



## Working paper: Human Values

IETM has always been a place for performing arts professionals to develop new ideas and solutions together, in order to strengthen our practice through knowledge exchange. Through [Rewiring the Network](#) we invited the membership of IETM on a journey to collectively engage in envisioning a transition into a more sustainable future for the performing arts.

We already took a number of steps together. Through a survey among the members, launched in February, we mapped the [pressures](#) and [promises](#) of the current situation: which dominant practices we face in our daily work are unsustainable and which grains do we already detect today of working models that are more in line with the values we hold dear? In a first online brainstorm session on May 19, more than 130 IETM members designed a vision for a more desirable and sustainable future for the performing arts. On November 5 (10:00 to 13:00 CET) we move on in this trajectory by tackling the following question: *how can we transition from the current situation into the more sustainable future?* Which steps can be implemented by the international performing arts community and what should be the role of IETM and other accelerators in this transition process?

We are aiming to move beyond survival strategies and question the system of the performing arts as a whole. In order to make this challenge more graspable, we have chosen to tackle it from five different angles: the human, the social, the artistic, the economic and the ecological. For each of these value frames, we mapped the pressures and promises and envisioned a more sustainable future. This paper takes the angle of the human values.

### 1. The current situation: pressures and promises from the human perspective

#### Pressures: unsustainable dominant practices we should say goodbye to

When it comes to human values, the survey highlighted two areas of current practices that are considered unsustainable: (a) Unequal access to training programmes and (b) bad working conditions. The current system of access to training courses seems to be still prerogative 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 type of audience. 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"?

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 labor 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"*.

Promises: interesting experiments or practices we should build on and make more mainstream

Unfortunately, we received not that many examples of alternative models strengthening wellbeing and the human fundament within the arts. There were quite some examples of inclusive (training) programmes, an initiative aimed at creating a better work-life balance or examples of shared decision making.

Check them out on the left hand side of the [transition X-curve of the human value framework](#).

## **2. A vision for a more sustainable future: the human perspective**

During the workshop of May 19, a working group engaged in envisioning a more sustainable future. From the perspective of the human value frame, it looks like this: in 2040, the human values we want to hold central are: fairness, equality, work-life balance and ethics-driven collaborations.

1. 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 needs to happen in a healthy work environment. In this future, also policy makers 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 flexworkers). Fairness, however, also reaches further and relates to values such as trust, transparency, ecology and diversity. It means that you practice what you preach. (The following elements can be read as implementations of this idea of fairness in different areas).
2. Equal opportunities and inclusion. In the future, one's social, economic or ethnic background, gender, skin color or physical ability does not determine whether one can develop a career in the arts or not. Already at the level of training programs, 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 way, the stories which are told on stage and by whom they are told, will resonate much better with the society at large.

3. 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 in order to allow this to happen. Leadership can be shared in order 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.
4. A work-life balance. Artists and art workers are human beings with friends and families. In a sustainable future, those human beings aren't involuntarily pressured anymore into working processes that do not allow them to take up their roles as parent, as partner or as friend 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 of the treadmill of production and touring and allow for alternating phases of productivity with phases of development.
5. Fostering growth for each. Each individual working in the performing arts should be able to continue learning and growing. For this purpose, 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 future image is mapped on the right hand side of the [transition X-curve of the human value framework](#).

### **3. Transitioning from the current situation into a more sustainable future**

So now we have our mapping of the current situation, with pressures and promises and we have an image of our more desirable future in 2040. In other words, we now have an idea of the transitions we have to go through.

In the brainstorm session of November, the working groups focusing on the human values, will design a pathway towards a sustainable future for the performing arts. *How to organise towards strengthening the people in the ecosystem - the artists and art workers? How to strengthen their socio-economic position, their working conditions, the development of their careers? How to reach more inclusion, access and recognition? Which are the forces that can help move from a situation where there are so many pressures on the people, to a situation where the human fundament of our sector is respected?*

In the process of answering these questions, we will consider the two movements that are part of transition processes: the deconstruction of dominant unsustainable practices, and building upon already existing promising experiments or practices.

In designing the path of the transition, we will focus on the different roles that need to be fulfilled in order to advance. And we will consider what different actors in the ecosystem of the performing arts can do. We start by asking what we can do ourselves!

Roles to play:

- ... stop doing unsustainable things
- ... learn new skills
- ... connect and collaborate
- ... set the direction
- ... invest in experiments

Questions:

1. Where do I see my contribution? (What is my pledge?)
2. I cannot do this on my own, so who else can help to... (And how?)
3. In this transition, what is the role of international networks?