



# Ecological Endeavours: Independent Sector's Pursuit of Ecological Commitment



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A Volume from the Reset! Atlas



Building on the recognition of the ecological impact of culture, Reset! aims at highlighting the commitment of independent cultural and media structures to try and limit these effects. From thinking and conceiving this paradigm shift to actively modifying one's practices, notably in the music field and in festivals organisations, independent cultural players act to raise awareness and put the ecological and climate challenge at the centre of its preoccupations.

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# Editorial

Reset! Network:  
An Age of Alliances

Europe's cultural landscape has entered a phase of transition, the harbinger of a new era. This break with the past, which took a tangible hold around the time of the global pandemic, reflects not only the difficulty of leaving behind the codes and social fabric of the 'cultural world as we knew it,' but also the yearning to look ahead to a new horizon in a context marked by accelerating climate change, ultra-violent geopolitical upheavals, and the mounting sense of conflict, even within democratic societies.

## **A polarised and weakened common perspective**

Culture has entered a period of **doubt**, of uncertainty, of feverish introspection about its meaning, its generational misunderstandings, its many tensions, and about the new forms of mistrust that it had previously overlooked.

The pressure weighing down on culture as a result of the paradigm shifts inherent in its day-to-day deployment is just as crippling: **radical transformation of our relationship with work**, new forms of mobility, reassessment of spaces and territories, the evolving role of mediation, upheavals linked to the rapid pace of technological development and the countless ethical questions it spawns.

Culture is confronted with the many issues that are on a head-on collision course with society, fuelling polarisation and the **growing radicalisation of interactions, leading to a breakdown of dialogue, of the shared perspective, and of the collective adventure**, complicating and eroding culture's primary mission, which is to open minds, nurture dialogue, create conditions conducive to listening and interacting with others.

## **The threat of authoritarianism, the threat of concentration**

Culture is under pressure from its social context and from the sense of "permanent crisis" that pervades our age. But it is also, more than ever, intimidated by its economic and political environment. More than ever, culture and the media are victims of **full frontal attacks from authoritarian regimes that**

deny and sometimes flout their artistic, cultural, and editorial independence. More than ever, independent culture and media are struggling to survive in a hyper-concentrated competitive world, where the growing power of the web, publishing, media, or music industry giants means shrinking margins of manoeuvre for pluralism and diversity.

**Independent cultural ecosystems are fragile and under threat in many parts of Europe.** Yet they are essential to democratic and social vitality, in particular to equip up-and-coming generations for the transformations our world is screaming out for: capacity for action and transformation, social and environmental responsibility, the fight against discrimination, pluralism and diversity, safeguarding freedom of creation and expression, strengthening media education, inclusion, regeneration, equal access to culture and the media, but also access to their production.

## **Forging new alliances**

Confronted with these challenges, the turmoil of our times, authoritarian regimes and the growing concentration of capital in the culture and media sectors, **a strategy of massive cooperation is held up as the only possible response.**

It has become not only strategic, but imperative, to connect the players, foster the sharing of resources, knowledge and tools, promote collective intelligence and the forms of governance that encourage it, **work in networks and join forces.**

The time has come to imagine new ways of forging alliances between cultural players and independent media, but also with **all those working in the general interest**, particularly in the public sector in the fields of education, youth, the media, and health: the public broadcasting service, universities, local authorities.

This is what the Reset! network is all about. It endeavours to adopt a Europe-wide, non-sectoral approach to bring together cultural structures and independent media, but also to bring on board general interest resource hubs (Consentis, Black Artist Database, Observatoire des politiques culturelles, ACT RIGHT, and others), as well as **local authorities willing to support** the movement and serve as testing grounds for new practices (City of Lyon, City of Brussels).

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The Reset! network brings together cultural structures and independent media to give them a platform to get better acquainted, enter into dialogue, work, and act together.

## **Common atlas**

The Reset! network is doing just that, working **from Budapest to Lisbon, from Kyiv to Prishtina, from Amsterdam to Naples**, to bring together cultural structures (concert halls, festivals, publishing houses, labels, etc.) and independent media to give them a platform to get better acquainted, enter into dialogue, work, and act together. To build their common approach to transformation, these 85 organisations first focused on their local area and local issues: for just over a year, dozens of workshops were organised across the continent to **take the pulse of independent European cultural**

## **ecosystems.**

Today, the time has come for an initial pooling of this feedback. This is the purpose of this atlas and its volumes, built collectively around eight themes that emerged during the year's meetings: "Independent culture in times of adversity", "Ecological commitment in the independent sector", "Enlarging communities in culture: the need for common spaces rooting in independence", "Imbalances in territories representation: independent structures to counterbalance a hyper-centralised cultural and media field", "Connecting to the youth: maintaining intergenerational links, enhancing emergence", "Creating and preserving safe spaces: diversify, include and raise awareness", "Decentralising digital power in culture: let's talk about MAGMA alternatives", "The concentration or independence antithesis".

This material, which **captures the zeitgeist and the changes taking place in the cultural sector**, will serve as the foundations for our advocacy and transformation tools. A few months away from a high-risk European election, and in a context where it is in serious danger of disappearing from the programme priorities, the Reset! network and its members will take it upon themselves to highlight the essential role of culture, the media, their independent ecosystems, and their artistic and editorial integrity, in this period of essential social and democratic reconstruction that has only just begun.

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February 2024

# Editorial

**Vincent Carry** has been Managing Director of the Arty Farty association since 2002, supporting the development of the Nuits sonores festival in Lyon, the Sucre club, the Hôtel71 creative hub and the HEAT food court. In 2023, he was appointed chairman of the Gaîté Lyrique cultural institution in Paris, bringing together a consortium comprising ARTE, Singa, makesense and Actes Sud.

# Under their opinion

Within this segment, we delve into the evolving narrative of the cultural sector's ecological practices, acknowledging past missteps while spotlighting the genuine efforts being made to become better stewards of the planet. From innovative sustainability initiatives to eco-conscious exhibitions, embark through the intersection of art and environmental conscientiousness, where the cultural sector endeavours to transform its role from a “bad student” to responsible practices.

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## Ecological Dilemma: The Need to Go Smaller

### **Nono Gigsta aka Noëmie Vermoesen**

is a transdisciplinary artist working at the intersection of music, writing, and climate justice. She is a member of the campaigner network Stay Grounded and has been avoiding flying since 2019. Nono regularly shares thoughts on slow touring, sustainability, and mobility in zines or via her newsletter.

The cultural sector seems increasingly concerned with sustainability issues. But audiences and music lovers need not fear any embarrassing challenges: there is now a thriving industry offering advice on reusable cups, vegan options on the menu, carbon offsetting schemes to mop up any unavoidable impacts, and recommendation on how to paint it all in green. Et voilà, any event or venue can be “carbon neutral”!

### **Let's shrink**

What if the equation is based on shaky premises? In an article on micro-festivals<sup>1</sup>, Pablo Belime writes: “(...) studies have shown for more than ten years that the ecological impact of festivals is intrinsically linked to the increase in size, a structural phenomenon that makes the objectives of carbon neutrality by 2050 unattainable. In this race for size, the international dimension of the event plays a major role, since air travel can produce up to 53% of CO2 emissions. This is why the Shift Project's recent report<sup>2</sup> recommended the organization of ten events of 28,000 people each, allowing emissions to be divided by 30, rather than a single large gathering of 280,000 participants.”

The point that needs to be made (or repeated<sup>3</sup>) is that this observation doesn't just make mathematical sense. In my experience, small and medium-sized independent events aren't simply more sustainable because it's easier to get the numbers right. These events are also more likely to have sustainability in their philosophy. And I would argue that they offer a more valuable cultural experience, too.

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1. Pablo Belime, « Les micro-festivals peuvent-ils transformer l'expérience festivalière ? » (Can micro-festivals transform the festival experience?), Nectart, 2022/1 (N°14), p. 142-152.  
2. Décarbonons la culture ! (Decarbonise Culture!), The Shift Project, November 2021.  
3. Nono Gigsta/Noëmie Vermoesen, “A love letter to do-it-together gatherings, intimate scales and micro parties,” January 2023

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## **A reluctant sector**

Over the past fifteen years, I have been involved with music industries and communities in more ways than I could count—from working at the door to being an intern, a volunteer, a journalist, a radio host, a promoter, an academic, a listener, a dancer, and an artist. On the occasions when I interacted with larger, mainstream structures—and regardless of my role—I felt like a number. My music performances, for example, were first and foremost a negotiation, with my fee and slot calculated on the basis of the number of followers and streams my ‘content-making’ had generated. As someone whose musical identity is hard to pin down—who hides her face, uses social media sparingly, travels grounded and has been vocal about social justice issues—these negotiations often didn’t end well.

When it comes to travel for artists, larger industry structures are less inclined to adapt to more sustainable methods, they struggle to buy a train ticket in the first place. At the very top of the industry, there is a taste for private jets, which should simply be banned, period. Below that, there is a category of institutions that rely on travel agents to book artists’ transport—in much the same way that greening is outsourced to a consultancy rather than integrated into the organisation. These travel agencies seem to have no experience of booking grounded travel and offer inconvenient itineraries and inflated ticket prices. Large events need to be produced quickly and efficiently, leaving little room for research, adaptation, and integration of new approaches.

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## **A necessary social and ecological organising**

One of my most inspiring recent musical experiences took place at a micro-festival. Spending the weekend in the countryside, making music, dancing, listening to unusual sounds, helping in the kitchen, and marvelling at the synchronised efforts of those involved is unfortunately an unusual experience in nowadays cultural sector.

Larger stages can also affect the aesthetic of performances. Artists often feel compelled to play it safe, perhaps avoiding experimentation. The latter is such a precious quality that needs personal and collective cultivation, especially in the face of climate catastrophe.



↑ Radio Ondorphine at the Chantelouve festival, in September 2023, in France. © Nono Gista

Cultural events, art communities, and festivals are experiments in social organising. I usually appreciate contributing to events that are affordable and where all performers are paid the same fee. It feels right when there is no performer/audience hierarchy, but a deeper sense of community. I feel at home when there is neither a green room nor a flashy ‘green’ statement, when festivals are ‘naturally’ diverse, inclusive, equitable, and sustainable.

Of course, conversations about sustainability are important. And the point is not to undermine every single consultancy or communication strategy on the subject. These issues are so complex, the knowledge is so vast, the factors are constantly evolving... and we all lack time, resources, and energy. However, it seems that beyond a certain size of event, these strategies inevitably turn

# change

Experimentation is such a precious quality that needs personal and collective cultivation, especially in the face of climate catastrophe.

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into greenwashing. At a certain point, the damage can neither be undone nor compensated for. More importantly, was the damage really necessary in the first place?

Of course, quantification also matters. I stopped flying because of the numbers—numbers that point to the intolerable injustices enabled by the aviation industry. But eventually I realised that travelling on the ground meant more to me than just reducing emissions. The same goes for institutions: a spreadsheet will never solve the problem of extractivism, whether material or cultural. And while

“From the point of view of emissions, it is better to organise ten events bringing together 28,000 people each time throughout the year, rather than a single event bringing together 280,000 people over a few days.”

### The Shift Project



↑ View from behind the stage at the tornaod riddim festival, in August 2023, in France. © Nono Gista

independent structures may not be inherently more sustainable, their size and intentions make them more malleable and able to consider inclusivity, diversity, equity, and ecological sustainability.

Ecological sustainability in the cultural sector needs to be associated with an urgent need to decolonise, decarbonise, decentralise, and democratise. In other words, we collectively need to advocate for a degrowth of the cultural and music industry as well as the support—in many forms—of independent and collaborative initiatives.

This is what this volume is about: presenting initiatives that have chosen to change their practices, change their habits, question the norms of the sector and take a step in the right direction. Perhaps more equitable music communities would mean scaling down: this would entail fewer giant events and more micro-festivals, but could result in lesser GHG emissions—and more fun!

# The Shift Project

## Decarbonize Culture!

### Facts

- Mobility and transport. Culture and leisure are the 3rd most important cause of mobility
- Agriculture and food. Food is a significant source of emissions for events and cultural production (15 to 20%).
- Buildings and energy. The European cultural landscape is a particularly dense network of infrastructures.
- Digital. 3 to 4% of global GHG emissions. Culture is the world's largest consumer of digital data (over 70%).

#### → Fossil fuel dependency

- Training for all the players in the sector: 88% of cultural professionals are not trained in energy and climate issues

### Directions

- Relocate activities. Place culture at the heart of territories and make it a driving force for local transition
- Slow down. Artists will continue to travel... Stay extended / reduce the number of trips.
- Reduce the scales. Rethink the permanent growth of audience size.
- Eco-design. Take into account the global impact of a scenic or scenographic creation (life cycle analysis)
- Renounce. To certain high-carbon practices already in use and high-carbon technological opportunities

# Under their light

We celebrate the trailblazers in the independent cultural sector who are redefining the narrative of sustainability and responsibility. In this curated collection of articles, the spotlight is set on a diverse array of initiatives that demonstrate the intersection of culture and environmental consciousness. From grassroots movements to innovative projects, these stories exemplify how the independent cultural sector is stepping up to the challenge of fostering a more sustainable future.

## Venues

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### Creative Solutions for Climate Change – Some of Europe’s Most Trailblazing Independent Cultural Venues Share Their Ecological Practices

#### **Lieneke Pisters**

is an individual actress from The Netherlands, a storyteller, and a singer composing electronic music under the alias Tropical Dutch.



↑ SWG3. © Michael Hunter

Scotland is the host of one of the most distinctive independent venues and sustainable hubs. Established in 2005, SWG3 is the main multi-discipline arts venue, and forms a local supply chain on what used to be a clutch of warehouses and a galvanizer’s yard. Closely collaborating with small businesses in several units, it’s now a collection of atmospheric spaces alive with art, design, music, fashion, food, shopping, and nightlife.

On its net zero mission, the organisation started to use the BODYHEAT system in 2022, saving up to an estimated 70 tonnes of carbon per year. Installed by award-winning geothermal energy consultancy TownRock Energy Limited, it captures the energy created by gig and party goers, and uses it to help reduce the venue’s carbon footprint. As forward-thinking and radical as this innovation might sound like, the heating and cooling system that works with geothermal energy already existed. Functioning with heat pumps that harness heat from





↑ © Depot Cinema

# circula-

the audience, it's made available for on-demand heating or cooling after getting pumped out of the room and stored underground. Hannah George, SWG3's Sustainability Coordinator, explains that the organisation is using the concept of circularity that's found in nature.

"It engages people. We encourage everyone to live more in alignment with the environment, and to give back to it." Standing out as a flagship project, investors and funders were attracted to it, and charity organisation Clydeside Initiative for Arts Ltd was their founding charity.

Although there are also hurdles such as eliminating single use plastics, by organising and partaking in numerous projects SWG3 is well on its way to reaching its carbon emission targets for 2025.

Another pioneering organisation that inspires a circular economy and holistic mindset is Lewes-based Depot Cinema, recognised as winner of the "Green Screen" award at the London Big Screen Awards 2022. From green infrastructure, to promoting sustainable practices with employees, customers, and business partners. And from optimised representation in its movies, to a diversity of wildflowers both in its garden and on the roof. Their efforts are impressive.

Acknowledged for demonstrating exemplary commitment to keep their carbon footprint as low as possible, this organisation's ecological practices have reached a level of micromanagement. They've counted 9 species of bees on their 30 cm thick substrate living roof that are attracted to a recorded 72 species of wildflowers, providing the bees a 4-star restaurant experience. Natasha Padbury, Office & Sustainability explains that they "try to mimic the species from the environment". It also provides excellent sound and heat insulation, and prevents excess water run-off.

Using Julie's Bicycle's CG Tools to annually measure and monitor the impacts including energy use, water consumption, waste generation and recycling, travel and production materials. This framework calculates its total annual carbon emissions, compared with previous years performances and benchmark against other cultural organisations. This enables Depot Cinema to have a better understanding of where their impacts lie and helps inform their environmental strategy and priorities.

Garance Amieux from Le Périscope, a residency and concert venue for jazz and innovative music in Lyon, is also familiar with environment consultants, as she has been coordinating training programs and leading several projects around sustainability for about three years. Their ecology practice started with Footprints, a European project that followed up a previous one called Jazz Connective, intended for artists and programmers who got to meet and work together. "Soon we came to realise that there's a problem with touring in Europe, since it's not sustainable in many ways: environmentally, economically, socially, and in terms of mental health for the artists. It's all linked." To do the pre-work and to save the music industry time and money, they calculated the footprints of 9 European venues and jazz festivals in various sizes, and in urban, rural, and in-between areas.

# urity

Garance was at the time of interview in Łódź (Poland) for the Better Live project. "Collaboration allows us to change practices, change the way we work with artists and audiences, and ultimately change the music sector. We meet people with

"It's a culture shift in which we all have a part to play. (...) Ecology is still a niche subject and it's a struggle to get people here."



similar and different problems and experiment with alternative options to find solutions. We are co-financed by Creative Europe, this allows us to put our extra time in these projects. Of course we are documenting all of our studies, to share new knowledge and enable other organisations to benefit from it."

One project flows into another. But for this, Le Périscope collaborates with 11 partners in Europe who are leading 15-30 venues in one region like the adjacent countries Italy, France, and Switzerland. Their aim is to create ecological ways of touring by co-programming within the area and optimising the circulation of artists. This way, artists don't have to travel so much, and have the opportunity to stay longer in a residency, do concerts, inclusivity programs, or masterclasses, which allow them to obtain intercultural and artistic leads to new ideas and projects.

Several experts have been working on the first blueprint which will be published in September 2023. They will be implementing experiments, researching the financial and social impact they had on the sector, and finally taking back this blueprint to update everything in partnership with a university. All the results will be collected and ultimately published in a big roadmap publication.

# in-

Garance lifts the curtain a little bit. "One of our first conclusions so far is that the audience has the biggest carbon footprint. A lot of responsibility is put on the shoulders of the artists but we want to shift this to booking organisations, venues, promoters, agents, and festivals, who should take a bigger part on working toward more sustainable touring. We have to get closer to where the people live, and it also requires an understanding of the local context."

In regard to their local context, Lewes is a special town according to Natasha. Its 'get up and do stuff' attitude allowed Depot Cinema to maximise positive impact and re-humanise their local environment. "Money talks, and we really put it where our mouth is. For example we guarantee the local milk factory good business and year round trade, if they deliver the milk without unnecessary packaging and a promise that we can visit the cows ourselves and know their welfare."

For Depot Cinema, sustainability is not reduced to a decrease on the carbon calculator, and not only an environmental case, but also translated into a social responsibility to achieve their lowest possible environmental impact. But educating about a holistic and circular economy is not easy, Natasha has to admit. "We don't want to guilt-trip our

own audience. But we're honest, it's a culture shift in which we all have a part to play and it will have uncomfortable consequences. We are leisure facilities and ultimately people come here to have a good time, so we try to find ways to encourage and inspire in our communication."

Local stories are helpful to raise awareness, for instance a documentary from the UK titled *The Nettle Dress* did very well, about textile artist Allan Brown who spends seven years making a dress by hand, just from the fibre of locally foraged stinging nettles. Storytelling is important, says Natasha. "Cultural venues are communicators, where dialogues are started in interesting ways, holding up mirrors. But ecology is still a niche subject and it's a struggle to get people here." It's a matter of balancing their financial interests, with their vision of showing a diverse range as they train their staff in order to invite and meet with particular audiences like autistic or blind people.

# nov-

Garance underlines the potential for cultural venues to raise awareness about environmental and social sustainability: "It's amazing that you can touch so many different people. Artists make a big impact, have an imaginative creative power. Culture is often treated like it's not part of the economy, perhaps because it's hard to collect data about its impact. But COVID has shown how important culture really is, we have to go out and meet other people, connect, and share emotions."

Hannah agrees with Garance. "We tend to think about scientific or technological solutions for climate change, but music venues have the unique ability to evoke emotions, to bring people together, and inspire action. Climate action needs creative solutions, it requires all sectors to work collectively to bring about effective and lasting environmental change. I believe that music and the arts have an important role to play in complex issues and also help to alleviate climate anxiety."

We all know that the climate crisis is an urgent matter, but independent culture can make us experience it, and feel it in our hearts.



↑ Bimhuis, Amsterdam (March, 8-9th 2023 for Better Live). © Ada Nieuwendijk

Sustainability is not reduced to a decrease on the carbon calculator, and not only an environmental case, but also translated into a social responsibility.

# ative

## Julie's Bicycle

Julie's Bicycle (London, UK) is a pioneering not-for-profit, mobilising the arts and culture to take action on the climate, nature, and justice crisis. Founded in 2007 by and to serve the music industry, it was a natural evolution to expand its commitment right across the creative and cultural landscape. Central to its core mission remains that the climate crisis is a cultural crisis, requiring a creative response from the cultural industry. Julie's Bicycle focuses on high-impact programmes and policy change to meet the crisis head-on.

Their first of its kind Future Festival Tools, learning resources for professionals to embed sustainability within their careers, prove to hold an enormous potential for impact in mainstreaming environmental action throughout all events and job roles. Actually measuring footprints is a must, in order to move from understanding to action. We need to see less talking and more action. According to the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report, we have just over 6 years left to halve emissions and we are no way near.

Each organisation has its own unique set of challenges and it is JB's job to understand those and help co-create strategies, pushing resources into solutions moving towards creative climate action by becoming net zero carbon and restoring nature. Having partnered with over 2000 organisations in the UK and internationally, they also work with smaller organisations, however very often they collaborate with industry bodies that represent many organisations and so have that impact through scale.

## Festival

### It Can Be Done! – An Independent Polish Music Festival Works to Benefit the Planet

Participating in cultural events, we very often overlook challenges taken upon by the organisers. From artist transportation to stage design, the process of event production is just the tip of an iceberg. Right now, music festival organisers head asking themselves key questions: Is it possible to produce a festival in harmony with the environment? How do we start a broader, global discussion that will encourage others to make changes? Up To Date Festival comes with an answer. The Białystok-based electronic music festival has undertaken a number of significant changes for the benefit of the planet this year, despite its small financial capacity.

Up To Date Festival is an event that has been taking place in Białystok – the heart of north-eastern Poland – for 14 years. The festival has been known for its deep connection to the city, including tremendous support of local culture through numerous actions for the benefit of children, the elderly, and groups at risk of social exclusion. Previous editions of UTDF have taken place in different places in Białystok, each year gathering dozens of artists from the techno, bass, ambient, or experimental music scenes from all over the world. This year, however, the Up To Date Festival

#### Malika Tomkiel

Editor, awareness-driven culture and art journalist. She works as a social media and communication specialist for Up To Date Festival.

team have decided to introduce some significant changes. It started by going back to its origins and organising an outdoor edition, in a location unknown to the audience at the start of the event. We called it the Secret Location for the purpose of the festival. It's a direct reference to the festival's roots – the rave culture of the 1990s. With the word 'roots' and the good of the environment in mind, it also turned to implementing new solutions in its organisation. All with the aim of minimising its negative impact on the planet and sparking a wider, industry-wide discussion.

## **The planet needs us to change mindset**

Consistently implemented pro-environmental changes would not be possible if it were not for the festival's collaboration with Electrum, a Białystok-based company that leads the way in climate tech and renewable energy. Every year, the festival organisers face a multitude of challenges that are invisible to participants at first glance. Choice of venue is already problematic. Will the loud sound harm animals in the area? Will the construction invade the wildlife originally present?

Another problem is how the artists will get to the event, but also how to encourage participants to choose a low-emission train or bus when coming to the festival. The choice of means of transport may have

little impact on the environment individually, but if dozens of people switch from planes to trains and buses, it will start an environmental snowball effect. Next details thought of by the UTDF organisers include doing many of the standard elements of the festival in a 'less orthodox' way: from the production of merchandise, to the serving of water, to the construction of the stages. The production of clothes, the decision about whether water will be served in plastic bottles, and the recycled set design are a number of things that can be done differently—rather better. In harmony with nature.

# perspec-



↑ Up To Date Festival (Secret Location, Białystok, 2023). © Maciej Korsan



↑ UTDF De Luxe and Karolina Maksimowicz

## **How did Up To Date do it?**

Up To Date never says of itself that it is flawless. What they try to show is that even a small entity can look and think ahead, inspiring others to find their own solutions for the planet. One of the most key changes the festival announced this year was the complete abandonment of new merch production. The hoodies, t-shirts, or socks made each year to celebrate a new edition have been replaced by De Luxe clothing in 2023—clothes upcycled from second-hand clothing.

Even a small entity can look and think ahead, inspiring others to find their own solutions for the planet.

## **Ecology and upcycling are De Luxe**

The originator of the De Luxe collection is long-standing UTDF team member Karolina Maksimowicz, who, together with her team, has been searching, embroidering, and reworking clothes since the 2016 edition of the festival, so that they can find their new owners during this year's festival. In 2023, the idea of selling old clothes was expanded upon with a boutique shop set up on the event site, where it was also possible to customise one's own items.

Over the two days of the festival—June 23rd and 24th, 2023—hundreds of people brought their old t-shirts, dresses, skirts, and even trousers and socks to the stand, which were screen-printed or given the iconic UTDF patches! All of this was done on the cheap to show that, very often, what we already have in our own wardrobe is just as good (or even better).

# tives

The festival team also never made it a secret that the stage designs and decorations were always built from found and unwanted things. When you come to Up To Date, don't be surprised to find an old, painted Fiat 126p (a cult attribute that has survived more than a few editions), an old dentist's chair in the chill zone, painted euro pallets, or even, referring to the theme of this year's edition, withered roots brought from the nearby forest.



↑ Volunteers and UTDF team (2023). © Krzysztof Karpiński

## **Changing transportation**

Bragging about flying from point A to B is slowly starting to get dusted. This is the approach taken by festival organisers, because if artists are not from the furthest corners of the globe, they recommend that they come to Poland by train. When we stop thinking in old patterns and open up to new solutions, very often such a journey can turn out to be much more comfortable and even faster. Thus, about 40% of the artists came to the festival by ground transport in 2023.

Taking care of the planet also means taking care of people: Up To Date Festival 2023 partnered with FreeNow, a company that offers app-based taxi ordering. During the two festival days, each attendee had a dedicated discount to use, which, once entered into the app, securely connected them with a driver and took them from anywhere in the city to the secret location (and back). The festival organisers realise that they can't get every guest to give up their

car altogether, but if they can help them get home or back to their hotel safely in the morning, it's worth a try. On June 23rd and 24th, the FreeNow app was used nearly 600 times (on a total attendance of 3300 people), which shows that when you are the organiser of an event, it is worth looking for brands with which you can establish cooperation based on a specific idea—e.g. safety, which gives mutual benefits to both entities.

## **The course of the event: small things with significant people**

The Up To Date Festival and its organisation would not be possible if it were not for the people. Apart from the organisers themselves, it is a number of volunteers who put all their heart into making the festival site not only a safe space, but also a clean and sustainable

one. Volunteers from all over Poland often accompany the festival for many years observing its development, and it is them—the youth—who are the voice initiating change and inspiring its implementation.

One such change this year was the introduction of water in glass bottles. UTDF teamed up with a local mineral water producer, so those attending the event were able to purchase water in returnable bottles for symbolic 3 PLN. Bottle return points were available across the festival site, while every other beverage was served in reusable cups—a simple but effective solution that has been used for years. Own cups or water flasks were also welcome at the festival grounds.

## **Do we really care? Let's talk**

An integral part of this year's Up To Date was the conference "DO WE REALLY CARE? #balance #climatetech #responsibility", which expanded on the strategy adopted by the festival and the Electrum group. The leitmotiv of the meeting was a joint reflection on the functioning of music entities in the context of caring for the well-being of the planet. During the several hours length meeting, many questions were asked about how to organise events in times of climate change and rising inflation, which can often provide an excuse for inaction.

The meeting, conducted in English, featured two panels. One was hosted by UTDF's own Cezary Chwicewski, who discussed the inequalities resulting from the location of events as well as the origin and gender of artists with a host of guests from across the continent. The other puts the environmental impact of music festivals under the microscope and was attended by representatives of the music and events industry as well as specialists in implementing

pro-environmental changes, moderated by Misia Furtak from Music Declares Emergency Poland<sup>4</sup>. Exchanging experiences and perspectives turned out to be important as introducing actions via small steps and collaboration can bring the best, long-lasting results. The statements elaborated by the invited guests (Grzegorz Stanisławski (Electrum Holding/PL) Halvard Müller (Monument/NO) Paulina Żaczek (Granko Agency/PL) Bartłomiej Arendarski) very clearly showed that technology, and therefore culture, should be approachable to people. It should be created to be as safe as possible for the planet. It is not created to pollute and destroy what we have created—culture is there to take care of nature. The organisers of the events themselves, as emphasised by among others Halvard Müller from the Monument festival, should carefully plan the direction they want to go and how they want to be perceived. The next step is to guide the artists and show the recipients how, in small steps, they can act in a pro-ecological way.

## **Post-festival dust-up: UTDF's further plans**

The recent changes have been welcomed by the attendees. The UTDF organisers say it's the consistency that makes the small, thoughtful moves turn into bigger changes. Right now, the Up To Date Festival is planning its 2024 edition having in mind that 2023 was just the first step. They design next steps consistently thinking about the planet through the whole development process.

Is there a universal excuse for event organisers to do nothing? Let's hope that every creator, but also consumer of culture, will now ask themselves this question and turn their gaze in the direction of Białystok.

4. Watch full panel here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CllmtCF5nRA&t=4s>

# 3 questions to Terra- forma

Milan, Italy

## 01. \_\_\_\_\_

### Can you introduce your structure to us?

Terraforma is an international music festival dedicated to artistic experimentation and sustainability. The three-day event has taken place since 2014 in the garden of Villa Arconati, near Milan. The artists range from early innovators and genre precursors to young and promising talents of the experimental music scene, defined for an ever-evolving approach to active and creative research. Since its genesis, Terraforma has always been providing a diverse, experimental and innovative program that aims to give space to every art practice. Within the frame of a music festival, Terraforma aims to be an ongoing cultural and social experiment, embracing, more than ever, a full year-round program taking place

in different cities and contexts. During the pandemic, Terraforma began organising diverse activities in the fields of cultural and ecological investigation such as launching Il Pianeta, an itinerant and protean creative incubator of artistic languages, which takes place in Milan, Rome, and recently in Paris. The Terraforma Simposio was also born as an open space for discussion—a moment dedicated to research, a reflection of the present through the lenses of contemporary practices in the sustainable realm. Finally, yet importantly the ongoing Terraforma Journal, an editorial project at its 5th release, created as a platform to deepen some of the critical issues lying at the intersection of sound, art, ecology, and contemporary culture. Terraforma is one of the main projects of Threes Productions, a creative agency committed to cultural

sustainability that develops and promotes experimental projects in music and art with an ecologically conscious approach. It is a multidisciplinary platform driven by research and innovation, whose activities span from event production and curation to the publishing of music and editorial content. All projects are research-oriented and highly experimental, fuelled by a desire to challenge cultural paradigms and inspire an ecological vision.

## 02. \_\_\_\_\_

### Why did you join the Reset! network?

At Terraforma, we've joined the Reset! network because we believe it's crucial to create a connected community of European cultural platforms that can support each other, exchange ideas, and bring fresh perspectives to the table.

In the fields of arts and culture, the idea of a united Europe is still relatively new, and the prospect of collaborating with other cultural organisations provides a sense of security. Enhancing each other's visibility holds particular significance, especially within an environment where public funding is scarce, and local institutions often struggle to grasp our sector's significance. It is imperative that the arts and culture sector be identified, nurtured, and unified to attain a critical mass and attain the recognition and cross-border visibility it deserves.

## 03. \_\_\_\_\_

### Which key element can make cultural structures more sustainable in terms of ecology?

One of the main goals of the organisation is to restore Villa Arconati's historic

garden. In 2016, we started a 3 years program in collaboration with Borotalco, aiming to restore from scratch a historical labyrinth, which was presumed to be present in the 18th century, and that now is one of our stages. Also, we act proactively towards the safeguarding of the territory by implementing an extensive gardening project through land recovery, greywater collection, and extensive cleaning procedures. Thanks to the engagement of a team of tree climbers, we also trimmed over 60 centennial trees in order to secure about two hectares of forest. Our sustainability approach is also reflected in our architectural model. In the past years, we engaged with our community, involving young professional architects such as Fosbury Architecture, Studio Zarcola, and Studio Petrucci to develop our distinctive facilities, mostly made

out of wood. The Vaia Stage, designed by Space Caviar in 2022, is made entirely of wood from trees felled by the 2018 Vaia storm in northeastern Italy, to help the community make use of the vast amount of wood they have invested in removing from the mountains before it rots. In addition to this, Terraforma aims to overcome the traditional events management approach, by developing an organisational model able to measure, report, and reduce its impacts in terms of waste, mobility, energy, and water consumption on nature and its resources. Last, we release a sustainability report every year, presenting a comprehensive overview of our ongoing initiatives in the realms of environmental and social sustainability.

# Under their words

Step into the minds of visionaries shaping the landscape of sustainable cultural practices in an interview series with voices of change. In this section, we engage in insightful conversations with key figures driving initiatives within the independent cultural sector. From an entrepreneur to a booking agent, each interview unveils the perspectives, challenges, and triumphs of those at the forefront of the ecological awareness campaign in the cultural sector.

## Vinyl Industry

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### With Karen Emanuel from Key Productions (London, UK)

#### **Key Production**

is a London-based music manufacturer founded in 1990 by Karen Emanuel. It is a, industry leader as a B-Corp company, committed to making vinyl sustainable and sharing this knowledge with the industry to make a big difference.

#### **Can you tell a little bit about yourself and how you started Key Production?**

I always had a passion for music from a young age. And at one point my friend pointed out that music makes me tick and maybe I should get a job in music. At that time, there was very little opportunity for women in music. I got told I could be a secretary or a personal assistant and that was all that was available for me. But I persevered, got a job as a receptionist at a company, then moved into the production department when they realised I'm good with my numbers. I was checking invoices for them initially and then I ended up running the department. I had a boss that came in and we didn't see eye to eye. He wasn't particularly fond of women who have their own mind. I left and set up my own because I had nothing to lose. I thought if it doesn't work, I will get another job. I set up Key Production in 1990 in the back office of a proposed client who is still a client. Then, I got more and more work by going out to gigs, networking, and meeting people. It grew organically and then over the years bought other companies to add to our range of services. We grew but then we had to contract, because of the recession. We make physical products for the industry. At one point, they tried to close all the vinyl plants, and the vinyl went down ill. Downloading and streaming came in. It's been a rocky ride. But we have been operating for 33 years and we now have two offices in London, one in Brighton, one in Sheffield and an office in Europe as well. We're the biggest company of our kind in Europe. There are different parts of the company that do different things like one part does product design, one part concentrates outside the music industry, one part deals with more up and coming bands. We pride ourselves on being knowledgeable and passionate about what we do. We have staff that have been in the company for 28 years. We are and always have been passionate about sustainability. I lead several groups in the music industry to look at the supply chain and how we can improve it from a sustainability point of view. When we're talking about sustainability, we also need to think about sustaining our businesses which includes selling products and performing live.

**I would like to hear more about your ecological practices and sustainability efforts. Has this been a focus from the beginning or a more recent effort due to the current situation of the climate crisis?**

I've been passionate about it since I was a teenager. Back then, good practices weren't even thought out. In fact, anyone that tried to shout about it was looked at as a bit odd. When offsetting or carbon balancing first came in and carbon outputs were first being measured around 2007, I tried to teach people about things they could do. But at the time people didn't want to care. It's been important for the company from the beginning really. Even though people are talking about it, now there's still not enough being done about it. There's also a lot of misinformation. One of the things that we try to do as a company is to get as much information as possible to educate people to make their own choices rather than believing the unjustified claims. We're trying to get the whole supply chain to work together.

# aware-

**You seem to be a pioneer and there are also some other companies that are putting similar efforts. Do you think there's more awareness around sustainability? Also, considering how companies have been exploiting it through greenwashing, where do you think the music industry stands?**

I think there are some people who are greenwashing and trying to use it as a selling tool that are not transparent about their supply chain. The more people are talking about it, the more people are becoming aware of it, the better. I'm always trying to educate more people and I believe everyone has to do as much as they can. The more people take steps, the more it will become normalised. For example, in the vinyl industry, there is this new product in the market base. When making PVC, they try to replace the fossil element of PVC with biofuels. It's not the best thing in the world, but it's much better. They're all making steps towards this, but at the moment it is more expensive. People are unwilling to pay a bit more to have a better product. But if we can get enough people to pay a little bit more and start looking at that product as the norm, then the price will come down. You have a product that is better from a sustainability point of view than the product was last year. There's lots of positive change being made for the good of the earth and people. We all need to sustain our businesses and the industry, but ideally do it in a better way. There are a lot of products coming in. I've been to quite a lot of conferences recently where people are talking about greenwashing. There's a lot of new legislation coming in the EU. People can make choices and prefer the factories that are abiding by that legislation. People aren't going to be able to greenwash, because they will be sued for using the wrong terminology or not declaring their emissions. Those people that are greenwashing will get called out or actually give us the whole life cycle of their products. We saw something terrible just recently, someone said vinyl is really bad and there is this product that is much better. They didn't have any backup data to show that. You're making a product that is not actually vinyl and the claims you're making aren't true. The legislation coming in is good for that so that people won't be able to make such false claims.



**It's good to hear that it is not an individual choice anymore, but there are regulations coming in that will be imposed on competitors as well. Are there parts of the vinyl that are more difficult to replace with more sustainable materials?**

There is the shrink wrap which is such a minimal proportion to plastics you use in manufacturing. There're two arguments: one is that most shrink wrap is recyclable, but not curbside recyclable. It's industrially recyclable. Some of the other materials that they have been making, there are question marks about its compostability. Regardless of that, shrink wrap protects the record. When the vinyl gets made it passes through a lot of hands because it gets distributed. It gets touched a lot of time so taking off the shrink wrap risks damaging the vinyl and it becoming unsellable and therefore it could end up being thrown away. If you protect it with a thin layer of plastic that is technically recyclable, it lends its life indefinitely. And vinyl is meant to stay forever and be passed down from one generation to another. People want the vinyl pristine. You find out a lot more than meets the eye when you scratch the surface so all you can do is tell people what we know and allow them to choose the best way forward.

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**It sounds like there is a need for educating the audience and the consumers as well as the larger industry. As an independent organisation a lot of responsibility falls on your shoulders for raising awareness on sustainability.**

Indeed! A big change should come from governments, but we end up taking responsibility for it because the government does not. Europe is making quite big strides forward. America is miles behind in sustainability and environmental practices. Some states like California are good, but other states have different legislation. They're still using vinyl compounds that contain substances that were abandoned in the EU about 15 years ago. We know other compounds can be approved and used to make good products,



because we have been doing it in Europe for that long. That needs to be spoken about as America is a much bigger market than Europe. In order for that to happen a lot of major record companies need to put pressure. The EU government is making everybody audit their carbon emissions, which is necessary. You have got to know what your base level is and how you can improve it.

**Do you have tips for other independent organisations for educating their clients and the industry for sustainable practices?**

We recently became a B-Corp company<sup>5</sup>. We also go around to conferences, panels, and make presentations to educate people. We sit on all the different industry boards that are talking about sustainability to try to make sure that everyone is on the same page and try to achieve the same things. What I found with sustainability is that industries try to do their own thing by themselves rather than getting together with everybody. We're trying to change that and we've had some success. In vinyl manufacturing, there are groups called Vinyl Alliance and Vinyl Record Manufacturers Association. They are both trying to get more sustainable practices. We told them that they need to come together and they are going to be doing that, so you can see that things are moving.

**Do you think there are more listeners who appreciate that and invest in sustainable vinyl products?**

At the moment, people are really reluctant to pay more because there is a living crisis and vinyl has reached a level where people don't want to pay more than they are already currently paying. Some of it is about education; people still think streaming is better than buying vinyl, which is not the case from a carbon emission point of view. How we get the buying public to be educated is the question. I think it should come from the talent—the artists themselves. If they were educated and were able to educate their fans, that would be a way of getting the information out. If they encourage the listeners to pay an extra euro for their album to buy a vinyl that is made with a more sustainable substance, maybe they would do it. We need to get the major record companies on board and make sure they have the right information and to get that information out there in the right way. It is definitely better than it was ten years ago, when I first started people did not care about sustainability.

**Well, we can't afford not to care anymore!**

Yes, we are forced to do something about it!

This interview was conducted by Deniz Kirkali

<sup>5</sup> B-Corp Certification designates a business as trustworthy and meeting high standards of verified performance, accountability, and transparency on multiple factors. It is an acknowledgement of the social and environmental impact of the business.

# Festival and Performing Industry

## With Eilidh McLaughlin from Clean Scene



**You worked with Clean Scene on a significant report entitled "Last Night a DJ Took a Flight." What were the key takeaways or conclusions you drew from this report?**

Eilidh McLaughlin: The key takeaway from the report is that our industry has a real and drastic negative impact on the environment.

No other research has been undertaken to understand exactly what this impact is, and we did our best to give an idea of what that looks like. By estimating 1000 DJs touring schedules in 2019, we worked out that collectively they:

- emitted 35,000 tonnes of CO2
- took 51,000 flights
- travelled 117,000,000 kms

These figures are gross and hard to conceptualise, but the energy is equivalent to powering the electricity in 200,000 (US) homes for a year! Touring DJs enjoy the careers they do due to the efficiency and convenience of air travel and its reliance on the fossil fuel industry. Ultimately the industry is at the behest of capitalism and colonialism, and it's extremely hard to disrupt this status quo.

However, we made some suggestions on things that the industry could do:

- Planning for future equity.
- Rethinking exclusivity.
- Celebrating and investing in the local scene.
- Prioritising more efficient tour-routing.
- Establishing agency and promoter networks to provide peer support and sharing best practices.
- Nurturing relationships between agents and promoters to further this work and narrative.

**How can independent cultural and media organisations contribute to the paradigm shift towards recognising and addressing the ecological impact of culture?**

All individuals and organisations have a part to play in addressing this issue—every single action we take to recognise and reduce our environmental impact helps.

I am an established sustainability consultant and regularly work with clients in the creative sector to help them reduce their environmental impact. There are a variety of ways to directly reduce your carbon footprint both internally and externally: implementing resource efficiency measures, reducing your travel footprint by limiting flying, creating and embedding an environmental policy, working with local environmental initiatives, and, importantly, communicating your action to stakeholders.

**Can you share examples of specific initiatives within the independent cultural sector aimed at actively modifying practices to reduce environmental impact?**

DJs4CA, Julie's Bicycle, Clubtopia, Earth Percent, Culture Declares, Music Declares, Creatives for Climate, Feat Artists, Vision 2025, AGF, DGTL Festival, Massive Attack research, Future Festival Tools, Greening Music Tech, and We Are Albert are good examples.

**How did Clean Scene contribute to raise awareness about the environmental impact of DJs, and what strategies have you used to promote your report?**

There is really no other similar research out there so, I think that's why it reached as far and wide as it did. We all recognise that the touring industry has a huge environmental impact, but no one had really tried to figure out what that looked like. Although we made a set of assumptions and estimated touring schedules, the resulting data was significant and became comparable to other industries, which had previously never been done.

Also, one of our team members worked in PR which I'm sure is part of the reason it achieved such wide reach.

**Can you comment the challenges faced by independent cultural and media structures in implementing sustainable practices, and how are they overcoming these challenges?**

The main issues I face working with organisations are a lack of time, money, and commitment to the cause. By that I mean that they recognise the importance of introducing sustainability measures, but don't always have the ability to follow through with the suggested actions because of the three factors previously mentioned. Collaborations are most successful when there is someone in the organisation who really cares and is dedicated to pushing these initiatives through. If that person has sway and decision-making power within the organisation, even better!

**Are there any notable collaborations or partnerships between independent cultural players and environmental organisations to amplify the impact of their initiatives and to advocate for their activities?**

Arts Council England and Julie's Bicycle: the arts funding programme in the UK and a cultural sustainability non-profit who work together to reduce environmental impact in cultural organisations.

Earth Percent and Client Earth: music non-profit and earth advocacy non-profit who support each other to raise awareness and reduce the ecological impact of culture.

**How can artists, individuals and audiences actively support and contribute to the ecological and climate initiatives led by independent cultural and media structures in their communities?**

Behaviour change is hard so we need to continue to keep fighting the good fight! It can feel difficult to take a stand for something we believe in or to change how we do things, particularly when it feels like we're going against the grain—but challenging the status quo is never easy. Joining forces and working collectively and within community is where we hold most power, and makes the individual journeys we are all on a bit easier. Supporting your local venues, communities, and initiatives can help. As can using your individual power to stand up for what you believe in; whether that's using your body to protest and vote, or your purchasing power to send money to the right companies and organisations. Every little bit helps!

# portraits

## Horst Festival: Sustainable Urban Transformation Through Culture and Creativity

The Horst Arts and Music Festival takes place every year in Vilvoorde, in the northern suburbs of Brussels. It combines a club-oriented music programme, avant-garde contemporary art, and a scenographic programme that creates experimental and iconic club environments that change every year.

It's anything but a three-day festival, as the organisers are actively involved in sustainable urban development throughout the year in the district where the festival takes place. By transforming a former military camp into the ASIAT park and repurposing festival structures for year-round use, they contribute to the creation of a large urban park that serves the local community and beyond. The initiative not only reimagines public spaces, but also involves the reuse of materials, such as turning recycled materials from festival structures into park infrastructures. Additionally, the festival fosters partnerships to develop local projects, promoting sustainability and community involvement in the process of shaping the city of tomorrow.

The stages and some of the infrastructures created during the festival remain in place throughout the year and are used by the local population. For example, the Moon Ra pavilion, designed by Leopold Banchini, is used by youth associations and school classes. For the 2024 edition of the festival, one of the guest architects will be asked to remove the roof of one of the barracks and use the recycled materials to create a stage that will later become a children's playground. Stand Van Zaken's scenography for the 2023 edition will remain in place throughout the year to form both street furniture—a fountain, vegetation, lampposts—and an artistic intervention accessible to everyone.

As the development of the ASIAT park, also managed by Vilvoorde city council, continues alongside the activities associated with the festival, the site is gradually occupied by permanent or semi-permanent structures. Spaces that were previously empty are now occupied and the festival has to adapt each year. The Horst therefore aims to activate new spaces outside the ASIAT park, such as across the river that borders the site or elsewhere in Vilvoorde, by creating partnerships to develop local projects, such as a bakery, a brewery, a sports hall, etc. The Horst is an example of how a festival can implement an ecological approach that seamlessly integrates sustainable urban development with cultural initiatives, repurposing festival structures for year-round use, and fostering local partnerships. A testament to the transformative power of rave, through art, music, and architecture in shaping a greener and more vibrant future for both the community and the environment.

## DumBO: Transforming Bologna's urban landscape and music scene towards sustainability

The city of Bologna is one of the European cities that the EU has committed to achieving carbon neutrality by 2030. Accompanying this transformation of the city, the DumBO district was created in 2019 by independent social and cultural coop Open Event, on the 40,000 m<sup>2</sup> site of a former goods yard, consisting of 86 buildings and warehouses. The urban regeneration project led by Open Event promotes creativity, art, and culture in all their forms, developed under the prisms of the circular economy, social innovation, inclusion, and solidarity.

The project began with the gradual refurbishment of the buildings through self-build workshops, reusing mainly existing materials on site. At the same time, DumBO has hosted numerous events—300 a year today—, mainly concerts. This has led to the implementation of ecological practices being focused primarily on the music sector.

In order to provide a theoretical and exploratory basis for working towards a more ecological music sector, a number of professionals and politicians were invited to speak at debates and conferences. The concrete ecological practices put in place are articulated around three main directions. The first is to build stages, bars, and furniture from rented materials or by reusing what is already on site. The second is to establish partnerships with public and private transport companies to encourage audiences to travel less by car, and to offer sustainable travel solutions to guest artists. The third is to apply a model for the elimination of non-organic waste by recycling everything that can be thrown away, eliminating the use of paper in favour of digital formats, and raising awareness of waste management.

The four years of temporary operation—the first phase of which runs until the end of 2023—have enabled the team in charge of the site, in collaboration with the University of Bologna, to draw up a "roadmap to sustainability." The roadmap, which is still under development, is intended as a reference document for projects similar to DumBO's, but on a more modest scale, with the aim of achieving near-zero carbon emissions and waste, and promoting ecological practices as far as possible, particularly in the music sector. Now that the site has been purchased by the Municipality of Bologna, a second phase of operation is due to take place, which the DumBO team hopes to steer towards furthering the urban regeneration of Bologna and the sustainability of the music sector.



# Under their reports

Coming from decentralised workshops, the reports capture the challenges faced by independent cultural actors in navigating the realm of ecological practices. Here, it is drawn from the collective wisdom and experiences the complexities of integrating sustainability into their craft. These reports offer an account of the hurdles, triumphs, and collaborative efforts as artists, curators, and organisers grapple with the evolving landscape of ecological responsibility.

## Sustainability in Organisation of Cultural Events

– by Unsound Festival

Kraków, Poland  
February 2023



### The concept of sustainability

Sustainability is a concept that emerged as a result of debates on economic, social, and environmental development. It gained momentum in the 1970s and 1980s and became one of the main goals of public policy globally. It challenges traditional economic models that focus on economic growth without considering the impact on the natural environment and society. It was specifically defined for the first time in the Brundtland Commission report titled 'Our Common Future' and has since become a key topic in global debate. The report emphasises the need to look simultaneously at the three dimensions of sustainability—economic, social, and environmental. In a social context, the idea of sustainability refers to the concept of social justice and equality, emphasising the need to provide opportunities for development

and a decent standard of living for all. In a historical context, the concept of sustainability refers to understanding the impact of human actions on the natural environment as well as analysis and assessment of various ways of using natural resources in the past and present. In a political context, sustainability is often seen as a goal to be achieved by various institutions and governmental bodies. The National Cohesion Strategy plays an important role when it comes to sustainability in Poland. It specifies goals and priority actions related to sustainability in the country.

### Workshop's discussions

The concept of sustainability has become a slogan for many political strategies, aid plans, and social projects. This has led to

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its meaning gradually becoming blurred and has weakened the critical tone it conveyed at first. The workshop therefore began with an attempt to redefine the concept of sustainability by creating a mind map and dividing it into four main themes that emerged from the open discussion. These are: (1) environment—this refers to actions aimed at maintaining balance in the natural environment as well as reducing the impact of human actions on the environment, (2) social education—this includes initiatives that raise social awareness around sustainability as well as improving skills and behaviours that help to achieve these goals, (3) economy—this is understood both as new business models looking beyond solely economic growth and also issues connected to dignity of work, workers' rights, and labour unions, (4) equal opportunities in access to public goods which includes individuals with special needs as well as people who are socially excluded from participating in cultural events. We then split into four groups working independently on each of the issues to attempt to define its framework, discuss problems that arise in each of these areas, and outline solutions that could be implemented at a local, institutional, and political level.

## • Environment

The main problem identified to do with the environment is disposability. This applies to the cultural events themselves as well as, for example, to containers, packaging, and visual materials used for promotion. Other identified problems are a lack of knowledge and ambiguous regulations and directives that are often limited to empty slogans and not implemented in practice. Although the grant projects include clauses for limiting carbon footprint and accessibility for people with special needs, there is a concern about whether the people submitting the grants and the experts assessing them are actually knowledgeable about these problems and have the tools that allow real changes to be introduced. Education about environmental protection should not only be for those who are managing projects, but it should also cover all employees and volunteers involved in putting on cultural events. There is often resistance to radical changes within organisations and people are split into one group in favour of the changes and another strongly resisting them. Another problem is overproduction of artistic objects and a lack of planning for their disposal or recycling. It is important to already give some thought to recycling of objects at the planning stage of cultural events. On a city level there is a lack of shared storage space that would enable exchange of basic infrastructure resources that could be used by different organisations on a mass scale and could become shared assets. Furthermore, there is

no database of such resources or a barter exchange custom that would strengthen relationships between different players in cultural life. Doubts arose during the discussion about whether actions aiming to reduce the carbon footprint of cultural organisations are part of the process of privatising the responsibility for climate change and shifting the burden from industry to small players who in reality have minimal impact on the environment.

## • Social education

Workshop participants pointed out a significant imbalance in cooperation between city organisations and private parties. While private initiatives (clubs, bars, cafés, bookshops, etc.) very often promote the city and independent events free of charge—distributing leaflets, hanging posters, etc.—they cannot count on the same promotion from the institutions whose events they promote. Although participants in the city's cultural life often continue their evening in clubs, institutions still do not recognise this connection. Another problem raised was poor awareness about planning safer spaces and harm reduction practices. It was explained that a comprehensive approach is necessary in this area

Education about environmental protection should not only be for those who are managing projects, but it should also cover all employees and volunteers involved in putting on cultural events.

and that safety should be ensured for people representing minorities as well as those who may be using psychoactive substances. However, event organisers do not have the relevant knowledge and city institutions do not offer educational programmes in this field. There is a lack of anti-discrimination training and a knowledge-exchange platform regarding issues faced by organisers. Although many practices that address these problems have been implemented internationally, city institutions do not attempt to engage in education in this area. Smaller players in cultural life often feel abandoned.

## • Economy

The discussion about the economy began on the topic of occupational health—it was pointed out that work in culture is often unstable, poorly paid, often on 'junk contracts\*', and the line between work and private life easily becomes blurred. Cultural organisations still rely too much on unpaid (voluntary) work. Also, the leaders of cultural organisations often adopt a 'work for an idea' approach, realising their own ambitions at the expense of their own needs and their employees' welfare. Instability of work is often rooted in tenancy uncertainty as the city rarely offers long-term leases at reasonable prices, forcing independent cultural organisations to rely on private owners. Also, there is a lack of a partner cooperation model when it comes to designing the cultural map of Krakow, meaning cultural organisations are not invited to join discussions on planning of urban space. Furthermore, issues around financial cooperation with major sponsors have raised doubts on an ethical level. If cultural events are designed with sustainability in mind, but are financed by corporations that use an exploitative model, these events would appear to be adding to deepening inequalities rather than minimising them. At the same time, workshop participants admitted that independent cultural organisations lack money-making skills. There is an overriding 'mission model' when it comes to work in culture and commercialisation is

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often viewed as failure. Although people who work in the cultural field are proficient in conceptual, organisational, and curatorial work, they lack the tools to effectively capitalise on their activities. Grant systems often seem to encourage this incompetence by imposing restrictions on profit generation in their own regulations for granting public funds. There is often a lack of grant programmes and city authorities who would support projects that encompass both culture and business.

\* Junk contracts are short term contracts in Poland that are not subject to labour law and can be used by employers to pay workers below the minimum wage.

#### • Equal opportunities

Issues around equal opportunities in accessing public goods were discussed in the context of universal design. Plans around accessible culture must therefore begin with a discussion on the institutional and infrastructural framework in which the independent culture sector operates. A preference for planning and budgeting for cultural projects on an annual basis was identified as the biggest problem when it comes to sustainable planning of cultural events. This model prevents long-term planning and strategic redistribution of resources. The prevailing working model is 'more and faster' instead of 'less is better' which is what the workshop participants advocated for. As a result, people working in the cultural field face high levels of stress which negatively impacts their mental health and often pushes those unable to maintain the high-speed pace out of the work market. At the same time, it makes it difficult to build long-term development strategies, plan for multiple use of resources, and ensure continuity of projects and employment. Grant systems operating on an annual or biennial model were identified as one of the factors leading to the current state of affairs. They often require constant 'novelties' which makes comprehensive planning difficult. As a result, it is not possible

to focus on the continuity and continuation of projects which are replaced by a series of short events planned in a hurry and with no ongoing link between them. An intersectional approach was taken when discussing equal opportunities in access to culture. This focused on various overlapping forms of exclusion as well as a need for a comprehensive approach to the complexities of discrimination.

Barriers were identified resulting from various forms of disability, but also exclusion based on geographic location, social class, or access to technology. Female participants in the workshop pointed out that the current ways of dealing with the issue of accessibility lead to ghettoisation—separate events are held for excluded groups, which prevents the truly diverse groups from meeting, which should be one of the main roles of culture. Universal design should aim to provide space that allows everyone to meet at the same time instead of designing multiple spaces for specific small audiences.

#### **Workshop's proposals**

- Creation (in cooperation with the city) of a guide for safe partying which would include a compendium of knowledge and practices to do with safer club spaces and a harm reduction policy
- Creation of a standardised catalogue of good practices that would serve as a tool for risk analysis when organising parties and cultural events

There is a need to look simultaneously at the three dimensions of sustainability—economic, social, and environmental.

# guidance

- A new model where cultural life is viewed as a complex ecosystem with clubs, bookshops, and cafés treated as full-fledged participants on the cultural map of the city
- Reduction of paperwork when dealing with the city office
- Cooperation between the municipal water company and all event organisers which would allow free access to drinking water for all event attendees
- Barter agreements and exchange of services between the private sector and cultural institutions where both parties would inform each other about their projects—formalising verbal agreements in written form
- Organising regular city-wide debates within the culture sector where expectations could be discussed and solutions to problems developed together
- Educational programme for city officials and independent cultural organisations which would help to develop higher standards of communication and learn about each other's needs
- Developing an action plan for the culture sector in case of another pandemic based on experiences with Covid-19

- Training for people in the artistic field to precisely communicate expectations and needs when in contact with city officials and business representatives
- Changes to grant systems to help stabilise the third sector including funding of jobs, offices, infrastructure, and fixed assets as well as prioritising the realisation of long-term projects over the quantity of actions
- Changes to the way grant projects are assessed, so that the emphasis is more on achieving the intended effects and obtaining added value rather than achieving numbers, verifying substantive aspects of projects rather than just financial aspects
- Introduction of a 4-day working week
- Introduction of political stipulations for equality, environment, and economy as part of cultural entities' media communication
- Cooperation with experts in the field of digital ecology (for example the Digital Ecology Institute and Tech To The Rescue)
- Applying pressure on agents, managers, and promoters to ensure eco-friendly solutions appear in artist riders as a requirement
- Introducing higher transparency regarding remuneration of employees working in the cultural field and employed artists
- Creating city storage space, along with a database, for fixed assets that could be freely shared to reduce overproduction of goods for artistic work (for example, Spółdzielnia Kultury)
- Use of reusable vessels (water bottles, thermoses)
- Planning to reuse promotional materials (for example, making bags out of banners or using posters for packing)
- Using gobo projectors instead of producing visual materials
- Using cargo bikes to transport smaller items (leaflets, posters)

# The notion of ecology

In our interconnected world, independent cultural and media organisations emerge as actors, weaving threads of ecological consciousness into the fabric of our collective narrative. As *Reset!* beckons us to confront the ecological impact of our cultural endeavours, it unfurls a compelling testament to the pivotal role played by these independent entities in fostering a paradigm shift towards sustainable practices.

The imperative to re-evaluate our cultural footprint is underscored by the profound recognition of the environmental repercussions of our creative pursuits. Independent cultural and media structures, in embracing this realisation, are trying to spark change, steering the course towards a more environmentally conscious future. Their commitment transcends mere acknowledgment, evolving into a dynamic force actively engaged in reshaping practices.

At the heart of this transformation lies a profound commitment to raising awareness—an awakening that transcends the confines of traditional discourse. Independent cultural players become torchbearers of the narrative, one that places the ecological and climate challenge at the centre of the debate. Through their endeavours, they challenge the status quo, beckoning us to reconsider not only what we create but how we create it.

In the realm of music, independent cultural organisations take centre stage in orchestrating a harmonious coexistence with the environment. They reimagine the music industry as not merely an auditory delight, but as a steward

of nature. From the sourcing of materials for scenography to the carbon footprint of concerts, every note resonates with a commitment to sustainability. Beyond the dazzling lights and pulsating beats, lies a meticulous choreography of sustainable practices.

Waste reduction, energy efficiency, and mindful consumption become integral parts of the festival experience. Independent organisers becoming architects of immersive, eco-conscious celebrations, inviting attendees to take part in this evolution, through conversations and new practices.

*Reset!* has here tried to serve as a guide through the intricate landscape of these transformative initiatives, by amplifying the voices of those who, often operating on the fringes, reshape our cultural narrative towards sustainability. It unravels the stories of those who dare to challenge conventions, proving that ecological responsibility is not a hindrance to creativity, but a fertile ground for innovation.

*Reset!* emerges not only as a documentation of the ecological awakening within our cultural spheres, but as a call to action. The independent sector's endeavours ripple through the collective consciousness, inspiring a recalibration of our creative compass. As we navigate the complex interplay between culture and ecology, these organisations illuminate a path towards a harmonious coexistence.

**Manon Moulin** is the editorial coordinator of all European projects for the non-profit organisation Arty Farty. She specifically works on the European network of independent cultural and media organisations *Reset!*, as well as media cross border collaboration project *The Circle*, and aggregation media *We are Europe*.

# Reset! work- shops

## 2022, February

### ↘ Budapest, Hungary

Aurora – Resistant and Resilient: Perspectives for Independent Culture in Hungary

## 2022, September

### ↘ Tallin, Estonia

Palanga Street Radio – Sustainable Future(s) for Community Radio

## 2022, October

### ↘ Budapest, Hungary

Lahmacun Radio – Independent Music Journalism in Hungary

### ↘ Batumi, Georgia

Mutant Radio – Urban Cultural Physical Spaces in Batumi

### ↘ Barcelona, Spain

Whisper Not Agency – The Management of Artistic Independence

### ↘ Brussels, Belgium Arty Farty

Brussels – How to Support Artists with Disabilities

### ↘ Tromsø, Norway

Insomnia – New Audiences and Next Generation: How to Stay Connected to the Youth, Be Relevant, Become a Platform for New Generations and Support Emerging Talents and Artists

### ↘ Lisbon, Portugal

Canal 180 – History and Diversity: The Role of Independent Creative Actors in Post-Colonial Cultural Environments

### ↘ Tbilisi, Georgia

Mutant Radio – Independent Creative Platforms and Urban Changes in Tbilisi

### ↘ Porto, Portugal

Canal 180 – New Audiences and Next Generation: How to Stay Connected to the Youth, Be Relevant, Become a Platform for New Generations and Support Emerging Talents and Artists

### ↘ Berlin, Germany

Consentis – Diversity & Awareness

### ↘ Munich, Germany

Safe The Dance – Diversity & Inclusion

### ↘ Budapest, Hungary

Lazy Women – New Audiences and Next Generation: How to Stay Connected to the Youth, Be Relevant, Become a Platform for New Generations and Support Emerging Talents and Artists

## 2022, November

### ↘ Milan, Italy

Terraforma – The Relationship Between Independent Music Scene and Cultural Institutions

## 2022, December

### ↘ Leipzig, Germany

Sphere Radio – Decentralised Resources

### ↘ Skopje, North Macedonia

Skala – Audiences & New Generations

## 2023, January

### ↘ Istanbul, Turkiye

Garp Sessions – Intergenerational Cooperations: How to Share and Collaborate Between Independent Cultural Venues

### ↘ Malmö, Sweden

Inkonst / Intonal – Spaces for Emerging Culture

### ↘ Kirkenes, Norway

Insomnia – Cultural Collaborations in times of war and conflict

### ↘ Leeds, UK

Come Play With Me – Parents and Carers in the Music Industry

### ↘ Prishtina, Kosovo

Bijat – Prishtina Nightlife Behind the Scene

## 2023, February

### ↘ Brussels, Belgium

Arty Farty Brussels – Concentration in the Live Music Sector

### ↘ Helsinki, Finland

Pixelache – The Structures We Build: On Models and Practices Towards Sustainability of Independent Artistic Associations

### ↘ Vienna, Austria

Sounds Queer – Trouble in Paradise: The Current Struggles of Vienna's Independent Cultural Scene to Reach New Audiences and the Need for International Collaborations

### ↘ Krakow, Poland

Oramics – New audiences and next generation: How to Draw Them in?

### ↘ Podgorica, Montenegro

Nikola Delibasic – Building Relations between the Independent Scene in Montenegro and European Cooperations

### ↘ Krakow, Poland

Unsound – Sustainability in Organisation of Cultural Events

### ↘ Tbilisi, Georgia

Mutant Radio – The Decentralisation of the Independent Local Cultural Scene

### ↘ Kirkenes, Norway

Insomnia – International Cultural Cooperation in the Barents Region

## 2023, March

### ↘ Tbilisi, Georgia

Mutant Radio – Northern Propaganda, Hybrid War, and a Role of the Independent Platforms in Georgia

### ↘ Brussels, Belgium

Bandswith – Music Streaming: What Are the Prospects in Terms of Revenues and Transparency?

### ↘ Rome, Italy

Terraforma – Current Italian Clubbing Scene

### ↘ Turin, Italy

Terraforma – Independent Media

### ↘ Belgrade, Serbia

Drugstore – Belgrade Scene: Independent Cultural Players on the EU Periphery

### ↘ Vilnius, Lithuania

Palanga Street Radio – Solidarity Action and Support for Ukraine

### ↘ Lisbon, Portugal

Radio Quantica – Portuguese Independent Venues Challenges

### ↘ Tallinn, Estonia

De Structura – How Can Emerging Talents and Artists Be Supported and Nurtured?

### ↘ Leipzig, Germany

Seanaps – Interfaces: About Sustainability

### ↘ Prague, Czech Republic

Ankali – Reaching across the Velvet Rope: The Disparities between Electronic Music Scenes of Eastern and Western Europe

### ↘ London, UK

Sister midnight – Future Proofing London's Grassroots Music Culture: Ideas Towards a Blueprint for Sustainable Music Futures

### ↘ Sofia, Bulgaria

Hip Hip Library – The Culture Scene and the Next Generation

### ↘ Prishtina, Kosovo

Kosovo 2.0 – Tired Tropes and Reductionist Narratives: Kosovo, the Balkans, and the International Media

### ↘ Utrecht, Netherlands

COSMOS/The Guess Who? – How Can We Create a System to Directly Support Local Artists, Local Scenes, and Underrepresented Artists?



## ↘ Brussels, Belgium

Are We Europe – Transmedia Storytelling

## 2023, April

### ↘ Budapest, Hungary

JazzaJ – What Do We Do Well? Why and How Do We Operate? Best Practices by Independent Cultural Actors

### ↘ Naples, Italy

Vinylbox – Generational Gap: Promoter-Clubber

### ↘ Warsaw, Poland

Girls\* to the Front – Change: Towards Accessible and Inclusive Independent Culture

### ↘ Utrecht, Netherlands

COSMOS/The Guess Who? – Decentralised Platforms

### ↘ Pécs, Hungary

Cooperation and Networking Opportunities for Civil and Independent Cultural Organisations in Pécs

## 2023, May

### ↘ Kyiv, Ukraine

De Structura – Empowering Ukrainian Art and Culture: Strengthening Collaboration with Europe

### ↘ Tbilisi, Georgia

Mutant Radio – Importance of The Professional Communities on The Georgian Independent Art Scene

### ↘ Utrecht, Netherlands

COSMOS/The Guess Who? – New Audiences and Next Generations

## 2023, June

### ↘ The Hague, Netherlands

PIP – Solidarity and Hospitality

### ↘ The Hague, Netherlands

PIP – European Cooperation

### ↘ Brussels, Belgium

Bandswith – Sustainability and Ecological Challenges in the Independent Cultural Sector

### ↘ Topolò, Italy

Robida – Situated Publishing: Possibilities and Challenges of Editorial Practices in Post-Rural Contexts

## 2023, August

## ↘ Oslo, Norway

Insomnia – Arabic-Speaking Countries Minority Media, Arts, and Culture in Oslo and Norway

## 2023, September

### ↘ Helsinki, Finland

Pixelache – The Commons: A Sustainable Model for Independent Radio?

### ↘ Paris, France

Réflexivité(s) – Remaining Independent in Today's Photography Sector

### ↘ Lisbon, Portugal

Nêga Filmes – Exploring Lisbon's Independent Cultural Scene

### ↘ Tromsø, Norway

Insomnia – Safer Spaces: In the Currents and Context of Tromsø

## 2023, October

### ↘ Copenhagen, Denmark

Palanga Street Radio – Decentralising Digital Power in Culture: Let's Stop Using MAGMA

### ↘ Heraklion, Greece

Comeet Creative Space – Introduction to Inclusion and Accessibility in Culture

### ↘ Seville, Spain

Sala X – Imbalances in the Musical Representation of Territories between the North and the South of Europe

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