Challenging Dominance: Independent Initiatives Countering Territorial Imbalances in Culture and Media

When talking about cultural activities in Europe and looking at its map, it seems like the focus is only set on Western capital cities. Eastern and Southern Europe, non-capital cities, and rural areas are still considered as peripheries, not worth spending time on, boring, and overdue. As a consequence, most cultural events programs lack artists from the East and South of Europe, and generally Eastern European cultural scenes are extremely underrepresented in the continent's cultural activities. As for non-urban areas, they are simply excluded from the cultural field, as if one territory could just not participate in the effort, while they usually struggle more than others to be sustainable. In this context of hyper-centralisation, both regionally and on national levels, Reset! pledges for a rebalancing of the cultural scenes to counter these discriminative dynamics.

Summary

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.

Editorial

Reset! Network:
An Age of Alliances

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).

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.

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

It is imperative to scrutinise the state of peripheral cultural scenes that often stand at the crossroads of disparities and challenges. This column seeks to delve into the vital yet overlooked realms of cultural expression existing on the periphery of Europe, examining how these vibrant landscapes grapple with societal imbalances and adversities. By shining a spotlight on these peripheral cultural scenes, we aim to foster a deeper understanding of the transformative power of art, music, and traditions, while advocating for the necessary support systems to strengthen and sustain these valuable independent cultural ecosystems.

Strengthening Peripheral Cultural Scenes in the Face of Disparities and Challenges

Zaina Shreidi

is a Palestinian culture worker, organiser, and writer currently based between Berlin and Budapest. She has been involved in underground music and contemporary art scenes in various cities and countries. Her focus is on elevating local voices, creating and providing platforms and programmes that support local talent, and promoting local initiatives and artists internationally.

Some just can't be seen

My initial experience in Budapest was marked by my surprise at the amount of impressive talent and artistry I encountered. The cultural scene is small, especially the underground, but strikingly dense with talent. Over time, I realised that while the talent is impressive, my initial 'surprise' was due to not having heard much about the Hungarian scene before experiencing it first-hand. This realisation now makes me uncomfortable, but the fact is that unless you spend time in Hungary you simply won't know much about its underground cultural scene. This is the reality for many who exist in the "peripheries".

This issue goes beyond the ignorance and disinterest of the West, and therefore cannot merely be remedied by raising awareness. The imbalance on a wider geopolitical scale manifests in particular challenges locally, which must also be addressed locally.

Commodifying artistry

We are conditioned to believe that the value of talent is determined by the West, and can be measured through financial success and celebrity. The highest paid actors and musicians are almost always from, or rather, residing mostly in the USA or the UK. For techno DJs, the mecca is Berlin, for fashion it's Paris, and so on. It comes as no surprise that the biggest imperialist, colonialist, capitalist countries are also the ones that have found a way to commodify artistry on such a level?

People struggling in racist and classist systems, and who are also living in areas that do not receive any recognition or acknowledgement by urban centres or internationally, are often faced with a lack of cultural spaces and support. They have to work way harder to achieve much less, and can end up consumed with the challenges and pressures of making a living. Creating art, making music becomes something that people work and sacrifice to afford and be able to pursue.

↑ Distant Objects at Flashback Klub, 2019. © Helga Lugosi

The imbalance on a wider geopolitical scale manifests in particular challenges locally, which must also be addressed locally.

In the Hungarian scene, which is centralised mostly in Budapest, both fees and venues are majorly lacking. Funding opportunities from the State are so few and far between that they are not really worth considering. With the government being right-wing and corrupt, some artists and institutions refuse to accept State funding, and if they are vocally opposed to the political party in power, do not have a chance of receiving it to begin with. Political and economic pressures are also why so few venues can survive, especially if they are leftist, community-led, or deemed too "liberal".

The political and economic situation is not a unique situation, and many former Eastern Bloc, post-Communist countries face similar conditions -but while different scenes are handling things in different ways, success or recognition can often be determined by the strength of their local scenes.

Building decentralised spheres

In places where commercial venues and festivals make more money by profiting off mass appeal, the local scene is kept alive by independent organisers and collectives, community-run venues, labels, community radio, and small festivals who fight the good fight without the funding enjoyed by their counterparts in the West. It's challenging, especially when they are often unrecognised or unknown among many outside their spheres.

When the people who run the venues also run the scene, and focus on centring and supporting local artists, and building local audiences and communities, we see the West suddenly "discovering" these "new" underground scenes. Tbilisi and Kyiv are great examples of this. Despite major social difficulties, their scenes have achieved acknowledgement and

support from Western capitals. Bassiani in Tbilisi and ♯ (K41) in Kyiv became known for their incredible parties and crowds, and their emphasis on local DJs, who are more important to the audience than international acts. The same goes for Ankali in Prague. This lends credibility to these scenes, since they are already established in their own cities, popular with their own people, and have had the opportunity to achieve success on their own terms.
In many countries that are considered irrelevant to the West, and particularly in rural areas, which are often left out of the conversation completely, audiences have a closer relationship to their local acts than to international ones. This gives more credence to the idea that decentralisation is instrumental in solving many issues facing our capitalist driven and

dictated societies. Shifting the focus to fostering communities, building locally, paying fairly, and creating a supportive environment may result in a different, but perhaps more sustainable path to achieving representation and recognition.

Lower glass ceiling

In order to reclaim power and attain representation and recognition, artists need the support of independent cultural organisations. They rely on venues for opportunity and income, as well as support in promoting them and helping them reach a wider audience.

frames

↑ Distant Objects at Flashback Klub, 2019. © András Tibor Vizi

Independent cultural and media structures are instrumental in raising issues of disparities and representation to the international community. Whether in rural areas, non-capital or capital cities, independent cultural organisations are the ones sustaining their scenes. Nevertheless, outside of places with established infrastructure and funding for the arts, these independent organisations are not able to have salaried employees, to dedicate time and resources to press, and so on. People usually take on more than what they're paid for, and things are done with little to no money. Many rely on suppliers and barters since doing everything in-house legally and profitably is a huge challenge that many cannot surmount.

lo-

Recognising this is one thing -but the solutions aren't simple, and won't look the same from community to community, simply because those who exist outside of Western European capital cities are not a monolith, and each will have its particular strengths or challenges. In some places, we see more political involvement to communicate with local politicians and policymakers to make the case for recognition of and funding for cultural activities. In places where this idea may be laughable, or simply not enough, the independent scenes are finding innovative ways to sustain and support local culture by building relationships with other scenes, finding clever solutions and approaches to production, supporting smaller communities and emerging talent, and reinvesting money earned back into growing their projects and communities.

Reframing the discourse

It's hard to expect equality without justice. How can rural areas, small towns, small scenes, in "far away" places, ever grow, get opportunities from, and be recognised as equals by the very countries that destabilised their own? It's not enough to judge the current situation as the West overlooking the East, it's also important to recognise the role imperialism, politics, and the shift from communism to hyper-capitalism has played in creating the current situation.

Not only will the solutions and approaches to addressing this imbalance and discrimination vary, but the results will too, because the whole point is that it is impossible to ever succeed when success is determined by those holding it beyond our reach.

Representation, recognition, and success begin and end with our own definitions of them. By dismantling the systems currently working against us, we can reimagine and rebuild them in our own image.

cal

In many countries that are considered irrelevant to the West, and particularly in rural areas, audiences have a closer relationship to their local acts. This gives more credence to the idea that decentralisation is instrumental in solving many issues facing our capitalist driven and dictated societies.

← Brussels-based sound artist Yann Leguay performing 7 haikus for a turntable at Noise n' Roses #15 organised by Lucia Udvardyova and Rozi Mákó. The event took place during the Art Quarter Budapest Open House 2023. © Barnabás Neogrády-Kiss

Under their light

Eastern Europe on Focus

Nurturing Creativity in the East. Exploring Independent Art Scenes in Eastern Europe

An exploration of Europe's dynamic independent cultural scenes flourishing on what is usually considered as 'periphery' –in Eastern and Southern Europe, non-capital cities, and rural areas. This section serves as a curated collection of articles that aims to rectify the oversight of these vibrant cultural landscapes within the broader European narrative. From grassroots movements in Eastern Europe challenging historical legacies to the flourishing arts communities in non-capital cities and the rich creative spaces persisting in rural areas, these articles shed light on the resilience, creativity, and unique expressions that have often been side-lined.

Eastern Europe has always been a hotbed of cultural diversity and artistic innovation. In recent years, a growing wave of independent art scenes and cultural industries has emerged, defying political and economic challenges. In this three-part series, we delve into the vibrant world of Eastern Europe's independent cultural movements, showcasing their resilience and creative spirit. Our journey begins with a closer look at independent community radios, followed by a glimpse into Hungary's independent publishing and art book scene, and concludes with an exploration of KAJET Journals' Easternfuturism and its impact on dealing with the Post-Soviet social and cultural conditions from the perspectives of alternative (often semi-peripheral) futurities.

Community radios have been vital in providing a platform for free expression, fostering local talent, and preserving cultural identities. In Eastern Europe, where the media landscape is often dominated by State-controlled entities or corporate giants, independent community radios have emerged as beacons of hope. These stations amplify voices that would otherwise go unheard, broadcasting diverse music, discussions, and cultural narratives.

Lóránt Bódi

is a social historian and editor. He worked as a Junior Research Fellow and Assistant Research Fellow at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in international research projects. Lóránt Bódi earned his PhD from the Atelier – European Historiography and Social Sciences Program at Eötvös Loránd University.

Zsolt Miklósvölgyi

is an editor, art writer, and curator from Budapest, Hungary. He is Co-Editor-in-Chief of the Berlin-Budapest-based art collective and publishing project "Technologie und das Unheimliche" (T+U). He has been a visiting research fellow at the Humboldt University in Berlin, Germany as well as at the Wirth Institute of the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada. He was also a Visegrad Literary Fellow at the Institute Umeni in Prague, and an artist-in-residence at the MeetFactory in Prague.

East

Exploring Eastern Europe's independent art scenes and cultural industries unveils a tapestry of creative resilience and diversity.

Hungary's independent publishing and art book industry have experienced a renaissance, with a fresh wave of creators determined to challenge the mainstream. Independent publishers have embraced the medium as an art form, often producing visually stunning books that are as much works of art as they are vehicles for literature. These publishers not only bridge the gap between the written word and visual art, but also play a crucial role in promoting diversity of thought and expression.

KAJET Journals, an independent platform, has been at the forefront of Eastern Europe's creative revolution. Their exploration of Easternfuturism, a concept that reimagines the region's future and embraces its multicultural heritage, is reshaping the narrative of Eastern Europe. KAJET Journals are providing a stage for voices from the semi-peripheral and minority communities in the region, allowing them to define their own futurities. While these independent cultural movements are undoubtedly transformative, they face numerous challenges. Economic constraints, censorship, and political pressures are constant threats. Many of these artists and creators operate on shoestring budgets, driven by their passion for art and a desire to preserve their cultural heritage.

Yet, in the face of adversity and territorial relegation, they find innovative solutions to sustain and grow their endeavours.

The resilience of these independent cultural industries in Eastern Europe is awe-inspiring. They serve as counterpoints to the mainstream narratives and bring vital diversity to the global art and culture landscape. These artists, publishers, and curators are reclaiming their stories and preserving their cultural heritage. Their work transcends borders, connecting with audiences worldwide, and challenging perceptions about Eastern Europe.

Exploring Eastern Europe's independent art scenes and cultural industries unveils a tapestry of creative resilience and diversity. Independent community radios, Hungarian publishers, and platforms like KAJET Journals are shaping the future of the region, redefining their narratives, and challenging conventional wisdom. As we delve deeper into this series, we aim to celebrate these unsung heroes of culture, and through their stories, appreciate the unyielding spirit of Eastern Europe. Join us in this journey as we explore the vibrant worlds that often remain hidden even from the European stage, and appreciate the boundless creativity that thrives in the heart of Eastern Europe.

scenes

Post-Apathy: In(ter)dependent Community Radio Scenes in Eastern Europe

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.

"At first, it was illegal" – that's how I started my journey to independent community radio scenes, with a visit to collect stories from Tilos Rádió in Budapest back in 2018. Symbolically, this echoes the history of the independent community radio in the region: after a year of pirate broadcasting, Tilos officially started in 1991 –becoming the first community radio to do so East from the already fallen Iron Curtain. Today active in circles other than most radios discussed here, they were one of the first stations to benefit from the tripartite Hungarian media system, which recognised the non-commercial and non-State-owned media bodies. This has allowed Hungarian community media to lead and relatively prosper not only locally, but across the post-Socialist countries at the time.

Common heritage, multifaced creativity

It's been more than 30 years since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and some things have changed –for the Hungarian alternative independent media for sure–, but some haven't. The legacy of pirate radios, old and new, is often quoted in most


↑ IDA Tallinn studio visit, 2022. © Samantha Lippett

1. Vivien Lee, "Free and Easy Listening With NTS Radio's Femi Adeyemi," *Ssense*, August 13th, 2019

contemporary western independent radio genesis stories (with widely spread yet London-based NTS being the most well-known out of the European ones'). For our Eastern and Central counterparts, these were always more imaginary, or inspirational storylines, somehow juxtaposed with more official narratives referencing Radio Free Europe or politically charged America's Voice playing rock'n'roll: the humorous notion that it was chewing gum and jeans that finally broke the Soviet Union. While it probably took more than that, there seems to be relatively little awareness of the legacy and history of DIY music and media cultures that have fostered cultural resilience under a rigid surface, just to explode in the beautifully creative mess that was the 1990s. There is a growing body of voices advocating for that legacy; voices much more equipped at telling stories of grassroots record labels, underground venues, and contemporary electronic sounds. What this text suggests is that there is a role for online community radios to play in this transition –from the playfully subversive to the more sustainable and digitally interconnected cultural scene– and contemporary practitioners are on it.
One of the best examples is the Easterndaze initiative, which focuses on showcasing alternative local music, hosting regular shows on Berlin's Cashmere Radio, organising live and on-air festivals since 2016, and, as one of its organisers Natalie Gravenor has

once said in an interview with Kaput! magazine, in other ways "mapping the diverse and simply amazing DIY musical activities throughout the 'region' of Central and Eastern Europe". The last two years, in particular, were dedicated to the community radio exchange, with most of the initially outlined radios participating in sharing broadcasts and panel discussions. While there are differences –like having access to stationary physical studios; forms of collecting funds for maintenance; the ratio of live to recorded, talk to music shows; organisational structures– most radios focus on showcasing local alternative music and experimenting with creative production methods. And there is increasingly more talk of mutual support and cooperation: for example, last year, Tallinn and Helsinki's IDA, Riga's Tīrkultūra and Vilnius' Palanga Street Radio started an Independent Community Radio Network, where they meet up to discuss shared challenges and successes, exchange working knowledge, and explore further collaborations in the Baltic-Nordic region. Last year's Easterndaze discussion focused on similar questions of collective growth as resilience: with Mutant Radio in Tbilisi pointing out the importance of coming together to resist isolation and strengthen the local grassroots discourse.

▬▬▬
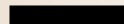
↑ Spiečius event Kirtimų Kultūros Centras, 2022. © Ieva Černiauskaitė

In times when it seemed that geographical identifiers have become obsolete, memory and locality still prove to be important.

Proactive solidarity

These discussions quite quickly turn to questions of solidarity with Ukraine and the importance to remain proactive supporters and listeners. While unfortunately unable to join in the discussion live, a pre-recorded message from Gasoline and references to 20ft's "Grains of Peace" initiative have given rather clear guidelines on how: by amplifying Ukrainian voices and promoting ways to financially contribute to defence and aid. Since last February, radios have all contributed to their respective capacities: by organising local fundraising events, sharing broadcasts, and launching other initiatives; some on their own, but some together –a rather poignant case of cultural mobilisation that was able to rely on the already existing network of radios, but also of cities and local communities. In most radios, new shows on Ukrainian sounds were launched, while at the same time hosts who had to relocate due to the invasion found space for their shows in the adopted community stations. Aside from the donations and a growing interest in contemporary and legendary Ukrainian musicians, these events serve a function uttered by the already referenced 20ft's "Grains of Peace": "to fill souls with light and fill the future with meaning".

This form of cultural activism isn't limited to current times or geographical borders: from Iranian music showcases or calls to participate in local protests –whether it's the recent raves against the foreign agent law in Tbilisi or Radio Kapitał's long-lived fight for reproductive rights justice in Poland– there is a certain social responsibility that runs across,

I want to argue, long histories of alternative cultural scenes and independent media initiatives. "It is important to situate yourself in the right context", said Nina from Mutant Radio. Yet whenever I am taken out of my Eastern European contexts, I am reminded of how deep runs the sentiment expressed by Peter from Lahmacun: "If you talk about life, you can't escape the topic [of Ukraine]. This topic comes organically, naturally from independent voices of show makers." While his comment implies something perhaps slightly counter-intuitive ("we are not explicitly or even implicitly political, we just try to stay normal in the country that isn't so normal"), it hints at this unbearable lightness of sharing a collective historical context from which some mutual "normality" emerges. It's important to use such a term carefully and acknowledge the wide range of inescapably politicised identities at play in any society. Yet the point is –and I cannot stress this too strongly– local community radio mediates lived realities and music cultures directly, and often with passion. And there is a lot of passion to be broadcasted across Central and Eastern Europe.

Independent cultural media: can we, and do we want to, ever be completely independent? For any region that only recently –and still yet– must prove its sovereignty and legitimacy, autonomous cultural media's resilience is a vital topic. In times when it seemed that geographical identifiers have become obsolete, memory and locality still prove to be important. What can we learn from local histories and collective imaginations exhibited through independent community radio? And how, by doing that, can we express care about the diversity of music cultures without falling for the limiting notions of novelty identity? I guess there is no other way but to tune in: and have fun, in our own way, in our own time, in our own capacity.

▬▬▬

"That's where the nuts ring."[1]
On Independent Art Publishing in Hungary and Eastern Europe

Beáta Istvánkó

is a Budapest-based art historian and curator. She worked as the project coordinator of the Hungarian University of Fine Arts and the Studio of Young Artists' Association, and has curated numerous independent projects. In 2017, she founded the contemporary art publication store and gallery, ISBN books+gallery. She also works as a lecturer at the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts.

Annamária Szabó

is a PhD student in Aesthetics, curator and art writer living in Budapest. For two years she worked as an assistant at ISBN books+gallery, and has also been the editor of the art&design column of prae.hu. Currently she is a proofreader for Artmagazin, and her writings are published in the weekly Magyar Narancs, the Slovakian independent art platform Kontur-Art, and Artportal.

Despite their diverse characteristics, strategies, and concepts, today's Eastern European and Hungarian publishing scenes are linked by the ethos of cultural independence, self-organisation, liberating, and playful –sometimes bittersweet–(self-)reflection, the examination of individual responsibility in relation to our artificial and natural environment, or even the connection to our cultural and historical heritage. To unfold these dispersed yet like-minded modes of operation, this article aims to present three research-based, archive-like publication projects that could shed light on the blind spots of Eastern European identity in a way that will make it difficult to escape from them, demanding answers from the readers. Doing it mostly in a playful way, we might be reminded of the children saga, where the catcher is lured by the lyrics into the longed-for, homely unknown; where the assignment of roles or shelters can change quickly.

Independence in writing

OFF-Biennale Budapest is one of the largest independent contemporary art event in Hungary, that started in 2014 as a grassroots initiative, a "garage" biennale set up by a small group of curators and art professionals. In 2022, OFF-Biennale participated in the fifteenth edition of Documenta with two exhibition projects and an unconventional publication, On the Same Page[2]. It was inspired by the initiative of one of the editors, Katarina Šević, who held editorial meetings with invited national and international guests for the duration of the 2021 OFF Biennale, to explore together important issues such as self-organisation, community pedagogy, artistic freedom, and ecological sustainability through texts and works. These pressing issues were also addressed in the programme of the biennale[3]. The editors originally envisioned a publication shaped by a flexible and open-ended workflow, with the finished work "stimulating collective reflection". The co-publishing project, online and offline, will feature the various collaborating partners and creators of OFF-Biennale Budapest rather than the international guests of the open editorial meeting. But in the end, the editors managed to "boil down" the invocations and shared knowledge into an essential extract.

We are not confronted with an encyclopaedic book, rather with a more informal, liberating content. This is why the On the Same Page project serves a genuine example of Eastern European independent art publishing in general, since it is not formed along a hegemonic or mono-cultural narrative, but provides space for multiple voices to co-emerge. The publication, composed of personal and self-reflexive reports, not only explores the fragmented questions of independence through individual strategies, collective experiences, and historical facts, but also invites us as readers to work collaboratively, even though the publication can be considered finished. This is served by the publication's clean graphics, its script-like presentation, and its open editorial intent: the blank spaces between poems, songs, pictures, visual diaries, essays, and studies encourage us to write our own commentary, so to really be on the same page by the end of the dialogue.

reflec-tion

Project participants had to monitor their research or artwork, assess its success and find new opportunities in the lessons they learned. This is how the mixture of the themes like artistic freedom, ethnic equality, freedom of expression, changing eating habits, or even the connection of fine art versus carbon emissions gave birth to the central theme of the book, which is the topic of independence in general.

It is not formed along a hegemonic or mono-cultural narrative, but provides space for multiple voices to co-emerge.

---

1. A Hungarian children's saga for a catcher, similar to the English Hare and Hounds. All but two children (at least 10) form a circle. One of the chosen players is blindfolded and stands with the other inside the circle of the others. During the singing, the second player runs back and forth (staying in the circle) clapping while the other tries to catch him. When he catches him, two new players are chosen.

2. Here is a summary of the author's Hungarian book review of On the Same Page published on artportal. https://artportal.hu/magazin/egy-lapon-az-on-the-same-page-cimu-kiadvanyrol/
3. More information in English about On the Same Page – OFF-Editorial Practice on the OFF-Biennale's project Living Room homepage: https://archive.offbiennale.hu/en/2021/projects/nappali-living-room.html

With similar intentions in mind, the The Blue Room project by artist duo Tehnica Schweiz (László Gergely and Péter Rákosi) started in 2017, and aims to "recycle" historical and artistic memories in space and time, which merges two narratives in their joint work. On the one hand, the story of the Hungarian Museum of Fine Arts' plaster cast collection of antique sculptures, and on the other hand, that of the 18th century synagogue of Tata (small city in Hungary), which served to house the 'temporary' exhibition of life-size copies of antique sculptures for more than forty years. The two stories begin before World War II, when a tenth of Tata's population of 12 thousand residents were of Jewish origin. They were responsible for the industrial and commercial development of the town and the production of Herend porcelain. After the Jewry of Tata was deported to Auschwitz, their assets, including their factories and the synagogue building, used as a warehouse during the war, were transferred to the State. The damaged synagogue was first renovated in 1977 with the purpose of housing the formerly significant part of the Museum of Fine Arts' plaster cast collection. Similarly to the ambitions of other European museums, so the Museum of Fine Arts Budapest introduced the comprehensive world history of sculpture through replicas for want of original artworks, but later these began to become a nuisance to store. So the Greek-Roman copies were moved to various rural museums, culture houses, and former temples. The Blue Room project, which was presented first in Tata, then in Budapest, and finally in Berlin in 2021, consists of a video work with music and an installation. It is in fact a scaled-down, more or less accurate, porcelain replica of the plaster cast collection created by the artist students who have set up a workshop in the deconsecrated synagogue.

Although the book and its two longer essays cannot reproduce the combined, elemental impact of film and installation, they can provide a crutch by contextualising the exhibitions precisely where they are needed. The study To Do Something with It: Copy Management by art historian Hedvig Turai examines the exhibition in the context of discourses of memory, while the essay Uncertain Futures in Unsettled pasts: Tehnica Schweiz's The Blue Room by the cultural theorist Margaret Tali explores the museum representational and educational role of 19th century antique plaster copy casts and how contemporary art can reuse synagogues in Central Europe.

↑ © Fusz Mátyás – Kristóf Krisztián – Zalavári András, A madarak tapsolnak, amikor felszállnak. Szemlélődési példagyűjtemény, Kisterem Galéria Budapest, 2021

In 2021, Kisterem Gallery, a commercial art gallery (founded in 2006) that not only show cases progressive tendencies of contemporary Hungarian art, but often supports independent art initiatives, published the joint work of Mátyás Fusz, Krisztián Kristóf and András Zalavári, The Birds Clap When They Take Off – A Collection of Contemplative Examples. In a 2019 video interview series, they asked their friends, family members and

other artists how they make playful, seemingly manic observations in the monotony of everyday life, and how they wonder at the small details of their built and natural environment. The interviews first debuted in the context of their group exhibition at Art Gallery Paks, but the project took its final form in this perception showcase book. It is impossible to determine whether it is an archive, an academic study, a comic book, an artists' book, or a fictional one-minute story. But that is irrelevant, because the volume resembles the pataphysic methods of Alfred Jarry or Boris Vian: a series of trivial, playful, yet serious problem-solving exercises. We don't even realise how many opportunities we have to be present somewhere without any active action or purpose. A minimum of one hour of public transport a day, waiting in a doctor's surgery, queuing –in these situations a state of being capable of absorbing reality is created. The book illustrates our relationship to the outside world in solitude, and in doing so is able to create the missing common ground between two people, even if they are completely different, in the chaos of the hustle and bustle of everyday life. These observations, thought to be personal, are dissolved in the collective experience, so that we can look at each other with a wink at the end of the gag... As Kurt Vonnegut would say: and so it goes.

▬

Creating independent art spaces in pages

These books come from the ISBN books+gallery selection, which is a contemporary art bookstore and a gallery space in Budapest. Before ISBN books+gallery was founded, we were confronted with the fact that the visibility of independent publishing in Hungary is very low, even though in practice this territory of the visual arts scene is very active. As a result of the experience, we decided to embark on our own project, attempting to fill the gap in the institutional system and to create a sustainable and completely independent economic model. The decision was followed by action and the ISBN books+gallery opened in December 2017. ISBN's main mission and objective is to map, collect, exhibit, and distribute contemporary art publications, exhibition catalogues, fanzines, artists' books, photobooks, and art theory publications, in Hungary and from the region. Our exhibition space, like the project rooms, functions as an independent and non-profit gallery, while the bookshop will serve as a physical extension of the autonomous zone created by the artists' publications.

↑ Courtesy of ISBN books+gallery

Autonomous art spaces can be created not only in a physical exhibition space, but also in the pages of a publication, and this possibility is increasingly important in the complicated global art world. In line with international trends, contemporary Hungarian artists are more and more thinking about making artists' books, photobooks, and fanzines. In many cases, these mediums allow artists greater freedom than the physical exhibition space. In the case of artist's books and fanzines, the experience of touching, holding, and turning the pages of the book is an integral part of the experience, as is the fact that the book can be bought and taken home, and the experience can be repeated over and over again. Moreover, thanks to the number of copies and global courier services, this process can take place simultaneously in several locations, even in different parts of the world. This aspect is really important for the self-publishers, because the written and visual message they want to communicate can ideally reach a much wider audience than if they were to organise an exhibition in a certain space, in a certain town, in a certain country. Consequently, the artist's books, the photobooks, and the fanzines are media with enormous political and communicative potential. In some cases, the potential is much bigger than a single artwork or an exhibition. Moreover, artist's books, photobooks, and fanzines transcend the institutional boundaries of art, i.e. it is not necessary to go to a museum, gallery, or other exhibition space that for many is an intimidating atmosphere or is labelled elitist.

In addition to being a democratically consumable artistic medium, the independent publication also has the potential for institutional critique, since it does not need the often-rigid institutional framework, so an artist's book or zine can boldly reflect on perceived inadequacies or dissonances. Artists' books and zines are characterised by the fact that they exist in multiple copies (even if limited in number) and are inexpensive compared to the art market, making them relatively widely and democratically available. The production of artist books and fanzines following the rise of the Internet is highly self-reflective due to the fact that it is a change of era; in addition to carrying content, publications often reflect on the medium itself, making different statements about the print book format through their content and appearance.

The post-digital era is characterised by immense information overload, if we only think of the endless data accumulated on the internet. The potential of this is undeniable, but there is also a natural need for some form of selection and for making the filtered information tangible. This is precisely what motivates artists who choose the medium of the artist's book, the photobook, or the fanzine. To leave the status of passive media consumer and become a media-creator. The objective and motivation of ISBN books+gallery is clear: to expand to the maximum possible size and to sustain the shrinking domestic independent art scene in the long term through the opportunities created by publications and exhibition projects.

Bibliography

Mátyás Fusz – Krisztián Kristóf – András Zalavári: A madarak tapsolnak, amikor felszállnak. Szemlélődési példagyűjtemény. Kisterem Gallery, Budapest, 2021.

Rita Kálmán – Lívia Páldi – Katarina Šević: On the Same Page. OFF Biennále Budapest, 2022.

Tehnica Schweiz (Gergely László, Péter Rákosi) – Eszter Lázár: The Blue Room. Berlin/Budapest, 2021.

On Kajet, the Independent Platform for Easternfuturism and Its The Future Of Series

Lili Rebeka Tóth is a Hungarian curator and art writer based in New York. Her latest curatorial project includes the HOW(EVER) Art Book Fair at PORTIKUS in Frankfurt, ABRACADABRA at the Residency of the American Embassy of Hungary, and No one is bored at the Hessel Museum, Annandale-on-Hudson.

"Leaning on the Past, Working for the Future," the subtitle of Anders Kreuger's essay that appeared in Afterall, speaks for the definition of Ethno-futurism, a loosely defined concept and a future-oriented mode of thinking based on the idea of providing an equal platform for multiple ethnicities in the world.[1] Among Afrofuturism, Gulf Futurism, and Sinofuturism, Easternfuturism was also born as a branch of Ethno-futurism, explicitly referring to a project anticipating the future. While these movements are interconnected in their intention to achieve and maintain everlasting multiculturalism and global ethnopluralism, their core characteristics are distinct from one another.

For instance, what defines Easternfuturism is a re-conceptualisation of Eastern Europe's future through a wide range of artistic and activist practices. This gave birth to various parallel movements within this category, for instance, Ossifuturism, Hungarofuturism, Yiddish Cosmos, and Roma futurism. All of these embrace certain cultural theoretical concepts, such as nostalgia, utopia, hauntology, or feminism, reflecting on the questions of historical myths, nationalistic ideology, and post-socialism.

However, Easternfuturism as a defined cultural phenomenon could not be existent without such platforms as the independent Romanian publisher, KAJET. "The Journal of Eastern European Encounters" brings together a new generation of curators, publishers, and artists who have the chance to study further West after the fall of the Berlin Wall. These intellectuals actively operate in introducing and implementing new forms of ideas into regional discussions while having an innate capacity to translate current Eastern European artistic trends into a more global language.

1. Anders Kreuger, "Ethno-Futurism: Leaning on the Past, Working for the Future," *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry* 43, March 2017, pp. 116–33

The Future of Eastern Europe

The Future of series, a collaborative project developed by KAJET and Dispozitiv Books, has been launched in 2021 as a quarterly magazine that examines how to reconsider, reclaim, and remap the potential of ideas that reshape contemporary society. The editorial project works with a methodology of deconstruction, recontextualisation, and critique of such notions that can be utilised to think for a more stable, optimistic future. Borrowing the title of Svetlana Boym's book, the first issue of the series begins with The Future of Nostalgia (2021-2022 winter), and unfolds the meaning of nostalgia as a tool for collective liberation.[2] The Future of Ghosts, the second issue which was presented in the summer of 2022, embraces the existence of "ghosts" in current critical notions.

↑ Kajet 05 Front Cover. © Pavlo Borshchenko

reclaim

The Future of series carries those attributes, which a KAJET journal reader would recognise: it is well-designed, speculative, experimental, and inherently Eastern European. KAJET, borrowing its name from the French word cahier (notebook), is a publisher from a working-class neighborhood of Bucharest called Titian. It is run by Petre Mogoș and Laura Naum, the owners of Dispozitiv Books. KAJET's objectives are precisely presented on their website in a form of "A Manifesto or why bother about Eastern Europe," in which they claim to counterbalance and expand an overly Western-oriented field while emphasising the existence of an

aggravated socio-political territory behind the term Eastern Europe.[3] They demand and demonstrate how the area, which had been long treated as "the other" is much more than a mediocre exotic site of disaster tourism. They show how it functions as a platform for thriving experiments, on which, their engagement as an independent publisher also becomes one. KAJET's methodology is substantially collective and lies behind filling the hiatus of a concise, critical approach to this marginal segment of the world.

2. Boym, Svetlana. The Future of Nostalgia. New York: Basic Books, 2001.
3. KAJET DIGITAL. "A MANIFESTO OR WHY BOTHER ABOUT EASTERN EUROPE." Accessed February 7, 2023. https://kajetjournal.com/about/.

Reclaiming "the other"

Their first printed material series, the KAJET journal with the subtitle "a journal of Eastern European encounters" has already published four award winning issues, On Communities in 2017, On Utopias in 2018, On Struggle in 2019, and On Periphery in 2020. What differentiates the KAJET journal from the The Future of series is its length and tone: the former comes in a rather heavy and theoretical, book-life format, while the latter is a more digestible magazine, the Spike Art of the East. However, what brings them together is their deep attraction to reclaiming this Eastern "other" as their own.

The Future of Nostalgia is an overture, a grounding block of a system that is built on a structure where Eastern Europe is exposed to be discussed in critical theoretical terminologies. The clean plate which is provided for Boym's Nostalgia was wiped out and bleached from those troubled, conservative, melancholic, yet romantic meanings, which illustrated it as sentimental kitsch. It became a platform to talk about the Moldavian documentary photographer Ramin Mazur's archive, built on collected and found camera rolls, or narrate a hypothetical discussion between György Lukács and Mark Fisher. The Future of Ghosts is an investigation on the haunting past in literal and figurative sense. Ghosts could be either persistent memories of the pasts, "ordinary" ghost from spooky movie characters or, just steams and clouds.

Independence beyond stereotypes

The Future of series disproves if such a stereotype ever existed of Eastern Europe being dull, savage, and pessimistic. It also breaks the pattern of Western-style magazines, deluged by countless advert pages. In every sense, KAJET is independent from commercial, institutional, and bureaucratic authorities. It creates a trend of being political, but

This marginal area is long defeated to be more than just the ruins of modernity and became a platform for thriving contemporary encounters as well as collective ideas.

reading between the lines: troubled memories and heavy thoughts are folded into a design object. Yet, a double-sided question remains when analysing the publisher in a global context. Being consciously self-reflective, the inquiry of why the world should pay attention to the Eastern European part of the world is already, explicitly formulated in KAJET's Manifesto's title. However, "why bother about Eastern Europe" never actually finds its answer within its standpoint; it only lines up arguments of how this marginal area is long defeated to be more than just the ruins of modernity and became a platform for thriving contemporary encounters as well as collective ideas. If the "West" is clever enough, it understands that certain points of KAJET's statement are harsh critiques of neoliberalism, individualism, capitalism, and a superficial reading of cultural peripheries. And if it bothers, it maintains self-reflection on those issues.

The other side of "the question of the global" concerns Eastern European art production: do these regional encounters manage to stand in dialogue with other parts of the world? Or again, doesn't it fall into the same pitfall and follow the model of the former communist economic system: producing for its own market? By embracing its own characteristics and declaring a collaborative union within the post-socialist countries, doesn't the East contribute again to the construction of the Berlin Wall?

Non-Capital Cities on the Border

The Strength and Structure of the UK's Independent Northern Musical Network

Laura Rosierse
music industry professional from the Netherlands, based in Newcastle upon Tyne. She has worked with international artists as an artist manager and PR agent, organises live events and is co-city leader of Sofar Sounds Newcastle. Laura also regularly works at music festivals such as Solfest, Eden Festival, and Lindisfarne Festival.

The network of independent cultural and media organisations has always been a colourful one in the UK. The cost-of-living crisis in combination with the underfunding of the independent and emerging music scenes, this unstructured network is becoming less colourful when it comes to both hope and motivation to continue working in its sector. This framework should bring back and brighten the colour of the local music scenes that are based in the northern regions of the United Kingdom. Grassroots musicians,

music venues, festivals, and promoters are struggling, but they have always had to work harder for their craft than say a dentist, and it shows, because they simply won't give up. Cities such as Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool, and Newcastle are filled with creative initiatives and businesses such as XS Manchester, Amazing Radio, Come Play With Me, the Northern Music Collective, and supportive independent venues such as Lions Den in Manchester and The Jacaranda in Liverpool that support the local music scenes where they can.

Grassroots media outlets, venues, and festivals

Northern music-related media outlets help amplify the voices of their local scenes, with great examples in NARC Magazine, The Crack, Louder Than War, and Soundsphere. Many a local radio station, such as Amazing Radio, XS Manchester, and Radio Northwich help broadcast releases of emerging artists and bring them to new ears. These creative outlets prove that their local scenes are more than thriving and those interested in working in their respective scenes shouldn't feel obliged to move to

London for any chance of being able to work in music or the creative arts. The north east hosts many an all-day music festival with great examples in Coast Fest, A Stone's Throw Festival, Waves Sunderland, and Aelius Alternative Festival. Their grassroots music venues Zerox, Bobiks, Mosaic Tap, and The Lost Wanderer offer live opportunities to the wider scenes that give emerging artists the opportunity to grace a stage in- as well as outside of their hometown. Microbus, a new micropub in Gateshead, offers emerging artists the chance to perform across the river from Newcastle and pays them fairly without ambiguity. Worldwide organisations such as Sofar Sounds

such as for example Sam Fender and Lewis Capaldi. The rising cost of living crisis is however trying its hardest to bring some of these grassroots venues to their knees and sees some of them no longer programming live events as the simple issue is that tickets don't sell as fast anymore.

↑ The Levellers at Solfest, Cumbria. © Laura Rosierse

offer paid no-risk opportunities for emerging artists in Leeds, Manchester, Middlesbrough, and Newcastle, and Arts Council funding pots support artists financially where needed. The wider northern regions host many an inclusive festival organised by and for artists, examples are Live at Leeds, Solfest in Cumbria and Musicport in Whitby, add Whitby's goth weekender to that and you can pinpoint where most of Whitby's local businesses' income is coming from. All the above-mentioned organisations are vital for emerging artists to find their voice and their stage, and help them develop into the next nationally well-known artist,

We are stronger together

Organisations such as the Northern Music Collective, based in Newcastle, have brought together a group of local promoters as well as artists to streamline the live events and support those organising them. With a clear and simple overview of the live events happening in the city, the collective works on preventing multiple events of the same genre happening on the same evening, so as not to divide audiences. Venues such as The

louder

Peer Hat in Manchester, Hyde Park Book Club in Leeds, and The Cluny in Newcastle work hard on creating diverse programs and inclusive venues. These venues are not only popular among national artists, but also bring in a great amount of international artists that jump the hoops to tour internationally. Dutch artists such as Pip Blom, Personal Trainer, Queen's Pleasure, and Canadian outfit Shelf Lives, are only a few examples of artists that bring audiences to the UK venues up north. With smooth sailing travel links such as the ferry from IJmuiden to Newcastle and Hoek van Holland to Harwich, artists are able to cross the pond and finally personally engage with the audience they have gathered over the past few years through social media. These are the artists that have been discovered through Instagram Reels and Tik-Tok and over the lockdowns have been able to connect with an international audience that are longing to see their new favourite band live.

Organisations such as the Northern Music Collective, based in Newcastle, have brought together a group of local promoters as well as artists to streamline the live events and support those organising them.

Post-Brexit touring

The sad reality of international relationships between music scenes is the massive difference Brexit has made for grassroots musicians and organisations. Where it used to be possible to simply book a flight and bring a band from one side of the pond to the other, new costs have to be calculated into the touring costs, such as ATA carnets and the costs of selling merchandise outside of the European Union. Most grassroots artists and music structures don't earn their money from touring, but from selling merchandise, and are often told they should be 'happy to play for £50', while there is no way for four people (the average amount of musicians in a band) to travel the country for under £50. The margins

on one T-shirt are around £6 per T-shirt, if they sell 5, that is an extra £30 which could just get them the petrol to get to the venue and back. While it is currently more expensive to tour overseas, both fees and hospitality at venues in mainland Europe are generally more in favour of the grassroots artists thanks to the local governments and their support for the grassroots arts scenes. Yet no matter the –lack of– support from the UK government to embrace the arts and music sectors as one of the best coming out of the UK, these scenes are resilient and bring a power and stubbornness to those eager enough to join them.

Conferences and networking

Scotland's Wide Days conference, Manchester's Un-Convention, and the north east's Twisterella, Stockton Calling, and The Gathering Sounds festivals all bring a much needed structure to their scenes. Manchester's Un-Convention is a stronghold that offers the north a conference with international speakers and an organisation that is internationally involved in the music scene. The two-days-long convention offers insightful, inclusive, and accessible panels and masterclasses with internationally known organisations, artist managers, and musicians to talk through the challenges of those attending, aiming to find answers to questions that aren't answered elsewhere. No-one is a fan of the term "networking", but conferences and network-events do bring the opportunity to meet like-minded professionals within the music industry, and help create stronger

networks and partnerships to enhance existing projects and businesses. A good example of that is the Regional Music Network which includes promoters and venue owners from Manchester, the north east, Coventry, and Hastings to name some examples. Another rather new example of an inclusive network event is The Pentatonic's Nobody Talks Anymore which takes place in Manchester and is looking to host another edition in March next year.

Merchandise and physical music

As if the above isn't enough to prove that the UK's northern regions within the music industry are in fact thriving, despite losing independent venues and bands due to them being unable to break even, an already established merchandiser and a brand-new pressing plant are located in the north east, accessible to all. Merch Bitch have been producing merchandise for

voices

↑ Sofar Sounds Newcastle show. © Laura Rosierse

emerging bands all over the world with one of their most famous clients to date being Sam Fender, their office is based in Sunderland and offers local artists the chance to pick up their new merchandise themselves to save on shipping costs. With quick communication and a quick turnaround, they make it possible for bands to press merch sometimes before they have even released any music, making it possible for them to earn extra money while being out on the road or at hometown shows. Pressing plant Press On Vinyl makes it even easier for artists to start selling their music through their initiative Fairsound Music. Fairsound offers a service similar to a Crowdfunder, where artists can sell pre-sales of their physical music, once they have hit breakeven point, the pressing plant will start producing their vinyl. This is a no-risk deal for both artists and pressing plant! Press On Vinyl have an open-door policy and allow bands, managers, record labels, and the like to visit the plant and watch the production process while their vinyl is being pressed. These businesses don't just make it viable to be an artist in the north east, they open up job opportunities and show that there is no need to move to London to become a part of one of the most beautiful industries there is. Their personal way of interacting with their clients shows their passion for their craft and takes away the ambiguity of what is going on behind the doors of seemingly mysterious businesses.

Every single village contains at least one musician, and those musicians need structure and a second opinion from time to time, an industry to support them and help them evolve.

Inspiration and resources

Those that are brave enough to start working in music or decide to start a business in music might at times find it overwhelming to find the right business, or business partner, with the overload of information we receive via social media on a daily basis. Books written by artists and industry professionals can help narrow it down and highlight other resources to consider before diving in at the deep end. A good example of an artist that has outlined his journey into music is Johnny Marr in his book Set The Boy Free, Dave Grohl did a similar thing in his book The Storyteller and most recently James Kennedy published his book Noise Damage which does not beat around the bush. Music journalist Ian Winwood shared his stories and experiences in Bodies and what is also called "the music bible", is How Music Works by David Byrne. When independent artists Honeyblood and The Lovely Eggs were asked if they ever thought about a Plan B to being an artist during this year's Un-Convention, both answered with a simply "I don't have any transferable skills, this is what I do, it isn't a career, but a lifestyle choice." And there is no better way of wording it. Every single village contains at least one musician, someone who is born to tell their stories in the form of music, and those musicians need structure and a second opinion from time to time, an industry to support them and help them evolve. Grassroots music venues offer live opportunities, cultural organisations such as Come Play With Me offer exposure, job roles, create network opportunities and offer advice where needed, it is the invaluable added value of structured music scenes. No matter where you are based, there will be opportunities for you to be a part of the most creative and resilient industry there is and for you to find your voice, and your crowd.

3 questions to Come Play With Me

Leeds, United Kingdom

01.

Can you introduce your structure to us?

Come Play With Me is a non-profit music development organisation, based in Leeds, United Kingdom. We specialise in supporting people from marginalised communities to further their careers in music. Our mission is to fight for an equitable, inclusive and diverse music industry. We provide tailored career development for individuals through our events, label, mentoring, podcast & magazine and workshops. We are a Community Interest Company (CIC) meaning that we seek to make profits but are legally obliged to reinvest these in the activities we manage.

02.

Why did you join the Reset! network?

Since Brexit, the organisation has been reflecting on how to keep interacting and existing within the European landscape - joining RESET! was a great starting point to grow key relationships with other organisations and players in the independent cultural sector across Europe and kickstart some important conversations about how to rebuild successful models of collaboration for UK-based organisations. We believe these is lots of best practice we can learn/share across sectors within the Reset! network.

03.

How does being an independent cultural actor based outside of the all-centralised capital city affect your cultural activities at the regional level?

Being based in a decentralised city in the UK is both a resource and an issue for our organisation. On one hand, there is a clear imbalance when it comes to cultural investments in the region, if compared to a place like London for example. It's definitely a challenge to build an organisation in a city with little industry infrastructure. One the other hand, being based in Leeds allows us to interact with highly engaged and passionate communities, brought together by the DIY spirit that characterises the city.

COME PLAY WITH ME

Rural Areas Forgotten

Reviving European Mountain Sanatoria: A Rural Cultural Rebirth?

Deserted and abandoned, hundreds of sanatoria facilities across the European mountains are awaiting a new destination. Could communities and regions that were once sustained by "the tuberculosis industry" find a new drive through culture-led rural regeneration? In this piece, researcher and writer Giulia Gotti discusses possible futures for this unique heritage, following the example of the small Polish village of Sokołowsko.

The rise (and fall) of tuberculosis and sanatoria facilities

From Giovan Battista Pergolesi to John Keats, from the Brontë sisters to Niccolò Paganini, from Fryderyk Chopin to Anton Chekhov, from George Orwell to Louis Braille, from Baruch Spinoza to Erwin Schrödinger. What do all these personalities have in common? They all died of tuberculosis, arts and literature's cultural denominator across the 18th and 19th centuries, tied to the romantic ideal of it as a redeeming disease and the sanatorium as

Giulia Gotti

is a research writer with a background in literature and cultural theory. She held an active role in the participatory development of several creative spaces based on repurposed buildings across Italy, Central Europe, and Scandinavia – venturing as well to non-urban contexts. Now working with environmental humanities and rural development, she collaborates with Rural Radicals, an independent social enterprise working with culture-led regeneration of European non-urban areas.

a place of purification. Because of the variety of its symptoms, tuberculosis wasn't identified as a single disease until 1820, making the implementation of an appropriate treatment difficult. The pivotal year is 1854: in the historical moment of the Industrial Revolution and cities at peak explosion, Dr. Hermann Brehmer asserted that all that was needed to cure this illness was a regime of isolation, fresh air, abundant sunlight, and good nutrition. Although the medical establishment initially rejected Brehmer's ideas, the sanatorium movement steadily proved its effectiveness, becoming the official cure across European countries.

↑ Sanatorium in Sokołowsko. © SchiDD, CC BY-SA 4 - Wikimedia Commons

The newborn mountain colonies were often inspired by a mixture of philanthropic socialism and entrepreneurial spirit aimed at exploiting the "tuberculosis industry" which, in the hopes of the sponsors, was destined to be profitable and permanent since it had no "seasonal downtime," unlike the touristic one. In light of these factors, it becomes clear why, around a century ago, across Europe, hundreds of these buildings were fabricated to contrast a disease older than the history of humankind. Then a cure was found —and, while celebrating, we forgot about them.

In the debate about rural regeneration in Europe, we need to speak about Sanatoria. Enormous complexes from a (mostly) bygone era, the earlier heritage was born mainly from private initiative, producing high-quality, architecturally notable buildings of eclectic, secessionist, and historicist styles. And the same reason that made them ideal in the treatment of tuberculosis –the isolation in remote, green, rural mountain locations– now poses significant challenges in what

may seem like an intuitive path of integration into the modern healthcare system. Lots of these facilities are considered obsolete; transforming them into hospitals is an expensive commitment. And they lie in decay.

The problem is more than just at the level of the landscape. Year after year, the anti-tuberculosis treatment centres, crowded with patients, medical personnel, and assistance personnel, were often the main source of employment and income in several areas. The example of a small village in the Silesian Mountains, in the south of Poland, stands out in suggesting how culture-led regeneration might be an answer to offering new opportunities not only for the depopulating community, but for the region as a whole.

regene-

Sokołowsko: when health and independent culture intertwine

The town of Sokołowsko is an invisible dot on the map, with no more than 600 inhabitants spreading around one main street. Its history is tied to the history of Dr. Bremher himself: the town was, in fact, home to the very first European sanatorium, all the way back when the region was part of Germany, and the place name was Görbersdorf. In 2007, Bożenna Biskupska, a Polish sculptor and independent artist from Warsaw got to the remote village. She was traveling around the country looking for a new headquarters for her Contemporary Art Foundation 'In Situ'. The main Sanatorium building's roof was burned, and trees had grown in the patients' former rooms, but Biskupska was fascinated by the ruin, and she bought it. This is how a new chapter of the village's history began.

Since then, the main goal and project of the Foundation has been the reconstruction of the former burnt Dr. Brehmer's Sanatorium and the creation of an International Cultural Laboratory there –a process which resulted in transforming the place into an internationally recognised hotspot for contemporary arts.
For instance, in the experimental music festival 'Sanatorium of Sound', Dr. Bremher's innovative health treatments are now "with cold and hot sounds, sticks and stones, in the cinema and outdoors." In Situ's initiatives such as the festival –reaching this year its 9th edition– attract a crowd of thousands of art and music enthusiasts from all over the world, creating a new, colourful small town. And the connection between research-based art projects and medical architecture is often present. For instance, the 2019 project Musica Sanae, dedicated

↑ Sanatorium of Sound 2019. © Tomek Ogrodowczyk

to intersections of sound and medicine, where Sokołowsko joined major European urban centres such as Naples and Berlin in a three-step event where over forty musicians, performers, researchers, and theorists presented their takes on "how new ways of hearing produce and underlie our notions of hygiene, health, well-being, progress, and sanity."

Now, the ex-sanatorium of Dr. Bremher is definitely "on the map." Two types of newcomers coexist in the village: while some may come for the mountains and nature, an increasing part is there for the art. And while most drop in for a while, some decide to move here permanently, resulting in a surprising diversity where retired sanatorium employees, artists, architects, and corporate employees now live next to each other.

A collateral sign of Sokołowsko's new energy is in the local housing market: due to its increasing popularity, prices are now somewhat comparable to property costs in the bigger cities. While the word "gentrification" may echo, its non-urban version has new connotations: with the sanatorium no longer active, it often represented a great deal for the aging population to have the opportunity to sell their houses to up-and-coming artists at a significantly higher price, thus gaining access to something in the city closer to health facilities and services more of their interest. Despite the existence of a few short-term rentals, signs of capitalist development seem not to be looming: no new buildings arrived in the village, the sole source of groceries is still one small shop that opens at irregular hours, the public connection to the nearest train station (14km) is a scattered bus service. And the result is also a village finding a new spirit, rejuvenated by young people with a stable presence there.

ration

↑ Sanatorium of Sound 2019. © Tomek Ogrodowczyk

European sanatoria: calling for a grassroots model of regeneration

Sokołowsko's remarkable transformation can arguably be attributed to its active on-site engagement. European sanatoria, with their varying states, follow diverse trajectories after decommissioning. While some crumble into ruins for "Urbex" enthusiasts, the Polish case demonstrates how these health centres might have a realistic chance to go beyond being just a simulacrum of past times, still living and evolving their purpose through independent culture.

One major structural obstacle is the significant amount of building renovation required compared to the limited resources available. For activists and organisations in non-urban or isolated contexts attempting such projects, securing a consistent funding stream presents an even greater hurdle –a problem that In Situ Foundation knows well. Which gets even more significant with the necessity of

It is ultimately through culture that the regenerative and health-preserving spirit of former sanatoria places might just refurbish and blossom.

——

maintaining a substantial on-site presence in the community. There's a notable risk of resorting to commercialisation to sustain this heritage. In that regard, an example comes from the Portuguese mountain village of Caramulo; home to the 1920's Estancia do Caramulo, which would become the leading tuberculosis health resort in the Iberian Peninsula, the 22 buildings currently lie in ruin. So far, the rest of Caramulo has managed to gain its spot on the map following a tourism-led model of development.

re-

↑ Kino Zdrowie from Ulica Glowna. © Tomek Ogrodowczyk

vitali-

↑ The Great Sanatorium, Caramulo. © visitcaramulo.pt

The initial establishments come from the 1950s with the creation of "cultural resort" facilities: two museums dedicated to the arts and the automotive industry (currently owned by the Abel and João de Lacerda Foundation). But the late 1990s saw a shift in direction, with the appearance of a high-end hotel, as well as a spa and wellness centre. As of 2023, Caramulo is facing the challenge of understanding what is now going to be of its sanatoria heritage.

There is a proclaimed intention of "diversifying more into the arts, namely artists' residencies, creative hubs, and incubators." Next to a clear vision, what is crucial now for Caramulo's sanatoria is funding support and commitment to ideas preserving their tie to the community in the regeneration process. As Sokołowsko's example shows, adopting a non-exploitative model of cultural revitalisation in rural areas can result in a new, sustainable, holistic direction for these types of establishments. With the right awareness of the

challenges that it entails, it is ultimately through culture that the regenerative and health-preserving spirit of former sanatoria places like Caramulo –as many others all across our continent– might just refurbish and blossom.

——

Thank you to Lech Moliński and Gabriel Souto for sharing their knowledge with me.

→ Learn more about what's happening in Sokowolsko:
https://www.sokolowsko.org/en

Rural Radicals is an independent social enterprise working with culture-led regeneration of European non-urban areas. Together with its help, the village of Caramulo is being envisioned for the next 100 years, including some of its empty sanatoria.
→ Learn more about it:
https://ruralradicals.com/

sation

↑ Overview of Basis, Silandro, and the valley. © Samuel Holzner

Basis Vinschgau Venosta and MOCI Network: Rural Situations for Independent Cultural Structures

Axel Simon

is an architect and stage designer based in Paris. He also works as a journalist for various medias, writing articles about clubs and festivals design and ecological practices in architectural and musical fields.

In Europe, rural exodus following cities economic developments and emigration movements left rural areas less provided than cities in structures of all kinds, including cultural ones. Sometimes being perceived as empty spaces for culture, they are still home to very lively cultural productions, not only traditional ones, but also increasingly contemporary trends. If Covid led significant movements of people from the cities to the rural areas –with digital nomads being able to work from almost everywhere– it's only been a push for a trend that was already active before. It accelerated the needs and impulses for independent cultural structures in rural areas, as well as a fusion between rural and urban cultures and ways of living.

Despite these dynamics, the balance between urban and rural independent cultural structures remains highly in favour of the cities, especially the big ones.
To explore the reasons why there is still a disequilibrium between urban and rural areas, but also to present processes that can lead to a better balance and inspire people who would contribute to this rebalancing, the article invites several actors in Europe who create and support independent cultural structures in rural areas to present their situations and contexts, and how they create positive dynamics in it.

Basis Vinschgau Venosta: an independent cultural hub in the centre of a rural valley

This exploration takes us first to Silandro, in the autonomous province of Bolzano, northern Italy. In this rural valley, far from the main traffic routes that cross the Alps, an independent cultural and social venue, Basis Vinschgau Venosta, is helping to revitalise the local context, while attracting newcomers, retaining those tempted to leave, and accompanying a transformation from conservative values to more progressive ones.

> The balance between urban and rural independent cultural structures remains highly in favour of the cities, especially the big ones.

This place has been founded by Hannes Götsch, born and raised in Silandro, in 2019 in former military barracks built in 1936. The main two-storey building is used for educational purposes, meeting rooms, co-working spaces, shared workshops, studios, and a multifunctional club room, which is also used for congresses, events, and exhibitions. Basis hosts both local and foreign people, and is profitable for the local communities, institutions, and private actors.

Before creating Basis, Hannes mainly learned from independent cultural structures in cities that have repurposed buildings. For him the main reason for this is that: "cities processed faster than rural places. There are more people, less space, everything is getting more edgy, so the reuse and investment projects are getting faster." These sources of inspiration helped him and his friends to build Basis and anticipate the needs of people from the city to escape it.

Convincing step by step on a local level

Still, living in Silandro in a very conservative context, Hannes knew that there was a great need for a change in values. He also realised that he needed a place like Basis in order to stay in the valley, to develop, to meet, to experiment, to create a supportive culture, and to initiate change. He was not the only one in need of such a place and changes: as the valley doesn't have a university, many people go to the big cities around (Vienna, Innsbruck, Bologna or Bolzano) after high school, and rarely come back, creating a brain drain situation. Hannes convinced the mayor of Silandro that the creation of Basis would reverse the phenomenon, and the latter gave him permission to set up the facility.

change

This creation was not an easy one, as the Basis building represented traumas from the past. The region of Bolzano has been part of Austrian Empire, Italianised, administered by the Nazis during the Second World War, had a movement for reunification with Austria. All these periods have left traumas that have not all been worked on. Also, in 1936, the place was taken away from the farmers by the military, so decades later farmers themselves wanted to demolish the building. Instead, the place was transformed, solving much more than destroying it. Today, one of the rooms is used by a Culinary Craft Academy in which farmers can refine their products. Basis team also offers innovative services to farmers' associations or cooperatives. This example shows how, in a situation that was not so easy for the local population, the elasticity of grassroots processes led to the creation of a bond between the project and the locals.

This kind of success also comes from the necessity created by the rural context. Fewer people in rural areas implies a need to find more common ground and political diplomacy to realise proposals. Discussions processes find more overlaps and interests between different groups of people. Part of this diplomatic way of finding common sense has been stimulated by letting local people, from the public and private sectors, be part of 50% of the club venue programming.

Because Basis includes a club venue and organises events, they needed to find a critical mass of people to be sure that what they're organising is economically sustainable. This meant attracting people from other towns, regions, and abroad, from mainstream as well as subcultural scenes. A challenge that led them to create a good balance in the programming between accessible and subcultural niche events.

A decentralised and re-localised hub in an Alpine idyll

This balance between accessible and niche seems to be working, as more and more people from other areas, both rural and urban, come to the events. This movement is also active for people who come to work in Basis, or even live in Silandro. Not just after Covid, which Hannes sees as a boost, but as a digital nomad trend for workation, co-workation, co-living, the need to travel, to be with creative people and not to be alone.

The result is that Basis hosts people from all over the world, a melting pot of dynamics that are supported by work modules and infrastructures, as well as four residencies. This makes Basis a creative hub, where energies converge and are redistributed between all the actors and with the local context, creating a dynamic transformation of values that attracts more people and convinces them to stay in the valley.

Creating this virtuous circle and attracting people from abroad has been facilitated by the connections Basis has made along the way with other networks and actors. They are part of the Trans Europe Halles network and the European Creative's hub network, both of which feature very similar places. They also frequently collaborate with an entrepreneurial project called MIND and the Ost West club, both based in Merano. Since 2017,

they developed a coworking brand for the region called Start Base. Today, have a second location in Malles and building projects in two other spots in the valley.

MOCI: a network of independent socio-cultural structures and initiatives between Balkans, Caucasus, and Eastern Europe

Basis Vinschgau Venosta was created in a rich region in the centre of Western Europe, where cultural structures are already present and funding mechanisms are well established. Other initiatives of the same type do not benefit from such a favourable context, and must adopt ingenious strategies to accompany their own development over time. This is the case of the structures that make up the MOCI network, present in several Balkan and Caucasus countries.

MOCI was co-created in 2019 by independent European cultural and social actors and youth organisations. It aims to connect and transcend cultural constraints, eliminate digital divides, create common vocabularies and access open knowledge within and across the regions where it operates. MOCI actors create independent cultural structures and initiatives that vary greatly from one country to another. Among these three of them in three different countries catch our attention here, in Albania, Georgia, and Romania. Each case shows the dynamics of cultural rebalancing in rural areas, and all highlight the importance of structuring networks, even transnational ones, to achieve successes in this process.

This kind of connection is an important way of coming together in former communist countries, which usually have very few connections from one structure to another, as well as from one country to another. MOCI allows its member organisations to counter these dynamics and to create a reflection around social or cultural life, as well as the processes of creating independent cultural initiative in non-capitals and rural context.

Beyond these limits, MOCI members initiate and support actions that are crucial for rural regions, overcoming the challenges of acceptance by local populations and creating vital alternatives and resources that are gradually becoming effective.

↑ Basis co-working spaces. © Samuel Holzner

In the city of Kamzës, Albania, located between the Tirana and more rural areas, Ronald Qema is one of the founders of Ata grupi, created in 2014 by several young people driven by the desire to build a place and a city in which they would have opportunities to learn things, express themselves, meet, experiment, and engage in various actions. For this, they have used different disciplines of communities activation, such as journalism, theatre, anthropology, cinematography, community building, youth empowerment. The horizontal basis of Ata grupi is one of the keys to the structure's longevity, as Ronald explains. It allows the people involved to express themselves fully and feel included, and thus to stay for the long term.

In Albania, the rural exodus and emigration that took place in the 1990s is still active. This means that most of the rural areas are almost abandoned with nearly no infrastructure, making it difficult for people to come back and try to create something, especially in the cultural field. In order to reverse these dynamics, Ata Grupi is helping rural communities by providing them with legal assistance, already as a base for social gatherings, before developing physical structures later.

From Tbilisi, Georgia, Wato Tsereteli and colleagues run the Centre of Contemporary Arts (CCA), founded in 2010. They support rural initiatives in the field of culture, but also build bridges between urban and rural areas through permaculture.

Thanks to independent cultural structures, parts of rural areas are reconnected to the flows of cultural production.

—

Wato sums up this commitment to regional development: "Even if you want to develop a capital, you should develop regions, because it's the only way the balance is possible. Otherwise, you have everything in the capital and the regions are passive, which would ultimately unbalance the capital."

In 2016, the CCA team participated in a TV programme about finding empty spaces in rural areas and people who would like to activate them. For this programme, they spotlighted potential places in all regions of Georgia that could be used as projects. They then supported the initiatives to be built, acting as initiators to find people and new legal bodies. Five initiatives have maintained this continuity and found the ground to grow, are stable, and work with CCA. They work as spaces where young people can have free access to knowledge and resources, be involved in

↑ Home in Făgăraş. © Făgăraş Research Institute

the communities and develop their potential. For this younger generation, it creates a future with more opportunities, away from difficult jobs and sometimes criminality.

Stefan Cibiani is part of three initiatives aimed at developing independent cultural structures and initiatives in the rural town of Făgăraş, Romania. The first is called Home in Făgăraş and is a co-living and coworking space in his former grandparents' house and barn. It has been hosting people and various workshops and cultural events for several years. The second comes from his day job at the Făgăraş Research Institute: as a researcher, one of his goals is to create a liberal arts college in the region. The third initiative is a small campus called Calbor for educational and cultural events in a small village near Făgăraş, which takes place in a former renovated school.

Stefan Cibiani notes that both the EU and the Romanian government are not doing much to fund cultural initiatives in rural areas. For him, another limit for the development of rural cultural structures comes from the fact that funders and donors

ask MOCI actors to think about their own economic sustainability, while they themselves don't think about how to help and endorse the independent cultural sector. This would mean creating systems in which people working in culture and the arts do not have to struggle to make a living.

Despite these economic difficulties, cultural activities take place in the villages around Făgăraş, Georgia, Kamzës, or Silandro. Thanks to independent cultural structures, parts of rural areas are reconnected to the flows of cultural production. This fusion between rural and traditional ways of life, and the reinterpretation and reappropriation of everything from gastronomy to songs, dances, costumes, building methods and more, creates something that people can relate to and identify with. Home in Făgăraş, along with CCA, Ata grupi, and Basis, are a part of this movement and gives impulses to it, highlighting these (re)emerging dynamics.

—

↑ Art House Gori, a place helped by CCA Tbilisi. © Gori photographers club

3 questions to Robida

Topolò, Italy

01.

Can you introduce your structure to us?

Robida is a cultural association and a collective of architects, researchers, archivists, and artists based in Topolò/Topolove, a small village of 25 inhabitants, situated at the border between Italy and Slovenia. Robida works at the intersection of written and spoken word and spatial practices, carrying out for almost ten years a multilingual magazine, a community radio, its own Academy of Margins, taking care of the nature-culture that surrounds the village and constantly reflecting about different modalities of inhabiting the village and its landscape. robidacollective.com

02.

Why did you join the Reset! network?

Robida decided to join the Reset! network to bring in the network perspectives on culture and media making from a very rural context –namely that were Robida is working from, a small, depopulated, underdeveloped, borderland village in the Italian mountains. Based on this interest Robida organised, within the series of Reset! workshops, a one-day seminar and workshop with the title Situated Publishing: Possibilities and Challenges of Editorial Practices in Post- Rural Contexts, inviting 12 cultural workers active in rural or urban context (from Italy, Slovenia, The Netherlands, Poland, England, Portugal) to discuss challenges, possibilities, positive and negative aspects of cultural production in post-rural contexts, based on their experiences.

03.

How does being an independent cultural actor based in a rural area affect your cultural activities at the regional level?

Working on cultural projects being based in a non-urban, hyper depopulated environment has a very strong impact on the way projects are done, both on a conceptual level and on an infrastructural practical one. Practically, many of the rural and mountainous territories of Europe are still infrastructurally underdeveloped, meaning that we need to work with a slower internet connection (because the area is not covered with fibre optic connection) that after stronger storms stops working. Also, electricity is not stable during storms or strong rains bringing to many hours (or even entire days) of no electricity, several times a year. This impacts the work flow pushing us to consider working away from home -and away from the place where we organise activities. On a purely cultural and conceptual level there are positive and negative aspects of working, producing culture, and making art in a rural territory. Among the positive aspects there are: a non-competitive environment; the possibility to invent new frameworks; different experience of time (slowness) and space (silence) which results in more focused and intimate cultural environment; the possibility of testing abstract concepts among "real" people, avoiding cultural bubbles, so typical for cities. Among the negative aspects there are: lack of local money; lack of public support structures; lack of diversity; lack of peer-review; rural's dependency on the urban; fear of periphery; lack of direct exchange with other cultural workers (and the importance of the internet to maintain such relations!).
Needs of independent cultural actors from rural areas:
– separate funding for cultural production in rural areas (from that of cities)
– need to define different criteria to evaluate cultural projects in rural areas
– need to have long term support (instead of yearly fundings). Working in rural contexts where there is a lack of cultural infrastructures (as cultural spaces, galleries, institutions, know-how) means that part of the curatorial and creative work goes into defining the infrastructures, opening up spaces, being part of a community, building up frameworks within which to then develop creative and cultural work. Therefore, supporting projects with a yearly deadline makes curatorial, creative and cultural work very difficult. Giving projects longer time to be developed, tested, and executed would help to support projects that will be present on the territory for a long time and could actually help revitalising its culture.

Robida

Under their words

Enter the voices and stories that resonate from the vibrant 'peripheries' of Europe, challenging the dominant narrative shaped by the hyper-centralisation of cultural activities in Western capitals. In this series of interviews, we engage with the dynamic individuals and organisations who are actively countering this imaginary discourse and trend, creating spaces for cultural expression, innovation, and community engagement in areas that are often overlooked and undervalued. These conversations explore the motivations, challenges, and triumphs of those working to rebalance the scales and foster a cultural ecosystem that thrives beyond the gravitational pull of major urban centres.

↑ WIDT and Christoph de Babalon (TEYAS) live at Easterndaze x Berlin 2018. © Andras G. Varga

What inspired you to launch Easterndaze?

Lucia Udvardyova: We co-founded Easterndaze together with my friend Peter Gonda in 2010. I had been collaborating with London-based arts station Resonance FM, and had produced a radio show focused on the Prague audiovisual scene. I had also lived in London previously, and growing up in the countryside of the Slovak border area (aka Slovakian Twin Peaks), my aim was to get out of East Europe as soon as I could. Everything exciting and current was happening further West, that had been my idea. Telling stories about being a child in the 80s (still communist Czechoslovakia) to my London friends –which became my favourite afterparty pastime– sort of made me realise we really do have different backgrounds. Fast forward a couple years later, I found myself studying and living in Prague, and becoming fascinated by the underground heritage of the country, the anti-establishment dissent movement that was very cultural and musical. An inadvertent counter culture, of sorts.

Together with Peter, we set out to explore the underground music scenes in our neighbouring countries, since we'd realise back then that we had no clue what's happening musically and culturally in countries around us. During communist times, chances were you were more interested in what's the latest music coming from the UK or US, and not what other socialist countries officially sanctioned music scene was up to (most of the "Western" music was pretty much inaccessible on the State radio or TV, you either had it "smuggled" if one of your acquaintances went to the West and managed to bring back some records, or listened to it on radios like Radio Free Europe or Radio Luxembourg, or if you lived close to any Western country, and you were lucky to catch the Austrian ORF or radios and TV's in the Nordic countries if you lived in the Baltics. The politics of radio jamming and "East" x "West" tuning with makeshift antennas to catch Western broadcasting, is a topic for another discussion). So, the interest in what's happening in other Eastern European countries had been also historically speaking quite minimal.

In 2010 we travelled across each country for roughly 2 weeks, on trains and buses, recording interviews in people's living rooms, on a Soviet monument by the Bulgarian seaside, after basement gigs… We continued our travels –intermittently– until 2017, when we went to Ukraine for two weeks. These physical encounters have been crucial, and we've been in touch with many of the musicians and cultural activists we met during our travels. We later also set up a label called Baba Vanga (named after the infamous blind Bulgarian mystic) where we released several of the musicians whose music we fell in love with.

initia-

We have since collaborated with many institutions and initiatives, curated events, etc. Between 2016 and 2021, in collaboration with Natalie Gravenor, we organised an Easterndaze x Berlin festival happening annually in Berlin, where several Central and Eastern European collectives collaborated with Berlin-based labels and collectives (one of them, the sister duo WIDT and Berlin-based legend Christoph de Babalon ended up recording an album together after our event where they performed together for the first time). There was also a 3-month exhibition series that presented CEE labels and their visual aesthetics that I curated as part of OFF-Biennale Budapest in 2015, etc.

In any case, we never considered ourselves as some sort of "Columbuses" of Eastern European underground music –we thought we had something in common historically, and wanted to bring attention to many of the amazing, hard-working musicians and cultural activists we met. Often working without funding, in precarious conditions, almost never being able to quit their day jobs. And this was the same for us, we never had structural funding, it was always just for one-off projects, and we always had "day" jobs.

Can you share specific challenges that under-represented artists from Eastern and Central Europe regions face in gaining visibility within the broader cultural landscape?

Probably most of it comes down to money –not many people in Eastern Europe can afford to be full time musicians and artists, not many artists can afford to pay PR agencies, etc. And at some point, you cannot hold a full-time job and be an artist on the side. The unemployment benefits are miniscule. And for Western media, it is more interesting to document certain Eastern European scenes especially in connection with the dire political situation in those countries, or something "edgy" and remote of course (with a hint of exoticism –i.e. the features about Ukrainian rave revolution, the Georgian techno scene x politics, etc). Most of the Eastern European artists who have "made" it, are still those who have moved to the West (certain cultural hubs, per se, Berlin, London (mostly before Brexit), Brussels, Paris…).

How does your platform address the hyper-centralisation of cultural representation, and what strategies do you employ to counteract these imbalances?

I would say by not (yet) moving to Berlin! And continuing to live in Eastern Europe and being active here, doing events –mostly DIY, I organise an off space event series with my friend Rozi Mako in Budapest, for instance–, visiting local concerts, exhibitions, etc.

In what ways does the geographical imbalance in cultural representation impact the diversity and richness of artistic expression within the European cultural scenes?

It is necessary to hear many voices, diverse voices from rural/urban locations, from East, West, South, North, and here I not only mean Europe, of course.

Can you discuss any success stories or positive outcomes that your platform has witnessed in terms of amplifying the voices of some artists?

For instance, the above mentioned WIDT x Christoph de Babalon collaboration. But I've noticed a more intense collaboration between Eastern European bookers and collectives, which is great! I'm not saying it's because of Easterndaze, but it's definitely something positive. There are also more platforms that are increasingly heard and listened to in the West too, such as Oramics from Poland, Standard Deviation and Cxema from Ukraine, the brilliant Kajet Journal from Bucharest, festivals like Unsound, and more, amplifying the voices of Eastern European artists.

How do you navigate the balance between promoting regional identities and fostering a more interconnected and globally accessible cultural space?

Now I will sound like an old lady, but I do believe there is a lot of potential in the younger generations, who were born after 1989, not so much burdened by the past, more interconnected with peers across the globe. Active on local scenes, but in touch and connected with global ones. Not "ashamed" (as I had been, living in the West as a gastarbeiter, so to speak) of their Eastern European identity, but rather being inspired by it in their work and art. So, I do have hope!

tives

It is necessary to hear many voices, diverse voices from rural/urban locations, from East, West, South, North, and here I not only mean Europe, of course."

Have you encountered any resistance in challenging the hyper-centralised cultural norms, and how do you respond to such challenges?

As I mentioned above, I do have hope on a grassroot, underground level that things are changing, getting more decentralised, existing in rhizomatic structures that are standalone but connected hubs of creativity, outside and exterior to any national borders. On a more institutionalised level, I think things are moving more slowly. Perhaps we need a generational change on that level as well to be able to witness more change there. Most of the key players on the scene (club owners, festival organisers, etc) are still probably middle-aged white men.

Looking ahead, what steps do you believe need to be taken on a broader scale (by European networks and any other international projects for example) to create a more equitable and representative cultural field for all regions?

I feel a lot of the key players on the cultural scene in terms of festivals, booking agencies, media (mostly based in Western Europe still –that says a lot too, doesn't it?) have been creating more diverse rosters in terms of geographical diversity, but often, Eastern Europe remains underrepresented. Why this is the case, is a mystery… Probably it's too close, not "interesting" enough unless there is some sort of conflict there or some political malady. I think the fact that there are more Eastern European writers writing about these scenes in Western European media helps. Next step would be establishing Eastern European institutions and media that would be followed by and relevant for Western Europeans as well, and not just vice versa, as has been often the case so far. But on a grassroot level, I'd say connect and support each other, invite each other to gigs and events.

You yourself also have the power to make a change, running one of the largest festivals in Europe (Nuits Sonores), so I urge you to look around and book artists beyond the headlines and (former, but somehow persistent) Iron Curtain borders. I think the responsibility to make substantial changes in this respect should rest with those who have the power and capacity (not least financial) to do so.

Resources

→ Easterndaze website
https://easterndaze.net/

→ Easterndaze Trailer from 2012
https://vimeo.com/37461058

→ Easterndazed: DIY Music Topographies exhibition Programming
https://vimeo.com/126114051

---

3 questions to Ankali

Prague, Czech Republic

01.

Can you introduce your structure to us?

Ankali & Planeta Za is a multifunctional cultural space situated in the largely industrial part of Vršovice district in Prague. Since its opening in 2017, Ankali has become an established electronic music venue with a European reach. Planeta Za was opened in 2020 as a spatial expansion as well as an extension of the original night club concept. The programming of the club has progressed towards a wider and more diverse range of music, and it now includes various alternative genres apart from the electronic music spectrum. Apart from weekly club nights, the programme accommodates live concerts and ambient shows, listening sessions, summer film screenings, and occasional workshops, discourse activities and markets. Club's aim is to create a cultural offer to a range of activities available to different audience groups of all social or cultural backgrounds.

The club is also an initiator and member of Gravity Network, an international cooperation project of 5 European music venues which is co-funded by the Creative Europe programme of the European Union.

02.

Why did you join the Reset! network?

We were approached by Reset! thanks to our activities connected to our European project Gravity Network and joined the Reset! network quickly after. While we largely focus on the local scene, we believe having quality connections with like-minded individuals and organisations from abroad is highly beneficial not only to our organisation, but also to local artists and cultural workers. We believe these connections can help in improving the huge imbalances present in our field (electronic music) in the long run.

03.

How does being an independent cultural player based in Central Europe affect your cultural activities at the regional level?

While the situation improved significantly in the recent years, we still feel like a smooth and fruitful exchange between the countries in our region is far from the reality. Speaking from the perspective of an organisation running an electronic music venue, we feel like the development of prosperous local scenes in post-soviet countries is a long and uneasy fight. Only after forming stronger foundations, there is now an interest and need to seek like-minded partners beyond borders. Of course, there has always been some exchange to some extent, but only now we're seeing what might be an emergence of real, strong, mutually-benefiting partnerships developing across the region. We believe that understanding the European dimension of our culture is vital to forming new alliances, which can help us remain resilient to quickly changing political weathers.

Under their reports

From various corners of the continent, here are the convergences dissecting and deliberating on the challenges posed by territorial disparities. From impassioned discussions on the underrepresentation of cultural initiatives in specific regions to collaborative brainstorming sessions aimed at formulating solutions, these reports offer a comprehensive view of the multifaceted efforts to rectify the existing imbalances.

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

– by Robida

Topolò/Topolove, Italy
June 2023

Historical and political context

Topolò/Topolove is a semi-abandoned village on the border between Italy and Slovenia in the Italian region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, more precisely in a small mountainous region in north-eastern Italy called Benečija (Friulian Slavia), named after the Slavic population that settled here in the 8th century AD and still lives in the area.

The history of the 20th century used the borderland—to which Topolò/Topolove belongs—as a backdrop for some of the most violent operations of the First World War; Fascism also oppressed the Slovene minority in the area, and the Cold War completely transformed the territory into a military zone to be emptied of its inhabitants. This history led to an almost complete loss of population, language and identity and the destruction of a community. Before the outbreak of the First World War, Topolò had a population of 400 people who were closely linked to the then Austro-Hungarian villages on the other side of the border, now part of Slovenia. Today the village has only 25 inhabitants. The hardest border between Benečija and the Posočje region (Yugoslavia)—otherwise incomplete until 1975, when the Treaty of Osimo was signed between the Republic of Italy and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia—was established after the Second World War, more precisely after the Paris Peace Conference in 1946.

After the Tito-Stalin split in 1948, Yugoslavia and its border with Italy became a cushion between the Western and Eastern blocs. But the border was not the same everywhere during the Cold War. The central-northern part of this border, where Topolò/Topolove is located, was under the strong control of Gladio, a secret Italian "stay-behind" operation organised after the Second World War by the Western Union, then by NATO and also by the CIA, with the aim of maintaining control of the Italian-Yugoslav border in case of future Yugoslav attacks or attempts at expansion. The people living along the border were terrorised by Gladio and other similar secret organisations. This border was not a line, but a belt that was redefined as a military zone. With the help of these secret organisations, Italy systematically forced the people who lived in the mountain villages along the border to move out of these places in order to maintain strict control over the so-called i. Titini (engl. Titoists) on the other side of the border. They did this with the help of local spies, who wrote down everything people said, and with other systematic measures, such as the deliberate construction of industrial complexes in the valleys outside this military zone, from which the villagers were supposed to move. Photography was forbidden in Topolò/Topolove. Any such photography could reveal too much information about the area that had to be protected on the Italian side and make it invisible. All the systemic measures were accompanied by strong anti-Slavic, anti-Yugoslavian and anti-Slovenian propaganda, not forgetting the tragic identity dynamics that tried to anchor the principle of self-denial in the Slovenian-speaking inhabitants of the area. Propaganda against everything on the other side of the border and mistrust of the political authorities, who have made a political training ground out of these people and their living space, have created fear, suspicion and mistrust of any kind of otherness.

ex-

Even today, the Slovene minority in Benečija and its political and cultural associations are facing serious problems, which are linked precisely to the lack of inhabitants and influential representative institutions. The Slovene minority in Italy is strongly represented in Trieste and Gorizia, but less so in Benečija. Benečija is therefore the edge of the already marginalised Slovene minority in Italy. Nevertheless, some Slovene institutions in the area have contributed greatly to the cultural development of the area, namely the SMO Museum (Slovene Multimedia Window) in San Pietro al Natisone, the Ivan Trinko Cultural Association in Cividale and, last but not least, the Stazione di Topolò/Postaja Topove: Stazione di Topolò/Postaja Topolove, a festival of contemporary art which, since 1994, has brought artists from all over the world to Topolò/Topolove every year and has played a major role in reducing the fear, suspicion, and mistrust of foreigners mentioned above.

This contemporary approach to rural areas has had a great influence on the Robida Collective, a group of artists, designers and architects who move to Topolò/Topolove to reflect on the past, present and future of living and working in these rural areas in a contemporary way, through the organisation of cultural events, artists' residencies, radio broadcasts and publications.

Workshop's discussions

The workshop titled Situated Publishing: Possibilities and Challenges of Editorial Practices in Post- Rural Contexts wanted to explore challenges, possibilities, positive and negative aspects of cultural production in post-rural contexts. Post-rural territories are those areas that were once mainly inhabited by farmers and are today depopulated and almost abandoned, where farming life is not possible anymore (because of topographical reasons) and a change of activities and meaning is therefore needed to keep them alive. We, as Robida Collective, strongly believe that cultural work and economy can substitute what was once agricultural work and economy.

The workshop wanted to explore publishing and editorial practices that are born and developed within such territories. The questions at the base of the workshop were: What feeds cultural practices in urban and rural contexts? How to turn rurality into a methodology? What methods can we gather from the place we work from? How to decentralise cultural production to give more agency to margins, to strengthen the urban-rural exchange and relation?

12 cultural workers, from different backgrounds, gathered in the village of Topolò. All of them have a very different relation to the place: some of them live every day in the village and do cultural work from there, while others come back cyclically to the village as they find it extremely fruitful for their own artistic and creative practice. One person lived in the village for half a year developing a master's thesis on it, another one was in the village just once, 10 years ago. Some people come from the village, others come from big European cities such as London, Rome, or Ljubljana.

All the participants were interested in exploring urban and rural contexts in relation to cultural production, wanted to discuss the challenges of rural spaces in the wider European contexts and wished to propose "elegant steps" to Robida's editorial projects, as the magazine and the radio.

The workshop started with an analysis of the positive and negative aspects of doing culture, working with culture or being part of cultural events in urban and rural contexts.

Post-rural territories are those areas that were once mainly inhabited by farmers and are today depopulated and almost abandoned, where farming life is not possible anymore and a change of activities and meaning is therefore needed to keep them alive.

ploring

• Positive aspects of urban cultural production

As positive aspects of urban cultural production, the participant listed different (structural) opportunities. The developed structural aspect of the urban areas was recognised in fact as the biggest advantage of working from the city, as it offers access to funding and different facilities needed for cultural production, which bring with them possible collaborations with the existing structures and do not demand from cultural workers to deal with inventing new structures, which demand time, other-than-strict-cultural skills and sufficient funding. As very important, participants highlighted the big possibility of encountering the unexpected in the city. The wide range of events gives more chances for networking and provides serendipity of encounters not just between different cultures and people, but also between different ideas.

These in return produce a rich cultural milieu that holds great possibility for further personal and work-related development. The participants also emphasised that the city also offers a strong feeling of anonymity, which they judged to be a positive aspect, as it takes possible pressure from their shoulders.

• Negative aspects of urban cultural production

As negative aspects of urban cultural production, the participants first listed points dealing with the perception and use of time. They highlighted being productive all of the time for financial and career reasons; these reasons also bring to the fact that the relations they establish are very quick and superficial, as depth of thought is getting valued less and less. The fact of being always in action also results in the lack of time for reflection. The overwhelming and competitive environment, which demands constant networking, brings to what the participants named the peer- and beer-pressure.

The peer-pressure makes one follow trends and niches, which are usually established in the cities, and not follow individual needs and artistic practices; the "beer-pressure", the need for constantly going out and party-networking, is also exhausting and causes burn-outs. Generally, despite the big diversity of city dwellers, one finds itself stuck in closed circles; and despite the overlapping of different ideas, the homogeneity of the cultural scene in the city was also one of the main negative aspects of urban cultural production.

• Positive aspects of rural cultural production

As positive aspects of rural cultural production, the participants firstly talked of the possibilities due to the lack of established structures for cultural engagement: this gives cultural actors freedom to act and invent new frameworks, which can be even more contemporary than the ones in the city, as they are not constricted by the frameworks of established institutions. The lack of structures results in less cultural production in the rural areas, which means fewer events (therefore the audience is less spread and takes part in all the activities) and smaller competition between cultural actors, which can bring more opportunities. The lack of resources and the actual smaller need for

time

resources, as life in rural areas demands smaller financial incomes, was also interpreted as a positive thing that can lead to more inventiveness and creative freedom. The rural areas also offer a different phenomenological experience of time (slowness) and space (silence) which results in more focused and intimate cultural production. The strong identities of specific rural areas also function as translators

space

The rural areas also offer a different phenomenological experience of time (slowness) and space (silence) which results in more focused and intimate cultural production.

▬

of abstract concepts into situated knowledges, where context and content are not so strictly separated. Many participants highlighted that rural areas provide possibilities to test abstract ideas among "real" people, which made them bring their ideas down to earth. Last but not least, the awareness of the importance of rural areas—their repopulation and keeping them alive—for possible change of our modes of living in a climatically damaged world and the need for paradigmatic change was also considered as a strong point for the need of rural cultural production.

• Negative aspects of rural cultural production

As negative aspects of rural cultural production, the participants listed different lacks: lack of local money, lack of public support structures, lack of diversity of ideas and people, and consequential lack of peer review from colleagues. As a big down-side to rural cultural production they mentioned rural's dependency on the urban.

The public interested in cultural production is mainly situated in the cities, so cultural workers from rural areas depend on cities for the diffusion of content. The way tenders are written and the subjects they are interested are directed towards cities. There is also a big fear of periphery coming from the cultural workers working in the rural areas. They fear being provincial and judged by the city-dwellers; they also feel they have to adapt the content to the context and deal with only particular topics, dictated by the local environment. The potential public in rural areas is also very suspicious of contemporary cultural production and usually demonstrates a fear of new things and changes in everything that is typical and traditional in their local space. Finally, the lack of established cultural structures and the consequential need to build these structures—which takes a lot of time, other-than-strict-cultural skills and extensive long-term funding—leaves little time for actual creative engagement.

▬

Workshop's challenges

The participants in the workshop were divided into smaller working groups. Each of the groups selected the most interesting topic concerning rural cultural production, may it be positive or negative, which they later discussed/worked on and proposed ways of engaging in cultural production in the rural areas—that concern the selected topics—that could form the principles of so-called situated publishing.

• Rural positive – Freedom to act

Group 1: Laura Savina, Janja Šušnjar and Ola Korbańska

One of the pinpointed positive aspects of producing culture in rural contexts was "freedom to act", defined within the working group as the freedom and flexibility of space use, less restrictive bureaucracy, and the possibility of being more spontaneous. From the experience carried on by the three designers and by Robida Collective in Topolò the possibility of acting spontaneously, engaging with the space more freely and using public space without the necessity of making official requests to the municipality for its use, was identified as one of those aspects which would make the production of public events, workshops, summer school less bureaucracy based. Moreover, rural contexts lack infrastructures within which to perform and organise cultural events (such as galleries, museums, libraries, theatres, or cultural centres), giving centrality to the re-imagination and invention of what these infrastructures, frameworks, and spaces could look like: a classroom where to carry on a seminar can be the river bank, a clearing in the forest or a garden near an abandoned house; a private house can host public meetings or artist studios; the parking lot can become the concert hall.

The "freedom to act" was then also analysed in relation to the imperative of being present on social media which, in the opinion of the group working on the topic, is constraining this freedom and spontaneity. Over-sharing content on Instagram can become itself a performance, giving pressure, expectation, and constant judgment. The group proposed to consider pauses from social media or to frame the production of content for social media within the different seasons, following the seasonality of Robida's cultural work.

• Rural negative – Lack of comrades

Group 2: Elena Rucli, Jack Bardwell and Antônio Frederico Lasalvia

"Lack of comrades" was identified as one of the negative aspects of producing culture in non-urban environments. This can be described as lack of like-minded people with whom to discuss about shared interests, lack of public interested in the specificities of certain reflections, lack of critical public. Many of the methodologies already used by Robida Collective are tackling this problem: open calls want to be inclusive and reach a wider public, residencies are designed to invite comrades to share everyday life and creative processes with the collective. A challenge of the working group was to radicalise what an open call is or situate the open call by e.g. inviting people to work in the village of Topolò on the contents that will be then published in Robida magazine, or inviting them to re-think the structure of the magazine while being in the village.

Another reflection and answer opened up by the problem of the "lack of comrades" was that of trying to find comrades locally instead of attracting them from afar (through open calls). To engage more with the wider context where we operate, to be present locally through workshops and events to find those missing comrades in the towns and cities closer to us.

It's important to emphasise that we want to see more cultural production coming out of non- urban areas, not culture produced in the city and brought to rural areas (which usually uses or exploits rural areas).

• Rural positive – Keeping places alive

Group 3: Dora Ciccone, Vid Skrbinšek and Vida Rucli

One of the positive effects of cultural work in non-urban areas, if done constantly and daily by being present in those spaces, is that of helping maintaining places alive. The working group discussed the meaning of the phrase "to keep a place alive": that could mean keeping the memories of the place alive, keeping its economies alive, keeping its communities alive, and keeping spaces alive. For each of these four sub-challenges, the group proposed specific actions. "Keeping memories alive" (without mythicising them) can and maybe should be one of the tasks of the cultural workers operating in depopulated, post-rural, abandoned areas: a proposal was that of dedicating a section of Robida magazine to framing some of the forgotten traditions within a contemporary discourse or that of proposing performative actions which would recall the past traditions.

"Keeping economies alive" means to recognise that the work carried by cultural workers contribute to the local economies.

"Keeping communities alive" means to involve people who contribute to the magazine and to publishing projects in the life of the village the whole year round.

"Keeping spaces alive" means to use, open and transform unused and closed spaces, to unfold the magazine in them, to open them up for people to enter and engage with them.

• Rural positive & negative – Intimacy

Group 4: Aljaž Škrlep, Katja Canalaz and Vesna Skubic

The last of the four groups decided to explore the positive concept of "intimacy" when working in rural contexts: intimacy intended as the closeness between guest-artists and the organisation hosting them, who work together and share their everyday life in a rural context, intimacy with the inhabitants of the village and intimacy with the place itself. The group also reflected on the negative aspects of intimacy: on the anonymity one has in cities versus the hyper-observation one feels while working in a village. Anonymity is one of those elements of everyday city life that, when living and working in rural contexts, one can miss. The group therefore proposed ways of how to give people the possibility to be anonymous and explore privacy within the magazine.

——

Workshop's proposals

At national & European levels

• Separate funding for cultural production in rural areas (from that in cities)

The workshop highlighted the lack of structural support and funding for cultural production in marginal areas. It's important to emphasise that we want to see more cultural production coming out of non-urban areas, not culture produced in the city and brought to rural areas (which usually uses or exploits rural areas). We believe it would be important to have separate funding to stimulate cultural production in rural areas. This would be necessary because at the moment there is a concentration of cultural production in cities and proposals from rural areas cannot compete with those from urban contexts. For this reason, it would be important to have separate funding to encourage organisations from rural areas to apply.

• Define different criteria for evaluating cultural projects in rural areas

The criteria for evaluating the success and effectiveness of cultural projects in urban and rural contexts should be different: the number of visitors cannot be an objective parameter for evaluating the success of an event (as in cities) or the number of tickets sold. Rural areas need different approaches, which are slower, more consistent and based on daily presence in the territory. Can the parameters needed to evaluate projects not be numerical?

• Fund projects with long-term support

Working in rural contexts where—as our debate shows—there is a lack of cultural infrastructure (such as cultural spaces, galleries, institutions, know-how) means that part of the curatorial and creative work goes into defining the infrastructure, opening up spaces, being part of a community, building frameworks within which creative and cultural work can then develop. This is why supporting projects with an annual deadline makes curatorial, creative, and cultural work very difficult. Giving projects more time to develop, test, and implement would help to support projects that will be present in the area for a long time and could actually help to revitalise its culture.

• Support networking and alliance-building projects in rural contexts

Getting to know and sharing methodologies among peers working in similar environments would certainly be helpful in developing methods, approaches and systems that are better suited to the contexts in which we work (rural, post-rural, marginal, mountainous, and small territories). Learning from institutions and organisations working in urban environments is not always helpful.

Resources to go further (readings & people)

→ Alpine Community Economies/ research project (Trento, IT)
https://www.alpinecommunityeconomies.org/
The Alpine Community Economies Lab uses participatory design and foresight methods, combined with practical economic experimentations, to support alpine communities in addressing the challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, and limited imagination of the possible.

→ Peak Cymru/Abergavenny (Wales, UK)
https://www.peakcymru.org/
Peak Cymru is an organisation which collaborates with young people, artists, and intergenerational communities in Wales.

→ Rural Commons Assembly/Alpine network (IT, AT, CH)
https://ruralcommonsassembly.com/
The Rural Commons Assembly is a "network-in-the-making" and iterative platform, laboratory and think tank for trans-local networking and learning across the Alpine region. It brings together initiatives and practitioners who confront social, political, economic, and ecological complexities through developing cooperative and imaginative alternatives on a local scale.

Key points

Prishtina, Kosovo
March 2023

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

• The main issue identified for the independent cultural and media structures in Kosovo is the reductionist and sensationalist vision of the independent media towards the country, harming specially the perception of art, culture, and media as they are coverage only superficially by international media.

• A need for a space of exchange between local and international media in Kosovo is essential to foster exchanges between the two visions, make local journalists be trusted by the international media, and therefore be able to produce knowledge and spread truthful and non-reductionist narratives about Kosovo and the region.

• At a European level, independent media demand a revision of the access and design of media funds, as Kosovo still does not have full access to EU media funds and grants, including Creative Europe program.

"A formal space for exchange between local media in Kosovo and international media would be mutually beneficial, not only for improving the depiction of Kosovo in the international media, but also for fostering a better understanding of global issues."

Reaching Across the Velvet Rope: The Disparities Between Electronic Music Scenes of Eastern and Western Europe

– by Ankali

Prague, Czech Republic
March 2023

State of the situation

In recent years, several articles and Twitter threads have sparked fierce debates about the disparities between the electronic music scenes of East and West. The imbalance is most visible in the representation of Eastern musicians on so-called global media platforms, in the line-ups of major European festivals, or in the digital realm of respected podcasts and streaming platforms with global audiences such as Hör and Boiler Room.

im-

Polish queer collective Oramics collected geographical data on prominent podcasts from large online outlets like Resident Advisor, Crack Magazine and FACT Mag to illustrate the gap. In the period between July 2020 and September 2022, artists from the Eastern bloc made up only 3, 2, and 5.5% of the total –global– representation, and these percentages represent only 2 to 6 artists from the East in total.

The example is just one illustration of the wider issue, similar imbalances occur when data is collected from other places and situations, festival and club line-ups, agencies, music charts and so on.

While some progress has been made since the debate was sparked, mostly thanks to individual artists, activists and journalists, the imbalances remain. At the Reset! x Gravity Network workshop at Ankali, we brought together local and foreign artists, agents, bookers, label owners and other cultural operators from both sides of the "velvet rope" to continue the discussion in a structured way.

Workshop's discussions

• Western media don't serve Eastern Europe accurately, or equally

Coverage from major Western electronic music media lacks nuance and accurate detail, favouring 'clickability' over presenting the true opinions and facts within a local scene. There's little evidence that well-publicised criticism from platforms such as Oramics (2020, 2022) has led to any noticeable change in the major media platforms. Journalists show "the smallest research effort" (Avril - Futura Artists) and "it makes no difference" whether they are talking to a member of the editorial team or a freelancer from a major platform: the quality –and above all the sensitivity– of the approach is the same.

There is plenty of evidence that media barriers and walls between European and Asian, African and South American communities are being broken down, but this attention to coverage isn't being shown towards European countries other than those where the major platforms are typically based (Germany, UK, Netherlands, France).

• Stories about Eastern Europe tend to portray the region in a negative light

The host's research, corroborated by the participants' first-hand experience, suggests that stories relating to the Eastern European region are most sought-after during periods of local political unrest, war or other forms of socio-political strife. The language used paints a dramatic picture (with potentially unpleasant connotations in the language used) and uses identity politics as a way of shifting clicks to Western readers. The result is a largely unpleasant world view of Eastern countries, which ultimately doesn't help music tourism to the region.

bal-

• Media attention still focused on major typical European cities

"We feel the need to move to Berlin to have a chance of being recognised" (Paul, Standard Deviation). At the same time, many of the participants admitted that they were unfamiliar with aspects of the Hungarian scene, or even their closer neighbours in Bratislava.

In general, Czech artists don't know how to promote themselves on the same level as Western artists –from social media marketing to writing informative biographies– which can hold them back from gigs. Promoters from here and there spoke of having to do much of this work themselves, at their own sunk cost.

ances

break

Build an infrastructure of writers based in many cities to tell local stories with local knowledge.

• Emancipation from Western media should be a goal of the East

There was a unilateral agreement that the Western European electronic music media is unsatisfactory for Eastern Europe and does not provide the coverage we need or deserve. Finding ways to break away from this led to several hours of lively discussion, and the broad consensus was that 1) their model doesn't exist for Eastern artists, and 2) the core interest of most Eastern European artists is actually in our own communities anyway, not in gaining international credibility.

• Differences between local representation in East and West

There's a difference between how countries like Italy, the Netherlands and non-EU countries like Mexico work with local artists and how events and nightclubs in Eastern Europe work. The former countries have a strong sense of support for their local acts, and the

media develop attention through longstanding positive press, whereas many of our participants agreed that in the East, attention is predominantly focused on celebrating Western European and otherwise foreign acts, booked at higher cost, which is relevant to the locals.

Workshop's challenges and proposals

• A united Eastern bloc can lift all boats

We want the local scenes to be treated fairly and on an equal footing, but the biggest barrier to this for Eastern Europe is the infrastructure, class, and level of

access compared to places like Germany. By dealing more with Eastern artists when it comes to bookings, we are talking to people on the same terms as we work.

If we unite to build better connections (in terms of promoting and booking artists) within Eastern European cultures, it makes sense to avoid current issues such as exclusivity deals as much as possible, but if that's not the case, find alternative ways to develop the connections, such as encouraging

collaborative production between like-minded artists, booking in smaller cities (where viable) and others. Zuzana from Heartnoize promotions spoke about how packages could be created to sell larger European tours of the artists they book, rather than just single shows which are harder to cover financially.

Participants brainstormed a vision of a network of nightclubs within the Czech Republic, but with the aim of building it further outside the country, with Brno and Prague exchanging artists more often, in the hope of building the entire country's music scene unilaterally.

At festivals and big nights, discussing quotas and arranging decent slot times for locals will help increase the relevance of local scenes.

• Look to the diaspora both for support and to use their influence for more support

There are many wealthy artists from our regions who are successful in cities like Berlin. Jirka of the Lunchmeat Festival spoke of an awareness of the need to look not only at those immediately within the Czech and Slovak Republics, but also at those with this heritage who live beyond the borders.

• Using local writers to tell our stories for us

Build an infrastructure of writers based in many cities to tell local stories with local knowledge. Participants agreed that they "would rather read a long read" from an experienced writer on a specialised topic.

The Substack platform seems like an easy option, with flexible (and optional) payment methods that allow those from more privileged backgrounds to pay more if they can –and indeed there's plenty of evidence of this both

away

Key points

on the platform and in the wider music community. There is more disposable income in Germany, Paris, and London than in Prague, Warsaw, and Bratislava, but we shouldn't overprice ourselves (Avril, Futura).

• Current social media marketing cannot be relied upon

Any use of mainstream social media platforms is fraught with danger, as followers and visibility can be weaponised against the user in an attempt to increase funding for the media platform. "All the tools we have now at hand are not community-service tools, they are... profit-making businesses, with specific business models that can change" (NCOL, Gravity).

• Media ownership is paramount

Radio Punctum talked about taking big steps to have their catalogue privately hosted to ensure there's a safety net in case a hosting platforms collapses. Owning any media (such as the proposed newsletter/substack) privately, as opposed to the platform hosting and owning it, can result in better channelling of funds to those who need it.

• Show as well as tell

"We've had quite a negative experience with international journalism... so we invite

professionals from other festivals, for example, to see our acts," says Lunchmeat's Jirka, before explaining the recent success of the Lunchmeat-commissioned project with Mike Paradinas and ID:MORA, which at the time of writing has been booked for MUTEK Montreal and Dekmantel, among others. This shows both the quality of events here in the Czech Republic, but also that sometimes Western journalism has to see it to believe it.

• Finances are key

Despite the desire for independence from Western attention, there is a clear need and desire for more international support for our scenes, and new connections outside our immediate region are helpful (such as Gravity, SHAPE+). Access to funding is very important, and EU funding is a way in.

The workshop created quite a stir in the Prague music scene. Šimon (Bike Jesus), a relatively young promoter who listened attentively throughout, said that the results discussed had influenced his decisions as a booker in as many situations as he could manage.

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

• Corruption in the dynamics of the national public funding open calls is observed. Regarding the open calls announced by EU cultural organisations and funds, there is a predominant role of the older generation as gatekeepers in the access and visibility thanks to personal connections. The independent actors stand for a demand for more transparency with open calls at local and European level.

• Regarding the relation of Serbia with the rest of the world, the global and local inflation of artists prices, as well as the strong brain drain of talented, educated, and successful members of the Serbian society in the field of arts and culture, pushes the need of promoting and developing local talent and collectives, and investing in cultural professionals at a local level.

Imbalances in the Musical Representation of Territories Between the North and the South of Europe

– by Rocknrolla Producciones

Seville, Spain
October 2023

State of the situation

One of the main goals pursued by Reset! is to identify imbalances in the way different territories are represented and to come up with means of counterbalancing a still highly centralised European cultural sector. Independent music is one of the industries suffering from this imbalance, and the situation faced by southern Europe, namely countries such as Spain and Portugal, offers added challenges when it comes to giving music a wider and more international stage. The Spanish and Portuguese music scene does not offer the necessary basic training capable of producing well-trained professionals, be they musicians, agents, managers, or technical staff. This lack of availability of training and access to information makes it difficult for musical

artists from the Iberian Peninsula to even consider a professional career in the sector, which in turn becomes another obstacle in the process of counterbalancing the overrepresentation of other territories on the European scene. This observation gave rise to the organisation of the workshop on "Imbalances in the musical representation of territories between the North and the South of Europe", which discussed the challenges faced by independent actors in the music sector in southern Europe and explored the actual needs and possible solutions. The workshop revolved around a diverse group of stakeholders, the aim being to try to tackle issues such as the perception of the relevance of the southern

European music scene in the North, the resources available in terms of funding and exposure, the participants' experiences of internationalisation, etc.

Why RNR Producciones?

Rocknrolla Producciones y Eventos Culturales is a key player in the field of music in southern Spain. Its experience and multidisciplinary vision means that it can provide privileged insights when surveying the current mechanisms of the music industry. The company is an organiser and producer of musical events and is also a programmer for various venues, including two concert halls in Seville (Sala X and Sala La2), as well as festivals such as Electrolunch and Pop CAAC. It also manages and books artists, takes care of the marketing and communication of cultural companies on a national and international level, and is also involved in designing, implementing, and coordinating a range of projects in the music sector on a national and European level.

Workshop's discussions

• Professional training: a very long way to go

The discussion began by addressing structural issues that we consider key to the practical implementation of this representation, such as the low levels of professional training of independent artists in southern Europe, or the lack of practical knowledge about how to apply for the European funding available for international expansion processes in the field of independent music. With this clear framework, the group began to discuss the reasons why the independent music sector in Spain and Portugal suffers from so few professional career opportunities, one of the major determining factors mentioned being the difference in the north-

south axis in terms of purchasing power, personal disposable income for music and job stability. Carmen Kalenita pointed out how difficult it is for anyone with an artistic bent to embrace music as a career when there is no guarantee of earning a living wage. Carlos Moreno suggested that the EU make funds available to EU citizens precisely to correct these imbalances, but then the conversation went back to the initial point and the group agreed that one of the major weaknesses of the southern European scene lies in the lack of professional training, operational solvency, and knowledge of and access to these sources of funding.
In the wake of Rocknrolla's experience with TransEuropeCREATE!*, we also introduced the idea that independent artists in southern Europe have much less access to high-quality sound equipment (hardware and software). "A synthesiser or a guitar cost the same in Spain, France, or Belgium, but wages are not the same", noted Carlos Moreno. At this point Tero M. Heikkinen shared his personal experience in Finland, where the situation is exceptionally generous in this respect, to the extent that professional recording studios are available to the inhabitants of Helsinki free of charge, although

Independent music is one of the industries suffering from this imbalance, and the situation faced by southern Europe offers added challenges when it comes to giving music a wider and more international stage.

he also pointed to the fact that it was not uncommon to always see the same names on the lists of beneficiaries, a fact which perhaps points to other well-known problems in southern Europe as well. We established that the imbalance is very much there and difficult to counteract, that the territories are running on parallel tracks and that it is complicated for the countries of the South to attain levels of development that are comparable to those of the North in the short term. On the other hand, the under-performing professional development of the sector in southern Europe was identified as a niche opportunity, both in terms of the potential to create professional training processes and in terms of the lack of competition, as there are few artists who make a professional career out of their passion.
(*) TransEuropeCREATE! is a free online music campus where you will create, produce, and release new, amazing music with other European emerging artists. This is not a drill and all the actions happening in TEC! aim to get your music released and your professional skills thrusted forward. This is a project designed to give you the tools and the training to become a better independent music professional, by providing the best learning content available designed by top music industry professionals while you create and produce the first songs of your future music career.

• The time has come to rethink the institutional strategy governing the dissemination of support schemes within the cultural sector.

A common denominator emerges when analysing the demands and complaints voiced by cultural industry players in Spain, even more so among the independent actors, which is the lack of information about funding, cooperation and networking opportunities in the European (and national and regional) context.

The Workshop in Seville clearly revealed the poor coordination between the dissemination strategies rolled out by administrations and institutions, and the people at whom these opportunities are aimed. Marta Sampaio confirmed during the conversation that this is also the case in Portugal, while Tero M. Heikkinen shared the opposite experience in Finland, where this information is efficiently and comprehensively distributed and easily accessible.

• Gaining an international foothold in northern Europe is an insurmountable challenge when starting off on the journey from the South

At this point in the conversation, we invited participants to share their international experiences. The cases vary depending on the roles they played in their initiatives to get onto the international stage, but the conclusions were similar. In general, we can conclude that all the artists present who have attempted or carried out forays into northern Europe –or the UK– (Tero M. Heikkinen, Hannah Derrick, Esteban Ruiz) came face to face with many difficulties when searching for opportunities in northern territories, although no different from those on other parts of the map.
Hannah Derrick shared her experience of collaborating with The Record Shop in London, through whom she was able to perform and record some video clips in the city, but which did not lead to new concert dates, possibly because the level of insertion she achieved through the collaboration was too superficial and because more investment, strategy, planning, and local networking are needed to establish a presence in a market like London. Carmen Kalenita shared

There is a poor coordination between the dissemination strategies rolled out by administrations and institutions, and the people at whom these opportunities are aimed.

her experience in Bristol while living there and emphasised the numerous grants and support schemes for people involved in music in the city, something that does not exist in cities such as Seville at a local level. Luis Álvarez, on the other hand, shared a different view on internationalisation, claiming that he did not feel any real necessity to internationalise the artist he represents at this point in his career. He cited the loss of control in northern European territories, the extreme difficulty in recovering investments in production, logistics, and promotion, and concluded that it is preferable to focus on one's own territory before pursuing such risky international ambitions.
On the other hand, Alejandra Aguado, as a trans woman, gave a different take on the motivations and results of her efforts to give an international edge to her project. She felt that, in many southern European territories, there is no interest in artists from the collective who have dissenting identities, except on those dates when it is politically accepted to roll them out (8M International Women's Day, Pride month). In her opinion, central and northern European territories put fewer obstacles in the way of gay and trans artists.

• The challenges go beyond music
The debate could be extended to independent culture in general within southern Europe. Even in universities, we come across this aforementioned lack of structure and funding. This is clearly illustrated by the fact that, although culture is enshrined in the statutes of Spanish universities as the third mission, there is a widespread shortage of physical structures within these institutions for performing arts and cultural exhibition, and the funding allocated to cultural activities is often much lower than the funding dedicated to other areas such as research or technological development. In this workshop, we explored the comparison with other northern European countries in this regard, and looked at examples such as Newcastle University, which has its own cinema and theatre.
Another problem that was pinpointed in the university and cultural sphere in general, in the light of the conversation in this workshop, is the aforementioned lack of information flow and, consequently, the limited scope for generating new audiences for cultural activities. The regular audience does not seem to be mainly from the student body, as the average age is much higher than the university average.
All this raises problems for the representation of culture in that these kinds of public and educational spaces should be able to serve as incubators for new artists, and even as tools for generating audiences, but we have seen that they do not currently have the resources or the agility to do so. The public-private model was proposed as one way of maybe mitigating these problems, as well as trying to find mechanisms to break down power hierarchies and attract new, younger audiences to culture and music.

music

beyond

Workshop's needs and proposals – Visions for the future

A wide-ranging debate on the needs analysis of independent music in southern Europe led the group to reach conclusions and recommendations for ways of tackling the South-North European imbalance:

• Information on support opportunities for independent music needs to be easily accessible to all

This could be done by creating more information channels that use different platforms and reach different audiences in an inclusive and intergenerational way. One of the artists at the workshop mentioned: "We need someone to do the job that the high school counsellor did, some person or office to advise us and guide us in our musical career". Possible concrete proposals could be the creation of consultancies for the music sector (covering legal matters, financing, international expansion, etc.), and incubators and/or accelerators for different types of music projects.

• More access to specialised training

For artists and professionals in the music sector to help professionalise the sector, and thus reduce the differences with other European countries such as France or Germany.

• More financial support

For independent music in the South, especially from the public sector. More grants are called for to encourage the development of music projects –especially those that can be rolled out in the short term– which will also provide an outlet for a variety of future cultural professionals (e.g. audiovisual professionals who create music videos).

• Internationalisation

It should be at a closer and more accessible level, as, in addition to taking southern Europe's musical scene to other regions, it also helps to develop learning pathways, create new connections,

professional training, etc. Some of the actions put forward to this effect, include putting pressure on regional and local governments to offer funding opportunities and to shore up their export offices, which could be carrying out these tasks.

• Create collaborative networks in the region

To develop strategies to strengthen independent structures. This could include the identification of good practices within and outside the sector (e.g. the export of fado from Portugal). Furthermore, on a positive note, it was concluded that southern European music scenes tend to be open and cooperative, compared to other countries (e.g. Finland) or other sectors (e.g. illustration). The South should make use of this collaborative culture to boost its music platforms.

• Diversity and inclusion must be secured

Both as elements that are necessary to safeguard equality and as strengths for the southern music sector. To do so, it is also necessary to include young people, and especially people from less privileged backgrounds, who have not felt represented in the local and national scenes until now.

• Find ways to break down stereotypes that still abound about southern Europe

Which damage the diversity and representation of the music sector at international level. Ways must be found to get rid of preconceived ideas about music from countries such as Portugal and Spain. We do not only have fado and flamenco, and the Mediterranean is not only "the beach of Europe". Other European regions have a responsibility here as well, both to overcome their own prejudices and to give more opportunities to showcase other musical performances and projects from the South.

Key points

Decentralisation of Local Cultural Scene in Tbilisi
– by Mutant Radio

• The main obstacles for existing without a central "endorsement" outside the capital are the lack of sufficient audience, infrastructures (places sacrifice for the tourism), and financial opportunities not linked to the governmental impositions.

• The fragmentation of the independent sector makes the situation even harder. Therefore, there is a strong need of a unity among the actors, by sharing experiences, encouraging a professionalisation of the sector by training and academic research.

"The decentralisation of the cultural scene in Georgia is the only solution to preserve the value of cultural heritage, criticism, and creative process in the country."

"In the capital, independent organisations find ways to have their own private sources of funding for maintenance. But in the areas outside Tbilisi, it's impossible for the small, contradictory, and community-based organisations to even exist."

The notion of territories and representativity

In the vast tapestry of Europe's cultural landscape, a glaring disparity unfolds —a stark imbalance in territorial representation that perpetuates the dominance of Western capital cities, relegating Eastern Europe, non-capital cities, and rural areas to the margins of cultural relevance. This volume, delving into the heart of this geographical asymmetry, exposes a disconcerting reality where cultural activities in Europe appear to orbit only the luminous nuclei of its Western capitals.

Eastern Europe, non-capital cities, and the rural peripheries find themselves marginalised, dismissed as uninteresting backwaters that fail to merit the spotlight.

The consequence of this hypercentralised focus is a cultural myopia that reverberates through the programming of events, leaving the vibrant diversity of Eastern European artistic expression obscured in the shadows. The absence of artists from the East in mainstream cultural events becomes a testament to the systemic neglect that these regions endure. The cultural scenes of Eastern Europe, rich in history and diversity, are cast into obscurity, their potential contributions overlooked in the grand narrative of Europe's cultural heritage.

Yet, the issue extends beyond the East-West dichotomy. Even within individual countries, the cultural pulse is disproportionately concentrated in the throbbing hearts of capital cities, leaving non-capital cities and rural areas as cultural deserts —deprived of the nourishment that artistic expression provides. The very essence of these regions is dismissed, deeming them unworthy of participating in the broader cultural conversation. It's as if the territorial boundaries themselves dictate the cultural narrative, excluding vast expanses from the creative discourse. In the face of such hypercentralisation, this volume asserts a bold declaration for change —a call for a reconfiguration of the cultural landscape to dismantle the discriminatory dynamics that perpetuate these imbalances. It contends that the true pulse of Europe's cultural heartbeat lies not only in Western capitals, but in the diverse rhythms emanating from every corner of the continent. The vibrancy of Eastern European cultural scenes, the untold stories of non-capital cities, and the unique expressions emerging from rural landscapes should no longer be confined to the periphery, but embraced as integral threads in the rich mosaic of European culture.

Crucially, this call for rebalancing places emphasis on the role of independent cultural and media organisations as the vanguards of change. Through their efforts, they endeavour to bridge the gaping divides, shining a spotlight on the overlooked, amplifying voices from the peripheries, and challenging the status quo. Independent cultural and media organisations serve as catalysts for a cultural renaissance —a reset that dismantles the entrenched hierarchies and invites a more egalitarian participation in the cultural discourse. They function as glares of fresh perspectives, providing a platform for artists and cultural practitioners who defy the conventional narratives. In doing so, they not only challenge the status quo, but actively contribute to a more nuanced, comprehensive understanding of Europe's cultural identity.

The alternatives to the hypercentralised cultural landscape depicted in this volume underscores the urgent need for recalibration. The current narrative, fixated on Western capitals and urban centres, perpetuates a skewed representation of Europe's cultural richness. The marginalisation of Eastern Europe, non-capital cities, and rural areas is a disservice to the continent's diverse heritage. As Reset! advocates for a rebalancing of the cultural scenes, it places the transformative power in the hands of those who champion diversity, and the narratives that lie beyond the hypercentralised gaze. The future of Europe's cultural landscape hinges on this recalibration —a collective effort to transcend geographical boundaries and celebrate the kaleidoscopic richness that defines the true essence of European culture.

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

↘ **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, Portuga**l
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

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

Reset! members

on date of publication
of the Atlas

20ft Radio — Ukraine • **Act Right** — France • **Alter Ego** — France • **Ankali** — Czech Republic • **Are We Europe** — Netherlands • **Artportal.hu** — Hungary • **Arty Farty** — France • **Arty Farty Brussels** — Belgium • **Auróra** — Hungary • **Babel International** — France • **Bandswith** — Belgium • **BASIS Vinschgau Venosta** — Italy • **BAZAAR** — France • **Bi:pole** — France • **Bijat** — Kosovo • **Black Artist Database** — UK • **Borshch magazine** — Germany • **C/o pop** — Germany • **Cameltown** — Belgium • **Canal 180** — Portugal • **City of Brussels** — Belgium • **City of Lyon** — France • **Come Play With Me** — UK • **Consentis** — France • **Cultivamos Cultura** — Portugal • **Culture Next** — France • **De Structura** — Estonia • **Drugstore** — Serbia • **Dublin Digital Radio** — Ireland) • **EBB Music** — Netherlands • **Electropark Festival** — Italy • **Elevate Festival** — Austria • **Fairly** — France • **Femnoise** — Spain • **Flumi** — Spain • **Fundación Uxío Novoneyra** — Spain • **Garp Sessions** — Turkiye • **Girls* to the Front** — Poland • **Ground Control** — France • **InFiné** / France • **Inkonst Cultural Centre** — Sweden • **Insomnia** — Norway • **Intonal Festival** — Sweden • **ISBN books+gallery** — Hungary • **Kajet** — Romania • **L'Observatoire des Politiques Culturelles** — France • **La forêt électrique** — France • **La Vallée** — Belgium • **Lahmacun Radio** — Hungary • **Lazy Women** — Hungary • **Le Guess Who?** — Netherlands • **Les garages numériques** — Belgium • **Magma** — Belgium • **minimal.lt** — Lithuania • **MMN** — Hungary • **Motsion** — Czech Republic • **Mutant Radio** — Georgia • **Nêga Filmes** — Portugal • **Oramics** — Poland • **Palanga Street Radio** — Lithuania • **Paral·lel 62** — Spain • **Parsec** — Italy • **PIP** — Netherlands • **Pixelache** — Finland • **Radio Quantica** — Portugal • **Réflexivité(s)** — France • **Resonance FM** — UK • **Reworks** — Greece • **Robida** — Italy • **Rocknrolla Producciones** — Spain • **Seanaps** — Germany • **Sister Midnight** — UK • **Skala Magazine** — North Macedonia • **Sounds Queer** — Austria • **Soundwall** — Italy • **Sphere radio** — Germany • **Stichting Trasformatorio** — Netherlands • **T+U** — Hungary • **Terraforma** — Italy • **The Art of Social Change Podcast** — France • **The Shift Project** — France • **Tropisme** — France • **Unsound** — Poland • **Vinylbox Napoli** — Italy • **Whisper Not Agency** — Spain

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed
in this document do not necessarily
reflect the positions of the European
Commission.