



**Expanding Cultural  
Bonds: Fostering  
Independence  
Through Communities  
and Shared Spaces**



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A Volume from the Reset! Atlas

Far away from restricting considerations and visions, the term of communities is a door to independent cultural expression and sharing. To practise culture, the need for physical, online, and abstract spaces and bubbles is core—without being hermetic of course, but rather to exert one’s freedom to create. That is why independent culture lies on venue’s initiatives, bars, clubs, studios, platforms, genre, and so on. These places are what bind independent cultural players together, and Reset! is both supporting and relying on them to create this feeling of network and connection.

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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

Exploring the evolving concept of communities in the cultural sector and the crucial role played by independent common spaces is at the core of this section —both physical and online, concrete and abstract. From vibrant art districts to virtual platforms, we'll delve into how these hubs foster collaboration and creativity.

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## What Does the Concept of “Community” Mean to You?

### **Johanna Urbančik**

is a journalist based in Berlin. Her work focuses on culture, music, and societal issues and has been published in publications in the likes of *Kaltblut Magazine*, *Refuge Worldwide*, *Happy Mag*, to name a few.

For some, it serves as a welcoming gateway to unfettered creativity and shared adventures and transcends the confines of boundaries and expectations, granting individuals the freedom to liberate themselves from conventional norms. At the core of this creative autonomy lies the imperative need for a multitude of spaces—be they physical, digital, or conceptual—where people can gather to explore, experiment, and exchange their ideas. These spaces function as the life force of independent culture.

But what exactly do we picture when we think of the word? Personally, I picture a dim-lit room with a group of like-minded people mingling and debating. That's only a tiny fraction of the meaning and also only scratches the surface of its importance. Communities play a pivotal role in offering support

and fostering a sense of belonging for each one of us and serves as a remedy to loneliness and isolation. Communities facilitate social interaction, empathy, and a shared sense of identity and purpose. It empowers us to actively contribute to shared missions or goals, fostering a profound sense of meaning and fulfilment in our lives. But is it a correct way of thinking? Can we only connect in a dimly-lit, cosy room?

The answer is yes—and no! In the last couple of years, starting even before the pandemic, our lives have become ever more digital. The concept of “community” has evolved with time and can encompass a range of definitions, including regional and online groups forming around common interests. Nevertheless, authentic community revolves around a shared commitment, sense of duty, and resilience, which seemed to have diminished in contemporary, individualistic societies.

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### **The pandemic and its impacts on community**

During 2020, at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, we were instructed to socially distance to minimise infection and protect each other. This, of course, meant that our lives seemingly only took place online, and the line between work and life got blurrier by the day. Even from this time of loneliness though, unexpected positive outcomes have emerged. Grassroots organisations have emerged, offering a digital space for like-minded people.

# com-

One of these spaces is the Berlin-based independent community radio station, *Refuge Worldwide*. I first heard of the project online, when friends were telling me about this little space that has just opened in Neukölln, Berlin. Since we're past the height of the pandemic and social distancing has become a thing of the past, spaces like *Refuge Worldwide* have turned into hybrid communities. Many people thought radio was a dying medium. They've been proven wrong though, which is a topic also discussed in this volume in an article by Ieva Gudaitytė and Matteo Spanò, who are discussing the rise of small-scale independent radios in the 21st century as a platform for questioning voices in a post-media era.

You can listen to the radio from wherever you are on our planet and join the events, such as the quiz nights, when you're in Berlin. Having worked with the station since February 2022, I've noticed what the differences are when you write an article for a community-based magazine compared to a "standard" one. For these two years, I've interviewed people in war and crisis zones for the station, such as Siranush from Nagorno-Karabakh. After these interviews were published, I was surprised to have received many kind and non-insulting messages and feedback on the article. This helps to understand the importance of independent, grassroots communities in creating collective, kind and respectful spaces. Furthermore, it emphasises the importance of independence. A complicated geopolitical topic like that doesn't generate the same amount of traction as a click-bait-y article. Magazines and organisations that aren't dependent on search engines to generate income have

more freedom to take risks. The community does the rest, in this case, by appreciating and sharing the article. However, even the greatest community isn't spared of capitalism. In this volume, an essay about Editorial, an independent project space in Vilnius, Lithuania, emphasises their experimental, artist-friendly approach while facing funding challenges, as well as uncertainties about sustainability.

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## **How do grassroots organisations and authenticity correlate with community?**

But what additional changes has the pandemic brought upon our approach to community? It seems like there's a bigger focus on originality and authenticity. Within the last couple of years, several mainstream cultural projects have shied away from taking any risks. It might take a little while longer, but there's more appreciation for a project the artists and communities are passionate about. Marwan, an artist-run project space in the very centre of Amsterdam and currently run by Tirza Kater, Tim Mathijssen, and Dieuwertje Hehewerth is the manifestation of this approach. The project has adapted to the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic by shifting towards a more forgiving and reflective approach.

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Essentially, grassroots organisations can be characterised as local, frequently self-organised assemblies of individuals who unite to tackle common concerns, issues, or objectives at the foundational level of society. These communities generally start from the grassroots, with individuals or small groups taking the lead in effecting change or advancing social, political, or environmental initiatives.

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As part of this volume, Emma Warren has looked into a similar project: Manchester's independent magazine *Dance Policy*, which is providing a platform for young photographers and visual artists. The essay touches on the importance of smaller, independent publications disrupting larger ones, supporting independent websites, fostering collaboration to generate authentic content, endorsing positive narratives, and recognising the significance of venues that go beyond conventional club environments. Additionally, she's trying to answer the question if there's an ultimate goal to grassroots organisations and projects.

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## **Where does a community take place?**

Alongside ideas and ideologies, a community needs a space to thrive. Spaces serve as a canvas—both physical and virtual—where communities craft their narratives. Physical spaces, including venues, studios, and clubs, act as platforms for artists to exhibit their talents, whereas virtual realms like online platforms and genres create digital landscapes where ideas and expressions have limitless horizons.

To simplify: A community space gives you the room, equipment and/or digital platform to experiment and work on your artistry alongside like-minded peers.

Conceptual bubbles, in their abstract and digital form, also offer an intellectual backdrop for individuals to delve into unexplored realms of creativity. These spaces serve as the crossroads where communities come together to exchange, learn, and innovate. They represent the vital core of the independent cultural domain, nurturing originality and encouraging cooperation. Spaces provide the fertile soil where creativity, cultural interchange, and boundary-pushing flourish. But does a "space" always need to be a room or a studio?

Inkonst have asked themselves the same question by discussing the historical and political context of Malmö, while highlighting its transformation from an industrial city to a creative and knowledge-based hub.

In a nutshell, this volume aims to look into the relationship between community and space, exploring how they serve as the cornerstone of practices and expressions within the independent culture and media sector in Europe. It seeks to unravel how the synergy between community and space acts as the driving force behind a myriad of creative practices and expressions, breathing life into this vibrant cultural ecosystem. Furthermore, this volume emphasises the importance of independent media and organisations and how they contribute to different communities across Europe.

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# Under their light

This sector showcases a curated collection of articles shining a spotlight on diverse examples of spaces that champion independent culture and community engagement. A spectrum of environments—from grassroots art collectives and alternative music venues to virtual platforms—each serving as a vital space for fostering creativity, collaboration, and cultural diversity. These articles will delve into the inspiring stories behind these spaces, showing their pivotal role in nurturing independent voices, challenging traditional norms, and contributing to the vibrant tapestry of our cultural landscape.

## Physical Spaces

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### Marwan: Slowing Down, Opening Up

#### Deniz Kirkali

is a curator and writer based between Istanbul and London. She has co-founded topsoil, a transnational curatorial and research collective, and Garp Sessions, a summer programme in Babakale, Turkey. She is the co-author of *Otomy*, published in 2022 by Onagore and winner of Volumes Book Award 2022.

*“I was introduced to Marwan during the last quarter of 2020 through “this closure,” an online event I conceptualized with Dieuwertje Hehewerth and organized by poše. It addressed the initial impact of the pandemic on independent art spaces from the Netherlands, France, the UK, Turkey, Mexico and New Zealand, their positioning within the new art world, their coping mechanisms with this global crisis, the possibilities of moving things online and new funding strategies amongst other pressing questions. We met again online after two years and had a conversation on their current programming, how they have adapted to the new conditions of the pandemic and challenges for the independent art scene in Amsterdam.”*

Marwan is an artist-run project space in the very center of Amsterdam and currently run by Tirza Kater, Tim Mathijssen, and Dieuwertje Hehewerth. Their ongoing yearly programming, organized by the three of them, is no longer solely centered around shows but also includes in-between processes. In addition to the regular exhibitions happening throughout the year, they give equal significance to periods of rest between exhibitions where they invite artist Jason Hendrik Hansma to activate the space. Jason takes over during these in-between moments and experiments by making new works that uses elements of his already existing works to make site-specific installations. They also refer to these periods as “anti-exhibition slots.”

They remark that one of the major shifts in their ways of working since we met for this closure the first year of the pandemic is that they are more forgiving towards themselves and they are more caring towards one another. They take their time in developing programmes, value resting rather than being in a constant production mode, and allow space for reflection. Operating with a much looser structure and a slower pace, they are happy to experiment with a more fluid programming as opposed to their former modus operandi where they put on approximately seven shows a year. Thinking back to how during the first lockdowns Marwan has resisted production, this slow pace adopted afterwards seems to



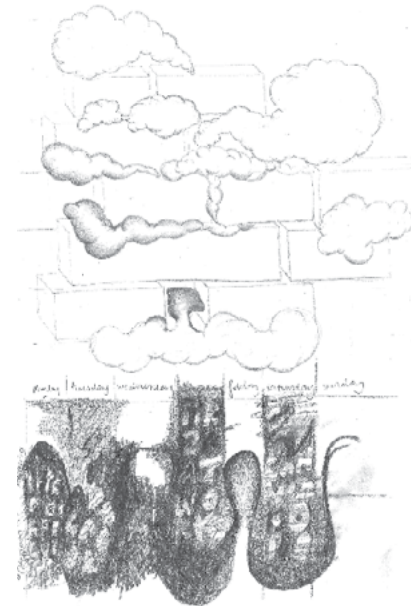
work for them individually as well as for Marwan. They acknowledge that there are outside factors and conditions (like the lingering impacts of the pandemic, other life commitments, and changing social needs) beyond their control that need to be taken into consideration, and have let these conditions determine the urgencies and speed of their curating and Marwan's programming. The past couple of years have been a period of understanding that they don't have to always answer to the demands of the art world and funding bodies, but above all listen to themselves. For this, they have tried to build a programme that takes into account their needs and that works for them, Tirza adds.

The seeds of this current structure which is not a fixed one, were planted when Dieuwertje joined the team at the beginning of the year while she was still living in New Zealand and brought in important questions such as "How to meet from a distance?" and "How to have a more sustainable working relationship?" These challenging questions that are even more relevant amidst a global pandemic have led them to abstract the notion of distance and their current approach is one that attempts to

minimize this distance between the audience and producers or themselves as the team of Marwan, their collaborators, and their community. They have been eager to communicate their new structure, aims, and priorities with the larger public more openly and work in a more dispersed and open manner, through inviting further collaborations as well as building long term intimate relationships with artists that form their community.



In relation to the competitive funding processes in Amsterdam, they say that, for them, it feels perhaps even more competitive than the pre-pandemic times especially for the short-term city funding opportunities. What makes it even more difficult is that artist-run spaces don't always categorically fit into the discrete funding requirements. Additionally, funding bodies tend to perceive initiatives and independent spaces as mini-institutions or steps on the ladder to becoming an institution themselves. "However, we don't want to grow or get bigger, but do this as a practice," Tim says. For now, they sustain Marwan through working in other jobs at the same time and through project funds for individual exhibitions.

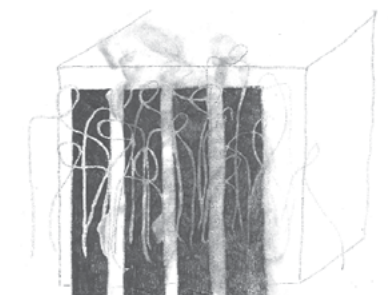


In terms of the challenges of the current contemporary art ecosystem in Amsterdam, its drives and struggles, they mention the scarcity and high prices in real estates which renders independent spaces even more precarious and fleeting. This housing situation seems to be among the biggest challenges artist-run spaces face, perhaps more so than financial ones during the pandemic due to the support they were receiving during the initial lockdowns.

However, as is usually the case, this shared concern leads to solidarity between the existing independent spaces and a more centralized contemporary art world which keeps on working from the existing conditions. In that sense, Marwan is on a more secure side as they have been operating autonomously under the generous wings of AKINCI, in the former storage of the gallery.

It is inspiring to see that the Marwan team is working from their needs, intuitions, rhythms and have not gone back to an over productive mode of working after a dictated pause. They are actively contemplating on what matters to them, how to work with the resources they have, be more inclusive and open to collaboration, and take the time they need for themselves while always transforming and adapting as Marwan. Their emphasis on building sustainable and long term relationships with artists and collaborators, inviting them back for further projects, revisiting their works together in the space, being attentive to their voices in shaping the direction of Marwan shows that they feel the need to operate more collectively and prioritize the community above individual and one-off projects and exhibitions. This is very important for the times that we are living through as well as in terms of the shift towards a more collective ethos in the contemporary art world.

→ Images courtesy of Dieuwertje Hehewerth.





## A New Music Venue, Community Space and Co-operative Model for South London

Sister Midnight, due to open its doors in October 2023, has become Lewisham's first community owned live music venue. When I spoke with Lenny Watson, the co-founder and one of the directors of Sister Midnight, back in March, they were in the process of learning more about cooperatives and new models emerging in the grassroots music scene as well as fundraising for opening up their new venue in Catford, again in South East London.

Sister Midnight was initially



↑ Great Dad playing at the former venue. © Chiara Gambuto

opened in 2018 in what used to be a tiny record shop called Vinyl Deptford where Lenny Watson used to volunteer at. The owner had decided to close down the shop and pass on the lease to a potential operator who wanted to turn the space into a fancy wine and cheese shop. To prevent that from happening, Lenny Watson bought the rights to the lease and ran it as a music venue until the pandemic hit in March 2020. Throughout the pandemic, they received the Culture Recovery Fund which was, in fact, more money than they were ever making. However, following

the initial lockdowns, it was clear that the business wasn't going to be sustainable as the space was tiny—it hosted about 50 people in full capacity—and they could not operate in a profitable way under the pandemic safety regulations. They, then, started looking for a bigger place in South London. After almost buying an empty pub that was on the market for a stumping 3 million pounds, they found a shabby old Working Men's Club which was perfect for them in its messiness.

One needs to look towards a future where access to the arts is in the hands of communities and local actors.

The building needed serious renovations, nonetheless, it was given to them for free by the Lewisham Council for a duration of ten years.

## Genesis of a community venue

The core team of Sister Midnight is composed of Lenny Watson, who is a lecturer and runs her own record label called Fatigue Records, Sophie Farrell, who used to put on DJ nights at the former space of Sister Midnight and joined the team later on, and Lottie Pendlebury, who is a musician playing in a band called



↑ From left to right Lottie Pendlebury, Lenny Watson, Sophie Farrell. © Holly Whitaker

Goat Girl. When they first announced that they were looking into buying a venue on Twitter, it went viral locally and around 850 people replied for consultation and said they wanted to help out. They now work together with a community advisory committee of local volunteers and investors who generously pitched in for the renovation of the new venue. Overall, the cooperative currently has a total of over 800 members. They offer them withdrawable community shares; locals can invest in the venue and get a vote in its operations. Their contributions are being used towards renovation costs and once the business is up and running, the shareholders will be able to get interest payment on their shareholding.

They strongly believe that music venues need to shift more towards being more accessible community hubs fostering solidarity.

## New growing chapter

When asking about the genres they are playing and their audience, Lenny Watson says that at their former space in Deptford, they used to play DIY indie, punk and experimental music for a young creative crowd as well as older locals who had been living in the area all their lives. It has also become a space for neurodiverse and disabled individuals who did not have many places in the neighborhood they could frequent and therefore they spent a lot of time at the record shop and the cafe. With the new location at Catford, they hope to grow their demographics. They plan to reach out to a diverse selection of music genres including—but not limited to—drill, hip hop, experimental free form and jazz as they will have a bigger space and a proper stage and lighting. The new venue will allow them to host larger groups of performers which will also contribute to expanding their existing audience. It is also very crucial for them to ensure the venue is accessible to underprivileged people and communities who can't be among the already existing investors or supporters of Sister Midnight. They are contemplating ways in which more people can be involved with and part of Sister Midnight's co-operative society. It is intriguing how, in a surprising turn of events, the pandemic compelled them to grow and get bigger. Lenny Watson responds by saying they had already had some ideas on how to grow, but before

the pandemic, as they were working other jobs and had not much spare time to dedicate to the venue, the planning could only happen during the global pandemic. The slower pace the pandemic forced on many of us allowed them to imagine and plant the seeds for what Sister Midnight would become. For now, the main goal is to have the space renovated, open to the public and running, however, besides that they are also highly motivated by the political potential of building models that are viable for the future of creative institutions. Being forced to operate under the capitalist regime, always squeezed for profit and often not able to prioritise culture, Lenny Watson

### **From night-time music venue to all-day community space**

There is also a need for questioning and challenging what music venues are to particular communities they engage with. Before the pandemic, they were only open in the evenings and on particular days, however, Lenny Watson asserts that they strongly believe that music venues need to shift more towards being more accessible community hubs fostering solidarity. Thus, the venue space will still largely



↑ The new site in Catford. © Sophie Farrell

argues one needs to look towards a future where access to the arts is in the hands of communities and local actors. It is important and extremely necessary to have alternative business models that aren't merely centred on making profits and are owned and democratically controlled by the local community. Within that effort, they define their core values as accessibility, democratic ownership, fair pay, affordability, sustainability, inclusivity and ethical decision making.

operate in the evenings while also having a community lounge/café where community events, reading groups, workshops will take place throughout the day and which will provide a meeting space for other activist groups allowing them to link up with other local organisations supporting local people. Theirs is a holistic approach to community that wishes to help community wellbeing and is a very promising model that could inspire a lot of new businesses and spaces in London and beyond.

# 3 questions to Sister Midnight

London, United Kingdom

**01.** **Can you introduce your structure to us?**

Sister Midnight is a Community Benefit Society, which is a type of not-for-profit co-operative organisation which is owned and democratically controlled by its members. Anyone can become a member of Sister Midnight by buying a share through our website ([www.sistermidnight.org/invest](http://www.sistermidnight.org/invest)). As a co-op, we operate on the principle of one member, one vote, which is important to us because it means voting power cannot be bought. We currently have 975 members.

**02.** **Why did you join the Reset! network?**

Although cultural actors exist within very different contexts across Europe, our motivations, passions, and challenges are often similar. As a UK organisation we feel isolated from Europe since Brexit, so we are excited to join an initiative where we can be part of a European network of cultural organisations. There are so many methodologies and ideas that I feel we can learn from other Reset! members, and in turn we hope we can contribute our own learnings and ideas to this wonderful community.

**03.** **How important is creating a feeling of community for your activities today?**

Community is the foundation of everything we do! Collaborative, distributive, and connected working is so important to us, and we are always looking for opportunities to apply this way of working at different scales within different communities; our hyper local community, our nation-wide community, and at a global community level. For us, being part of all these communities nurtures us on a human level, it is what makes this work worth doing.



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## An Experimental Space in the Booming Lithuanian Art Scene

Editorial, established in 2016, is a project space from Vilnius, Lithuania for exhibitions, talks, and events. It is founded and run by artist and curator Neringa Černiauskaitė, and editor and curator Vitalija Jasaitė. Their office space (which they share with Artnews.lt, Echogonewromg.com and Artbooks.lt) at Latako str. 3 in the old town of Vilnius used to mainly be a storage space for books before they founded Editorial. However, the 60 square meters space was quite big to be used solely as storage space and they thought they could somehow use it for events and exhibitions. Thus, they reorganised the space so that they can host exhibitions and events. Since both Černiauskaitė and Jasaitė worked as editors, the name Editorial came naturally.

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Bring new ideas to the local art scene.

Editorial started off as a platform for organising exhibitions with artists whose practices they were interested in spanning across various topics, fields, and materials.

At the time, there was a lack of independent, artist-run spaces in Vilnius with experimental character and Editorial was created to bring new ideas to the local art scene. Inviting both Lithuanian and international artists to exhibit their work, Černiauskaitė and Jasaitė prioritised sticking to the experimental character of the space and refrain from too much curatorial interference. Supporting the artists as much as they can or as much as the artists need throughout the process, they give them the freedom to do whatever they wish in the space beyond that. Artists would go to them with ideas and then once decided on the main structure, they would have total freedom to implement it in the unorthodox space. In most cases, the works would be new productions and they would show artists who needed exposure, who had a project in mind, but no space to execute it or artists from whom they would like to see new works.



↑ Doppelgänger, Goda Palekaitė, Jonas Palekas, Editorial, 2019.  
© Laurynas Skeisgiela

Shapeshifting according to the needs and requirements of its community in order to fully enable their artistic processes.

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# space

The community is quite integral to how Editorial operates as it is one of the reasons Černiauskaitė and Jasaitė started it in the first place. They organise a celebratory annual show with the editions or small works from their artists and once the works are sold, the artists decide what percentage of the profit they would donate to Editorial. This is how the community supports the space as much as they wish. All the profit from the sales is used to support the space and the production of new exhibitions. For Editorial, it is critical to offer artist fees while trying to cover the production costs with the limited budget they have. As independent spaces are compelled to experiment with different financial models and always seek out alternative ways to support their community, Editorial is also quite flexible in terms of their financial efforts. Their financial model is one that is not fixed just like their definition.

Never losing their experimental nature, they are open to call themselves a gallery, an artist-run space, or a project space. The main funding, though, comes from the Lithuanian Council for Culture and the Vilnius City Municipality. They run on public money which is very common for art spaces in Lithuania as well as at times for commercial galleries willing to participate in art fairs. In Lithuania, individuals and institutions can apply for funding for projects as well as mobility funds, so it is feasible to get support from public money while being an independent space. However, this does not mean they don't have concerns of sustainability as it is rather uncertain whether they will be able to receive the funding every year or how much it will be.

The uncertainty and the long processes make it difficult for them to plan in advance and cause a limitation to their programming. Both Černiauskaitė and Jasaitė have other jobs and projects, and therefore can't dedicate all of their time to the project space unlike a commercial gallery does. Jasaitė states that they think of Editorial as a project of passion and if it is to bring more headache than joy, they would stop doing it. She works three jobs which gives her a sense of financial security and allows her to have the freedom and flexibility to do what she wants and how much she wants with the space. Indeed, financial security and sustainability through the space would help, but it would also come with more rules. Therefore, so far it is a personal decision that seems to be working for them.



↑ Liudmila (Miša Skalskis, Milda Januševičiūtė) Karmagedon, Editorial 2023. © Editorial

Editorial was closed during the pandemic and then slowly opened for small groups. Yet, it brought up new interesting dynamics and questions such as how to accommodate different opinions regarding vaccination and its regulation. It is crucial to be in dialogue with the existing conditions, crises and emergencies, especially for small independent spaces that work closely with their communities and have a responsibility to them, while having more freedom in terms of what kind of content they want to produce. For example, in response to the ongoing Russian-led war in Ukraine and given Lithuania's proximity to the conflict zones, Editorial has donated parts of its profit to Ukrainian organisations and has held several exhibitions dealing with the Russian invasion. They have found ways to address and work through the multiple ongoing crises in different ways while operating according to their curatorial agendas.

Smaller independent art spaces in Lithuania are receiving great visibility as, for example, The Contemporary Art Center in Vilnius has been closed for some time for renovations and as Lithuania, and especially Vilnius got under a spotlight due to the Lithuanian Pavilion winning the Golden Lion in the 58th Venice Biennale. The same goes for some other Baltic countries. When I ask Jasaitė about the booming independent art scene in Lithuania, she responds by saying in Vilnius there are a lot of independent spaces like the rest of the country and some other Baltic countries. "As most Soviet countries don't have strong art markets; public funding is quite strong and independent initiatives can survive," she adds. Underlining the

Both Černiauskaitė and Jasaitė find it exciting to work with many artists, see how they develop their works, and especially installing with the artists. Giving them the absolute freedom is central to how they operate which distinguishes them from many larger art centers where there are complex dynamics and rules. They, on the other hand, want to make the process as easy and enjoyable as possible for all parties. Their joy clearly passes onto the audience as their shows are well attended and received, as well as a stepping stone for many artists who then get invited to large scale exhibitions both in Lithuania and abroad. It is also encouraging to hear that they have never had any negative experience as a result of this absolute freedom they give to the artists. Editorial has hosted diverse range of exhibitions and events that have really transformed the space according to the timeline and the usage. The venue of Editorial is a complicated one with low ceilings, office furniture, and setup. It would not make sense to pretend that it is not an office, but

## Importance of having international exchange.

artists work around it in innovative ways and most of the time completely change the atmosphere of the space. They are flexible about how the space can be used, or how it can serve artists before or between exhibitions. Jasaitė adds that if there is a time gap between two programming, artists are also invited to use the space as their studio. In that sense, Editorial shapeshifts according to the needs and requirements of its community in order to fully enable their artistic processes.



↑ Anni Puolakka, Feed. Editorial. Ugnius Gelguda

importance of having international exchange, Jasaitė concludes by saying that the intergenerational contemporary art scene in Lithuania is a pretty strong one that draws international attention while opening up more and more to the rest of the world.

INDEPENDENT  
COMMUNITY  
RADIO  
NETWORK

**icrn**

The Independent Community Radio Network (ICRN), founded in 2022, was initially a collaboration between three community radio stations who came together for renewed perspectives on the future of their field, with the understanding that collective action is the answer to overcoming common challenges. Since discovering the ripple effect of their meetings, ICRN has become a foundation of support that aims to break competitiveness and develop a continuous knowledge distribution for the growing field of community radio. It is not only keeping its members up to date about (for example) technological developments and organisational structures, but also opens slots of airtime for each other to amplify their voices trans-locally through co-broadcasting initiatives.

Community radio focuses on local quality relationships, its identity is not fixed and maintains a fluidity between listeners and makers. Forever evolving and experimenting with what radio can be, these stations offer open access for anyone who has an idea or something to say. ICRN currently exists as *Palanga Street Radio* (LT), *Tīrkultūra* (LV), *IDA Radio* (FI), *Cashmere Radio* (DE), *radiOrakel* (NO), *Lahmacun Radio* (HU), *Seydisfjörður Community Radio* (IS), and *The Lake Radio* (DK), and has collaborated with many independent media actors across Europe, in order to connect and support like-minded community radios with the shared goal of establishing a more sustainable and long-term future for the field.

# Medium

## Tuning into Questioning Voices: Independent Radio as a Minor Media Practice

*"In the 21st-century radio as we have known it may disappear altogether...or, as an obsolete technology relegated to the subculture fringes, it may exist only in pirate form, a weapon of the world's underclasses; a tool for artists, revolutionaries, shamans, and other questioning voices in our brave new tech world."*

Jacki Apple,  
*New American Radio and Radio Art*

Here we are, in the 21st century, observing the small-scale independent radios springing up internationally to offer us a way to make sense of our sounding world through media today. The need to gather together in small-scale nooks and fringes of mass media to listen as a conscious citizen remains important—to mobilise across the translocal, rather than universally global; to share time and space with activist urgency yet with sustainable care. In this article, we try to outline the way this gathering is attempted: neither by revolutionaries nor shamans, but by questioning voices.

### Ieva Gudaitytė

researches, writes, and hosts occasional radio shows on various independent community radio stations. She is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Oslo with a focus on Ukrainian independent radio and music scene and its Eastern European networks.

### Matteo Spanò

is a researcher and radio producer. His work focuses on experimental radio practice, visual and sound poetry, and the intersection between media culture and radical politics. He is co-founder of *Cashmere Radio*. He is currently a PhD student at the UdK - Sound Studies with a research project on *Radio Alice* and free radio culture.

## Subversions of the post-media era

In the later years of his life, psychoanalyst and philosopher Félix Guattari repeatedly referred to a socio-historical transition of exceptional proportions: the coming of the 'post-media era'. Guattari provided an ambiguous sketch of this concept, from which we can nonetheless draw out its key features: first of all, post-media can be understood as post-mass-media,

i.e. a condition in which the capillary diffusion and miniaturisation of communication technologies have ousted mass media from their technological supremacy and, more importantly, from their cultural hegemony. The distinction between different types of media would be overcome, as traditional media were reconfiguring themselves into a new transmedial format that would fit the needs of the network society (Guattari had foreshadowed the Internet revolution through the French experiment of the Minitel network, commercially introduced in 1982). Finally, the modality of media use and consumption in the 'post-media era' would change: from a strictly hierarchical/vertical mode (producer/transmitter to consumer/receiver) to an osmotic/rhizomatic one.

Examples of this change had been emerging roughly since the completed transition to post-Fordism in the late 1970s: one case that had particularly concerned Guattari was the experience of free radio in Italy and France. Taking an active part in the experiences first of *Radio Alice* and later of *Radio Tomate*, Guattari had observed an alternative use of the radio medium, a use that subverted both its technical characteristics and its political implications; a use that effectively shuffled the existing hierarchies within the medium. In free radio, the transmitter/receiver dynamic was subverted, i.e. diffused: by unfiltered phone-ins on the radio, and by physical participation in the broadcasts from its open studio, everyone could be simultaneously a producer and consumer of media, and perform both roles within the radio channel understood not as a top-down communication process but as an emergent performative situation. In the case of independent community radio, the user entering into a dual role of production and consumption is often the necessary condition for the existence of the medium itself, understood as a common resource to be shared and preserved collectively.

## **Minor turn, major implications**

Today, however, it appears that the post-media transition optimistically envisioned by Guattari has taken a different turn, one that has brought social media to predominance. Tools for media production and consumption are easily and readily at hand for us at all times: we literally carry them in our pockets. Yet, our mode of presence within social media doesn't quite look like the collective liberation that the network society was supposed to bring about. Our social media avatars do not emancipate us from determined identities and societal



↑ @leva Černiauskaitė

roles, but cast us back into them. We find ourselves disarticulated from the mass (without ever activating the possibility of *reaching critical mass*) but think, act and feel as part of a bigger organism with its own consciousness: the swarm (Berardi 2014, 165 ff.). We inhabit social media environments as if they were spaces of self-enfranchisement, while we become more entangled in the meshes of swarm personality and fail to recognize that these environments represent the most

advanced systems of control by capitalist hegemony. But capital's resilience depends on its ability to harness our collective imagination, reconfiguring its use to update and enhance the existing mediascape, thereby guaranteeing its endurance.

What happens, then, if our imagination is oriented not towards the new but the old, towards recuperating mechanisms that no longer serve the logic of control and power preservation, but can instead prove useful to trace the lines of flight outside of the swarm mind and towards an "ethical community of singularities" (Agamben 2021, 18) and a multitude of sense-makings? In order to follow this path, we attempt to sketch a different kind

The medium itself  
is understood as  
a common resource  
to be shared  
and preserved  
collectively.

of media, one that stands at the antipodes of social media but - in a similar, and to some extent, specular way to social media - emerges out of the post-media transition. Such is *minor media* (Broeckmann, 1999), i.e. media that employ the strategy of "becoming-minor", as initially outlined by Deleuze and Guattari (1986, 16 ff.), to "proliferate [...] to amplify, to recompose something that is no longer a totality, but that makes a former totality shift, de-totalises, de-territorialises an entity" (Guattari, 1995). In particular, we focus on independent radio as an example of minor media, one whose specific traits reside in the way it combines active listening practices with the ability to imagine community; we argue that this particular combination is an essential step towards the actual construction of community.

## **Minor public: communicating the common feeling**

Guattari's concepts exhibit themselves in ways comparable to counter-cultural or subcultural scenes; that is, by reclaiming social and cultural capital through the use of symbols and references outside the hegemonic discourse. This can be seen as one of the common resources that creates a new cultural imagination and a sense of personal belonging, acting both as a "destabilising agent" and a minor knowledge production mechanism. For independent radio, it is in the general tone of the broadcasts: playful subversion of traditional broadcasting roles, mutation and juxtaposition of radio formats, use of irony, nonsense, rambling, local accents and dialects to perform linguistic experiments outside classic, conservative, heteronormative radio speech. This future highlights the two elements of minor media performing to the minor public: subversion through a plurality (or anti-order), and a bottom-up way to form a mutual understanding within a collective (alternative knowledge). This poses a threat of creating an exclusive audience by "preaching to the converted", which, in this case, are predominantly young, often university educated, urban international demographics with preexisting interest in alternative music cultures. At the same time, rather than being merely a stylistic strategy, it is also a way to practise left-leaning politics through references that rely on shared ideological stands (climate activism, feminism, anti-racism, etc.). While the idea of a cultural and activist crossover is not surprising, the move from a universal appeal to a more minor one is characteristic of independent radio. To create an attentive conversation alternative to the mass-produced culture, a sense of a common knowledge system—linguistic and symbolic—is first needed.

Communication, however, is not a simple tool; and listening to internally understood independent radio is not enough to articulate an alternative to mass culture. What challenges the hegemony is not only the socio-linguistic tools minor media employ to first form a minor public, but how these tools use emotion to diversify the conversation. If communal and small-scale radio activity keeps on reminding us of “the idea of listening as a public act, and the consequences that had for what it means to be a member of the public” (Lacey, 2013, 15), then the kind of public it forms also implies a broader world-making. Even if based on a reclaimed and internally shared set of meaning signifiers, radio is still a public or rather shared way of exchanging information (knowledge). Radio producers imagine their listeners and vice versa, making the content in between—whether within the show or the webchat—act as a certain local forum where a common status quo is discussed. In this world, emotion carries cultural and political connotations that Judith Butler has argued are performed through the use of language; historically a threat to logic (Butler, 1997). Hence, not only understanding each other but feeling together becomes a common resource shared through the radio. It becomes a subversive act against the seriousness of power: whether through fun, anger, or sorrow, emotion brings radio listeners and hosts together in a rhizomatic, fluid affective relationship to the world that Guattari has proposed.

# radio

## Figuring out together, in the studio

In these processes, elements that create minor media and its minor audiences—shared understanding and emotion through listening—become steps to actually construct a media practice together through independent radio. What grounds them is a studio: a physical place that allows people to meet up, share their ideas and exhibit visions of socio-cultural life; a metaphoric yet real forum that translates to a more ambiguous sonic one through the broadcast. Common space blurs the line between the listener and the producer, removing the level of mediation that *media* by definition creates and offering an imagined belonging to the imperfect, yet real soundscape of the local radio station. It makes it less an intellectual, and much more a practical endeavour: through defining “local” not in the notions of national or ethnic borders, but in the lived ‘here’ and ‘now’; through the shared labour and responsibility of maintaining a place; through an inevitable compromise of collective management. Initially outlined concepts of pluralism, interdisciplinarity and de-totalisation are thus lived in an independent radio studio by working, arguing, and having fun on the air but also in a place.

Quoting Bickford, “listening is a constitutive element in the



† © Ieva Černiauskaitė

process of figuring out, in the face of conflict, what to do” (Bickford, 1996). While in a much less explicitly political context, this is what minor media can offer: a passionate conversation around a common vision of a small media culture world-making. *A municipality*, which, from the Latin *munia* (duties) and *capere* (to assume), well embodies the characteristics of this kind of medium and of its user. To assume duties of care and preservation of the medium is the smallest common denominator for a community that emerges around the medium’s own resources. At the same time, on a translocal level, (radio) municipalities become symbols and vehicles of a collective use-value movement that finds a myriad of different implementations and interpretations across the network society in its entirety. Finally, radio municipalities are there to be enjoyed—and maybe cause a little chaos.

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# Genre

## Organising Forces in the Hungarian Improvised Music Scene



↑ Auróra, 2015. © Dávid Tamás Pap

### Péter Ajtai / Band leaders and collectives – circles of positive and negative liberty

The roots of the independent Hungarian improvised music scene can be originated in the work of György Szabados in the 1960s. The “Szabados-circle” meant such a community of musicians and listeners where Szabados’ music and intellectuality served as the connective link. Szabados created a musical world similar to Ornette Coleman’s – without knowing his work. Affected by Béla Bartók and Afro-American jazz, he blended folk music and avantgarde in his art. Szabados’ early works can easily be considered as free jazz, although his later pieces show an influence of contemporary classical music.

#### **Péter Ajtai**

bassist, a well-known figure in the radical free jazz scene, leader of several music groups.

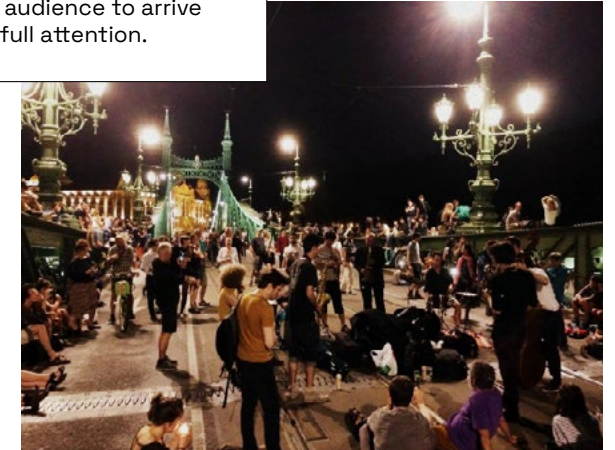
#### **Ernő Zoltán Rubik**

composer, pianist, one of the founders of JazzaJ, a series organising creative music concerts and workshops since 2011 – from 2016, as an association.

#### **Márk Gasner**

drummer, organiser of the end-of-the-year Avant-garde jazz festival and Kék Ló, a venue that started off as an upcycling fashion store to become the main meeting point of the younger generation in the creative music scene.

When do we start? In five minutes. Starting an improvised concert is like giving birth. It cannot be accelerated, its right time comes all at once. The space defines the positions of the musicians in itself. The seven performers have already spent two hours at the venue that was once a private flat, now a sort of communal space mainly used for workshops. We wait a bit more for the audience to arrive and be present with their full attention.



↑ Liberty Bridge, 2016. © Tamás György

Several creative musicians teach in schools where their expertise can act as a community building force.

When defining what is meant by improvised music, we face difficulties even in the case of a single artist. We certainly do not have the opportunity to elaborate the problems of definition here, let us settle for labelling all sorts of contemporary improvisational music collectively as creative music. We will proceed by taking a look at how creative music formations are structured in the Budapest scene. There are two typical ways of forming a group in the Budapest creative music scene that can be analysed along Isaiah Berlin’s concepts of positive and negative liberty. The former aims to take over all music-related decisions, while the latter aims to restrict power as

such. In the first case, a group is formed around a charismatic band leader who makes the decisions on his own—and thus, can be considered as an embodiment of positive liberty—such as the formations of György Szabados, Mihály Dresch, István Grensó, Tamás Geröly, or István Baló. From the 2010s or so, the new generation of creative music groups take up a different structure—they typically exist as collectives. It could also be stated that they are formed along the idea of negative liberty. Such collectives are A.M.P, Dzsindzsa, Less is More, The Best Bad Trip, or BIO. These groups can also have a band leader—but instead of the individual, it is the collective itself that is in focus. Both music groups and collectives work basically independently, but they can also have connections to institutions. Several creative musicians teach in schools where their expertise can act as a community building force—these institutions are typically the Bartók Conservatory, the Bartók-Pikéthy conservatory in Vác and the Ferenc Liszt Academy of Music. Hence, it often brings about a



paradoxical situation in which creative musicians who form their very own musical expression against institutionalisation find their homes inside an institution. Beyond schools, another important meeting point for artists are creative music concert series, where the doors are open for those without an institutional background and arriving from the peripheries of music.



↑ Auróra, 2017. Péter Ajtai at the centre, on doublebass. © Attila Károly Nagy

I push the REC button on the recorder and on my mobile on the tripod. An audience of 30 is watching six string players and a drummer. Bogi Szűcs, a classical violist, has been an active part of the scene in the last few months. In contemporary classical music she missed the freedom and the kind of creative attention that is the very basis of improvised concerts. Rieko Okuda also has a viola in her hands, but she plays in a totally different way. She is self-taught and plays the viola only in a free improvisational context; she is originally a pianist.

## Ernő Zoltán Rubik / Community and attention

JazzaJ series was born out of passion for improvised music and communal thinking back in 2011. It started off as a weekly club with always something unpredictable happening. Through ideas that were new and bold at the time—such as mixing electronics with free jazz or folk music with noise—, we successfully brought together in the intimate space of improvisation not only musicians with differing backgrounds, but also their fragmented audiences. In just a few months, we managed to appear on the radar of the international improvising community and were contacted by more and more foreign musicians searching for an

opportunity to perform. Thanks to a downtown venue called Mika Tivadar Mulató, we also had the opportunity to organise a complete three-day festival at the end of our first year with internationally recognised artists such as Eddie Prévošt. Roughly every three years new venues hosted the series, which were further expanded by extra events and workshops. Our enthusiasm was shared by more and more people. It was a particularly important moment in broadening our audience when in 2015 we moved to Auróra, a freshly-opened, civil, independent community space in the 8th district. We inherited the idea of volunteership from them and were amazed to realise that JazzaJ is not only important to us, founders. Others began to be engaged in organising events and other important background activities in their spare time on a volunteering basis. In 2016, Trafó House of Contemporary Arts—a venue well-known in the European

contemporary art world and considered a top institution in Budapest—hosted JazzaJ's fifth birthday event to which the aforementioned Eddie Prévošt returned with his legendary formation, AMM. Due to the possibilities of our host, we had the budget to try our well-working curating practice on an international level: Andreas Backer, a vocalist from Norway, performed with acclaimed artists of the Hungarian scene selected specifically for this ad hoc ensemble.

From then on, more and more Hungarian festivals and organisations invited us to work with them as curators, to take this kind of music to different contexts. This was the point where it became untenable to proceed without an official form—we lacked a bank account to receive donations while we were also unable to create invoices when working on request. In 2016, we founded our own independent base, JazzaJ Improvised Music Association. The budget of an ordinary JazzaJ-event is provided by ticket revenues alone. The design and printing costs of the monthly programme are partially covered by association membership fees or savings from our on-request projects with a larger budget. If an event e.g. has 20-25 paying guests including online ticket sale, after deducting the 20% due to the venue, the royalties paid to the musicians can only be minimal, rather symbolic.



↑ Ernő Zoltán Rubi

We organisers feel a bit ashamed about this and often supplement it from the (also minimal) leftovers of the previous concert, but most musicians do not even expect more. Most of them have such a musical project or job that enables—beyond personal relationships—creative fulfilment and the attention of an appreciative audience become the primary motivating factors for them.

Rieko lives in Berlin with her partner, Antti Virtaranta who is a bassist. It's not their first time in Budapest, they are good friends with Ernő Hock who is one of the most diverse and sought-after bassist in the city but now—leaning against his double bass—he is silently listening and swishes his bow while Albert Márkos plays squeaking harmonics on his cello. Berci was among the first ones to play non-idiomatic improvised music in Budapest, he already played in the Szünetjel festival in the 90s. A tram is passing by under our window, when Attila Gyárfás, a jazz drummer, calls a deep, roaring sound from his bass drum. Attila is the curator for December 2022 in JazzaJ's new series focusing on young improvisers, ZZZ.

## Márk Gasner / A uniquely honest place

Between 2000 and 2010, the hospitality and cultural scene in Budapest have gone through many changes that significantly influenced the emergence of creative music: for instance, the introduction of more severe security measures due to the tragic events happening in West Balkán, an important club in the 2000s; the bankruptcy of the Hajógyári Island in the outskirts of Budapest and the fall of its club empire; or the ruin pub trend thriving on a European level. Trends and demands rapidly shifted from the larger units typically found in brownfields to smaller-scale downtown clubs.

An old moustached gentleman is checking if his recorder is working correctly. He is a regular in our audience, interested in creative music for more than 30 years, he records every concert he attends. A young girl is listening with her eyes closed, his boyfriend is reaching for his beer. The eyes of a musician and a dancer in the audience meet after an unexpected sound. A thin tune can still be heard, but it is not clear if we hear the cymbal or Ádám Jávorka's viola.

# cre-

Kék Ló opened its doors in 2010 on Kazinczy street in the 7th district, which became an intersection of the Budapest nightlife in a few years. It can only be attributed to luck that our otherwise economically unfavourable business model proved to be successful: in Kék Ló, we deemed honest aspirations and the uniquely clumsy, friendly atmosphere valuable rather than being profit-oriented. Not too many places dared to take this risk at the time, so we quickly became popular in independent, underground circles—that naturally served as home for independent creative music.

Our area has become overly popular in time though that implied the introduction of further restrictions. For example, a regulation in 2012 that prohibited smoking inside clubs has driven people to the streets which led to an increased number of complaints from the neighbourhood. Over the years, the 6th and 7th districts have become a mainstream party district and the tension between those who wanted to have fun, the clubs, and the residents

were continuously growing. The needs of the underground scene and the spirit of Kék Ló were drawn towards the 8th district nearby. Around 2013-2015, the “8th is the new 7th” narrative appeared. By the time we moved Kék Ló to the 8th in 2015, several underground units existed in the district (including Auróra that hosted the JazzaJ series at the time).

on the other hand, it also made it impossible for future competition to appear which was a huge advantage on our side due to the small size of the underground scene in the capital. In addition, the clubs on the periphery did not represent serious competition either, as over the years people have become comfortable with the fact that they do not have to leave the city centre

# atives



↑ Kék Ló, 2019. Márk Gasner sitting in the centre. © Máté Miklósfalvi



↑ Kék Ló, 2018. © Miklós Déri

Among other factors, it was this migration of the venues that provoked a regulation from the district authorities that forced all bars without special night permission to close at 10pm. On the one hand, this regulation definitely made the operation of independent cultural venues more difficult—as the majority of their income is generated after midnight which makes them able to maintain cultural programs that otherwise were not financially feasible—,

if they are looking for a party. Thus, the almost unprofitable operating approach of Kék Ló—which puts profit in the background—and its activity of organising creative programs could become successful. Between 2017 and 2019, with many concerts and other programs, we were considered an important meeting point for the younger generation of the creative music scene as a uniquely honest place. The club probably had its best period when the local authorities suddenly terminated our lease contract following residential complaints. In the end, our



↑ Kék Ló, 2018

operation was also made impossible by the problems that accumulated around the party district—and even to this day, there are hardly any underground venues in the city centre that can accommodate experimental music events. As long as the operating conditions are so inhospitable, it would take a lot of luck for us to successfully reopen. In the meantime, due to the global crisis, energy prices are also running higher. In order for the business situation to normalise and the balance of economic power to equalise, the immediate reduction of applying taxes and rents is inevitable. In Hungary, there is still no trace of the regulation already established in several western countries, which would impose higher taxes on vacant business premises than on the ones that are in use—even if it reduced rental prices as a result. It would also significantly reduce the operating costs of concert venues if the local royalty management association (Artisjus) set fairer payment obligations for the usage of background music and live music events.

After the concert we announce the next episode of Gyárfás's curator month, several purchase his new self-released LP. There are still a few posters left, we are trying to encourage the people leaving to engage in voluntarily poster-sticking. Some of them take a few and place them in cafes, pubs, or independent cultural spaces. The musicians are satisfied, other than the fact that someone has to give an invoice for the online tickets, which due to the transformation of KATA (a favourable type of tax in Hungary until its abolition last summer) entails higher costs than before, and many are also no longer able to create invoices since. Chatting, hugging, saying goodbye. Everyone moves on. The foreign musicians stay at our place.

The text in italic is a description of a real ZZZ event organised by JazzaJ in December, 2022.

Edited by Nóra Balkányi  
Translation by Máté Tóth  
This piece was supported by KultDesk Foundation.

# 3 questions to Are We Europe

Amsterdam,  
The Netherlands

## 01. Can you introduce your structure to us?

Are We Europe (AWE) is a non-profit media collective that exists of a foundation that runs multiple cross-border European projects, a media arm that produces border-breaking stories and cross-border productions; and a creative agency, Awe Studio (Are We Europe Studio), which is doing creative productions for mission-driven clients all over Europe. We have teams in Brussels and Amsterdam, but are mainly found doing workshops and projects and story productions all over the continent.

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

We felt that there was a need to connect media and cultural players, and instantly felt like this was a network that could facilitate that. We've been long-term partners with Arty Farty and we didn't have to think twice to join. Our founder, Mick ter Reehorst, was also in the first Executive Committee which helped to shape the network.

## 03. How important is creating a feeling of community for your activities today?

It is the core of what we do. Really. We are, first and foremost, a community (collective) of creative freelancers from all over Europe. Our collective exists of over 750 people we've partnered and collaborated a lot with over the past years. Plus; our partners are our community! One of our projects, The Circle (Arty Farty is also a partner) also sets up local media communities in 8 cities all over Europe. You could honestly say that building communities is central to every project we undertake at AWE.

are *We* europe

# Online Platforms

## A Platform for Resistance: Why Independence Is Key for a Thriving Online Community

The public sphere, an idea conceptualised by German philosopher Jurgen Habermas, is where individuals can come together to discuss and debate problems impacting society and eventually form public opinion, with a view to influence political action.

The internet as a public sphere has been around as a concept since the 1990s, but so far, majority of the media and platforms that were meant to foster debate, have become breeding grounds for extremist views and anonymised attacks on people who have the courage to actually express their opinions.

Mainstream media channels and popular social media platforms have failed to create common spaces rooted in independence, as they have been driven mainly by commercial interests rather than a desire to bolster communities.

Not only have these platforms and media channels inadvertently been used to curb rational discourse and stunt communities, there have been cases where they were actively used to manipulate people's thoughts and actions. The Facebook-

### Selin Bucak

is a Turkish freelance journalist, currently based in Paris. She is a contributor to feminist media platform *Lazy Women* and has previously written for a variety of publications including *The Financial Times*, *Sifted*, *Citywire* and *Reuters*. She runs a weekly newsletter for women who want to know more about finance and economics called *The Rebalancing Act*. Her first book, *The Last Day Before Exile*, featuring interviews with people living in exile, is out November 2023.

Cambridge Analytica scandal, where the personal data of millions of people were collected without their consent to then be used for political advertising, shows us the pitfalls of online social platforms, claiming to bring together communities. But that is exactly why there is an urgent need for independent online platforms that can be common spaces for communities to come together.

# chan-

## Diversity of thought

One example of this is *Lazy Women*. A feminist media platform, born out of a desire to change the narrative around womanhood and productivity and create an open space for anyone to speak their truth, without fear of backlash.

Although there are many cases of misuse, the internet as a tool for building a community is incredibly useful. It can connect those from faraway places, and allow people to interact with those they never would have before.

All of *Lazy Women's* volunteers come from different backgrounds, lived experiences and cultures, with people from Hungary, Turkey, the UK, Kazakhstan, and Czech Republic. This diversity is one of the benefits of moving beyond physical spaces to online platforms to build communities.

*Lazy Women* also offers people a platform to be free in their creativity, allowing contributors to experiment with different formats to find out what works for them, without the fear of failure. In addition, people are encouraged to get involved, no matter where they are in their journey of discovering feminism. *Lazy Women's* feminism is about embracing who you are, as you are. It is rooted in the idea that many people go through similar experiences, regardless of where they come from. And for a lot of women, who volunteer at *Lazy Women*, it is difficult to find physical spaces to express themselves, as they come from countries that curb free speech and oppress women.

Being online has allowed people who might have had their voices shut out from mainstream conversations have a platform to share their thoughts.

## Creating physical spaces

However, despite all the benefits of online platforms like *Lazy Women*, creating an opportunity for communities to come together and create a new public sphere, there are also significant challenges.

For some, the move away from physical gatherings, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic-era lockdowns, can create a feeling of disconnect and loneliness. It is important for online platforms to regularly reach out to their members and give them the opportunity to actively participate in discussions, instead of allowing them to stay as quiet bystanders.

*Lazy Women* has overcome this challenge by organising monthly meetups in different cities, bringing together its members in a physical setting. In addition, it holds online meetings, where members can ask questions and join in a discussion. The collaborative nature of the content creation on the platform also ensures that no one works in a bubble on their own. Writers interact with editors and designers to create a final holistic piece, exploring topics ranging from abortion rights and dealing with loss to musical releases and cultural critiques of films like *Barbie*.

# nels

The other big problem of online platforms is they are vulnerable to attacks from anywhere in the world. Trolls that can hide behind usernames and disrupt communities. Content creators, particularly female, have increasingly received online abuse. But community-driven online platforms can provide a support system for its members in the face of such abuse.

## No strings attached

These independent online platforms, like *Lazy Women*, can be a form of resistance against private interests and abuse that have taken up most of the space online. At a time when physical gatherings are increasingly curtailed across the

world, including countries like the UK, where a new Public Order Bill has made it more difficult for people to gather in peaceful protest, online communities are becoming much more important as spaces for free expression and to foster cultural creativity.

But the key concept here is independence. Independence from advertising and public relations, which can influence content. Independence from billionaires that have powerful business interests and independence from political actors looking to fuel their re-election campaigns. Independence is difficult to obtain, but not impossible. By refusing funding that comes with strings attached, or advertising that requires the use of individuals' information without their consent, online platforms like *Lazy Women* can create safer spaces for communities to thrive online, and meet offline.



↑ *Lazy Women* at Budapest Pride 2023. © Kinga Gárdonyi

It is important for online platforms to regularly reach out to their members and give them the opportunity to actively participate in discussions, instead of allowing them to stay as quiet bystanders.

# 3 questions to Vinyl Box

Naples, Italy

## 01. Can you introduce your structure to us?

Vinyl Box is an artistic collective born in 2018, with the purpose of enhancing and promoting musical exploration. The name was chosen not only to reflect our inclination toward analog medias, but also because the project is a container for people with diverse musical backgrounds and life experiences. We are not all DJs, but we are all clubbers, and people who do not play music take care of other aspects of the party that we value just as much as the music we like. Currently, the collective consists of a dozen members and various satellite figures who assist us in areas where we lack expertise. As a collective, our group has no bosses, but many leaders. We discuss themes horizontally, and any member who want

to take on a task is invited to do so. Decisions are only made when a majority of members agree on something, although we constantly strive to be open to other points of view.

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

The reason for the creation of our collective, club, and festival is the same reason we joined Reset!: to establish a familiar dimension in which people with similar musical and life perspectives may share time and space.

## 03. How important is creating a feeling of community for your activities today?

As previously stated, this is the core essence of our collective being. Whether it is between

us or towards others, we always attempt to create moments that are easily joinable and delightful. Whether it is a time of work or play, the enchantment is always present, especially because these two moments frequently shift like a blurry image. Our friends and followers have always been willing to help us, even if it meant sacrificing hours of sleep and sorrow. They've always been there for us, even throughout our darkest parenthesis. That is why we always strive to provide them with the finest possible experience. Our collective now includes individuals from all around Europe, and nothing except a sense of belonging keeps us together.



VINYL BOX

# Under their words

This section is a dedicated exploration of the dynamic voices behind the scenes of independent community-oriented cultural players—those architects of spaces and platforms that serve as fertile soil for collective thought and creation. From innovative curators to pioneering creators, these interviews unveil the passion, challenges, and inspirations that drive these cultural organisations.

## Platforms



*This grassroots, Manchester-based magazine is dedicated to youth culture – specifically nightclubs, music, and community. It also provides a platform for young photographers and visual artists. Reset! caught up with by 24-year-old, mostly-anonymous editor Zak.*

**With Zak Hardy,  
from Dance Policy  
(Manchester, UK)**

**Why did you start Dance Policy as an independent, grassroots collective?**

I started it because the ladder is broken. Since the internet, a thousand new ladders have appeared—but they're all broken. I'm sick of writing for someone else, waiting for permission for someone else to let me write, let me think, or to let me create. In 2020 I was bored, so I created the magazine. It's essentially me doing what I want.

**Why do we need magazines and zines run by people who are part of the culture?**

A big publication will never let you know what's at the forefront. They'll cover people that have already been in magazines like ours. We can see talent that they can't. I think we need to break down bigger publications. We need to champion independent sites, zines, publications in different parts of the country, collaborating, working together will create far more elevating content than any of the big publications. I'm considered too small to work with—but I know [bigger publications] are watching me. We lead the culture and the others follow, reluctantly.

**What's your ethos?**

My ethos is not gatekeeping. Only running positive pieces that help give a spotlight to other people. And don't ignore the politics, because politics influences everything.

### How can culture be part of local community and how can local communities be part of culture?

It's looking very bleak and also positive at the same time. It's bleak because nightlife is still seen more as a nuisance than an extension of culture, but it's positive because people are beginning to see the value of places that are more than just party spaces, like Gut Level [an independent queer-led DIY space in Sheffield] and Partisan Collective in Manchester. These are places you have to get membership for. They provide amazing community, not just to the dance scene and the LGBTQ scene, but also as spaces to meet other people, to do activities.



↑ @ Zak Hardy

### What do we need in terms of clubs, do you think?

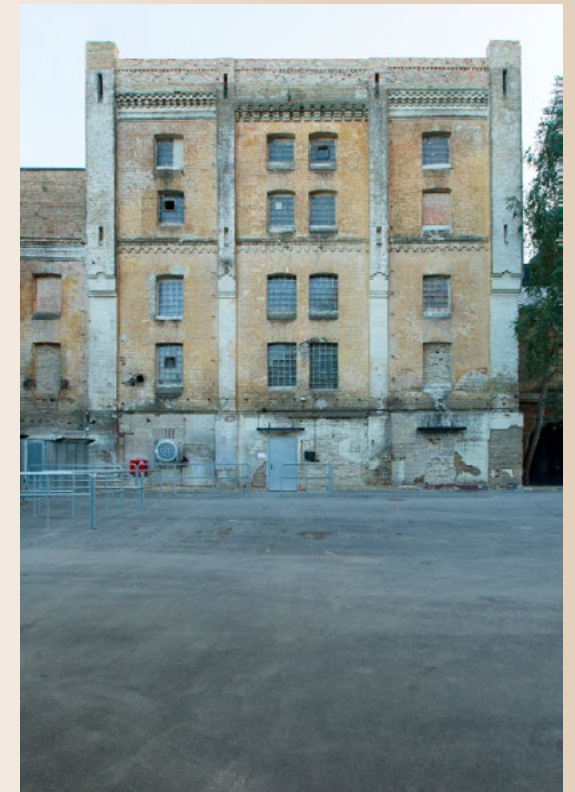
These days I'm considering if the word 'club' is the right word for the spaces I love the most: the DIY, collective, local event spaces. They're the way forward because they can be more than just a place for people to get drunk. I don't know if the word [club] is a bit tainted. If we can have these spaces for people to do talks, workshops, movie nights, exercise, political action as well as club nights—if we move more in this direction than all-encompassing clubs, the perception could be completely changed, if not reversed.

### How do you see things changing, regarding clubs and dance spaces?

If we want to create fundamental long-term change rather than complaining about clubs being closed, then we need to think about how we frame the debate differently. If that means changing the word from 'club' to something else then so be it. We need to start having real conversations about the role of these spaces and their future. It's increasingly hard to have these spaces because they're being pushed out into the peripheries. In Manchester, it would be impossible to have something like Partisan or Gut Level in the city centre. It ties into a bigger conversation: what is community in a city? Does it exist anymore? Clubs are one speck of that much bigger conversation. There's a question about how we can change the public perception of clubs and event spaces, but there's a bigger question: what does the future of community in UK cities as a whole look like? It's not looking like it's being led by us. The whole point of Dance Policy is to show that there are different avenues for people to go down. I want people to think about what they can do in terms of protecting their club, or how they can highlight individuals who show real community and give a spotlight to smaller, independent people. That's the policy of Dance Policy. What are the things we can change, dictate, and instruct in the community? What does community in dance music look like? And what do we want it to look like?

## Spaces

# club



↑ Front of  $\mathfrak{A}$  (K41).

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### With Nastya Zamorska from $\mathfrak{A}$ (K41)\* (Kyiv, UA)

#### What's the backstory behind K41, and how did you succeed in cultivating such a robust community around this initiative?

Our club (its name is actually  $\mathfrak{A}$ , not K41; K41 is an abbreviation of the address Kyrylyvska 41 that stuck around) started in 2019, and we just celebrated our fourth anniversary last weekend. The entire thing was based on the strong desire to create a space that would be fresh, free, and different from what was here before. In a way,  $\mathfrak{A}$  became a safe haven for the new generation of Ukrainians, and an encapsulation of its spirit. Our ideas resonated with people, and our community grew organically over the years.

#### Could you elaborate on the role that $\mathfrak{A}$ plays in Kyiv and its broader significance for the Ukrainian electronic music community?

Our club arguably was the first one in Kyiv based firstly on values of inclusivity and with an intent of creating a safer space. I think, this is the reason why it became special to so many in our community. Unfortunately, being queer in Ukraine is still not safe,

so for many people our space was the first place where they could feel fully free to be themselves.

In terms of our curatorial approach, we strive to uplift local talents and to build connections within our scene. We recently got together with a few more Kyiv venues to create UNight—an organisation representing the Ukrainian 'night life' industry.

**What values do you believe are integral to the close-knit community that surrounds ã?**

Apart from the values of mutual respect and inclusivity, the common effort to contribute to Ukrainian victory is integral to our community.

After the full-scale invasion, we started the K41 Community Fund with the aim of helping those affected by war and those defending us at the front line. This has been our focus for the last two years. Now we operate with a donation-based entrance to our weekly Community Events. We use all the donations to purchase equipment (not weapons) for specific military units, as well as supporting urgent volunteer initiatives. It's important for all of us to know that we don't just get together to have a party, but also do something to contribute to our victory. Ukrainian victory is the one goal that unites our community at the moment.



↑ Front of ã (K41)

During the last two years, many new music communities, venues, and events emerged in Ukraine, and the music scene is developing faster than ever before. This might seem paradoxical, but it shows just how needed these shared experiences are.

**In your opinion, why is the independent cultural sector essential for fostering and uniting these communities?**

In our context, having accessible cultural spaces is vital, as it is needed for people to come together and reconnect. There are many displaced persons among our visitors. Many of our guests are volunteers or on military service. Artists, DJs, regular people are defending our country and sacrificing their lives. Having this space where we can all connect and share our experiences is essential.

**Maintaining open-mindedness in a community is crucial. How do you ensure that ã remains an inclusive space and avoids being perceived or behaving like a closed club?**

Since the full-scale invasion, we changed the way we position ourselves to the public. We believe that right now is not the time to be closed off or exclusive. We welcome anyone who respects our rules and shares our values.

**How do you perceive common spaces as pivotal in preserving the autonomy of cultural communities?**

Common cultural spaces are incredibly important, especially now. War is exhausting, traumatising, and isolating. Supporting each other and staying connected is the best we can do. During the last two years, many new music communities, venues, and events emerged in Ukraine, and the music scene is developing faster than ever before. This might seem paradoxical, but it shows just how needed these shared experiences are.

**What challenges have you encountered in establishing and sustaining spaces for cultural exchange and independence?**

One big challenge is the societal stigma towards clubs and electronic music communities that is still present in Ukraine. However, we are doing our best to fight it. That's the main reason we co-started the UNight initiative.

**Given the challenging circumstances, how has the war impacted the ã community, and what was the team response to the onset of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine?**

The full-scale invasion changed us, everything we do, and the way we do it. It changed everyone in our community. Our main shared goal is the Ukrainian victory. This goal lies at the core of all our current activities and is shared among our community.





# Under their reports

In this section, we encapsulate the diverse voices, experiences, and perspectives shared during decentralised workshops, shedding light on the nuanced challenges and opportunities faced by organisations navigating the independent cultural landscape. From discussions on the importance of community-building to first-hand accounts of being a vital part of these networks, these reports provide a panoramic view of the evolving role of independent cultural players in shaping and participating in communities across the European cultural spectrum.

## Spaces for Emerging Culture – by Inkonst

Malmö, Sweden  
January 2023



### Historical and political context

Malmö is Sweden's third largest city, which is located in the very south of the country and is directly connected to Denmark and mainland Europe via the Öresund bridge.

Historically, Malmö was known as an industrial city with a highly developed shipbuilding, textiles, and construction-related industries, at one point it was also the leading industrial centre of Sweden, and at the very top of all of Scandinavia. However, during the 1970s, a major economic crisis began, which gradually destroyed the leading industries in this southern Swedish city and led to a high rate of poverty. Only in the early 1990s, Malmö decided to start the process of recovery from deindustrialisation.

The plan was for Malmö to become a creative city and a city of knowledge that would attract various investments and, more importantly, the so-called creative class (a term first used by Richard Florida, an American urban studies theorist, who claimed that the creative class is a key driving force for economic development of post-industrial cities).

Attention was focused on the part of the city where the former industrial harbor and the old Kockum shipyard are located. One of the first steps was the establishment of the Malmö university which today has around 25,000 students, including a large number of international students. Then the construction of residential areas began, and most of them were intended for the middle- and upper-class population; a large business district was also built, as well as various concert halls and a huge skyscraper, the so-called Turning Torso that was supposed to become the trademark of the city by replacing the Kockums Crane, a gantry crane, that used to be a symbol of the Malmö's industrial past.

And we can say that this whole process of recovery from deindustrialisation was successful, Malmö has become a city that attracts investors, huge global companies, as well as young people engaged in creative work. However, now several decades since the beginning of the process, certain shortcomings have been noticed. First and foremost is the problem of social segregation, as if this well-planned development of the city, did not think about the inclusion of the large number of ethical minorities. It is also important to note that Malmö is a city with one of the youngest populations and has one of the highest proportions of foreign-born residents in Sweden, and this fact makes the presence of inequality and social segregation even more problematic. Apart from ethical minorities, unestablished, alternative artists did not see the benefit of this post-industrial transformation either. Although the original plan was to make the city a paradise for the creative class, today one gets the impression that they only focused on the already established culture and art, and all those who were different in any way, were forgotten. It is exactly this disregard for the needs of unestablished culture that inspired this workshop.

## **State of the situation**

Sweden is today worldwide known as a culturally progressive country, which is arguably true since it has one of the strongest funding systems for culture. The funding system is determined by Swedish cultural policy whose objectives are to provide everyone with opportunities to experience culture, education and develop their creative abilities, as well as to provide them with quality and artistic renewal, and with equal access to arts and culture for children and youth. The influence of the Ministry of Culture on the public funding system is also undeniable, but the organisation that is most responsible is The Swedish Arts Council, a government agency that, according to their official notice, aims to support art and culture in many different forms. Already here we can see that this is a well-organised system which, however, is primarily made for established arts, but when it comes to unestablished, spontaneous or experimental culture, the problems caused by legislation and lack of trust arise.

What then happens with cultural tendencies that fall outside of the existing frameworks for funding? Their options are limited, they can either apply for the public funding and risk losing its initial spontaneity and experimental attire and eventually become involuntary professionalised or they can continue struggling without the help of the aforementioned funding system.

## **Workshop's discussions**

### **• The issue of physical spaces**

The first topic is also the topic after which we decided to name the entire workshop, and all other topics are closely related to this one. Malmö, like the entire region of Scania, is a city with a diverse culture where a lot of art is produced, however, when it comes to emerging, unestablished, and alternative culture certain problems always appear. One of those problems, which most of Swedish artists have to face sooner or later, is related to the space where their art should be developed and nurtured. The core of this problem is not that there are no physical spaces that artists could use, since Malmö, as it's already been mentioned, used to be the one of the industrial centres of Scandinavia until the 70s of the last century, has a huge number of empty buildings that were once used for building ships, producing concrete etc., and that today could be utilised by the artists, artistic collectives, and all creative workers from the town and the region. The problem lies in the fact that if you want to use one of those spaces for your art, you also have to become part of the Swedish public

funding system, which does not suit everyone, especially not those artists who would like to remain independent in their work. This directly leads us to the next topic that we discussed during the "Spaces for emerging culture" workshop.

### **• Public funding leads to involuntary institutionalisation**

Sweden has a very developed public funding for arts and culture, one of the best in Europe, however such a developed and organised system has downsides for those initiatives that do not want to lose their experimentality. From the moment when a cultural initiative becomes part of that system, the process of their institutionalisation begins, which almost always happens against the will of the originator of that initiative. It is important to note that officially no Swedish institution requires the initiators to professionalise in any way. The question is: how does this institutionalisation, or involuntary professionalisation, happen then? The simplest answer would be through the countless permits that the artists are forced to collect before applying for any help from the State. Namely, Sweden has strongly established standards that applicants for funding must meet in order to be eligible for it, these standards entail various permits without which they would not be able to operate in any way, for

# emer-

The promotion of international cooperation between unestablished initiatives is a very important step towards solving common problems.

# gence

# needs

example, during the workshop the alcohol license was mentioned multiple times and it is often a problem many initiatives, especially when it comes to clubs, encounter. Applying for an alcohol license has about 20 steps and each of them has several sub-steps, and it is through completing all these steps that you become professionalised. Also, keep in mind that the alcohol license is only one of a series of permits that an artistic initiative must have if it wants to, for example, get a space where they will be able to practice their art. Inkonst, the host of this workshop, can be taken as a good example of involuntary professionalisation. They started as an underground club that gained a cult following over time, which of course led to the need for a larger space that they eventually received from Malmö municipality, but that was the beginning of the loss of their original spontaneity.

## • The role of politicians

The third topic that this workshop touched on is the role of politicians. It is also related to the previous two topics, but this was more of a proposal of one of the solutions that the participants of the workshop came up with.

To be more specific, there was talk of how Swedish politicians, lawmakers, or civil servants could help alternative, that is, unestablished initiatives, to avoid professionalisation without having to give up public funding.

The answer that the participants of the workshop came to is actually very simple, it is necessary to change the already mentioned standards, and only politicians, that is, decision makers can do that, with cooperation with different type of artists, initiatives, collectives...

## **Workshop's challenges**

### • Convincing the authorities that unestablished art is worth of investing

One of the biggest challenges is convincing the authorities that your art is worth funding as it is and that there is no need for modifying it. This is of course difficult to do because, as the workshop attendees pointed out, there is almost no positive opinion about underground culture in Sweden, as if everything that is not already established is not worth investing money and energy in.

One of the workshop participants gave an example of how representatives of the Malmö municipality publicly praise the already existing nightlife in this Swedish city and cite it as one of the main attractions of the city, but whenever there are official talks between the municipality and representatives of the alternative night life, conditions, impositions, and new rules always occur and that leads to changes that eventually eliminate all that is alternative about those initiatives. And not only that, the involvement of the police is also very frequent, according to the workshop attendees, the police shut down almost every party.

### • Overcoming the reputation of a violent city

In recent years, among other things, Malmö has been known for its high percentage of violence, and our participants believed that this plays a big role in the development

of alternative nightlife, but also culture in general. More precisely, they blame stereotypes, which are often of a racial nature, for imposing unnecessary rules. During the workshop, it was mentioned that many culture creators are trying to start various initiatives in neighbourhoods with a high crime rate, but problems arise because politicians are making policies based on this stereotyping.

During the workshop, our attendees mentioned the example of the "Nora Grängesbergsgatan" street, which was once known as the most dangerous street, not only in Malmö, but in the whole of Sweden, but with the help of various alternative initiatives, it managed to transform the title of the most dangerous into the title of the coolest street in this southern Swedish city. One of the person responsible for that transformation participated in the workshop and stated that although Norra Grängesbergsgatan is seen as a success story, they still face the same problems as at the very beginning of that initiative.

### • Complex bureaucracy

One of the challenges that everyone in Sweden faces is the complex bureaucracy. According to our participants, whenever you try to create something in Sweden, especially if it is the initiation of some great cultural change that will bring even the town itself to a higher level, i.e. the level of some European metropolises, such as Berlin, it is the bureaucracy that will stand in your way. It doesn't matter how passionate you are about your idea, the bureaucracy will tire you out before you even start executing it, the attendees say. The participants jokingly gave examples of questions they themselves encountered: "Have you filled in this?"; "What about this law from 1805?"; "Are you married?"; and all of this proves the ridiculousness of the whole situation.

## **Needs of the participants**

### • More written material (manifestos, studies...)

All workshop participants agreed on one need; the need for as many manifestos, studies, and written material in general as possible, which would serve as inspiration for both culture creators and policy makers.

Culture initiators would learn from those materials from the experience of other European or world initiators who encountered the same or similar problems and managed to overcome them.

For policy makers, it could be a kind of a guide on how to adapt policy making to an experimental culture that differs in many ways from the already established culture.

Through these various written materials, the policy makers and, in our case the municipality of Malmö, could learn what are the good sides of a nurtured alternative culture and could get familiar with all the successful examples from around the world where alternative culture helped a lot in the development of the city and made them a real tourist spot.

When it comes to emerging, unestablished, and alternative culture, one problem most Swedish artists have to face is related to the space where their art should be developed and nurtured.

## Workshop's proposals

At a national level

### • **Become a politician**

During the workshop, we established that among lawmakers, policy makers, and politicians in general, there is almost no one who would represent the rights of experimental, unestablished cultural initiators, that is why one of the first proposals was that someone from this branch should become a politician.

The concrete proposals that have been made is that someone from the alternative Malmö cultural scene should join a political party, which according to the workshop attendees is a typical Swedish way of getting what you want, and thus begin their journey towards promoting the unestablished and spontaneous scene.

### • **Night mayor**

The role of night mayor has proven to be effective in promoting lively nightlife throughout Europe, so it's no wonder that this was one of the main proposals our guests had. A few years ago, Malmö actually started talking about electing a night mayor, but unfortunately it came to a standstill.

In order to prevent this from happening again, the participants proposed the creation of a plan, i.e. a program, in which the current state of Malmö's nightlife would first be analysed to help identify the basic needs and the changes that this Swedish city require, then it is important to have predetermined goals, as well as the actions that will be taken in order to fulfil those goals. It is also important to have a predetermined economic plan for the future, and all this is necessary so that Sweden's already mentioned complex bureaucracy does not become one of the obstacles to getting the night mayor.

At a European level

### • **Learning from neighbours**

The participants of the workshop agreed that the promotion of international cooperation between unestablished initiatives is a very important step towards solving common problems.

This cooperation should be at the European level, but in the specific case of Malmö and whole Sweden, the participant proposed to start cooperation with neighbouring countries.

Although everyone thinks that it is an extremely important concrete proposal, it will not be easy to achieve, mainly because, according to our participants, there is no sense of community in the Scandinavian countries. One of the suggestions on how to do this was given to us by a workshop participant from Estonia, who had similar problems in her country and learned from experience; she believes that a sense of community should first be created among the local population, then regional, and then finally move to the European level.

# Key points

Helsinki, Finland  
February 2023

## The Structures We Build: On Models and Practices towards Sustainability of Independent Artistic Associations

– by Pixelache

• The relation between the independent artistic actors and the city of Helsinki (its public funding system and approach towards the independent cultural actors) is highly contested and stated to be one of the limiting factors for cultural organisations sustainability, undermining these organisations and creating a highly competitive system.

• The principal demands from these independent actors to the public authorities are to consider them as sustainable partners, to reinforce the creation of mid-size organisations, and to provide accessible spaces for independent artistic organisations (such as empty public spaces). The need to enable stronger exchanges between independent actors and public bodies is therefore considered essential both at international and national level.

*“This system (Helsinki public system) provides us with a set of broken tools that limits our associations’ visibility, sustainability, and potential of growing into becoming middle-size organisations in the local artistic landscape. Why are our independent artistic associations not allowed to succeed?”*

## Sustainable Future(s) of Independent Community Radio

– by Palanga Street Radio

Tallinn, Estonia  
September 2022



Independent Community Radio Network (ICRN) is created for, and organised by, autonomous radios and respective practitioners. We connect and support like-minded community radios with the shared goal of establishing a more sustainable and long-term future for the field.

ICRN's activity responds to common values that focus on building local and trans-local communities; maintaining independence and cooperation – that we view as an essential tool for achieving our goals and empowering our future.

ICRN believes that transparency and publicness of accessible knowledge should be considered as an essential part of breaking competitive attitudes within creative media practice. We also believe in the power of cross-influencing, to support our professional development and of others within independent media.

ICRN was co-founded by the community radios from the Baltic-Nordic region *Palanga Street Radio* (LT), *Tīrkultūra* (LV) and *IDA Radio* (ES, FI) in 2022. They have since collaborated with many independent media players across Europe including *Resonance FM* (UK), *NTS Manchester* (UK), *Cashmere Radio* (DE), and *Reset!* network.

## 3 questions to Palanga Street Radio

Vilnius,  
Lithuania

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

#### Can you introduce your structure to us?

*Palanga Street Radio* is a listener-supported, independent community radio. This means that we are self-governed, ensuring that the voices of our local community are at the heart of our content and not limited by any external body. Being listener-supported means our existence depends on the support of our community and this includes monthly donations, the making of content, prioritising the local listeners, and advocacy. Through this structure we have independently existed for six years. We pride ourselves on values of independence, creating a space for freedom of expression and DIY approaches to radio making. Thinking ahead to the long-term sustainability of our radio, we have built relationships with like-minded local partners and supporters and over the last two years, also developed international partnerships with community radio

stations in the region. This has also taken place through our involvement with co-founding the Independent Community Radio Network, which brings together international partners to engage in knowledge sharing, co-broadcasting activity, and in-person networking opportunities to support the sustainability of our field.

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

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

We joined *Reset!* after our involvement in the Independent Community Radio Network (ICRN), which encouraged us to acknowledge the importance of forming connections with like-minded organisations. The network has offered the opportunity to discover new partners, share experiences/challenges, engage in workshops, and build skills, as well as advocate our needs at policy making level. Community radios are of growing demand,

but our structural support is scarce. However, we believe in the power of cross-border collaboration as one form of building stronger support for our future.

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

#### How important is creating a feeling of community for your activities today?

Community is at the core of what we do. As a largely voluntary project, the relationships we build between listeners and content creators is the main source of energy and motivation to move forward. Members of the community offer their time, skills, and resources to help the radio exist and develop. *PSR* is constantly inspired and moved by the creativity and commitment of the people surrounding us. We also believe that a community focus is a key element in building strong, diverse, and resilient societies and supports the wellbeing of every individual involved in the process.

## **What is an ‘independent community radio’?**

While there is no exhaustive or concrete definition, ICRN stands for local alternative culture through the radio medium. Our common goal is to mobilise people to create culture through an accessible tool that brings producer and the listener of radio programmes closer to share local realities - through music, sound, research, etc.

We understand ‘independent’ as self-governed, where we make the decisions about our organisations and define notions of labour, merit, and fun ourselves. Independent of any forces that might cause you to make a certain type of broadcasting content.

We understand community as that which relates to one another directly and not through representation of centralised media. That means that a radio does not broadcast outward but rather invites the community to broadcast. This creates conversations, further links and networks within the community. So, it is a very living and active thing.

We understand radio as a tool that reflects community identity through free cultural expression.

## **Why a network?**

The Independent Community Radio Network (ICRN) recognises the growing relevance of community radio within the contemporary culture field across the Baltic-Nordic region and wider Europe. Small scale radio is growing in demand as a creative resource and an independent dissemination tool.

Joining a network offers a space to recognise shared values and challenges, and to create a common knowledge base to tackle them. As we prioritise sustainable development over

competition; resilience over growth; rich disagreements over the homogenous singularity; we need a system that helps us provide mutual support to each other individually and deliver our joint messages powerfully. That system is a network that serves us before it can serve others: we want to be able to supply a living public service to the society while enjoying doing it.

## **Workshop’s discussions**

### **• Non-competitive sharing (what do we do)**

ICRN unionises independent radio practitioners by offering a collective database created by common resources while respecting creative and intellectual property. Being an umbrella for non-profit and voluntary-run organisations, it offers an efficient way of working together through sharing of:

- content (music sets, interviews, other broadcasts)
- knowledge (technical, organisational, curatorial, legal and other how-to’s)
- human resources (visiting radio hosts, technical staff, other members)

### **• Translocal resilience (how we want to do it)**

ICRN’s vision of sustainable ‘long-term futures’ is rooted in relating to the world from each local reality while reflecting on the world’s impact in it. We believe that a resilient cultural ecology is only possible by maintaining each radio’s identity and encouraging heterogenous, open, yet non-compliant, relations to changing political, social, and environmental contexts.

### **• Events and networking opportunities**

It is important to be able to meet between member radios, to regularly revise and extend the network’s connection to a larger community media landscape. ICRN wants to do that in the most environmentally friendly and locality sensitive way possible. We stand with European and global initiatives working for green travel and against predatory tourism.

### **• Legal status**

We believe that policy makers have to be able to adapt and respond to lived realities of small scale alternative cultural organisations. We believe third sector and non-commercial citizen-run initiatives need legal status that would improve their chances of survival outside of the competitive market value systems. We believe that the public value of our field should be acknowledged and public funding should be an option for its maintenance.

### **• Political integrity**

We support our members’ political activism and we stand against conformity and passivity: we care about the world and society, and we recognise this care as not always comfortable. ICRN does not compromise on questions of human rights, climate justice, racial, gender, sexual or other discrimination. We continually revise these questions, acknowledging that understandings of these subjects are not linear. We acknowledge that being apolitical is only a choice of the privileged and we pledge to be self-reflexive and accountable in our actions.

## **Needs of the participants – Common resources**

### **• Space**

A radio station is, firstly, a physical space: a place for people to come together and engage with one another. A studio is a powerful tool to promote belonging, dialogue, and citizenly participation. Sociality and ability to work together physically is one of ICRN’s top priorities.

We need an affordable rent policy for non-profit cultural/media organisations—such as community radio—to aid the increasingly challenging process of locating space.

### **• Digital Presence and technical set-up**

Radio is a cheap and simple tool to use. Most of today’s independent radios, and all of the radios in ICRN, are broadcasting predominantly online. To ensure sound quality, both hardware and software tools and their maintenance is constantly required. ICRN allows sharing of creative solutions that would improve accessibility, outreach, and ways to adapt to the dynamic notions of contemporary locality.

We need a third-sector, or non-profit, media laws that encompass digital space and allow an affordable legal use of online royalties and digital tools.

### **• Funds and funding**

Independence requires diversifying financial resources. The precarious nature of creative initiatives, like ICRN, means that applying for grants and marketing oneself as a part of the project is part of the job. This is particularly tricky since radio is often recognised as a purely journalistic, and not a creative, platform.

We need community radio to be recognised as an artistic platform and have fundings allocated for independent cultural media. Also, by addressing this issue in the context of ICRN, we are addressing a larger issue of how creative labour is and should be valued.

# The notion of com- munity

The significant role played by European independent cultural organisations in creating both online and offline, concrete and abstract spaces to foster communities cannot be overstated. These organisations serve as vibrant hubs of creativity and connectivity, enriching the cultural tapestry of Europe and beyond. Through their diverse programs, innovative approaches, and unwavering commitment to gathering, they have proven to be indispensable pillars of communal identity and solidarity. These organisations have shaped—and still do—the continent’s cultural landscape and redefined the very essence of community in multifaceted ways.

One of the most remarkable aspects of European independent cultural organisations lies in their dexterity to transcend the confines of physical bricks-and-mortar venues, all while adroitly navigating the digital landscape. These organisations harness the power of technology not only to create vibrant online spaces that are as dynamic and engaging as their offline counterparts, but also to foster the development and sustenance of physical community venues. Through websites, social media platforms, and events, these organisations have extended their reach, enabling them to cultivate a larger community of like-minded individuals who share a profound passion for art, culture, and creativity, while simultaneously creating and nurturing real-world spaces for community gatherings and artistic expression.

The online communities formed by these organisations are not mere extensions of their physical spaces; they are unique entities in their own right. They provide a platform for artists, enthusiasts, and curious minds to come together, exchange ideas, and showcase their talents. These digital communities encourage

participants from all walks of life to contribute and engage, regardless of geographical location or physical abilities. They have become vital spaces for creative expression, dialogue, and collaboration, reaffirming the enduring relevance of culture in the digital age.

Furthermore, independent cultural organisations have been instrumental in redefining the concept of community itself. They have moved beyond the traditional geographical constraints, instead creating communities that are bound by shared interests, values, and aspirations. These communities transcend national borders, uniting individuals from diverse backgrounds who find common ground in their love for culture. The sense of belonging and connection fostered by these organisations is not limited to physical proximity, but extends to a shared cultural consciousness, where creativity knows no bounds.

European independent cultural organisations are not merely places where art and culture are showcased; they are the lifeblood of communities, both online and offline. Their impact is far-reaching, from promoting creativity and inclusion to bolstering local economies and preserving cultural heritage. In a rapidly changing world, these organisations remain steadfast in their commitment to cultivating spaces where individuals can come together, share experiences, and celebrate their collectiveness. Their significance in shaping the cultural and social landscapes of Europe cannot be understated, and they are poised to continue playing a pivotal role in building communities that transcend boundaries and foster unity through the culture. As we celebrate the meaningful work of these independent organisations, it is crucial to recognise their vital role in creating spaces where a collective spirit can flourish and thrive.

**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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