



**THE FESTIVAL** NEW EUROPEAN  
of the BAUHAUS

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**ARCHIPELAGO**  
OF POSSIBLE FUTURES

## ARCHIPELAGO OF POSSIBLE FUTURES SYMPOSIUM

An Initiative in the context of New European Bauhaus Festival 2024

Directed by Francesca Bria, Jose Luis de Vicente and Christophe de Jaeger

Supported by Erste Foundation

*“If the solution seems difficult to you, maybe even unfeasible, don’t go shouting out of the blue what is wrong. Don’t use the real to justify your failings, Instead, realize your dreams in order to deserve your reality” Edouard Glissant 1969*

### The Arts, Technology and Science in the European Ecosystem of Innovation

In October 2020, President of the European Commission Ursula Von Der Leyen announced the launch of an ambitious new initiative linked to the Union’s Green Deal agenda, the **New European Bauhaus**. In [her statement](#) the NEB is defined as “an interdisciplinary project that will create experimental spaces where art, culture, science, technology and society can mingle, imagine, test and demonstrate new solutions”.

The statement is the most explicit acknowledgment yet by the European Commission of practices and methodologies that have a long history, but have bloomed and become increasingly relevant in the last two decades. Several previous programs supported by the EC and its member states have shaped out an emerging territory of research, experimentation and production based on connecting the ecosystems of art, research and industry.

Artists, designers, architects, technologists, activists have become today important and productive communities of knowledge production; their output is increasingly understood as a form of research, pushing the boundaries of innovative practices. The divide that separated funding of culture and the arts, and funding of research are increasingly dissolving and becoming less stable. However, new alliances are needed between science, technology, artistic practices

and cultural institutions to make sure that arts, design, and creativity become fundamental elements for a more sustainable innovation model. These new alliances can create public value, putting the power of technological and scientific advancement at the service of tackling today's major challenges for industry and society.

While artistic research is different to scientific and academic Research, it produces distinct forms of impact that contribute to the overall technological and scientific exploration. Artistic research is increasingly present in hybrid research environments, entering into dialogue with other knowledge based communities, and is playing an important role in hybrid research initiatives, funded in many cases by Horizon Europe projects.

The contribution of the arts is key in facilitating new social imaginaries, transformational narratives for the twin green and digital transitions. Rethinking our relationship with communities, energy, food systems, materials, the shape of cities, mobility, algorithmic systems, will require more than policy regulation, technological innovation and industrial development. It will require a cultural reimagining of our everyday life.

The methods grounded in artistic practice, while occasionally disruptive and radical, can foster positive, pluralistic, and inclusive change. They reveal futures to come and the paths to achieve them. It's important that these methods and their consequences transcend art institutions and the artistic milieu and also inform product innovation in industry, helping shape the prototypes of sustainable products, services and policies of tomorrow. For example, artistic research initiatives are having an impact today in fields such as artificial intelligence, HPC and quantum computing, biotechnology, robotics and the circular economy, as well as fostering sustainable practices in architecture and design.

Along with science, research, policy and industry, artists, designers, architects and technologists have an important role to play in shaping the visions of change for a post-carbon society and a digital strategy in the public interest. Bringing together artists, engineers, scientists, designers, entrepreneurs, to develop and showcase new prototypes, will also create a range of educational activities that increase digital skills and the ecological awareness of citizens. This enables us to experiment new technology transfer models, new methods of co-creation with scientists and artists, generating new capabilities and skills that connect languages and practices and challenge the disciplinary boundaries.

***This is what science and art have always done in their history, generating a big leap forward for our societies. These forms of collaborations have the power to help Europe pave the way***

***towards the production and adoption of digital technologies, linked with arts, design and science, to achieve an ambitious and just green and digital transformation.***

### **A Confederation of Laboratories**

The New European Bauhaus does not emerge in a void. The EU has been for decades a global leader in producing publicly funded hybrid spaces of dialogue and collaboration between art, science, technology, ecology, and society.

Starting in the 1990s, with some pioneering initiatives in the previous two decades, Europe has produced an increasingly rich and diverse infrastructure of organization and institutions: art and technology festivals, art and architecture biennales, hackerspaces and citizen laboratories, digital fabrication laboratories, digital art museums, artistic residency programs at scientific institutions and research centers, art and culture foundations fostering interdisciplinary research, and other kinds of agents.

This infrastructure for artistic research spans the whole Union and has only been possible through the active financial support of EU and member states funding programs; it has been built through sustained political support, if not with a cohesive, strategic vision.

This archipelago of institutions and organizations, entering into its third decade of existence in multiple cases, has no parallel in any other region of the planet. It could be said that, unlike the American or Chinese models of Innovation, the EU's innovation policy has implicitly recognized as one of its features a natural relationship with Culture, in a context where public funding of the arts has always been considered a defining democratic principle.

EU Research Funding programs have also incorporated progressively Artistic Research methodologies and agents. It is not uncommon now for museums, art foundations, festivals, art, design and architecture studios or citizen laboratories to be partners in Horizon Europe Consortiums, along with academic departments, research centers or tech companies.

The creation of the pioneering STARTS program (Science, Technology and the Arts) in 2016 deserves special mention. It was launched with the explicit goal of fostering the impact of the arts in innovation ecosystems and to recognize innovative solutions and ideas originating in the space of art practice, with an impact beyond it. It has been very productive in spreading these methodologies, funding multiple pilot projects, normalizing art residencies in scientific institutions, and recognizing best practices through the STARTS Prize.

Beyond Horizon Europe, other EU programs from Creative Europe to Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) Initiatives, have supported this ecosystem of cultural laboratories. We still lack a

systemic, integral map of the multiple ways in which EU funding of the Arts is having an impact on the EU's Innovation Policy.

What has been mostly considered a series of exceptions, of experiments on the margins, has the potential to become a cohesive vision, a strategic program building on top of this existing infrastructure of institutions and organizations.

At the center of the New European Bauhaus initiative resides a powerful and inspiring statement: the ecological transition represented by the European Green Deal will require a strong contribution of the already existing European communities of the arts, science, technology, architecture, urbanism, humanities, and design.

We need a big shift in thinking, like the New European Bauhaus framework, to achieve this vision that calls for more collaboration bridging the science, technology, and arts divide, to build interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary models of social and environmental change.

### **An Archipelago of Possible Futures**

2024 marks a landmark and a transitional point in this trajectory. The end of the term of the current commission and the beginning of a new one after the June 2024 elections is an adequate moment to evaluate the successes and shortcomings of this model, and to shape a more ambitious and effective vision for the following cycle.

Four years after the launch of the New European Bauhaus, what impact has it had on the European communities of science, technology, architecture, and the arts? What models has it fostered and what is missing in the picture? How is it contributing already to the objectives of the European Green Deal?

The [STARTS](#) program, as an example, will advance in its current form until 2026, after 10 years of activity. What learnings can be derived from its methodologies and implementation? What impact has it produced in the ecosystems of the arts and technology in Europe and beyond, and what new links has it produced between them? To what extent has it validated the impact of arts and culture on democracy and innovation ecosystems? On the other hand, how can technology, new platforms, audiences, and economic models empower artistic and cultural experimentation? What are the challenges and opportunities ahead?

It is essential that the rich extensive knowledge emanating from the hundreds of experiences of the last 10 years, in the shape of arts and technology residencies, pilot projects, interdisciplinary collaborations and commissioning becomes the basis to shape and define a new, more ambitious

and impactful vision for the coming decade of the integration of the Arts into the EU's Innovation policy. The risks of not learning from these experiences is keeping the development of this space in a permanently embryonic stage, as a series of experiments that are cyclically rediscovered and restarted but never consolidated.

The goal of the Archipelago of Possible Futures Initiative is to produce **recommendations, guiding principles, and policy suggestions** in the shape of **a manifesto and a vision document** produced by the EU's communities of the Arts, Design, Architecture and Creative Technologies, to shape the next cycle of activities and programs.

### **Archipelago of Possible Futures: Program**

The **Archipelago of Possible Futures Symposium** held as part of the **New European Bauhaus Festival** gathers artists, designers, architects, technologists, curators and representatives of festivals, museums, biennales, design and architecture centers and more from all of the Union and beyond, to contribute to the production of a vision document and manifesto. It was preceded in 2023 by the creation of a Working Group made up of assisting in the development of a vision for New European Bauhaus Festival 2024.

For New European Bauhaus Festival 2024, it will host **10 Visions for an Alternative Everyday**, a gathering of voices of practitioners in art, design and architecture exemplifying the multiple paths of Artistic Research methodologies, and a series of **working sessions** featuring institution directors, curators, policymakers and noted professionals from the fields of art, design, architecture, science, technology and industry.

### **10 Visions for an Alternative Everyday**

The arts are today one of the most powerful laboratories of society. Artistic research is opening up dialogues with science, academia, government and industry to develop alternative visions of our daily life. Yet in a fragmented and uncertain world that constantly speculates on its futures, we need to ask ourselves about our potential to actually impact them. Must we just settle for the short horizon of the present or can the combined forces of art, science, and ecology offer us a different scenario? What new platforms can ensure genuine agency? Can we engage human creativity to foster a healthy and regenerative re-entanglement with the Earth's natural systems? The urgent need of truly transformative scenarios today pushes us to define the goals and conditions of actual transformation. How can the arts intensify our consensus on core goals, and advocate for our creative potential to implement new hopeful horizons?

Globally recognized practitioners from the arts, science, design and technology meet in this exceptional gathering of voices, to guide us on a journey through other visions of the possible. A Collection of narratives, images, and prototypes featuring **Studio Lemercier, Cooking Sections, Superflux, Future Farmers, Maarten Gielen, Peter de Cupere, Evelina Domnitch & Dmitri Gelfand, Vladan Joier, Hiyo Steyerl and Pavlos Antoniadis** The Gathering of Voices will be followed by a panel discussion moderated by curator **Manuel Cirauqui** on how to engage human creativity to reimagine a regenerative re-entanglement of human activity with the Earth's natural ecosystems, featuring **Ipollito Pastellini (2050.plus), Louise Haxthausen (UNESCO)** and **Eduardo Santana Castellón (Museum of Environmental Sciences, Guadalajara, Mexico)**.

### **Archipelago of Possible Futures Working Sessions**

A full day of discussions and exchange between organizations and professionals featuring institution directors, curators, policymakers and noted professionals from the fields of art, design, architecture, science, industry and creative technologies. These sessions will inform and provide the basis for the development of a manifesto and vision document for the next cycle.

Each 2-hour session will start with a **5-minute statement** from each of the participants, giving shape to a specific suggestion, formulating a provocation, requesting a policy measure, or proposing a principle to follow. This will be followed by a **1 hour open discussion** opening up to the full assembly of participants for consolidating and critiquing ideas and principles.

#### **Working Session 1**

##### **ARCHIPELAGO OF SYSTEM CHANGE LABS**

**Coordinated by Christophe De Jaeger**

This session is about **Laboratories scaling collaborations in the Nexus of Arts, Technology & Ecology**. It focuses on sharing insights on fostering collaboration between the arts, science, technology, and ecology, drawing from the many programs funded by public institutions (like Creative Europe, STARTS, EIT Culture & Creativity Platform) and programs funded by private foundations or hybrid public-private spaces. Laboratories are tackling some of the main NEB themes such as the built environment, the production of energy, food, water, and planning sustainable cities and economies. Labs experiment a new model of ecological, environmental, and social innovation that allows communities and citizens to engage, for example with the organization of energy communities to self-produce clean and renewable energy, or with sustainable social housing and ecological neighborhoods. Starting from the achievements of the NEB movement, we want to imagine new socioeconomic and environmental configurations. Design and project social and economic pathways that open new and radical possibilities for the future. ***Labs can be seen as new public spaces, new sustainable cultural infrastructures,*** showcasing how artistic research and experimentation can open unpredicted innovation

trajectories and novel forms of adoption and diffusion of innovation that addresses key societal challenges. The collaboration between technology and science centers, artistic practices, and local communities can be key to achieve new outcomes.

**Eva Franch i Gilabert**, architect

**Aric Chen**, Director Nieuwe Instituut

**Veronika Liebl**, managing director Ars Electronica

**Fernando Cucchiatti**, manager Barcelona Supercomputer Center (BSC)

**Florian Schneider**, Professor Trondheim, Academy of Fine Arts

**Vera Winthagen**, EU Policy lab New European Bauhaus

**Lucas Evers**, Head of Make Programme & Lead Open Wetlab, Waag

**Hedwig Fijen**, Director Manifesta

**Gaia Danese**, European External Action Service, European Commission

**Grégory Castéra**, curator KANAL Centre Pompidou Brussels

**Evelina Domnitch & Dmitri Gelfand**, artists

**Amy Franceschini**, Future Farmers, artists

## **Working Session 2**

### **A EUROPEAN ENDOWMENT FOR ARTS, TECHNOLOGY AND ECOLOGY: INSTRUMENTS, FUNDING & INVESTMENT**

**Coordinated by Francesca Bria**

This session will reflect about the role of arts and culture in Europe's Innovation Policy and the need for long-term ambitious investments. It will discuss the role of policy in fostering arts, science, and technology integration, reflecting on new instruments and investment models needed to leverage private and public funding in a synergetic way. For instance, Europe needs a new kind of publicly supported **European Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts** that works to increase the innovation capacity of Europe, based on a multidisciplinary and experimental approach. The endowed funds (a blend of public grants and private investment) should enable Europe to take a longer-term view and develop ambitious models of innovation that can be replicated across the Union and with global partners. The endowment/Fund should have independence and ability to work across different sectors to bring together ideas from a wide range of perspectives, and to assume a greater burden of risk than other smaller or more fragmented initiatives.

**Luca Perego**, Head of Unit Innovation and EIT European Commission

**Adriaan Eeckels**, JRC SciArt Project Leader 

**Bernd Fesel**, CEO EIT Culture and Technology

**Peter Friess**, Project Officer STARTS, European Commission, DG Connect

**Gerfried Stocker**, Director Ars Electronica  
**Marc Brandsma**, CEO Cult Tech Vienna  
**Prodromos Tsiavos**, Onassis Foundation  
**Bettina Kames**, Director Light Arts Space Berlin  
**Vittorio Loreto**, Director Sony Arts & Science  
**Rosa Ferrè**, Co-director TBA 21  
**Maria Grazia Mattei**, Director MEET Milan

### **Working Session 3**

#### **VISIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

**Coordinated by José Luis de Vicente**

This session is about **addressing the crisis of Imagination and public participation**, by imagining a new platform for participation, knowledge creation, and debate on how arts and culture can help overcome societal inertia, reimagining forms of knowledge production and governance, reinvigorating public spaces, educational practices, and public awareness campaigns. This session will be projecting future scenarios that can help people not only to plan for an uncertain future but to actively create it and shape it and will be used to provide a platform to unleash collective imagination about the NEB vision, encouraging people to imagine freely, and trigger new thinking of the future. This approach highlights the importance of community engagement and collaborative projects, sharing strategies from NEB projects and worldwide examples that can be replicated across Europe and globally.

**Stephan Petermann**, architect

**Manuel Cirauqui**, curator

**Alexander Mankowsky**, futurist

**Maria Iglesias**, European Commission DG EAC

**John Palmesino**, Territorial Agency, London

**Olga Sismanidi**, Policy Officer DG EAC

**Jose-Carlos Mariategui**, founder Alta Tecnología Andina – ATA

**Dirk Snauwaert**, Director, Wiels Museum of Contemporary Art, Brussels

**Anab Jain**, Superflux

**Caterina Benincasa**, JRC SciArt Project Leader

**Pierre Françoise Marteau**, Cult Tech Vienna



**The participants are asked to prepare a five minutes statement that will address one of more of the issues highlighted in the description of the sessions and here:**

- 1. What works and what doesn't in this Arts and Tech multidisciplinary collaboration:** Reflect and share insights based on your practice of, including the way we do residencies, prototyping, commissioning, pilot projects, community engagement, and scaling effective and positive outcomes. Our aim is to establish a dynamic, timeless repository of sustainable innovative practices and pilots accessible to all as a soothing antidote in times of uncertainty, reinforcing the transformative power of alternative narratives about the future. What skills, tools, knowledge infrastructures and perceptions are required to not merely survive, but to radically transform in the forthcoming years?
- 2. Opening up public technological and scientific infrastructures for cultural and artistic experimentations addressing societal challenges:** there are virtuous examples of collaboration between artists and creators with scientific Institutions like [CERN](#) or Supercomputing facilities and scientific infrastructures such as the Supercomputing Center in Barcelona and the High Performance Computing Center (Euro HPC) in Stuttgart. This kind of collaboration can involve a variety of technological and scientific innovations, from particle physics, to quantum computing to AI and next generation chips. Accelerating the digital transition is not enough, we must also give it a direction, that is about obtaining social and environmental sustainability. Opening up and widen access to the EU's world class supercomputing resources for artists, creative startups, and the broader creative community as part of a EU initiative would be highly beneficial to experiment new directions for the adoption of technological change in society.
- 3. Strengthening Global Experimentation for a Sustainable Future, embracing the Global South:** Debating visions for large-scale experimentation to redefine our missions in the face of current polycrises. This needs to forge strong partnerships with innovators, policymakers, community organizations, scientific and technological centers, arts foundations, labs, and private investors, with the idea of bringing great ideas, new flows of capital and talented people together to address our key global challenges. The network of labs should be global and open to in particular the Global South. In a complex, evolving, and increasingly contested world, the aim is to envision a forward-looking European mission that transcends Eurocentrism and embraces the Global South. This vision emphasizes multilateralism, international solidarity, and engagement while considering geographic, economic, and cultural diversity. Strengthening global cooperation to address the pressing challenges of climate change, migration, security threats, AI, and pandemics is crucial. Tasked with shaping a positive outlook for global collaboration and diversified relations, the younger generation, unburdened by postcolonial legacies and tensions, will play a vital role in bolstering a new kind of movement worldwide, especially in the Global South. Adopting a perspective that prioritizes the Global South could greatly benefit Europe's future, promoting a more inclusive and cooperative global landscape.