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ON
THE
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REPORT: Mobilities Europe/World 2nd session - 12 May 2022

Artistic mobility and environmental sustainability: which way are we going?

The Cité internationale des arts and On the Move have once again joined forces to create a time for exchange and reflection on the issues of mobility and creation.

After a first session on Europe / World mobility, which took place on 28 March during the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2022, and which had a focus on residencies, mobility and professional development, a second public conversation was organised in collaboration with The Green Room, this time focusing on the relationship between artistic mobility and environmental sustainability.

Around 40 participants were present in the Cité internationale des arts' Auditorium space, and the meeting was also followed online. The two round tables were moderated by Dea Vidović, Director of Kultura Nova Foundation in Croatia.

Programme and bios: <https://www.citedesartsparis.net/en/mobilities-europe-the-world-artistic-mobility-and-environmental-sustainability-cite-on-the-move>

The context and its possibilities

Speakers:

→ Selim Ben Safia, choreographer, Tunisia (representative of the 'Manifesto for the mobility of artists and culture professionals in the Mediterranean and worldwide' initiated by the Roberto Cimetta Fund).

→ Annabel Guérédrat, choreographer, dancer, performer, researcher, 'bruja' and co-founder of the International Festival of Performance Art @FIAP Martinique; former artist-in-residence at Cité internationale des arts.

→ Mutaz Abdulrahman, project leader of the Guan Eden project at Goethe-Institut Irak.

→ Karolina Juzwa, Coordinator of the Wytwórnia Foundation, manager of the Wytwórnia venue in Łódź, and co-leader of the European Project Footprints, Poland.

Faced with the urgency and importance of environmental sustainability, and in a context where mobility is an inherent part of artistic creation, the first discussion explored different practices and realities through examples emerging from national contexts. The aim was to underline the importance of making different European and international voices and experiments heard, but also to look at power relations, obstacles and inequalities that cultural actors have to face.

Mobility as a survival tool

The speakers emphasised that, for most artists, mobility is not a choice but a necessity if they are to make a living from their art. It is also a fundamental right, defended in particular by the 'Manifesto for the mobility of artists and culture professionals in the Mediterranean and worldwide', initiated and coordinated by the Roberto Cimetta Fund. In an island territory as small as Martinique, the possibilities for artistic distribution and dissemination are very limited, which makes it necessary to explore other territories.

In a post-Covid context, this need is particularly marked for musicians for whom international development is an essential lever, especially for young artists supported by the International Jazz Platform in Poland. In Tunisia, Al Badil is helping to find solutions for cultural mobility, while contributing to the development of the local artistic ecosystem. In Iraq, where the infrastructure has been destroyed by the war and the security situation remains very complicated, the issue of local

development and internal mobility within the country embodies the primary mission of the Goethe-Institut Irak.

International arrangements and infrastructures also strongly influence artistic and cultural mobility practices. For example, in the Tunisian context, the government does not provide the necessary support for artistic development.

The availability of international funding therefore makes it easier to work with European structures and actors than with those from neighbouring countries. Mobility is also prevented by the colonial and post-colonial context. For an artist from Martinique, it is very difficult to move within the Caribbean space, either because the island has not yet developed relations with the other English- and Spanish-speaking islands, or because one 'has to go through Paris to get to Haiti'. Conversely, when an airline company set up flights from Martinique to New York, a large number of collaborations sprang up with North American artists.

Decentralising

When it comes to making the arts accessible, there is a need to train and perform outside of capital cities, city centres, and national institutions. In a context of international cultural cooperation such as the one led by the Goethe-Institut, local organisations are key actors that need to be consulted in order to understand the specificities of their different contexts and to propose relevant projects and practices, and not just apply the European 'model'.

In Martinique, the Scène Nationale centralises creation, and local institutions don't have the capacity to absorb all local artists, who often choose to migrate to the United States, Canada or France. However, getting out of the institutions and meeting the public remains difficult – as is also the case in Tunisia or Iraq, where public spaces are difficult to access due to the political situation. The importance of working with regional actors to implement more sustainable practices is also highlighted in the music sector, but achieving this remains complicated due to the constant competition and lack of cooperation and networking between promoters.

Focus on residencies, exhibitions and projects: challenges for mobility and non-mobility

Speakers:

→ Christophe Gay, co-director of the Forum Vies Mobiles, France.

→ Elena Mazzi, artist, Italy.

→ Alona Karavai, co-founder of the residency house Khata-Maysternya, of the gallery Asortymentna kimnata, and of the agency for art projects proto produkciia, Ukraine.

→ Alice Bonnot, founder and director of villa villa, Portugal / United Kingdom.

This second discussion offered a reflection on how exhibitions and residencies can, through their contents and format, bring new perspectives to environmental and climate issues. How to consider mobility as the core of artistic practice while integrating these issues into contexts where there is no mobility or (en)forced mobility?

Dependence on mobility

Mobility is a source of freedom but is one of the main causes of the climate problem we face. It risks becoming a source of alienation, and important work must be done with researchers and policymakers to make mobility more sustainable and desirable. This is the focus of Le Forum Vies Mobiles ('Mobility Lives Forum') and its exhibition The Lives We Lead, which works in collaboration with visual artists to help us understand current realities, get off the beaten track, and imagine a more sustainable future.

The dependence on fossil fuels and the dependence on our current system for producing exhibitions is also a concern for curators and artists who are rethinking their ways of moving and creating. For example, during the preparation of the exhibition Chasseurs de Tempêtes ('Storm Hunters') organised in France and Madeira as part of the France-Portugal season, the artists and curator worked online, and had to adapt the dates of the exhibition, and work with a longer preparation phase, in order to travel and transport the artworks by sailboat according to local weather patterns. Mobility can also become an integral part of the artistic process, or artists themselves can be involved in the creation of an itinerant residency, as has been the case with various projects run by HIAP (Helsinki International Artist Programme) in Finland.

Impossible Mobilities

In Ukraine, residencies are being organised for artists who are currently facing the constraints of forced immobility or forced mobility within the country. This is the case for the arts agency *proto produkciia*, which also works around the mobility of works of art – evacuating and protecting them, but also bringing them back to Kyiv.

Whereas before the war most artists participated in residencies without necessarily having a tangible result in mind, artists now seem to be producing more, as a survival tool in response to that which is being destroyed daily.

The agency's coordinator points out that, paradoxically, the war has had some positive impact on the environment, with people cycling a lot and the use of energy and electricity being greatly reduced. The long-term consequences, however, will be disastrous, particularly for the state of the soil, and this is beginning to be felt with the abandonment of waste separation infrastructures. Ukraine used to have a decentralised, horizontal infrastructure system, which is no longer in operation due to the lack of manpower and the insecurity of the areas where key facilities are located.

Sustainable / unsustainable

The reality of many mobility activities is that they are short-lived and not well remunerated, which makes them unsustainable in both human and environmental terms. Practitioners defend the right to refuse a project or a mobility opportunity if they do not find it meaningful, outside of financial necessity. In the context of residencies, it is interesting for artists to be able to establish longer and deeper links with residencies, to work with them over several years and several projects, rather than only going once.

Recommendations:

- 'One hand does not clap': artists and cultural operators need to work together to share knowledge, skills and practices, but also to coordinate dates and programming;
- Support the possibility to perform outside of institutions (in markets, natural spaces, public spaces, etc.) in order to make art and artists more accessible;
- 'To slow down does not mean to collapse': rethink the balance between breadth and depth, take the time to meet and discover a territory, host over a long period of time, and connect foreign projects to the local, especially through residencies;
- Carry out studies, research and experimentation with a view to systemic change;
- Establish a code of ethics for residencies (e.g. to welcome women artists with their children);
- Have more radical practices, turning problems into solutions;
- Support projects to develop and take root locally, while maintaining a connection to the international community;
- Give value to activities that are not only about creation.

Summary prepared by Gwendolenn Sharp, The Green Room

Edited by John Ellingsworth, On the Move

Resources- Shared projects / initiatives:

- **Footprints, European project on sustainability and the music sector in Europe:**
<https://footprints-europe.com>
- **Project Archipel that links Québec, the City of Nantes and Tunisia:**
<https://www.dansepartout.org/archipel>
- **European mobility funding scheme that addresses the question of sustainability:**
<https://www.i-portunus.eu>
- **Réseau ARMODO - les Arts en Mode Doux:** <https://framalistes.org/sympa/info/itinerance-modesdoux>
- **Arts and climate change / focus on visual arts:** <https://galleryclimatecoalition.org>
- **HIAP long distance residency :** <https://www.hiap.fi/open-call/open-call-connecting-points-long-distance-land-based-trans-siberian-railway-trip>
- **Forum Vies Mobiles / Les Vies qu'on mène :**
<https://forumviesmobiles.org/evenements/15454/les-vies-quon-mene>
- **GALA – Green Art Lab Alliance Network:** <https://greenartlaballiance.com>
- **Resources on The Green Room:** <https://www.thegreenroom.fr/en/resources>
- **Resources on environmental sustainability on On the Move's website:** <https://on-the-move.org/topics/environment-sustainability?f%5B0%5D=type%3Alibrary>
- **GALA funding guide:** <https://on-the-move.org/resources/funding/gala-funding-guide-arts-and-culture-projects-related-environmental-sustainability>
- **Cultural Mobility Forum focused on Digital Mobility – Online recording focusing on digital environmental sustainability:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ok9py-EnRdk>