

The Next Renaissance

Precis

The aim for the Next Renaissance platform is to promote the need to dramatically reassess our ethics, values and priorities in addressing the major problems of our times. Our belief is that the creative and cultural sectors, and especially blending scientific, technological, cultural and artistic knowledge, can be a catalytic driver to both imagine possible futures as well as to help make them happen. We aim to develop a global movement that sees this task as common sense and urgent. It argues for a paradigm shift in how we think, plan and act. Our strategy of influence and involves a range of activities gathering steam in 2024 that helps build a community of active people who support our wider goals.

Why?

Time is short and the urgency is clear. Global problems are escalating. It is time to act. Yet crises always provide a gateway from one world to the next if we are alert to opportunities as they open up. It demands looking at problems and potentials afresh and both thinking about and doing things differently. What is clear is that a business as usual approach will not get us to where we need to be. Our challenge is clear – shifting our economic order and way of life that is materially expansive, socially divisive and environmentally hostile as well as our increasingly polarized political climate. This all involves major adjustments in attitudes, ways of being and mindset.

They require looking at our assets, resources and paradigms afresh as do all periods of history involving mass transformation, like the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution or the technological revolution now. These current change processes can produce confusion as the temper of the age, the Zeitgeist, is one of uncertainty, foreboding, vulnerability and lack of control over overweening global forces and technologies like AI. But they also foster a sense of liberation combined with a feeling of being swept along by events. They embody powerful cultural shifts, ways of life and affect our patterns of behaviour.

What?

The world stands at the cusp of a rare opportunity to shift our systems and way of thinking, planning and acting dramatically as a mood is emerging that transformation is possible. The solutions are in the air and renewal is possible. Perhaps a rebirth – a Next Renaissance, where we harness our collective imagination and intelligence, where we blend insights from differing disciplines, such as science, the arts, the humanities, technologies, and where we work across those forms of knowledge. Here we can rethink how to organize our economy on different principles and base our society beyond mere self-interest as well as redo our relationship to nature given the dangers of climate collapse.

There is convergence and it is happening at escalating speed as from the beginning of the 21st century we finally saw a rapprochement between the two great ways of exploration, discovery and knowing: art and science. It begun to break down the widespread mutual incomprehension between the arts and sciences. The premise was that the most fruitful

developments in human thinking, insight and innovation frequently take place where different lines of creativity meet. By sharing their creativities, ways of knowing and knowledge it enables scientists and artists or increasingly technologists and the digitally savvy to enrich and maximize each other's potential and so encourage solution finding innovations. The transdisciplinary perspective becomes powerful when boundaries erode and as methods of exploration and problem solving combine the linear, analytical and logical as well as the visual, kinaesthetic, spatial, musical and dialectical. Allied to technologies that help shift ideas into reality these synergies promote new forms of creativity which can result in ideas that can be turned successfully into products, services and ways of addressing intractable problems. Much of this activity happens within the creative and cultural sectors whose role as helping to drive solutions is expanding. This is the radical technological and cultural revolution underway. It lies at the core of the Next Renaissance - and it can be transformative.

There is, indeed already, a mood and a movement emerging. We are seeing the possibility of creating a different world driven on other principles. Think how eco-principles are beginning to shape our mindscape as is the determination to move towards a green transition. Here concepts like the circular, doughnut or sharing economy are taking hold. Think too how co-creation and new participatory formats help harness the collective imagination since transformation is a collective endeavour. Think of the notion that the world is our joint commons collaboratively managed or new forms of joint decision making. Think of innumerable practical examples from sensorized, self-regulating buildings or ones that give energy back to the grid or immersive environments that augment your sense of reality. Here a digitizing world and wider cultural creative economy run through systems like electricity in their inventiveness and their Immersive capacities. Sometimes the speed of possibilities are dizzying and we always must be alert that we rather than the technologies are control – they are our servant.

In short. there is a Planet B in sight, even though to get there we must get Planet A right. It is a compelling story.

How?

Our aim for the Next Renaissance platform is to promote the need to dramatically reassess our ethics, values and priorities in addressing the major problems of our times.

Our belief is that the creative and cultural sectors, and especially blending scientific, technological, cultural and artistic knowledge, can be a catalytic driver to both imagine possible futures as well as to help make them happen.

Our intention is develop a global movement that sees this task as common sense and urgent. It argues for a paradigm shift in how we think, plan and act. This can create a 'rebirth' and 'renewal'.

Our strategy of influence and involves a series of core aims and initiatives operating at different levels simultaneously. It wishes to build a community of supporters and adherents so as to popularize the concept, its programme and activities well beyond the more

educated elites and to connect to younger audiences across the world. It will connect and partner with organizations with related aims to share the burden and increase impact. It will become politically involved from the local to global level in highlighting the need for a 'great rethinking'.

Our activities will include: Map what is going on that aligns to our 'next renaissance' objectives; develop a repository of good examples that express the 'next renaissance' approach; promote educational programmes that break the divides between disciplines; create exhibition formats – large and small – highlighting specific themes within the broader agenda such as from circularity and ethical supply chains or sustainable fashion or architecture and more.

Our channels of communication will be centred on a digital platform and publishing formats allied to a series of in-person activities from dialogue sessions with influencers to major, popular events. This will include a significant curated annual event that also involves a call for proposals created by the core team as well as events co-created with partners across the globe. Additionally there may be physical publications or magazine formats perhaps jointly produced with partners.

Our governing arrangement currently involves a Core Group of eight members, a Council of up to thirty members and the establishment of Renaissance Communities across the globe. There will a core staff, funded by EIT Culture & Creativity, to drive the initiative.

Our timetable involves substantial preparatory work in the latter part of 2023 and early 2024. This will have established a more precise action plan for 2024 and beyond. It needs to ensure that a series of major interventions occur in 2024 as well as a range smaller ones from pop-ups to promoting the Next Renaissance by hooking up with other events.

Our assessment of effectiveness will be built into the programme from the outset. This implies setting targets, such as 'how many partners have we been able to get to commit to our aims'; 'how big is our network of Renaissance Communities'; 'what media impact have we had and what media partnerships have we created'; 'at how many events have our core team and allies spoken at'; what is the range of actions we have undertaken and how effective have they been' and more.

Charles – late June 2023