wired.com/story/proton-mail-calendar-drive-vpn](http://wired.com/story/proton-mail-calendar-drive-vpn)

In French

→ [framablog.org/2020/11/10/ce-que-framasoft-a-fait-durant-le-premier-confinement](http://framablog.org/2020/11/10/ce-que-framasoft-a-fait-durant-le-premier-confinement)

In the framework of the switch described above, we began to identify and list digital tools and platforms used daily by the ENCC that could potentially be replaced by more culturally interesting services and projects. This is a complex and uncomfortable project, which demands that we put into balance elements such as efficiency, habits, comfort, time, cost, interest, stress and privileges. The encouraging news is that many other organizations are also engaged in this process, and that the health crisis has been a detonating moment for many others.

Here is a list in progress with suggestions for alternatives:

- Mail  
From: Gmail, Outlook, Yahoo and other mail giants.  
To: own email service, running on free software, with Thunderbird as a client app for each user.
- Collaborative work tool  
From: Asana.  
To: Wekan, Taiga.io, OpenProject, Kanboard, Restyaboard, or a Nextcloud app.
- From: Google drive, calendar, forms, and Microsoft suite (Office and 365).  
To: Nextcloud, on own server, or one of a nearby association.
- Mailing  
From: Mailchimp.  
To: Buttndown, Mailcoach or another less dominant actor, offering a service that does not overly exposes recipients to surveillance.
- File and photo sharing  
From: Google, Dropbox, Wetransfer, and other services.  
To: Nextcloud on own server, or one of a nearby association.
- Photo storage  
From: Flickr.  
To: Nextcloud on an own server, or one of a nearby association, lots of other libre software to install on own server, or Flickr foundation, as it is being relaunched.  
→ [flickr.org/why-were-doing-this](http://flickr.org/why-were-doing-this)
- For applications, evaluation forms  
From: Google forms.  
To: Nextcloud on own server, or one of a nearby association, Framaforms.
- Video  
From: Vimeo, Youtube.  
To: Peertube, ideally on own server, or one of a nearby association.
- Poll tool  
From : Doodle, Calendly.  
To: Nextcloud on own server, or one of a nearby association, Framadate.
- Sound  
From: Soundcloud.  
To: player on own website.
- Office chat  
From: Skype.  
To: Deltachat, Matrix, Zulip on an own server, or one of a nearby association.
- Collaborative blackboard  
From: Miro.  
To: diagram.net, OpenBoard, Excalidraw, tldraw, Lorien and a Nextcloud app.
- Meetings  
From: Zoom, Meet me, Skype, Teams, Google Meet.  
To: Jitsi, ideally on own server, or one of a nearby association.
- Website analytics  
From: Google Analytics.  
To: Matomo, running on own server.



- Social media  
From: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram.  
To: the Fediverse, probably Mastodon, with Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram used as bots to the original content on Mastodon. Plus a clear message about the fact that the original content is not on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter.
- Office software  
From: Microsoft Office.  
To: LibreOffice.
- High-end graphic design tools  
From: Adobe.  
To: Gimp, Krita, Inkscape, Scribus, paged.js, and a very diverse digital ecosystem.
- Low-end graphic design tools  
From: Canva.  
To: Crello, Stencil, FotoJet. Bear in mind that these tools are extremely marked by the aesthetics of the companies that offer them. Nothing that can replace a local graphic designer.
- Link shortener  
From: Bitly.  
To: tools installed on own server.
- For statistics and interactive meetings  
From: Mentimeter.  
To: pads or tailor-made tool. Or question the necessity of this kind of tool.
- PS: pads are essential tools that can fulfill many needs of cultural organisations!  
→ [march.international/constant-padology](https://march.international/constant-padology)

# 12. On developing a website

For cultural organisations, the development or redevelopment of a website is a privileged moment to examine their digital practices. Indeed, any website is multiple. It is a networked software object, which will appear to visitors in a wide variety of forms, depending on their types of screens and modes of consultation. It is a communication medium, a calendar tool, a collection of texts and a work interface. But it's also, and this point is sometimes overlooked, a complex cultural object that provides keys to understanding an organisation through a wealth of details.

Some like to extend this very articulated role of websites by comparing them to third places<sup>c</sup>. Without going that far, a website is certainly an important object in the digital ethics of an organisation. If built with care, it will, among other things, offer content that is accessible to as many people as possible, be a perennial independent source of information, make sure the traces left by users in their interactions with it are kept private, consume as little resources as possible by making technological choices that aim for sobriety and simplicity, and draw paths towards emancipation through the poetics of its texts, visuals and interactions.

In order for a website to fulfill these functions, it must be built in close collaboration with specific craftspeople who master this specialty. Given the extremely ambiguous nature of the term "website", there are several options available.

Many global solutions exist, like Squarespace, Wix, Shopify, WebFlow or Wordpress.com. These pre-built solutions obviously have the advantage of being very reassuring and may appear to be time-saving, since they offer a preview of results. On the other hand, they have disadvantages that we consider to be major. Most often, they use greedy and unnecessarily complex technologies that make them more difficult to access; they depend on large platforms (which they nourish in return); they cannot give any guarantees regarding their sustainability over time; they offer few real guarantees that they will not expose visitors' private data to the surveillance appetites of Big Tech; they present an attractive but global, smooth interface that has little connection with the cultural specificities of the organisation it represents.

As an alternative to this option, choosing local artisans who develop websites on a scale that fits the organisation may be a better choice. They will bring their own technological choices, among others in terms of content management tools. Some will offer to use global and standardised tools such as a WordPress install. Others may suggest more specifically adaptable frameworks like Laravel, Drupal or Django, or even more complex solutions called "headless" because the front end is separated from the back end. But either way, they will share a common cultural standpoint with the organisation they are working for, and will be able to translate the global dimensions of digital culture into local specificities.

Third places are spaces that embody the desire of a community of citizens to move towards a better world. They redraw through common sense, cooperation and solidarity the territory in which they are anchored, and position themselves at the heart of exchanges between public actors, private actors and citizens.

→ [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Third\\_place](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Third_place)

One last point: these local craftspeople will sometimes also be the graphic designers of the website, and, by extension or most often beforehand, of the organisation's identity. Among the many tasks of graphic designers, let's take an example often considered anecdotal: typographic choices. This involves choosing a set of fonts that will be used by the designer for the organisation's identity, but also by the developers for the website, by the organisation for various simpler productions, and sometimes by third parties once the designer's mission is complete. Three choices are possible.

- Privately licensed fonts will require the designer, the organisation and third parties to pay a licence fee, and usually the developer to pay an additional licence fee for web use. As 70% of typographic heritage is, according to the latest estimates, owned by Monotype, which is itself owned by a pension fund, it is not always guaranteed that the budgets allocated to these purchases will actively participate in the cultural development of typography.
- Another possibility is using open source fonts from Big Tech, such as those offered by Google. Nothing to pay here, but two possible drawbacks. If the developer decides to use Google's services to serve the fonts to visitors' browsers, she exposes them to surveillance. And she contributes in a very minor way to local typographic culture, with the meager remuneration from Big Tech going to developers spread all over the world.
- Finally, she can choose local typefaces, free or not, and thus start a dialogue with the culture of her region. This choice can also be an occasion to open the discussion to the cultural centre's audiences. The cultural centre may decide to collaborate in financing the development of a typeface, or it might ask for specific adaptations. In short, it becomes culturally operative. Isn't that its main role?

Methods for choosing a team of web-creators are beyond the scope of this text. One useful idea may be to ask the candidates to react to the excellent advice and criteria developed in the EDRI Guide for ethical web development<sup>6</sup>. The cultural organisation could choose a few points and listen to the feedback from designer and communication teams. Affinities should emerge.

Another part of the discussion could be about how the web designer and web developer will use their knowledge and experience to :

- manage the graphic and technical aspects of the site
- facilitate the coding and updating of content
- store all content of the site in a clear, readable and easily exportable database to facilitate future updates of the site and backup of all content
- ensure follow-up and advice on the maintenance of the site and its evolution, and guarantee technical assistance

The most important thing is to initiate discussions that focus on the cultural stakes of the future website, and therefore of its design in the broadest sense, for instance as defined by the philosopher Gilbert Simondon, for whom aesthetics unite fragmentary and analytical technical conceptions with holistic, contemplative conceptions of wholeness.

# 12. On accessibility standards

Why make the communication of a cultural centre accessible? It is often an effort. But it's also an opportunity to reexamine its communication from different points of view, and perhaps to simplify it. Creating a well-designed and accessible website and extending its logics to a communication strategy can thus become a political task, as well as a particularly enjoyable one.

Using web standards by respecting their semantic logic is the basis of all accessibility approaches at the technical level. Discussing the accessibility practices of candidate web designers is also a good way to start a project. The web is fundamentally conceived to work for everyone, regardless of hardware, software, language, place or abilities. When the website of a cultural organisation achieves this goal, it becomes accessible to people with a wide range of auditive, visual, cognitive and motor abilities.

The effects of disability is thus radically transformed on the web, which removes the barriers to communication and interaction that many people face in the physical world. However, when websites, applications, technologies or tools are poorly designed, they can create other barriers that prevent people from using them fully.

With an accessible website, persons with disabilities can perceive, understand, navigate and interact with the web, but also contribute to it. This kind of website also benefits people without disabilities, for instance:

- people using mobile phones, smart watches, smart TVs and other devices with small screens, different input modes, etc.
- older people whose abilities change as they age
- people with "temporary disabilities", such as a broken arm or lost glasses
- people with "situational limitations", such as exposure to sunlight or in an environment where they cannot listen to audio
- people who use a slow internet connection, or who have limited or expensive bandwidth
- people who use other writing systems, or other languages, or who read websites through an automatic translation system

There are many resources on the subject of website accessibility, which is a good thing, so we will not detail all the criteria and practices here. Let's simply point out three resources, the first two gathering the main body of standards that exist on this issue, the last one offering a more generalist summary.

- [w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/faq/#start](https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/faq/#start)
- [w3.org/WAI/fundamentals/accessibility-intro/#examples](https://www.w3.org/WAI/fundamentals/accessibility-intro/#examples)
- [washington.edu/accesscomputing/sites/default/files/30-Web-Accessibility-Tips.pdf](https://www.washington.edu/accesscomputing/sites/default/files/30-Web-Accessibility-Tips.pdf)

These standards have given rise to accessibility labels. They are important to bring as many actors as possible to equip their websites and apps in an adequate way. But in some cases, they can give the impression that the work can stop at labellisation, like a good deed accomplished. This, however, misses the point. Here too, cultural centres can choose more specific and in-depth practices to reach out to their users with a wide range of disabilities or differences.

- [encc.eu/resources/database/tools-ci-ae-project-inclusion-arts-education](https://encc.eu/resources/database/tools-ci-ae-project-inclusion-arts-education)
- [encc.eu/resources/database/art-inclusion-resource-base](https://encc.eu/resources/database/art-inclusion-resource-base)

One example is the CIAE (Creative Inclusion in Adult Education) project, led by the Cope Foundation in partnership with the ENCC from 2017 to 2019. On one hand, the project brought together a panel of users with disabilities to test the project's website, which was designed as a resource base primarily intended for them. On the other it concluded with a conference (The Art of Inclusion, 2020) where self-identified disability artists defined their own requirements in terms of inclusiveness in the cultural and artistic world.

One of the strong points made by speakers was that disabled, deaf and neurodivergent artists are experts in their own needs, and demand to be listened to. They also asked for an aesthetics of access to be at the heart of all cultural work and processes, and for support in fighting against systemic ableism in all sectors of the arts and culture.

The website of a cultural organisation, as well as all the digital devices it develops, can thus play an important part in welcoming participation and diversity, which should not only be directed towards passive audiences, but also allow the emergence of disabled persons who are innovators, game changers and professional artists at the forefront of contemporary creation.

# 13. A few expanded effects of digital communication

The communication and coordination teams of cultural centres, and indeed of cultural organisations in general, see their relationships with audiences and communities directly shaped by digital technologies, with extremely varied effects. Let's pinpoint a few examples.

Social cooling is the term used to describe the long-term negative side effects of living in a "reputation economy". The massive use of social media and digital platforms by the cultural world (among others!) is not neutral in our socialisation. In fact, it tends to produce effects of conformity, risk-aversion and increased social rigidity:

- Concerns about online surveillance can make visitors wary of clicking on links to material perceived as subversive, which in turn can bring cultural organisations to self-censor in terms of what they programme or how they describe it online, resulting in a flattening of the cultural offer.
- In a related way, communication teams of cultural centres may hesitate to describe their activities and to approach certain topics on social media if they are perceived as polarising or involving tense relationships between different groups, out of reluctance to deal with backlash from funders or from violent social media contexts.
- Adaptation to non-transparent algorithms of social media can also push organisations to communicate in a predetermined style, for instance focusing on close-ups of human faces, posting multiple rather than single images to generate interaction, etc.

- Obviously, cultural centres have no magic wands to solve this issue. But by adopting (or just testing!) more cautious and critical practices, they can, to a certain extent, inflect toxic social norms towards more direct forms of sociability, and therefore solidarity.

Audience growth has become a massively measured type of data in the cultural field, so much so that it is sometimes used as a monitoring tool to decide whether or not to grant subsidies. But organisations may wish to measure other criteria in parallel, and to invite qualitative feedback. Opportune use of digital tools may then allow them to move away from monitoring, towards more interesting, peaceful and explicit interactions. On the other hand, it can also be fun to invent new and/or alternative quantitative indicators!

Cultural centres may even choose to reflect on the way they speak about their communication. What if they were to question the vocabulary, to avoid injunctions, to be aware that military marketing terms, such as "target", "impact", "strategy" or "punch", originated in 20th-century totalitarianism?

Finally, what are the links between digital communication and material ecological impact? The digital carbon footprint of an organisation is very complex to calculate. Perhaps the best is to start with the obvious. One important thing to understand are the categories of emissions according to their effects. There are a. emissions produced to manufacture devices and equipment, b. energy required to run the devices and equipment, c. energy required to transfer data and d. energy consumed by servers and data centres.

Many organisations replace their computers every three years. Regarding a., extending this period to 4 or even 6 years can considerably reduce an organisation's carbon footprint. Even more so if the choice is made to use second-hand equipment! b. can be significantly reduced by common-sense measures.

Points c. and d. involve more complex balances. According to the International Energy Agency, the rate of electricity consumption in large data centres is increasing by 10-30% per year, due to ever-increasing workloads. Again, using common sense to limit data in the cloud to what is in current use, while storing archives on local digital media, can limit the impact. Choosing more sober media, such as sound rather than video, goes in the same direction. In general, it's advisable to remain critical and measured about one's practices, and about overly generalized injunctions that tend to place the burden of the ecological transition solely on individuals. Here again, the role of cultural centres is... cultural.

Two texts as further meditations:

This paper asks what we can learn about the real commitment of Big Tech to reduce its ecological footprint by looking at edge computing. The text starts with the COVID-19 pandemic being framed by the industry as an opportunity for greater sustainability, and takes a critical look at edge computing as one of the proposed solutions, along with working from home.

The following excerpt on "ecological redirection" invites us to build new business models for the Anthropocene, which implies giving up entire sections of the economy and reallocating them. Could we imagine speaking of "collapsed cultural centres" to refer to organisations that have evolved far beyond the level of incentives, compensation and "sustainable development"?

"Ecological transition is based on the idea that a continuation horizon is naturally possible, if not absolutely imperative, between economic development and ecology. Whereas with ecological redirection, the possibility of this continuation is questioned. The fact is that we will probably need to make difficult decisions, and even give up many things, before even starting to imagine how to reconcile the economy with ecology. First of all, we'll need to give up the idea that this reconciliation will be perfect. "Renunciation protocols" are therefore one of the major operational aspects of our concept of ecological redirection. [...] They involve "voluntary renunciation of organisations and communities led by what we call 'collapsed executives' or 'collapsed public managers'. These are people who have already evolved enormously and who are ready to move on beyond incentives, compensation and sustainable development."

Culture is a decisive player in the essential environmental challenges of our times. In fact, it is the only area able to dedicate appropriate space to the imagination required to fuel the gigantic collective efforts that are necessary. Here, a key role will be played by digital technologies, which need to be approached in their full complexity. Let's conclude temporarily on this.

→ [aprra.net/article/view/128184/174364](https://aprra.net/article/view/128184/174364)

→ Read the whole article in French in [www.ladn.eu/entreprises-innovantes/redirec-](http://www.ladn.eu/entreprises-innovantes/redirec-)

## How this document was written

This document was written four-handedly by Lucy Perineau from the ENCC and Pierre Huyghebaert from Speculoos in a markdown file shared on Nextcloud. It is largely inspired by:

- discussions with webdesigner Constant Mathieu from Variable.club, in the context of building a new website for the ENCC with Speculoos design studio;
- over twenty years of very diverse encounters and conversations, mostly around osp.kitchen and constantvzw.org associations in Brussels;
- attempting to relate these elements to the recent experiences of the ENCC and its coordination office.

Lucy Perineau is the communications and publications manager of the ENCC. She is also a translator and cartoonist carrying out doctoral research in comics.

Pierre Huyghebaert is a graphic designer, type designer, cartographer and teacher engaged in practice-based research on digital and its boundaries.

Parts of this document were translated with the help of an AI, though its authors consider DeepL to be more a tool for reading than translating, and though it is certainly not a virtuous digital model. They also wondered while writing this document how much evaluating human translation as vastly superior to machine translation is a form of normativity, and how to think about the relationship between AI and accessibility - knowing that AI can support blind, dyslexic or dysorthographic people in daily life, and allow knowledge to spread across languages, but also that corporate tech's focus on accessibility is partly driven by the will to market text-to-voice apps, often linked to the hugely questionable development of voice recognition tools.

Feedback and comments are very welcome on [digital-ethics@encc.eu](mailto:digital-ethics@encc.eu)

[encc.eu](http://encc.eu)

Cocteau is asked:

"Your house is burning down, what do you take with you?"

He replies:

"Fire".

Technology today is the campfire around which we tell our stories. There's this attraction to light and to this kind of power, which is both warm and destructive. We're especially drawn to the power. Many of the images of technology are about making us more powerful, extending what we can do. Unfortunately, 95 percent of this is hype, because I think we're powerful without it. — Laurie Anderson

The license of this document is dual, despite the distortions that may appear to attentive readers between the two licenses. We consider them to be interesting tools for reflection.

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→ [constantvzw.org/wefts/cc4r.en.html](https://constantvzw.org/wefts/cc4r.en.html)



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