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TRAST

Transmedia Stories of Insularity

Policy Recommendations for Future Exploitation
Position Paper

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Position Paper

The policy recommendations presented in this position paper build on the combined evidence of TRAST's research activities, co-creation workshops, stakeholder engagement, Policy Guidelines and Integrated Cross-Sectional Strategic Framework for Policy Dissemination. The recommendations therefore translate project evidence and methodological learning into possible policy and institutional actions rather than constituting a separate policy exercise. Particular attention has been given to the extent to which practices developed and tested through or within TRAST can be transferred to other communities, cultural sectors and institutional contexts.

The recommendations are assessed according to seven criteria established within the TRAST policy framework: effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, sustainability, duplicability (or rather transferability and replicability), cross-sectorality, and participatory validity. Together, these criteria provide a basis for distinguishing promising policy directions from recommendations that are insufficiently grounded in project evidence or difficult to sustain beyond the project period.

The position paper also considers future exploitation. Its purpose is not only to identify how TRAST can inform policy at European, national, regional and local levels, but also to identify how project partners and other stakeholders can continue to use, adapt and disseminate the methodologies, tools, partnerships and cultural models developed through the project.

1. Purpose and approach

The TRAST project advances a policy framework rooted in co-creation, cultural rights, participatory practices and the recognition of communities as active producers of cultural knowledge and meaning. Our recommendations are intended to be applicable across multiple levels of governance and within diverse institutional and cultural contexts.

TRAST understands insularity not only as a geographical condition, but as a relational condition that may emerge through social, cultural, political, institutional or representational forms of exclusion. Across the project cases, the communities we engaged with have experienced different combinations of geographical distance, migration, displacement, racialisation, colonial legacies, historical absence, limited recognition and unequal influence over cultural representation. What connects these contexts is therefore not a single

experience of isolation, but unequal conditions of participation, recognition, representation and belonging.

The Integrated Cross-Sectional Strategic Framework of the project establishes a process whereby the project's objectives, target groups, artistic practices, methods and results are considered in relation to their potential transfer to other artistic fields and to policy development. It explicitly identifies policy implications at macro, meso and micro levels and calls for cross-sectoral application of participatory methods.

It should be mentioned that TRAST was not designed as a longitudinal or controlled impact study. Participant feedback, creative outputs and public reach provide important evidence, but do not by themselves demonstrate durable social inclusion, psychological transformation or long-term changes in identity.

Accordingly, the emphasis in this report is placed on evidence-supported conditions and practices that can inform future policy, while distinguishing demonstrated project findings from longer-term potential.

2. From TRAST findings to policy relevance

In this chapter several cross-cutting findings provide the basis for the policy recommendations.

2.1 Participation requires conditions, not simply invitations

Across the TRAST cases, meaningful co-creation depended less on the use of a particular artistic technique than on the conditions under which people participated. Trust, contextual knowledge, sufficient time, culturally and linguistically responsive facilitation, flexibility in forms of expression, participant influence and continuing negotiation over representation were repeatedly identified as important enabling conditions across the projects interactions with different communities.

This suggests that cultural participation should not be measured only through attendance, audience numbers or the number of activities delivered. Participation becomes more substantive when people can influence what is explored, how it is expressed and how their contribution is subsequently represented.

2.2 Cultural participation includes narrative authority

A central and quite important TRAST finding is the distinction between *visibility and narrative authority*. Being represented within a cultural institution does not necessarily mean having influence over how representation is produced. The TRAST Study identifies participation as more substantive when communities can contribute to the production, interpretation and circulation of cultural meaning.

This has direct implications for i.e. museums, cultural organisations and public cultural programmes. Inclusion can involve not only providing access to cultural spaces, but also enabling communities to participate as storytellers, researchers, performers, curators, cultural experts and co-authors. Granting insular communities a narrative authority changes the perspectives considerably.

2.3 Multimodal and transmedia practice can widen routes into participation

The project learnings shows that knowledge and memory may be expressed through speech, objects, photographs, sound, movement, performance, food, place, film and other creative forms. In linguistically diverse contexts, sensory and non-verbal practices can provide forms of participation that conventional verbal interviewing might not capture adequately.

The policy implication is not that every institution should adopt every medium. Rather, cultural programmes should provide multiple, diverse and adaptable routes into participation, with artistic formats selected in response to the specific community context.

2.4 Co-creation is relational and context-dependent

In order to walk the talk TRAST does not support the replication of a fixed workshop formula. The Study instead identifies principles that can be transferred while methods and artistic formats remain context-dependent. These principles include:

- contextual research
- trusted relationships
- participant influence
- multiple modes of expression
- accessibility
- transparent authorship
- continuing consent
- negotiated public visibility
- adaptive evaluation

An important distinction for future exploitation is therefore: *what should be transferred is the methodological principle, not necessarily the original activity*.

2.5 Public visibility creates both opportunities and responsibilities

The learnings from the TRAST project demonstrates that moving from a protected participatory setting into exhibitions, screenings, publications or digital spaces is a distinct stage of the process. Consent to participate is not necessarily consent to every subsequent use. Public representation can increase visibility and recognition while also creating questions concerning privacy, framing, authorship, ownership and exposure.

Policy therefore needs to address not only access and participation, but also the conditions governing representation and circulation of products and content created in the process.

3. Policy recommendations

This chapter presents 8 policy recommendations based on the research, the learnings, the workshops, the reports and the evaluations available at the time of the writing of this report. The recommendations are assessed according to the above mentioned seven criteria established within the TRAST policy framework.

Recommendation 1 - Fund the conditions required for meaningful participation

Funding programmes should recognise contextual research, relationship-building, facilitation, accessibility and sufficient time for trust-building as legitimate components of participatory cultural projects.

TRAST evidence shows that meaningful co-creation often begins before artistic production. Existing relationships, community knowledge and gradual engagement created conditions in which participants could contribute more fully. We therefore recommends funding the conditions of participation rather than focusing exclusively on visible outputs.

Potential stakeholders: European and national funding structures; public administrations; cultural institutions; cultural and civic society NGOs.

Governance level: European; national; regional/local; institutional.

Potential future exploitation: The TRAST partners can make use of this principle when developing future project proposals, funding schemes and programme guidelines.

Recommendation 2 - Embed community expertise and co-authorship in cultural governance

Cultural institutions should move beyond treating communities primarily as audiences, beneficiaries or sources of material and instead create opportunities for them to act as cultural co-experts, co-facilitators, co-authors, co-curators and co-decision-makers.

The evidence from the TRAST project shows that community knowledge became particularly productive when participants could teach, facilitate, interpret and make decisions. At the same time, professional artistic authorship remained relevant. The evidence therefore supports negotiated and transparent forms of co-authorship rather than the assumption that professional mediation should disappear.

Possible institutional mechanisms include community advisory structures, resident or community curatorships, co-curated exhibitions and participatory programming.

Potential stakeholders: This recommendation is predominantly institutional, aiming at museums, cultural centres, galleries, arts councils, community organisations and public administrations.

Governance level: Institutional, regional and local.

Potential future exploitation: The TRAST methodologies can inform institutional guidelines for co-curation, community participation and cultural governance.

Recommendation 3 - Make narrative authority a component of cultural inclusion

Cultural inclusion policies should address not only who has access to cultural institutions, but also who has influence over cultural representation.

TRAST distinguishes cultural visibility from cultural agency. Participants may become visible without gaining meaningful influence over how their histories and identities are interpreted. The project therefore have supported approaches in which communities can influence subject matter, narrative form, interpretation and, where appropriate, public circulation.

This principle is particularly relevant to museums, heritage organisations and public cultural programmes working with communities whose histories have been marginalised, stereotyped or insufficiently represented.

Potential stakeholders: Cultural institutions; public administrations; creative professionals; community organisations; researchers.

Governance level: Institutional to national.

Potential future exploitation: The project partners can decide to deepen their engagement with insular communities in order to strengthen cultural democracy locally.

Recommendation 4 - Develop participatory capacity within cultural institutions

Training and capacity-building should equip cultural professionals and public bodies with competencies in participatory facilitation, cultural sensitivity, accessible communication, ethical representation, shared decision-making and negotiation of authorship.

If anything the learnings from TRAST demonstrates that artistic expertise alone is not sufficient for participatory practice. Effective facilitation also requires relational credibility, trust, cultural knowledge, active listening, flexibility and the capacity to adapt methods. Community members may themselves hold expertise that should shape the process.

Potential stakeholders: Cultural institutions and networks; creative professionals; public administrations; academic and research institutions.

Governance level: Institutional

Potential future exploitation: The TRAST methodological model can be converted into different training modules, guidance materials and professional development activities.

Recommendation 5 - Recognise multimodal and transmedia participation as a policy resource

Cultural and social inclusion programmes should support multiple forms of cultural expression, including storytelling, film, sound, performance, objects, photography, movement, place-based work and digital/transmedia practices.

The project findings indicates that different media enable different forms of knowledge and participation. This is particularly relevant where language, literacy or conventional institutional formats create barriers to participation.

TRAST's Strategic Framework already identifies application opportunities in education, health and well-being, cultural tourism, urban planning and local governance.

Potential stakeholders: Cultural institutions; digital cultural actors; NGOs; civic society organisations such as schools and educational organisations; tourism organisations; local authorities.

Governance level: All levels.

Potential future exploitation: The ability to navigate the future is much about being able to foster multimodal and transmedia participation for different communities in society. This has been a driving motivation for the partnership and something that could open up for new partnerships nationally and on an European level.

Recommendation 6 – Treat consent, authorship and public visibility as continuing responsibilities

Cultural institutions and project funders should encourage procedures in which consent and representation are revisited when participant-generated material moves from a protected workshop environment into exhibitions, publications, archives, screenings or digital circulation.

TRAST evidence shows that participation and permission for subsequent public use are different decisions. Editing, selection, framing and artistic mediation also influence meaning.

This recommendation is particularly important when working with sensitive memories, historically marginalised communities or children.

Potential stakeholders: Cultural institutions; creative professionals; public administrations; community organisations; researchers.

Governance level: All levels.

Potential future exploitation: Develop a TRAST-inspired ethical checklist for documentation, editing, public presentation, attribution, consent and reuse.

Recommendation 7 - Adapt evaluation while retaining common principles

Funding and monitoring systems should allow different evaluation instruments to be used according to language, literacy, cultural context and emotional conditions, while retaining common evaluative questions.

The TRAST project used written questionnaires, oral feedback, reflection and observation in different combinations. The project found that standardising the questions can be more appropriate than requiring an identical instrument in every setting.

Evaluation should distinguish between participant experience, participation, artistic production, public reach and longer-term impact. Different contexts might require different evaluation formats, but these should be based on the same standardised principles.

Potential stakeholders: Public administrations; funders; cultural institutions; academic and research organisations.

Governance level: All levels.

Potential future exploitation: The TRAST learnings could be integrated in future evaluation design.

Recommendation 8 - Transfer principles rather than fixed activities

Future European and national programmes should support adaptation and knowledge transfer rather than requiring direct replication of cultural activities.

TRAST's methodological findings explicitly conclude that transferability should mean transferring principles rather than reproducing a workshop. The transferable principles include contextual grounding, trusted relationships, narrative agency, multimodal expression, negotiated visibility and reflective evaluation.

Potential stakeholders: Public administrations; funders; cultural institutions; academic and research organisations.

Governance level: All levels.

Potential future exploitation: This provides a particularly strong basis for future exploitation because the approach can potentially be adapted to different communities and sectors without imposing a culturally inappropriate format.

4. Governance and cross-sectoral application

The recommendations can be considered across three respectively complementary governance levels. Across these levels, TRAST identifies potential applications beyond culture itself, including the fields of education, health and well-being, cultural tourism, urban planning and local governance.

Macro level – European and national policy

At European and national level, the TRAST project can contribute to policy discussions concerning cultural participation, social inclusion, cultural rights, representation and regional development. The project's strategic framework proposes, among other measures, insularity-sensitive indicators, targeted support for participatory artistic initiatives, links between cultural participation and inclusion or well-being, and transnational cooperation involving underrepresented communities.

The main policy contribution at this level is therefore to strengthen recognition of *participatory cultural practice as part of wider inclusion policy*, rather than treating cultural participation exclusively as an output of the cultural sector.

Meso level - institutions and sectors

At an institutional level, TRAST can inform i.e. museum governance, curatorial practice, cultural programming, training, evaluation and partnerships. The projects strategic framework proposes community advisory structures, participatory curating, training, cross-sector partnerships and participatory approaches within public cultural institutions.

The TRAST findings add an important operational dimension: institutions need the competence and resources to work through trust, adaptation, accessibility and negotiated representation.

Micro level - local and grassroots practice

At the very local level, the emphasis should be on co-developing cultural interventions with affected communities, supporting grassroots initiatives and using storytelling, artistic practice and digital tools to increase opportunities for self-representation.

The project evidence also suggests that local organisations and existing community structures should be treated as assets. Several TRAST cases were strengthened by existing associations, cultural networks and community relationships rather than by creating entirely new structures.

5. Future exploitation of TRAST results

We have identified four pathways around which the future exploitation potential of TRAST can be organised.

5.1 Replication through adaptation

The project methodology can be adapted for communities experiencing different forms of cultural, social, geographical or institutional exclusion. Transfer should begin with contextual and community research rather than with the automatic adoption of a predetermined workshop format.

5.2 Institutionalisation

The TRAST partners and associated organisations can integrate the project's principles into cultural programming, curatorial practice, community engagement, evaluation and institutional governance. The project provides a basis for moving participatory practice from individual projects towards longer-term institutional competence and governance.

5.3 Capacity building and knowledge transfer

The TRAST methodological model can be developed into training materials for artists, cultural managers, curators, facilitators, educators, researchers and public administrations. The seven interconnected components identified by the Study - context, relationships, narrative agency, multimodal expression, co-creative translation, negotiated visibility, and reflection and adaptation - provide a useful basis for such materials.

5.4 Policy and programme development

The project partners can use the evidence and tools generated by TRAST when contributing to future cultural strategies, European project proposals, local development programmes, institutional policies and funding schemes.

The strongest exploitation opportunity therefore lies not in presenting TRAST as a single intervention to be reproduced, but as a *transferable approach to designing participatory cultural processes and policies*.

6. Policy recommendation assessment matrix

Below we have created an easy-to-navigate assessment matrix for organisations to use. The matrix should be read as an evidence and applicability assessment rather than a ranking. The evidence base is strongest for methodological conditions and participant experience; it is more limited for long-term societal outcomes.

Recommendation	Effectiveness / evidence	Sustainability	Transferability	Cross-sectorality	Participatory validity
Fund the conditions of participation	Strong methodological evidence	High	High	High	Strong
Embed community expertise and co-authorship	Strong	High	High	High	Strong
Strengthen narrative authority	Strong	High	High	High	Strong
Build institutional participatory capacity	Strong	High	High	High	Strong
Support multimodal/transmedia participation	Strong	Medium-high	High	Very high	Strong

Strengthen consent and negotiated visibility	Strong	High	High	High	Strong
Adapt evaluation instruments	Strong	High	Very high	Very high	Strong
Transfer principles rather than fixed activities	Strong methodological evidence	High	Very high	Very high	Strong

7. Final remarks

TRAST provides clear insights that participatory cultural practice can create conditions in which communities experiencing different forms of insularity participate more actively in the production, interpretation and representation of cultural knowledge. The project's contribution is not a single artistic technique or fixed workshop format. Rather, it lies in identifying the conditions under which co-creative practice can become meaningful: contextual grounding, trust, culturally responsive facilitation, participant agency, multimodal expression, recognition of community expertise, transparent artistic mediation, negotiated visibility and continuous reflection.

The findings also point to a broader understanding of cultural inclusion. Access to cultural institutions and programmes is important, but inclusion can also require the ability to influence cultural representation, contribute knowledge, shape narratives and participate in decisions concerning how personal and collective histories enter public cultural space.

For policymakers and cultural institutions, this suggests a shift from focusing exclusively on participation figures and visible outputs towards supporting the conditions that make meaningful participation possible. For the TRAST partners, the principal opportunity for future exploitation lies in transferring these principles into new cultural, social and institutional contexts while allowing methods to remain locally and culturally responsive.

The policy value of TRAST lies in connecting *co-creation with cultural agency, cultural participation with narrative authority, and artistic practice with wider processes of social and cultural inclusion*. Its recommendations provide a basis for continued collaboration among cultural institutions, creative professionals, community organisations, public administrations and research institutions beyond the duration of the project.

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