

## WHO?

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Cultural observatories are highly differentiated institutions, which in some way reflect the cultural reality that surrounds them - whether it is international, national, transnational or purely regional. According to the *Monitors of Culture* working group definition, they are “responsible for facilitating the transfer and access to information and knowledge in order to support the decision making process in the cultural field through information systems.”

Miralles defined cultural observatories in the *Bilbao Reader* “as specialised structures, [which] seek to find a place at some fundamental crossroads: between action and reflection, between the arts and the territory, between institutions and society.”<sup>1</sup>

There are three main groups of cultural observatories consisting of public, private and non-profit sector. Although there are commonalities between these three sectors, each one implies different stakeholders and as well as the degree of accountability to the public.

The cultural sector is primarily constituted of small institutions with project based or erratic funding. Their interests often reflect that of the funding bodies interest (regional or national) for that particular time. Therefore it is difficult to place observatories into typologies without conducting deeper research into the relations between their area, funding source, chosen field and disseminated products.

### **In this context, we challenge you to consider and debate these statements:**

- « Who are cultural observatories in relation to the public?
- « Who are the public in relation to cultural observatories?
- « Observatories should not exert influence, they should only reflect reality.
- « Who an observatory is depends on the culture it is observing and it should always be like this.
- « Cultural observatories shouldn't be connected to government bodies.
- « A *Union of Observatories* should be formed that will provide a single place where questions can be answered and initiatives started.
- « We would know who observatories were if they told us!
- « An observatory is defined by their dissemination practice.

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<sup>1</sup> *Bilbao Reader*, Part III p.9.