



Arts Festivals Summit 2024 Usedom

Denis de Rougemont Labs: Connecting the dots

14 May 2024, 15.15 - 16.15 PM, Peenemünde Museum

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Introduction

Under the motto "The art of awareness, caring and connectivity", the Arts Festivals Summit gathered 230 festival makers and festival stakeholders to collectively think about and experience the purpose of the arts and arts festivals from 12 to 15 May 2024 on the island of Usedom, hosted by the Usedom Music Festival.

Iliana Ivanova, European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth recognised in a digital statement the importance of identity, community building and openness that festivals bring to our lives and that festivals are at the heart of Europe's peace project: "*[Festivals] are woven into the very fabric of Europe's cultural and creative heritage. Freedom is something we must not take for granted, and is always something worth fighting for*" she said (watch the video message here).

The Denis de Rougemont Laboratories (DdR Labs) – named after the founder of the European Festivals Association (EFA), Denis de Rougemont (1906-1985) was one of the fathers of Europe and ardent defender of peace – was an important session to go deeper into several topics and discuss the responsibility of festivals, the arts, and Europe to contribute to the well-being and living conditions of our societies. For three hours, ten groups of 20-25 people shared personal experiences and in-depth reflections with experts on several topics and questions such as: Can the arts save Europe?; Responsible consumption and production; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI); Artificial Intelligence; Experimenting democracy; Festivals and money; etc.

Every public authority, civil society organisation, and human being should take care of improving the quality of life of each individual in the society, and look after the planet. At EFA, we are convinced that the arts, bringing artists' ideas and people together across borders positively contribute to personal, organisational and systemic well-being and health. The DdR Labs aimed to understand where the arts



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can make a powerful contribution to our living conditions, to dream up future projects and see what festival makers need from the sector, EFA, and the politics in order to build a better life and world together.

Connecting the dots

The DDR Labs concluded in a plenary session during which each group summarised the main points, commitments, and needs that have been discussed around their topic. Here are the main takeaways of this moment serving to connect the dots between the different groups.

- Arts and arts festivals are great platforms to open minds but the sector is too often working with restricted resources, limited personal capacities, obsolete infrastructures, etc. This reality shouldn't become a burden.
- Change needs time. Festival makers should be humble, kind towards themselves, and resilient, and use this open-mindedness as a means to enhance their own wellbeing.
- Acknowledge a festival is one drop in the ocean, and that all changes don't rest on the shoulders of festival directors. Small gestures can have big impacts, that become even greater through the power of networks such as EFA.
- It's important to question knowledge, assumptions, practices, power structures, privileges: festival makers should have a look at themselves first, the artists and partners they collaborate with, the audiences and those the festivals are trying to reach and impact, the funders and sponsors. What are the power structures existing? What metrics are we using to measure our success? Who has set them and why do we follow them? What does that say about our values?
- Experimentation is an essential tool for critical thinking, to constantly question how, why, where and with whom we do what. Emerging artists can play a role in this process.
- Bring attention to underrepresentation in all its forms through collaborations, creating a sense of belonging
- Connections should be genuine and not just a list of boxes to check. This underlies that people want to get to know one another, knowing oneself, being honest about one's purposes, why we are reaching out to partners.
- Paying attention to not create new silos of exclusion in the process of breaking down older ones.
- Nothing exists on its own, all is connected. Connections are crucial on all levels - global to local and local to global – in order to share, collaborate, and exchange (data, knowledge, experiences, frustrations). We don't need to re-invent the wheel.
- The circle of festivals: Festivals are platforms of reflection of what happens or could happen in society in the future. Festivals change people, therefore people change their festival themes, which further has an effect on the whole community and discussed present topics.
- Start thinking about this circle in its widest sense in participatory processes from the moments of encounter within the festival staff, in the festival's programme, in the festival's relationship to the planet, and so on.

By Stephanie Bonnici, Audrey Brisack and Simon Mundy

You can read the conclusions of each group here below and [find more detailed notes on each topic here](#).



Conclusions

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| Group 1: "Nothing is ok" (Rene Pollesh) with Jurriaan Cooman, Culturescapes | |
| 1. How do we (arts, festivals, cities, EU) <u>contribute</u> to create better living conditions (world and the people)? What is our value? What is our potential? What is the next step in my world/work? | |
| Conclusion 1: | Transformations... Growth Vs. Collapse |
| Conclusion 2: | Giving the power back to the people and let them define art themselves and being part of decision making. |
| Conclusion 3: | Creating new currencies for art like "empathy, equity, time, listeners, attention, breaking walls, accessibility, consistency, inclusion". |
| 2. What do we <u>need</u> (from us, from politics, from the world) in order for | |
| a. me/my organisation to perform 'better'/more happy/healthy/efficient? | |
| b. for the sector to have a greater impact (funding, advocacy...)? | |
| Conclusion 1: | More reflections, honesty, generosity, time, appreciation |
| Conclusion 2: | Instruction within institutions needs to be willing to change |
| Conclusion 3: | NOTHING IS OKAY (WE ARE PRETTY F***ED) |
| The workshop's title is "NOTHING IS OKAY" and this question is NOT OKAY | |

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| Group 2: Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI): is it a mission-critical competence? with Ceyda Berk-Söderblom, MiklagårdArts | |
| 1. How do we (arts, festivals, cities, EU) <u>contribute</u> to create better living conditions (world and the people)? What is our value? What is our potential? What is the next step in my world/work? | |
| Conclusion 1: | DEI is viewed inter-sectionally, it is about representation & knowledge about structural discrimination, racism & privilege. There is a difference between equality and equity. Organisational level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define your mission (research your mission) • Stakeholders analyses, who is your audience and why • Think in terms of strategy • What are your strategic and operational goals, long-term vs short-term • The entire team needs to be motivated • Working with the audience, audience engagement • Collaborating with education • Practical topics on recruitment, team care, team preparations • Empower through flexibility: every step is an important step forward. Be ambitious within your reality • Anonymous recruiting • Intrinsic motivation for change and DEI |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beware of tokenism • Money for accessible buildings |
| Conclusion 2: | EFA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is EFA perceived by other organisations? • Organise an external coaches team as critical friends • Financial inclusion / accessibility (financial accommodations) for members, board, etc. |
| Conclusion 3: | FESTIVALS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More knowledge of organisational institutional context • Awareness on the power of language • Training young audience • Roadmap (short-term & long-term) • Audience development • Education • Acknowledgment |
| 2. What do we <u>need</u> (from us, from politics, from the world) in order for <ol style="list-style-type: none"> me/my organisation to perform 'better'/more happy/healthy/efficient? for the sector to have a greater impact (funding, advocacy...)? | |
| Conclusion 1: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open-source knowledge: sharing failure and success tools • Training festival managers to be aware • Exchange of values through networking, dialogues and connections • Artists in residency programmes at festivals |
| Conclusion 2: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political demand for resources (time, money...) • Funding for two way, trans-structural exchange |
| Conclusion 3: | Quota |

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| Group 3: The geographic gap: presentation of talents from East-West with Milica Popovic, Cultural Centre "Nikola Djurkovic" Kotor | |
| 1. How do we (arts, festivals, cities, EU) <u>contribute</u> to create better living conditions (world and the people)? What is our value? What is our potential? What is the next step in my world/work? | |
| Conclusion 1: | Erase divisions and promote & enable diversity/inclusivity through connection and collaboration |
| Conclusion 2: | Highlight under-represented topics through our programming and curational decisions |
| Conclusion 3: | Making people (local communities) matter and create a sense of belonging, creating community |
| 2. What do we <u>need</u> (from us, from politics, from the world) in order for <ol style="list-style-type: none"> me/my organisation to perform 'better'/more happy/healthy/efficient? for the sector to have a greater impact (funding, advocacy...)? | |



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| Conclusion 1: | Better need-based funding options – grant opportunities outside-of-the-box, involvement of more people (from diverse backgrounds) in the development and processing of grants, redefine the conditions |
| Conclusion 2: | Make EU-funding better: Facilitate or “force” East-West collaborative projects |
| Conclusion 3: | More LOVE. Open your eyes and start to really care for each other |

Group 4: Taking a chance on emerging artists with Donika Rudi Berishaj, EFFE, and Mirna Gott, Music Biennale Zagreb

1. How do we (arts, festivals, cities, EU) contribute to create better living conditions (world and the people)? What is our value? What is our potential? What is the next step in my world/work?

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| Conclusion 1: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ARTISTS visibility → education in self-management |
| Conclusion 2: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FESTIVALS → bringing diversity / changing perception → emotional connection arts / audiences places to come together → creativity bridges |
| Conclusion 3: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • REGIONS → different approach throughout education → politicians look at short term |

2. What do we need (from us, from politics, from the world) in order for
a. me/my organisation to perform ‘better’/more happy/healthy/efficient?
b. for the sector to have a greater impact (funding, advocacy...)?

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| Conclusion 1: | Resources (facilities, instruments, infrastructures) |
| Conclusion 2: | TRUST - mediation politics / arts |
| Conclusion 3: | TIME + Support to build / create long term |

Group 5: Can the arts save Europe? with Eric Corijn, Cultural philosopher, social scientist, professor

1. How do we (arts, festivals, cities, EU) contribute to create better living conditions (world and the people)? What is our value? What is our potential? What is the next step in my world/work?

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| Conclusion: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Challenge: coping with diversity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ International networking ○ Increase accessibility: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disabled ▪ Free tickets ▪ Refugees and newcomers ▪ Subtitles and multilingualism - Improve the programme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Co-production: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outsource a part of the programme to someone else: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Youth ➢ Artists from different backgrounds ○ Broadening our own categories |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Interaction with audiences ○ Changing spaces: other venues, public space and temporary uses |
| 2. What do we need (from us, from politics, from the world) in order for a. me/my organisation to perform 'better'/more happy/healthy/efficient? b. for the sector to have a greater impact (funding, advocacy...)? | |
| Conclusion 1: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Insist more on human rights and cultural rights in the framework of democracy - Associations such as EFA need to advocate for culture as a common public good that needs to be present in our teams and in the programmes and this needs to be reflected in the member states. It cannot be just a theoretical right. - Get involved in Mondiacult and connect with global processes that then comes back to the local communities. Amplifying the voice of festivals. |
| Conclusion 2: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contact other networks to collaborate and put goals together - E.g. Explore the challenges of diversity and look for solutions on how to navigate them |
| Conclusion 3: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Document existing data: give analysis of the data of these challenges - Never underestimate the power of arts |

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| Group 6: Making Sense? / Festivals and Well-being with Rarița Zbranca, Cluj Cultural Centre, and Mahir Namur, Existential Coach, Lecturer and Trainer | |
| 1. How do we (arts, festivals, cities, EU) contribute to create better living conditions (world and the people)? What is our value? What is our potential? What is the next step in my world/work? | |
| Conclusion 1: | <p>Well-being and meaning. How do we as festivals, cultural actors view well-being and find meaning in what we do and our festival. This includes the intercultural aspect of it, how we find purpose that in turn enhances our well-being, the individual well-being which requires connection (connection with ourselves, spiritual, physical... our embodiment with arts and in relation also with our audience).</p> <p>Individual well-being is not only about feeling well, but to be resilient towards the difficulties in our context and the world.</p> <p>We also brought the point of how systems are imposing on us in limited time, the need for increasing the numbers and counting.</p> |
| Conclusion 2: | <p>The arts have the power to make shifts in our perspectives, towards audience, funders, stakeholders.</p> <p>The impact of what we do to our team, the acts (small or otherwise) of what we can do to enhance well-being, in relation to time, human and financial resources. How do we make it more sustainable, through time and resource management, especially human resources, while still accomplishing the results we seek.</p> |
| Conclusion 3: | <p>To have well-being, is not only to be connected to oneself and environment, but to be connected to the world and the planet we work in. We are depending on money value and not on other values that we offer, take and share. The purpose, the communal celebrations, hope, temporal space for community.</p> |



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| <p>2. What do we need (from us, from politics, from the world) in order for</p> <p>a. me/my organisation to perform ‘better’/more happy/healthy/efficient?</p> <p>b. for the sector to have a greater impact (funding, advocacy...)?</p> | |
| Conclusion 1: | <p>From value to values: The need to change or better yet enhance the evaluation systems in the sense of how we convey values, we are so getting used to the quantity of reach, the financial value and the numerical but instead we need to give attention to the quality by asking for example how it’s impacting, how is art and our festivals are moving people, making a change? So, to change the dynamic of how we convey our values in a new collective narrative (not only to our funders, but also to our audiences) because we’re also talking about the narrative of conveying the quality of togetherness. And how can the artist play a role in creatively changing this dynamic.</p> <p>We can also say that festivals are creators of narratives, in the sense of being safe spaces and key moments for cultural discoveries. The necessity of safe spaces being there and how we will and must provide them when we are able to do so. Without these safe spaces, we lack well-being (us and the audience). through which we acknowledge that a good life is possible. This also brings the acknowledgment into the crafting of the festivals.</p> |
| Conclusion 2: | <p>Rethinking time: Time operates at different levels, even audiences have different perspectives... interruptions of the everyday.</p> <p>Festivals, cultural organisations and workers are at a fast pace in the work, reacting to our surroundings and the needs, the issues. We are being reactive more than proactive. We worry about relevancy and losing it if we take time. But we do need time, to reflect, to think and rethink, to remind ourselves about what we do and why. We need to be awake in our escape in our work and the creative world.</p> |
| Conclusion 3: | <p>From breadth to depth: our intention to go deeper even with the smaller or current number of audience and not only focus on getting bigger and losing the essence or maybe not enhancing it. How our work can be more immersive and experiential with our audience. How we can empower them to go to more events and engage more, that is, instead of just listening or receiving, but to be listening, receiving and practicing and thus allowing our audience to experience what it means. We need to translate our intentions to audiences, communicate and connect through common languages.</p> |

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| <p>Group 7: AI and the New Festival Age with Haris Pašović, Sarajevo Fest</p> | |
| <p>1. How do we (arts, festivals, cities, EU) contribute to create better living conditions (world and the people)? What is our value? What is our potential? What is the next step in my world/work?</p> | |
| Conclusion 1: | <p>CRITICAL THINKING</p> <p>Festivals can embody critical thinking and foster discussion regarding virtuality, reality, integration of both, digital well-being.</p> |
| Conclusion 2: | <p>CREATIVE AI & NON-AI PARTNERSHIP</p> <p>Festivals can be spaces to showcase and discuss both AI and non-AI elements. Contents can creatively mix AI tools and human being’s work.</p> |



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| Conclusion 3: | PRESERVATION Festivals provide a space to experiment preservation of contents, connections, emotions without AI. |
| 2. What do we need (from us, from politics, from the world) in order for a. me/my organisation to perform 'better'/more happy/healthy/efficient? b. for the sector to have a greater impact (funding, advocacy...)? | |
| Conclusion 1: | TRAINING As producers, festival makers and creative people we need to be trained to use AI tools with critical thinking. |
| Conclusion 2: | GUIDANCE Clear guidance about legal and political framework. |
| Conclusion 3: | INDEPENDENCY Festivals need to advocate for more financial resources and claim AI as a tool for social and cultural justice. Independency from politics and military is also needed in AI, and people from diverse and humanistic backgrounds must be behind AI. Politics should not influence festivals. |

Group 8: Responsible consumption and production in the framework of festivals with Mikko Laamanen, Oslo Metropolitan University

1. How do we (arts, festivals, cities, EU) contribute to create better living conditions (world and the people)? What is our value? What is our potential? What is the next step in my world/work?

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| Conclusion 1: | Capacity and awareness of sustainability issues |
| Conclusion 2: | Networks to facilitate sharing of new / best practices |

2. What do we need (from us, from politics, from the world) in order for
a. me/my organisation to perform 'better'/more happy/healthy/efficient?
b. for the sector to have a greater impact (funding, advocacy...)?

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| Conclusion 1: | Systematisation of data, case studies, best practices and templates |
| Conclusion 2: | EFA Sustainability label, EFA Sustainability prize, Code of Conduct and Resource Hub |
| Conclusion 3: | Arts and Business Network within EFA |

Group 9: Experimenting democracy with Nele Hertling and Nicolas Bertrand, A Soul for Europe

1. How do we (arts, festivals, cities, EU) contribute to create better living conditions (world and the people)? What is our value? What is our potential? What is the next step in my world/work?

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| Conclusion 1: | The "circle moment of festival production": Festivals change people, therefore people change their festival themes, which further has an effect on the whole community and discussed present topics. |
| Conclusion 2: | Understanding what you never knew before: New and wider content is easier to understand through the arts and can therefore change living conditions through this new achieved understanding. |

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| Conclusion 3: | By finding new ways of participatory structures in festival production, a community can find new ways of working and living together in current societies. |
| 2. What do we <u>need</u> (from us, from politics, from the world) in order for a. me/my organisation to perform 'better'/more happy/healthy/efficient? b. for the sector to have a greater impact (funding, advocacy...)? | |
| Conclusion 1: | Festivals as a response to specific needs of specific communities, while following an artistic vision. |
| Conclusion 2: | Artists feeling as part of the community and act on it. |
| Conclusion 3: | Developing a deep sense towards festivals supporting art and culture being a force to development processes for all of us. |

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| Group 10: Let's talk about Money with Natália Oszkó-Jakab, Valley of Arts, and Peter Florence, European Festivals Forest | |
| 1. How do we (arts, festivals, cities, EU) <u>contribute</u> to create better living conditions (world and the people)? What is our value? What is our potential? What is the next step in my world/work? | |
| Conclusion: | You can we make people happy if you operate sustainably, understanding sustainability as economic and professional durability. |
| 2. What do we <u>need</u> (from us, from politics, from the world) in order for a. me/my organisation to perform 'better'/more happy/healthy/efficient? b. for the sector to have a greater impact (funding, advocacy...)? | |
| Conclusion 1: | From us: we need to diversify our revenues, be conscious of our values and needs, and build meaningful cooperations. |
| Conclusion 2: | From politics: we need more targeted and simpler grant application schemes. |
| Conclusion 3: | The sector needs to be more agile and dynamic. We need to take income as importantly as expenditure. |

