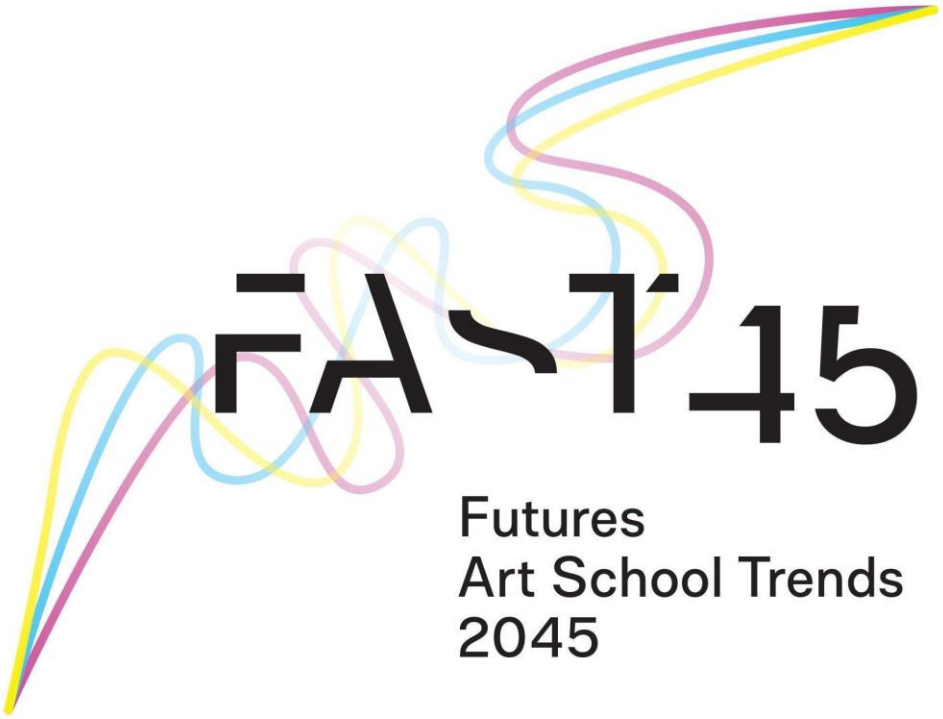

The Future of Higher Arts Education

Possibilities to Shape a Trajectory

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Scenarios and Policy Recommendations

Funded by
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"For any decision you make, you're using an image of the future based on what you expect is going to happen.
And if your images of the future are fuzzy and incoherent, then your decisions will be fuzzy and incoherent."
(Reed D. Reiner)

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Introduction

Students born in 2023, destined to graduate in 2045 from Higher Arts Education Institutions (HAEIs), will encounter a Higher Arts Education (HAE) landscape vastly different from today's settings. While the precise contours of future HAEIs are unknown in 2023, one aspect is clear — there is a unique chance to shape its trajectory. Rather than advocate for today's strengths and paradigms adhering to current practices and knowledge, HAEIs should leverage their inherent capacities for creativity and imagination to build their trajectory to the future.

The Erasmus+ Knowledge Alliance FAST45 (Future Arts School Trends 2045) embodies this forward-thinking spirit. By adopting a futures studies lens, FAST45 endeavours to envisage, delineate, and influence a realm wherein the arts — in participation, education, and research — become an integral part and central pivot for higher education and society..

This reveals the question of how it is possible to anticipate this unknown future for HAE. Furthermore, what kind of knowledge, structures, or policies should HAEIs establish in 2023 to consider the prospective needs of future societies in 2045? How do present signals, acting as forces or drivers, propel HAEIs, their research, educational programmes, or third mission activities towards shaping its unknown future?

Global megatrends such as digitisation, demographic shifts, the climate crisis, a changing labour market, economic shifts, and civil and equality movements compel HAEIs to reimagine their trajectories. What speculative visions and dreams of possible and preferable, sustainable and desirable futures could inspire HAEIs to act and transform their existence in relation to their diverse stakeholders and society?

At the core of these inquiries lies the fundamental mission of FAST45 — to envision HAE in a future world transformed by the societal, digital, and environmental transition. The core question that FAST45 grapples with is why the sector should address how these transitions reveal new needs for educational opportunities, study programs, and research incentives at the crossroads of higher arts education, artistic research, and innovation in society.

A good stepping stone to encounter all these questions is to develop future scenarios based on broad consultation of stakeholders and experts. These scenarios are the starting point for formulating recommendations for decision-makers and policymakers.

A long-term perspective

Effective politics is characterised by its ability to formulate compelling visions and devise strategies, embracing a long-term mindset that extends beyond immediate concerns. Likewise, successful policymaking takes advantage of its capacity to make well-informed decisions grounded in valid and reliable data. All this becomes progressively challenging as plans extend further into the future, given the inherent difficulty in empirically verifying forward-looking and scenario-building.

In the realm of futures studies, the validation of forward-thinking relies on techniques and approaches that prioritise epistemological criteria such as coherence and consistency. While empirical data remains a cornerstone of research, especially in proving the validity of future projections, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of its application in contexts extending over long-term timeframes. Nevertheless, some methods help prove the validity of future projections.

One illustrative method is the widely recognised Future Forecasts technique, prominently featured in climate change research. This method involves employing mathematical tools to extrapolate data from the past that appears plausible or probable under specific conditions. Another prevalent method, Trend Analysis, relies on extrapolating empirical data and finds extensive use in futures studies. Notably, this method integrates concrete empirical data and draws insights based on more general data from social research studies. These methods collectively demonstrate that political decision-makers can largely lean on valid data for long-term policies even when planning for periods exceeding 3 or 5 years into the future.

An inherent dilemma and challenge

In her speech to the European Parliament on 12 September 2023, discussing the current state of the Union, Ursula von der Leyen outlined an agenda that, in many aspects, aligns with the foresightedness required for strategic political planning. She identified key areas and addressed topics expanding beyond the typical scope of day-to-day politics. Notable among these are the European Green Deal, a European Wind Power package, NextGenerationEU, Qualified Migration, and the Digital Transition.

The inherent dilemma within the political system lies in the essential need for long-term political-strategic planning, as emphasised by speeches such as Ursula von der Leyen's. However, the challenge lies in the difficulty of executing such prolonged political strategies due to the inherently short-term nature of political mandates. The pace of day-to-day politics remains constrained by the relatively short duration of legislative periods, seldom exceeding four years.

One potential approach to mitigate the effects of this dilemma involves entrusting the development of future scenarios to the community of players and stakeholders within the sector. This delegation occurs within the parameters established by politics, recognising the limitations imposed by the shorter political timelines. The European Union employs this method, among others, by implementing corresponding funding programs to organise community-led platforms, roundtables, and knowledge alliances.

FAST45 is an EU-funded Erasmus+ Knowledge Alliance designed to support and advise the democratic-political process of shaping the future, specifically focusing on Higher Arts Education (HAE). To ensure a well-rounded infusion of internal and external expertise, the FAST45 consortium deliberately chose from the project's outset to include stakeholders from various professional fields. This inclusive approach involves partners from regionally anchored cultural institutions, the creative industries, tech sector companies, and representatives from the HAE sector.

Facilitating strategic decisions

This document presents futures scenarios and policy recommendations for HAE, addressing the imperative of facilitating policy-making and strategic decisions that effectively confront future challenges. Insights drawn from futures research assist in pinpointing and delineating influential factors, offering a foundation of reliable data.

The primary responsibility for shaping and implementing strategic decisions for the continued advancement of institutions falls on those within the higher arts education (HAE) sector, encompassing educators, students, senior management, and stakeholders. Policymakers, in turn, are responsible for establishing the framework conditions that empower sector participants to steer changes that meet the needs and requisites for developing and sustaining a future higher art education landscape.

The FAST45 project assumes a dual role in this context. Firstly, it establishes connections between futures research and the HAE sector by sharing expertise, developing experiments, fostering dialogues, or disseminating insights. Secondly, the FAST45 project addresses the political sphere by providing considerations and recommendations developed within community-led efforts to help establish the framework conditions that help the sector to steer its trajectory to the future.

Methodological framework

At the project's outset, the FAST45 consortium discussed what methods and tools would empower the project partners to craft their work. In pursuit of the objective of developing futures scenarios forming the basis for reliable policy recommendations, the consortium chose for a structured breakdown into three distinct phases: trendspotting, collaborative visioning and strategising for the future.

The consortium partners delved into existing research and expertise in the initial phase. They interviewed numerous stakeholders to identify current trends and primary drivers of change shaping the futures of HAEIs. Subsequently, the consortium launched the Arts School Futures Labs, where collectives comprising students, educators, researchers, and HAEI stakeholders collaborated. Using insights from the initial phase as a springboard, their task was to craft future images that inspire reflection and critical thinking. These future images became the foundational elements for developing four future scenarios. In the final phase of the project. These future scenarios served as seeds for policy recommendations, providing a roadmap and compass for a future-conscious and future-shaping Higher Arts Education sector.

The FAST45 project scaffolds its design on concepts and techniques from futures studies, futures research, and arts-based thinking. The project aims to strengthen the HAEIs' futures consciousness and futures literacy, the ability to imagine and anticipate different futures, understand the link between the future and the present, and act towards preferred futures (Miller, 2018). The methodology to achieve this aim builds on futures thinking and testing of methods undertaken as part of the Arts School Futures Labs.

Within the project's methodological framework, the innovative approach of Futures Arts School Labs plays a pivotal role in fostering collaborative creation and reflection on futures images. In these labs, stakeholders from HAEIs actively contribute data, enabling the consortium partners to formulate comprehensive futures scenarios for HAEIs. Hence, the Futures Arts School Lab's approach stands as the first pillar in shaping the overall methodology of the project.

A second pillar is an academic work on the social and cultural embedding of higher education systems and scholarly endeavours to develop innovative methods for futures thinking in HAEIs. The FAST45 Learning Platform supports the public presentation of live research. Over two years, interviews, workshops and lectures were delivered, archived and accessed through the platform.

Insights from the wide-ranging and multidisciplinary field of futures studies is the third pillar of the methodological framework. Consequently, the results of the FAST45 project are essentially inspired by the three principles that Roy Amara presented in 1981 as *Basics of Futures Thinking* (Amara, 1981): (1) The future is unpredictable because there is no single future but innumerable alternative futures; (2) The future is not a predetermined, fixed, or inevitable fate, even when we cannot see alternatives; (3) The future can be influenced because it takes shape due to our choices, actions, and non-actions in the present.

For more details on the methodological framework, please consult the Arts School Futures Lab Guidelines (add reference).

How to read this document

The following text serves as a discussion document, presenting four future scenarios and two sets of guidances. Its primary objective is stimulating dialogue, instigating action, and driving information. The primary audience for this document is policymakers navigating the intricate institutional and political landscapes at the local, regional, national, and European levels.

Beyond politicians, this document also speaks to senior management and stakeholders in HAEIs, cultural and creative sector, research and development hubs, corporations, business partners, and social-cultural organisations. These key players consistently contribute to the advancement and revitalisation of the Higher Education sector. Additionally, the FAST45 consortium aims for this document to reach the community of committed citizens interested in the tasks and processes outlined in this document.

The four Future Scenarios outlined below stem from the collaborative efforts in the Arts School Futures Labs. As highlighted earlier, these four scenarios serve as a cornerstone and integral feature in developing a dynamic agenda for strategic planning, shaping the future of the Higher Arts Education landscape.

Likewise, the document concludes with two sets of guidance. The first set derives from analysing each scenario, offering policymakers and decision-makers tools to contribute to the transformation of Higher Arts Education, aligning it with the evolving needs and challenges specific to a particular scenario. The second set concentrates on key lessons shared across all scenarios. This set of guidance, labelled as policy recommendations, demonstrates how

policymakers and decision-makers can bolster Higher Arts Education's resilience and steer the sector’s trajectory towards the future.

Four Future Scenarios for Higher Arts Education

Scanning the horizon

The FAST45 initiative aims to promote futures thinking as a tool for reflection and strategic planning within Higher Arts Education Institutions (HAEI). To ensure the uptake and relevance of the work done, co-creation was vital throughout the process, involving a broad range of stakeholders in each phase.

In the first phase, the consortium conducted more than 60 interviews with experts on arts and design practice, arts education, futures thinking, research, policy making, and beyond. The consortium also gathered literature on potential futures for HAEIs and artist employment.

Using the gathered information, a knowledge base named the FAST45 Arts School Futures Data Map was created. This online tool accessible through the FAST45 learning platform presents potential futures, emphasising artistic, educational, and socio-economic trends.

In the second phase, a futures workshop approach for HAEIs, Arts School Futures Lab, was developed based on fifteen test labs. Twelve Arts School Futures Labs were undertaken throughout Europe in addition to a Summer School in Zürich. These sessions encouraged collaboration between students, staff, and external partners, providing a structured approach to crafting a broad range of potential futures for HAEIs in Europe.

Data analysis of the Arts School Futures Labs

The Arts School Futures Data Map and the outputs of Arts School Futures Labs and the Summer School constituted an extensive and rich corpus of data for crafting four scenarios that inspired discussion about the potential futures of higher arts education.

As shown in Table 1, the scenario-making process began with the entire consortium classifying the accumulated raw data (2561 items) by selecting 1145 relevant items for the analysis. The selected items were sorted into categories; mega-trends and trends or emerging issues and weak signals (Analysis 1). These *building blocks* underwent three primary analyses. First, they were assigned to general domains of the HAEIs' operational environment: culture, economy, education, energy, environment, governance, politics, population, technology, and others (Analysis 2a). Then, the blocks were located in relation to different dimensions of HAEI, such as administration and management, art and design practice, curricula and programmes, learning and interaction, mindsets and values, organisation and facilities, relations and communication, research and resources and sustainability (Analysis 2b). In addition, they were considered in reference to pre-selected themes: acceleration and transformation, adaptability and flexibility, identity and ownership, interdisciplinarity, neoliberalism, polarisation, posthumanism, social and cultural diversity, well-being, and others (Analysis 2c). Next (Analysis 3a), the building blocks were estimated regarding their impact on HAEIs and the level of uncertainty for HAEIs. Following that (Analysis 3b), *the futures triangle* (Inayatullah, 2008) was employed as an

analytical framework to consider their position in time as regards three categories of influence: weight of the past, push of the presence, or pull of the future. Then (Analysis 3c), the building blocks were assorted in line with Jim Dator's (2009) *future archetypes*: continued growth, collapse, disciplined, or transformative. The fourth and final analysis phase examined the blocks by content in reference to broader domains of the operational environment (Analysis 4a) and considered them as regards the potential impact (hinder strong/hinder weak/ support strong/support weak) on various dimensions of HAEIs (Analysis 4b).

Crafting scenarios

Project partners in the six HAEIs undertook the four analysis phases, and the categorisation of data was done based on each partner's individual interpretations. Building upon these analyses, a selected team convened for a three-day intensive session at the University of the Arts Helsinki to strategically choose key points of interest for scenario writing from the analysed building blocks. Their focus was primarily on the strong impact factors identified in analyses 3a and 3b, hindering and supporting strong outcomes.

The result of this effort is the creation of four scenarios for HAEIs' potential futures, derived from the original dataset, highlighting shared and distinctive insights. These scenarios were designed to be explorative and change-oriented, focusing on European contexts from the viewpoint of HAEIs. The goal was to pay attention to 1) some of the most critical change drivers, 2) how arts practices, teaching, and research will evolve and transform, 3) the future roles of HAEIs in society, and 4) changes in facilities, organisation, and governance of HAEIs.

The scenarios reflect the intricate balance between frequency in the data and the synthesised understanding from the analyses. Subsequently, the team considered the identified ideas and formulated the core concepts of the four scenarios: *Open Spaces, Slow Ecolife, Phygital Frontiers, and Profitable Endeavours*. Each of these scenarios encapsulates:

- dominant drives and trends,
- the operational environment description,
- the journey towards that envisioned future,
- a portrait of the higher arts education realm, and
- depictive persons.

Consortium members and stakeholders from network organisations (AEC and ELIA) validated the scenarios to ensure their credibility and relevance. The feedback helped the team refine the scenarios for this publication.

Four distinct scenarios

Foresight and strategic planning often employ a methodology that hinges on developing four distinct future scenarios. This approach has been favoured for several reasons: (1) In its vast complexity, the future can be challenging to distil into narratives. Four scenarios provide an optimal balance between capturing the nuances of potential futures and ensuring that each narrative remains clear and understandable for stakeholders. (2) Creating four distinct scenarios

helps to take on varied perspectives, ensuring a more holistic view of potential challenges and opportunities. (3) Addressing a set of four potential futures enables organisations to prepare for various outcomes more effectively. Stakeholders are equipped to adapt to unexpected shifts and changes by considering a spectrum of possibilities.

While various methods exist for scenario planning, crafting four distinct scenarios has repeatedly demonstrated its value in offering a comprehensive yet concise and workable view of the future.

How to Use and Interpret Scenarios

Scenarios are powerful tools for envisioning potential paths the future might take. They are *not* predictions but co-created imaginative constructs that illuminate a range of possibilities based on current knowledge and uncertainties. Below is a brief guide on how to interpret and engage with them:

- **Explore with an open mind:** Recognize that scenarios are explorative and speculative, not prescriptive. Approach them with curiosity and openness, allowing for reflection on each scenario's implications without getting fixated on the likelihood of any single one.
- **Understand the context:** Always be aware of the key assumptions and driving forces that underpin each scenario. These give insight into the foundation upon which the scenarios are built and can help contextualise their narratives.
- **Probe for implications:** As you delve into each scenario, ask yourself: What are the consequences for my organisation or sector? What opportunities or challenges might emerge? This active engagement will make the scenarios more relevant to your context.
- **Compare and contrast:** Look across all the scenarios presented. What themes or trends are consistent? Where do they diverge? This comparative approach can unearth deeper insights about broader shifts and potential pivot points.
- **Strategise and plan:** Use the scenarios as a backdrop for strategic conversations. They can guide discussions on risk management, innovation opportunities, or resource allocation. The goal is *not* to react to every scenario, but to be more prepared and adaptive in the face of uncertainty.

In summary, future scenarios are both a lens to view potential futures and a compass to navigate them. Engage with them actively, reflect on their implications, and let them inform, but not dictate, your decisions.

Scenario 1 - Open Spaces

Abstract of the scenario

In 2045, higher arts education is vital to fostering creativity and innovation in society. It strives to create open and transdisciplinary work environments as part of a globally connected international community. These Open Spaces actively cultivate strong relationships with diverse communities, acknowledging the significance of these partnerships. By prioritising individualistic lifestyles focusing on self-dependence, uniqueness, abstract thinking, privacy, and personal goals, the partners in these Open Spaces promote a deep respect for individual and local needs. The setting of Open Spaces encourages people to explore their passions and pursue the opportunities that bring them joy. It recognises the value of personal growth and fulfilment throughout one's unique journey. Higher arts education actively engages with societal, environmental, sociocultural, and technological queries as the central focus shifted away from classical art practices and artistic craftsmanship. In short, Open Spaces serve as hubs of artistic ingenuity, empowering individuals to engage with the world creatively while navigating the challenges and wicked problems of society and the planet.

Main drivers and trends for this scenario

- Flexible and collaborative working environments
- Remote work and automation
- Project-driven and transdisciplinary work
- Increasing internationalisation and cultural diversity
- Demographic Shift and lifelong learning
- Work-life balance

The operational environment in 2045

Due to more diverse student populations and an increasing number of adult learners, the demographic makeup of students in higher arts education continues to change. This demographic shift is leading to a need for more flexible and accessible learning environments that can accommodate a variety of intentions and preferences for study and inquiry. Moreover, economic pressures are placing arts universities under financial strain. As a result, there is a growing urgency to explore more efficient and cost-effective approaches to delivering high-quality education in the arts. Additionally, a rising awareness of the environmental impact of campus infrastructure has led to strict regulation on how to design sustainable buildings and educational landscapes. Creating Open Spaces that foster collaborative partnerships across multiple sectors makes it possible to reduce the number of physical workplaces and infrastructure. Finally, the ongoing development of new technologies is still transforming higher arts education. Online and hybrid learning models are prominent, while expanded reality technologies are being leveraged to enhance the overall learning experience.

The path

In the second half of the 20s, the arts university fundamentally restructured its curriculum organisation and educational design. It abandoned a vertically discipline-oriented approach and transitioned to a horizontal model grounded in transdisciplinary work and process thinking. This shift allowed the institution to navigate complexity and embrace change effectively. As a result, new skills became essential in this dynamic environment. Traits such as openness to changes, awareness of intersections, understanding agency and signal functions, empathic imagination, transdisciplinary focus, counterpoint thinking, self-directed learning, playfulness, and engaging in protest and activism became crucial transferable skills for all stakeholders within the arts university.

In those years, the arts university also actively engaged with a multicultural perspective, ensuring a non-European-centric focus that dismantled geographical and cultural barriers, giving rise to diverse voices. This transformation was nourished by a sustained critical self-reflection on privileged and colonising Western artistic and academic practices, driving the institution's commitment to fostering a global and inclusive perspective.

In the late 20s, the rise of the gig economy continued to reshape the nature of work. More people opted for freelance work or short-term contracts, providing flexibility and independence. Platforms that connect freelancers, professionals and clients facilitated this trend.

By 2030, novel transdisciplinary approaches in research and education had reshaped the landscape of higher arts education, leading to a radical diversification of practices and the dissolution of artistic specialisation within the arts university. This transformative shift allowed the institution to challenge conventions and critically examine what was once considered obvious. As everything became increasingly interconnected and interrelated, new intersections emerged, expanding the core knowledge of higher arts education. Boundaries continued to fade, and a wealth of cross-sectorial and multilingual knowledge found its place within the institutions.

In the early 30s, the arts university experienced a surge in interest as a vibrant work and learning environment. People from private and public sectors with specific (academic and non-academic) interests or missions gravitated towards the arts university, drawn by its reputation for embracing all sorts of complex issues and promoting transdisciplinary and co-creative work.

In the late 30s and early 40s, the evolving landscape necessitated a new and diverse range of working spaces within the higher arts education ecosystem. The arts university struggled to balance the need for change in response to emerging novelties and preserving the quality of its tradition. Finally, the institution recognised the importance of addressing intra-artistic and extra-artistic questions, acknowledging its role in broader societal contexts. This holistic approach ensured that higher arts education remained at the forefront of innovation while upholding its commitment to excellence and experimental methods. As such, the arts university

began to merge into Open Spaces and developed an overall dynamic beyond the idea of a purely artistic or academic institution.

Description of the higher arts education landscape

Open Spaces is an arts university model, built upon collaborations grounded in project-driven, transdisciplinary, and co-creative work. It fosters an open and inclusive artistic creation, study and research environment that can thrive in multiple settings. As a result, the Open Spaces model encompasses a diverse spectrum, transcending binary oppositions such as praxis vs theory, specialist vs generalist, inside vs outside, qualified vs incompetent, human vs non-human, or physical vs digital.

As society undergoes constant change, entailing increasingly complex issues, higher arts education remains flexible and agile to adapt to emerging challenges and opportunities. The arts university embraces this shift by fostering collaborative relationships with partners from both profit and non-profit organisations across various sectors and industries. These partnerships contribute to establishing dynamic work and learning environments in which individuals and ideas flow freely, centred around specific focal points within societal, sociocultural, ecological, or technological domains.

The arts university establishes an Open Space to foster a dynamic learning and research environment. It facilitates meaningful connections among individuals and communities, both locally and globally. By promoting enduring relationships between partners, the arts university cultivates an atmosphere of exploration and exchange. It serves as a collaborative hub, uniting stakeholders from various domains and bringing together beginners, professionals, learners, and coaches. Central to the work ethos for these Open Spaces are flat hierarchies, solidarity, inclusive practices, porosity, and diversity, which serve as pivotal elements and driving forces.

Inherently nurturing imagination, creativity, and joy, the arts university creates ample communication channels with society. It bridges art practice, artistic research, public and private life, work, and leisure, bringing them closer together. By assuming the role of a project-based organisation, the arts university facilitates the co-creation of dynamic learning communities that prioritise exploration and knowledge exchange. This transformation positions the arts university as a catalyst for innovation and integrating diverse fields.

The arts university prioritises flexibility and adaptability over rigid structures. It emphasises fluidity and elasticity, enabling easy access to learning and study. Central to this approach are the values of academic freedom and freedom of choice. Partners in the Open Spaces can navigate through many options, discovering learning values along open and individual paths, rather than being confined to a predetermined route or fixed path.

The arts university eliminates the need for entrance examinations and certificate verification. Instead, it focuses on facilitating individuals or groups with specific interests or intentions, providing them with the necessary time and space to share and nurture their work. The learning programs embody the qualities of easy access and flexibility, allowing for a smooth transition

in and out of the university's learning environment. Project assessment meetings are central to starting a project, structuring the work packages, or coordinating co-creative work in groups.

The arts university cultivates social harmony and horizontal solidarity by emphasising the importance of strong relationships within and between communities and actively engaging in mutual learning. This commitment to meaningful connections and shared learning elevates the value of collaboration and strengthens bonds within society.

An inherent result of promoting a friendly social atmosphere is that the arts university establishes equitable dialogues and supports inclusive learning environments. Recognising the significance of the social dimension, the arts university strongly encourages multicultural practices and inter-generational connections. In contrast to imposing hegemonic and overly dominant frameworks, the arts university in this scenario embodies a dynamic and evolving process, constantly adapting its conditions and structures to serve its community better.

In a bold effort to foster networked interactions and prioritise multi-dimensional connections, the arts university facilitates multiple dialogues and collaborations. Various spaces within and beyond the university, such as multilingual collaboration zones, multidisciplinary resource centres, multicultural exchange corners, inclusive areas, informal chatrooms, and immersive celebration platforms, inspire individuals, foster connections, and help to stay abreast of trends and advancements. These new working spaces for multicultural practices help to overcome communication barriers, cultural differences, stereotypes and prejudices, or conflicting work ethics that can impede work in Open Spaces.

While blurring boundaries between institutions, organisations, and sectors, the arts university strives to maintain a critical relationship with its environment. This deliberate separation is crucial to prevent the arts university from simply merging into the environment, ensuring its unique identity and critical impact. It is a struggle for which the art university is continuously seeking a balance in its communication and collaboration strategies.

Persons

Person 1 – Klara – student at Open Space Mucial

Klara is a 21-year-old music and social sciences master student inspired by a transdisciplinary project in a coworking space developed by Open Space Mucial. Tinkering as an alternative to specialism and doing it yourself are the two dynamics that orient Klara in her work. Instead of becoming an expert, Klara has learned to make small changes in her work to improve her skills. A long-term discipline of classical training in music does not really work in her trajectory. Through specific iterations on aspects of her work, Klara finds solutions to particular problems and research questions (she works on nonverbal communicative behaviours in group improvisation). In dialogue and collaboration with her colleagues in the co-working space, Klara constantly (re)invents her practice, almost without any need for formal schooling or training.

Person 2 – Alexander – program facilitator at ArtVerse Open Spaces

Alexander is a 38-year-old program facilitator at ArtVerse Open Spaces. As a coach, he supports several groups of students in going towards a radical diversification of their practice. He assists them in choosing what variety of profiles or work contexts they want to visit. With his students' diverse backgrounds in mind, Alexander considers and discusses with students the specific conditions of access to, follow-up, and exit from learning paths in projects and communities. Language barriers and cultural diversity challenge his work in ArtVerse Open Spaces. Alexander tries to solve this by using flexible meeting spaces and informal chat rooms to accommodate and facilitate communication among multicultural and diverse teams.

Person 3 – Anna – researcher at Open Spaces TechArts Insight

Anna is part of a group of young and dynamic researchers working at Open Spaces TechArts Insight who engage with technological development and social justice questions. Anna's first ambition is to make her work more accessible to outsiders by developing her research in close collaboration with partners such as businesses, industry, community groups, activist groups, NGOs, or grassroots organisations. An increasing understanding of power hierarchies shifts the focus of her work. Anna engages in dialogues with groups of indigenous or allochthonous people and other species to understand their ways of perceiving the world. She identifies topics that have relevance for them and develops research with them on an equitable basis. Her work at Uniarts Open Space aims to create research-informed products, practices and policy recommendations for sustainability, green growth and technology, and a solidarity and repair economy aiming to transform society with others.

Person 4 – Guillaume – artistic director at Opéra Grand Anthéa

Guillaume is the artistic director at Opéra Grand Anthéa. He faces the same challenges as many of his colleagues in the sector, finding suitable candidates to fill new positions. Attracting and retaining talented singers, musicians, conductors, directors, dancers, and production staff is essential for the success of any opera house. However, demographic changes, changing career aspirations, and increased competition from other sectors where performing artists can work make recruiting and retaining top performers challenging. Therefore, developing strategies to stimulate and nurture emerging artists, create an appealing work environment, and offer opportunities for artistic exploration and individual growth is critical to Guillaume and his team's success.

Person 5 – Elsie – talent acquisition manager at Global.Clean

Global.Clean is an international partnership focusing on sustainable energy and clean technologies solutions. Elsie, the talent acquisition manager for Europe, works closely with various art universities throughout Europe to recruit emerging talent and potential partners. Graduates from art universities possess transferable skills and creativity that are valuable in the D&R department. Building relationships with these universities allows Elsie to hire talented individuals who bring fresh insights and artistic perspectives. Furthermore, to keep up with the ever-changing nature of work, Elsie collaborates with these universities' learning and

development teams to identify skill gaps and implement training programs that align with emerging technologies and changing job requirements in her industry.

Scenario 2 - Slow Eco-life

Abstract of the scenario

Institutes of higher arts education are active actors in sustainability goals and in finding ways to deal with wicked problems such as ecological crises. They are creatively using regenerative and indigenous practices and boldly experimenting with interspecies collaboration to find new ways of being an artist and a citizen within planetary boundaries. Hierarchies are flat, and students are actively participating in decision making aiming for consensus, flexibility, and community well-being. Slowness and degrowth are faced as positive challenges for creativity. What is essential is constantly asked, renouncing and reduction, and scarcity of resources are fundamental parts of the process of growing as an artist.

Main drivers and trends for the scenario

- Ecological crisis (climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution).
- Strong sustainability as ecology framing practices and materials, circular and sharing economy, and strict national and international regulations (nature and natural resources).
- Slowness and degrowth.
- Flat hierarchies in institutions.

The operational environment in 2045

Due to ecological crises societies are in a condition of survival fighting to keep global warming below +2° C. Strong regulations limit emissions and consumption. A serious concern is focused on food and freshwater security and green energy self-sufficiency. Climate refugees bring new dynamics and tensions to societies and local conflicts exist. In the Global North, living standards have decreased due to the necessary reduction of consumption and degrowth policies as well as due to unemployment and turbulence in financial markets. Circular economy, lending and sharing are highly valued when humanity learns to live within planetary limits. Repairing, "DIY-mentality" ("do it yourself") and handicrafts are appreciated. Instead of materialism, immaterial ideals such as culture and education are valued.

The Path

In the beginning of the 2030s, it became clear that the +1.5-degree limit of global warming would be exceeded, and biodiversity loss progressed at an alarming rate. Climate change was causing substantial damage to ecosystems and infrastructure due to extreme weather conditions (e.g. heatwaves, floods, and sea level rise). The mass distinctions of pollinators caused losses in food production. During the 2030s this led to very strict new regulations against emissions and pollution in most countries and to massive rapid global conservation actions aiming to save what was left to be saved.

Strong political movements against the market economy and exponential growth increased. Voluntary lowering of personal living standards turned out to be a megatrend in Global North. Circular and sharing economies became dominant. Art universities participated actively in collaboration with universities and NGOs in promoting the degrowth and climate justice movements, being inventive in reducing consumption and use of energy, reused or sustainable materials, and sustainable practices.

In the early 2040's the escalating amount of climate refugees increased turbulence in societies causing growing needs and pressures for intercultural communication and learning, just employment policies and social security. Art universities supported social cohesion through mandatory studies and training periods in socially engaged arts practices in their nearby communities. Subsequently, their curricula increasingly included cross-disciplinary, multidisciplinary, and intersectional practices and diverse cultural perspectives.

Local self-sufficiency became a standard with distributed energy systems. This led to a movement where many arts universities moved out to small cities or rural areas where self-sufficiency was easier and slow, absorbed art studies and local interaction were more successful.

Description of the higher arts education landscape

The arts universities are mostly decentralised and are often situated in rural and peripheral areas. They are close to self-sufficient entities with their own energy, circular and self-produced materials, own food, and use of local products due to ideological and economic reasons. The community is fed by a protein produced in a bioreactor and by vertical farming, and in rural areas also traditional ecological farming. Sustainability demands frame all the materials used and the modes of artistic practices. Technology is in use, but constantly critically questioned - what is indispensable and affordable.

Responsible and sustainable arts universities have flat hierarchies and they embrace diversity and students in positions of decision-making. A board governs the arts universities with rotating roles including students who participate actively in decision-making where their opinions are as valued as experts' opinions. Co-constructed processes allow the collective intelligence to operate in all possible dimensions. Consensus is aimed at all decision-making which makes it slow and often unfocused due to endless discussions. This may cause a danger of charismatic leaders taking over, providing easier, shallow, and ethically dubious solutions for complex issues and interesting but narrow perspectives for art education.

The arts universities have a strong sense of community where art and life are united, and people learn together. Sharing economy, sharing knowledge and holistic well-being, including planetary, social, occupational, and individual well-being are emphasised. Working time for fighting concretely against inequalities, for ecological reconstruction and for self-sufficiency and governance in the institution is provided within the schedule. Institutions are flexible in career paths, job rotation and knowledge management. The facilities support teamwork and informal encounters as well as absorbed quiet work and safe data management.

The content of education deals with the complexities of the current situation. Pedagogies increasingly apply critical thinking, social and environmental awareness, collaborative practices, alternative perspectives, cross-disciplinary, multidisciplinary, and intersectional practices. Activism, protest, and problem-solving are part of the pedagogies both as content and means and critical self-reflection of the Western exploiting practices of nature are pursued. Studies provide a safe space for questioning, exploring, empathic imagination and collaboration with diverse partners. Various voices as indigenous people's artistic traditions, local artistic practices, non-European traditions, and inter-generational knowledge are in use. The arbitrary borders being geographical, cultural, artistic, or generational are abolished. The necessity to focus on the non-humans and less human-centred thinking is leading to cutting-edge experimentations with interspecies communication and interactions. The binary human-non-human is replaced by interspecies and cross-species thinking and learning. Interspecies art is part of the curriculum including the exploration of new collaborative practices, new ethical questions, and communication with and for new audiences.

Slow culture gives time for students, researchers, and teachers to engage in an in-depth relationship with their artistic or research interests and have thorough dialogues with peers, colleagues, research partners and social interaction partners. Researchers have time to disseminate and post-process their research results to benefit teaching, learning, social engagement, and innovation development and their impact of research is measured by the in-depth quality of critical ideas and their relevance instead of quantity. Following the degrowth ideals, it is accepted and even encouraged to produce smaller quantities, less frequently and to embrace scarcity and reduction. The art and science projects have strict sustainability guidelines. In addition, social accessibility and dissemination to demographically wide audiences are valued.

Even the neoliberal ideas of productivity and exponential growth are radically challenged by more sustainable values, there are artists who are driven by success, fame and outstanding profit-making. Some artists have created celebrated stables where they operate as in old master-apprentice systems sharing their skills but utilising the followers as cheap workforce. In addition to questionable employment practices some artists' stables have been revealed as shameless utilisers of greenwashing as sustainable means are essential in the market. This has raised strong ethical debates in arts fields. Many artists and arts schools fear that in the last two decades increased appreciation and value of arts in the society is threatened by these actors.

Persons

Person 1 - Taylan Kaden - Student and activist (24 years old, They/Them)

Artistic freedom as a human right, climate justice, ecological reconstruction and interspecies rights are the leading interests of Taylan, a passionate art student and activist. They has heightened moral agency and critical contemplations concerning the ecological, social, and political consequences of one's choices and actions. They constantly asks: with what and with whom do I want to work? How I work and to whom I address my work? These demands and absoluteness often hinder or slow down Taylan's art projects and make them a bit troublesome

member of collaborative projects. Anyhow, their artistic work is uncompromising and innovative. They recently participated in a performative protest fighting for the same rights to insects that humans, mammals, and birds already have.

Person 2 - Samar Cushy - Lifelong student and caretaker (58 years old, He/Him)

Samar Cushy has never graduated but keeps living in the institution as a caretaker and part of the artistic community, having art and life united to a slow and eco-friendly lifestyle. Money is not valued, and communal sharing is central to him. In addition to farming food for the school, Samar organises community arts and learning together happenings in public spaces aiming to provide support and hope in uncertain times. Samar has an essential role in the local community by connecting people who want to give meaning to their lives, learn new things and practices sustainably.

Person 3 - Rebecca Sage - Professor and leading role model in sustainability issues (51 years old, She/Her)

Rebecca Sage is an internationally highly respected professor, one of the leading figures in dealing with the world's wicked problems. Rebecca Sage has proven the power of art and artistic thinking in collaboration with other disciplines and organisations. Lately, she has collaborated with marine biologists and molecular biologists in exploring new methods for identifying and destroying pollutive particles in seawater with the help of eco-friendly colours. Another global project assessed the well-being impacts of humming at the population level where the daily humming routine was based on indigenous traditions. She is also a member of a global network distributing art-based and scientific knowledge to citizen level with artistic means. Professor Sage is a role model for artists who want to be change-makers in society via art and artistic practices.

Person 4 - Kylin Nayati - A pioneer in interspecies research (38 years old, They/Them)

Kylin Nayati is involved in several artistic interspecies research projects. They studies communication with mycelium and insects via artistic methods, creates structures and new art materials with nesting animals and spiders. In international research seminars and conferences, they mostly participates by online tools but once a year long-distance travel is accepted either by e-flight hopping with electric short-distance aeroplanes or by land travel within working hours. Kylin has time in their work week not only to do research but also to be inactive, relax, rest, or drift without immediate objectives. This gives them time to be involved as a non-professional singer in a popular choir project with blackbirds and humans which is currently testing new species to get involved.

Scenario 3 – Phygital frontiers

Abstract of the scenario

By 2045, quantum cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and neurotechnology have revolutionised daily life, education, healthcare, and the arts. These advancements enable personalised learning and the seamless blend of physical and digital realities: the phygital environment. 'Cyborgification', with artists enhancing their bodies for artistic expression, challenges societal norms and ethics. AI-driven tools facilitate real-time learning analysis and guidance. Generative technologies revolutionise artistic research. Decentralised autonomous organisations manage educational institutes, supported by human bodies overseeing decision-making, solution proposals, and ethics. The rise of technology-driven art and art-driven technology challenges ethical norms and legal structures, necessitating fresh perspectives and legislation.

Main drivers and trends for this scenario

- Quantum cloud computing opened hitherto unfathomable frontiers in maths, science and tech.
- Generative and immersive technologies have become ubiquitous, also in learning technology.
- Neurotechnology is impacting daily life, education, healthcare and the arts.
- Physical and digital spaces have become more and more blended.
- ‘Cyborgification’ advances in health care inspire early adopters in art scenes to experiment with enhancing their bodies ‘for art’s sake’.
- The growing recognition of the role of arts and design in addressing industry and societal challenges.

The operational environment in 2045

We’re in a world in which AI is so ubiquitous that it has become almost impossible to find technology that is ‘AI-free’. Neurosciences have impressively advanced, and neurotechnology has become a huge economy, with more and more interfaces, tools and gadgets becoming widely available. Since the 30s, quantum computing has powered a new era in individual learning, enabled through the timely processing of huge amounts of student data for designing programs that adapt to students' unique achievements and abilities.

The domains of technology-driven art and art-driven technology keep pushing scientific developments, spawning new art domains, and questioning and exploring ethical boundaries. For example, there’s a worldwide underground art scene interested in exploring the potential of these new technologies to transform our understanding of what it means to be human. They experiment with combining generative AI and emerging multisensorial technologies to try and create new uncanny experiences that manipulate human consciousness, alter perceptions, or

induce altered states of consciousness. Needless to say, a lot of art produced by this underground scene operates in a grey area, as it may be illegal or ethically questionable.

In a society that has widely accepted (and even promotes) the idea that the arts significantly contribute to business and society, the adaptive hybrid artist thrives. Creatives that can take on flexible job roles and find creative job opportunities in other professional fields, businesses, and governmental offices, easily find jobs, also in highly valued positions.

The path

Nineteen years ago, in 2026, *the New European Arts School* (NEAS) was the first pan-European higher arts initiative to respond to the unignorable trend of technology-driven art and art-driven technology. The end of the 20s saw a few massively impressive artworks getting much worldwide media attention and igniting a broader belief that art and tech *can* save the world. Two famous examples are Studio Roosegaarde's Space Waste Fireworks and the desertification-reversing bioBomb artwork by Raw Land Collective. It translated to the growing recruitment of creative profiles both in the industry and in the public sector.

Kids that were born in this period - and who are now the youngest people at *the New European arts school* - grew up as 'AI natives'. As toddlers, they consumed media that were auto-generated by AI. While at primary school in the 30s, they learned most of the subjects helped by quantum cloud-based AI assistants, saw news coverage of wars in which humans fight soldier bots, and became the first generation to have real conversations with their cat using the petChat gadget.

In the first half of the 30s, neuroscience took a giant leap, and neurotechnology became widely available at reasonable prices. That had an enormous impact on health care but also drastically changed the education and entertainment industries. The growing possibilities and availability of neurotechnology strongly accelerated the experience-oriented economy in these sectors.

The rapid advances in generative and immersive technology paved the way for digital space more and more blending in with physical space, to the extent that around the turn of the decade, it was not always clear whether experiences were 'real' or 'virtual'. It sparked the need for clear international legislation concerning the creation and distribution of mixed reality experiences, which led to a new field of scientific, philosophical, and legal research.

Today, in 2045, technology-driven art and art-driven technology have become standard practices, both in the industry and in the arts. NEAS is still a beacon in the arts education landscape, offering a full-fledged *phygital* interdisciplinary learning environment that helps young creatives become adaptive, multi-skilled, confident, and self-and-world-aware artists and designers.

Description of the higher arts education landscape

The New European arts school pioneered designing education that helps young creatives become adaptive, multi-skilled, confident, and self-and-world-aware artists. As the result of a

mid-20s European Education Development project, it was quickly promoted as best practice in both the way it creates (often self-organised) interdisciplinary learning environments and how it is organised as an international decentralised horizontal and fluid structure. To cite the Commission's evaluation report: “A radical attempt to interact and collaborate within local, regional and international networks, focusing on horizontal relations beyond monodisciplinary domains and paradigms.”

AI algorithms perform real-time analysis of student progress and provide reliable feedback and ideas for the next steps in learning while also identifying areas where a student may need additional support or resources. Activities such as transferring bodily knowledge, exercising (hand)crafting skills, facilitating critique sessions, training (team) communication competencies and confronting ethical challenges are usually organised in similar ways as in the 10s and 20s. Educational staff with expertise in guiding international interdisciplinary teams in dealing with complexity have become increasingly important. These ‘new lecturers’ are skilled at inspiring value and vision-infused collaboration and creativity in these teams while also being well-trained meta-learning guides and good networkers and connectors. Moreover, they have a deep technical understanding of the generative and immersive learning tools, allowing them to make learners understand and reflect upon how these systems can help or mislead. The old hierarchical student-lecturer paradigm is outdated and abolished. Many learners earn money by giving workshops, coaching, or administering at NEAS, and most of the learning facilitators are enrolled in one or more classes…

Working at NEAS means that you are part of an interdisciplinary team, operating as project consultants, learning facilitators and individual and team coaches. Immersive technologies have solved most of the issues plaguing what people used to call ‘hybrid learning environments’ in the 20s and 30s. Working, learning and socialising in phygital space feels very ‘normal’ and is valued almost as much as the local physical learning activities.

Generative technologies have revolutionised (artistic) research. Certified Research Assistant Services are accurate and reliable analytical and generative research tools widely adopted by the international research community. Contrary to the doom scenarios often part of the discourse in research communities in the first half of the 20s, these services have drastically increased the originality, authenticity, variety, quality, and availability of research output. The erosion of the classic notion of authorship, which started a good decade ago, made way for broader interpretations of shared authorship and the blooming of more inclusive artistic research practices. This trend not only propels the diversification of ‘ways of knowing’, but it also starts valuing the role of many research stakeholders in generating new knowledge.

The New European arts school is run by an AI-driven educational DAO (decentralised autonomous organisation) service, which helps to align decision-making and budgeting in the different international on- and offline hubs. The service is extended with three ‘human’ bodies: one body that updates the agenda of issues that need decision-making, one body that researches these issues and proposes solutions that can be voted upon through the DAO service, and one body that functions as ‘regulator’ and ethical board. These bodies are composed of randomly drawn institution members (learners, learning facilitators, researchers, administrative and

technical personnel, etc…) who are replaced every six months and get paid for their work as body members.

Persons

Person 1 - Ro Ro: highly acclaimed artist - founding member of Raw Land Collective (47 years old, °1998, Belgrade, SRB).

Born while their Afghan parents were fleeing to Europe, Rostam Muss Rojput entered higher arts education at the age of 17. Their sister was doing a PhD in biotechnology at that time, which greatly influenced how Rostam (who now uses the pseudonym Ro Ro) approached their art studies. In 2020 they formed Raw Land Collective with their sister and two fellow art students. RLC's (often smile-inducing) bio-art-based guerilla actions did not go unnoticed. The collective quickly grew into an international interdisciplinary collective of engaged artists, scientists, lawyers, hackers, and educators with a mission to tackle climate change. In 2028, their work bioBomb astonished the world by combining an unseen aesthetic power with effectively reversing the desertification of the East African grasslands. In 20245, Ro Ro remains the artistic thought leader of RLC, which now operates as a 50 employee company based on a business model that combines activism with working for and with governmental bodies.

Person 2 - Pita van Laethegem - student/lecturer at NEAS (23 years old, °2022, Lievegem, BE).

Pita has been a NEAS student for five years. At the age of 15 she started hacking her body and later started using her art studies to explore further the practical and artistic possibilities of her ongoing cyborgification. Now, at age 23, she is experimenting with generative tech tools and neuroBots to generate unexpected and uncanny sensations. In 2042, she was drawn to be a six-month member of one of the NEAS governing bodies, a mandate she used mainly to draw special attention to the accessibility gap of some workshops and courses for those fellow students that cannot afford the newest immersive tech bots. For one year now, she combines her studies with teaching an experimental tech class.

Person 3 - See-Jay - lecturer/researcher at NEAS, neurohacker, generative AI expert and vintage death metal enthusiast (49 years old, °1996, Los Angeles, US).

See-Jay is a much-respected lecturer/researcher. His colleagues and students admire his deep understanding of new technologies and his playful, artful explorations in misleading and 'abusing' these technologies. His artistic output is notable for ethically questioning the technologies his works are made with. Cannibacchanal is probably the best-known example, using pikrosynth neurotech (generative virtual flavour synthesis) to induce an almost-real feeling experience of eating and actually *tasting* human meat.
Last week he was drawn to be a member of NEAS' Agenda Board, meaning he will have less time during the upcoming six months (until someone else is drawn to take his place) to work on his research project Lucida, which explores how the newest EarBots on the market can be used to induce and manipulate dreams.

Person 4 - Cif Cif - administrator and tech coach at NEAS (41 years old, °2004, Bruges, BE)

While rector of LUCA School of Arts (Ghent, Belgium), Cif Cif initiated the ‘New European arts school’ project in ‘26 with five European and two Middle Eastern partner institutions. The main goal was to try and develop a new educational paradigm to tackle some of the long-lingering issues that plagued higher arts education: old-fashioned hierarchical governing structures, prolonged adaptation to new societal and technological evolutions and an unmet need of students for an interdisciplinary approach to arts education. Indeed, his last action as a rector was to make his function no longer needed. He is still passionately involved in the NEAS project, helping new students and colleagues understand how to use best the many available administrative and learning bots.

Scenario 4 - Profitable endeavours

Abstract of the scenario

In the face of an increased neoliberal climate and right-wing politics, artists, arts organisations, and arts universities must adapt to a business-oriented environment and setbacks in academic and artistic freedom. While there are opportunities in customised education, university-business partnerships, and impact-focused research, economic challenges persist due to diverse needs and austerity measures. Cross-border mergers enhance competitiveness for some universities, but degree programs in higher arts education remain accessible mainly to the privileged. Affordable micro-credentials address immediate employment needs but fail to bridge the opportunity gap in degree programs, narrowing perspectives in artistic thinking, art-making, and research. Informal networks and agile alliances outside arts universities organise arts education and foster artistic inquiry at the grassroots level with increasing artistic and intellectual success.

Main drivers and trends for this scenario

- economic recession
- right-wing politics
- neoliberalism
- consumerism
- university-industry collaboration

The operational environment in 2045

In the 2040s, within a neoliberal climate enforced by a rightward political shift, EU Member States prioritise austerity, market efficiency, deregulation, and privatisation. This results in limited public funding, a focus on industry-driven higher education, and a shift toward viewing the arts as a luxury. This climate threatens freedom of expression due to ideological polarisation and government interventions, including no-platforming, ostracism, and self-censorship.

Despite these challenges, some artists succeed within high-profile social networks, securing contracts in traditional artistic fields or offering innovative professional services to non-arts sectors. These collaborations provide opportunities for creative thinking and artful outputs, often with corporate partnerships contributing to their competitiveness. However, artists adhering to a traditional view of art may struggle to maintain their creative vision in such collaborations.

With reduced public funding, arts organisations face competition for external funding and donations. Their benefactors and partners expect measurable social and economic impact, and business partners seek content control to protect their image. As a result, many organisations opt for conservative programming over experimentation, leading to standardised, mainstream-focused arts services, limiting the diversity and vibrancy of the cultural landscape.

The path

In 2025, EU countries facing economic challenges due to Russia's aggression in Ukraine embrace long-term austerity measures that reinforce the neoliberal trends in higher education. Neoliberalism continues to prioritise competition, unregulated markets, and university privatisation as the dominant discourse in European educational politics.

By the late 2020s, a rightward political shift, influenced by Russia's operations, lead some European nations towards authoritarianism. This shift results in censorship, declining freedom of expression, and an oppressive environment for dissent and critical discourses. In democratic states, increased political polarisation and the radicalisation of social and environmental activism have limited intellectual diversity and hindered the free exchange of ideas. This has resulted in self-censorship, restricting freedom of speech, diverse dialogue, creativity, and progress.

In 2035, EU Member States shift their focus from collective welfare to individual responsibility, favoring tax cuts and further eroding the welfare state. This shift leads to higher tuition fees, increased student debt, and greater societal inequality, exacerbating the opportunity gap. Additionally, in 2038, public funding for arts and humanities subjects is abolished, redirecting higher education investment towards areas aligned with immediate societal and economic needs. This transformation radically reshapes Europe's arts and higher arts education landscape.

Description of the higher arts education landscape

In a competitive neoliberal climate, successful arts universities are engaging in international cross-border mergers to gain a competitive edge, combining resources and expertise. For example, Uniarts Nordic, founded in 2039, brought together six European arts universities, creating a virtual, interdisciplinary arts university focused on artistic thinking and innovation in the Nordic region. Similarly, Universidad de las Artes International, established in 2041, merged a Spanish art university with several Latin American art and design schools.

These mergers foster competition, compelling arts universities to refine their strategies, develop unique programmes, and cater to cross-sectoral knowledge transfer and workforce demands. They collaborate with influencers to enhance their visibility, attracting funding, business partnerships, and affluent students. Due to their polished brand images, these universities are expected to deliver high-quality education and services.

Arts universities treat education as a market commodity, charging high tuition fees based on competency-focused, job-relevant curricula for individual student needs. They now employ mass customisation to combine the benefits of personalised learning paths with the cost efficiency of mass-produced micro-credentials and AI-enabled scalable educational support. In addition, they generate revenue through IP commercialisation, external research- and development grants, consultancy services, online lifelong learning programs, commissioned research, and tailored education and development services for businesses. Moreover, they

establish university-business partnerships to monetise student and researcher work. However, challenges persist in aligning the individual interests of students and researchers with particular project themes and objectives. Furthermore, reducing the cost of human instructors, who play a crucial role in emotional support, mentorship, and fostering critical thinking and creativity skills, remains an ongoing concern.

Many arts universities have restructured research, focusing on externally funded projects and forming interdisciplinary teams with needs-based and impact-driven research objectives. Researchers dedicated to basic research often struggle to secure financing and infrastructure support. However, strategically designed, interdisciplinary research initiatives with business partnerships can secure funding and produce high-quality, impactful results, benefiting selected artist-researchers. Nonetheless, navigating intellectual property rights and contractual issues can be challenging. Additionally, rising right-wing politics and societal activism impose threats to academic freedom, constraining freedom of expression for researchers and educators.

Narrowing their focus on university-industry collaboration and working life competencies, arts universities continue to disown Humboldtian values of holistic personal development and in-depth intellectual growth. This, together with the gentrification of higher arts education due to rising tuition fees, will expand the crisis in arts and humanities. Also, it contributes to the banalisation of Western civilisation by narrowing the diversity of perspectives, experiences, and interests voiced in and through the arts universities.

Amid these challenges, some talented artists, educators, and researchers are resisting neoliberal pressures by leaving arts universities to maintain their autonomy and creativity. They establish alternative arts education and research models through digital platforms, fostering experimentation, activism, and diversity. These efforts involve informal networks, alliances, sharing, and grassroots organisations supported by volunteers and philanthropy. Their bold initiatives attract high-caliber artists, researchers, and students, making it harder for traditional arts universities to secure top talent. The lack of dialogue between these innovators and universities hinders progress in higher arts education, leading to stagnant programs and research that fail to embrace new modes of artistic thinking and interdisciplinary connections.

Persons

Person 1, Ever Halston (ze/zir), virtual dream performance design student

Ever, a 19-year-old non-binary virtual dream performance design student at Uniarts Nordic has been an influencer since birth. With over 100M followers on Hol-o-gram, 52,7M on VirtuMe, and their witty comedy content, ze ranks as one of the most followed university brand ambassadors among teenagers and their parents in Europe. A recent deal with Ever has brought Uniarts Nordic positive publicity and tons of carefully segmented followers on many social media channels, which has boosted its international attractiveness by more than 300 per cent and brought in 3200 new online students with a turnover approaching 16M Euro during the past quarter.

Person 2, Rain Reed (he/his) performance artist, entrepreneur, and real estate investor

Rain is a 43-year-old performance artist, entrepreneur, and real estate investor with much at stake. He has created a successful career as a hybrid artist, providing mass-customised artistic interventions to help businesses improve their performance with creative ecological and social sustainability campaigns. Currently, Rain's portfolio includes active projects with 16 businesses, and soon, he is about to sign long-term contracts with two multinational corporations. He is busy hiring two hybrid artists to work as project managers and liaises with the local arts school for students as unpaid trainees. Later today, Rain will discuss with his lawyer Carla the upcoming lawsuit in which he accuses a technology company of copyright infringement. He aims to settle the dispute before the trial and get 3M Euro in compensation from the company.

Person 3, Belen Alfaro (she/her), HR director

Belen is a 48-year-old HR director at Universidad de las Artes International. Formerly an HR director of a large-scale business corporation, Belen joined UAI recently in search of a less stressful position. She has implemented a bonus system in the university. Now, she is busy introducing other best practices she has learned from the business sector to optimise all employees' economic performance. These changes have intensified competition and negatively impacted the university community, including relationships, everyday practices, atmosphere, and work culture. Consequently, there has been an increase in withholding information, silent quitting, sick leaves, quitting, and turnover. Belen finds it challenging to understand why recruiting talented artists, art educators, and researchers is so hard these days. She finds their talk about artistic autonomy and academic freedom a sign of irritating, outdated ideologism. After all, everyone working at the university should understand the idea of value creation and profit-making.

Person 4, Arja Thurn (she/her), self-employed visual artist

Arja is a 52-year-old self-employed visual artist. After graduating as a sculptor from Fine Arts Academy in 2019, Arja's career has been slow to take up. Inspired by the works of artists such as Louise Bourgeois, Faith Wilding, and Rosemarie Trockel, Arja has employed crocheting as a material and a feminist approach to investigate politically charged themes. She has participated in exhibitions that address her interests. Money is tight for Arja as her work doesn't generate significant income streams. She has been successful in receiving grants from private foundations. She works at a local bar between funding periods to make ends meet. She would benefit from continuing education programmes and micro-credentials to conceptualise her artistic competencies and earn more. Still, these options are out of her reach due to her financial situation.

Person 5, Emmet Viera (ey/em/eirs), artist-researcher

Emmet is a 32-year-old artist-researcher interested in the limits of freedom of expression. In 2043, ey created a controversial online performance that addressed violence and abuse in sexual behaviour seen from a pleasure point of view, creating moral turmoil at Uniarts Nordic.

Ostracised and cyber-bullied by student activists fighting for a non-violent, sex-free university and censored by the university leadership to avoid reputational damage, Emmet left Uniarts Nordic in 2044. Ey now works on an open digital platform to defend artistic freedom and provide a space for radical creative content that induces stimulating debate and includes diverse perspectives to generate a broad and in-depth understanding of what freedom of art means. Since leaving Uniarts Nordic, Emmet's followers on social media have rocketed, and ey has established a career as a public speaker with five-figure fees.

Policy Guidance and Recommendations

This is a working document, meant as guidance for the panel discussion that will take place on 6 December during the FAST45 event 'Future(s) Unknown'. During the event the project consortium will gather further input from experts in policy and strategy making in relation to higher arts education, and event participants (mostly representatives of higher arts education institutions). This input will be integrated into the working document, after which, a final version will be published.

Introduction

The four Future Scenarios outlined above stem from the collaborative efforts in the Arts School Futures Labs. As highlighted earlier, these four scenarios serve as a cornerstone and integral feature in developing a dynamic agenda for strategic planning, shaping the future of the Higher Arts Education landscape.

Likewise, the following set of policy guidances derives from an analysis of each scenario, offering policymakers and decision-makers tools to contribute to the transformation of Higher Arts Education, aligning it with the evolving needs and challenges specific to a particular scenario. This set of recommendations is a synthesis of all guidance formulated in the different scenarios. The initial set of guidance is documented in a separate text file.

Policy Recommendations

What the scenarios tell policymakers today

Wrapping up the FAST45 project and its implementation of future thinking methodologies to envision futures for higher arts education institutions brings up the following question: How can we use this array of new input to benefit policy and strategy development in 'the now'? Does future thinking offer techniques through which long-term perspectives can effectively be integrated in policy and strategy development processes?

The starting point of our journey is based on Roy Amara's three principles that the future is unpredictable and not predetermined, but can still be influenced[1]. That's why it can be assumed that what policymakers and leadership of higher arts education institutions do today and tomorrow will very much impact the future resilience of the higher arts education sector, and therefore matters.

[1] (1) The future is unpredictable because there is no single future but innumerable alternative futures; (2) The future is not a predetermined, fixed, or inevitable fate, even when we cannot see alternatives; (3) The future can be influenced because it takes shape due to our choices, actions, and non-actions in the present.

Higher arts education institutions are navigating a world in a state of constant flux. Consequently, it is crucial for higher arts education institutions to adapt, anticipate futures, and build their resilience as part of a larger knowledge and innovation ecosystem and policy framework.

Looking at the four detailed future scenarios and the related policy guidances brings to the fore multiple global developments which are challenging the leading structure and narrative on which HAEIs operate. These include digital and technological developments, societal transitions, as well as climate change. However, there are many different ways the future could unfold, further influenced by the variety and speed of these developments. It is therefore key to strengthen the resilience of the sector by anticipating future needs and creating policy that supports the sustainability, flexibility and adaptability potential of the sector.

The overarching goal of developing Future Scenarios is to create an environment for futures thinking that is open to the idea of continuous change in the spirit of adaptive transformation and sustainability, and in which political decision-making values and welcomes long-term, future-oriented thinking. The four scenarios offer different 'What if?' settings (cf. ASFL Guidelines, p. 9) that are intended to stimulate discussion. This raises questions such as:

- How can discussions around future scenarios be structured in order to facilitate political decision-making and strategising processes that include long-term, future-oriented thinking? In what contexts should these discussions take place, and which actors should be involved in them?
- Are the current governance models and policymaking processes equipped to facilitate this? Or, are they too focused on the short term? If so, how could we update them to support futures resilience?
- In what ways can discussion outcomes be documented in order to be useful for policymakers and leadership of HAEI? How can we bridge the work of the futures researchers and actions in ‘the now’?
- Can it be useful to invite more people to develop further scenarios, which are then 'brought into conversation' with the scenarios presented above?
- What do the scenarios mean for educational programmes and curriculum development? Are the current governance structures around the development of educational programmes and curricula equipped to integrate futures perspectives?
- What is the time-line for a mid-term and a long-term agenda?
- How can we deal with the challenge that political mandates pose for long-term planning. How can strategy and policy outlast the mandate period?

Key themes and questions emerging from the scenarios

Some red threads and recurring themes can be derived immediately from the scenarios and policy guidances (as listed further down), This policy recommendation suggests to cluster themes and topics in order to translate them into key features of any policy and strategy that is meant to actively contribute to make the sector resilient, futures ready and futures relevant.

1. **Increased flexibility and adaptability in the higher arts education sector governance.** This applies to:
    - Governance models (e.g., implementing and experimenting with more participatory governance models).
    - Institutional administrative processes
    - Reviewing the funding infrastructures to allow for more innovation and for flexibility.
    - Regular evaluation of strategic goals within a system of recurring cycles (such as PDCA - plan, do, check, act or triple-loop learning)

2. **Increased flexibility and adaptability in curriculum-development.** This includes:
    - Support for the development of interdisciplinary curricula, and curricula with a more holistic view on education (possibly side-by-side to more traditional curriculum elements, the one does not necessarily exclude the other).
    - Opening up curricular concepts towards student-centred and self-directed learning
    - pursuing comprehensive strategies for lifelong learning.
    - foster international and cultural exchange
    - taking in account issues of digital and environmental transition

3. **Strengthening the interaction between arts and society.** This includes:
    - promoting a concept of Cultural Citizenship based on the recognition of the multiplicity of voices and on the valuing of differences;
    - strengthening the ethical aspect of the arts and dealing with art;
    - protecting freedom of (artistic) expression.

4. **Making higher arts education more diverse and accessible.** This includes:
    - reconsidering the sector's common understanding of quality;
    - broadening access to higher arts education;
    - empowering students and staff to ensure diverse voices are heard.

5. **Support Slow Culture, and (self-)reflective approaches**
    - promote the valuation of quality over quantity in academic research and artistic outputs;
    - encourage institutions to have flexible project timelines for in-depth exploration, reflection and critical assessment.

6. **Stimulate adaptability towards generative and immersive technologies**
    - Making sure that ethical standards are met around technology-driven art and art-driven technology.
    - Allocate funding towards establishing infrastructures and training.

7. **Re-evaluate public funding models to promote artistic research**
    - Recognition for higher arts education institutions as key player within the knowledge and innovation ecosystem;

- Fully recognising artistic research as driver of innovation, constantly pushing the boundaries of the field and supporting the artistic research infrastructure;
- Providing more funding for interdisciplinary research and joint research projects bringing together HAEIs and external Research & Innovation partners

8. **Collaborations with third parties, partners and other actors.** This includes:
    - strengthening transdisciplinarity
    - collaborations with industries
    - collaborations with citizens and grassroot initiatives
    - collaborations with sectors beyond arts and cultures, including as part of multi-actor approaches.

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