

“60 Minutes for Fair Culture – How to make supply chains in the book industry fair and sustainable?”

Summary of the results of a joint Workshop with international experts at Buchmesse Frankfurt 2019 on Friday, 18th October 2019

The concept of fair trade has become an integral part of the food and textile industries, established to combat poverty and inequality. Yet, inequalities also persist in the cultural sector and creative industries, particularly between countries of the Global South and the Global North, as highlighted in the [UNESCO Global Report 2018 "RE I SHAPING CULTURAL POLICIES"](#). The report evaluates the implementation of the *2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* and also shows evidence how the distribution of cultural goods and services increasingly takes place in digital networks, leading to a transformation of value chains.

One key objective of the **2005 UNESCO Convention** is the promotion of a balanced flow of cultural goods and services and the mobility of artists and cultural workers. In order to overcome existing inequalities, article 16 of the UNESCO Convention calls for “**preferential treatment**”. In particular industrialized countries with strong economies – as, for example, Germany and other EU-Member States who are Parties to this Convention – are called on to develop and implement policies to reduce existing trade barriers, promote the mobility of cultural workers and facilitate access to international markets.

Promoting fair and sustainable trade and exchange in the culture sector and creative industries, thus also contributes to implementing the **UN Agenda 2030**, especially the Sustainable Development Goals "8: Decent work and economic growth", "10: Reduced inequalities" and "16: Peace, justice and strong institutions".

Against this background, the German Commission for UNESCO and the Frankfurt Invitation Programme of the Frankfurter Buchmesse organized an interactive workshop at the Frankfurt Buchmesse 2019 on “**60 Minutes for Fair Culture – How to make supply chains in the book industry fair and sustainable?**”

International experts and practitioners – authors, publishers as well as representatives of publishing houses, book fairs and UNESCO Creative Cities from all world regions (e.g. Argentina, Egypt, France, Germany, Ghana, Indonesia, Mexico, Morocco, Pakistan, Philippines, etc.) – discussed during the workshop how to apply the concept of “fairtrade” to the field of books and literature, taking into account specificities and challenges of the sector.

Key points of discussion of three thematic working groups, addressing inter alia the international book industry, governments as well as state parties of the 2005 UNESCO Convention:

(a) How to reach the audience and improve access to (international) markets?

Thematic discussion hosted and led by Maximiliano Papandrea, head of an independent publisher *Editorial Sigilo* based in Buenos Aires, specialised in fiction, non-fiction, comic and illustrated books and active member of the Feria de Editores (FED), an independent book fair founded by small publishers.

- Strategies for **reaching new audiences** are to be developed, especially young people with a different culture of access – through schools, libraries, etc.
- Identified need to collaborate with organizations in the **public and private sector**
- **Support and build up regional festivals and book fairs that can provide access to local (and new) audiences** and that help circulate literature within a region
- Create funding programs for **translation** especially for **local and minority languages** to assure diversity and access to local content (e.g. within language areas and regions as pan African, Latin America, etc.)
- **Support a South-South Dialogue driven by the global south** – transform and overcome existing hierarchies in global cooperation
- There is a strong need of research and new sources of information for cultural practitioners – **improve documentation** inter alia of existing resources and programmes for fair cooperation (e.g. “The book trade of the world” trend analysis series published by Taubert and Weidhaas / Frankfurt Buchmesse from 1972 to 1984)

(b) Policies and regulations for fair trade and international exchange

Thematic discussion hosted and led by Kenza Sefrioui, founder of *En Toutes Lettres* a publisher specialized in essays written by journalists, researchers and writers about social issues related to Morocco in French and Arabic.

- **Importance of political leadership towards international players** – support for local writers to avoid market domination by big platforms (e.g. Netflix dominates market – authors migrate to script writing as this is economically more beneficial than writing fiction)
- **Stricter rules and prosecution** to protect **intellectual property rights** and **fight piracy** in the book sector which requires also awareness rising
- **Improve the support to local and endangered authors**
- Raise **awareness** of the **value of locally generated content** and the necessity of **ensuring access to it** (valorisation)
- **Create support schemes for translation especially for smaller and local languages** to overcome still persisting dominance of Anglophone literature, **building on successful models** such as the initiative [TRADUKI](#)
- **Need of minimum standards for salaries and working conditions for translators**
- Proposals for legislation: **fixed book prices** (e.g. France, Germany, Norway) and **reduced value added tax rate on print and eBooks** (e.g. Germany, Norway) as well as preferential schemes / rules for support of local content (e.g. prompt libraries and universities to buy locally produced books, Norwegian book acquisition fund is an inspiring practice)

- **Preferential treatment** confirmed as a key instrument for “**fair culture**” and “**fair access**”
- **Training and capacity building of decision makers and public officials** – better understanding needed of the special **value of cultural goods and services, a fair trade approach** and the necessity of special and specific treatment for these goods and services (“dual nature” argument)
- Create a **fair trade label for books** to set standards for fair trade and cooperation in the book industry - including all stages of the value chain of books and literature e.g. working conditions, remuneration of translators and authors, trading via local fairs and distribution networks, environmental friendly production, etc.

(c) Digitization - Challenges and opportunities for “fair trade & exchange” in the book industry?

Thematic discussion hosted and led by **Ama Dadson**, founder and CEO of AkooBooks Audio, Ghana’s first publisher and digital distributor of African audiobooks and winner of the AEA (African Entrepreneurship Award) 2018.

- The book industry is currently driven by very traditional formats and regulations – need of **new approaches** (laws and policies) and more fluid structures as well as new formats and technologies, especially **to reach young generations** which are the majority of the population in Global South countries
- Potential of **mobile phone providers and platforms** should be tapped to reach local audiences to a greater extent especially in global south. Telecom companies act de facto as gate keepers – hence the need for **affordable fees** and “listening royalties” (e.g. flat rates or schemes with daily, weekly, monthly “reading/listening” deals)
- “**We want to listen to our own voices**” - **enable and empower local publishers and authors** to benefit from **new technologies** and to use **new formats of traditional cultural practices like storytelling** or music (e.g. **audio-books**)
- **New sense of “ownership”** requests new products and services (e.g. shared reading platforms like those created by the international NGO “world reader” – while these are also detrimental to the development of viable local markets)
- **Media and information literacy** are key to also make younger generations understand the “**value of cultural products and services** ” in the **digital environment** (e.g. tablets in schools)
- “Reward people for reading” - try to **fight piracy by affordability and variation of distribution channels**
- **Promote the idea of “fair and sustainable culture” in book industry** (e.g. use of eco-paper, awareness for fair cooperation and pay, etc.)

Further information on the Initiative of the German Commission for UNESCO: “[Fair Trade for Culture](#)”

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