

IETM PUBLICATION

www.ietm.org

REWIRING THE NETWORK (FOR THE TWENTIES)

Resetting the agenda for IETM



Photo: Markus Spiske



In partnership with:

IDEA
CONSULT thinking ahead



Co-funded by the
Creative Europe Programme
of the European Union

The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

February 2021
9782930897493

Rewiring the Network (for the Twenties)
Resetting the agenda for IETM - Summary

IETM Publication

**Authors: Joris Janssens, Delphine Hesters, Martina Fraioli (IDEA Consult),
edited by Elena Polivtseva (IETM)**

Published by IETM - International network for contemporary performing arts,
Brussels February 2021

Layout: Milton Pereira on a template by JosWorld



This publication is distributed free of charge and follows the Creative Commons agreement Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives (CC BY-NC-ND). You are free to reuse and share this publication or parts of it as long as you mention the original source.

This publication should be mentioned as follows:

D. Hesters, J. Janssens, M Fraioli, 'Rewiring the Network (for the Twenties), Resetting the agenda for IETM - Summary', IETM, February 2021. Link: <https://www.ietm.org/en/publications>
For further information please contact ietm@ietm.org

The publishers have made every effort to secure permission to reproduce pictures protected by copyright. Any omission brought to their attention will be solved in future editions of this publications.

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	03
Introduction	04
Flashback: on the origins of international networking	05
IETM today	05
The misty origins	05
The 5 original promises of international networking	06
The successes of international networking	07
Some major shifts in the 10's	08
A transition for the performing arts ecosystem	10
Some insights from transition thinking	10
Current pressures on and promises for the performing arts	12
A transition for the performing arts on 5 levels	15
Guiding values for the future	21
In order to get there, what needs to be done?	23
Rewiring the Network: resetting the Agenda for IETM	25
Three possible roles for the network	25
From ideas to strategies	26

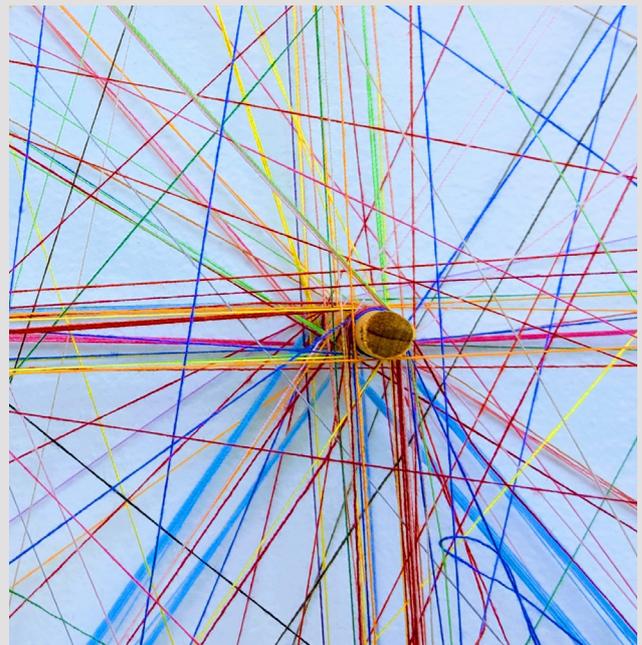


Photo: Omar Flores

Introduction

The performing arts have been going through some rough weather in recent years. Changing environmental, social and political conditions have increasingly put our work under pressure. All of us are trying to come up with answers and solutions, but how can these be more than just survival strategies? The answer is clear. In order to have a real systemic impact, we, as a sector, need to work together, and the networks we created might be the platforms to do so. For almost 40 years, IETM has been a place for performing arts professionals to develop new ideas and solutions together.. Through [Rewiring the Network](#), the members of IETM went on a journey to collectively engage in envisioning a transition into a more sustainable future for the performing arts. The purpose: strengthening our practice through knowledge exchange. But, as society is changing, the network can only achieve this purpose if it stays fresh and relevant.

So, in the light of today's rapidly shifting and challenging reality, how can we collectively conceive a more sustainable future for the performing arts ecosystem, in Europe and beyond? How can we work together to make this desired future actually happen? Who will be our partners to get there? And how can we 'use' and maybe redesign or 'rewire' IETM, our network, as a vehicle to get there?

Facilitated by [IDEA Consult](#), the IETM members took the whole (infamous) year 2020 to find it out, step by step, via an online survey and two large-scale online brainstorms. First, we designed a transition for the performing arts, that would bring us away from our current pressures and unsustainable practices to a more sustainable future:

- We started by **flashing back** to the misty origins of IETM. In what context did the idea for an international performing arts network pop up? What did the initiators want the network to do? What were the promises of international networking back then, and what were its achievements at different times and today?
- Next, we discussed the **current situation** of the performing arts ecosystem. We can safely say that international networking has had an important impact on it, but various pressures on the performing arts field have been mounting too. We also scouted for interesting ideas and experiments for more sustainable future practices, "weak" but promising signals that positive change is possible and necessary. We mapped both these 'pressures' and 'promises' based on the members' input via a survey.

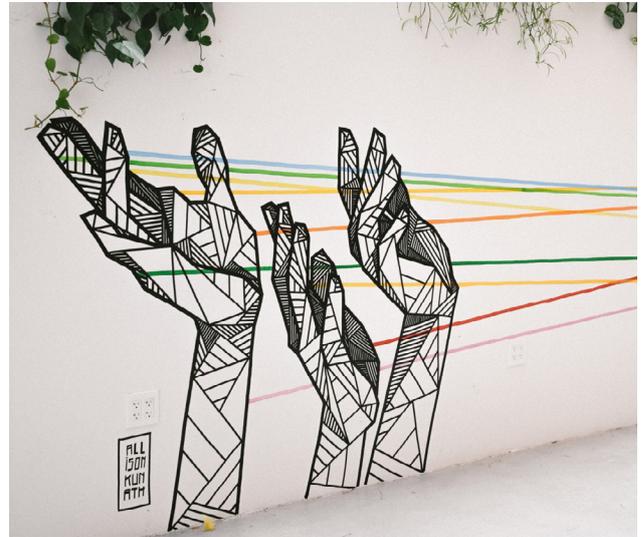


Photo: © Allie Smith

- Then, we collectively designed **a vision for the future**, where the value of the arts will thrive on many levels: artistic, social, economic, human and ecological. In 2040, what will be the common practices in the performing arts sector? What will be the core values guiding our work?
- Last, we talked about the **roles and partnerships** needed in the transition towards this preferred future.

This way, we designed a *transition for the performing arts*, taking into account that our movement from the current situation to a more sustainable future will always be a *double movement*. On the one hand, we need to break down our current habits and practices which we cannot sustain over a longer period of time. On the other hand, our transition movement will also be about building up more sustainable practices of the future. Therefore, we need to scout for and invest in emerging alternatives, we need to connect them and make them more visible, in order to mainstream them. How can the international performing arts community implement these movements? What role IETM and other accelerators should play in this actual transition process?

Throughout the Rewiring trajectory, we have been sharing learnings and insights in several ways, via a series of blog posts, an intermediary publication, a series of working papers and a MIRO whiteboard where we collected all the material. If you are interested in the detailed process and results, you can access these resources via the [project page on the IETM website](#). This text synthesises the main outcomes of the trajectory. Where did we start, where are we now? What does the transition for the performing arts ecosystem actually look like? And how can we start working on it together? What can be the future role of international networks, and IETM in particular, in accelerating this transition?

Flashback: on the origins of international networking



Opening Keynote of the Hull Plenary Meeting, photo: © Thomas Arran

IETM TODAY

Today, IETM is a “membership organisation which exists to stimulate the quality, development and the context of contemporary performing arts.” Currently, the network has approximately 500 members in more than 50 countries. They come from all sub-disciplines within the performing arts and take up all functions in the ecosystem (venues, festivals, companies, producers, independent curators, research and resource centres, networks, governmental bodies, artists...). Geographically, 88% of these members are in the European continent. The countries with the largest membership are UK, Germany, France, Netherlands and Italy. The two annual plenary meetings have always been the backbone of IETM, but through time IETM’s activities have diversified. IETM undertakes smaller meetings, exchange programmes, research activities and publications, conducts policy analysis and advocacy.

This is quite different from the origins. Initially, IETM was short for “Informal European Theatre Meeting”. Today, the network is broader than theatre; it is also more than just European - with all its programmes undertaken in Asia and the Middle East in the past years, membership in Canada, US and Australia and partnerships in Africa and Latin America. A couple of years ago IETM kept the acronym but changed the baseline - “International network for contemporary performing arts”. This is closer to what the network is about today. But how did it start?

THE MISTY ORIGINS

The idea of creating an ‘informal European theatre meeting’ was born in the summer of 1981, in Polverigi, a small village in Central Italy. In 1977, Roberto Cimetta, an Italian theatre director and playwright, created the Inteatro Festival in Villa Nappi, which the local mayor allowed him to use. Villa Nappi was home to theatre companies of all kinds, from all parts of the world. Cimetta and his colleague Velia Papa gave artists a place to meet to rehearse and find an audience.

Cimetta and Pappa invited their international colleagues to the festival. At that moment, there were several alternative festivals popping up across Europe, and like-minded peers wanted to meet. On a summer night in 1981, some of these directors of festivals, alternative spaces and supporting organisations conceived the idea of organising regular meetings to talk about the development of their different projects. It was Philippe Tiry, director of the French Office National de Diffusion Artistique (ONDA) who organised the founding meeting of IETM in Paris in the fall of 1981.

There were only less than 10 people on that summer evening in Polverigi and 60 people at the founding meeting in Paris. But you can find almost 100 people who would claim they were part of these legendary meeting etc. This exaggeration might be illustrative of the vibe, the energy and the dynamic at the time, and of the success of IETM as a pioneering international network. Why was the network so successful, at that moment within that context? Let us try to grasp some key features of the broader context for contemporary performing arts in the early days of IETM.

- One first important thing to point out is that 'official' international collaboration was very much driven by governmental bodies for cultural diplomacy, such as the Goethe Institut, Institut Français, among others, next to cultural diplomacy platforms such as the Europalia festival, which started in 1969. There was a growing need for non-government driven connections, starting from artistic rather than national premises.
- Second, the international performing arts landscape at that moment was dominated by large festivals which had existed since the 1950's, such as Wiener Festwochen or Holland Festival. There was a need for space for smaller and younger players.
- Third, there was a tangible division between Western and Eastern parts of Europe, which mounted after the Second World War. It was quite difficult to work across the so-called Iron Curtain. Therefore, people needed networks to create a more equal and open space for cultural exchange in Europe.
- Fourth, of course, these were the days before the Internet and email, Facebook, YouTube or even DVDs. In terms of communication technologies, the end of the 70's was, at best, the golden era of the fax machine.

At the end of the 70's, a lot of new, alternative, small-scale and not well-funded festivals, such as Festival of Fools, Kaaifestival, Festival de Nancy, Copenhagen International Festival, to name a few, appeared on the horizon. They were put up by such people as Roberta Cimetta, Hugo Degreeef, Trevor Davies, and more. Also, smaller and alternative venues joined the informal network. These were cultural entrepreneurs avant-la-lettre, setting up festivals but also doing many other things to support the work of artists. For instance, they also developed new possibilities for artists to produce work, via co-productions, for instance. Some even set up producing organisations, started lobbying with policymakers, and organise networking spaces and fora. In these efforts, they were supported by intermediary organisations, such as ONDA and VTC (the Flemish Theater Circuit, now Flanders Arts Institute), where its director Guido Minne kindly offered to host the first IETM office, from 1984 onwards. Hilde Teuchies started working there as an international relations officer and later, when IETM was established as an international association under Belgian law in 1989, became the first Secretary General of the network.

THE FIVE ORIGINAL PROMISES OF INTERNATIONAL NETWORKING

In predigital times, the pioneers of international networking organised networking meetings not only to strengthen alternative venues and festivals in their countries. The goal was to collectively develop a thriving ecosystem for contemporary performing arts in the whole of Europe. For this, knowledge was crucial, and the meetings were the place to accumulate and exchange the acquired experience and know-how. First, conversations revolved around current artistic developments and prominent artists and initiatives. In the early days, IETM was very much about detecting talent. Who are the bright artists, what is interesting work? Second, IETM was also the place to exchange practical know-how. How to set up an international festival? How to deal with such issues, as visa, taxes, social security and other matters related to international mobility? Third, exchanging strengthened advocacy for the field. What arguments could be used to develop policies for contemporary performing arts (which were quite exceptional at the time in Europe)?

Looking back on the early days of international cultural networking, one might identify the following five promises of international networking for the performing arts:

- Stimulating international mobility throughout the whole of Europe, beyond the borders of East and West.
- Creating opportunities for artists, not only touring of productions but also longer-term relationships between artists and venues.
- Developing production capacity, by not only exchanging knowledge but also by pooling co-production resources.
- Developing public support and policies for contemporary performing arts.
- Democratisation of contemporary performing arts, by creating the right context for presentation.

THE SUCCESSES OF INTERNATIONAL NETWORKING

Forty years later, the crucial question is: were these promises achieved? What was the concrete impact of all the networking that has been happening over the past decades? What has it eventually brought us? Let us start with the positive take on things. One day, a more elaborate history of the achievements and impact of IETM will be written. For now, it is safe to say that the networking was successful for a very long time, at least for thirty years, in the sense that concerning these five 'promises' important progress and positive developments were achieved. For instance, all this international networking did have a decisive and prolific impact on the development of innovative performing arts initiatives across Europe. The growth of the network, from 10 to approximately 500 members today, could be read as a first sign of this success. Second, we saw a proliferation of specialised cultural networks. IETM was one of the first ones, but many others followed. Some of these were indeed IETM offsprings; here are a few examples: NewOp/NonOp (new music theater and opera forms), ENICPA (European Network of Information Centers for the Performing Arts), EuNETart (European Network of Art Organisations for Children and Young People), Junge Hunde (emerging artists), DBM (contemporary dance in the Mediterranean area) and several co-production consortia such as Seas and Balkan Express (bringing together performing artists from South East Europe).

These European cultural networks also cooperated, certainly for their advocacy initiatives. In the nineties, IETM, with other networks, contributed to the creation of the European Forum for the Arts and Heritage – now Culture Action Europe. Together, cultural networks were very active in making the case for culture on the European level, and they contributed greatly to the development of European cultural policy initiatives. They managed to do so because artists and cultural operators were indeed drivers of European integration. In the slipstream of the fall of the Berlin Wall, they put this promise of international mobility and cultural exchange between the East and the West into practice. International networking was beneficial for connecting artists and venues on either side of the former Iron Curtain. It allowed the independent scene in Central and Eastern Europe to connect and develop internationally, in this post-transition situation, with for instance the Arca Theatre in Prague, Eurokaz Festival in Zagreb and Trafo in Budapest as some of the pivotal players.



Photo: Jaime Lopes

SOME MAJOR SHIFTS IN THE 10'S

International performing arts networking was quite successful, but at a certain moment major shifts happened. 2010 might be a pivotal point. After the near collapse of the global financial system after 2008, most European countries cut their budgets for contemporary performing arts. This put severe pressure on the collaborative practices in our transnational production and presentation systems. What happened then? Instead of doing less because there is less money, the immediate response of many performing arts organisations was to reduce the level of co-production and presentation fees, in order to keep up the same level of production and presentation – and remain visible in an increasingly competitive landscape.

While those solutions were tested and implemented, the network continued to grow, its nodes have become more vulnerable and the connections among them have become weaker: the number of players augmented, but those were smaller and more vulnerable. Moreover, while the number of coproducers in a production tends to grow, their involvement and engagement tends to diminish – certainly, if the discussion increasingly revolves around developing the budget, instead of focusing on the artistic work.

Thus, trying to find short-term solutions for economic issues, we made our networks more fragile and vulnerable. Not all our answers to the economic crisis since 2008 appeared to be sustainable, in the literal sense of the word: as they cannot be sustained for a longer period.

Moreover, there were two other major societal shifts which have marked the last decade. First, the impact of human behaviour on the environment and our increasing awareness of the climate emergency. Second, the worrying (geo-)political developments in Europe and beyond. For a long time, the idea of European integration was our major narrative, and the performing arts have also played an essential role in this story. But as the Bulgarian political scientist Ivan Krastev argued in his essay *After Europe* [1], since a couple of years, the idea and possibility of European disintegration have been gaining ground, with Brexit coming into place, the rise of Eurosceptic parties everywhere and the democratic election of illiberal parties. While the European cultural policies keep being depoliticised and serve economic agendas, we are observing a re-culturalisation of politics in many countries, where national identity politics are gaining ground in so-called 'illiberal' democracies.

Today, when we look at the current situation in the performing arts internationally, the question is more than ever whether we can keep up these five promises of international networking? For each of them, one might say that these promises (in blue on the left) have been coupled with increasing pressures (in red on the right). This is a scheme that might summarise our current predicament:

[1] Krastev, I. (2020). *After Europe* (Updated Edition). University of Pennsylvania Press.

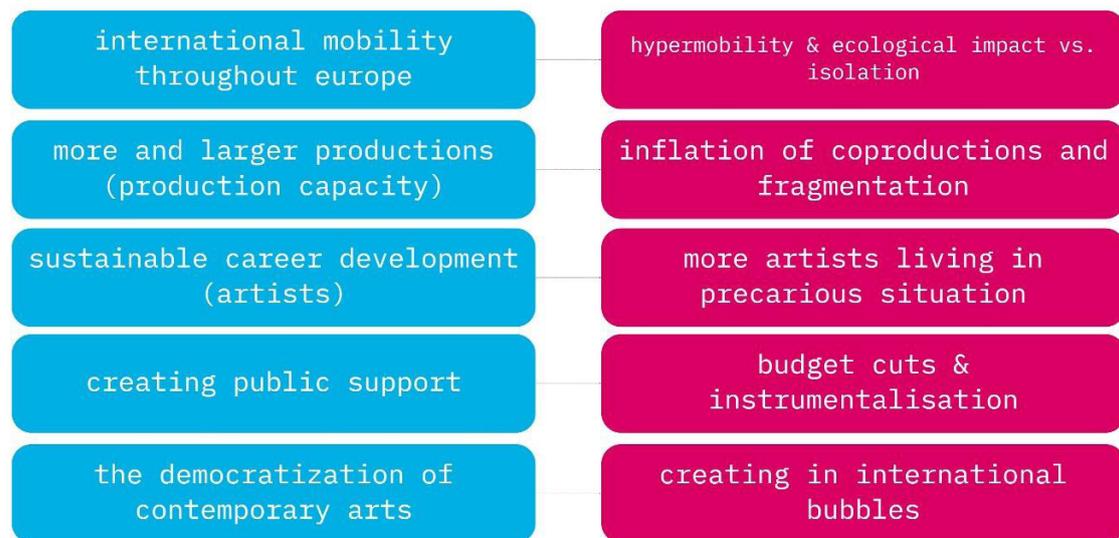


Figure 1. The promises and pressures of international networking

- The first promise was increased international mobility, both for East and West. The reality is different and diverse. Many performing artists find themselves in a situation of hypermobility—where they are forced to move because of the way the system is organised. Many others find themselves in isolation and face lack of mobility. How far is mobility your own choice? Ironically, the current pandemic crisis has been a leveller in this respect. In the year 2020, we have all been isolated.
- Second, the promise of international networking was that international collaboration would give life to productions that would otherwise be impossible, by bundling forces. But, as the economic pressures increased, we saw the opposite: producing companies are fragmenting their production capacity.
- Third, the idea was that, through connections and collaborations, professional opportunities would be created for artists, also on a longer term. Instead, two of the main issues in the sector today are socioeconomic precariousness and unsustainable working conditions.
- The promise of international networking was that, through collaboration, we could strengthen the case for the performing arts on different government levels. While we can say that there have been a lot of achievements at certain moments in certain places, the general feeling in 2020 is that this story does not sell anymore. The public support for contemporary art is under an enormous strain, often instrumentalised for various causes, such as economic agendas or national identity politics.
- Ultimately, international collaboration was meant to democratise the contemporary performing arts. But did we achieve this? Research continues to show that, despite our efforts, it remains very difficult to overcome the traditional sociocultural barriers, such as class, education level, age, domicile, etc. Overcoming these barriers requires an important effort which takes skills, commitment and continuity. The current circumstances are not favourable for breaking out of the proverbial silos. When increasingly forced to work internationally at high speed, many artists find it difficult to come out of their international performing arts bubble and develop meaningful relationships with local scenes and local audiences.



Photo: Ahmad Odeh

A transition for the performing arts ecosystem

SOME INSIGHTS FROM TRANSITION THINKING

So, where are we now, after 40 years of performing arts networking? For a long time, international cultural networking has proven to be very successful, and the performing arts were pioneers in this field. In the last ten years, we have seen major shifts in society and artistic practices - and the way our sector responded to those changes has not always been sustainable. All of us are trying to develop answers, approaches and solutions. Today, we see a lot of pressures on the international performing arts community, but we also see sparkles of hope in many alternative initiatives and niche experiments, even though they sometimes seem quite marginal. Now, the basic question is:

How can (some of) these alternatives be more than just survival strategies? How can they become the fundament or the starting point for a more sustainable future? Therefore, we need a paradigm shift, a transition for the performing arts.

How can we imagine and achieve a paradigm shift? Let us try to answer this complex question, by drawing some insights from transition thinking and highlighting three basic ideas:

- **First, a simple working definition of “sustainability”.** What does “sustainable” mean? In the trajectory, we kept things simple and used the following working definition: a sustainable practice is a practice which can be sustained over a longer period. Following this logic, an unsustainable practice is one which cannot be sustained over a longer period.
- **Second, a transition is a movement.** Basically, a transition describes a movement away from one situation (A) to another one (B). If we are talking about a sustainable transition, we are talking about a movement away from an unsustainable situation to a more sustainable one. This movement is always non-linear. Transitions start up when the unsustainable pressure is building up, when there are more and more indications that the current system cannot be sustained. Often, this is a trigger for alternatives and experiments to come up and be tested.



Photo: Edwin Andrade

- **Third, the co-existence of increasing pressures and emerging alternatives.** In our current situation, there are many dominant and persistent unsustainable practices. But there are also some experiments of alternative, more sustainable approaches. Those might be rather marginal and vulnerable. Although these experiments can be niche and less visible, an important idea in transition thinking is that small things can have a huge effect or impact. This is sometimes called the “butterfly effect”. (Which, post-Covid, can aptly be renamed: the bat-effect.)

These three ideas have been in our ‘rewiring’ toolbox when designing transitions. Furthermore, transitions are not simply ‘there’ for everyone – they are in the eye of the beholder. And to make them happen, we need to make them visible. For that reason, in our online brainstorm, we worked with the X-curve scheme by DRIFT, the Dutch Research Institute for Transition.

This is what it looks like:

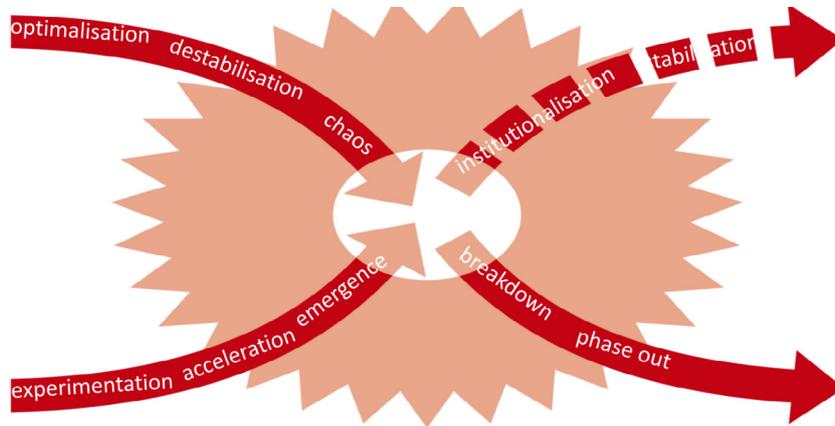


Figure 2. The X-curve for transition. Source: Loorbach, D. (2014) *To Transition! Governance Penarchy in the New Transformation*. Erasmus University Rotterdam

This is a scheme that gives us an idea of what a transition looks like. The X-curve describes a movement away from an unsustainable situation (the left side of the image) towards a more sustainable future (the right side of the image). On the top left, we see dominant practices and signals of the fact that these practices cannot be sustained: there are symptoms of pressures, of instability of the system, and they might be already breaking down. On the bottom left, we see some of the (radical) alternatives and new approaches.

Now, the visual with two legs shows us quite clearly that a transition consists of two movements. One is where the dominant practices are breaking down and need to be phased out

actively. The second movement is where the niche experiments are accelerated, scaled up and finally mainstreamed, and thus become the new dominant practices in our preferred, sustainable future.

Basically, this is the framework which we have been using throughout the year, in the different steps of the Rewiring trajectory. We have been designing a transition for the performing arts as a double movement: moving away from an unsustainable situation, by breaking down some persistent habits, and towards a more sustainable future, by supporting the emergence and mainstreaming of more sustainable practices.



Figure 3. An X-curve, specifically for our performing arts transition

CURRENT PRESSURES ON AND PROMISES FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

In the first step, the IETM members were consulted about the left side of the graph. We sent out a survey in February, where we basically mapped the left side of the X-curve. IETM members could optionally give one or two answers to the following questions:

- Describe a typical situation, practice or habit in the performing arts, that you were recently confronted with or took part in, which you would call “unsustainable”.
- Which example(s) of a new and alternative approach (a project, a practice, an organisation, a collaboration) recently gave you the impression that you saw a glimpse of a more sustainable future for the performing arts?

The answers to the first question gave an overview of the current practices which on the one hand are typical and not exceptional, of which it is felt that we need to get rid of them. The niche experiments and alternatives – with a glimpse of a better future – need to be situated on the bottom left of the graph. After the survey was closed, we clustered all answers on our MIRO online whiteboard on a [pressures radar](#), and a [promises radar](#).

What struck us when clustering, was that all these issues which were reported ultimately ‘devalue’ the manifold values of the performing arts. Of course, we’re not only talking about the economic value of the performing arts, but first and foremost its intrinsic artistic value, next to the social, human and ecological ones. These five forms of value are the same spots where interesting experiments can be situated. Precisely because the pressures are mounting, artists and arts organisations are developing alternative practices in order to create the right conditions to enhance the artistic, social, economic, ecological and human value of the performing arts.

Pressures on the artistic value and strategies to boost it

In the answers to our Rewiring survey, we see that current practices and habits put a lot of pressure on the intrinsic and artistic value of working in the performing arts. Some members refer to **a lack of recognition and the instrumentalisation of the intrinsic value of the arts**, mostly for economic and social purposes. ‘The notion of value attached to art has a connection with the price it costs, in the general understanding of the audience’, someone wrote, or: ‘Artists are seen as civil workers’. There are some testimonies of countries or situations where arts are under increasing political pressure. But not always do

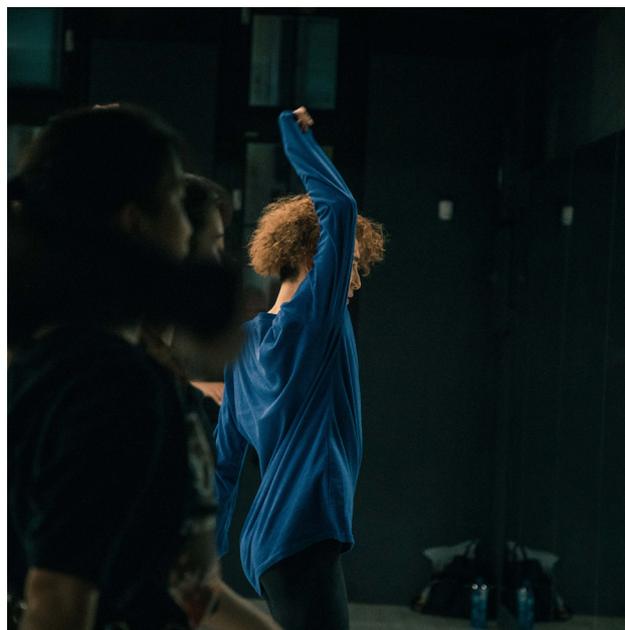


Photo: Chris Yang

these pressures on artistic value come from the outside. A lot of people raised the issue that the **conditions in which they create and produce have a negative effect on the artistic value** of the work, for instance, the sharp competition in the sector, leading to a blame game between the different parties involved in the creation, production and presentation. A respondent mentioned the issue of programming being based on ‘trends’. Another mentioned that we in the arts exclude ourselves from the political domain, by ‘not acknowledging the ideologies that stand behind different decisions’.

But how to respond to these pressures and enhance the artistic quality - and the recognition of this value in society? There were a lot of suggestions on how we should and **can put the artistic value of our work back in its central position**. Basically, the answer is this: in all our collaborations, we should start from our shared ethics and value framework, where the belief in the value of the arts is central. We should stay true to that and practice what we preach. The result: sincere and valuable collaborations, long-term collaborations, with partners from within and outside of the arts field. These ethics can be made explicit, in good and transparent arrangements between partners and in frameworks such as a Fair Practice Code. There are already several examples in this direction.

Pressures on the human value and strategies to boost it

When it comes to human values, the survey highlighted two main areas of current practices that are considered unsustainable: **bad working conditions** and **unequal access to training and education**. Several participants underline how many performing arts workers still have access only to precarious and non-permanent contractual schemes. This is indeed an issue that afflicts the whole society, but, besides often going against labour rights, the long-term consequences of job insecurity are even more unsustainable than precariousness itself: "The constant (or at least annual) feeling of 'I might have to apply for another job soon' makes my life unsustainable. I know I'm not the only one in this situation and I see how this affects the plans we make and our ability to work/or set long time goals – we simply don't know who's there to execute them".

Also, the current system of access to education and training courses is still the privilege of an elite in many countries. The almost total lack of diversity in terms of socio-cultural backgrounds among students jeopardises the entire sector also at the levels of artistic content and the composition of audiences. What is the reason behind that: lack of programmes to facilitate minorities' access to training courses, small number of applications by minorities or recruitment of the "same folks"? Education is just one of the factors affecting diversity of the performing arts, while working conditions in the sector and prejudices existing within artistic communities play a role too.

What are interesting experiments or practices we should build on and make more mainstream? Strikingly, we received not that many examples of alternative models strengthening wellbeing and the human fundament within the arts. However, there were some examples of **inclusive educational programmes**, an initiative aimed at creating a better **work-life balance** or examples of shared decision making.

Pressures on the social value, and strategies to boost it

What unsustainable dominant practices should we say goodbye to, with regards to the social value of the performing arts? In the sector itself, the main issue seems to be a **lack of inclusiveness**: 'Staggering lack of diversity in the arts that hampers the sector altogether. Many people are still excluded for the multitude of intersectional reasons to do with class, poverty, race and ethnicity, gender, ability, sexuality and all the forms of 'othering' that treats the white, able-bodied, middle-class man – and the work he makes – as the norm.' This is of course a 'wicked problem', because the (performing) arts are part of broader

society, where there is a lot of inequality and inequity, and a lack of social participation. The working conditions in the sector, as well as certain prejudices in the art communities, conventional governance structures and lack of inclusiveness in programming play a major role in this.

Still, there are interesting experiments or practices we should build on and make more mainstream. Concerning the social promises, we see several examples and experimental practices that aim at **fostering community engagement**. Some of these are about **co-creation projects** or **inclusive audience development initiatives**, for instance, aiming at young and new audiences. Others develop a more structural and long-term approach to **cultural democracy**. Basically, the idea here is not only to start from your own ideas and conceptions, but to listen to the ideas and values living in broader communities.

There are some examples of **policy frameworks promoting the social value of the arts**, without instrumentalising them. Someone mentioned the Create Inclusion Fund by Creative Scotland, as an example. There are also some examples of **artist initiatives raising awareness** about the social value of the arts, for instance via activism, ecosystems mapping or by actively contributing as artists in city development programmes.

Economic pressures on the value of the arts, and promising alternatives

Throughout the trajectory, there was a lot of discussion concerning economic pressures on the arts, artists and organisations. Partly, these pressures come from the outside. There are a lot of issues with **unsustainable funding models**, with a.o. a lack of support for the independent scene and small-scale initiatives, lack of support for touring, issues with funding applications and - an overarching issue - a focus on ad hoc projects and a lack of long-term perspectives. But pressures also relate to the economic practices within the arts field itself. There are a lot of concerns about **unfair remuneration**. These pressures are not felt by all people in the same way: in an economic system where short-term perspectives are dominant, most of the economic risks are put with the artists. The **socio-economic position of independent artists and workers** is clearly one of the main issues that came on the table during the Rewiring exercise. This is not only an effect of external pressures (funding systems), but also of a lack of fair collaboration within the arts field itself. This is felt to be not sustainable.

Yet, there are signs of hope. During the year, members pointed at an increasing number of policy frameworks that address these issues: funding mechanisms that give a lot of autonomy to artists to strengthen them in their position with venues, systems that support with a long-term perspective rather than one-offs, a situation where the local, regional and national government level actually work together in a concerted way to support artists. We also see some experiments in the field itself with fair remuneration schemes and interesting cooperative models.

Pressures ecological perspective and strategies to cope with them

There is a lot of worry and concern about ecologically unsustainable practices in the arts, which have a negative impact on our natural resources. First, there are concerns about the **limited ecological awareness** in the sector, and the toughness of our habits. It seems we are addicted to flying (or: from the current perspective - we used to be). These habits, of course, are linked to the way we have organised our (international) practice. First, there are a lot of concerns about **travelling** for short trips to meetings and conferences. Second, there are a lot of issues with the **materials** we use (and the lack of a circular approach). The major catch-22 for the performing arts, not surprisingly, is the issue of international touring. How can you be ecologically responsible in a system that relies so heavily on international touring and mobility? One of the survey respondents wrote: 'Environmentally unsustainable: **international touring** of large companies - the environmental impact of this is huge. However,

so many companies rely on international touring to make ends meet, and because there is a demand for international work and a hunger to experience culture from other spaces (which is great!). The impact not only of flights, but of hotels, one-off items, conception, and energy usage is significant over time.'

So, where are the interesting ecological experiments or practices we should build on and make more mainstream? There are quite a lot of attempts to deal with this: setting up **tours** in a different and more sustainable way, a more circular approach to **materials** and energy when producing and presenting. More fundamentally, there is the insight that unsustainable practices have to do with ingrained habits. It is important to raise awareness and make a click, to change these habits, and fly less and consider other options.

Sometimes, an incentive or some constraints from the outside can help to break down our unsustainable behaviour. We also see that there already are quite a number of **experimental policy approaches** to promote ecological sustainability within the arts field: for instance, Pro Helvetia stopped supporting short tours outside of Europe and the Dutch Performing Arts Fund gives additional support for those touring by train. However, it is crucial to pay attention to the inclusiveness and balance within the international performing arts field while greening it, as not all players within the sector are able to pay the cost of environmentally-friendly strategies. A great solidarity is needed to preserve the planet while caring for inclusiveness and balance.



Photo: Luke Richardson

A TRANSITION FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS ON FIVE LEVELS

'Rewiring' does not stop by mapping major pressures and signals of hope. Essentially, it is about designing a shared vision of a preferred future and brainstorming about how to get there. We completed the X-curve image – designing the transition for the performing arts during a massive online brainstorm in May 2020. There we imagined a better future. The focus lied on envisaging more sustainable practices in the performing arts in 2040. What will we do, how will we work together? What will be the underlying values, guiding our work? The result of this exercise is a shared vision of a preferred future for the performing arts – both in terms of concrete practices and their underlying values. Combined with our mapping of pressures and promises, we now have an idea of our performing arts transition, being a movement away from an unsustainable situation, by breaking down persistent habits and mainstreaming more sustainable approaches.

One cannot change a 'system' in one go, so to grasp the complexity and design strategies, it is best to focus. Above, we distinguished these five values related to the performing arts, where pressures were mounting because of unsustainable practices and persistent habits. Since these values can be regarded as the

ultimate promises of the performing arts to society, we used them to structure our transition for the performing arts. In a nutshell, we need a transition for the performing arts on five levels, towards more sustainable practices which

- create the right conditions that foster the intrinsic artistic value of the work,
- create the right conditions for artistic practices to also have a positive and demonstrable social impact,
- respect the human values of all those participating in the ecosystem,
- respect the broader ecologies the performing arts is part of,
- are based on economic practices which are sustainable over a longer period.

To make the transition more manageable and concrete, we break it down in 20 building blocks – four for each of the five forms of value.

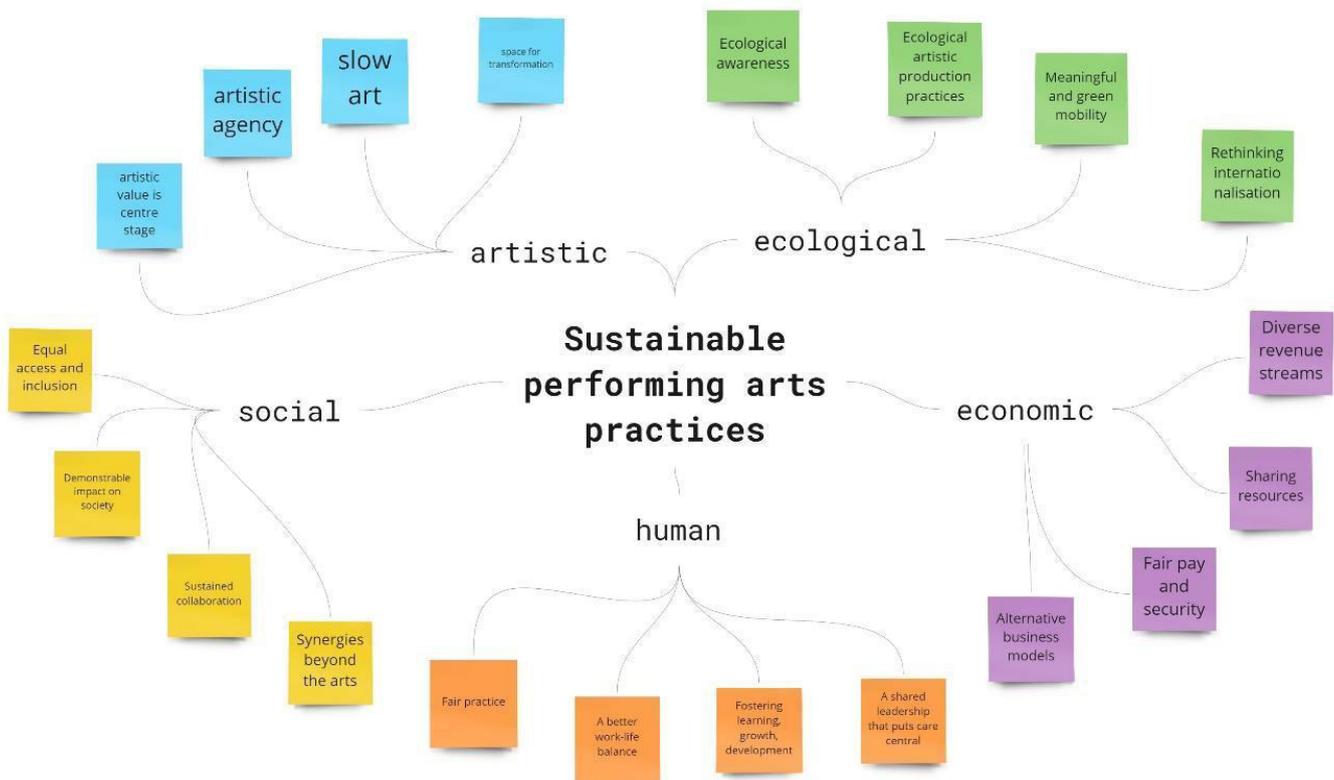


Figure 4. 20 building blocks for a more sustainable performing arts practice

The human value

How to create a future where the human fundament of our sector is enhanced, in the face of the multiple pressures being put on individual artists and art workers? How to strengthen the people in the ecosystem – artists and art workers – with regards to the development of their careers, their socio-economic position, their working conditions, inclusion, access and recognition?



Photo: Kyle Head

- Fair practice.** In a sustainable future for the performing arts, work relations are organised in a fair way. In the first place, this means that work in the arts - self-evidently including artistic work - is valued as labour, hence needs to be remunerated and to happen in a healthy work environment. In this future, policy makers also subscribe to the self-evidence of fairness and understand that fair working relations have a certain cost and should be supported by proper regulations in terms of labour law and social security (e.g. for flex workers). Fairness, however, also reaches further and relates to values such as trust, transparency, respect for ecologies and diversity. It means that you practice what you preach.
- A shared leadership that puts care central.** A leader is someone who guards the common purpose and who allows all team members to thrive. They also create the conditions to allow this to happen. Leadership can be shared to empower team members, to unleash everyone's strengths and to include more diverse perspectives into the decision-making processes. Shared leadership will be a leitmotif in our future performing arts sector.
- A better work-life balance.** Artists and art workers are human beings with friends and families. In a sustainable future, those human beings are not involuntarily pressured anymore into working processes that do not allow them to take up their roles as parents, as partners or as friends outside of the arts. This means that we recognise our partners-in-art as full human beings and create family-friendly conditions. And that we slow down. In the future, we have found ways to take the pressure off the treadmill of production and touring and allow for alternating phases of productivity with phases of development.
- Fostering learning, growth and development for each.** Each individual working in the performing arts should be able to learn, develop, grow. In the future, one's social, economic or ethnic background, gender, skin colour or physical ability does not determine whether one can develop a career in the arts or not. Already at the level of training programmes, thresholds hindering access and further development are stripped away and diverse needs and experiences are taken seriously. Gatekeepers and selection committees are organised according to principles of inclusivity. This is also about life-long learning. Systems for the sharing of skills and know-how and of mentorship are set up. This not only responds to the basic human need of self-development, but also allows for more job mobility within the arts, but also towards different horizons. This way, the stories which are told on stage and by whom they are told, will resonate much better with the society at large.

The social value

How to break out of our social bubbles and develop sustainable and long-term connections with people outside of our current networks? How to strengthen the social connections of the performing arts, focusing on several co-verbs – to connect, to collaborate, to co-project, to co-create or to common, as well as on the societal impact and the way we develop relationships and networks with communities and audiences. In 2040, the dominant practices in the performing arts field will be based on the central values of equality, accessibility, open-mindedness and collaboration and the belief in the fundamental role of arts for society.



Photo: Ahmad Odeh

- **Equal access and inclusion for diverse audiences.** In the future, one's social, economic or ethnic background, gender, skin colour or physical ability does not determine whether one can have access to the performing arts ecosystem or not. Also, the international is not considered more worthy as a playing field than the local. More so: a strong local grounding of artistic work will be a necessary precondition for the work to have an international quality. In a similar vein, rural areas are valued as much as urban areas as contexts to work and engage with audiences. By fostering more diversity among artists and art workers, the stories which are told on stage will resonate much better with the society at large.
- **Demonstrable impact on society.** In 2040, we not only believe in the fundamental importance of the arts for citizens, communities and for the society at large. We will also have developed compelling discourses about this value and systems of knowledge development, data collection and social impact measurement, functioning in line with our core values. Therefore, the impact of our work will be more tangible and visible. This is necessary, not only to defend the arts vis-à-vis outsiders, but also to challenge the Calimero complex that tends to live among art professionals and leads to an unnecessary submissive and defensive attitude.
- **Collaboration is key.** To foster meaningful relations with different kinds of audiences, we will not only be in co-producing, but also co-creating, co-programming, co-planning and co-governing and making decisions together. By 2040, we will have invested a lot in the development of inclusive practices and arts education and will have shaken up the basic value chain of production-presentation-participation.
- **Synergies beyond the arts.** The arts are not an island. By 2040 we will have entered an era where we finally recognise that the world does not consist of separate 'sectors', but is an interconnected whole of meaningful collective practices enriching and improving our quality of life, with respect for our natural environment. Artists and art organisations have built self-evident connections with actors with e.g. primarily educational and social goals. There is more dialogue with external stakeholders like politicians, funders, NGOs, municipalities.

The economic value

How to create a future in which the economic resources in our sector are fairly distributed, creating the proper conditions for all these other values to flourish? In 2040, how will we look at the economic value of the arts? Clearly, money will be a means to an other-than-financial end. The dominant economic practices in the performing arts field will not be there to make a profit. They will be there to provide the right and necessary conditions for all actors in the field to pursue their artistic aspirations, in a socially, humanly and ecologically just manner. These are the main ingredients of our future economic system:

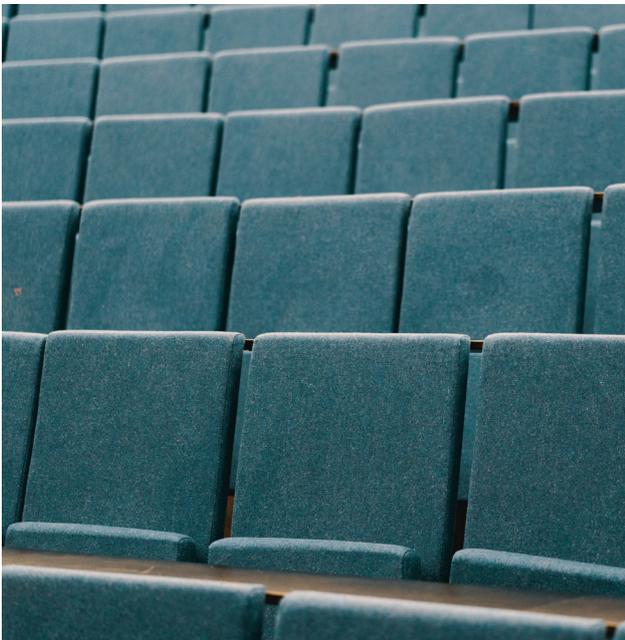


Photo: Ross Sneddon

- **Alternative business models.** In 2040, actors within the performing arts will have developed new and more sustainable business models. They decoupled art and culture from the neoliberal agenda, and consider and support art as a public good and integral part of a democratic society (rather than as a product of a creative industry, to be sold to venues, enjoyed by consumers as part of their leisure activities). In these models, cooperation is central, not competition or providing services. These new models function according to principles of slow art and degrowth.
- **Fair pay and security.** Work in the artistic sector is recognised as labour, hence receives a fair remuneration. Also, other economic transactions (fees for presentation, coproduction etc.) within the field correspond to everybody's contribution and needs. All artists and creative workers professionally active within the performing arts will be ensured a basic level of security. Which means that by 2040 smarter systems of remuneration or of social security are set up, so that also project-based workers have a level of income security, even if they do not have job security. Funding schemes reflect this willingness to provide more security, by providing a long-term perspective. They will no longer only address the 'new' (new productions, new collaborations, etc), nor will they focus exclusively on visible 'product'. They will adapt a long-term perspective on creative processes, allow for time to learn and to develop relations, value practices that invest in grounding locally, and believe in experiments.
- **Sharing resources.** In 2040, venues, resources and costs will be shared, in the context of a more sustainable 'economy of sharing'. Not all transactions need to be monetised. Systems for non-monetary exchanges – alternative currencies, common wallets, solidarity systems - will be widely used and adapted.
- **Diverse revenue streams.** Sustainability is enhanced when one is not dependent on a single source of income. In 2040, synergies between local, regional, and national dimensions ensure broader and more comprehensive funding schemes. This has brought more resources into the arts but is also part of the larger interconnectedness between artistic players and the world in which they are embedded.

The ecological value

How to create a future in which the ecological impact of our work is respecting the boundaries of our natural ecosystem? How to reduce the impact of the energy and resources that we use when developing, producing and presenting our work, and develop awareness on the boundaries of what we do in a broader, planetary context? How to translate this awareness into practices in the performing arts? In 2040, the dominant practices in the performing arts field will be respectful towards the energy and materials used and conscious of the boundaries of the natural resources of the Earth. This includes the following elements:



Photo: Markus Spiske

- **Ecological awareness.** By 2040, all actors within the ecosystem will be fully aware of the fact that all their activities are embedded in broader, planetary ecosystems and have an ecological impact. They will be able to self-assess this impact and reflect it in their behaviour and decisions. The value of reciprocity will not only be cherished in human relationships, but also in the relation between humans and nature. By 2040, funding schemes will take the ecological impact of artistic work into account and will play a major role in mainstreaming ecological awareness and practices. This includes that they will also value quality over quantity. Environmentally friendly mobility will be valued more than large-scale and rapid mobility across the world.
- **Ecological artistic production practices.** Slowing down the cycle of creation, production and dissemination of performances will imply that we will produce only when it is urgent and meaningful. We will make every effort possible to use environmentally friendly materials and energy systems and recycle production materials.
- **Meaningful and green mobility.** Artists will stop being tourists: they will cease hopping from one city to another by airplane. They will travel less frequently, and when they travel, they will prioritise green mobility. Mobility will not be taken for granted. We will travel when it is meaningful. This implies different time frames and paces, allowing for a different connection to local audiences and valuing quality over quantity. For programmers, especially, this will mean that they can leave their FOMO behind.
- **Rethinking internationalisation.** 'Working internationally' will not equal 'travelling' anymore. By 2040, we will have developed many ways to work within an international context, which will not necessarily require the physical presence of the artist elsewhere. Long distance meetings will often be held online. We will value the international dimension of our local contexts. We will work local, with a global outlook. We will focus on the mobility of ideas, next to the mobility of live art. In this context of rethinking internationalisation, we will equally consider that (meaningful and green) mobility should be accessible for everyone.

The artistic value

How to create a future in which the intrinsic artistic and cultural values are widely regarded and respected as factors for personal and societal development? How to not only strengthen the intrinsic values of the performing arts for society, but also the necessary conditions for artists and organisations to develop and create this value? In 2040, the dominant practices in the performing arts field will provide the right and necessary conditions for artistic work to be artistically qualitative and meaningful, hence unleashing their potential to stimulate the imagination and reflection of people and offer new perspectives on life and society. This includes:



Photo: Alex Alvarez

- **Artistic value is centre stage.** In 2040, artworks will not be instrumentalised. Their core contribution to society lies in their artistic value and the impact of art on social life, health, economy, etc., will be considered a consequence or by-product of this core artistic value. To unleash the full potential of the artistic value, the conditions in which an artwork or artistic practice comes about will be organised in line with the needs of that work.
- Keyword in this context is: **artistic agency.** In practice, this means that artists oversee the conditions in which they operate and that those conditions are tailored to the individual project or process. Consequently, in this sustainable future, artists will have a major role to play in decision-making processes, not only within the studio, but also in artistic institutions and in policy processes.
- **Slow art.** By 2040, the production machine will slow down and artists will not feel the constant pressure to be visible anymore. It will be widely acknowledged - also among funders - that periods of productivity and periods of research take turns. Also, fallow periods will be part of cycles of fertile land. Periods of research will also allow for space to reflect and respond to broader cultural and social shifts in society: a core attribute of the arts. Slow art entails a long-term perspective on artistic collaborations. Artistic collaborations in 2040 will not just be production-based but will start from a long-term collective perspective and engagement. Longer term engagements will allow for deeper commitments, offer time to get lost and for taking risks.
- **Create space for transformation.** In 2040, artistic institutions will find ways to create spaces which are not pre-programmed and of which the rules-of-the-game are not fully set. There, the cross-fertilisation and 'co-practices' will take shape. Breaking out of our own silos and exploring connections to other practices and domains, will not only be a way to become more inclusive (see: social values), but will also allow artistic forms to renew themselves. On the edges of the practice, art will continue challenging and reinventing itself.

GUIDING VALUES FOR THE FUTURE

Between these 20 building blocks there are also many connections and interrelations. This consistency has to do with the fact that they are informed by a set of shared values. What will be the main guiding principles in this performing arts sector, as we want it to be in 2040? Basically, Rewiring the Network (for the Twenties) is a story about fairness, solidarity, interconnectedness, diversity, equality and plurality, the fundamental belief in the value of the arts in a democratic society and our desire to make these values really guide our practice. This next image is a scheme that summarises the different underlying values that came out of this exercise.

Fairness means...

- Fair collaborations, starting from respectful and transparent agreements. In fair collaborations, risks and power are fairly shared among all partners (which means: the strongest shoulders carry the most weight).
- Mutually considering and taking care of the physical and mental well-being of all partners involved.

An attitude of **solidarity, interdependence and connectedness** means...

- Awareness of our interdependence and connectedness, on different levels: both within local communities and global ecosystems and ecologies.
- A generous and sharing relations within the arts sector, and with audiences, communities and other-than-humans within these broader ecologies.

Diversity, equity and plurality mean...

- Plurality and diversity: in our future system, we want a representation of diversity of voices and visions on all levels, including governance and decision-making.

- Inclusiveness, equality and equity: if we want to give access to everyone, we need to be aware that this will not happen automatically by itself; it needs to be stirred and fostered.

Publicness and democracy mean...

- Respect for the public and democratic value of the performing arts
- Respect for the basic forms of freedom regarding the performing arts, such as freedom of speech, artistic agency and the freedom of mobility.
- Empathy, openness, and curiosity are fundamental attitudes within the arts. Only when they are present, the arts can be a force of transition towards new politics and new economies.
- Providing the necessary conditions to achieve this public value: process before product, taking time and the acknowledgement of the complexity of transitions.

A value-driven attitude means...

- An increased awareness of the value of the arts in society starts with self-awareness of art's boldness, radicality, fierceness, authenticity, and spirituality.
- Art's credibility depends on our willingness to bring this awareness into practice rigorously: both within the choices we make for ourselves and as basic values in the working relationships we engage in.

Let us take these values as guiding principles, when we go to work to make these five transitions happen.



Figure 5. The guiding values for the performing arts in the future

IN ORDER TO GET THERE, WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

So here we are. We have mapped the current pressures on our work and we have scouted for promising alternative approaches. We have designed a transition for the performing arts on five levels – the artistic, the social, the human, the economic and the ecological – and we have broken this down into 20 more concrete building blocks which might allow us to go to work and start building the transition. But how to do so? Working on system change is always complex and the work of many hands. But what needs to be done, and who will do it?

Once more, we can borrow some insights from transition thinking. The next visual is a summary of the different roles needed when working on our performing arts transition.

We define five roles in making this transition happen.

- One is situated on the ‘breaking down’ axis: our unsustainable behaviour should be phased out and since this unsustainable behaviour is systemic and these habits are persistent, so some **urgency needs to be created**.
- Most of the other roles are on the building up axes. As we said before, our transition is based on the emergence of new sustainable practices based on experiments with alternative approaches. Therefore, we need **investments in experiments**, which need to be evaluated in order to learn from them.

- Furthermore, we need to create the right conditions where these experiments can be mainstreamed. En cours de route we might find out we need **to learn new skills**, so education and lifelong learning is key.
- Also, to accelerate these experiments and learnings, they need to **be structured, connected, and made visible**.
- A sense of direction is crucial: without a future compass, investments in experiments will be just ad hoc and directionless. Someone needs **to set the direction and the agenda**.

But who needs to do what? Who is best placed to take on which role? This was the topic of discussion in the second and last large online brainstorm organised in the Rewiring trajectory. 140 IETM members exchanged about what they could do themselves in order to make the transition happen but also where they need collaborations. Who will be the partners?

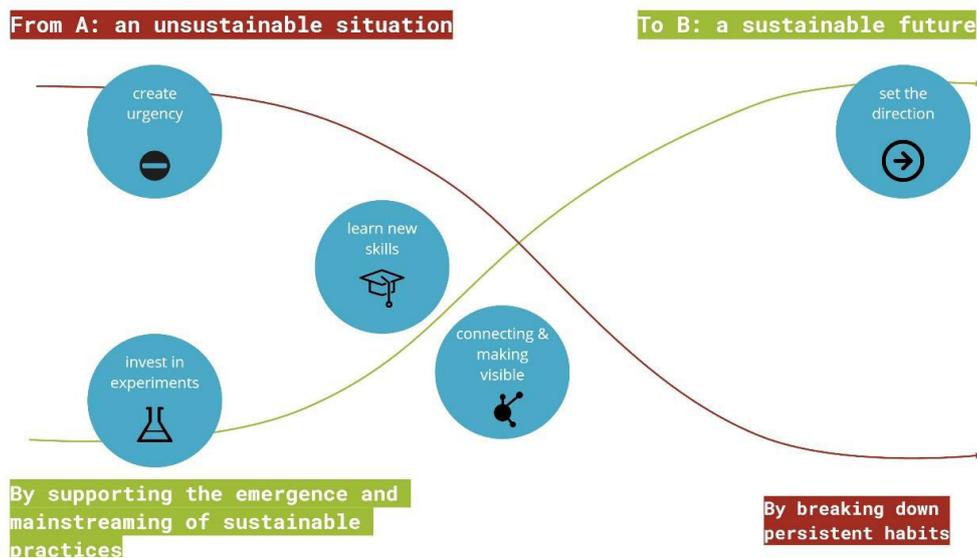


Figure 6. The five roles in our performing arts transition

Create the urgency to stop doing unsustainable things

What can we, organisations and individuals in the arts, do to create the urgency to break down persistent habits? Participants in the parallel working groups of the Rewiring brainstorm confirmed that we, taking part in the performing arts ecosystem, should “stop doing those unsustainable things” and “start acting in a better way”. However, if it would have been so simple, we would have already changed our behaviours, practices and habits. They are ingrained in our everyday life; they are what we know and they are also rewarded in the current system. Therefore, many participants in the brainstorm called out to be courageous. To have **the courage to say ‘no’**, to challenge non-sustainable projects explicitly, to stop compromising and censoring ourselves to please funders and policy makers. We should think bold and be radically open-minded. Being courageous is important to change our own ways, but also: there is a strong, inspirational power in ‘small acts’, in being the change we want to see. Additionally, one should also scrutinise the conditions that keep us from changing our practices. There must be ways to ‘undo’ those characteristics of the system that keep us from acting in a different way. How can we challenge these? Typical examples of unsustainable practices are unfair remunerations and collaborations. The lack of money and/or requirements set by funders often do not allow us to manoeuvre. What we, as actors in the art sector, can do, is **invest in explaining the nature of artistic work** and the true needs of artists and art organisations and lobby for policies that build on that understanding.

Who will be our partners?

- **Funders and governments** should start a structured dialogue with the sector, to make sure that their policies facilitate art work in the most suitable way and that the principles of sustainability, balance and inclusion are integrated. Concerning ecological sustainability for instance, governments (on all levels) should take responsibility in improving public transport and infrastructure.

Learn new skills and competences

As organisations and individuals in the arts, we should **develop skills beyond our profession** in the strict sense. The following skills and attitudes should help us to strengthen our position as an art field, but also to be ready to be part of positive change. We need to learn how to demonstrate or articulate the value of arts, develop lobbying skills (and also train young artists on how to advocate and approach policy makers) and we should practice to see the world in a different way every day and be more curious.

In order to be ready to build synergies with actors from other societal fields, we should empathically **learn those other actors’ language** (related to their business, politics, models of organisation, development and democratic ways of engaging and working). We should continuously learn about needs, themes and ideas in society and about interdisciplinary topics. Also important is that we learn **how to use technology and digital tools** in the artistic practice to reach audiences. In general, we need to be ready to adapt when needed, while staying true to our core values.

Who will be our partners?

- To make this happen, we could start long-term collaborations with e.g. universities and other **educational institutions** to develop long-term skills.
- **Funders and policy makers** can create conditions that allow us to learn. Invest money in the necessary learning and development processes in the sector. More specifically, in current times, it is important to allow everyone to learn about new technologies and remain up-to-date with digital innovations.

Invest in experiments

Some of us, institutions and organisations, have means and possibilities to support experiments, to invest in bold ideas and new formats. True investment in experiments means to give room to open-ended initiatives, avoiding pre-set instructions and pressures on the outcome. **Allow for ‘risk’, for the unknown.**

What partners do we need?

- Investing money in experiments is mostly and logically appointed to **funders and governments**. They should invest enough in responsive collaborative projects, research and development, not only production, and invest in new working models, in forward-looking long-term programmes.
- **Actors in other sectors**. Many artists nowadays develop practices that trespass the boundaries of the ‘artistic sector’. They work with health workers, in education, social sector etc. Also within those fields, institutions and government bodies should co-invest in experiments. This will allow for more innovative approaches.

Set the direction

As mentioned before, all of us working in the arts can 'be the change' and **lead by example**, however small our contributions seem to be. We do this by putting the principles and values described in our vision for the future at the core of our practice. We can equally **raise awareness** about art, ecological impact, social impact etc. to our different audiences and stakeholders. This can happen in different ways, e.g. by making artistic work and processes accessible and approachable, through the content transmitted in the artwork itself. Setting the direction also happens within our own institutions, by increasing knowledge and awareness and passing it on to the next generations. We must make sure the motivations and values are **ingrained in the institutions**, on a structural level – through the principles of fair governance – and not only remain part of the practice of engaged individuals.

Who will be our partners?

- **Research & education.** Universities or research institutions could build long term exchange with artists and art organisations to help build evidence for the value of the arts and deepen insights in new models.
- **Policy makers.** Policy makers can also lead the way. Through regulations and funding, they have incredibly powerful tools to make effective change happen. To do that, they need to embody that leadership and invest in long-term trajectories for deep structural changes.

Connect & collaborate

We, organisations and individuals in the arts, can build and strengthen connections in order to exchange good practices, to build upon each other's expertise and share skills. Connecting also makes us stronger in advocating for our sector. An important remark to make is that these connections should not only focus on one's own work but should try to work towards an artistic ecosystem that is diverse.

Networks, e.g. of curators - exchanging about artists, artworks, and ideas – also allow for less travel to each see all the same works.

Who will be our partners?

- Next to 'horizontal' connections, we should also invest in building 'vertical' connections with funders, people doing advocacy work, municipalities, trade unions etc. - not just for generating funds, but for building collective discourses and perspectives for change.
- We need to develop connections outside of the arts and in policy development on different levels. Connecting and making visible requires empathy: listening to and learning the language of those outside of our own field.



Photo: Delfi de la Rua

Rewiring the Network: resetting the Agenda for IETM

THREE POSSIBLE ROLES FOR THE NETWORK

During the second Rewiring workshop (November 5, 2020), the 140 IETM members also discussed what roles international networks – and more specifically IETM – could play in the transition process. And it should be noted that IETM here stands for the full network, including all current and future members, not just ‘the office’ in Brussels. According to the participants, collaborating in international networks has the leverage to contribute to the transition mainly through these four roles: creating the urgency to change, facilitating the learning of new skills, setting direction, and connecting & collaborating.

Creating the urgency to change

- As a network, IETM is a multiplier of practices. The way the network decides to develop and implement its actions will have a huge impact on the practice of hundreds of artists and organisations in joining these actions. Therefore, IETM is in an excellent position to create the urgency to change, also by leading by example. In this sense, it is critical that IETM does a self-evaluation on the sustainability of its own formats and modes of working. The second Rewiring brainstorm led to a few suggestions about how IETM could change and re-organise itself, to take up its role as a driver of the transition we designed.

The development of new skills and competences

- IETM has been a place for knowledge exchange since its inception. This is still the essence of the network. It should remain a platform that fosters the acquisition of new skills and ways of doing and accelerates skills development among members. The skills or areas of development will be instrumental to the transition we have imagined. During our brainstorm, the members thought about a.o. new leadership models, digital skills and community development.
- IETM could set up long-term practical training sessions, led by experts in particular areas (members or external). It could support the development of arts management in some regions where it is still underdeveloped.

- IETM could provide templates and tools for advocacy and lobbying, e.g. formats of letters and petitions that can be replicated locally.
- IETM could develop the capacity to train people in power.

Setting the direction

- When a network ‘sets the direction’, this is not a top-down approach. It can create environments for the co-creation and development of a shared future vision, and goals for the transition. Obviously, this is what we have been doing in the Rewiring trajectory.
- A network can empower and inspire its members. Within a network, inspiration for change can circulate and gain energy. A network can trigger discussions and conversations about change. This empowers members to contribute within their own practice.
- Support the development of international codes of conduct established to support artists’ livelihoods and needs, no matter where they are based and what their needs are.

Investing in experiments

- In the future, it can be discussed whether IETM should be one of the players investing in experiments with alternative practices. It can be argued this is not the core business of the network, and other instances – other networks or cross-border projects, artist initiatives, etc. – are better placed. But the innovations and experiments need to be multiplied and gain critical mass, in order to have an impact. Therefore, the role of IETM in connecting and making them more visible, is really essential and critical in the light of our transition.

Connecting and making visible

- Self-evidently, the core role of a network is to connect and collaborate. IETM can use its expertise and facilities to connect and collaborate with a focus on actors working on change, strengthening them, allowing for their exchange and making their learning processes and insights visible.
- IETM as a network also connects with other networks. With networks of funders, other fields or performing arts networks with different focuses or geographical delineations. Through these collaborations, members could e.g. tap into other networks' conferences and events.
- IETM, as a network, can invest in creating evidence for the arts. IETM is ideally situated to lobby for, champion or promote values of the arts. It can lobby for new standards of funding, set priorities, engage stakeholders, push actors to think and act from the perspective of the arts.

FROM IDEAS TO STRATEGIES

By now, Rewiring the Network (for the Twenties) has come to an end – which at the same time is a new beginning. After all, have the Twenties not just started? We have a whole decade to work on our performing arts transition. The Rewiring trajectory might have sketched only an initial idea of its contours. The moment has come to start working on it. Where are we now? We have developed a vision of the transition towards a more sustainable performing arts ecosystem. It is a transition on five levels consisting of 20 'building blocks', concrete sets of practices that can enhance the artistic, social, human, economic and ecological values related to the performing arts. We have also developed an idea of the roles different partners could play when working on the transition – setting the agenda, creating the urgency to stop persistent unsustainable habits, investing in experiments, developing new skills and competences, connecting and making the transition more visible. And more specifically, we have zoomed in the future role of international networks, c.q. IETM. Now what? It is time for the network to turn these ideas into concrete strategies for the next few years. At the end of this study, we give some possible directions on how this could be done.

- **First step: Prioritise the building blocks.** Our transition consists of no less than 20 "building blocks" for a more sustainable future. The advantage of this is that its broad scope will allow for many players and partners to be mobilised for this transition. For IETM itself, this will be too much. If in its next multi-annual working plan all these

building blocks are tackled, there might be a lot of efforts with limited effects. What IETM should do now is prioritise and define a limited number of building blocks where the efforts of the network could be the most impactful.

- **Second step: Define the roles and partnerships.** Once the building blocks are prioritised, a similar exercise needs to be done with regards to the roles: to be the most impactful, which of the five roles should IETM take up with regards to these topics? Also partnerships need to be redefined and made more specific: with regards to these building blocks, what partners – funders, policy makers, researchers, educational institutions, academics - could play a role in their development and should be mobilised?
- **Third step: Set the goals, define the actions and tools, assign the budgets.** Next, the building blocks need to be tuned into action plans. This entails defining the goals for each building block, assigning budgets and translating the goals into a concrete set of actions and tools.
- **Fourth step: integrate evaluation and monitoring.** Because all transitions are uncertain, it might be best to adopt a flexible, agile and iterative approach. Integrate moments of evaluation in the action plan – as a collective exercise for the whole network. An important challenge is to include a plan for monitoring IETM's contribution to the transition. For all building blocks, indicators (quantitative/qualitative) could be developed that will allow IETM to monitor its contribution. This is good for internal reasons – are we on the right track? – but on a longer term it can also be helpful to demonstrate the network's concrete impact on a transition towards its funders and stakeholders.
- **Fifth step: Go!**