

Call for Papers for a Special Issue Proposal for the International Journal of Cultural Policy (deadline 15.12.2025)

Local-National-European Policies for Culture in Non-Urban Areas: Tensions, Strategies, and Needs (eds.: Julius Heinicke, Nancy Duxbury, Helena Walther)

The cultural and creative sector has always been a driving force in community building, strengthening democracy, contributing to local economies, and initiating and supporting transformation processes. This is especially relevant in places where culture and creativity – a broad umbrella including artistic practice, cultural and creative industries (CCIs), heritage, socio-culture, and other culture-based creative work – spans from safeguarding and preservation to revitalisation and innovation. Cultural policy research has tended to focus on cities with particular attention to major metropolis areas as vibrant creative milieux and hubs of cultural expression, production, and innovation. In the shadows lie the “non-urban” areas – smaller cities, villages, rural, remote and so-called peripheral areas – from where a constituency, but also vibrancy of the cultural and creative sector works but which have received much less attention to their needs, characteristics and potential.

The beginnings of rural culture originated from the communal organisation of village structure. This is reflected in projects that are closely linked to the reality of everyday-life, needs and the resources of the respective rural areas. The art and culture of rural areas has an inherent transformative power that needs to be supported, nurtured and, in some places, reactivated in the face of major global crises and challenges. Rural areas also represent a special environment for innovation, involving processes that may differ from those in cities, as they are linked with the local areas, and their specific structures. This is visible within traditional practices as well as in a range of contemporary culture-based creative initiatives that have found fertile ground in non-urban areas, inspired by and contributing to the evolution of culture in these places – and more widely.

The cultural, artistic and creative potential of non-urban areas has been the focus of cultural policy strategies for a number of years. Various EU programmes (e.g., Creative Europe), national and regional policies and programmes have aimed to support or strengthen artistic, cultural and creative work in rural areas. However, the cultural policy strategies behind these programmes are very diverse and varied, and a coherent overarching policy framework has not emerged. Often the actors at the different levels (local, regional, national, European) have limited knowledge or may not even be aware of the strategies of the other levels, or the responsibilities are not clear.

In addition, ideas and visions differ with regard to certain concepts (culture, gender) and their respective social significance, leading to challenges in discussing and initiating transformative processes at a broader level. The different perceptions of culture and its significance is also reflected

in the inclusion of culture as a dimension in other policies. For example, policies on education, youth, territorial development, or innovation may address culture, influencing the CCIs and broadening the policy areas relevant for their actors: However, conversely culture may not be fully recognised and integrated in these policies, especially at the regional level, with guidance for this lacking.

In order to address these challenges, cultural mappings are carried out in many places, which depict the cultural landscape of a region and its players and could be translated into cultural policy strategies and visions. Various forms of bottom-up participation are also devised in order to articulate and address the needs and wishes of the population, but channels to move from ideas to policy and implementation are often not clear. Roundtables and policy briefs attempt to link the various cultural policy objectives at national and EU level and to bring their representatives into dialogue, with some (more limited) attention to subnational cultural policies.

In this journal, we aim to address three dimensions:

1. The respective needs of rural areas and their cultural and creative agents to develop their potential, and the cultural policy implementations of this at various levels.
2. Cultural policy concepts for developing the potential of non-urban areas, and the challenges of different understandings of terms, concepts and objectives at the respective regional, national and European levels.
3. Alignments and tensions regarding coordination of local-regional-national-European cultural policies, with examples of mapping, bottom-up models and other case studies that illuminate or address this issue.

Submission Process and Timeline

Event	Description	Deadline
Deadline for Abstracts	Please send an email with your abstract (400 – 500 words, English language) to walther@uni-hildesheim.de . The abstract should indicate the theoretical framework, methodology and the intended findings/contribution. Please also include a brief CV highlighting your publications and review experience.	15.12.2025
Review and comments	Review process from the guest editors Julius Heinicke, Nancy Duxbury and Helena Walther. You will get feedback if your article abstract fits in the concept of the Special Issue.	29.12.2025
Article Deadline	If our special issue is accepted and your article selected, you will be invited to submit a full article (6000 – 8000 words) for peer review (one guest editor and one external blind reviewer).	1.04.2026

Article final Deadline	After getting back your feedback, you have time to incorporate the comments and finalise your article.	1.5.2026
Special Issue	Planned publication of the Special Issue in 2026.	1.6.2026

We are looking forward to your submissions and are happy to help if you have any questions.

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