

Operational concept for applying a collective decision platform in the cultural sector

1. Systemic diagnosis of creative conformity and the crisis of recognition

The contemporary cultural ecosystem faces a profound crisis in recognition and the determination of value, driven both by the closed nature of traditional institutions and by the algorithmic pressures of digital platforms. A strategic diagnosis of institutional conformity and the mechanisms of digital distribution is an essential starting point: it reveals how existing funding and visibility models undermine the authentic creative process and turn it into an act of conformist adaptation. These diagnostic insights establish the need to move towards a post-hierarchical model of collective decision based on collective intelligence, capable of restoring a direct connection between artistic expression and public understanding.

1.1. Diagnosing institutional conformity and the gap in recognition

Drawing on Kasparas Pocius's analysis in "The Empty Talk of Contemporary Art" and on Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic premises, an artist's authenticity depends directly on the ability to become aware of their own lack and to speak in their own voice. Yet within the current system of cultural policy and funding, the artist's desire undergoes a fundamental distortion: instead of expressing a distinctive experience, the artist adopts the discourse imposed by institutions and assessment panels. Adaptation rarely begins with direct instructions. Artists themselves anticipate which themes, fashionable jargon or social issues will win the approval of curators, expert panels and funding bodies. Because recognition and economic survival depend on these actors, artists begin to view their ideas through the eyes of anticipated assessors.

This institutional conformity encourages the production of a particular phenomenon: "empty talk", a specialised expert jargon used to justify grants and applications. Artists and curators learn to produce pompous, intellectually impressive texts that conceal a lack of artistic depth while matching funding guidelines perfectly. In this way, institutional demands are seamlessly transferred into creative desire itself, producing a deep divide between formal assessment and the audience's actual experience.

Institutional assessment Preselection and indicators	Audience experience Actual value
Advance selection by curators and panels. Decisions are made within small groups of experts, guided by institutional priorities, fashionable rhetoric and anticipated criteria for approval.	A personal and direct relationship. Value is revealed through what the work actually helps a viewer, listener or reader see, understand or experience.
Quantitative attendance indicators. Visits or ticket sales are counted without revealing the depth of understanding of the content or its impact.	Qualitative, reasoned analysis. Genuine understanding requires a space where insights can be developed and specific artistic choices assessed.
Institutional conferral of recognition. Value imposed by authorities and a “famous name” often conceals a lack of substance legitimised by “empty talk”.	Authentic recognition. An independent assessment of the work's strengths and weaknesses grows out of the audience's own experience and arguments.

1.2. The traps of algorithmic pressure and social media

Commercial digital environments, such as Meta's Facebook and Instagram platforms, introduce a further layer of distortion into assessment. Their ranking algorithms operate on predicted user reactions and feedback. This logic subjects both commentators and artists to “double adaptation”: they simultaneously adjust to the expectations of their followers and to the algorithm's incentives for distribution. They learn to write and create in ways that secure immediate approval from like-minded people and encourage the algorithm to present their content to the widest possible audience.

This draws artists and assessors into a closed loop: visibility generates approval, and approval sustains the illusion of being right. The consequences are both ethical and practical:

- 1. The appearance of freedom can conceal adaptation.** An artist or assessor may sincerely believe in the distinctiveness of their expression, while their choices actually meet institutional expectations or the platform's distribution incentives, internalised as personal convictions.
- 2. External demands are transferred into desire.** The anticipated priorities of panels, curators or social media audiences distort the creative idea in advance: its theme and form are chosen according to what will guarantee support and algorithmic visibility.
- 3. Public exposure does not in itself bring liberation.** Greater visibility and constant adjustment to a like-minded audience distance people from their own experience, compelling them to repeat tested ideas that guarantee approval.
- 4. Ethical consequences and alienation.** Double standards and indifference develop: people justify the behaviour of their own group or institution while strongly condemning comparable behaviour by other groups, thereby losing impartiality and the ability to recognise different experiences.

1.3. The limits of self-irony and the need to change the system of recognition

Within the cultural field, attempts are made to resist this conformity through self-reflection and critical art. A striking example is Goda Simonaitytė's production "Šūdmala" at the Oskaras Koršunovas Theatre (OKT). Its creators were directly inspired by philosopher Harry G. Frankfurt's concept of "bullshit", formulated in his classic essays and works of 1971 and 2005. Frankfurt defines this phenomenon as the speaker's indifference to truth, with creating an impression on the listener becoming the primary objective. The production at OKT directly questions the weight of the "author's name" as a reputational brand in relation to the actual content of the work, and exposes how solemn, pompous art-world language conceals a lack of artistic substance.

This context reveals a fundamental structural limit: an artist's self-irony, personal sincerity or institutional critique alone does not change the existing system of recognition. An artist may ridicule their own conformity or the rules of "bullshit", yet after the premiere they will still have to approach the same panels for funding. A viewer may understand the absurdity of the art market, yet buy the next ticket on the strength of a familiar name or brand. Even the sharpest criticism of the system is often co-opted and rewarded under the same rules of adaptation. Self-irony provides an internal distance from one's role, but does not change the mechanisms through which recognition and resources are allocated.

A new structural environment is therefore needed: a platform governed by clearly defined procedures, where assessment rests on reasoned analysis and impartial rules of interaction rather than reputational authority.

The diagnosis clearly shows that moving beyond institutional conformity and algorithmic pressure requires a transition from individual reflection to a rigorously structured post-hierarchical architecture.

2. The architectural model and structure of collective decision-making

The architecture of a collective decision-making platform replaces vertical chains of assessment with a networked, post-hierarchical structure. This transforms the audience from a passive consumer of culture into an active community that determines value, ensuring that recognition arises from a reasoned understanding of the work rather than institutional power or algorithmic popularity.

2.1. The organising logic of clusters and projects

The platform's activities are organised by clearly distinguishing broad fields of expertise from specific assessment tasks:

- **Cluster.** A space and group of participants with knowledge of a shared artistic field or theme, such as theatre, music or literature. People with relevant knowledge, experience or interest register in the cluster.
- **Project.** A specific, bounded assessment space within a cluster, devoted to examining a single work or a clearly defined aspect of it. Every argument submitted must address the project's specific question.

This division avoids empty, vague talk and focuses attention on precise analysis:

- **Theatre production analysis project.** Instead of a general assessment, a specific element is examined: for example, how the final silence reveals a character's fear, or how a repeated scene affects dramatic tension.

- **Concert assessment project.** Participants analyse a particular performance, the balance of sound or the precision of musical interpretation in a particular venue.
- **Literary work projects.** Separate projects may be created to examine a substantial book: one devoted to character development, another to plot structure, and a third to language and style.

2.2. The mechanism of accountable anonymity

To ensure objectivity and remove reputational pressure, the platform implements accountable anonymity. The creator of the work being assessed, including their name, may be publicly known, but the participants who submit ideas and assess them remain completely anonymous to one another.

The platform's protocol records each participant's contributions, assessments and points without disclosing their identity to other members. Participants see the arguments submitted but do not know who wrote them; nor do they see the full membership of the cluster or an advance aggregate assessment. This objectifying logic removes the conditions in which interest groups or informal alliances can form. No one can adapt to a majority opinion or seek to please an authority figure. The artist's "name" or reputational weight loses its powerful influence because the assessment concerns the idea itself and its grounding in evidence from the work.

2.3. Distinguishing the roles of people and algorithms

The collective decision platform clearly separates cognitive human functions from the computational functions of algorithms and the protocol:

Human functions	Algorithm and protocol functions
Providing reasoned insights. Participants examine the work, identify its strengths or weaknesses and submit precise thoughts supported by specific examples.	Aggregating ratings. Algorithms collect and mathematically process the ratings submitted by all anonymous participants.
Qualitative assessment of insights. Participants examine the justification of one another's ideas, the consistency of the arguments and their accuracy in the context of the work.	Applying specialisation weights. The protocol calculates and applies weights reflecting participants' expertise and history of impartiality to the final result.
Experiencing artistic expression. People draw on their personal experience, aesthetic perception and knowledge to form a genuine assessment.	Calculating points and results. Algorithms calculate reward points for impartiality and generate the final aggregate assessment.

This architecture ensures that algorithms do not perform assessment or censorship. Instead, they impartially support and process the collective intelligence generated by people, linking it to mechanisms that ensure impartiality.

3. Mechanisms for ensuring impartiality and motivation

To prevent collective decision from turning into the polarisation or manipulation characteristic of commercial networks, the platform's rules draw on mathematical theories of behaviour and game-theoretic models that turn participants' personal interests into a guarantee of impartiality.

3.1. The reverse prisoner's dilemma and collective wisdom

The platform's reward mechanism is based on the “reverse prisoner's dilemma”, examined in detail in Post-Hierarchical Analysis 018, “When Democratic Communication Becomes a Struggle, What Can Change the Rules of the Game?”. In ordinary social situations, personal advantage often encourages unfair behaviour, the pursuit of personal alliances or conformist agreement with the majority. In this system, the incentives are reversed: participants earn the most reward points when their assessment of an idea coincides with the aggregate assessment that emerges honestly and impartially.

Because participants do not know who submitted an idea, cannot see an advance majority voting result and cannot coordinate with others, they cannot adjust to the group's mood. Even if someone suspects that the idea being assessed was submitted by a friend or a favourite artist, their greatest financial advantage, measured in points, comes from assessing it as objectively as possible. To “hit” the future collective judgement, they must rely on the work itself, consistent arguments and impartial criteria. In this way, the pursuit of personal gain through points compels assessors to produce impartial assessments, while objective collective wisdom naturally emerges from individual, independent judgements.

3.2. Second-order volitions in cultural assessment

In his 1971 essay “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person”, philosopher Harry G. Frankfurt distinguishes a “second-order volition”: a person's capacity to assess their own desires and to want their actions to be determined by the particular desire they endorse, such as the desire to act honestly rather than follow an immediate preference.

In artistic assessment, a person may feel an initial impulse to defend a favourite artist or an ideological ally. Yet as a reflective being, that person may also want impartiality and artistic truth to determine their judgement. The platform's reward rules provide practical economic support for this second-order volition: they help counterbalance personal preferences by rewarding participants for integrity and objectivity.

3.3. Balancing universal principles and freedom of artistic expression

Collective decision-making rests on the premise that people freed from group pressure can recognise universal principles, including human dignity, freedom and life, as enduring values. At the same time, the model clearly distinguishes moral assessment from freedom of artistic expression:

- A work does not have to become a declaration of moral approval or political correctness to be recognised as valuable.
- Grotesque imagery, fiction, provocation and disturbing images are legitimate artistic means of revealing deeper contradictions in reality.
- Assessors apply universal principles as a guide rather than a tool of censorship, enabling them to distinguish empty declarations or hatred from an authentic artistic form that explores complex human experience.

These mechanisms of impartiality and objective assessment create the conditions for accumulated intellectual capital to be converted directly into tangible economic and cultural value.

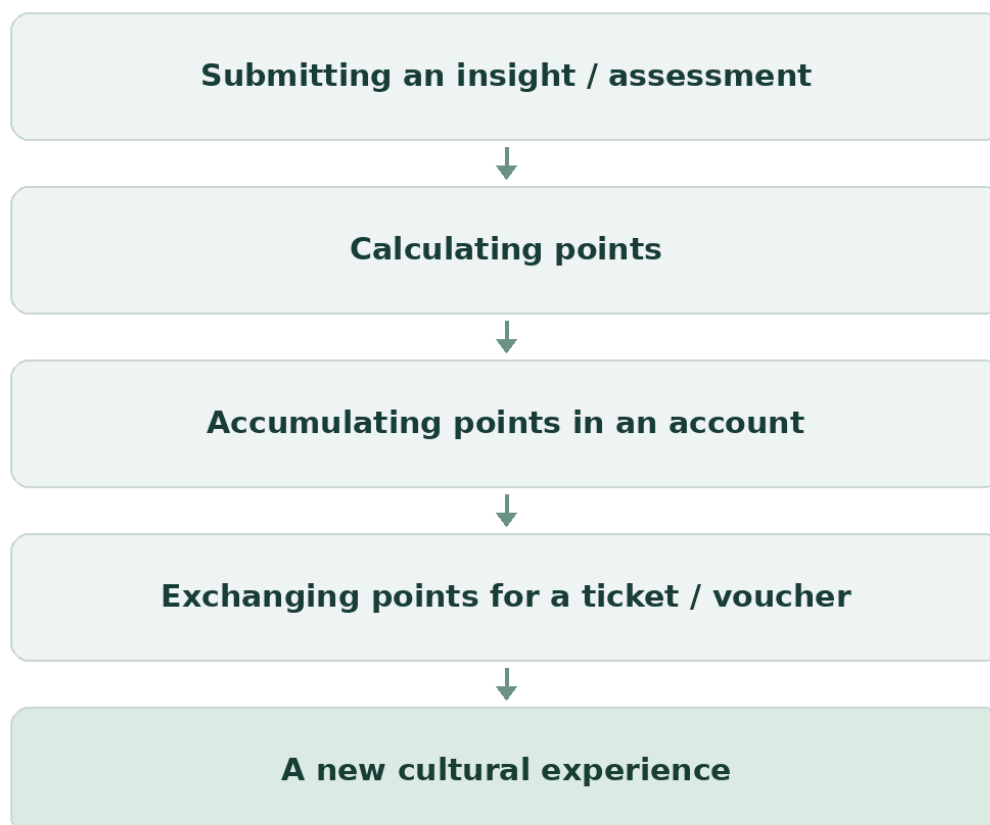
4. The social points economy and decommercialisation

Giving material value to intellectual work and the effort involved in assessment is a cornerstone of the system's sustainability. The social points economy connects people's efforts to understand with their actual participation in culture.

4.1. The system for accumulating and exchanging points

Platform participants receive points for impartially assessing ideas and providing high-quality insights. These points are more than a virtual ranking: they can be exchanged for tangible cultural services.

The process follows a clear sequence:



Submitting an insight or assessment. A participant submits a reasoned analysis or assesses another person's idea within a project.

1. **Calculating points.** The algorithm calculates the appropriate number of points on the basis of the judgement's impartiality and its alignment with collective wisdom.
2. **Accumulating points in an account.** Points are held in the participant's account as an independent record of their contribution.
3. **Exchanging points for a ticket or voucher.** The participant exchanges accumulated points for access to cultural experiences: tickets to theatre productions or concerts, or book vouchers.
4. **A new cultural experience.** The ticket enables the participant to experience a new work, which they can subsequently analyse on the platform.

4.2. Combining decommericalisation and economic benefit

This economic model differs fundamentally from the profit-making mechanism of conventional social networks. Commercial platforms appropriate users' attention and content without payment and turn them into advertising revenue. The collective decidement model implements decommericalisation: the person who makes the intellectual effort receives the reward.

The system has a dual character. On the one hand, tickets and vouchers have a clear monetary value, so participants receive a real economic benefit. On the other, it abolishes the purely commodity-based relationship inherited from the nineteenth century: a ticket is not simply bought with money but earned through socially useful work that helps others understand a work more deeply and reveals its true value.

4.3. The impact on artists' authenticity and financial independence

For artists, this system provides an entirely new source of recognition and financial stability. Artists are freed from the need to adapt to shifting institutional priorities or curators' tastes, because their work can receive high assessments and audience support directly through collective decidement. Knowing that an attentive and uncompromising view of reality will be assessed and rewarded impartially gives artists the courage to create authentic, independent work.

Making this economy work successfully requires specific capabilities from cultural organisers and curators, transforming traditional cultural management.

5. A practical implementation guide for cultural organisers and curators

Collective decidement enables cultural organisers and curators to bring people together to understand a work and assess it through reasoned argument. The organiser's or curator's expertise helps initiate the inquiry, formulate clear project tasks and introduce participants to the decidement process. The assessment of the work is formed by the participants themselves, anonymously submitting ideas and assessing one another's contributions within a single collective intelligence (CI) platform. Initiating a project or holding professional status gives the initiator's interpretation no privileged authority.

A cluster is created to examine a particular cultural phenomenon: a theatre production, exhibition, book or concert. It comprises the participants who come together to assess that phenomenon and their working space on the platform. Separate projects within the cluster can analyse different aspects of the same phenomenon. For example, in the cluster for Production X, one project may focus on acting, another on scenography, and a third on dramaturgy. A different production has a different cluster, which may bring together a different group of decidement participants familiar with that production.

Each decidement participant can draw both on knowledge of the field and on personal experience of the work. These capacities complement one another: participants not only experience a work's impact but also examine the artistic choices through which the artist achieved it.

5.1. Preparation and launch of a CI project

The cluster initiator identifies the cultural phenomenon to be examined and begins bringing together people with the expertise needed to assess it. The initiator of a particular project, whether the person who established the cluster or another participant, prepares a clear task for investigation.

1. **Define the work and the scope of analysis.** Identify precisely the work or cultural event being analysed. Specify whether the project seeks a comprehensive assessment or an examination of a particular aspect. Every idea submitted must relate to the same work and the stated scope of analysis.
2. **Formulate the project task.** Set one clear, specific task that encourages reasoned ideas. Avoid vague formulations such as “Is the production artistic?”. The task should help participants ground their assessments in what they observed in the work. For example: “Submit reasoned ideas about the strengths and weaknesses of the production's scenography. Support each observation with a specific scenographic detail or choice, and explain its effect on the production as a whole.”
3. **Prepare guidance on submitting and assessing ideas.** Explain that each entry should present one clear, independently assessable thought and its supporting grounds. Identify any assessment criteria specific to the task. Always remind participants of the standard rules: assess impartially, according to the thought's justification and relevance to the project task, and reserve extreme ratings for exceptional cases.
4. **Explain the purpose of a zero rating.** Use zero for diagnostic rejection when an idea is repetitive, off-topic, banal or incomprehensible, combines several independently assessable claims in one entry, or reveals the identity of the participant who submitted it. **Zero does not mean a neutral assessment or strong disagreement.** The creator of the work being analysed may be known; anonymity applies to the decider participants submitting and assessing ideas.

5.2. Bringing cluster participants together and recording expertise

The cluster organiser brings together people with the knowledge and experience needed to examine the particular cultural phenomenon and helps them become familiar with the participation process. Participants' expertise continues to emerge as they submit ideas, assess others' contributions and jointly identify the specialisations relevant to projects.

- **Bring together the necessary expertise.** Invite people who can assess the selected cultural phenomenon through reasoned argument. Usually these will be people who have seen the production, heard the concert, visited the exhibition or read the book. A participant's readiness is linked to their knowledge, experience and ability to apply them to the specific task.
- **Check readiness when necessary.** In certain cases, use a screening test formulated by AI. By answering the questions within a short, specified time, applicants demonstrate their knowledge of the cluster's subject.
- **Introduce the decider process.** Explain the rules for submitting ideas, assessment, accountable anonymity and earning points. Participants must understand that the platform records their individual contributions without disclosing their identities to other decider participants. The reward rules encourage them to assess the justification of submitted thoughts and to identify, as accurately as possible, the collective wisdom emerging through interaction.
- **Determine the project's specialisations.** In each project, participants themselves propose and assess the specialisations relevant to the task. They may identify several specialisations and assess their relative importance. For example, in a particular project, acting may account for 80 per cent and scenography for 20 per cent of the total relative importance assigned to specialisations. This ratio applies to that project; in another project within the same cluster, participants may identify different specialisations and a different ratio.
- **Update individual specialisation weights.** The platform records each participant's points earned in the project and the relative importance of specialisations determined by the participants. These

two components determine the increase in the participant's corresponding specialisation weights. In this way, a history of expertise accumulates according to the participant's contribution and the project participants' collective assessment of which specialisations were relevant to the project.

5.3. Presenting results, further inquiry and recognition

Once the project's assessment stage is complete, the platform produces results according to the protocol. People determine the value of the submitted ideas, while algorithms aggregate their ratings and perform calculations. Initiating a project gives the initiator no exclusive right to approve or alter the results. The initiator may participate in further decidement on the same terms as other participants.

- **Present and analyse the results.** The project's results table, showing idea rankings and other assessment characteristics, is generated automatically. Participants may also receive AI-generated analytical reports, podcasts and infographics. These tools help explain the assessment formed by people: they must retain their connection to the submitted ideas, their arguments, ratings and significant differences in interpretation.
- **Examine contradictions and divergent interpretations.** If the results reveal opposing, reasoned interpretations with similarly high ratings, any participant may initiate a new project within the same cluster. Its task is to examine the premises of the contradiction and seek a justified resolution. If the question goes beyond the existing cluster's subject and becomes an independent object of inquiry, a participant may initiate a new cluster and bring together people with the expertise it requires. Further decidement may resolve the contradiction or reveal more precisely why the interpretations remain different.
- **Present the results publicly.** Share the results of collective decidement with the public: reasoned insights, their ratings and significant differences in interpretation. A public account should enable readers to understand the basis of the assessment and the questions on which participants differed. Recognition of the work thus acquires an explainable basis that both its creator and the public can examine.
- **Recognition and social reward.** The creator of a work may earn public recognition based on the qualities of their work revealed by decidement participants. Participants, in turn, can exchange points accumulated for valuable contributions for theatre or concert tickets or book vouchers. This reward has economic value, and participants receive it for the effort of understanding a work, offering well-grounded insights and impartially assessing others' thoughts.

This decidement process enables artists to earn recognition from people familiar with their work, while participants can make meaningful use of their knowledge and experience. Contributing to the understanding of one work opens an opportunity to experience another. The conditions of participation themselves thus support independent creativity and attentive engagement with culture.