



IETM REPORT

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THE FORCES OF THE MARKET

Report from the IETM Porto Plenary Meeting, 26 – 29 April 2018

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The forces of the market

The Forces of the Market was announced as a workshop about the art markets for up to 25 participants. The training part was preceded by a discussion focused on identifying the different ways art markets function across countries, different opportunities, constraints, regulations that come along, and the concept of an art market itself.

Grzegorz Reske opened up the discussion with a clarification that IETM is not a marketplace. Instead of selling productions, IETM focuses on artistic expression, on artists' condition and cultural policies, on social and environmental issues, etc. This position was confirmed also by Nan van Houte, the Secretary General of IETM, and Pippa Bailey, a member of IETM's advisory committee. Yet, the market is there, Grzegorz Reske insisted, it is present, "as the elephant in the room nobody wants to speak about". People come to IETM meetings to search for partnerships and collaborations along with sharing ideas and discussing policies. "No matter how much we criticise the market, we are also market-driven, and this influences our everyday life", Grzegorz said.

Being quite critical on the idea of a market in the arts, Pippa Bailey turned attention to the term 'creative industry', and how it might drive the conversation away from arts and creativity towards markets, demand and supply. "Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer warned us not to become an industry", Pippa stressed, "but here we are, speaking about the market..." (For further insight, see the chapter *The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception* by Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno [here](#).)

The topic of the training has drawn attention and the maximum participants target was completed. Twenty-five artists, producers, artists/producers, funders, researchers, from 10 countries and four continents came to the workshop. The variety of expectations from the session they shared is also indicative of the high relevance of the topic.



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Trainer: Iva Horvat, Strategy Manager at Art Republic, Spain

Speakers:

Barbara Pocek, Production Manager at Glej Theatre, Slovenia

Grzegorz Reske, Associate Curator at EEPAP (East European Performing Arts Platform), Poland

Pippa Bailey, Producer / Director, Australia, UK

Some participants were interested to talk more about the taboo of the themes of money and markets in the art world: among them were some producers from Italy, Portugal, Slovenia, Australia, an art organisation manager from Italy, a funder from Switzerland, a theatre director from the Netherlands.

Other participants joined the session to learn more about art markets or to get introduced to the topic: a dance company production manager, Portugal, an artistic director of a dance festival from Catalonia, Spain, a producer from Australia/ UK.

Some wanted to get an insight into how the market influences one's work: a producer from Slovenia, a London based artistic director, a researcher from Bulgaria, a

funder from the UK, a self-producing artist from Denmark, a theatre director from Portugal.

Others wanted to clarify their own goals, positions: producers from Portugal, artists from Australia, Brazil, a festival organiser from Spain, creative producers from Denmark, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia...

The participants were asked to put themselves in different groups according to how privileged they assumed themselves to be: coming from 'rich' or 'poor' countries, having or lacking access to international markets, access to mobility programmes and so on. The most significant division was drawn between 'rich' (i.e. having sufficient funding for arts and culture, public and private

funding bodies, established rules and regulations, along with an overall higher GDP, living standard etc.) and 'poor' (i.e. lacking all this) countries.

'rich' countries [Group 1]: UK, Australia, Denmark, Switzerland, Spain

'poor' countries [Group 2]: Italy, Portugal, Slovenia, Poland, Latvia, Brazil/Spain

Divided in these two groups, the participants shared their perception on how the market they know functions, what are the obstacles and the drawbacks, but also, the advantages and the opportunities. An ununiformed country-by-country snapshot outlined certain peculiarities along with some common traits.



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What is 'the market'?

The participants did not aim to bring out a coherent understanding of what the art market, with all its variations, is, but talked through some practical definitions just for the purposes of the current discussion. It is also important to underline that each participant spoke from their point of view and shared their individual perception of what is a market. So, the most common understanding of the 'market' was defined as everything that provides the artist with money to work. As a consequence, the main focus of the conversation was about subsidies and how the public funds are structured and function in different countries.

Subsidies and alternative ways

The system of the subsidies exists in all the countries represented, and is the main source for art organisations to produce and show their work. It was noted that a substantial part of a subsidy goes for the huge infrastructure outside the process of creating the actual artwork: marketing, audience development, administration, evaluation, publicity and so on. But while Group 1 focused on the differences in how these subsidies are distributed, Group 2 shared some really disturbing issues around public funding in their countries.

Most of the art organisations in the countries in Group 2 are struggling to achieve stability. This is relevant to companies, to producers, and to individual artists. The public funding is irregular: both in terms of amount of finances allocated to culture and in terms of planning of calls' releases and payments. Nobody knows for sure when the calls are going to be announced, or if you get the funding, when you are going to be paid. This makes it difficult to plan in advance and impedes production, touring, even keeping the art organisation together, and brings a lot of stress.

Another issue that was identified is the non-market approach of the funding bodies in many of the Group 2 countries, but especially in the East European ones. On one hand, the funding bodies set quite a market-driven, neo-liberal paradigm of funding distribution (i.e. the most audience-attracting companies will receive bigger funds), but on the other hand, they do not apply any instruments to trace the effectiveness of these funds or the 'quality' of the production.

An alternative to this public funding roller-coaster was suggested by an independent art company from Italy. For the last three years they have been given up applying for any public funding. Instead, they started to develop projects for private companies, and, thanks to that, they manage to fund

their artistic work quite well, in their estimation: "It gives us freedom to do what we want and the way we want". The other endeavour that proved useful for them is being involved in an independent arts network. They managed to get their productions on international tours with the support of the In-SITU network.

Touring and access to international markets

Touring and having access to international markets was another major point in the discussions within both groups.

Group 1 distinguished between closed markets depending on whether they are closed to internationals coming in or restrain local professionals from touring abroad. Different mechanisms for internationalisation were outlined. Because of the changing circumstances in different places, international touring is increasingly done through international collaborations. You need to find other organisations in other countries with which you have similarities, in order to match and to apply for the resources together.

Group 2 outlined several issues related to internationalisation relevant for their national contexts. First, there is a lack of opportunities for international

professionals to see their work and eventually, invite them to their places. This leads to a situation where most of the work is being produced with the assumption it would stay within the national bubble. And when you are working mostly in a national context, there is a risk to become more focused on national history, national issues, and this can make your work even more difficult to translate to international audiences. The participants also noted that living in a closed society or in an open and multi-cultural environment has an influence and affects the work you produce.

Another recently emerged characteristic of the international market that Group 1 outlined is the occurrence of smaller quasi-markets around the big EU funded projects. These markets are created by multinational projects' partners and the networks they form.

Working out of your pockets. The fair practice code in the arts

Everybody from Group 2 witnessed that in their countries, artists need to constantly prove themselves, prove their merits to the funders. Artists are quite often working out of their pockets before they get recognised as professionals and become eligible for funding. And even then, many funding systems (in Spain or in Italy, for example) ask artists to deliver first, to produce the work, the festival, etc. to prove they have accomplished the project as they have stated in the application and then they are being refunded for their expenses. All this puts additional strain on the already precarious financial situation of most of the arts organisations.

Being urged to constantly prove themselves as artists and professionals was recognised as a common trait for the art market in the countries from Group 1 as well. It was noted that the independent self-producing artist has become a rising phenomenon in our world. Due to the recent drastic cuts and reorganisation in the funding structures for the arts, the figure of the artist/entrepreneur has also emerged on the market.

This new situation has disrupted the conditions for artists, and poses both threats and opportunities. In an attempt to ensure better labour market position for artists, a [Fair Practice Code](#) is being under elaboration, as an initiative started in Germany. Belgium and the Netherlands are now also taking part. It is an open initiative and everyone is invited to contribute. More about this initiative can be found in the report from the IETM Amsterdam 2016 session, [Fair Practice Label in the Arts](#) or on the website of [DutchCulture](#).

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The second part of the workshop was focused on self-reflection and analysing real examples from the participants' practices. "It was reassuring to see that you are not alone, that artists from different countries and contexts have the same issues as you, but most importantly, that you can gather and try to find a solution together", one of the participants acknowledged.

The Forces of the market workshop provoked participants to reflect on the vast topic of 'arts and markets'. There was not enough time to discuss some interesting questions and certainly, more time for dialogue was needed. Therefore the moderators suggest arranging a follow-up session where participants can mix and talk more about the similarities and differences of their systems and where the bridges for better understanding and collaboration could be built.