



Working paper: Economic 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 economic values.

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

Pressures: unsustainable dominant practices we should say goodbye to

On our Pressures Radar, there is a lot of discussion concerning economic pressures. Once more, these pressures are imposed on us 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, also the economic practices within the arts field itself - in a way, our response to these outside pressures related to funding and other sources of income, are unsustainable as well... There are a lot of concerns about unfair remuneration. This is 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 on our Pressures Radar. This is not only an effect of external pressures (funding systems), but also of a lack of fair collaboration within the arts field itself.

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

On our Pressures Radar, there was a lot of input concerning economic pressures from the outside: 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. On the Promises Radar, we see a 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 with fair remuneration schemes and interesting cooperative models.

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

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

In 2040, the economic value will be a means to other ends. The dominant economic practices in the performing arts field will provide the right and necessary conditions for all actors in the field to pursue their artistic, social, human and ecological values.

1. Fair pay and security. Work in the artistic sector is recognised as labor, hence receives a fair remuneration. Also other economic transactions (fees for presentation, coproduction...) within the field are respectful towards everybody's contribution and based on 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 don't have job security.

2. 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.
3. 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.
4. Long-term funding schemes. Funding schemes will no longer only address the 'new' (new productions, new collaborations, etc), nor will they focus on the '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.
5. Diverse revenue streams. 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.

This future image is mapped on the right hand side of the [transition X-curve of the economic 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 November, groups focusing on the economic realm, will discuss how to twist the system back to the basic logics in which economic value is a means to other ends. *How to build upon the grains of the alternative business models we already see today? How to move towards fair pay and less uncertainty for all who participate professionally in the arts? How to create conditions that allow for longer term financial security?*

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?