REWIRING THE NETWORK - 5 NOVEMBER
SECOND ONLINE
BRAINSTORM SESSION

Working paper: Social 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 social values.

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

Pressures: unsustainable dominant practices we should say goodbye to
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.

<u>Promises: interesting experiments or practices we should build on and make more mainstream</u>
Concerning the social promises, we see a number of 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.

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

2. A vision for a more sustainable future: the social perspective

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.

1. <u>Equal access and inclusion for diverse audiences</u>. In the future, one's social, economic or ethnic background, gender, skin color or physical ability does not determine whether one can have access to the arts 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 and by whom they are told, will resonate much better with the society at large.

2. <u>Demonstrable impact on society</u>. In 2040 we not only all *believe* in the fundamental contributions 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. As a consequence, 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.

3. <u>Collaboration is key</u>. In order to foster meaningful relations with different kinds of audiences, we will not only be coproducing, 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.

4. <u>Synergies beyond the arts</u>. 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.

This future image is mapped on the right hand side of the [transition X-curve of the social 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 5, the working groups focussing on the social impact and connectedness of the arts will tackle the following questions. *How to build upon good examples of inclusivity and accessibility to diverse audiences in terms of backgrounds and geographies? How to make a stronger case for the value of art in society? How to forge partnerships well beyond the boundaries of the art world, in order to contribute to a higher quality of life?*

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!

<u>Roles to play:</u>
  … 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?