



**Cultural Bridges:
Connecting to
Youth, Maintaining
Intergenerational Links,
and Enhancing Emergence**



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A Volume from the Reset! Atlas

In present times the age categories have become more and more blurred and they lack a clear categorisation which could define tastes, ethics, and beliefs. Who are the individuals behind Generation Z and Alpha? What kind of culture they like, they stand for, they identify with? Their access to culture has ethical, economical, and social limits and they are above all digital cultural consumers. Questioning their access to culture and their influence over it is one of the preoccupations of independent cultural players, who look to adapt to touch, be relevant, and help make emerge this youth that is too often put aside and considered as an outsider.

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Editorial

Reset! Network:
An Age of Alliances

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

A polarised and weakened common perspective

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

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

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

The threat of authoritarianism, the threat of concentration

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

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

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

Forging new alliances

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

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

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

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

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.

February 2024

Editorial

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

Under their opinion

In the ever-evolving landscape of culture, the role of youth stands at the forefront, driving innovation, challenging norms, and shaping the future. In this column, we delve into the dynamic intersection of youth and the cultural sphere, exploring the vital aspects of their participation, the imperative need for their voices to be heard, and the boundless reservoir of emerging talents that hold the potential to redefine artistic landscapes. From reimagining traditions to breaking barriers, the youth's influence on culture is unparalleled, demanding not just acknowledgment but active engagement.

The Movers of Tomorrow

Anastasia Lemberg-Lvova

is an artist and the founder of De Structura—a non-profit that supports young art professionals in Europe by doing cross-sectoral projects and advocacy for the art. She holds a BA in Fine Arts and has received training in Belgium, the Netherlands, and Estonia, where she is currently based. She is also a member of the Executive Committee of the Reset! network.

The Foundation's view on the basis of that study is that young adults are potentially the movers of tomorrow, but they cannot single-handedly change the course their societies will take. Any lasting change is born out of a dialogue. Be it a discussion to find a collective solution to a persisting problem or a negotiation to agree on a common course of action between counterparts with opposing interests. There are always obstacles, however.

Allianz Foundation carried out a study, in which 10,000 young adults between the ages of 18 and 39 in Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, and the United Kingdom were asked about their visions for a livable future and what they were doing to help shape it¹. It revealed quite a few intriguing insights, including that most young adults, Millennials, and Generation Z alike, want to have a say in their country's future. And a clear majority of them already do have a say in individual ways. Yet, young adults are more hesitant when it comes to amplifying their individual voices and collectively pressuring decision-makers and the public. In fact, around 50% are either unwilling or unsure about joining a citizens' initiative or another form of collective action; one in four prefers not to talk about political issues and one in eight does not plan to vote.

In 2021 the Romanian President Klaus Iohannis was presented with the Charlemagne Prize for promoting European values. Along with around 50 other winners of the youth edition of the prize, I was invited to take part in the Charlemagne Forum, where he was speaking. After a lengthy panel debate it was finally time to ask questions and mine sounded something like this: "In your speech you invited us to be bold and change the status quo, yet whenever I actively propose new ideas or give feedback to the generation in power in my field of work, it is disregarded and discouraged. How do you see this gap bridged and an effective collaboration established?" This was answered with a blunt constatation that such is the natural course of life—young people always had to fight for change.

1. "Movers of tomorrow Explore - Allianz Foundation."
<https://allianzfoundation.org/study/movers-of-tomorrow/explore/>. Accessed 6 Nov. 2023.

Fighting each other to achieve a common goal seems to be a counterproductive strategy. Yet fighting has become omnipresent in the younger generations.

An open dialogue

Working towards change one deems necessary and standing their ground is crucial. In that sense fighting is indeed natural. What has emerged lately, however, is a spillover of that quite logical phenomenon into a general attitude of distrust, dismay, and negation of open discussion. Being a frequent visitor of events that aim to unite different generations in a dialogue, I have observed that trend, and I cannot

help but feel we have veered away from a good thing.

One could say that pointing this out comes from cognitive dissonance, since my contributions to cross-generational debates and my speeches at forums have often been branded provocative. There is no denying the outrageous character of many aspects of the status quo and will not shy away from pointing them out loud and clear, often at measurable personal and opportunity cost. That said, in criticism, there needs to be a concrete proposal and there needs to be room to listen, consider, understand, and adapt. I am afraid that this attitude is starting to be replaced with antagonism, animosity and shutting down even well-meaning proposals that don't entirely align with one's own.

The tendency to shut down civil, potentially interesting discussion on the basis of ideologically or otherwise disliking the opposing argument without thoroughly considering it, is worrisome. Receiving a wave of strong

counterarguments and actionable proposals demonstrating the merit of the point of view counterparts is, of course, essential, but I haven't encountered enough of this approach in 2023.

Young art professionals and the art world

Nevertheless, this is the way to maintain intergenerational links, enhancing emergence, and progressing together—bringing opposing arguments or needs to the table, in unorthodox loud ways if necessary, and engaging in a discussion of how both sides could realistically move towards improvement. Young people need a platform, agency, and to not be dismissed for such a discussion to occur. In the art sphere the dismissal starts in education, as institutions are not ready to meet the quickly evolving needs of the students and the market.

One of the participants of the 2022 De Structura Forum that gather 100 young art professionals from all over the European continent to discuss the issues they are facing, Markéta Vašičková, put it very well: "Whilst studying my Bachelor's degree at one of the leading art universities in the world, specifically the University of Arts in London, I have been confronted with the fact that art institutions are not equipped to accommodate the new digital climate in their teaching practises appropriately, nor prepare graduates for the institutionalised structures present in employment hierarchies, meaning graduates are often unprepared for dealing with issues such as asking for appropriate wages as well as recognising incorrect employment treatment."

Marketa's quote also sums up the recurring themes and proposals made by other participants. In the course of ten days spent in Estonia they worked together in different Think Tanks to formulate what's important to them and what could feasibly be done to achieve change

for the better. While all groups had from 7 to 15 proposals each, there were some recurring themes illustrated by the points below.

From Institutions I and II Think Tanks

Proposes **artists' unions and associations** across Member States organise and **coordinate working groups** of art professionals in order to:

- Propose to policymakers **guidelines and regulations for cultural work** remuneration for all levels within institutional hierarchies,
- Establish a **best practice standards certification system** for institutions, demonstrating their adherence to the aforementioned guidelines.

Urges funding institutions to assist creative workers with **improving their application writing skills** by:

- Providing **personalised and constructive feedback to rejected applicants**,
- Offering **accessible educational resources on funding application procedures** to further support potential applicants.

From Communities and Society I and II Think Tanks

Calls upon national and local governments to work with art institutions and funding bodies, **to support the integration of artists in local communities** by:

- Establishing and expanding **funds and programmes dedicated to community-based projects**,
- **Supporting and facilitating existing community-initiated collaborations** with artists,
- **Decentralising budget allocation** to encourage artistic projects in small cities.



↑ Opening of the Unveiling Structures exhibition and Kogo Gallery in Tartu in July 2023. © Evelin Lumi



↑ De Structura Forum 2022. © Media Team of the Forum

Requests schools, art academies, and universities facilitate early implementation of cross-sectoral collaborations by:

→ Introducing **cross-disciplinary collaborative projects** such as the EU's Life-Long Learning Programs or collaborations with museums, companies or NGOs **as part of their curriculums,**

→ Creating opportunities for innovative projects through the awarding of **ECTS credits for non-curricular activities that reflect cross-disciplinary values;**

From Professionalisation Think Tank

Requests **funding entities, arts organisations, foundations, governments and the EU,** to be transparent in their relationship with artists by:

→ **Adopting the Fair Practice Code²** in their organisations,

→ Providing thorough **feedback on relevant applications** and making their **detailed selection criteria available** to the applicants,

→ Making **financial reports** on their activities **publicly available.**

From New Deal Think Tank

Urge local government structures to collaborate with cultural workers through:

→ **Systematically including creative practitioners in decision-making processes** which concern local culture events and initiatives,

→ Facilitating access to **unoccupied buildings as working spaces** for artistic and cultural activities, and supporting the renovation and transformation of such buildings into cultural centres,

→ Strengthening contact and dialogue between local residents and creative practitioners through the **organising of public forums focusing on the upcoming cultural programming of the region** at regular intervals.

From the proposals in the report from the 2022 De Structura Forum, it is clear that the new generation wants a culture scene based on merit and diversity, not the dominance of outdated practices and nepotism. The participants are being critical, straight-forward, and provocative. That said, De Structura as an independent organisation is eager to hear the arguments coming from the side of those in capacity to implement the proposals and to explore what could feasibly be done to improve the situation together. Through effective intergenerational collaborations where all sides

have an equally resounding voice, we will be able to move towards change that the new generation desperately wants. This volume is looking to give inputs on situations where intergenerational gaps were bridged, where youth was listened, and emergence favoured. It is about exploring experiences and ways to work towards a collaborative approach in understanding the next generation, and working hand in hand to open a collective path of intergenerational commune.

visions

Through effective intergenerational collaborations where all sides have an equally resounding voice, we will be able to move towards change that the new generation desperately wants.

2. "Fair Practice Code." Accessed October 25, 2022. <https://quickscan.fairpracticecode.nl/en/fair-practice-code>.

Under their light

In this collection of articles, we navigate the various facets that define the intersection of youth and cultural expression. From innovative educational approaches to empowering narratives that amplify the voices of the younger generation, these articles delve into the diverse and impactful ways in which youth are shaping and contributing to independent cultural movements –and vice versa.

Education

Northern Ireland's First DJ Workshops Created Real Change

Emma Warren

has been writing and making radio about music, community, and grassroots culture for decades. She is the author of the Sunday Times Book of the Week Mojo Book of the Year *Dance Your Way Home: A Journey Through The Dancefloor* (Faber, 2023). She also wrote *Make Some Space: Tuning Into Total Refreshment Centre* which was a Mojo Top Ten book of 2019 and *Steam Down: Or How Things Begin* (Rough Trade Books, 2019) which was an Irish Times read of the year. Her pamphlet *Document Your Culture* is a cult read for renegade archivists across the globe.

Back in the mid 1990s, Alice Ferguson was running an adult literacy programme for school leavers in Belfast. Her students weren't particularly engaged. One day she let them bring in a radio and made an offhand comment about the DJ Carl Cox, who she knew through her sons – the well-known

DJ Fergie, who was playing headline sets across the UK and Northern Ireland and had a popular hard house show on BBC Radio 1 and his Glasgow-based DJ brother Ken. The kids were amazed that she knew anything about music, let alone dance music, and their response gave their tutor an idea. It was an idea that would connect local young people with culture in ways that would create lasting impact on independent dance music and DJ culture in Northern Ireland.

“Within that moment of music,” she realised, “I had some influence. I said ‘you’re going to be the promoter for a DJ event’ and I incorporated their English and Maths into this music focus. Back in the day everybody wanted to be a DJ.” She made contact with local record shops, recording studios and nightclubs and got work placements for some of the students. In a less tangible way, she also broadened their perspectives – which was, of course, taking place within the context of pre-Good Friday Agreement Northern Ireland.

“It gave them an appreciation,” she says of this unexpected grassroots creativity. “Some of those young lads, when they’d go for a job interview and they’d be asked ‘what were you doing on Friday nights?’ and they’d say ‘I was down at the corner, throwing bricks at the Peelers [police]’. I like to think that instead of doing that, they were going to the club.”

“They had no more knowledge of DJing than me”

Soon after, Alice Ferguson moved into educational guidance, and would sometimes find herself encouraging music-mad young people to get into dance music, either as a DJ or as a producer or a promoter. “Music,” she says, “kept popping in and out of it.” Gradually she realised that there was a complete absence of projects designed to help young men and women get into the burgeoning dance music economy.

“I was in my 40s,” she says. “I’d set up a company with my two friends Lesley Reilly and Maeve Ferguson, called KeySound, doing personal development training for youth community groups. They had no more knowledge of DJing, than me. I was on holiday with Robert [DJ Fergie] in Ibiza and he said ‘Mum, just do it.’ I think he was fed up of listening to me going on about it. I phoned Lesley and Maeve and said ‘we’re going to do this. Think on a name’. They were taking the groceries out of the back of the car and they just said it: ‘KeyMix’. It was born in that moment.” It was an entirely independent example of grassroots creativity: a music-based youth programme that sat outside of the usual structures and which fed into independent music and clubs in the area.

DJ skills for life

Their idea for a series of DJ workshops was funded by Irish Electric who were handing out money for community projects and in 2002, KeyMix booked a room at the Brownlow community centre in Craigavon, just south of Belfast in County Armagh. The newly-formed team scraped up six sets of DJ turntables and mixers, set them up on pasting tables and crates for early-stage DJs who’d be supported by high-profile mentors supplied by Fergie. Hundreds of people applied for the 24 places, sending in a 30-minute mix CD and written answers to a questionnaire that Alice had devised. It was a success, and sessions followed at a range of venues from community centre and colleges. Sessions also occurred at The Met Arena in Armagh, so that aspiring DJs could practice in the booth of a big club with a massive soundsystem whilst their fellow KeyMixers took part in workshops on how to write an artist biography, or how to approach a club promoter. DJ workshops, industry panels and

anything like it – access to people who in their lives were so important. We also looked at other aspects of the industry, because DJing’s not for everyone. We had music mags. We had promoters – if you want to do your own night, this is what you do. I think it was pretty good, honestly.”

On a practical level, KeyMix created a bridge between young people and independent nightclubs and DJs in Northern Ireland, ensuring that the young folk who came through would have practical connections to promoters who’d book them to play. Alice Ferguson lists them out: The Met, Exit, Beach Club, the Red Box, Planet Love, Lush. “We needed the guys to be able to play,” she explains. “There was a very clear structure to it. When I look back I think ‘how did we do this?’ I don’t know. All the local DJs, Robbie Nelson, Gleave Dobbins – names that were important to the people who were coming – they came to the

workshops and taught. It was crazy that they done that. To give those young people an opportunity to talk to a DJ they were used to seeing up here – it was fantastic.”

A chip van becomes a DJ booth

Participants went on to DJ at superclubs like Cream and others became producers. For some of the young folk who got involved, it was a fast-track to a life in music. One of the KeyMix DJs, Angela Dunlop, won a chance to DJ at big English club God’s Kitchen which was taking place in Birmingham. Two others opened up for DJ Fergie at a huge BBC Radio 1 show in Larne. Over the years they operated – between 2002 and 2009 – KeyMix sent one person to India to the I Love Music DJ School and took over twenty young DJs to Ibiza to play in the clubs or on the radio.

The story of KeyMix and Ibiza Radio is a good example of the ways that this independent youth project created cultural connections internationally. Radio station HFM Ibiza was based in the club Privilege. KeyMix persuaded them to take on, Tony Rogers, a super keen young guy from Ballymena, who had a background in hospital radio but

growing

networking opportunities took place at other KeyMix events. “When I look back, I can see it was as much about personal development as DJing,” says Ferguson. “We talked about visualisation, creating road maps for where you want to get to, and action, how you move yourself forward. They coached each other. That’s not just a skill for DJing – that’s a skill for whatever you’re going to do in life.”

At a time of great segregation, the KeyMix participants came from all across the country, and from across the sectarian divide. “They came from everywhere,” says Ferguson. “Derry! They’d never experienced



↑ Cianan McAuley, then KeyMix young DJ, at HFM Ibiza radio station in 2007. © Alice Ferguson

no other connections to the music industry. In a typically inventive response, KeyMix sponsored Tony, allowing him to spend the season in Ibiza, on the basis that every Monday Ibiza Radio – and then Ibiza Sonica Radio – would run a KeyMix slot. Tony Rogers eventually went on to run the whole radio station. Then he came home, settled down in Ballymena, and won Young Businessman of The Year, redirecting his confidence and experience into commerce – specifically, shipping pallets.

Another time they converted a chip van into a DJ booth, wrapped banners around it, and created a micro-venue for KeyMix DJs to play their tunes as a tiny, grassroots extension of the club Planet Love. “It was crude,” says Alice with a smile on her face. “But nobody cared because people would come and listen to them.” The community obviously thought they were doing something valuable – the organisers were nominated for an award for their contribution to dance music at the Northern Ireland Dance Music Awards 2006 although it was Planet Love, the club that hosted their chip van and which ensured KeyMix had a stage at their festival between 2005 and 2007 that won on the night.

Over seven years – and informally, in the years that followed – KeyMix worked with a broad range of young people, none of whom had prior connections to dance music beyond consuming the music at home or in the clubs. These included girls who had been brought up in the care system, single mothers, homeless communities and people with mental health issues. For these groups, it was less about gaining access to creative industries and more about using music to create connection and to build confidence.

The contribution continues

What did KeyMix achieve? Alice pauses. “We created a space for young people who would have never had access to what we presented them with. Some of them moved into radio, into music, into production.” One KeyMix regular, Boyd Sleator is the founder of strategic cultural organisation Free The Night with DJ Holly Lester. They’re advocating for national change to outdated licencing laws and their work is bearing fruit.

Organisations have been harnessing a cultural interest in dance music for decades, with recent examples including French organisation EuropaVox who collaborate with several universities to offer a springboard into music. KeyMix did it all, in an acutely grassroots style.

“It was rough, it was ready. We weren’t doing it very long but we packed it in,” says Ferguson. Later, she adds another reflection: “I think that we were actually helping to secure the future of dance music in Northern Ireland. Club promoters were bringing the big names and different genres of music but in a very small way we were nurturing the future DJs and producers in a way that no-one else was doing back then in 2002.”

There’s one outcome that outstrips all others, something Alice Ferguson describes as ‘the coming together’. “It was the peace process,” she says. “They came from everywhere. We never asked anyone what religion they were. Here we were, with these guys from Derry and flipping Boyne Square, and no – it was about the music. That people came together, absolutely, was our contribution. We showed: here they are and they have a common factor. That to me was a massive thing.”

3 questions to De Structura

Tartu, Estonia

01. _____

Can you introduce your structure to us?

First, DS aims to strengthen emerging art professionals by providing them with necessary knowledge, connecting to a larger community of art professionals and creating frameworks for them to realise their ideas. Second, DS aims to bring forward the projects they create, make their ideas heard by institutions and decision makers of the sector and to build connections between art professionals and the audience to facilitate collective action towards positive change.

02. _____

Why did you join the Reset! network?

One of De Structura’s team members was affiliated with We Are Europe and Arty Farty. So when the organisation brought forward a project to support the independent media and culture actors in Europe, it was a great fit for us.

03. _____

How can the independent sector be a platform for the next generations?

Independent organisations provide more flexibility and are eager to experiment with new ideas. The next generation is looking to question the old-fashioned and outdated ways of working in the culture sector present in many large established institutions. The independent sector is fertile ground for the ambitions of young people.

The Need for Participation

Bridging the Generational Gap: The Role of Youth in Culture

We are currently witnessing an expansion of the idea of cultural rights. In addition to the fundamental human right to a cultural identity—one of the basic freedoms and privileges required in order to live a life of dignity—we now find the concept of “access to culture, participation and the right to contribute to cultural life” (Fem Cultural!, Barcelona City Council) as inherent to cultural rights.

Cultural emergence, the process of the emergence of novel cultural practices, practitioners, consumers and dynamics, is constant and omnipresent. The democratisation of cultural practices, the incorporation of new technologies and means of distribution, and the increasingly interactive relation between creator and audience, are some of the elements influencing cultural emergence in the 21st century.

In this paper we will consider the importance of participation when applied to young generations, why connecting to young people and giving them a voice within the cultural sector is essential, the challenges of working with young people and how in practice many organisations across Europe

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is founder and director of the NouPOP Association, the prize-winning Muntem un Festival educational programme, and innovative music festival, BOCA. She is a founding member of leading web magazine Mondomix, and founder of Barcelona-based Mellow Productions. She shares her considerable experience of music festivals and journalism as guest lecturer at the Missouri School of Journalism.

Aileen Morrissey

has stood out as a creative force behind the international programming and artistic direction of acclaimed festivals such as Summercase, SOS 4.8, and Utopía. Presently, Aileen serves as the co-director and Head of Creative Development for the BOCA Festival.

are putting youth participation in culture at the heart of their projects. We will also demonstrate how this shift in mindset within the sector can foster the cultural emergence of both innovative practices and artforms, and creative practitioners.

The need for new cultural models

Studies show that, contrary to the many stereotypes about young people in circulation today in the media (lazy, apathetic, stuck to their screens), they actually do go to concerts, and to the cinema, and even to cultural sites (although less than older generations). Yet there is a consensus in the cultural and creative industries that the models developed during the 20th century, and still in vigour today, require an overhaul in order to connect in a significant way with younger generations.

There is growing awareness that the young generations present in live audiences base their choices on differing values to older generations. As highlighted in the Summer 2023 edition of the Cultural Participation Monitor, “much younger audiences’ preferences for more relaxed behavioural regulations when it comes to how they can consume live culture, raises interesting questions about the increasingly different experiential tastes and expectations that venues may need to be prepared to cater to in the not so distant future.” In a survey carried out by NouPOP in 2022 with young teens, 82% wanted “more music festivals exclusively for their age group.”

Also, while digital natives consume culture, they interact with it in a radically different way to previous generations, with hyperconnectivity, social media, and the omnipresence of digital devices substantially contributing to and shaping their cultural practices. They also have differing value priorities—more idealistic, wanting less confrontation, and more dialogue, identifying as “inclusive consumers” and demanding purpose and accountability (McKinsey & Company, 2023).

Based on these changes in values, preferences, and practices, there is a need for redefinition—“redefining the boundaries of what theatre, dance, and performance can be... and redefining who gets to be involved” as explained by the team from The Shake Down at Bastard, a joint youth project from Latvia, Iceland, and Norway.



↑ Julia Amor at Festival BOCA 2022. © Miki Velilla

The central role of participation

While the importance of participation is no longer up for debate, the way in which this participation is conceived and put into practice, is crucial. As Roudy, a 17-year-old participant in the Festival BOCA project, so clearly stated: “What I most liked about the project is that we created the festival ourselves.” In order for young people to feel true ownership of their cultural experience, for it to be relevant, authentic, and coherent, participation must be much more than just a buzzword.

Also key is the idea of shared goals, defined collaboratively with young creatives. A process which requires those accompanying and facilitating young curators to develop strong “active listening” skills, as compassionate leaders, prepared to let go of limiting “wisdoms” in order to embrace a significantly different viewpoint.

Equally vital to this process is the idea of trust. As stated by Terje, project manager of the children’s program at Tallinn Music Week: “the basis of everything is [...] open communication and trust.” Trusting young people, believing they have the necessary creativity, curiosity, and commitment, is the foundation for their empowerment.

In order for the cultural sector to connect with young generations and new audiences, it must be permeable to their language, codes, values, and viewpoints. Providing them with a space in which to exercise their talents, learn new skills and take the lead as young creatives contributes to decision-making power shifts within the cultural sector.

In order for young people to feel true ownership of their cultural experience, for it to be relevant, authentic, and coherent, participation must be much more than just a buzzword.



↑ Festival BOCA 2023. © NouPOP

Challenges

While the benefits of youth participation in culture are clear, those facilitating projects are also faced with many challenges.

First and foremost, the transformative process of cultural youth participation, at both an individual and societal level, is lengthy. Participants need time, as do projects, for quantifiable results to become manifest.

Projects that not only aim for young people to be involved in their organisation, but also to foster young audiences, are social as well as cultural, and cannot compete on the same playing field as commercial ventures. They thereby require significant support from public institutions and subsidies.

And at a more executional level, projects need to provide a strong support structure within which young participants can fully enjoy the freedom to make decisions and take the lead creatively.

The BOCA Festival in Barcelona – a case study

The BOCA music festival is a collaboration between the cultural association NouPOP, and the Barcelona Centre for Contemporary Culture (CCCCB), and an example of an innovative and highly contextualised cultural project promoting youth participation.

Based on Muntem un Festival, the association’s award-winning educational project run in Barcelona state secondary schools since 2016, BOCA is a city-wide music festival organised by a teenage Youth Council for an exclusively young teenage audience (14-17 years). A unique project catering to a demographic that has limited access to cultural events.

The Youth Council is selected from applicants in response to a city-wide open call. One of the greatest challenges is to foster participation from a broad cross-section of society, contributing to the breaking down of socioeconomic barriers and fostering social cohesion. Thanks to the presence in state secondary schools around the city of the Muntem un Festival educational project, a wonderfully mixed group of young people apply to take part in BOCA and the Youth Council is a true reflection of the diversity of the city.

participation

em-

The Youth Council works on all aspects of the festival organisation, from booking, programming, staging, communication, marketing, and production. The educational project provides a clear structure and calendar of activities enabling the Youth Council to understand the general timeline and outline of the event organisation within which they are given the freedom to be creative and put their ideas into practice. They are accompanied in this process by NouPOP and by collaborating professionals from a wide range of fields within the live music industry, from which they discover career paths and learn valuable skills.

The varied backgrounds of the members of the Council and their inclusion in decision-making processes facilitate the integration of various cultural perspectives into the project. This, in turn, broadens the spectrum of content choices, encompassing diverse forms such as music, dance, multidisciplinary collaborations, as well as niche interests like tarot reading and cosplay.

The collaboration between NouPOP and the CCCB is key to the success of this project, highlighting the importance of partnerships and alliances within the public sector for youth participation projects. In the same way, financial support in the form of grants awarded by the Barcelona City Council, Catalan Institute of Cultural Companies and other public institutions is also crucial for independent organisations such as NouPOP and its BOCA project.

BOCA is a social rather than commercial venture, and respects a strict ethical code, both in its programming of artists and activities. Hence when considering private sponsorship, the organisation is particularly aware of the need to preserve its teenage audience from becoming a mere target for advertising. Equally, the importance of promoting access to culture within this demographic is a pillar of the festival and informs the ticket price, which remains symbolic.

Another mainstay of the project is to provide a safe and inclusive space for young teens to experience a meaningful cultural experience with their peers (no adults allowed). The festival has a no alcoholic beverages or smoking policy, which not only ensures the audience's well-being, but also promotes the event with parents as a safe cultural activity for their children. This community-focused messaging is central to the communication campaign run by the association.

This community-focused messaging also lies at the heart of the festival's communication campaign, run by the Youth Council and leveraging a powerful strategy to connect with their peers. By allowing participating teens the freedom to manage social networks and create content in a loose, informal and natural style, the campaign taps into the authenticity and relatability that teens seek. This 'like-to-like' approach establishes a genuine connection between the association and its young audience, fostering trust and a sense of shared values.

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ergence



↑ Festival BOCA 2022. © Miki Velilla

Youth participation is both a necessity and a catalyst

Promoting the cultural activism of young generations, facilitating their participation in culture as creatives, artists, and change-makers, and promoting their right to access and create cultural experiences that are authentic and meaningful to them, not only benefits culture and young generations, but ensures the ongoing relevance of the organisations that foster these projects.

While the benefits are evident, challenges persist, including the lengthy transformation process and the need for support from public institutions. Groundbreaking independent projects such as the BOCA music festival in Barcelona—an inspiring case study showcasing the success of youth participation and exemplifying the potential of youth-driven cultural initiatives—, London's Tate Collective or Tallinn's Kräsh Jazz Festival, need not only recognition, but practical and

financial support for their work. And these projects would greatly benefit from a network at a European level through which to collaborate and share best practices.

In a rapidly changing cultural landscape, youth participation is not only a necessity but a catalyst for innovation and sustainability in the cultural sector.

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Providing them with a space in which to exercise their talents, learn new skills and take the lead as young creatives contributes to decision-making power shifts within the cultural sector.

Emergence

Supportive Communities Enable Emergence of Youth Culture

The emergence of youth culture is of critical interest to all the many stakeholders involved – from directors of urban cultural institutions to rural teenagers in their first bands, members of the community of all backgrounds and ages are interested in how this phenomenon plays out. The activities of generations Z and alpha, perceived as over-technical and mysterious by older generations, in addition to recent crises (the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia’s full-scale war in Ukraine, and economic events related to both), have caused concern in cultural actors and commentators that, in our current times, young people may not be able to develop their own independent culture because of a lack of support, autonomy, and vision that they would need for such a task. From the perspective of youth workers active in the field of music in Slovenia, and while these concerns certainly need serious attention, there is hope in the resilient creativity of today’s youth.

Robbie Hopper (she/they) is a youth worker, community activist, and musician based in central Slovenia. Their current work at Lojtra Association focuses on addressing personal and professional development of youth.

Rural youth in the shade

The music ecosystem in Slovenia is rich, vibrant, intelligent, and avant-garde. If you enter any of the independent cultural spaces in Ljubljana, you will find diverse programmes which span genres, styles, and methods of delivery, and which are accessible to almost anyone due to low ticket prices. Being a regular concert-goer in the capital city is truly a delight for anyone interested in music.

However, as it often goes, once you step outside of the city bounds, the picture drastically changes, with the number of independent music events dropping to close to zero in most places. Musicians in rural Slovenia struggled to get

gigs long before the desperate circumstances caused by the lockdowns, during which the prohibition of public gatherings for culture caused the number of concerts to plummet (see Fig. 1). In this framework, the development of a young underground music scene has long been restricted by the centralisation of non-mainstream cultural activity to Ljubljana, which has made it extremely challenging for young rural musicians to develop professionally:

“In Litija you cannot be an underground musician because there’s no space for it and no audience. You don’t have any support here in rural areas in general. Even if you manage to break through to bigger cities then, you don’t have any channels you can work through.”

Luka, multi-instrumentalist member of post-rock band LSBTMM, aged 31



↑ Participants in the workshop by Uroš Čokl, 'Exploring African Rhythms'. © Neža Palčič



↑ Workshop by Samo Kutin, 'Improvisation on Homemade Instruments'. © Neža Palčič

Support

With the independent music scene being mostly limited to Ljubljana, many rural scenes have been deprived of nourishment and simply lack an audience, a problem exacerbated by the apparent lack of interest on the part of the public cultural authorities—dominating concert real estate in Slovenia’s small-towns—in providing space for underground music events. There are some obliging venues linked to official youth centres—Klub eMce plac in Velenje and Center mladih Koper being notable examples—but they are exceptions and tend to be in larger towns (ca. 25,000 inhabitants). Young musicians in rural areas are thus afforded very few opportunities to hone their craft, get inspired, or to network, often leaving them far behind their urban peers in terms of skills, repertoire and industry connections.

Lack of spaces

Another challenge frequently faced by our youth is finding space to rehearse. Band practices were directly and indirectly affected by the COVID-19 restrictions in a lasting manner:

“We couldn’t practice for 3 years because of the COVID situation. We’re just starting up again now.”

Timotej, bassist of alternative band Nubira, aged 29

Apart from the potential damage the disruption of lockdown could cause to the musical process – which requires painful dedication to continuity–, the recent hike



↑ Young facilitator Nejc Podobnik leading his workshop 'Real-Time Composer'. © Neža Palčič

in property prices has made it incredibly difficult for some musicians and independent collectives to even find a place they can practice in. Since 2020, the rate of increase in property indices in Slovenia has doubled, driving up rents to an almost unliveable extent for people of all ages, but for young musicians with their own living costs as well as a practice place, the outlook is bleak.

As youth workers, we believe that our role is to enable young people to realise their potential in the paths they choose to follow. This principle formed the foundation of the Tune Green project, the over-arching aim of which was to diversify musical opportunities for young people in rural Slovenia.

The work towards this aim comprised several areas. The first was a micro-festival for showcasing music workshops and performances by local musicians. The festival succeeded in creating a professional network of musicians and educators, as well as giving participating youth the chance to try out diverse musical experiences in workshops, from African percussion to vocal improvisation and experimental electronics. These experiences were shared further in a workshop series in schools and non-formal education institutions around the country, while musicians also strengthened their professional connections. Finally, we established a library of musical instruments and equipment for free use.

As an independent NGO, we are limited in terms of funding and the physical space we can offer young musicians. However, in the future we plan to restructure the library area, to include a practice space. Furthermore, we plan to continue the festival and workshop series, with an additional concert series, in order to continue offering diverse educational experiences for young people and help to maintain the professional network between musicians and educators.

By providing the space and resources for young people to create and enjoy music, we believe that their culture will emerge on their own terms, in their own unique style.

Number of Musical Performances by Genre

Slovenia 2016–2022. Source Republic of Slovenia Statistical Office (stat.si)



↑ Figure 1: Annual figures for musical performances in Slovenia from 2016 to 2022. Source: Statistical office of Slovenia

Supporting the youth: independent cultural organisations respond

Rural youth in Slovenia indeed face very real challenges to the emergence of their musical culture. What can we do as independent cultural actors to support them?

3 questions to Skala Magazine

Skopje,
North Macedonia

01. Can you introduce your structure to us?

As Skala Magazine is a project that came to be from the work of the Skala School, the organisation is composed both from the professors and the students of the Skala School. The current organisational chart consists of editor-in-chief, editor of the writing section, editor of photography, editor of design. Further to the editors, Skala has a creative team composed of current and former students, and an administrative team that is supporting admin and legal matters.

02. Why did you join the Reset! network?

As we met part of the Reset! coordination team on a very inspirational event in Budapest, after a short discussion we agreed that we have so much in common in the goals and the values of the network. We also wanted to get in touch with more organisations from the independent cultural sector and potentially have the opportunity to work on joined projects.

03. How can the independent sector be a platform for the next generations?

The activities of Skala Magazine have mostly been focused on the domestic market, as one of the main ideas of the establishment of Skala Magazine was promotion of artists, and creation of a link between the artists and the domestic creative industries. Taking into consideration that Skala was founded at the time of the pandemic, it was also a platform where our students, all young designers and artists

could have a place where they can promote and exhibit their works. In our opinion, the platform for the next generations can be nothing but the independent sector. We strongly believe that the independent

sector can afford the flexibility, the openness, and the prompt reactions needed for creations and collaborations between the members of the next generation. The independent sector can also afford the flexible procedures

needed to adapt to any upcoming and emerging technologies, with which the new generations are born and raised with.



↑ Skala Magazine

Under their words

In this section, we engage in conversations with an independent cultural voice dedicated to integrating, educating, and including the youth in transformative cultural activities. This insightful interview offers a unique glimpse into the mind of a cultural player who is actively shaping the landscape of cultural expression by fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment among the younger generation. Broadly, from trailblazing educators to community leaders and artists, these voices share their experiences, strategies, and dreams for a future where youth not only participate, but also play a central role in the evolution of our cultural landscape.

Youth and Community

With Sophie Nicol from the Woolwich Creative Club (London, UK)

Woolwich Creative Club in south east London offers free music lessons to children and young teenagers whose parents don't have spare cash for paid instruction. We meet founder Sophie Nicol.

Tell me the genesis of Woolwich Creative Club.

For many years I've been a primary school teacher. For years children had access to free music lessons if they showed enthusiasm and aptitude –some aptitude, enthusiasm mostly. That's not the case now. I was talking to people of my generation, in their fifties. For many of them, their entry into being a highly skilled and fêted musician and artist was the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA), who in the '70s and '80s gave out free instruments and music lessons, as well as access to a wide range of musical opportunities –maybe three different ensembles each week. ILEA provided a step up for creative children who couldn't afford paid lessons. It used to be really good for some children, and now it's getting worse and worse. There are secondary schools in the area that don't offer any music, let alone free music lessons. That was the beginning of me thinking I needed to do something about it, for the musicians of the future, and the cultural sphere in general.



↑ Sophie Nicol at Woolwich Creative Club. © Brian Aldrich for the Royal Borough of Greenwich

What's your relationship to music?

I'm a music lover. I like going to see live music, particularly jazz. Years ago, I went to an event at [London cultural centre] the Southbank –a big performance workshop for children. I could see the impact it was having, so I invited Abram Wilson into the school where I worked– and from then on I've invited different jazz musicians in. The impact is so immediate. Jazz musicians don't come with a set thing, everything's improvised. If something happens, they can turn it into something else. They know how to let the children create their own thing. Inviting musicians into school meant I got a bit deeper into going to gigs and performances. It's in the back of my mind always –how could this work for the children? It's a working relationship and a fan relationship, and the two things feed into each other.

commu- nity

“A lot of people have made friends within in.”

Who is in the community of WCC? Do you think of it as a community and a collective?

I think it is a community. A lot of people have made friends within in. We've got children from ten or eleven schools. When they come in, we have half an hour of chatting and socialising, and pizzas. You see friendship groups forming. Some of our tutors are students from Trinity Laban Jazz department, [tutor] Enoch Mukasa is from Greenwich's Music Service and Rasheeda Page-Muir is a poet. They know each other from going to the same primary school. The musical director is Byron Wallen, who is a very well-respected jazz musician who also teaches at Trinity Laban.

Who comes to the club?

The club is really aimed at that younger teenage age group –the youngest is ten and the oldest is 15. It was set up to be a bridge between leaving primary school and going on to secondary school, where they may not be able to access lessons, particularly if they have to pay for them. The idea is that by the time they're mid-teens, they're more entrenched in their music and we can refer them to another organisation.

How does it work, when someone comes along?

They can do two instruments. Some of the children end up giving up all the instruments and do poetry club or journalism club. They fit in really well, in different ways, with the music –which is the core. They do a half hour lesson, then they swap and do their other instrument, and then the last half hour is creative time where everyone gets back together. We play together as a band or do a bit of listening, choose some repertoire, something like that.

Where did you get your instruments from?

Some of them I bought, with the initial funding from Youth Music. Others have been given to us by private individuals or Nucleo's National Instrument Donation Hub.

What are you seeing with the children in terms of what happen to them, because of joining the club?

We've got a very obviously relaxed environment from the minute you walk in. It gives a confidence for people to say what they want. We have clear-minded children who say they don't want to play guitar any more, they want to concentrate on one instrument. Now we've got children who are doing piano or keyboard for an hour. I think that's brilliant. Sometimes children randomly want to choose a completely different instrument and then just really love it. You can see them finding their thing. It happened just this week, with this boy who suddenly wanted to learn trumpet. The tutor, Byron Wallen, a very famous jazz musician, said he could tell straight away that he was going to be brilliant at it. We've got a little cornet for him but with no mouthpiece so we'll sort that out, find him a mouthpiece and drop it off at his house.

I get a sense of the musical progression, but what about the other stuff. Music and culture have a big role to play in children's education and development, but how does the club support children in a more general way in their lives?

That transition to secondary school can be tricky. I think having the same people there every week helps. The tutors are in their early twenties, they've got recent experience of school and they can chat about things as they come up. We can refer them to other cultural spaces and go on trips. Hopefully we'll play at Woolwich Carnival as well. I just wrote a reference to a child to get a scholarship to get into a particular school. It's a welcoming place with adults who can help you.

There's a lot of anxiety around in young people. Can you see any ways that the club supports children in that way?

Definitely, in terms of having an outlet. We are playing tunes and we're also creating our own music. There's a lot of emphasis on improvising. It's a creative space which is good for wellbeing. It's a friendly space, and it's relaxing. Some schools put children under a lot of pressure. They're not going to get that pressure here. They're not going to get kicked out if they don't practice their instrument. They get food, that's one meal their parents don't have to worry about. It's creatively flexible –Aaron from AFRORACK came in for four weeks [Chicago-based educator bringing modular synthesis to children of colour]. The only limiting factor is if I can keep the funding up.

“You can see them finding their thing. It happened just this week, with this boy who suddenly wanted to learn trumpet. The tutor, Byron Wallen, a very famous jazz musician, said he could tell straight away that he was going to be brilliant at it.”

What do you think you can do because you're an independent, grassroots creative community?

We are in the middle of Woolwich. Children and young people can access us very easily. We've got the contacts in the community. We're offering a service that's the only one of its kind in the area and people are really supportive.

Your grassroots-ness allows you to be flexible around community need, it allows you to connect easily to local communities and there aren't many barriers to entry –and maybe allows you access to some funding?

We're about to become a registered charity and that will be massive for us. I could almost do it full time, applying for funding. We're going to apply for a huge Youth Music fund in conjunction with Into Music which does music production. Hopefully we'll be successful. We rely 100% on funding. We don't have any other income, or patrons, yet.

I know WCC came out of a keyboard club you were running, but basically you invented this from scratch. How much work has it been for you to get it to this point, two years down the line, with twenty or so children attending each week?

It doesn't seem onerous, although setting up the charity has been onerous. We've been in a school, but soon we're moving to a local community space called Tramshed. When that happens, the workload will be greater: we'll be in charge of our own system of safeguarding –at the moment we're under the school– and budget management. Those are two things you have to be really on top of. The creative bit of running the club every week doesn't seem like work because it's really nice and fun.

What is more difficult because of being an independent, grassroots creative community?

I can't rely on our funding. I know I could go and recruit ten children within a month, but we haven't got the capacity to teach them, feed them or house them. Having to apply for funding continually is a limiting factor.



↑ Sophie Nicol at Woolwich Creative Club. © Brian Aldrich for the Royal Borough of Greenwich

So, in a small way there's a campaigning aspect to this?

Yes, and it would be good to connect up with other groups who are saying similar things, throughout the country. Children should have a proper music lesson, compose something on the xylophone. In some schools, that's not happening.

Culture in our broader society can be seen as something that is nice to have, not something that we need to have. It's not always seen as an essential, or normal. Why do you think it's important?

It's like saying 'why is reading important?'. It's a national mess. I've had someone saying to me: "It's no use giving all children access to instruments because if they're not going to practice at home then there's no point them letting them learn the trumpet or whatever'. There's this attitude that it has to be something special, that it's only for special children, special families and not something that everyone should take up. It's such a ridiculous stance. We don't say 'well, we're not going to teach you to read because your parents won't hear you read at home.' It's ludicrous to take that away from a child. It's probably based on the classical model, where you have to practice for however many hours a week. The elitism filters down too many primary schools.

I've been down to Woolwich Creative Club and I've seen the incredible things that you're doing first hand. I can see how the music is becoming rooted in these children's lives and that this collective, independent initiative that you've built is having a real impact on people's lives. Can I ask you to imagine you're at the club and to let us know what you're seeing? Paint us a picture of what happens.

One week someone doesn't want to play in the band, next time they're joining in. One girl hasn't wanted to play the trumpet in front of anyone. She'd almost pretend to play, or say 'it's not working, I can't make a sound'. This week she was properly joining in. I'll notice and think about what the next steps might be – thinking next week we'll do it again, so that she can carry on with that frame of mind, where she doesn't mind performing and she'll start to enjoy it. We'll play the tune again so she can build upon it. It's a nice feeling, popping in all the time into the lessons.

Independent, grassroots initiatives and community projects are often left on their own to try and fix national problems –in your case, in the field of culture. In an ideal world what kind of structural support would you have?

Ongoing funding. But if it's not a huge national movement there will be children who are left out. In some schools, they don't even do classroom music. Music and the arts in general have got very low status in the education system. That should be tackled nationally, with children trying out instruments in the school day. In some schools, children don't even touch a musical instrument in primary school – sadly. I feel like we're patching together something; a tiny plaster for a huge national problem.

█ This interview was conducted by Emma Warren.



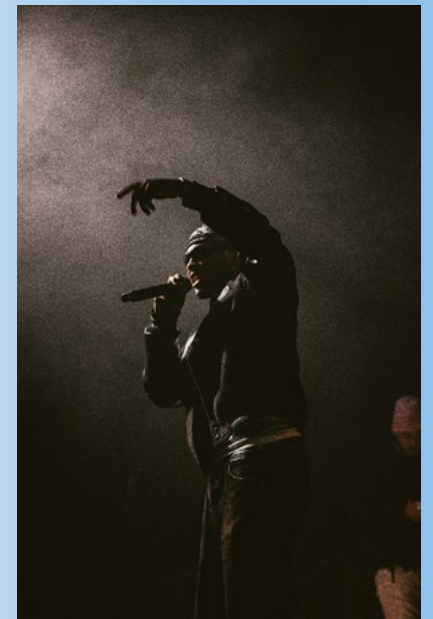
↑ Estelle Langlois, Isulia 2022. © Tristan Conchon

isulia

Isulia

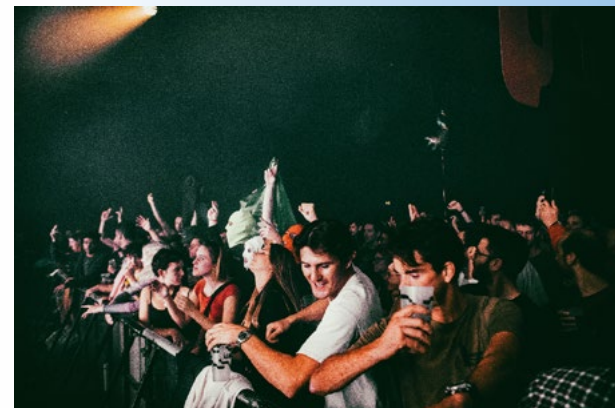
Isulia is a Bordeaux-based multi-disciplinary festival that aims to showcase the way in which young people think, react, enjoy, and get involved in the local community and in society in general. With a “music, talks, performances” proposal, they want to increase the opportunities for the younger generation to feel understood, listened to, represented, and valued. It is open to all those who want to be their allies, meaning that they have a place that brings together very different people from different communities, united by shared values.

It encourages a dialogue between the younger generation and its previous ones, to counter the idea that young people are depoliticised, disengaged, even selfish, and nihilistic. Without minimising anxiety about the future, young people have developed new ways of getting involved, creating, and expressing themselves. We need to emphasise this idea and let them take the reins, in awareness that they already have all the resources to change society.



↑ Baby Neelou, Isulia 2023. © Sophie Hugues

Although it's challenging to straddle culture and youth together, the festival is highlighting the positive, committed spirit of young people as an essential vector for social and democratic cohesion. Isulia Festival has forged a host of partnerships with key players in the cultural, artistic, student, voluntary, and entrepreneurial sectors to co-produce workshops, masterclasses, and performances, and brought in more experienced partners to pass on their knowledge to this audience.



↑ Public dans la Base sous-marine, Isulia 2023. © Sophie Hugues

Under their reports

In this section, we bring accounts and insights gathered from workshops held across diverse communities. These reports provide a nuanced understanding of the obstacles faced by the youth in engaging with cultural pursuits and the innovative solutions emerging from grassroots efforts. From discussions on access to cultural education to the grassroots movements striving to bridge gaps in participation, this collection sheds light on the multifaceted landscape of challenges and solutions in the realm of youth involvement in cultural activities.

Next Generation & New Audiences: How to Draw Them in?

– by Oramics

Kraków,
Poland
February 2023



Historical and political context

The electronic music scene in Poland is relatively young having only really started to develop after 1989. Before that, access to synthesisers or DJ equipment was limited to people from a more affluent background or those with opportunities to travel. Raves were rare, very independent and did their best to remain off the government radar. The scene slowly began to develop and take shape after 1989 once Poland was no longer under USSR influence. It has therefore been going just over 30 years and for a lot of this time, until Poland joined the EU, the country's main focus was on the economic transformation. The situation remains challenging, major socio-economic inequalities still exist and internet access and opportunities to travel have not had as positive an impact on Poland as expected. The electronic scene in Poland really struggles with impostor syndrome and has strong aspirations to live up to its western counterparts.

This hinders its development and makes it difficult to open up to a wider Polish audience. Access to equipment is also limited, even DJs often do not own their own sets. There was much hope of a 'leap in professional development' in 2019 but unfortunately the pandemic proved to be a severe setback for the scene's development. Despite these difficulties, of course the scene is moving in the right direction. There are increasingly more DJs and producers, both male and female, more in-depth analysis of the scene is emerging and the people behind it are focusing on deeper meanings. Still, it is not possible to make a living solely as a DJ or artist. Very few manage to do so.

generation

State of the situation

Since the scene in Poland is quite young, due to the country's independence from USSR dating back from 1989, our scene differentiates a lot from Western ones. Our observation of the Polish scene in recent months and years shows that the audience of events on the independent electronic music scene is aging, while the interest among young audiences is decreasing. We pre-diagnosed the problem for several reasons, including the pandemic cut off the younger generations from partying and event production prices rising. However, one of the most pressing reasons for this situation is also incorrect communication and strategic planning of club events. Most promoters either do not promote their events or focus on a very small audience by communicating their events in Poland in English only. We read it as the aspirational behavior of the Polish scene that wants to equate to the West. We can see that such actions have no effect and are outdated in a reality where many young Poles are fans of Polish pop or rap, two genres that have become immensely popular in recent years. We feel that the Polish scene does not keep up with the changes in trends and do not think strategically.

Our observation of the Polish scene in recent months and years shows that the audience of events on the independent electronic music scene is aging, while the interest among young audiences is decreasing.

Workshop's discussions

• Booking foreign vs local artists

The participants discussed whether it is beneficial to invite international stars, whose rates often exceed the cost of all Polish support acts, both from a financial perspective and for the development of the scene. Opinions were divided although the majority were of the view that it does not pay off to have foreign headliners. They observe a change in audiences who are becoming more oriented towards local artists.

• New promotional tools

New promotional tools and new social media platforms (Discord, Twitch, Tik Tok) sparked heated discussion in the context of promoting club events. The app created by Ciało club, a novelty on the Polish scene, was discussed at length. The app creates a community around the club, aims to improve people's music knowledge and also has an option to report dangers (fellow attendees behaving badly, excessive alcohol consumption, etc.).

• Gen Z vs. Millennials

Given that the group consisted of representatives from the scene of varying ages, the conversation about characteristic traits of different age groups generated a lot of passion. The participants, having the opportunity to meet face to face, learned how to communicate with each other and understand the differences and needs of the different age groups, and also heard what impact the pandemic had on the young generation.

• FOMO: FOFO

Many were surprised to learn about new forms of fear when trends were discussed. Most stopped at FOMO (fear of missing out), but we now live in a world where people do not want to find out what reality really looks like—FOFO (fear of finding out). This resonates strongly in both event communication and the number of people attending events.

• Alcohol/drugs: 0%

Part of the workshop was dedicated to the image of events as places where alcohol and drugs are commonly consumed. Due to changes in people's consumption these days, with many avoiding alcohol or hard drugs, interest in attending events is in decline. This came as a shock to many because as 'culture creators' they are focused on the culture-creating aspect of the events. Various ideas were raised about how to turn this image towards cultural events, rather than just fun.

Workshop's challenges

• Young people's interest in slower electronic music

Many promoters emphasised that the current trend for fast techno events has led to declining interest in house, electro or Italo events. They try to balance it out in their programmes waiting for the trend to pass.

Due to changes in people's consumption these days, with many avoiding alcohol or hard drugs, interest in attending events is in decline.

• Poland's economic situation not understood

Many promoters struggle with the fact that agents fail to understand the economic situation in Poland, where the currency is much weaker than euro. They receive offers that are higher or the same as in western Europe.

• Gossip / online arguments

The participants highlighted the fact that the scene generates a lot of passion which is often negatively released as arguments online or gossip. The workshop made them realise that face to face meetings in daylight are much more supportive and simply necessary.

• We've seen it all before, nothing will come of it

One of the participants who had the most experience in the industry did not engage much, suggesting that he had had similar conversations in the past and they failed to bring real changes despite good intentions. Others disagreed claiming that in the past there may have been fewer people ready to cooperate and energy got burned out, but now times are different and they should give it a go.

Needs of the participants

• Regular meetings/experience sharing

Participants expressed a need for regular meetings and sharing of experiences to help prevent promoters from making the same mistakes.

• Social media/communication training for promoters

Participants were very surprised by the wide range of tools that can be used to communicate about cultural events. They were not familiar with many current social media platforms or all the functionalities of the social media platforms they are already using.

Workshop's proposals

At a national level

• Organisation to bring promoters together

Participants expressed a need to come together as part of one organisation that would represent their rights. They see it as an opportunity to develop their business and strengthen the scene's ethical commitment as well as a means to reduce borderline illegal activities that are harmful to the scene.

• Financial support

Including electronic music clubs and promoters on a list of cultural institutions and regular financial support would benefit the scene. Currently, festivals receive funding, but clubs are seen as businesses which means they are dependent on sponsorship deals, for example with alcohol brands. Regular support would help the scene to develop.

At a European level

• Financial and training support from the EU

The participants very much enjoyed the workshop and would like to have more opportunities to meet and talk

face to face. It would be difficult for young and beginner promoters or those from the outskirts of Poland to meet in different cities without external financial support.

• Support in establishing contacts

Participants expressed a need for support from Reset! (or another organisation) to establish international contacts. Due to a lack of access to offline meetings and scenes in western cities, it is hard to even get a reply to an email from different institutions/clubs/agents.

• Mobility support

The group considered special programmes for promoters that would enable their mobility in both eastern and western Europe to be one of the factors that could significantly help to develop the scene.

Resources to go further (readings & people)

→ Narodowe Centrum Kultury, Sondaż o Kulturze w Pandemii

<https://www.nck.pl/badania/aktualnosci/trzecia-edycja-sondazu-o-kulturze-w-pandemii>

→ Ergo Design Trend news

<https://ergo.design/blog/>

→ OMUZ

<https://omuz.org/>

→ Keep Hush report

<https://djmag.com/news/keep-hush-shares-findings-community-led-clubbing-survey-u-going-out>

Key points

Tromsø, Norway
October 2022

Next Generation, Young Audience

– by Insomnia

• Many formats have been explored with the aim of engaging the youth in the cultural industry; programs for talents, workshops and specialised kids' activities, etc. However; this remains a main issue that leads to the discussion on two topics; working with youngsters as staff and artists, and the need for reaching new young audience

• Making culture accessible for the young public could be reached by creating programs from young to young, reaching them through new online formats and developing a connection with these new audiences based on their needs.

• Suggestions for introducing young people in the cultural industry include building relations among trust, allowing things to be unstructured, and focus on creating spaces for free creation and development.

“There is a tendency among the youth to say ‘that’s not for me!’.”

How Can Emerging Talents and Artists Be Supported and Nurtured?

– by De Structura

Tallinn, Estonia
March 2023



State of the situation

Professionals working in the cultural and creative sectors (CCS) are facing a lot of struggles related to the development of their professional careers. Studies show that the process of starting and developing a career in the creative sector is complicated by high entry barriers to professional networks, low pay levels and high amounts of unpaid work, as well as lack of practical labour market relevant skills given in formal education. The situation is further complicated by a strong controversy over the idea of the value of arts and culture and the representation of the sector's professionals. Recent studies by OECD and AHRC suggest that the

evaluation of the sector should be shifted towards more long-term, process oriented, qualitative indicators instead of quantitative, market related measurements. These factors together create an environment where a person aspiring to build a career in the CCS faces extreme barriers to enter the professional field together with a strong lack of support both within the sector and in the society at large.

FRESH FABRIK partners have each been working individually with these challenges in their countries and internationally and have now come together to share their experiences among each other and translate them to a wider audience. This workshop aimed to understand how the emerging talents and artists can be supported in the beginning of their careers. For the purposes of

this report, the group will consider the term “emerging artist” to mean a person pursuing a professional career in the arts and still having limited to very little experience in taking part in culture industry projects. However, the groups recognise that a lack of a clear universal definition of the term is problematic.

Workshop's discussions

The discussion revolved around a series of key points: a) access to information, resources and networks within the sector; b) psychological conditions of art professionals and psychological support; c) status of the artist in the society and perception of the field's value in general.

The workshop started with the proposal of the moderator for each participant to identify what “support and nurture” means to them and why they might feel not being supported and nurtured in their careers. The most common topic in the discussion was related to lack of resources and skills for professional development and lack of opportunity to ensure one's own financial stability. Most of the participants expressed that they have experienced a lack of practical knowledge and skills required by the market – the knowledge and skills that are not connected to the creation of an art work, but to its further promotion and distribution. They have expressed

that they lacked such training in formal education and seen a lack of offer of such training in the sector, especially training that is affordable and sustainable for them. The conversation about knowledge and skills was further elaborated with the statement that the feeling of lack of knowledge further damages one's confidence and perception of one's own professional identity, which have a strong input on professional growth. Therefore, initiatives in developing skills and knowledge of the sector's professionals are very important and have a potential to work on multiple levels, not only through boosting one's practical capacity to work in the sector, but also strengthening one's confidence, motivation and perception of self-worth.

Moreover, in this regard the participants have mostly agreed that there is considerable lack of support for emerging professionals in terms of spaces, financial resources and career development opportunities. A statement was made by one of the participants that they have found it particularly difficult and frustrating to make a transition from formal education, where the majority of the resources were provided by the institution, to independent practice where the support structures are very scarce if not non-existing. Together with that, the participants have agreed that even when there are opportunities, finding them is rather difficult and takes up considerable time and resources. The existing support structures in terms of both financial support, training and material resources have been experienced by most participants as rather sporadic, not always sustainable and difficult to access.

careers

dialogue-

Another point related to barriers to professional development is difficult access to networks and lack of opportunities for intergenerational communication between professionals at different levels of career development. In the view of participants, communication with professionals who have already reached higher levels in their career can be a strong source of valuable information and support. There are, however, little opportunities created within the sector for such communication to happen. Without structured points of contact, access to higher level professional networks is extremely complicated for professionals in the early stage of their careers, so there is a need for initiatives dedicated specifically to networking, knowledge sharing and community building within the sector.

The participants also paid attention to the question of health and, more specifically, mental health and emotional state. Work in the CCS usually presupposes a strong component of emotional labour. Participants agreed that together with precarity of the sector it may create grounds for negative influence on the emotional state of the field's professionals, some of the participants have expressed that they indeed felt that the professionals of the sector are usually more vulnerable towards mental health and emotional stress. Together with that they have expressed a lack of support structures in terms of health and lack of access to health insurance due to the sector's precarity. This sense of vulnerability and low access to healthcare further exacerbated the participants' sense of confidence and stability.

The dialogue has further evolved from considering rather concrete aspects of the participants' professional careers where they feel unsupported to considering the status of the artist in a larger societal perspective. The participants have agreed that they felt like artistic careers were largely understood by people from outside the sector through stereotypes which facilitated, on the one hand, the lack of support to the sector from the wider society, and on the other hand, disorientation within the sector itself among its active participants. The still existing stereotype of a "starving artist" together with little understanding of how art contributes to society, according to participants, prevent the wider public from recognising the sector's positive impact which in turn leads to lack of support.

gue

Together with this the CCS professionals themselves develop a sense of disorientation, not knowing where and how they can utilise their skills, and experience problems with professional self-identification. The participants have stated that there is a lack of positive representation of the sector in the media as well as lack of professional training within the sector that could facilitate a better understanding of the variety of areas where the sector's professionals' skills can be utilised.

Workshop's challenges and proposals

• The group recognises the following challenges:

- 01.** Lack of a clear definition of the term "emerging artist" which provides further uncertainty in respect to support mechanisms;
- 02.** Lack of opportunities by State-funded institutions (galleries, museums, art centres, exhibition spaces) directed towards emerging artists;
- 03.** Scarce offer of capacity-building initiatives related to practical knowledge of working in CCS both in formal education and outside of formal educational institutions;
- 04.** Lack of access to health insurance and mental healthcare for freelance art professionals;
- 05.** Pre-existing negative stereotypes about art professionals, lack of recognition of their work and the impact of the sector as a whole in the society at large;
- 06.** Lack of financial resources for emerging artists:
 - No institutional frameworks supporting emerging artists specifically;
 - No sustainable long-term programmes to combat precarity;
 - Resulting personal and cross-sectoral instability;
- 07.** Lack of intergenerational exchange between sector professionals at different career levels.

• The group proposes the following steps to improve the status quo:

- 01.** State-funded institutions provide 15% of their budget to a dedicated programme that supports emerging artists;
- 02.** Artists' unions and associations create continuous professional development (CPD) and capacity-building courses for art professionals (members and non-members);
- 03.** Free of charge mental health care to tertiary education students is provided by their educational institution;

04. Artists' unions and mental health organisations collaborate in order to provide emergency assistance to art professionals;

05. A television programme showcasing local artists' work in the community that runs on a regular basis to explain the positive impact of their work on the life of the community;

06. Existing support platforms (artists' unions, NGOs, art associations) create networks between emerging artists and together lobby for institutional change;

07. Introducing nation-wide development programmes for individuals and State-funded organisations:

→ A 5-year plan for emerging artists that would help them establish a practice and build a portfolio after leaving university, the programme would be coordinated by a State-funded art institution;

→ Aiding State-funded institutions to establish long-term programmes for emerging artist, that would be coordinated by the culture ministry;

08. Organisers ensure that 50% of percentage art are works by emerging artists;

09. Socially engaged artists are involved in social impact assessment of urban and rural development;

10. Funding mechanisms for emerging artists to work with established artists/art organisations are established.

New Audiences and Next Generations

– by COSMOS /
Le Guess Who?

Utrecht, The
Netherlands
May 2023

The workshop about New Audiences and Next Generation aims to reflect on how COSMOS can stay connected and be relevant for a younger audience, become a platform for new generations, support emerging musical scenes, and explore the challenges and opportunities created when crossing onsite audiences with online audiences, local audiences, and global audiences.

Historical context and state of the situation

Since their first appearance in the late 1950s, music festivals have grown and changed significantly with their communication, sponsorship, and promotion. The communal spirit that led festivals, like Woodstock, in the 1960s has nowadays been replaced by a business mentality that chases profits, revolves around 'big names,' and embraces corporate sponsorship. The number of festivals and their popularity has also increased due to people's willingness to invest more in experiences rather than common goods and free accessibility to music streaming platforms. The multitude of festivals available made promotion and marketing crucial to attract audiences, and the communication strategies to do so have also adapted to the preferences of today's audience. The colourful posters, pamphlets, and radio announcements popular in the 1960s have nowadays been replaced by websites, advertisements, and videos posted online.

Indeed, studies show that digital communication is undoubtedly favoured by the three latest generations, Gen-X, Millennials, and Gen-Z, and the trend seems to keep developing in this direction. However, it is worth considering that although Gen-X, Millennials, and Gen-Z revolve their communication online, each behaves differently and therefore requires a different marketing strategy. Gen-X is still influenced by TV and newspapers, whereas the two younger generations rely more on the internet. Gen-Z appears to be sceptical in front of traditional advertising techniques and favours ads with proper storylines. Gen-Z and Millennials seem to prefer online digital methods of communication as it facilitates two-way communication with businesses and brands. Interaction is essential for Gen-Z, who is more active on platforms like Instagram and looking for dynamic and vibrant social media like Snapchat, TikTok, and Clubhouse. Conversely, Millennials are present on these platforms but less active and creative tech-savvy than the younger generations. Accordingly, if festivals want to grow, be competitive, and maintain relevance in the long run, they must understand their audiences'

language and preferences, and adapt their communication and promotion style. Given that Gen-Z represents the audience that is now approaching its twenties, hence shaping its artistic taste and finding cultural niches, it is in the interest of festival curators and programmers to understand how to appeal to them. In light of the findings stated above regarding attention span and adverts style, the question arises: How will the content of the communication be impacted? Does using TikTok and Instagram imply a simplification and impoverishment of the message? Will these online strategies affect offline participation? Before opening the workshop and delving into these questions, the conversation circles the thin line defining the relationship with the audience: the choice between attracting and reaching out. It is important to note that during the first workshop, when discussing the difference between the terms 'support' and 'promote' in relation to diversity, it became clear that terms that seem to have roughly the same meaning can stand for very different approaches. Similarly, (attracting) and (reaching out to) denote ways to connect with others but differ in how the connection is created. For example, attracting someone focuses on "pulling the person towards self/entity," and connotes and emphasises the receiver. On the contrary, to reach out to someone means to "make an effort to get

The conversation
circles the thin
line defining the
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between attracting
and reaching out.

closer to the other" and highlight the action. Accordingly, reaching out to new audiences would stress the importance of the action of extending and opening towards them, and implies a rather inclusive attitude. An attitude that is in tune with the supportive practices described previously and with the values that COSMOS, organisers of this workshop, as well as the Reset! network have at their core. Pluralism and inclusivity, pillars of this set of values, can be truthfully reached through a bottom-up, open-minded, and empathetic approach. As the past reports demonstrate, each choice of communication can make a difference in achieving it. In this third and last workshop, the choices to reach out to the new, younger generation will be at the core of the discussion.

Workshop's discussions

The implication of reaching younger audiences

• Understand your audience

To reach younger audiences, does it mainly take adopting new mediums and technologies? Or are there other tools and strategies that we still need to consider? What winning choices would help to gain the attention of new younger audiences. The younger voice of the workshop, Dalia Al-Dujaili, is the first to respond to the call and jumps in to debunk common stereotypes about her generation, Gen-Z. From the office of AZEEMA, the magazine she is the editor of, Dalia tells us that Gen-Z does not only navigate the vast and mainstream feed of Tick-Tock and Instagram. In her eyes, an insider, Gen-Z is a generation of creatives that masters the internet in search of the niche that reflects their identity. The youngsters, particularly those involved in the creative industry, are interested in alternative and underground ways to consume

content, either they may find it offline or in the depths of the web. Boomers, Gen-X, and to a certain extent Millennials, had to adapt to the internet slowly; still, they feel hesitant and critical towards it. This sense of unfamiliarity may lead them to overlook the opportunities and the space for creativity that the Internet allows when used purposely. Dalia voices the complex and more knowledgeable approach to the Internet peculiar to her generation. She implicitly answers that reaching younger audiences is more complex than being on Tik-Tok; it takes more elaborate strategies and a deeper understanding of the web and its users.

• **Outsource curatorial agency**

How do we get the curators and programmers, who still belong to the pre-Z generations, to create satisfactory content? This question arises spontaneously after Dalia's claim that Gen-Z, as masters of the Internet, are actually looking for what represents them and what they like. This time, it is Rana Ghose, Director of REProduce, who kicks off to shift our perspective on the topic.

To create satisfactory content is a key to "outsource curatorial agency." Three simple words together throw us back to the topic of the first workshop, about diversity, where leaving the space for artists to express themselves unfiltered was concluded to be a valuable way to support them. During our first conversation, the ability of curators to stay behind the choices and focus on designing a safe space for artistic expression was a pivotal strategy for creating an inclusive space. Supporting diversity and stimulating inclusivity means giving space to different voices to be expressed in their authenticity, and the voice of young people is definitely a valid one to be heard. Therefore, the same support practices previously mentioned keep their validity also in this case.

Moreover, Rana argues that when the agency is left to the creators and filters kept minimum, not only a wider variety of perspectives will get on stage, but more numerous

mediums

creatives will respond to the call triggered by the call of action. "People, especially young people, love the opportunity to create themselves, Rana elaborates on his initial statement. Platforms like Tik-Tok and Instagram are mainly distribution platforms that allow individuals to generate their own content. These apps are just containers of expressions. What is centralised can be the launch of a trend, but the narratives that develop from it are community driven." Ceding the responsibility of the creation to its consumers appears, once again, to be a healthy recipe for success.

• **Trust and become their interest**

Who is responsible for the artistic movements that rise from the internet? Are Gen-Z's creative products just a response to a premeditated algorithmic choice of content? So far, the conversation clarified that trends and hints that require Gen-Z to be creative would stimulate engagement and invite the audience to contribute to content creation simultaneously. However, when discussing how to create and expose these trends

To reach younger audiences, does it mainly take adopting new mediums and technologies? Or are there other tools and strategies that we still need to consider?

to the audience, the shadow of GAFAM, the core topic of our second workshop, sits again in front of our disillusioned eyes: "It is the algorithm that chooses for you" states Voltnoi, Artistic Director of the online Movement Radio. In light of the intricate reflections of our second workshop about Decentralised Platforms, we are now more aware of our online bubble as well as of the limits of our agency, so the questions stated above flow automatically. The controversy of the topic, also this time, results in an engaging, articulated discussion. Rana agrees with Voltnoi's realistic recalls, but, according to him, there is still much space for one's unique creative production.

Furthermore, he states that the algorithm does not only respond to the needs of the market and the instructions of the BIG 5, but is ultimately listening to the users' choices and generating content and trends based on their inputs. The content might be tailored to the user. Yet, it is the overwhelming availability of inputs that detaches people from what they really like, Voltnoi counterargues, reminiscing about the fanzines in the 1980s: "It was easier to follow the cultural changes and trends then. The fanzines had very specific content about emerging topics and created smaller communities of interest around them. Today in response to an algorithm aimed at satisfying every user, there is too much to choose from, the content is too vast, and people lose the ability to take agency and commit to their choices."

Even in front of the valid facts that Voltnoi brings to the table, the creative drive and the feeling of being in control, even if illusory, win, according to Dalia. As mentioned earlier, young people were born in the storm of content and have learned to navigate through it, taking advantage of its power to reach their destinations. Dalia witnesses this belief by bringing her own experience: in her early twenties, she began with her own fanzine about the niche she was interested in giving voice to; it then developed into a business, now a successful magazine: AZEEMA. It appears that Gen-Z's ability to surf the waves of algorithmically drafted content to find or realise their interests is an asset that independent, underground initiation needs to be accounted for when shaping their online strategy.

Ceding the responsibility of the creation to its consumers appears, once again, to be a healthy recipe for success.

Where can younger audiences find us?

• **In the niche of every platform**

How do we best reach younger audiences? Should we be on every platform and try to reach the largest possible audience? New generations like to be involved and creatively stimulated, which leads them to platforms like Instagram and Tik-Tok. In addition to scrolling through the feeds of mainstream apps, new generations know what they like and are curious about niche topics, which they seek out online and offline. The question is where to be, to reach and to be reached.

Do we need to be everywhere? "Yes and no" is Julian's straightforward answer to the above questions. He argues that it is important to be present on most online platforms where the target audience is active. However, it is crucial to maintain the DNA that defines the identity of independent platforms. Authenticity is key, and although it may have a less explosive impact in quantitative terms, it will attract the people who are actually interested, creating a more loyal audience. It is not necessary to aim for the highest number of followers, especially if this means producing generic, algorithm-friendly content. What is essential, however, is to adapt and translate content to the style and language of each platform. Instagram is different from TikTok, which is different from Facebook, Twitch and Discord. It opens up a whole new way of communicating and is a key to speaking their language.

Producing authentic content and sharing it in the language of every relevant platform seems to be a winning formula for capturing the attention of curious young people. However, as with most successful strategies, there is a cost. Voltnoi points out that tailoring the message to each different medium requires a team of experts able to strategise the communication plan accordingly. He reminds us that it can be difficult to afford the resources to manage multiple platforms for independent initiatives. This issue is certainly relatable: it takes money and people to adequately address all these different dimensions of communication.

• Let the program be the path

No concrete solution was offered to address this latter factual reality. However, a closer look at the situation of Movement Radio reveals another interesting aspect, which seems to be a less costly way of reaching out to younger generations. "We have hosted many DJs and producers between the ages of 20 and 23 from different backgrounds, Voltnoi tells us, and I can see how this has influenced the audience, which is now also younger". Even without sophisticated communication strategies and amplified algorithms, this example highlights that programming is the most authentic and powerful content to reach audiences.

The positive outcome of this correlation is also a recipe for success, which makes Bob Van Heur, founder and artistic director of Le Guess Who, want to know more: "Movement Radio is an online platform based in Greece, right? So where do your listeners come from?" Relying on Google Analytics, one of GAFAM's data management tools, Voltnoi answers that the audience attracted by Movement Radio's international group of resident producers is 35% international and 65% national. Among the internationals, the highest proportion of listeners come from Berlin, London and the Netherlands, where the hosted DJs and producers come from. Pulling the threads together, it seems that programming younger artists attracts younger audiences, and this correlation is also reflected on a geographical level.

action

How to connect with the audience?

• Create a dialogue - Build a community

From the experiences and opinions shared so far, the ways to reach younger audiences seem to be taking shape. Offering authentic content, fresh programming and opportunities for direct engagement tailored to the language of each platform will help reach younger audiences. However, Julian points out that likes, follows and comments do not guarantee loyalty. People, especially young people navigating the ocean of online stimulation, need a reason to stick around before the next interest pops up and steals the stage. "Nowadays it is important to cultivate an audience that has longevity and to stimulate communication," adds Beatriz Negreiros, content creator and copywriter for Le Guess Who?, highlighting the key role of community.

foster conversations. That has a lot more impact and value." The divide between creator and curator is slowly disappearing and people want to be part of these events in some way. Multiple platforms are very interesting and useful for building a sense of community. Outsourcing a curatorial agency encourages participation and strengthens the connection between people, which is the cornerstone of community building.

• Actions as a goal

How do we see the balance between control and spontaneity? In an online world where the lines between curators and creators are becoming increasingly blurred, offering authentic, co-created content instead of orchestrated, attention-grabbing communication campaigns appears to be an easy game. Behind the scenes, however, the game looks different: What still

goal

The question is where to be, to reach, and to be reached.

As mentioned earlier, Gen-Z wants to feel like they are actively contributing, so it is crucial to encourage active participation through platforms that not only allow for decentralised content creation, but also dialogue. Producing engaging and tailored content is not enough; Gen-Z wants to feel connected by sharing opinions and conversing with each other. "To achieve this interest, we should let go of the quantitative aspect of social, such as the number of likes on posts and stories, agrees Bethany Andrzejak, intern at Le Guess Who?. The focus should be on figuring out how to use the platforms available to

distinguishes curators from users is the mastery and thorough strategy needed to control the impact of content. Extensive, centralised control is at odds with what is at the heart of community engagement: bottom-up organisation. However, echoing the question above, Luis stresses that it is difficult to relinquish control altogether. Curators need to evaluate the response to the message and plan the next steps accordingly to achieve the desired results. Based on the milestones that have emerged so far, participants agree that strategic content and community engagement are not mutually exclusive if the purpose of the former is to stimulate the latter. Paradoxically, a strategy focused

on pure growth will fail if it does not take into account the crucial role of the community. Indeed, communication designed to attract followers and conform to standards can ensure visibility and exposure. Conversely, a plan that focuses on using online content to invite people to act, connect, create and share will be more successful in creating an engaged audience, both in the long term and offline.

• Translate it offline

So the final question is: how do we translate communities offline? So far, the conversation has mainly revolved around the role of platforms for online creation and communication, but the real thing happens when it is all translated into the real world. The strategy and planning that curators put in place online to reach audiences is ultimately relevant to their impact offline, in terms of the number of tickets to their stages, the exposure given to their artists, the number of copies sold of their records, magazines, and so on. Online still serves offline. Zsarà Grünfeld, marketing & communications manager at Le Guess Who?, confirms the direction of this trend: “I feel that young people rely a lot on online to find out what is going on offline. So, using the offline as a way to guide people is the best way to work with them”. Through the various examples given in the previous workshops, we learned that the algorithm can be misleading and that offline and online are not mirrors of each other. For example, a musician’s online content may get 10,000 views and go viral, but it does not necessarily bring people to their stage. Inspired by the success of the blogging era, which spawned many communities in the early 2000s, Julian talks about how our “digital echo chambers” should drive people to take action in the real world: inviting them to meet, going somewhere, connecting outside the platform boundaries, or even just picking up the phone. Online can create community, but the offline footprint is what authenticates it. Despite its value in stimulating creativity and connectivity, online is still ‘just’ the virtual face of its tangible counterpart.

Just as we reach this realisation, Linda Thoen, Senior Project Advisor at DEN, the Cultural Institute for Digital Transformation, jumps in to update us on the progress of the online dimension, revealing a whole new realm of potential. At We Are Playgrounds, a platform dedicated to connecting and supporting creatives in the Netherlands, offline and online, two separate but connected experiences are offered. “The online one is an event in its own right: it starts earlier and offers tools and means for people to co-create, describes Linda, making us think about the creativity behind this new approach. It was born out of curiosity about online resources. It is really a mindset of letting your curiosity shape your thinking”. In a world that is increasingly online and rapidly taking on new forms and dimensions of interaction, pre-Z curators may feel disoriented and challenged by the need to keep up, translate and personalise their content within these parameters.

We began the workshop with a subtle and unsettling question about how much content should be shortened, simplified and compromised to fit the language of the new platforms used by younger audiences. However, a rather reassuring feeling emerged from the conversation: behind this virtual takeover is a generation searching for real connections, communities, meaningful content and creative stimulation. The ways in which these needs are expressed have changed massively and rapidly over the past decade, but people’s interests have not changed much. Learning and mastering the new online tools will certainly be a challenge for ‘older’ generations. However, we should be inspired by the younger generations and use their creativity and curiosity to play with our content and the available communication platforms.

Key points

Sofia, Bulgaria
March 2023

The Culture Scene and the Next Generation

– by Hip Hip Library and Fonoteka ElektriKa

- The current political crisis in Bulgaria puts the independent cultural sector in a vulnerable position meaning a lack of financing and instability of public support. In addition, the bureaucratic barriers prevent the creation of new projects and proposals. A need for diversifying the financial streams and market target campaigns towards the youth becomes essential to stay open to new formats, space for creativity.
- The creation of a network and community gathering the independent cultural actors would contribute to two basic needs of the sector. On the one hand, the impulse of a more professionalised industry, by creating capacity-building and knowledge sharing. On the other hand, contributing to the promotional side and visibility of the independent organisations, often marginalised and overshadowed by the mainstream.
- There is at the same time a need and a lack of reach to new audience and young people. It is therefore essential to involve them by making them active participants in the creation of culture, creating as well a safe and inclusive environment where they can feel accepted, heard, and free

“We are young, we want to participate, but we are scared of documentation. Please, help!”.

The notion of youth and emergence

In nowadays cultural sector, the discourse on youth and emergence takes centre stage, revealing a narrative that transcends conventional boundaries and challenges preconceived notions. In a world where age categories have become increasingly blurred, the delineation of tastes, ethics, and beliefs has grown elusive. The enigmatic figures of Generation Z and Alpha stand at the intersection of an evolving cultural landscape and a digital realm that defines their interaction.

At stake in this unfolding narrative is the very essence of cultural identity, the shaping of values, and the amplification of voices that may otherwise be lost in the cacophony of mainstream narratives. The urgency to understand who these individuals are, the culture they embrace, and the beliefs they champion is a paramount concern. Independent cultural and media organisations must emerge as the vanguards of this cause, driven by a fervent commitment to inclusivity, access, and the nurturing of emerging talent.

In the absence of clear categorisations, these organisations delve into the complexities of understanding the nuances that define the preferences, aspirations, and unique identities of Generation Z and Alpha. They recognise that the youth of today, far from conforming to traditional moulds, are forging their own paths, shaping a culture that defies easy classification. It is a culture rooted in the digital landscape, where most interaction is mediated by technology.

However, the access to this cultural realm is not uniform, and therein lies the crux of the matter. The ethical, economic, and social limits imposed on the youth's access to culture pose a significant challenge.

Independent cultural players, fuelled by a sense of responsibility and a commitment to social equity, are at the forefront of questioning and dismantling these barriers. They recognise that a vibrant and inclusive cultural landscape necessitates the dismantling of impediments that hinder the youth's ability to engage, contribute, and shape the narrative.

These organisations understand that the emergence of talent and ideas is inexorably linked to the removal of barriers that stifle creativity and innovation. The youth, too often relegated to the periphery, are, in reality, the driving force behind cultural evolution. Independent cultural players recognise the transformative power inherent in the youth's perspectives, aspirations, and talents.

The narrative surrounding youth and emergence in culture is a multifaceted tapestry woven with threads of digital connectivity, cultural evolution, and the struggle for inclusivity. The stakes are high, encompassing not only the cultural identity of a generation, but also the very ethos that shapes the future. In embracing the complexities of this narrative, independent organisations herald a cultural revival, where the youth are not just spectators but active participants in the creation of a more inclusive, vibrant, and resonant cultural landscape.

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

Reset! work- shops

2022, February

↘ Budapest, Hungary

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

2022, September

↘ Tallin, Estonia

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

2022, October

↘ Budapest, Hungary

Lahmacun Radio – Independent Music Journalism in Hungary

↘ Batumi, Georgia

Mutant Radio – Urban Cultural Physical Spaces in Batumi

↘ Barcelona, Spain

Whisper Not Agency – The Management of Artistic Independence

↘ Brussels, Belgium Arty Farty

Brussels – How to Support Artists with Disabilities

↘ Tromsø, Norway

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

↘ Lisbon, Portugal

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

↘ Tbilisi, Georgia

Mutant Radio – Independent Creative Platforms and Urban Changes in Tbilisi

↘ Porto, Portugal

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

↘ Berlin, Germany

Consentis – Diversity & Awareness

↘ Munich, Germany

Safe The Dance – Diversity & Inclusion

↘ Budapest, Hungary

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

2022, November

↘ Milan, Italy

Terraforma – The Relationship Between Independent Music Scene and Cultural Institutions

2022, December

↘ Leipzig, Germany

Sphere Radio – Decentralised Resources

↘ Skopje, North Macedonia

Skala – Audiences & New Generations

2023, January

↘ Istanbul, Turkiye

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Mutant Radio – The Decentralisation of the Independent Local Cultural Scene

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Insomnia – International Cultural Cooperation in the Barents Region

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