Publication

# Supporting relevance: *Ideas and strategies for inclusive, fair and flexible arts funding*

Milica Ilić, Fatin Farhat

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**Ideas and strategies for inclusive, fair and flexible arts funding**

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**Authors**
Leading researcher: Milica Ilić,
supporting researcher: Fatin Farhat

**Editing and coordination**
Elena Polivtseva

**Graphic layout**
Milton Pereira
on a template by Formula
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Square Sainctelette 19,
1000 Brussels, BE
+32 2 201 09 15 / ietm@ietm.org



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For further information please contact:
ietm@ietm.org



## Authors

### Fatin Farhat

Fatin Farhat, an experienced arts manager, curator and policy maker. Fatin Farhat has a long and extensive experience in cultural development and the management of cultural and artistic programs and has previously served as the director of the cultural department at the Ramallah municipality. She has actively contributed to the development and establishment of numerous cultural initiatives and centres in Palestine and in the Arab region.

Fatin Farhat has been involved in a series of cultural research, mapping and evaluation projects. She is a member of the Expert Facility for the implementation of the UNESCO 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural expressions and serves on the artistic board of Al Mawred Al Thaqafi's, Lebanon.

### Milica Ilić

Milica Ilić is a cultural worker specialised in transnational cooperation and contemporary performing arts. Milica is fascinated with collective processes of change-making in the arts and culture. She is artistic advisor and a member of the team at Onda, the French office for performing arts circulation, where she also coordinates the project RESHAPE - a collaborative, bottom-up research process that proposes instruments for transition towards an alternative, fairer, and unified arts ecosystem across Europe and the Southern Mediterranean.

As a freelance consultant, she worked on numerous international cooperation, training, research and evaluation projects in the field of culture.

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***Any grant application should answer this key question: in what way is your practice, your organisation, your institution radical?***[1]

Wouter Hillaert, State of the Union speech, Het Theaterfestival, 2016

***By shifting towards a paradigm truly rooted in social justice we are then able to create models that imagine fairer ways of being together and value the most vulnerable in our communities, rather than seeking to 'include' them in the structures that are designed to exclude.***

Helga Baert, Martin Schick and Sam Trotman,
Governance of the Possible, RESHAPE, 2021

1 Original in Dutch: Het zou een sleutelvraag moeten zijn voor elk subsidiedossier: waarin is jouw praktijk, jouw organisatie, jouw instelling radicaal?

# Foreword by IETM

What is it like being an art worker today? Accelerated production, increased focus on outputs and numbers, unstable and low incomes, lack of socio-economic security and growing political pressures... The COVID-19 crisis has accentuated and aggravated these and other acute challenges the arts community has been facing for many years.

In these challenging times, there has been a clear need in the arts for better financial support. Arts funding, its guiding values and modalities affect working and living conditions of art professionals and influence their capacity and freedom to produce truly relevant work. Funding can play a significant role in diversifying the arts field and making it more accessible. Funding affects the relations and dynamics within the sector, stimulating a fair collaboration spirit or undermining it.

Today, amidst the crisis and a large-scale reflection on how not to waste this crisis, simply “more money” for the arts is no longer enough. It is urgent to ask the question: how is this money used, what impact does it have on the sector, on individual professionals, on their careers, on their artistic offer - its relevance and diversity, on the audiences and societies at large? How does this money contribute to the sustainability of the arts sector and sustainability of the broader ecosystems we live in?

IETM has been actively engaged in the advocacy for better working conditions in the arts, in the past decades, but especially in the past two years. We believe that funding for the arts is an important element of this urgent and complex process, and we are convinced the time for innovating arts funding strategies is ripe. This publication is initiated to feed the current debate and offer strategies and solutions to improve the situation of the arts sector and of every professional involved in the arts.

# INTRODUCTION

## Fair, flexible and inclusive: funding for a sustainable arts sector


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The purpose of this paper is to identify, analyse and reflect on funding practices that contribute to a more sustainable and more inclusive arts ecosystem. The reflections and ideas of art workers, as well as the knowledge and experiences shared by art funders, will guide us in tracing possible pathways towards more pertinent funding practices. We will propose and discuss methods and instruments of arts funding that are adapted to the evolving artistic, economic and social dynamics of the sector as well as to the role arts strive to play in society.

Funding structures, their working models and their capacity to adjust and adapt to changing social, economic and environmental realities play a crucial role in the development of the arts sector. Even though society and artistic practices have evolved tremendously in the past decades, by and large, the arts sector still relies on ways of working that fail to integrate these changes. Funders can be the driving force of a necessary transformation of the sector towards models and practices that are more sustainable and more in tune with the values of inclusiveness and fairness. The Covid-19 pandemic has again confirmed the discrepancies and disbalances in the sector and the urgency to address them, including through fair, inclusive and flexible funding - some of the practices and trends emerging in the context of this unprecedented crisis can be found in IETM's publication The Moment for Change Is Now (IETM, 2020).

Starting from acknowledging the urgency to reassess and rethink the practices of art professionals and art funders, we propose to learn from the various alternative models practiced and tested by funders and policy-makers, as well as in the sector itself. This study offers food for thought, concrete examples and guiding principles for funding structures to consider their own transition as key players in the survival and thriving of the arts sectors.

The following recommendations are highlighted, further discussed and elaborated at the end of the publication:

- Restructure relations between funders and applicants/ beneficiaries: to question and deconstruct relations of power; to investigate a more partner-like relationship with the funding beneficiaries;
- Identify blind spots in funding and propose financial solutions: to actively seek the artists, art workers and communities that remain underrepresented in funding processes and devise specific strategies to include them;
- Coordinate actions between funders: to seek to reduce the burden of the funding processes on art workers and organisations by regular concertation with other funders and adjusting calendars, tools and jargon used;
- Include artists and art workers in funding schemes: to benefit from the expertise of professionals working on the ground to devise and implement funding schemes;
- Refocus assessment on the content: to judge projects by the quality of the ideas (content) rather than the capacity of applicants to present them in an appropriate form;
- Encourage cooperation rather than competition: to infuse collaboration with and between art workers in different phases of funding to support learning and reinforce fairness;
- Support experimentation: to encourage and nurture the experimental nature of the artistic process;
- Feed funders' knowledge on artistic work: to understand artists and the artistic projects in order to serve them better.

By means of inspiring stories, identified and refined arguments and recommendations, this publication hopes to contribute to a larger ongoing conversation on the future of the arts sector and the place of arts funding in it. It advocates for rethinking, adjusting and upgrading models, methods and instruments of arts funding, to help the arts sector thrive and stay in tune with its values and the evolving context of today's society.
In the text boxes at the end of each section, a few examples of inspiring funding practice that we have come across provide additional ideas.

# Why talk about fair, flexible and inclusive funding?

The arts sector is full of contradictions. On the one hand, it is deeply concerned with its social role – holding its finger on the pulse of society, the arts sector offers a rare space where we can confront, practice and discuss different visions of society. Artists and artworks question the boundaries of dominant thought, imagine alternatives, shed a light on other possible realities, poke, test, disturb. To put it in the words of the curator and festival director Frie Leysen, artists "look, analyse, reflect and criticise. And develop visions of what is and what could be."[2] At its best, art is the rebellious voice that helps us rethink how to best live together, in the world that we share.

On the other hand, the arts sector is also entrenched in practices and organisational models that are in stark contrast to these noble values. Growth, extraction and productivity are often the norm in how art is being produced, distributed and accessed. Exploitative working relations lead to precarious life and careers of artists and art workers[3]. Disbalances in resources and access to mobility are still flagrant and growing[4].

How to tackle these contradictions? How to ensure that the arts sector is more true to its values? How can the arts sector imagine and mainstream models and practices that are in tune with the role it aspires to play in society?

To play their role of disturbers and visionaries, artists and art workers constantly adjust their ideas, projects and practices to the evolutions of society. To be able to support them in this dynamic context, arts organisations and institutions need to be flexible to meet specific needs of specific projects. Many arts organisations experiment with alternative models and these experimentations are crucial for a positive development of the arts sector. Flexible funding programmes are able to support these initiatives for the benefit of the entire artistic landscape. In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, some funding structures rapidly adjusted their guidelines and activities, which was beneficial for many arts projects. Flexibility of funders in the Covid-19 times allowed many artists and organisations to survive and remain relevant, even in this particularly fragile moment.

There is an acute need in the sector to adjust models and practices to be more inclusive and to reflect the incredible potential of our societies' diversity. In addition, inclusiveness is also crucial for the arts sector's contribution to democratic processes. Art workers and arts organisations contribute to shaping the narratives around today's society. The more our teams, our projects and our organisations are inclusive, the more diverse are the stories and perspectives that our projects propose to audiences and citizens. Depriving society from a multiplicity of perspectives leads to hindering the society's democratic processes. A unified single story, a single way of looking at, interpreting and imagining the world, is rendering impossible this permanent negotiation on how we can live together in a democracy.

However, the Covid-19 pandemic is likely to further undermine the inclusiveness of the arts sector, preventing those in vulnerable situations from embarking on an artistic career, which is likely to become even more unstable and precarious. Funders can play a crucial role in supporting the most fragile players in the field, as well as underrepresented professionals and those from marginalised backgrounds to remain in or enter and thrive in the arts sector.

Fairness in the arts contributes to a broader notion of social justice. To perform its role in society and be able to be its rebellious voice, the arts sector needs to be aware of the injustices it reluctantly participates in or helps perpetuate and develop strategies to avoid and counterbalance this tendency. Fairness is also a dynamic category that has to be continuously re-negotiated: in the words of the Fair Arts Almanac "fairness is constantly in a precarious state if we don't care for it as an ongoing practice. Fairness cannot be reached by structural changes alone. As it is based on mutual trust, it has to be in constant public discussion - aware and woke to current economic, social, and political developments. The revolution has to be continuous."[5]

The Covid-19 crisis has further intensified these challenges or at least has made them bluntly clear. Although the sector has globally been amongst the hardest hit, how this impact was distributed amongst art workers, different organisations and art practices, in different countries, showed again how unequal and disbalanced the sector is[6]. On the other hand, the pandemic has also shown how more flexible funding can be beneficial for the arts sector and audiences[7].

2 "Disturbing, Not Pleasing Should Be Arts' Role", Frie Leysen, keynote speech, Australian Theatre Forum, 2015
3 Wages for and Against Art Work: On Economy, Autonomy, and the Future of Artistic Labour, Katja Praznik, RESHAPE, 2021
4 Operational study Mobility Scheme for Artists and Culture Professionals in Creative Europe countries (On The Move, 2019)
5 Fair Arts Almanac (State of the Arts, 2019)
6 Dance Mobility in Times of Fracture: Experiencing the Framework of Fragility, European Dancehouse Network, 2021
7 Idem

The Covid-19 pandemic has reconfirmed the need for readjusting funding towards more fairness, more flexibility and more inclusiveness.[8]

In various recent research papers and policy recommendations published prior to and during the Covid crisis[9], cultural workers expressed their needs for funding structures that are more flexible and adaptable, that are guided by inclusiveness and that promote and reinforce the notion of fairness. Voices from the sector are calling for support structures that can, in particular by anchoring their actions in these guiding principles, better respond to the needs of the sector, support the post-crisis recovery and encourage the sector's transition to a more sustainable future[10].

How can we best define these concepts? What is a fair, flexible and inclusive funding programme today, in the context where artists practice creative and collaborative formats never before imagined, while at the same time their precarity and insecurity is ever increasing? What can we learn from those funding structures that put fairness, flexibility and inclusiveness at the heart of their practices and experiment with alternative support schemes? This research builds on the opinions and expertise of the art professionals and looks at some of the funders that have been trying, at various scales and in diverse contexts, to answer these questions with concrete programme proposals.

This paper's primary focus is not placed on funding programmes that support inclusiveness and fairness of the arts sector and agility of art workers. It rather taps into the knowledge of the art funders that have made inclusiveness, fairness and flexibility the standard of their own work and the criteria for developing their support instruments. Through unpacking their stories and their experiences, the research shows what can be learned through these examples and how this learning can be infused in other policies and funding instruments.

In tackling the issue of funding, and in particular in analysing examples of inspiring practice, the authors concentrated on recent evolutions. The Covid-19 will doubtless continue to impact the arts sector in the coming years. Future research will show how wide and deep this influence will prove to be. Written in the second year of the pandemic, this publication takes as a basic premise that in the field of contemporary artistic practices, in many ways, the Covid crisis has accelerated processes and challenges that had been already emerging and set in motion before the pandemic: economic and ecological unsustainability, precarious work and life conditions, and escalating threats to freedom and rights of expression. It is, thus, necessary, while searching for positive practices in arts funding, to look at recent examples, whether they were initiated before or during the Covid times.

This research, therefore, concentrates on recent funding practices and instruments, launched and fine-tuned in the period of the last 5 years, with a particular attention to those that were experimented since the outbreak of the Covid crisis.

8 The Moment for Change is Now (IETM, 2020)

9 Examples: Operational study Mobility Scheme for Artists and Culture Professionals in Creative Europe countries (On The Move, 2019) or The Assessment of the Impact of COVID-19 on the Cultural and Creative Sectors in the EU's Partner Countries, Policy Responses and their Implications for International Cultural Relations (CULTURAL RELATIONS PLATFORM, 2020), Rewiring the Network (for the Twenties) Resetting the agenda for IETM, (IETM, 2021), Preliminary analytical report on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the cultural and creative industries, and the findings of the ResiliArt movement,Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (UNESCO 2021) amongst others

10 The Moment for Change is Now (IETM, 2020)

# The scope and the challenges


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The intention of the research is not to collect and analyse data in an exhaustive and balanced way, but rather to tell stories that can inspire an alternative vision.

The term arts funders, in the context of this publication, encompasses public, private and hybrid funding institutions, programmes and initiatives that actively support, by means of financial contributions, contemporary artistic creation, dissemination, research or any other segment of the value chain of contemporary artistic practices.

This research concentrates on the practices of funders that support artistic and cultural projects, organisations and individuals that work in the realm of contemporary artistic practices and in the not-for-profit context. The sectors dealing with more traditional art forms, with heritage and preservation, as well as the more market-based practices have specific funding and structural challenges that deserve to be tackled in a separate research.

Most of the knowledge in this publication is gathered from art workers based in (geographic) Europe and the MENA region. However, the research also connects to experiences from other regions of the world, thus extending the scope to other socio-political contexts. The intention of the research is not to collect and analyse data in an exhaustive and balanced way, but rather to tell stories that can inspire an alternative vision. Instead of pursuing geographical balance, it taps into the great diversity of contexts and practices that make the transnational arts sector.

In this very diverse sector, marked by discrepancies and imbalances, a positive impact of a funding practice will depend on its capacity to recognise and respond to specific needs in particular contexts. What works in some circumstances might not work in others. To draw universal conclusions by comparing knowledge and opinions on arts funding from very different contexts seems to be an insurmountable challenge. For example, in some cases, the political and social context is such that any support from the public sector is considered unethical or at least problematic, whereas in others, the maintenance of public funding is at the forefront of the social struggles. This is just one example, and there are many other situations when perceptions, challenges and aspirations in one context might be contradictory to those in another.

To respond to this challenge, the authors chose to concentrate on ideas and examples that might be useful in various realities. The recommendations and conclusions are designed in a way that they can be translated into various contexts.

The notions that this research is dealing with (fairness, flexibility, inclusiveness) are not static categories, but rather dynamic ones, that evolve together with the society and the sector's place within it. For example, some of the unjust and unethical practices from the past were considered fair at the time, just like there might still be blind spots in our current quest for more inclusiveness. Any attempt to define these categories in relation to the arts sector is marked with the subjectivity of its time. Therefore, this publication carries the stamp of this particular time, the specific vision of what flexible, fair and inclusive is to the art workers of this particular moment, in the hope that our thinking and our experiences will continue being refined, changed and adapted towards more justice and equality.

Finally, the many inspiring examples of funding structures and schemes in the field of arts could be extended to other sectors as well. There is much to be learned from funding in the field of research, science, media etc. Unfortunately, the scope of this publication did not permit to include those practices.

# Methodology

In order to tackle the above mentioned notions, the authors tapped into three main sources:

— Contributions of a diverse group of professionals, gathered through an open online survey. The survey was distributed within IETM's membership and broader connections as well as through the personal networks of the authors. It gathered impressions, expectations, opinions and recommendations of cultural professionals in respect to arts funding.

— Interviews with key professionals engaged in funding organisations active in the arts and/or other value-based sectors. These were identified through the proposals and recommendations of the survey respondents and selected for the relevance of their practice to the issues of fairness, flexibility and inclusiveness, as well as for the diversity of their activities and fields of action. The interviews concentrated on the guiding values of those funders, as well as their most interesting and relevant models and evolutions, in particular in relation to flexibility, fairness and inclusiveness.

— Desk research that involved recent publications in respect to arts funding and evolution of the arts sector, especially those that were published since the outbreak of the Covid-19 crisis.

— These sources were compared and contrasted in order to infuse the final recommendations that are presented in the last chapter.

It is also important to note that the survey results presented a disbalanced geographical coverage. Out of 94 respondents, 78 were based in Europe. Only very few respondents were based outside of Europe and its neighborhood (Africa, Asia, Australia and South America – 1 respondent each). Likewise, even looking within Europe, a clear majority of respondents are based in the Western part of the continent – 64, out of which 19 are UK-based. With the contributions coming predominantly from the West and the North, where public funding in the arts has a long history and tradition, the analysis might be influenced by this perspective.


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# UNPACKING THE KEY NOTIONS:

## relevant funding is fair, flexible and inclusive

# Fairness: what is needed for arts funding to be fair?

In this chapter, we analyse the key concepts that drive the vision of a fair, flexible and inclusive arts funding.

To unpack these notions, we will follow the leads of the respondents of the survey that shared how these concepts resonate with them and how they believe an art funding programme should reach more fairness, flexibility and inclusiveness. We will walk the path defined by the needs and interests of arts professionals, those that benefit from, or actively participate in, arts funding. These contributions also include the perspective of the funders, as some of the respondents are representatives of funding structures. In the following notes, the quotes from the survey have been anonymised to maintain the privacy of the respondents.

In a sector marked by inequalities, structural disbalances, complex power relations and influences, fair practices may seem an ideal that is hard to achieve. However, the issue of fairness is increasingly discussed in the transnational context. A series of events and documents have opened the conversation on how to create common knowledge on fair practices and embed more just practices in our daily work. For this research, particularly interesting are the studies launched by Dutch Culture[11] and later joined by On The Move and IETM[12], which, although concentrating on international collaboration, provide practical advice and guidance towards infusing fairness in the daily practice of cultural organisations, including funding organisations themselves. In this segment, we will look specifically at fair funding and how, from the perspective of those that benefit from support, funding structures can adopt ways of working that are more just.

## To be fair is...

### ...to acknowledge the value of artistic practice

*"More compassionate and reciprocal approach to art funding that recognises and values what artists do."*

Beside a few exceptions confirming the rule, artistic work is burdened by precarity and insecurity, often leading to poor living conditions.

Fair funding thus translates as sufficient resources, fair pay for all team members and at all stages of the project, taking into account the variety and diversity of costs.

It also includes a particular attention to structural costs of the organisation. Structural funding is not sufficiently on the radar of the funders. Yet structural funding is essential for the running of the organisation and its capacity to conduct short-, medium- or long-term projects.

Finally, the comments of the respondents also tackle a broader responsibility. Beyond the financial aspect, the value of artistic practice can and should be acknowledged on a symbolic level. Fair arts funding systems can only stem from a broader agreement in society on the value of arts and artistic work. When arts, artists and artistic work are truly accepted as being of value to society, this acceptance leads to treating artists with care and respect: acknowledging the amount of work required, the experimental nature of the practice that they develop and their specific needs. This will then translate into support schemes, methods and tools as well as adequate level of funding.

### ... to shift power relations and challenge hierarchies

*"To be mindful of, and responsive to, all of the various power dynamics at play"*

Various hierarchies mark the arts sector: between the institutional and independent sectors; between various disciplines; between different types of work that are more or less recognised depending on where they stand in the hierarchies of aesthetics; between the dominant and minority cultures; between arts scenes in various countries, depending how close or far they are to the perceived or self-perceived centres of power, to name a few.

Fair funders are deeply aware of these power relations and work to actively deconstruct them. This might include creating specific programmes that target structural inequalities; confronting elitism; seeking to correct income disbalances between countries; establishing and encouraging partnership relations within the sector rather than reinforcing the existing hierarchies.

### ... to be transparent and clear

*"A transparent and open application process and evaluation of applications"*

Clarity and transparency were present in numerous comments of the respondents, as one of the values that have to be reinforced. Although transparency is high on the agendas of many funding bodies, many art workers responding to the survey feel it is lacking. Here respondents were talking about clear guidelines, clear objectives of funding schemes explaining for what purposes funds are being granted, simple application procedures with less bureaucracy; precise and transparent assessment criteria to understand on what basis applications are assessed; well defined decision-making processes, including who gets to make the decision, how and why decision-makers are chosen and how they end up making and arguing their decisions. A point that respondents often mention is the importance of feedback providing clear, informed, personalised and respectful information for all applicants – including ones that were rejected – to make sure that artists and art workers can learn from the process.

11 https://dutchculture.nl/en/news/report-fair-international-cultural-cooperation

12 https://www.ietm.org/en/system/files/publications/ietm_beyondcuriosityanddesire_2018.pdf

## … to provide informed, knowledgeable and unbiased support

*"I'd like to see a system whereby artists spent say five years, not more, administering funding and developing policy, then back out into practice, and others then take over the role, so that people who actually know what they are talking about are supporting their peers - and the system keeps moving and stays fresh and relevant to contemporary practice"*

*"I think the funding entity must understand the necessity of the cultural project and its projection in its context and community."*

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In providing fair support, understanding the context in which the artist or art worker is acting is key. This may require decision-makers' deep knowledge of the artistic, cultural, social and political context and understanding of the evolution of the specific artistic discipline. It also necessitates insight into the specific situation, artistic or organisational evolution, even life experiences of the applying artist or art worker. More generally speaking, designing and administering a fair funding scheme require a deep understanding of artistic processes and the conditions of work and life of the artists, as well as the audiences and communities they address. In order to activate this very diverse and very precise knowledge in the process of distributing the funding, many respondents call for independent juries consisting of peers – artists or art workers. There are also numerous requests for more diversity in the decision-making structures that create and manage funding programmes - to reflect the diversity of societies and the sector. A few voices call for experimenting with models that encourage a more personalised approach and a dynamic learning process between artists and decision-makers (embedding artists in policy-making structures, like in the quote above; providing individual and personalised advice to artists through all stages of the funding processes, while paying attention to the equal treatment of all potential beneficiaries). Finally, some ideas go towards models that would rethink decision-making processes to prevent any kind of inherent bias (the system of random choice or lottery; participatory grant-making in which "those that need the funding decide together the best way to distribute the funding, in a democratic process")

## … to acknowledge and relieve the burden that grant applications put on teams and individuals

*"Proposes support models for financed projects in order to improve their management, efficiency and development."*

Keeping up to date with the information on funding opportunities, carrying the application process and managing a grant in all its different stages constitute a series of complex and burdensome tasks that require a lot of investment. This favours larger, more institutionalised structures as well as individual professionals with means and resources to carry the weight of the grant application, management and reporting. Fair funding actively seeks to address, in the processes of grant application and management, disadvantages put on some organisations because of their size, status and lack of resources. This might mean providing personalised support to less experienced or small-scale structures, such as high quality consultancy services, training opportunities, dedicated support at specific stages of the application etc. It could also mean dividing the application process into several strands dedicated to organisations of different types and sizes to avoid unequal competition.

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### GAP DAY

An initiative led by Mermaid Arts Centre and Lian Bell in Ireland, Gap Day allows a freelance theatre maker to dedicate a day in their schedule to creative research and thinking. The freelancers receive a fee for their time, a room to work in in a cultural venue and some networking support. They have the freedom to choose how they would will spend the day.

https://www.mermaidartscentre.ie/whats-on/mermaid-space/gap-day-2021

### SELF-ORGANISATIONS

This programme, ran by Mophradat, an arts funder engaging with artists from the Arabic-speaking world, aims to provoke inventive ways of working and collaborating. It supports experiments with self organisation in the hope of reinforcing sharing and generosity amongst art communities, through initiatives such as 'Informal Coops' (finding imaginative solutions for sharing resources in a group), 'Private Audiences' (presenting work in private spaces), 'Topical Assemblies' (organising public discussions on topics less accessible or discussed) and 'Your Ideas' (open invitation to support ideas in the field of self-organisation.

https://mophradat.org/en/program/self-organizations/

# Flexibility: What is flexible funding?

The arts are a dynamic sector that is in constant evolution, driven by its creative potential and restricted by the precarious and volatile economic reality. The capacity of funding structures and schemes to change and bend their focus, methodology and regulation has a direct influence on the arts scene and its capacity to develop and thrive. In particular when faced with a sudden and fundamental crisis, such as the one brought about by Covid-19, or great social and economic shifts, funders that manage to be flexible and keep focus on the arts community and citizens they serve, may contribute to the sustainability of the art ecosystem and help art professionals and organisations remain relevant in turbulent times.

However, funders usually hold a sensitive position: while they are committed to support the arts community they serve, they are also responsible for carrying out their mission and, in the case of public funders, accountable to policy makers and, in some cases, directly to the citizens whose taxes contribute to the budget of the funding. Striking the right balance between ensuring freedom and fair conditions for art makers and accountability to their constituency might be the funders' most complex task.

## To be flexible is...

### ... to allow failure

*"support for initial ideas and time to develop projects to see if they work, rather than just delivering finished productions to audiences"*

Many voices are calling for more funding schemes oriented towards research, experimentation and process, with less emphasis on results, allowing mistakes and failure. The result-oriented funding that insists on measurable outputs often limits creative processes and puts additional burden on the artists. More emphasis on exploratory processes can allow artists to try things out, experiment, and eventually come up with alternative ideas, practices and models. Beside support for production or distribution, flexible funding thus also supports research and development, be it in the framework of a creative process, or to explore a project idea before the project is even devised and an application is written. This includes also, very concretely, remuneration of artists for their research work. In the words of one of the survey respondents: "this is a critical area where funding is often lacking, and should be the place where the future ideas emerge from."

### ... to rethink time

*"understand and follow the artistic and creation timing"*

Time is a crucial point in the discussion on flexibility. It is a constraint that many struggle with, seeing the time imposed by the administration of the grant as disconnected from the time of the creation or artistic project. Concretely, this concerns the application deadlines, often too short or not frequent enough: multiple deadlines throughout the year or rolling calls for applications are more beneficial and less burdensome for many artists. Furthermore, a perceived predominance of short-term (yearly) grants actively discourages projects with a longer timeframe, those that not only enable to investigate further and experiment with practices, but also enable deeper connections between partners. Finally, allowing beneficiaries to get additional support in some phases during the life cycle of the project, or an open scheme for grantees to choose the duration of the grant, could make time an ally, instead of a limiting factor.

### ... to change and adapt

*"A flexible funding programme not only reacts to developments in the practice of makers and arts organisations. It interacts."*

In the last year and a half, with the sanitary crisis shaking the society and the sector, many funders have proven their capacity to change and adapt their programmes as well as the methods, tools and requirements – there is much to learn from this experience. Flexible funders absorb changes and shifts in the implementation phase of the project – alterations of budget, timeline and/or outcomes, which may occur as a result of external forces (such as social, political, environmental developments), or internal evolutions of the project (the need for artistic, budgetary or production adaptations might be revealed once the project leaves the planning table and starts taking shape in reality). These changes might even be beneficial "as the framework of the project is tested in real life" (as one of the respondents puts it). Instead of pushing for complete respect of the agreed activities, funders could encourage adaptations that will benefit the goal of the project. Moreover, a flexible funding programme is able to reposition itself in order to swiftly react to changes in the sector and the society: it seeks to address emerging needs, formats and aesthetics within the arts sector, as well as to respond to urgent issues and evolutions in society.

## … to be a partner

*"shared responsibility amongst funders, recipients and the wider arts community"*

Being open to the context in which the artistic work is evolving is crucial for funders' understanding of the specific needs of each initiative they support and their ability to adjust the support structures and mechanisms in a way that best suits the beneficiary, rather than the administration. A flexible funder is one that is a partner to the grantee, sharing the responsibility for the good conduct of the project with them. Concretely, this may mean collaboration between funders and potential beneficiaries on developing support programmes, formulating their guiding principles and defining their long-term goals and their priorities. Such partnership can also mean involving the sector in devising reporting mechanisms to make sure reporting is not only a mandatory part of administering grants but is also a useful exercise for grantees. Finally, the partnership can also involve audiences and community members that can be an active part of the process of supporting arts for the community. Including artists and broader communities in the decision-making processes is perceived by many respondents as a key to creating relevant funding programmes that are truly in tune with the needs of the arts field and societies at large.

## … to lighten restrictions and create space for experimentation

*" [A flexible funder] has specific goals but allows for different ways to get there"*

*"My dream flexible funding would be: do you have an idea? what would you like to produce or what would you like to do, tell us, tell us why you think this is important in your context and if we find it good, we support it."*

A few voices in the survey responses are calling for grants that are less restrictive and free from rigid guidelines and administrative regulations, open to interpretation and adaptable to the needs of beneficiaries. Although this is arguably more simple to implement for private funders that are less - or not at all - accountable to policies and tax-payers and dependent on broader administrative systems, in all types of funding structures more collaborative relationship can be established between funders and applicants/beneficiaries. Flexible funding requires maintaining a certain level of trust between the funder and the beneficiary, taking into account that there is risk-taking on both sides. Flexible funding trusts the capacity of the art workers to make choices that ultimately benefit the objectives of the project. Proposals include establishing universal basic income – or the equivalent targeted specifically at artists; funding that can be used as a resource for whatever is needed for the organisation or the project, without limitation in terms of the eligibility of costs; directing funding to an agreed area of work, rather than specific projects, etc.

### KONE FOUNDATION

This Finland-based foundation focuses on research - it supports research processes in arts and humanities, encouraging cross-disciplinary and cross-border work, long-term experimentation. Boldness is one of its central values: it embraces incompleteness and unexpected results, as it seeks to support research in the broadest sense, for its intrinsic value to society.

https://koneensaatio.fi/en

### LET ARTISTS BE ARTISTS

Strike a Light is a UK-based organisation dedicated to organising festivals and cultural events in Gloucester. In 2020, it launched the programme Let Artists Be Artists that proposed to contract 3 artists to "work within a community to make people's lives better through the arts". The programme concentrates on the process and had no pre-defined outcome or result-related pressure.

https://strikealight.org.uk/let-artists-be-artists-updates/

### SNABSLANTEN

The City of Copenhagen's programme for young culture, Snabslanten supports small-scale projects proposed by young art workers, by offering micro grants (up to 10.000 DKK, approximately 1400 EUR). With the intention of moving quickly from idea to action, they guarantee application processing within 14 days. The grant committee is made out of young people with an insight in the cultural life of Copenhagen.

# Inclusiveness: who is excluded?

The Council of Europe defines inclusive societies as those "where individuals maintain their own identities while respecting each other's differences, united by a set of shared, democratic values"[13]. Inclusiveness is about cherishing the differences while agreeing on common values. It imposes observing whose voice is dominant, and whose voices are less heard or excluded, as well as remaining sensitive to the blind spots and adjusting whenever necessary. Tracking the patterns of dominance and constantly refining structures and strategies to involve those that do not have access to funding is clearly seen as a major role for funders.

In an attempt to identify the art workers that are excluded from or fall under the radar of funding programmes, respondents mentioned a number of groups:

- Art workers from minority groups: those with a sexual orientation, and ethnic or linguistic background other than the dominant ones;
- Art workers with disabilities;
- Art workers based and professionally active in rural areas;
- Professionals that lack networks, experience and knowledge; those whose social status did not enable easy access to skills and connections; non-professional artists;
- Art workers engaging in some disciplines or artistic practices that are not sufficiently recognised and / or supported by funders in some countries – depending on the context, this might include dance, design, heritage, digital, experimental and out of mainstream practices or others;
- Art workers of certain age groups: those perceived as young (and thus not experienced enough), or perceived as old (and thus too experienced);
- Individual artists, freelance art workers, those involved in small-scale initiatives and organisations with insufficient resources to engage in application processes;
- Migrant and refugee art workers that have limited or no access to funding;
- In specific contexts (in some countries), art workers that refuse to comply with specific political agendas enforced through funding.

Respondents also identified a number of actions which could ensure a greater inclusiveness of funding programmes and schemes:

## To be inclusive is...

### ... to acquire excellent knowledge of and develop deep relations with various specific communities

*"Funders need to conduct outreach to get in touch with these artists, listen to what barriers they experience and then address these barriers."*

In order to actively include and support art workers excluded from funding programmes, it is necessary to have a good understanding of their specific needs, the impact that various obstacles have on their work and possible ways of overcoming them. This can only happen through an engaged and direct conversation between art workers, their audiences and the support structures they engage with. This includes involving staff and jury members that are informed and sensitive to these issues; reaching out to the experts that have experience of work with specific communities, including those from outside the arts sector; keeping up to date with research and policies in specific related areas; regularly mapping (and updating maps) of creatives in the area that might fall out of funding opportunities; creating platforms for excluded art workers to actively participate in the constitution of the programmes and schemes.

This requires a proactive attitude on the side of the funder: actively seeking and detecting art projects that fall under the radar and potentially deserve support.

### ... to challenge current models and structures

*"Generally, funding tends to be shaped around existing models of practice or production rather than those which are emergent."*

*"In some of our discussions we have considered what it would look like to turn funding structures on their head so that artists received the funding, and employed organisations as producers rather than the other way around."*

The need for inclusiveness stems also from an awareness of how imbalanced and restricted the current funding models and tools might be, at times also actively contributing to further isolation and ghettoisation of certain art workers. For more inclusion to happen, it is necessary to rethink the frameworks of thought and action that are currently in place.

This includes, for example, challenging the very notion of artistic quality which is often rooted in a specific set of aesthetic codes that might be too static, exclusive and restrictive and rooted in a single, often Western-centred vision, and thus irrelevant for the rapidly and constantly evolving demographic, social and artistic dynamics. Encouraging disruption and innovation and questioning dominant norms and codes help establish a different understanding of what quality is – and thus how it should be supported.

This also includes challenging power structures, by raising the awareness of currently present bias and experimenting with various actions to limit it – actively seeking more diversity in teams; supporting partnerships between artist-led organisations and institutions; encouraging employment of artists by institutions and other types of organisations.

Finally, to challenge current models, experimenting with alternatives is key: supporting artists that experiment with different ways of working, learning from those that already have experience with responding to a radically changing environment, supporting activists that use artistic tools.

13 Action Plan on Building Inclusive Societies (Council of Europe, 2016)

## … to design funding schemes dedicated to art workers that are excluded

*“providing some targeted funds to build quality, experience, networks and confidence.”*

Inclusive funding may also require direct targeting of specific groups of art workers, addressing their particular needs with a view of overcoming the disadvantages caused by the blind spots of the current funding system. This may include proposing quotas for specific groups of art workers; adopting a different set of criteria for art workers with specific needs (emerging artists, for example); including specific costs for art workers with specific needs (additional expenses for the helpers of disabled artists, for example).


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## … to propose specific information, application modalities and support systems for those that are excluded

*“Make accessible applications possible - spoken, written, sign language etc”*

*“It’s necessary for an organisation or an independent artist to have someone helping or dealing with the research of suitable grant opportunities, with the grant application and later with the administration of the grant.”*

To bridge the existing gaps, application processes can be adapted to suit better those that are currently underrepresented with specific formats of applications offered and targeted support provided to those that need it. This certainly comprises creating accessible and comprehensible information on available tools: making forms shorter and simpler, using less jargon, making applications possible in a variety of formats, media and languages (outside of the omnipresent dominant language and written format – including for example oral or video applications, in various languages, including the sign language), but it could also include other support tools, such as consultancy services offered to specific groups of art workers to assist them in the application processes, project management and reporting; workshops and personalised support by established producers or support structures; training and peer to peer learning opportunities.

## ... to safeguard freedom from political agendas

*"Inclusion can happen by giving the artists the possibility to offer ideas, values and their vision of our reality and how it should develop instead of forcing an agenda of policies."*

Inclusive funding is also one that seeks to achieve objectivity outside of the tensions of current political agendas or in some cases even political pressures. This requires building and continuously reaffirming funding structures as safe spaces, rather than tools for short-term political priorities. It also requires putting additional efforts in building trust in institutions where this trust is lacking; eradicating nepotism and opacity in decision making processes and resisting untransparent lobbying; inviting artists to participate in the reflection on building new programmes and support schemes; allowing more flexibility in objectives and outcomes for projects acting s in politically tense or conflict zones.

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### LIVE WORK FUND

This fund brings together 4 funders: Jerwood Arts, Wolfson Foundation, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and The Linbury Trust. It aims at supporting young art workers in the field of performing arts in the context of the Covid crisis. The grants are awarded to artists and producers to "adapt their approach to making and sharing live work."
Its intention is to ease the burden of the crisis on the young and emerging practitioners, and to enable creative reimagining of performing arts practices.

https://jerwoodarts.org/opportunities/live-work-fund/ (shorten url)

### FUNDACTION

FundAction is a funding programme carried by four foundations (Open Society Initiative for Europe, European Cultural Foundation, Charles Leopold Mayer Foundation and Guerilla Foundation). It aims to support social movements that work towards a transition to a just and equitable world. It is providing grants for social transformation, following principles of participatory grant-making. A community of activists and a group of donors work together to distribute grants in a democratic and participatory way. A Facilitation Group made by activists and one representative of funders is ensuring the daily coordination and the granting decisions are made by all members.

https://fundaction.eu

### PRODUZIONI DAL BASSO

Produzioni dal Basso is the first crowdfunding platform in Itraly dedicated to social innovation. Their mission is to support the creation of an economic community for initiatives that have a positive social, cultural and environmental impact. Through this open and simple format, it provides direct support to the arts, from contributors that are not necessarily regular arts audience.

https://www.produzionidalbasso.com

# Balancing tensions

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*...these tensions also speak for the increasing diversity and complexity of the sector whose evolution requires close observation...*

Building relevant funding programmes is not a straight-forward process: the various aspects of fair, flexible and inclusive funding, listed above, can hardly be all achieved equally, without compromises and balancing solutions, as some of them can be contradictory to one another (some examples are cited below). Funders' attempts to address certain blind spots, can create further challenges , if decisions are not carefully thought through and not balanced with many other priorities and needs arising in the sector and societies.

These tensions stem from the dynamism of contemporary art practices, the complex roles funders are playing in the arts ecosystem, as well as the interconnected and multiple priorities and objectives of the artists, funders and society. On the other hand, these tensions also speak for the increasing diversity and complexity of the sector whose evolution requires close observation, re-checking the changing needs and, when necessary, adaptation of support programmes to these new realities.

There is not one way to solve these contradictions, but it is extremely helpful, for funders and for beneficiaries alike, to be aware of their existence. Navigating these contradictory aspirations and priorities is a useful tool to define an appropriate support methodology. The tensions bring forward food for thought for funding structures which might consider where on the scale between two extremes they would put the cursor of their funding programmes and schemes. Likewise, beneficiaries choose, by applying to a specific funding programme, where on the scale between two extremes they place their work and what is their preferred balance between these contradictions. A greater awareness of the various tensions will help both sides make more informed, contextualised and appropriate choices.

## Specific needs of disciplines <> freedom for genre fluidity and development

Various artistic disciplines or practices have specific attributes and needs: the way the artistic work is conceived and devised, the necessary phases in the lifecycle of the project, the various technical and production processes involved, the distribution models connected to the specific discipline, to name only a few. Knowing these characteristics can help funders provide more tailor-made and thus more relevant support to arts organisations and professionals active in specific sub-sectors. On the other hand, an increasing number of projects are crossing the limits between disciplines or actively pushing the boundaries of their art form. Genre fluidity, multi-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary practices, collaboration between art and different sectors are strong tendencies growing in the arts sector at large.

Therefore, acknowledging the specific needs of projects within a single discipline must go hand in hand with openness and attention to these practices that do not fall within the limits of specific genres: the multidisciplinary, the non-disciplinary, the unclassifiable, and leave a space for any relevant artistic practice to evolve.

Finally, adapting funding programmes to specific needs must be carefully balanced with a sense of equal opportunities and appropriate level of support to various art forms and sub-sectors.

## Artistic value <> social impact

Artistic work carries its own intrinsic values: in order to nurture them, it is important to support artistic experimentation and pursue aesthetic and intellectual goals, even when they are not clearly inscribed in the logic of social engagement and serving broader social priorities. On the other hand, respondents acknowledge the importance of reflecting artistic work in its social environment and supporting projects and artistic work for the social value they carry. A balanced approach is greatly welcome, one that supports the capacity of artists to creatively reflect on the challenges of today's society, but also acknowledges the need to serve arts' own creative purpose and keep the freedom of artistic experimentation and risk-taking.

A careful choice of thematic priorities seems to be key here, alongside flexibility in their interpretation. Art workers welcome funding schemes that stimulate artistic work that contributes to larger societal debates and reacts to current social challenges. However, they also call for more freedom in interpreting these challenges and choosing the focus that fits their vision and interests, rather than following strict agendas delivered top-down.

## Clear frameworks <> experimentation

Clear and detailed information on the objectives, thematic focus, available budgets, eligibility and selection criteria, assessment and evaluation process, reporting, etc. are necessary for the art workers to be able to produce applications that are in line with funders' and evaluators' expectations. Clarity is also crucial for estimating in advance whether one's ideas and projects fit into the scheme. Application processes with unclear and vague objectives and guidelines are time consuming and confusing. They can lead to frustration, with grantees wasting time writing applications that will end up being rejected, and with funders confronted with unmanageable amounts of submissions. On the other hand, application procedures or grant management rules that are too prescriptive and strict discourage experimental practices and models and make it hard to engage in out of the box thinking.

Striking the right balance is a complex endeavour, requiring an in-depth assessment process, where priority would be given to understanding the specific situation of the applicant, and the strength of their project in relation to the context it would be acting in.

Another aspect of this tension is the challenge of combining experimentation with the necessary accountability of funding structures. In particular public funders need to be able to acknowledge and justify their choices, and this is often much harder with funding schemes that are open and have looser frameworks.

Multiple complementary funding schemes, including small-scale experimental programmes, might offer a possible path out of this dichotomy: proposing more open schemes for research or start-up projects alongside those with stricter guidelines for when the projects gain in strength.

## Multiplicity of funding schemes <> Clarity of the landscape

Understanding the complex arts funding landscape and navigating it is an important challenge for art workers. From one funder to another, there is a great diversity of objectives, scopes and priorities, methodologies, jargons, procedures that all require a great deal of adaptation by the beneficiaries. Likewise, funders often support one phase of the creative process or project lifecycle, which makes it necessary for art workers to multiply applications in order to carry the entire project through. On the other hand, the beneficiaries also acknowledge how useful it is to be able to combine different resources in order to respond to the nature of the project in the best way. Several smaller grants might be easier to get than one larger subsidy and would also bring more flexibility and space for adaptation, following the dynamics of the project.

To bridge this contradiction, many voices, responding to the survey, called for more collaboration and concertation between funders, in order to streamline the funding applications and make the application writing process less time-consuming and complex for the applicant.

## Supporting many <> creating sustainability

In the too often limited funding budgets, many projects and initiatives are left unsupported. Choices are difficult and complex, as providing support to some necessarily has negative repercussions on those that are not selected, sometimes leading to quality projects and initiatives forced to shut down, or stagnating, as well as creating a sense of disappointment and lack of recognition.

Choosing to support as many projects as possible, but with smaller grants, ensures that multiple and diverse projects can exist; it also encourages a greater number of professionals to carry on their careers in the arts, and in the long term, it makes the art field more diverse and dynamic.

On the other hand, such a strategy may miss an opportunity to create sustainability for some projects that show particular potential. A more ambitious, more substantial, longer-term funding might help a few projects or initiatives grow and develop in ways that could not be possible otherwise, to the benefit of the communities and society.

For some respondents, adopting a strategy of smaller support to help as many as possible is particularly important in times of crisis, when survival of organisations often depends on it. In other circumstances, outside of the crisis, practices that contribute to the development and renewal of the art field as well as projects with the biggest potential to have an impact on societies should be prioritised.

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## Participatory grant-making <> pursuing equal opportunity for the whole arts community

A few funding programmes experiment with participatory grant-making, a process in which those that the funding intends to support are making decisions on how the support is distributed and to whom. The funding structure is there to provide the financial resources, the general goals and guidelines and the framework of decision-making, but the actual decisions are made by the beneficiaries (or applicants, depending on the context). Some examples of this type of funding are scattered in different parts of this publication. It is an alluring idea, as it not only allows for an informed, democratic process to be carried out, but it also presents an opportunity for those involved to learn from one another and build further collaborations. By default, it deconstructs the power relationship between funder and applicants or beneficiaries as the financial resources and the decision-making power are dissociated.

On the other hand, a successful participatory grant-making programme requires creating and maintaining a sense of community, in which those participating will take the time to get informed on the practices of each other, discuss them and come to a joint decision. These processes are enriching, but they are also complex, time-consuming and concentrated. The risk is that the funding will end up reaching a limited group of beneficiaries that are a part of the community, by default excluding those that are less connected or under the radar of the funders.

Experimenting with participatory grant-making is not necessarily excluding: to maintain equal opportunities for all, special effort has to be put into actively looking for and involving arts professionals that are not included. It is the funder's responsibility to achieve a delicate balance between maintaining the community open and keeping its sense of common action towards a common goal.

In a less radical way, regularly inviting multiple and diverse artists and art workers to be involved in decision-making in various ways (participating in juries, in conceiving programmes, in the assessment and evaluation processes etc), alongside the funders' own staff, might also be a possible solution, in particular for public funders that might be bound by rigid administrative regulations preventing them from experimenting with more participatory models..

# LEARNING FROM POSITIVE PRACTICE

This section brings stories of six different funding bodies and intermediary cultural organisations practicing alternative, positive funding models.

In order to better understand and compare these organisations' missions, activities, methods and ambitions, we conducted interviews with their representatives. The modalities through which these funders operate were further investigated through complimentary desk research. These organisations were recommended - amongst many others - as examples of inspiring funding models and practices by the respondents of the survey.

The section below describes these organisations' mission and main programmes, and it sheds light on how the values of inclusiveness, flexibility and fairness are manifested in their work.

## THE DROSOS FOUNDATION

***Philanthropy - Switzerland***

https://drosos.org/en/

Interview with: Reem Khalil, Palestine Country Director

Drosos Foundation is a charitable, non-profit organisation founded in 2005, funded through a private endowment. It is ideologically, politically and religiously independent. Drosos funds projects that aim to bring tangible and sustainable change to disadvantaged groups and that are implemented primarily by local civil society. In 2015, Drosos refined its vision as follows: Young people have the life competences to take their lives in their own hands and contribute positively to their communities. Life competencies, in particular self-esteem, respect, eagerness to learn and resilience, are important for the development of strong personalities who master the challenges of life and contribute positively to their communities. Drosos now works on two strategies: to encourage economic opportunities and to create spaces for initiative and creativity. They strengthen soft skills of target groups by supporting spaces and opportunities for individuals and communities that allow building initiative and creativity. Moreover, they aim to develop the self- and social competencies of children and youth through involving them into artistic and / or creative activities.

The Foundation is active in Egypt, Germany, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Switzerland, Syria and Tunisia, and is open to extending activity into some neighbouring countries. Their focus is on income generation, harm reduction for risk groups, facilitation of the access to education and knowledge, environmental protection, social reintegration, and creative activities for young people.

Drosos has chosen to focus on projects and partners over the longer term, rather than to react to short term priorities, emergencies, or current political developments. The Foundation is also flexible enough to focus on themes that may be considered too sensitive for other donors, especially in the Arab region, and where the difficulties in raising donations may normally be considered as prohibitive. Drosos aims to support partners over a number of years. Promoting creative activities for young people is just one of several longer-term thematic priorities. In addition, Drosos does not restrict the eligibility for its beneficiaries (called "partners" in the internal terminology): the Foundation might invest in a well-established arts organisation but can also support small initiatives that are still in the process of formation and help them transition into functional organisations. This flexibility is often missing, especially with donor funding in the Arab region. However, flexibility comes with its share of challenges, as foundations such as Drosos that do not opt to launch open calls, tend to be accused of lack of transparency and not providing equal chances to the different beneficiaries. Aware of this risk, the Foundation invests in external expertise and in local offices that are quite autonomous and managed by local staff who know their own communities and engage in long, extensive and transparent processes with their direct beneficiaries.

*Drosos aims to support partners over a number of years. Promoting creative activities for young people is just one of several longer-term thematic priorities.*

Drosos is unusually **partnership-oriented**, with staff members empowered to work with the foundation's beneficiaries ("partners") in a close and responsive way. They engage in long periods of project development with the partners, with the aim of creating **project certainty for those working in challenging environments**. The Drosos team also cultivates close contact with local players in all countries of activity, to maintain **transparency** and to ensure that the team and the beneficiaries have all information needed to support the implementation of the project. While Drosos adopts a long term thematic perspective, project implementation should be kept as short as reasonably possible. According to Reem Khalil, few, if any, partners have expressed a wish to end their working relationship with Drosos Foundation. The investment of both Drosos and the beneficiary in creating a working relationship that is based on shared **understanding, transparency and trust** is as rare as the preparedness of Drosos to invest in the core capacity of the partner organisation needed for a successful project delivery.

Drosos' focus on partner relations with their beneficiaries means that they adapt their approach to the local needs and specificities of each beneficiary. The method employed may have its roots in a mainstream cultural practice, in community development, or education, and is chosen with the following considerations in mind:

- Developing the creative method collaboratively with the partner, and ensuring it responds to local conditions.
- Ensuring that artists, involved in a social project, receive recognition, support, time, resources and space for their own artistic creation and production, in order to nourish the qualities they use in the participative social work.
- The acknowledgement of the importance of professional artistic quality and the resources needed to maintain it contributes to the sustainability of organisations that are capable of touring successful productions, attracting ticket-buying audiences, raising sponsorship, etc.

During Covid-19, all of the Drosos projects continued and no partnership had to be terminated. Drosos has been flexible in handling project and budget revisions, and the local offices worked with beneficiaries to develop possible scenarios and adapt to the current reality. In addition, for those partners that faced extraordinarily challenging situations, **additional emergency funding has been disbursed**, allowing partners to secure **staff livelihoods** and keep their spaces. Due to the impossibility of maintaining the same level of activities, many partners have shifted their focus on organisational development and training or investing into digitisation efforts, which has given them new opportunities for outreach and allowed experimentation with new engagement methodologies. In partnership with Al Mawred Al Thaqafi and the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture, two major funding structures in the MENA regions, a programme of unrestricted funding to support the livelihood of Arab artists was launched. Following the explosion in Beirut in 2020, Drosos offered counselling sessions with a trusted Lebanese psychotherapist, which were welcome as an important first measure to deal with trauma affecting the teams. Drosos also launched a grant programme to support cultural institutions in Lebanon. All these measures were made possible thanks to the flexibility of the Foundation and its strong partnerships within the communities it serves. In addition, the resilience and resourcefulness of Drosos' their partners to make difficult decisions and accept cutbacks and tough changes have proved invaluable.

## CLUBTURE

***NGO - Croatia***

https://drosos.org/en/

**Interview with: Domagoj Šavor**

Clubture Network is a non-profit, **inclusive, participatory** network of organisations working on strengthening the independent cultural sector through programme networking, raising public visibility, encouraging organisational development of the sector and strengthening its influence on the institutional framework in which it operates. It consists of 59 organisations (non-governmental and artistic organisations) active in areas of cultural and artistic expression. The main programme activities of the network include: facilitation of direct programme cooperation between independent cultural organisations; strengthening organisations' capacities for programming and organisational management; as well as strengthening their capacities for participation in policy making and advocacy in the cultural field.

The network operates as a **collaborative** platform through which independent cultural organisations **implement collaboration projects**: cultural and artistic public events in different cities in Croatia, g**athering different local audiences**, mostly **young people** and those living in **smaller communities**, often socially and culturally deprived.

The main programme of the network is "Clubture-Hr:", an exchange and cooperation programme, around which the platform was established and has been continuously realised since 2002. The programme is based on direct collaboration among independent cultural organisations (associations, artistic organisations and informal initiatives). The platform helps these organisations exchange content and jointly create and implement new partner projects. The programme is focused on **the long term** support to the **development and decentralisation of culture** and the cultural civic sector through strengthening programme activities of the independent cultural scene. Also, the programme supports the distribution of quality cultural content in different parts of Croatia, for various target groups, primarily youth.

Clubture is therefore a network, providing funding for collaborative projects. It is an extremely open format: any independent organisation based in Croatia can apply, as long as the project is collaborative and fulfils a decentralising objective. The programme is based on a participatory model through which collaboration projects are implemented: at least two/three organisations, one of which is the project leader responsible for its implementation, are part of the application. The partners are supposed to jointly realise at least three public events in at least three different towns or cities in Croatia.

Clubture's calls for exchange and collaboration projects are announced twice a year. The selection of proposed projects for each forthcoming cycle is decided at the Assembly meeting, where all organisations that submitted projects in this particular cycle as well as all member organisations of Clubture Network take part. They all **jointly** evaluate and select projects, which are then implemented every year from March to December, and the organisations which have successfully implemented their projects join the network as regular members. In practice, this means that decisions on the funding are made by the applicants themselves and by those who have already successfully carried out their projects supported by Clubture. The programme promotes and **stimulates solidarity, equal sharing of knowledge, skills and practices, mutual support and capacity building** as well as joint communication with the public and the cultural policy field.

*The programme is based on a participatory model through which collaboration projects are implemented: at least two/three organisations, one of which is the project leader responsible for its implementation, are part of the application.*

## RAWA FUND

***NGO - USA/Palestine***

http://rawafund.org

**Interview with: Fadya Salfiti, Chairwoman of Rawa Advisory Committee**

Rawa is a funding and support model that aims to promote alternative local solutions generated by Palestinian communities. In its initial three-year pilot phase (2019-2021), Rawa's model **entrusted** local people to set **funding priorities** and **allocate resources** to innovative community development projects according to the following rationale: in moments of **political urgency**, grassroots groups are the **first to lead community mobilisation**, but are too often at the **margins of philanthropy**. Rawa brings progressive Palestinian community voices to the international philanthropy table, while working to fix the existing hierarchical funding landscape. Working in (and between) local grassroot activism and international philanthropy, Rawa aims to incite new thinking on how to foster organic, effective, and community-determined resource allocation and social investment.

Rawa operates through four different community cluster members (the Jerusalem Cluster, the Gaza Strip Cluster, the 1948 Cluster and the West Bank Cluster). Cluster members can join Rawa through an open call process. The criteria are simple and straightforward: individuals applying to become part of a cluster must know their own local communities in different sectors, including art and culture. For months, the cluster members work with local communities to identify relevant projects. Together, they elaborate project applications and submit them to an online platform. The application process is easy and accessible, and unlike the majority of funders operating in Palestine, applications in Arabic are encouraged to allow for more inclusiveness and equality. Rawa offers two forms of grants: a small one up to $10,000 and a bigger one up to $40,000. The smaller grant scheme was developed to respond to urgent community problems while the bigger grant scheme targets longer term projects on a bigger scale.

Towards the end of the year, a three-day forum is held to close the grant cycle. With Rawa team and advisory committee members supporting the process, cluster members discuss the grassroots projects they had identified to be considered for Rawa's grants. Out of the projects that were submitted, cluster members collectively choose participatory, creative, interdisciplinary grassroots community development projects.

According to Fadya Salfiti, Rawa has developed a code of ethics and a clear strategy towards funders that contribute to its budget. Rawa does not accept conditional funding as it might jeopardize the integrity of the projects selected. In recent years, Rawa has also invested in attracting unrestricted donations that come from individuals across the globe. The unrestricted funding is important for Rawa to maintain its flexibility, openness and independence from funders' constraints, checklists and agendas. Rawa's future plan is to cover the grants budget by unrestricted funding, while operational costs can be covered by other funders. This way, the grants will always be flexible and inclusive, and the decisions that the cluster members make will not be jeopardized. Rawa also seeks to fund projects that are often excluded from donor's agendas: LGBT-related projects and projects by artists with disabilities.

What makes Rawa also stand out is its **easy and straightforward** reporting process, unlike other funders that have heavy reporting requirements.. Rawa is open to changes in the project it supports, and it does not follow strict log frames and grids. However, when a change is introduced into a project, it is brought back to the community of cluster members who make the final decision.

"Our modality is not perfect, we still struggle as we build it, and we face several challenges: reaching consensus, maintaining the coherence between the cluster members and always looking for unrestricted funding". "We are learning by trial and error but we are convinced that ours is the best way to dismantle present hierarchies and to shift funding paradigms more towards the people" says Fadya Salfiti.

*Rawa brings progressive Palestinian community voices to the international philanthropy table, while working to fix the existing hierarchical funding landscape.*

## 3ARTS

***NGO - USA***

https://3arts.org

**Interview with: Esther Grisham Grimm, Executive Director**

3Arts is a non for-profit organisation that supports Chicago's **women artists, artists of colour, and deaf and disabled artists** who work in the performing, teaching, and visual arts. By providing cash awards, project funding, residency fellowships, professional development, and promotion, 3Arts helps artists **take risks, experiment**, and build momentum in their careers. 3Arts programmes are designed to support artists in **multiple and tiered ways**—through validation, promotion, residencies, project support, and unrestricted cash grants that let them know their risk-taking and determination are deeply valued. This **inclusiveness** is not only represented through 3Arts' beneficiaries but also mainstreamed through 3Arts board, jurors and staff who all come from diverse ethnic and socio-political backgrounds. According to Esther Grisham Grimm, "in an attempt to allow for flexibility recognising that all jury panels are subjective, we favour a conversational approach in our selection process—as opposed to using numerical ranking systems and biased notions of quality." "We support artists throughout their involvement with our organisation, even during the application process, with honoraria provided to each applicant and feedback sessions offered to artists who applied for our award but were not selected."

Every year, ten artists who live and work in the six-county metropolitan area receive unrestricted $30,000 awards in dance, music, teaching arts, theatre, and visual arts. Artists may use the award in any way that makes a difference to their lives and careers, including paying off debt, purchasing equipment, hiring collaborators, producing new work, and saving for the future. 3Arts awardees are selected through a nomination and jury selection processes. 3Arts Residency Fellowships provide artists with uninterrupted time and space to focus on their creative processes within environments and communities that are both restorative and stimulating. 3Arts offers all-expenses-paid fellowships to artists in their network who want a creative sojourn out of town, with $2,000 stipends and airfare. Next Level / Spare Room Awards is a new concept in the grant-making field in which a second award at a higher level is distributed to a past recipient, the 3Arts Next Level/ Spare Room Awards reflect 3Arts belief that once is not enough and that artists thrive with continued investment at critical junctures. 3Arts provides unrestricted cash grants of $50,000 to three women visual artists who are past 3Arts awardees practicing in the Chicago metropolitan area. Make a Wave is an artist-to-artist giving programme that erases the traditional gatekeeper by inviting each of the previous year's 3Arts Award recipients to select another artist to receive a surprise grant from 3Arts—in effect sending a wave through Chicago's cultural core. Crowdfunding with a Match 3AP (3Arts Projects) is a special crowdfunding platform with a built-in match that helps Chicago artists finance new creative work. 3Arts pledges one-third of each project's funding goal, charges no fees to artists, produces the project videos, and provides coaching before, during, and after each campaign.

*3Arts helps artists take risks, experiment, and build momentum in their careers. 3Arts programmes are designed to support artists in multiple and tiered ways...*

## FONDS DARSTELLENDE KÜNSTE

***Public - Germany***

https://www.fonds-daku.de

**Interview with: Steffen Klewar, Programmer**

**Fonds Darstellende Künste**, the Performing Arts Fund is one of the six German federal cultural funds; it has been funding projects in all branches of the performing arts since 1988. In its more than 30 years of funding practice, the Fonds has repeatedly introduced innovative elements in the national funding landscape, so it launched the first multi-year funding in 2009, followed by the first funding not related to production and dedicated to artistic research and conception. It is currently the first funding institution that promotes open-format work processes and works together with federal states and funding institutions on coordinated funding for the performing arts. According to **Steffen Klewar, Fonds Darstellende Künste** offers significant funding for artists on a national level. Based on the state regulation for public funding, there are of course limitations and restrictions that we need to take into account when defining our funding programmes – aiming for the most possible openness and accessibility".

Like the five other federal funding structures for visual arts, literature, music, socio-culture and translations, the Performing Arts Fund has received its annual basic funding since 2016 from the Federal Commissioner for Art and Media. A broad basis for safeguarding the interests of the performing arts is guaranteed by the comprehensive spectrum of the sixteen member clubs, associations and organisations at the federal level. Over 40,000 professional theatre and dance professionals in Germany, 2,200 theatre associations, around 300 independent theatre locations, nationwide visitor organisations and international networks are represented.

The Fund has set itself the goal of **promoting all fields of work and forms** of professional independent theatre and dance in order to do justice to the great importance of this field of art and to make a substantial contribution to the further development of a **diverse theatre, performance and dance landscape in Germany**.

With its new funding programme #TakeHeart, the Fonds Darstellende Künste extends its support measures, in particular with NEUSTART KULTUR – the rescue and future-oriented package for the cultural and media fields financed by the German Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media (BKM). The goal of this new scheme is to ease the impact of COVID-19 in the cultural sphere, to facilitate the restart of cultural life in Germany and to offer planning security and new pioneering perspectives for the development of the independent performing arts.

According to Steffen Klewar, "The pandemic situation not only challenged the independent performing arts scene but the funding bodies as well. More than ever, a hands-on mentality was needed to support the arts scene in the most flexible and thus effective way". "Working extensively with the independent art scene has proved to be efficient during the pandemic as the independent sector showed more flexibility from their end as well and we have come out realising that our future focus should be on basic income schemes for artists".

*The Fund has set itself the goal of promoting all fields of work and forms of professional independent theatre and dance in order to do justice to the great importance of this field of art and to make a substantial contribution to the further development of a diverse theatre, performance and dance landscape in Germany.*

## FONDS DARSTELLENDE KÜNSTE

***Coalition/network - international***

http://artscollaboratory.org

**Interview with: Geerte Wachter and Merel Oord, Programme Manager International Culture and Media, DOEN Foundation (Amsterdam, The Netherlands)**

**Véronique Poverello Kasongo, Programme and Network Manager, Waza Art Center (Lubumbashi, DR Congo)**

**Lina Mejía Álvarez, Director, Platohedro (Medellín, Colombia)**

Arts Collaboratory (AC) is a trans-local coalition consisting of twenty-five diverse organisations spread across five continents. It is focused on **art practices, processes of social change**, and working **with broader communities beyond** the field of art. In Arts Collaboratory's ecosystem, knowledge and strengths are brought together in processes of **collective organisation**. Two funding structures, Doen Foundation and Hivos, initiated the project by selecting a group of 23 organisations from across the globe to form a coalition and by providing them with funding. The aim is to support the growing number of artistic organisations providing alternatives to the often inflexible local arts contexts, and to strengthen the South–South connections between these initiatives. Doen Foundation (one of the funders of the network) is also represented as a member in a joint venture that aims at examining hands-on possibilities of funders paradigm shift. "At Doen we are trying to be less of a traditional funder through this process, to learn and exchange on how to decolonise funding, we are looking into ways to work more horizontally with the eco systems", says **Merel Oord**.

The annual assembly is integral to the way in which AC operates as a translocal organisation in line with its ethical principles. It is the moment in which the organisations gather and live together, share and pool knowledge, address issues and challenges in a mode of collective study, and engage in decision-making processes. An annual assembly is hosted rotationally by the AC's members. Each assembly is embedded in the local context of the organising member. By visiting sites and institutions of the given location, Art Collaboratory members learn how the local ecosystems function. Further, AC invites institutions and artists to collaborate on making the assembly. Assemblies play a critical role as a laboratory for organisations to share knowledge. They provide a space for individual organisations to learn to navigate local dynamics, while also collectively envisioning ways to deal with unfolding challenges in and beyond AC. In addition, AC organises the Banga meetings which are small-scale encounters. Triangles and working groups are another part of AC's work. Since AC's ecosystem requires strong rituals and habits to interiorise and practice the self-managed model, establishing a common rhythm is necessary to keep this process alive. This rhythm is understood as the habit of conversation, studying and working together, and it is formulated through the mechanisms of triangles made up of three AC organisations and working groups that take up the maintenance of the ecosystem.

What makes AC unique are its decision making processes that rely on consensus and extensive dialogues. Everybody is included in the process and all opinions matter; what supports this process of dialogue is the light administrative structure of AC. The network funds its partners through a collective pot where access to funding is equal and transparent to all its members, discussed and distributed in a long process of concertation. All of AC's members have equal access to the money, but only those that need it will use it. In this sense AC supports equity rather than equality. Diversity and inclusiveness are key to AC's work. ACs members come from diverse backgrounds and localities; however, more conversations are needed for AC to be more inclusive and this is recognised as a priority for the near future.

*Everybody is included in the process and all opinions matter; what supports this process of dialogue is the light administrative structure of AC. The network funds its partners through a collective pot where access to funding is equal and transparent to all its members, discussed and distributed in a long process of concertation.*

The six organisations showcased here exhibit strong value systems that foster flexibility, inclusiveness and fairness and that govern their work internally and with their beneficiaries, networks and partners. For the majority, mainstreaming the values that pertain to inclusiveness, flexibility and fairness internally and externally are crucial to strengthening their own ownership, commitment and trust as well as to their constituencies, circles and networks.

Analysing all these very different examples, certain common features emerge, helpful in our search for fair, flexible and inclusive funding.

## A human-first approach

The case studies showcase a keen interest of these six funders in testing human-focused approaches towards grantmaking and career development schemes. Above all, they are interested in supporting the people behind the projects, ensuring the care and dignity they deserve.

In an attempt to promote inclusiveness and advocate for equality, 3Arts places the artist as a human first and then as a professional at the core of its funding process. To reach their potential beneficiaries, they actively look outside the circles of the "usual suspects" who are often showcased in major art houses, museums and theatres. Furthermore, 3Arts are not interested in limiting funding schemes for artists within strict categories such as "emerging artists" or "mid-career artists" but rather seek to approach artists based on the content of their work, without predefined definitions and labels. In addition, even prior to the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak, which motivated discussions about artists' wellbeing, basic income and livelihood, 3Arts adopted a form of "unrestricted support" for artists as a priority. "We do not tell artists what to do with the grants, buy a new computer, pay off debt, put food on the table". This approach of fulfilling artists' basic needs results in more security for artists which enables them to better focus on their work.

Similarly, the main revelation that Fonds darstellende Künst-Germany has observed during the pandemic is very obvious but not yet implemented: German artists would benefit from a basic income. Thus, Fonds is working towards gradually integrating this model in their future funding schemes.

## Concertation and participatory decision-making

All analysed organisations share interest in participatory processes and participatory decision making. Rawa Fund, Arts Collaboratory, Clubture and the Drosos Foundation stand out in this respect as organisations that are heavily invested in collaboration, concertation and joint decision-making. In diverse ways, they all create platforms in which the responsibility for the good conduct of the project is shared, and the evolution of the project is discussed, as in a partnership, or amongst a community.

Arts Collaboratory works within simple yet completely horizontal decision making logic and dialogue processes that are based on consensus between beneficiaries and funders. The annual assembly where all organisations that form the network (including the funders) convene, pool together and share their knowledge, collectively address issues and challenges, and engage in decision-making processes. The assembly is seen as a village square where exchange, active learning, and collaborations among participating organisations are made possible. It is noteworthy that in the context of the interview for this research, Arts Collaboratory engaged in a process of dialogue with its partners to ensure that more than one voice contributed to the study. The interview was held with four different key representatives to allow for multiple voices to be heard.

Similarly, Clubture, as a network-based funding structure, invests in deep and extensive concertation processes where the network members and the organisations that apply for funding jointly decide on which projects will be funded. The entire grantmaking modality is based on the feedback, reflection and finally the voting of the community organisations. This community is open to all actors of the independent sector, as long as they propose decentralising collaboration projects. The participatory approach to decision making extends to all applicants, who are, when applying, invited to participate in the network annual assembly.

The Drosos Foundation also engages in long conversations with its potential "partners": organisations based in the priority regions that develop projects responding to the Foundation's priorities (the terminology is indicative here, as Drosos Foundations uses the word "partner" instead of grantee or beneficiary, in order to underline the specific type of relationship they are building with the organisations they support). These concertations take place while new projects are conceived, as well as during their implementation. The Foundation's staff puts a lot of effort in maintaining the channels of communication and dialogue with and among partner organisations. Although the Foundation does not opt for open calls in the selection of beneficiaries, it actively looks for organisations that are deeply rooted in their communities, that engage with conversations with local artists and act as mediators between Drosos and other potential beneficiaries.

Grassroots initiatives supported by Rawa are selected by local community members who work on the ground and know best what types of projects can strengthen the fabric of society, including artistic and cultural programmes. The members of four community clusters set the funding priorities and manage the oversight of support resources, as they are the most qualified people to do this work. All cluster members meet annually, present their selected projects, defend them and cast their votes on who is awarded the grants.

According to the representatives of the organisations that were interviewed, the participatory approach, although significantly worthwhile, comes with its flows, limitations and challenges. Long and extensive concertation processes are time and resources consuming, while reaching consensus is often not an easy task considering the commitment to diversity that these organisations uphold. Participatory grantmaking does not eliminate the potential for bias and it can be difficult to ensure representativeness of such processes

## Shifting power relations in funding practices

There is an attempt by many organisations at the moment to shift the dominant funding paradigm that puts the funder at one end and the beneficiaries at another, creating a vertical relationship of power between the two. Changing the paradigm is motivated by the need to rethink current funding modalities that generate dependency and leave no space for flexibility and experimentation. Arts Collaboratory and Rawa are the most prominent examples of this rethinking, among the funding structures analysed in this chapter.

Arts Collaboratory is actively investigating the concept of community-oriented funding. Arts Collaboratory was established in 2007 by two Dutch foundations, Doen Foundation and Hivos, as a funding programme and a platform for knowledge sharing. It is not an open platform, in a way that, for example, Clubture is. On the contrary, it is constituted of a group of organisations that, even though acting in very different contexts, share commitment to sustainable and collaborative visual arts practices that contribute to social innovation and building translocal communities. In 2015, the network decided to experiment further with self-governance and mutual accountability. They refocused their structure to base it on transparency and common learning (for example, by insisting on discussing struggles and failures, rather than complying with the usual trajectories of success and evaluation). One of the funders, Doen Foundation, became an equal part of the community, sharing its activities and taking part in discussions. Even though they contribute to the network financially, they share the same rights and responsibilities as the other partners and remain committed to non-hierarchical, decentralised, solidarity principles of the community. They participate in the same learning process as other members of AC.

As for the other funder, Hivos, they remain observers for the moment, although they might be included in the network at a later stage.

According to Rawa, "shifting power takes time and requires flexibility, courage, a commitment to learning, and an openness to mistakes". Rawa's founders are personally motivated to experiment with a different distribution of power through their own experience of working with major funders, especially in the fields of culture and social development. According to Rawa, top-down grantmaking can be efficient – a few people at the top make decisions, while others follow, with a limited communication and information flow. However, they strongly prefer bottom-up processes that question and disturb power relations. Participatory grantmaking is one tool that can inspire and provoke the shift of power. Participatory funds are incubators and advocates for transformative resourcing—for the equitable redistribution of wealth and building of resilient, regenerative solidarity economies and support networks.

Experimenting with a different distribution of power can be somewhat easier for philanthropic organisations and private funders that are less bound by rigid administrative frameworks. Fonds darstellende Künst works with significantly larger financial resources than any other organisations showcased in this section, and the impact of its work on artists and art organisations is very important - this makes any experimentation all the more complex. Administrative restrictions can stand in the way of more inclusive modalities and could create potential obstacles to maintaining a balanced funders / beneficiaries relationship. Fonds darstellende Künst is always working within the system, exploring possibilities to inspire change from within. In its investigation on basic income for artists, it explores the same notion of shifting the power, in this case by empowering artists to decide on how they would want to use the funds. The commitment of the Fonds to this practice is a proof of the capacity of public funders to engage with more experimental practices.

## Arts and Culture within broader disciplines and practices

Of the six organisations showcased in this section, most support art and cultural projects within a broader mandate that allows them to engage with projects that reach out to other sectors.

This is the case with the Rawa Fund as its funding model encourages projects that are cross-sector and draw from and/or generate local resources (including capital). The wide diversity of the cluster members and the projects supported allow for better positioning of the artistic sector within a broader local development agenda.

The Drosos Foundation, on the other hand, operates within two thematic priorities that give visibility and support to each other. In addition to supporting creative skills, the Foundation supports children and young adults in their individual development to achieve economic independence. This multi-sector approach places the arts within a broader framework of beneficiaries and partners that is worth investigating further.

# RECOMMEN-DATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This section brings stories of six different funding bodies and intermediary cultural organisations practicing alternative, positive funding models.

In order to better understand and compare these organisations' missions, activities, methods and ambitions, we conducted interviews with their representatives. The modalities through which these funders operate were further investigated through complimentary desk research. These organisations were recommended - amongst many others - as examples of inspiring funding models and practices by the respondents of the survey.

The section below describes these organisations' mission and main programmes, and it sheds light on how the values of inclusiveness, flexibility and fairness are manifested in their work.

Many funding programmes, schemes, initiatives and institutions strive to be fair, flexible and inclusive. Their role is crucial in creating a fertile ground for an arts scene that can experiment its artistic and social roles in ways that are more in tune with how both arts and society are evolving. Some of them were mentioned briefly, or analysed more in-depth in this research (and there are many more out there).

From the conversations, ideas and opinions gathered in this research, we have identified some possible pathways for funding organisations, in different contexts, to pursue if they aspire to design a truly relevant funding scheme - both for the art field and broader societies:

## Restructure relations between funders and funded

The relation between funders and beneficiaries are burdened with power dynamics. More often than not, one side holds the decision making power and is capable of determining the very existence of a project, organisation or artistic career. In these circumstances, it is very hard to imagine working collaboratively, on an equal footing, towards a common goal. To create the conditions to jointly work towards a shared objective and release the tension of the power dynamic, funders are best placed to position themselves in a different kind of relation: a partnership, based on trust, where power and responsibility are shared for the benefit of the artistic work and its social impact. Some organisations mentioned in this publication show examples of a different relationship with the beneficiaries: they join the process of project development early on in the process, not to direct it, but rather to discuss and support it, as a partner does. In those structures, the subsidy is the result of a close relationship between the funder and the beneficiary, where the financial support is just one piece of a puzzle, coming logically from continuous discussions inscribed in a joint long-term vision. For some funders, this approach might be too complex, as it requires additional resources, including time and finances, put in maintaining the long term relations. This restructuring of relations might also happen on a smaller scale, with continuously reaffirmed personal commitment of the funders and trust-based relations (regular communication on the evolution of the project, presence at its implementation, flexibility in the administrative framework with a focus on the project's objective, etc.).

## Identify blind spots and propose financial solutions

In the development of arts projects, some phases in the process seem to be under the radar and outside the scope of the funders. The research that leads to the project, the phase of conceptualising and development are often overlooked, although they are crucial for artistic work. Structural funding seems to be an overwhelmingly important issue, with a great number of art workers being unable to access resources that would secure the basic needs of the organisation.

Even with many funders adopting inclusive practices, there are still various artists and art workers that are excluded or less represented in arts funding because of the nature of their practice or because of their background or abilities.

Identifying the blind spots is necessary to propose adequate financial solutions for developing each phase of the project, as well as the core funding that enables the organisations to exist. Continuously seeking artists and art workers whose practice falls outside of the scope of the funders and imagining ways to make funding more accessible to them is key to funding that is more inclusive and more fair.

## Coordination between funders

From the perspective of the beneficiaries, the diversity of methods, procedures and tools between different funding structures adds to the complexity of the already extremely time- and resource-consuming process of fundraising. The application procedures, forms, deadlines, even the jargon used are all specific to each funder and little thought is given to the fact that beneficiaries that work in the same context often have to go through multiple funding applications in order to secure funding for their project.

More information exchange and coordination between funders in a shared context might lead to building common calendars of application deadlines, adopting common application, assessment and evaluation processes, mainstreaming the jargon and mutualising resources that can relieve some stress off the applicants. Instead of having to adjust and rewrite their projects to suit the jargon and processes of each funder, it might allow applicants to dedicate more time to the preparation and realisation of the project.

Beside this, regular communication between funders is also beneficial to their organisations: through peer to peer learning and exchange, more knowledge is built on examples of inspiring practice and opportunities created for collaboration between funding structures.

## Include artists and art workers in funding schemes

Many voices mentioned throughout this paper call for a more active presence of artists and art workers in the funding structures. This would bring an in-depth knowledge on the specific artistic practices, the state of affairs of a particular arts scene, shed more light on the actual experience of precarity and insecurity of artists' experience and demystify funding processes and methods. It creates ground for building more trust and understanding between funders and artists and art workers, which is key to transforming these power-infused relations into alliances and true partnerships. Artists and art workers can be included in various phases of the funding cycle: in devising programmes, in the assessments, in decision-making processes, in the evaluation, etc.

## Refocus assessment on the content

The assessment of the funding application is often a complex process that carries various levels of subjectivity. A recurring criticism is on the fact that in some cases, the assessment concentrates less on the quality of the idea and more on the capacity to present the idea in a format that is adequate for the particular funder. To recenter the assessment of the applications on the essence of the project / initiative would mean to set aside considerations of form, jargon or meeting bureaucratic requirements, and put most efforts on understanding the quality of the idea. This requires adjusting assessment procedures and tools, refocusing the criteria and priorities of the juries and integrating closer communication with the applicant within the assessment process. Including people from the field in the assessment process can bring this deeper understanding of the essence, potential impact and quality of the project.

This also requires opening the possibility to apply in a variety of formats and methods (video, sound recordings…), adapted to the specific skills, needs or resources of the artists or the nature of the project.

## Encourage cooperation, rather than competition

Repeatedly in the course of the research, respondents called for establishing a more collaborative working environment. Funders have a crucial role to play in this: most of the time, beside a few notable examples of experimentation with alternative funding practices, they support projects by means of open calls where art workers compete with one another. Although open calls have a great potential in reaching out to the largest and most diverse groups of arts professionals, in some situations, they are also highly competitive, which can discourage cooperation and put additional burden on teams and projects. In participatory decision-making, there is still competition for a limited pool of resources, but because the decision and the responsibility is shared between applicants/beneficiaries, collaboration becomes a fundamental part of the process. In an effort to be non-discriminatory, open calls often apply unified guidelines and rules for all. Developing models that provide collaborative platforms for underrepresented artistic disciplines, practices and communities to act on a more equal ground, can create a more inclusive and fair funding environment. Experimenting with alternative assessment models, including elements of participatory decision-making in the grant-giving processes, providing frameworks of professional support and assistance to those that are less skilled or equiped are all possible solutions that would encourage collaboration, would greatly relieve the stress of a highly competitive environment where many are competing for, most of the time, very scarce resources.

## Support experimentation

Researching and experimentation are essential to the artistic process. It is necessary to leave the space of freedom to the creative process to test ideas, including and embracing the possibility of failure. Experimentation is also imperative as a means to question the notion of quality that is often dominating the funding principles. Extending the boundaries of what artistic work can do, testing different ways of making, distributing and accessing art can only happen when funders embrace experimentation - and potential failure - as a crucial phase of the artistic process. And yet, for artists and art workers, these are increasingly difficult to fund, as funders require more and more detailed information on the expected results and outcomes of the artistic research.

These spaces of freedom without the burden of having to produce results, can only be created by dedicated funding to this particular part of the process, and making it more flexible and open than a regular project-based funding. If imagined as complementary to other more classical funding sources, these schemes can be a true driving force for creativity.

## Feed funders' knowledge of artistic work

Creative processes can vary tremendously depending on the artistic focus and interests, organisational structures, production processes, even the personality of the artist. Truly relevant funding is able to take these specificities in consideration when assessing the project and devising the most appropriate ways to support it. Funders need platforms and resources to better understand the artistic work and artistic processes and be able to react accordingly. This may include a variety of strategies, from inviting artists to take part in some of the phases of funders' work, through continuous personal contact with artists, to making sure that all staff follows and discusses artistic work.

The arts sector has been increasingly concerned with adjusting its ways of working to the evolution of the artistic practices and of the economic, social, ecologic and political context that it is grounded in. More and more, artists develop their work in ways that blur borders between countries, artistic disciplines and traditionally assigned roles. They test different hierarchies and organisation structures and innovate collaborative practices. As society gets more acutely aware of some of the injustices it has been perpetuating, the arts sector is also more concerned with "walking the walk", upgrading its own models to better fit the values of fairness and inclusiveness it promotes.

In this necessary transformation, the funders' role is crucial, as they can be the driving force and give impetus to many others to reflect and implement their own transformation.

Many arts funders have proven, in the past years and months of the Covid-19 pandemic, how a swift reaction towards more flexibility can be beneficial to preserving the sector in times of crisis. Building on that experience, the next step is to consider how to effectively infuse fairness, flexibility and inclusiveness in all phases of the funding process.

Devising a relevant arts funding programme today requires considering how to make it flexible, fair and inclusive. This is not a simple process, it presupposes an excellent knowledge on the artistic, economic and social context; it also necessitates successfully navigating the sometimes contradictory priorities and needs in the sector, and finding one's own method of responding to the multiple tensions.

In the extremely rich and diverse funding landscape, there are examples of funding structures that have been creating and adapting schemes and testing funding principles that put fairness, flexibility and inclusiveness at the heart of their activities.

This publication hopefully gave some indications on where to start in this thrilling process that many arts funders are embarking upon.

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