

## Experience Report

### Care/Free: Care, for free roundtable discussion

#### Fresh Fabrik – Can we fix this

I organized the roundtable discussion *Care/Free: Care, for free* that focused on gender inequality and the invisible labour of women in the cultural field. I invited Darina Alster, who is the founder of the Czech collective *Mothers Artlovers*, Fanny Hajdú, who is a freelance facilitator, educator and creative, and Emilia Barna, who is a professor at the Communication Department in the Technical University of Budapest (BME) and a researcher of popular music, and gender issues within the Hungarian musical scene.

These three people have very different backgrounds and took part in very different initiatives but they are all strongly engaged against gender inequality in the arts and they all understand the unequal division of invisible labor on a structural level.

I asked all three participants to briefly introduce their work in relation to the topic.

Emilia talked about her participatory action research in the framework of which female cultural managers were asked about their experiences withing the music industry. They shared several stories about sexism, unequal opportunities and being positioned as a 'mother' by bands or musicians, having a strong mental workload, managing emotional as well as organizational labor. The research was done in a non-traditional way, involving a socio-drama expert, Ágnes Blaskó. Together with her, they re-created and reenacted scenes from the participants' lives, and analyzed each situation, thinking about what could have been done differently as well as acknowledging the structural nature of the problem which are patriarchal society and the economic background of the music industry as such.

Darina read the Manifesto which was written by Mothers Artlovers, a group of mothers who were excluded from the art world when they had children, because their children were born and their rhythm of life and opportunities have changed. They decided to support each other in this new situation which is why they founded Mothers Artlovers. They think of motherhood as a political position that allows an insight into the burden of care work, mainly done by women; and they also think of motherhood as a new possibility of making art, a new situation which can be overwhelming and very hard but also inspiring. They supported each other during the pandemic. They have openly feminist values and wish to change the way women are treated in the field of visual arts after they have children. They have performed together several times, their community is constantly changing and evolving.

Fanny talked about awareness-raising videos that she had recorded as part of a project called *Not Targets*, against victim blaming in cases of gender-based violence and atrocities. She also talked about the way she works as an educator with young people, teenagers, and how she thinks it is crucial to talk about taboos such as unpaid artistic work and sexual education. She emphasized the importance of raising our voices as women to stand against discrimination and for our values, and also to be open to dialogue. She often uses the tool of Forum Theatre to inspire young people and help them to reflect on their own social position.

After their brief introductions, I asked them about the sustainability of socially engaged art and research practices, how oftentimes it is difficult to plan and think in long-term projects, while short-term projects can actually hurt the communities that one is working with. They all responded and went deeper into the methodologies they used when working with different groups.

Several questions were raised in the audience as well, mainly about the (social and physical) accessibility of such projects and about the situation of having to advocate for the recognition invisible cultural labor as a woman and a cultural worker.

We reflected on our own positions and realized that we do a lot of the type of (invisible) labor that the conversation is evolving around.

As different as the participants' backgrounds were, their work is intertwined and shows similarities in many ways. They all worked with a group (or groups) of people, with a community of women, and they all try to better understand and see the structural oppression of women and the vulnerability of artistic labor. Being a woman and a cultural worker myself, I was very touched by their insights.

Eszter Kállay

When thinking about the topic of my roundtable talk, the advocacy of cultural workers' rights, my initial baseline was two-folded. First of all I wanted to start the conversation from the explicitly politicized statement, that culture has to be accessible to everyone, culture is part of the commons. The second was a drive to understand workers' rights ( let it be that of cultural workers, or workers of any other sectors) must be understood not just in financial means, directly connected with wages, working hours and benefits, but has to entail the discourse about the culture of work and workplaces, and how labor is inevitably tangled in living conditions and a society's life in general. As such, I was interested in the legal, financial and social structures which can promote working conditions based on solidarity, community and security, especially in the context of cultural labor, where project based work is often not even defined as labor , but rather self-expression, something that doesn't require payment, social security, working hours etc in return . As such I have mapped out three distinctly different forms of institutions which each could offer different solutions, combining cooperative financial structures, community based project development and deep roots of solidarity.

First we invited Irena Preda, member of the workers committee of ZASUK, the recently founded Artists and Creatives Union in Slovenia. She is committed to the fight against economic exploitation, demystification of the work in arts, culture and creativity, as well as transforming the working conditions and standards of social security for workers across the sector. During the talk she presented the initial organizational methodologies of Zasuk, as well as the tactiques they continue to apply ensuring the rapid, but stable growth of the Union. Inviting her was especially inspiring in the context of post-communist societies' mistrust towards unionizing, allowing the audience to hear of the contemporary importance of unionizing, especially in the cultural sector, where through project based work's domination, the sector and its actors are increasingly secluded and fragmented.

Our second guest was Yvonne Carmichael, Who, through a community asset transfer, secured the community arts center of South Square in Bradford, UK. The story of South Square Center in the financially unstable, post-industrial rust belt of the United Kingdom told the story of diversifying as means of inclusion, democratization of arts, while ensuring also the financial security of an establishment at the heart of a community. Her points were especially illuminating when she compared the cases of South Square with her current workplace, a very well-funded, but disengaged museum in Bradford.

Our third invited speaker was Réka Holánszki, founder of Közös Műhely ( Common workshop) In Budapest, who works as a carpenter in the same workshop with graphic designers, ceramics, and other artisans. The institution operates on a cooperative basis , ensuring the shared use of tools and spaces otherwise unattainable to individual artisans. Of our three guests, she was the one bringing to the table the idea of burning out, when working in non-capitalist structures, yet having to balance the conditions of the markets, as well as the cooperating members' individual enthusiasm, patterns of labor as well as financial needs, means and conditions.

All together we found that the three guests, approaching cultural workers tactiques from three distinctively different aspects, could show valuable ways to counteract the precarisation of cultural workers, while also bringing knowledge and experiences specific, practical and scalable.

# Performance Situation Room

## Fresh Fabrik can we fix this

*Three roundtables, three workshops  
to change the status quo of the cultural sector*

### EXPERIENCE REPORT

We, Katalin Gordos and Fanni Solymár, were the main curator of the PSR event organised in the frame of the Life Long Burning project. We have collaborated together with the Workshop Foundation team to implement the project. Garten Foundation has also contributed to the curation with its expertise in the cultural field in Hungary. The overall experience and the level of cooperation was of high quality and great success. Content-wise the event focused on the (lack of) advocacy in the field of culture and the precariousness of the working conditions of cultural workers, as well as the questions stemming from these two topics. Structure-wise, the event was divided into two days - on the 1st day, we organised three roundtables zooming into one of the identified problems of the cultural sector - namely gender inequality in the sector, good practices in advocacy and relationship between arts and money. The second day focused on solution-oriented skills development with workshops, each workshop centered around one highly-demanded skills in the sector, namely fundraising skills, advocacy skills and communication skills.

The planning process of the event was smooth. We have created a roadmap at the beginning and followed the planning process accordingly. We have started the whole process 6 months prior to the event. We had numerous online and in-person meetings, where we discussed the current topics on table and identified the next steps to take. We started with content planning together with Garten Foundation and in string collaboration with Workshop Foundation team, and then continued with structure-planning under the lead of Workshop Foundation. The planning went as planned, however, there were slight delays with the communication plan, the event was published 1 month prior to the event (the original plan was 6 weeks before).



The implementation of the event has derailed as planned without major deviation. The event on Nov 12, started at 13.00 pm and ended on 19 pm. The Workshop Foundation team already started to pack the place in the morning, we placed yoga mats and pillows and lots of chairs on the floor to accommodate to the audience needs. We installed projector and chairs and tables for the speakers. We met at 12.00 pm with the speakers

and moderators and went through again the technical aspects. The event started and went in accordance with the original timing (1,5 hour for each roundtable, 30 min break

time). At the first roundtable, there were 30 guests, second 50 guests and the last one around 40 guests. The speakers and moderators were speaking fluently and interestingly about the subjects, the audience could ask questions. Major stakeholders showed up at the event, there was space for networking during breaks too.

On the second day of the event, we organized the three workshops. Each of them was successful, the timing was followed, we received good feedback. The first workshop was held by us, Katalin and Fanni, we held a workshop about international fundraising techniques. The second workshop was held by Anastasia Lemberg from Estonia, she worked for EYP and is an artist herself - combining these two fields, she became an expert in cultural advocacy. The workshop provided a platform to transfer Anastasia's knowledge to participants. The third workshop was about cultural communication and notably about miscommunication, misunderstanding situations. Feedback forms were sent out to participants after the event ended.



Overall, we were highly satisfied with the event and the cooperation. It was a great opportunity to foster dialogue and strive for change in the sector, which was the initial goal "can we fix this". According to the feedbacks we received, we would like to continue the dialogue and organize further similar events. We also aim to continue cooperating with the invited international guests and notably their organizations (ZASUK from Slovenia, De Structura from Estonia etc.).

Zsuzsanna Bódi (Sanna Bo)

Short recap of my experience of curating and moderating the “And in return, we give you an honorarium” panel discussion

Organising a panel discussion about how money from different sources – especially money raised through public funds – affect specific art initiatives was quite a challenging and exciting task for me, and for the invited speakers. I invited Márton Illés, the operative leader of the Independent Theater Hungary, an organisation that is dedicated to applying theatrical forms to fight for Roma rights, and Erik Kolbenheyer, the founder and curator of EXILES, a Budapest-based experimental record label. The two speakers represented two very different art initiatives which also have quite different financing systems as well: Independent Theatre is heavily dependent on European funds (namely Erasmus+), while EXILES relies on for-profit activities and private investors.

We placed an empty chair among us, and we told the audience that they can join to the discussion at any time. Luckily, the audience accepted the call, and the panel discussion became participatory in this way. During the 100+ minutes long discussion, we got to know differing opinions about how public money should be spent, what is the government’s role in shaping the cultural life of a society, when and how community budgeting should be applied, how artists should be paid and if artists should take a role in initiating societal changes. We evaluated how different governments deal with culture funding at times of crisis, with a special focus on how COVID pandemic affected grassroots organisations and what we can expect regarding the current financial crisis. Altogether, it was a good choice to hold the panel discussion in Hungarian, so we could reflect on local issues, with a special focus on institutional problems, such as corruption, uncontrolled working conditions, censorship, lack of social securities and so on. The discussion was sparking and although people had opposing opinions and ideas, we ended up having constructive and informative dialogues.

I am grateful for the careful, thoughtful organisation and the proper promotion of the event, as we have very little (if none) opportunities for discussing such (for some reason) sensitive topics as money. It was quite hard to close the discussion, as so many people wanted to share their thoughts. To me, the high level of participation of the audience clearly showed that we need platforms for discussing this topic further and we also must normalize the fact that public money belongs to the public.

Pardon, I am disinformed  
Zea Gyarmati  
Fresh Fabrik workshop  
Final Report

In the end, the workshop was attended by 15 people, which was the maximum number I had planned to make it workable. Not only the number of participants, but also the composition of the team was ideal. There were 6 people who work in the cultural sector supporting artistic activity, 4 who are creative artists and 5 who came from completely outside the sector, simply interested in the topic. I was very happy that the workshop was able to give something to all of them, because exactly as I had planned, the methodology itself, dealing with communication traps and solutions, was completely scene-independent, the programme became culture-sector specific because the 9 cases we dealt with and the solutions we sought were inspired by problems I had encountered working in the cultural sector, by my own experiences as a programme organiser.

Based on the questionnaire they filled in during registration, I divided the participants into groups and assigned them different roles. This was the biggest change from the trial workshop. I didn't want to spend time making sure everyone understood all the roles (3x1 and 3x4) and found the one that best suited them, so I did the casting myself based on the pre-completed questionnaire and the LinkedIn profiles. The roles and what they entailed were handed out to everyone at the Trafo Café half an hour before the start, so they could get to know their roles right up to the moment of the start. There were 3 decision maker roles, they were attached to the 3 stations and their task was to decide how to communicate by asking the experts for their opinion, motivating them to think together and making notes of the solutions they came up with in their own disinformation notebooks taken in the café with the task description. At the end of the exercise, they were the ones who presented the three disinformation cases they had solved at their station and the communication solutions they had come up with. These three roles were assigned to participants whose real-life work was close to the cases they had to solve at their station, thus ensuring that the teams understood the task accurately. The concept worked well, the makers could identify with their roles and, on reflection, reported on how what had happened could help their day-to-day work. The makers solved a new case with a new team every 20 minutes. The teams consisted of 4 people, 4 experts, in 4 different roles. The expert roles were asked to pay attention to different aspects of the communication dynamics within the group that they observed while solving the cases and to make notes in their disinformation notebooks. During the reflection, I asked them guided questions about the communication they had observed in a particular case or team. The function of these roles was to highlight a small point to pay close attention to in any situation where conflictual communication occurs. The roles did not require any acting and I repeatedly emphasised that they should try to solve the situations by thinking for themselves, BUT that they should have in their minds all the time the one small thing they should pay attention to. In this way, we were able to bring out some very interesting moments of communication during the reflection.



After introducing myself and the aim of the session, the workshop started with a warm-up association task, followed by 1 hour of team tasks, where I just wandered from station to station as an observer and maybe dropped 1 or 2 helpful thoughts or comments. The workshop was designed not to be lecture-like at all, to learn from each other and from our own behaviour, and to add value in the long preparation and proper facilitation. The most valuable part of the workshop was the final reflection, originally planned for half an hour, which lasted more than 45 minutes, so actively did the participants share their experiences and observations. It was in this part that I was most active, in order to spend the same amount of time discussing the communication dynamics in addition to presenting and solving each case. In the last part of the reflection, we went around and everyone shared what they had gained from the workshop and what they had not liked so much. Participants left grateful, I received several thank you notes the week after the workshop and I sent out a longer letter myself, collecting links and recommendations for articles, reading materials and other resources that I could use.

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