

Issue number: 18

Issue: Structure VRS Creativity OR How to get your organization well structured and open-minded and creative

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Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

Starting point

Artists need space for creativity – artistic and cultural organizations need more or less structure to make projects happen. How can you bring these contradictions together?

Discussion – remarks

- Preliminary remark by a choreographer: as an artist, you need to have some structures and processes in order not to lose energy and money for organizational tasks. But of course, these structures must not become more important than the artistic project.
- Second preliminary remark: We should change the name of the topic into “creativity via structures”.
- Not all artistic projects are equal: there is, on a structural level, a big difference between a company, a festival and an arts space. But the challenge to find the right balance between structure and creative chaos is important in all those different structures.
- Artistic structures should serve artists: they should be able to adapt to the artists needs, and not force artists to adapt to their structures. While everyone can easily agree on this, the reality is more complex.
- We recognize that employees of artistic organizations have, as everyone, a need of a certain security, rules, structure, while the artistic project needs collaborators that are as flexible as possible. We agree that a horizontal hierarchy with much delegation of responsibilities is more adapted than a vertical organization to obtain a flexible structure - but this means a high level of management skills, while we all think that the management knowledge in the sector is rather poor. Also, we ask our collaborators to be flexible to meet the artists requests, but we recognize that we not always provide enough man-power to support that flexibility – which leaves often to frustrations, difficult private lives (...) and burn-outs.

- Often, administrative procedures are complex to be able to answer all request of founders – however, some people discovered that by explaining to founders the artistic process, these rules can be adapted.
- Not only the way we work and structure our organizations should be creative – it is also crucial that projects are regularly renewed. The Berlin-participants replied to that remark that it is also important that projects get the chance to establish themselves.
- We agreed that structures should be flexible, but we agreed also that no structure is not a solution neither. While the absence of a secure structure properly founded is for some people a motivation to keep awake, fresh and creative, for others this absence will be seen as a threat.
- Organizations should not grow old with their directors... On the other side, it is important to keep knowledge. It is important to find, in a global landscape as well as in individual organizations, a balance between renewing and continuity.
- An interesting historical remark reminds us that, before the roman empire, countries were run like some of the artistic organizations today: If they had a good king, the country was well organized and flourishing. When the good king died, the country came in trouble or even disappeared. The romans tried to stabilize this, and their way was a standardization of processes and structures. This risk of standardization exists also today in the artistic scene.

Proposals

There seems to be a need to deepen this reflection in the cultural sector. We thought one recommendation and two actions that could be launched to do so:

- A recommendation for workers in the artistic sector and directors of organizations: In order to obtain a balance between a certain security and freshness, it can be interesting to have one fix job and, from time to time and for a short time, switch to another job in a new environment. Organisations should encourage such time-outs of their employees.
- Action 1: It could be interesting to develop a job-switching for several months between members of IETM. There might be a local experience between Brussels organization in the coming months, which might be inspiring.
- Action 2: There is a real need for “senior” arts-managers of a space to develop experience and talk about structural problems in their organisations. A group of maximum ten people should meet for 2 days twice a year to exchange experience and discuss concrete challenges they meet in their daily professional life. IETM, VTI, ONDA or British Council could be bodies that could help organising such a project.

Roger Christmann

