

SPARSE Plus Symposium 2025

Culture Get-Together

European Rural Touring - The Future

October 8 - 9, 2025

ARCHA+, Prague, Czech Republic

PROGRAMME

DAY 1 / WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2025

09.00 - 09.40 / Official Opening of the Conference

Moderator:

- **Saša Michailidis (CZ):** Czech journalist and moderator known for his work on radio and television discussions. He specializes in topics of culture and social dialogue. Moderation in English.

Welcome Address:

- **Nová síť:** Aneta Hladovcová (CZ), Petr Pola (CZ), Adriana Světlíková (CZ)
- **SPARSE Plus:** Amat - Daniele Sepe (IT)
- **Radim Sršeň** - Deputy of the Cabinet Minister, Deputy Minister of Regional Development of the Czech Republic, Member of the European Committee of the Regions, deputy of the Cabinet Minister

Content:

- Presentation of the program.
- Importance of supporting culture in rural areas in Europe. SPARSE Plus project case.

09.40 - 12.30 / Morning Block: Inspiration from Practice

Keynotes:

1. **Sylvia Amann (AUT):** Future (Culture) Policies with Rural Areas in Europe

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- An international expert in cultural policy and funding, a long-time advisor to EU Institutions

Abstract: Evolving EU frameworks tied to rural development require a novel policy and implementation perspectives. Cultural development should play a central role in the view of major (rural) transformations of the 21st century and changing frameworks. What are the new options for EU cultural policies?

- **Duration:** 25 min + 15 min Q&A.

2. **Francois Matarasso (UK): A Principle of Resistance**

- A Cultural theorist with 45 years of experience in community art, author of the book *A Restless Art*.

Abstract: An increasingly autocratic world order is provoking dangerous, unsettling change, inequality, and insecurity. The interests of the poor, the weak and the marginalised are forgotten or ignored. What can artists who work with these communities hope to achieve in such conditions? François Matarasso will draw on his 45 years' work in co-creation to describe its perennial importance in community development and suggest how a philosophy of resistance to dominant ideologies can still defend space for positive change.

- **Duration:** 25 min + 15 min Q&A

11.00 - 11.20 / Coffee Break (refreshments and networking opportunity)

11.20 - 12.05 / SPARSE Plus Research Presentation:

1. **Giulia Zavaglia (ES):** Results of SPARSE Plus Research - Analysis of funding cultural activities in rural areas of Europe.
 - **Duration:** 25 min (+ Q&A after next presentation)
2. **Ralph Lister (UK):** Evaluation Results of SPARSE Plus Partner Year 1 Tours
 - **Duration:** 10 min + 10 min Q&A.

12.05 - 12.45 / Examples of Good Practices: Three short contributions from SPARSE Plus partners focused on Funding, Community aspects, Sustainability.

- **Duration:** 30 min + 10 min Q&A.

12.45 - 14.15 / Lunch Break (on-site lunch, networking opportunity)

14.15 - 16.20 / Afternoon Block: Social Impact and Cooperation

Keynote:

1. **Justin O'Connor (AU):** Rethinking Culture as part of the Social Foundations

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- A professor of cultural economy at Adelaide University, author of studies on cultural policy and economy.

Abstract: This presentation will introduce the key ideas of *Culture is Not an Industry*, exploring how the book challenges dominant narratives around culture, creativity, and economic value. It will reflect on how the publication has been received across Europe since its release, highlighting the debates it has sparked within policy, academia, and the cultural sector. Particular attention will be given to the relevance of these discussions for those working in the arts in rural contexts, where cultural practice is often closely tied to questions of community, place, and sustainability

- **Duration:** 35 min + 15 min Q&A.

Panel Discussion:

Title: Creating a Vibrant Arts and Culture Infrastructure in Rural Areas of Europe

- Bringing together different viewpoints representing the local, national and European perspectives, we will discuss this topic and reference the role rural touring and the SPARSE Plus has played in making this a reality.

Moderation by Ralph Lister (UK)

Confirmed Panelists:

- **Justin O'Connor (AU)** – Professor of Cultural Economy, Adelaide University
- **David Kašpar (CZ)** – Deputy to the Minister of Culture of the Czech Republic for cultural and creative industries
- **Sylvia Amann (AUT)** – Expert in cultural policy and funding, long-time advisor to the European Commission
- **Markéta Hrdlička Málková (CZ)** – Director at REZI.DANCE – Artist Residential House for Live Art in the Village of Komařice
- **Duration:** 75 min.

16.20 - 17.00 / Coffee Break (refreshments and networking opportunity)

17.00 - 18.30 / Cultural Open Mic

Uncensored informal five-minute contributions on the conference topic

- Open Mic is an interactive session allowing participants to share their thoughts, ideas, and projects related to the year's theme.

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Moderation by Jiří Šimek (CZ): A theatre creator and co-founder of the Ufftenživot ensemble, a graduate of the Prague Academy of Performing Arts. His work blends physical theatre, dance, slam poetry, and new media.

DAY 2 / THURSDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2025 / Strategy & Collaboration Day – open only for SPARSE Plus partners

09.30 - 09.45 / Thematic Introduction

Brief overview of the working day, presented by moderators.

09.45 – 12.00 / Working Groups (World Café Format)

First Group: World Café in the Small Hall of ARCHA+

● **Table topics:**

1. Community Practices: Social impacts of art, inspiring examples, and barriers in community work.
2. Touring and Mobility: Experiences, challenges, and shared practices across countries. What models of collaboration between regions and cities work best?
3. Sustainability: Economic, ecological, and personnel aspects.

Second Group: Guided Tour – From Centre to Periphery: ARCHA+ → GALAXIE

- A guided tour exploring the shift from centre to periphery - beginning at ARCHA+, a new platform carrying forward the legacy of the former Archa Theatre, and culminating at GALAXIE, a unique, one-year experimental cultural station housed in the first multiplex cinema opened in the Czech Republic in the 1990's, now serving as a temporary home to Dejvické divadlo, Divadlo Minor, DAMU, 4+4 Days in Motion, and Dance Connected.

12.00 – 12.20 / Coffee Break (refreshments and networking opportunity)

12.20 – 13.00 / Summary and Final Presentation

Content:

- Summary of outputs from discussions and workshops.
- Key topics resonating within the SPARSE Plus network

Moderators: Facilitators summarize outputs from their groups

13.00 – 14.00 / On-site Lunch

The programme is subject to change, so please check the schedule regularly for updates.

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Practical information:

Organizer:



Location → [ARCHA+](#), Na Poříčí 1047/26, 110 00 Florenc, Prague, Czechia

Registration → This year is exclusively via the Eventival web interface:

<https://vp.eventival.com/novasit/2025/custom-form/sparse-plus-symposium--culture-get-together-bymagda/edit>

Questions → Please send your questions via the Slido application:

<https://wall.sli.do/event/r5ggHpQ8d9Qw7qngKwdRRE/login?>



Follow the event on Facebook → <https://fb.me/e/5lO3Klp9g>

Translation → <https://sparse.beey.live/>



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Profiles of the speakers and performers:

Justin O'Connor

A professor of cultural economy at Adelaide University, an author of studies on cultural policy and economy.

Justin will give an overview of his book "Culture Is Not an Industry" and reflect on how it has been received within a European context since it was published a year ago. He will also reference its relevance to those of us working in the arts in rural areas.

Sylvia Amann

An international expert in cultural policy and funding, a long-time advisor to EU Institutions. Evolving EU frameworks tied to rural development require a novel policy and implementation perspectives. Cultural development should play a central role in the view of major (rural) transformations of the 21st century and changing frameworks. What are the new options for EU cultural policies?

François Matarasso

A cultural theorist with 45 years of experience in community arts, an author of the book *A Restless Art*.

An increasingly autocratic world order is provoking dangerous, unsettling change, inequality, and insecurity. The interests of the poor, the weak and the marginalised are forgotten or ignored. What can artists who work with these communities hope to achieve in such conditions? François Matarasso will draw on his 45 years' work in co-creation to describe its perennial importance in community development and suggest how a philosophy of resistance to dominant ideologies can still defend space for positive change.

Saša Michailidis

Saša Michailidis, a former programme director and later a director at Radio 1, hosts the Czech Television show *Artzóna* and presents *Akcent* on Czech Radio Vltava. He identifies himself more as a guide than a critic, leaving that role to his guests. He doesn't mind - he says that face-to-face interviews suit him better than criticism.

Ralph Lister

Ralph Lister has been the executive director of *Take Art*, a pioneering cross art form organisation based in rural Somerset, UK, for over 35 years. The organisation has a rural touring, professional dance and theatre, a participatory music and early years remit as well as a growing international reach. He was a founder member of the National Rural Touring Forum, an umbrella advocacy organisation representing all the rural touring organisations in England and was its development director from 2003 to 2018. In that time he led the Rural Touring Dance Initiative, a national project bringing contemporary dance to rural areas with *The Place* as a

major partner. In 2018 through his work with Take Art he led the first three years of SPARSE project, and from 2023 Take Art has been contracted to lead on the evaluation and advocacy for the project as well as contribute to the research element. He sits on the Arts Council England-convened Rural Stakeholder Group and was an adviser to their Rural Evidence & Data Reviews 2017 and 2019.

David Kašpar

David Kašpar (STAN) is the Deputy Minister of Culture of the Czech Republic. With a degree in theatre production from the Theatre Faculty of the Prague Academy of Performing Arts, he has held numerous leadership positions at Prague's cultural institutions and previously served as the Deputy Mayor of Prague 10 for culture, education, and later for social affairs. As the Deputy Minister, his main task is to present the new national cultural policy and foster collaboration across cultural sectors.

Markéta Hrdlička Málková

Marketa Hrdlička Málková is a cultural manager and director of REZI.DANCE, the first artistic residency house for performing arts in South Bohemia, which she co-founded in 2015. She has long been engaged in contemporary dance and independent culture in the Czech Republic and abroad, and her work has received several national awards. Currently she focuses on interdisciplinary projects that include dance, architecture, and land art, while actively involving local communities in the creative process.

Jiří Šimek

A theatre creator and co-founder of the Ufftenživot ensemble, a graduate of the Prague Academy of Performing Arts. His work blends physical theatre, dance, slam poetry, and new media.

Radim Sršeň

Radim Sršeň has an extensive experience in municipal politics as a long-time mayor of Dolní Studénky and, since 2016, as a regional council member of the Olomouc Region. For several years he was the vice-president of the European Association for Rural Development and currently represents the Czech Republic on the EU Committee of the Regions. Long-term he focuses on the development of structurally disadvantaged regions and Smart Cities solutions improving life in rural areas.

Daniele Sepe

Daniele Sepe is a vice-director of AMAT (Associazione Marchigiana Attività Teatrali), the Marche Region's Interdisciplinary Circuit of Theatre, Dance, Music, and Contemporary Circus. He has been working for the Association since 2005 after first graduating in Art and Modern Languages and Cultures from the Università degli Studi di Urbino Carlo Bo. At AMAT, he is

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primarily involved in management, creation and development of programmes and projects, coordinating activities in support of creativity, including creative residencies and workshops. He has been a member of the Anticorpi XL national network Promotor Committee since 2007. He participates in the ideation and management of international and interdisciplinary projects approved in the context of EU programmes, such as Sparse Plus (Creative Europe, lead partner), Open Atelier (Creative Europe), Craft, and UpCreate (Erasmus+). Daniele is a co-author of several scientific articles.

Aneta Hladovcová

An international relations manager at Nová síť, an executive director of Malá inventura festival. Aneta has been involved in cultural production and financial management of independent projects for a long time. As an executive director of the Malá inventura festival, she supervises the festival's financing and production and develops its international network. Her considerable experience in organising conferences, international meetings, and managing cultural projects allows her the ability to ensure the success of the festival's programme conducting efficient operations and incorporating international collaboration, which makes her a key member of the festival team.

Petr Pola

A dramaturg, theatre curator, producer, and non-profit specialist.

He completed his master's degree and doctoral studies in Aesthetics at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University (2007, 2015), and a master's degree in Dramaturgy of Alternative and Puppet Theatre at Prague Academy of Performing Arts (2012). He is the co-founder and dramaturg of the alternative and puppet theatre Anička a letadýlko (since 2004). He has worked with the organisation Nová síť since 2015, contributing to the development and direction of its cultural programmes, conferences, and festivals, such as ART-IN-RES, Culture Get-Together, and Malá inventura, of which he is also the artistic director (2015–present). In addition to his curatorial and production work, he has served as an assistant professor at the Department of Philosophy of the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen (2017–present), focusing on the development of contemporary performing arts and international collaborations.

Adris Světlíková

Adris Světlíková is the director of Nová síť, a service organisation for culture, where she has also worked for the past fifteen years as a consultant, lecturer, and mediator in performing arts. She co-initiated and developed the conference on cultural cooperation, Culture Get-Together, and residency support programmes, such as ART-IN-RES, along with many other initiatives. She contributes to industry efforts to bring a change into cultural practice in the Czech Republic and participates in the development of strategic cultural policy documents. She serves on cultural grant committees and works as an external university lecturer. She holds a degree in Cultural Studies from the Faculty of Arts, Charles University, and has participated in several

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European cultural projects. Her main professional focus is on networking across Czech regions and changing the social climate through culture. She enjoys being the mother of two daughters (19 and 17) and relaxing in the countryside with her chickens.

Giulia Zavaglia

A project manager specialising in cultural projects and initiatives centred on sustainability. Giulia's work integrates project design, funding strategies, and sustainable development to help organisations create impactful social and environmental projects. With a background in cultural production, sustainable events, and law, she brings a multidisciplinary perspective to her work. As a consultant representing Chloe Sustainability, she carried out an analysis of public funding among the project partners and developed statistical results. To support the research process, she also conducted interviews with institutional representatives and coordinated with key stakeholders.

tanz weit draußen

Jessica Buchholz, Co-Project Lead, and Pascal Sangl, choreographer and dancer from Baden-Württemberg, represent tanz weit draußen, the German network for contemporary dance in rural regions. The network connects artists, strengthens local cultural actors, and builds sustainable structures to support dance, culture, and community life in rural areas over the long term.

In this session, we present tanz weit draußen, the German network for contemporary dance in rural regions, highlighting our current structural funding and nationwide reach. We will introduce our diverse formats that connect artists, strengthen local cultural actors, and foster sustainable collaborations. A central focus will be on how the network builds long-term community ties and supports ongoing artistic and social engagement in rural areas.

Kateřina Bohadlová

Kateřina Bohadlová is the creative producer and director of the independent theatre company Geisslers Hofcomoedianten, as well as the multi-genre THEATRUM KUKS festival of Baroque and Baroque-inspired art. Having studied German and Italian at Charles University's Faculty of Arts, she specialised in Baroque theatre, a source of inspiration for her theatre projects in Prague and the surrounding region. She also works as a translator of plays and collaborates with Prague's DAMU and Minor Theatre on external projects. From 2011 to 2014, she lived in the US, where she received a Fulbright Scholarship to lecture and conduct research at Portland State University (OR), and founded the Czech School of Portland.

This year's festival successfully broke down barriers between itself and the residents of the village of Kuks, and this contribution will focus on that achievement. The key to bringing people together was the TisíciHRAn documentary theatre residency, which collaborated with the

festival to initiate the sharing of personal memories of local residents. This process began privately, then continued publicly, finally culminating in a performative, site-specific walk as part of the festival programme. This shared experience of mutual listening and searching for connections rather than differences opened a new phase of coexistence.

Géza Pintér

Géza Pintér-Németh, studied at the University of Pécs, in Hungary, at the department of Italian Literature and Film studies from 2003 and graduated in 2010. He worked with several street theatre companies in Germany and in Italy from 2008 until 2016 (Teatro Nucleo, Antagon Theatre, Teatro Tascabile di Bergamo). He is a theoretical and practical researcher of the intercultural aspect of theatre events in rural areas. In this field he has managed Erasmus and Creative Europe projects since 2016 (RIOTE, ATIPIA, Weaving Voices, SPARSE). Recently he has been taking part in a DLA program at the University of Film and Theatre in Budapest (SZFE) since 2023.

My intention is to share the experience of our most recent SPARSE plus event on the day of 28th September 2025 in the village of Szalatnak (Hungary). At this time we created a complex event around the theme of the celebration of birds titled as "Bird's feast". This was a project about the connection of nature and performative art including the inauguration of a birdwatching station, a village walk act and a Baul storytelling concert. The planned content of my speech: 1. description of the event; 2. explanation of the concept behind; 3. its prospective and vision as an innovative way to bring and create theatre events in rural areas.

Open mic section:

Jan Žůrek

cultural manager, dramaturg, and cultural policy expert

Jan Žůrek has over fifteen years of experience in independent theatre, public administration, and cultural strategies. He served as Artistic Director of Divadlo na cucky, Director of DW7, and Regional Councillor for Culture in Olomouc. He is active in expert committees of the Ministry of Culture and currently works as a consultant, lecturer, and external teacher at Palacký University Olomouc.

OPEN MIC contribution:

Jan's presentation explores the role of regional personalities shaping cultural life in small towns. Using examples from heritage sites in the Olomouc region, he examines how local actors balance heritage care with live art, site promotion, and exhibition building, highlighting how participation and collaboration can revitalize cultural spaces.

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Bazo Garsu

community and cultural organizer

Bazo moved from Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia to Pilsen five years ago. In Mongolia, he organized film festivals and hosted cultural events, and in Czechia he aims to build connections between Czech and Mongolian culture. He co-organized the Mongolian Film Festival and continues to engage with the Czech cultural scene.

OPEN MIC contribution:

Bazo will perform a comedic, musical, improvisational “rant” reflecting his desire to create honest, creative connections between Czech and Mongolian communities, accompanied by a presentation (PPT). His manifesto: "Ne zvlášť, dohromady."

Tereza Kahounová

creative producer and musician

Tereza studies Architecture in Prague and has been involved in several cultural projects, including Festival Láskyplno, Days of Architecture, Pěstuj prostor, and Film and Architecture. She is experienced in intercultural exchanges and works across music, visual arts, and writing.

OPEN MIC contribution:

Tereza will share a small concert/improvisation performance, presenting her original melancholic and dreamy compositions on piano, exploring intimate personal stories through music.

Jessica Rincón

artist and community organizer

Jessica is an artist from Colombia based in Prague. She combines puppetry, storytelling, and community building, co-creating plays on migrant stories and facilitating workshops for children. She currently develops the initiative Kindness Exchange Box in Žižkov.

OPEN MIC contribution:

Jessica will present a participatory performance asking “Who gets to tell our story?” Combining a poetic rantifesto with collective memory-making, she invites participants to contribute notes, drawings, or objects, highlighting the value of every voice in rural and small communities.

Nitish Jain

performance artist

Nitish (born in India, based in Czechia) creates immersive performances combining objects, spaces, storytelling, and sensory experiences. His works explore post-coloniality, anthropocene, and climate themes while engaging audiences sensorially with tactility, taste, and scents.

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OPEN MIC contribution:

In Prelude to First Raindrops, Nitish guides the audience through a participatory sensory imagination exercise using objects and storytelling. He draws attention to human and ecological wellbeing, celebrating plurality and non-human narratives.

László Gálos & Márta Ladjánszki

independent performance artists, L1 Association, Hungary

László explores the relationship between subjective and objective reality through photography and video, performing internationally since 2018. Márta co-founded KOMPmANIA

Contemporary Dance Theatre and is now Artistic Director of L1 Independent Artists Association, focusing on dance and choreography.

OPEN MIC contribution:

Their performance Jeremiad is a culture-political commentary on censorship and self-censorship in Hungary, exploring the impact of conservative cultural policies on independent artists, using nudity and performative lecture to convey truths beyond words.

Jiří Šimek

theatre creator and performer

Jiří is a co-founder of the Ufftenživot ensemble and a graduate of the Prague Academy of Performing Arts. His work blends physical theatre, dance, slam poetry, and new media.

OPEN MIC contribution:

Jiří's contribution explores innovative theatre forms that combine movement, storytelling, and multimedia to engage audiences in participatory and reflective experiences.

Yasmine Heyer

contemporary circus artist and community organizer

Yasmine co-leads the circus association Akrosphäre and the new circus centre in Graz. She performs internationally with ConTakt and as a duo, blending partner acrobatics, trapeze, and live music. She focuses on community building, activism, and inclusivity in performing arts.

OPEN MIC contribution:

Yasmine shares her perspective on organizing rural tours in Austria, combining performance and spoken word while balancing production tasks in a playful handstand-based presentation, reflecting challenges, lessons, and creative strategies for decentralizing culture.