

The background of the entire cover is a dense, abstract pattern of small, irregular dots in various colors including black, orange, teal, light blue, and yellow, set against a light beige or cream-colored base. The dots are scattered across the entire surface, creating a vibrant, textured effect.

Stronger
Peripheries

Building
a Southern
Coalition in
Performing
Arts

Pedro Costa,
Ricardo Venâncio Lopes
and Anja Pletikosa
(coord.)

STRONGER
PERIPHERIES

Building a Southern
Coalition in
Performing
Arts

Pedro Costa,
Ricardo Venâncio Lopes
and Anja Pletikosa
(coord.)

STRONGER PERIPHERIES:

Building a Southern Coalition in Performing Arts

EDITORIAL COORDINATION

Anja Pletikosa (POGON—Zagreb Center
for Independent Culture and Youth)

Pedro Costa (ISCTE—Instituto Universitário
de Lisboa / DINÂMIA'CET-iscte)

Ricardo Venâncio Lopes (ISCTE—Instituto
Universitário de Lisboa / DINÂMIA'CET-iscte)

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Bruno Castro (Artemrede)

Clara Antunes (Artemrede)

Marta Martins (Artemrede)

Sonja Soldo (POGON—Zagreb Center
for Independent Culture and Youth)

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

Emmanuel Négrier
(CNRS-CEPEL / Université de Montpellier)

Félix Dupin-Meynard
(CNRS-CEPEL / Université de Montpellier)

Jovana Karaulić
(Faculty of Dramatic Arts
—University of Arts in Belgrade)

José Vicente Pestana
(Universitat de Barcelona)

Ksenija Marković Božović
(Faculty of Dramatic Arts
—University of Arts in Belgrade)

Lluís Bonet
(Universitat de Barcelona)

Margarida Perestrelo
(ISCTE—Instituto Universitário de
Lisboa / DINÂMIA'CET-iscte)

Milena Dragičević Šešić
(Faculty of Dramatic Arts—University
of Arts in Belgrade)

Pedro Costa
(ISCTE—Instituto Universitário de
Lisboa / DINÂMIA'CET-iscte)

Ricardo Venâncio Lopes
(ISCTE—Instituto Universitário de
Lisboa / DINÂMIA'CET-iscte)

Tatjana Nikolić
(Faculty of Dramatic Arts
—University of Arts in Belgrade)

EDITING AND PUBLISHING

DINÂMIA'CET-iscte — Centro de Estudos sobre a
Mudança Socioeconómica e o Território
—Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (Portugal)

Artemrede—Teatros Associados (Portugal)

POGON—Zagreb Center for
Independent Culture and Youth

Lisbon, Portugal / Zagreb, Croatia.
September 2024

ENGLISH EDITING AND PROOFREADING

Sandra Young

TRANSLATIONS / TEXT EDITING

Valentina Salis [Ch. 2.2]; Marija Andrijašević
[Ch. 3.1 / Vedrana Klepica]; Estelle
Papadimitriou [Ch. 4.1]; Sara Rossetti [Ch. 4.3];
Mariana Buruiană [Ch. 4.6]; Elisa Delvecchio
[Ch. 5.6]; Sandra Young [Ch. 2.1, 5.8]

ILLUSTRATIONS [CH. 6.3]

Alice Andrea Iliescu (coordination); Evelina
Grigorean (488–491); Adrian Buda (492–493;
496–497); Teodora Predescu (494–495)

PHOTOGRAPHY

Nada Žgank (98–103; 149–151); Karla Jurić,
925STUDIO (108–109); 21:21 (111); Jelena Janković
(116–121); Pedro Jafuno (128–132; 212–216;
224–225, 227); Claudia Borgia (140–141, 146–147);
Valentina Medda (142–144, 148–149); Baratti/
Sisinni (144–145); Laura Farneti (156–163); Giulia
Lenzi (170–171, 177); Elisa Vettori (172–173, 174–
176, 177; 200, 204–205); Marga Cruz (182–191);
Lepomme—Piccolo Studio Mobile di Fotografia
Commerciale (198, 202–203); Roland Vácz (201;
244; 485–487); Sergio Vaccaro (202); Maria
Toultsa (228–229); Hamdi Dridi (235–237); Oana
Hodade and Selma Dragos (251–253); Coralie
Claverie (261–263); Miha Godec (434–437)

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Sven Sorić, Sophia Mewes

FO NTS

HAL Timezone, ABC Diatype

PRINTING

Kerschoffset, Ježdovečka 112, 10250 Lučko

Stronger Peripheries

Building a Southern Coalition in Performing Arts

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To partners, associated members of partner
networks and their hosting venues, artists,
local communities and mediators/connectors,
institutional partners, financing bodies, as well as
this publication's many contributors and all the
colleagues who accompanied us throughout the
Stronger Peripheries journey, our deepest thanks.

Stronger Peripheries: A Southern
Coalition is a large cooperation project
co-funded by the Creative Europe
programme of the European Union.

Costa, P., Lopes, R.V., Pletikosa, A. (coord).
2024. *Stronger Peripheries: Building a Southern
Coalition in Performing Arts*, Lisbon and Zagreb:
DINÂMIA'CET-iscte, Artemrede
—Teatros Associados and POGON—Zagreb
Center for Independent Culture and Youth

Keywords: #performingarts
#culturalcooperation #buildingalliances
#southernperipheries #peripheries
#participation #communityengagement
#culturalpolicies #politicsofcare #solidarity

PEER REVIEW: Yes

LEGAL DEPOSIT:

PRINT RUN: 2000

ISBN: 978-953-46074-2-8

*The Stronger Peripheries: A Southern Coalition
project was co-funded by the Creative Europe
programme of the European Union. Views and
opinions expressed in this publication are those of
the authors only, and the European Commission
or the European Education and Culture Executive
Agency (EACEA) cannot be held responsible for
any use which may be made of the information
contained therein.*

dinamia
'cet-iscte



POGON
ZAGREB CENTER FOR
INDEPENDENT CULTURE AND YOUTH
www.pogon.hr

Editors' Note

Anja Pletikosa, Pedro Costa and
Ricardo Venâncio Lopes 6

Section 1: Stronger Peripheries

- 1.1 Stronger Peripheries: A Southern Coalition. Beginnings, Unfoldings and Becomings of a Nodular Mesh
Marta Martins and Clara Antunes 12
- 1.2 Stronger Peripheries Framework / Axes 19
- 1.3 Tandem Methodology 20
- 1.4 Stronger Peripheries Calendar 22

Section 2: Participation in Southern Peripheries

- 2.1 Periphery, Peripherality and Counter-Peripherality
Marcia Tiburi 26
- 2.2 Reconfiguring Reality: Performance, Participation and Community Processes
Fabrizio Fiaschini 42
- 2.3 Community Artistic Practices and Civic/Political Participation
Hugo Cruz 50
- 2.4 Bread and Roses—Being the Centre? Peripheries and Cultural Policy
Emmanuel Négrier 60
- 2.5 Challenges, Paradoxes and Tensions in Artistic Cooperation In (and Between) Europe and Latin America: Some Reflections and Guidelines
José Vicente Pestana 68
- 2.6 Peripheries and International Cultural Relations: Perspectives, Factors and Effects
Lluís Bonet 78

Section 3: Stronger Peripheries Artistic Creations

- 3.1 Work and Happiness
Tandem #1—Neja Tomšič and Nonument Group
Circle 96
Tandem #7—Petra Hrašćanec & Ksenija Zec
Safe Chemistry / 21 Degrees Celsius + Dinner for 21 106

Tandem #7—Vedrana Klepica
Things That Burn Easily 114

- 3.2 Connecting Dots
Tandem #2—Inês Jacques
HappyMerryJoyYay! 126
Tandem #8—Valentina Medda
The Last Lamentation 138
Tandem #8—Chiara Bersani
Sottobosco 154
- 3.3 Daily Bread
Tandem #3—Kepler-452
Album 168
Tandem #9—Moon Ribas and Quim Girón
Sota Terra 180
- 3.4 Having a Voice
Tandem #4—ZONE-poème-Enemy (A Peace Conference) 196
Tandem #10—Tiago Cadete
CONCERTO 208
- 3.5 Bridging the Gap
Tandem #5—Eva Giannakopoulou
Ichthyolatry 222
Tandem #11—Hamdi Dridi / Cie Chantiers Publics
DANS(E) HOUSE TRIO 232
- 3.6 Right to the Future
Tandem #6—Catinca Drăgănescu, Oana Hodade and Mihai Păcurar
Point Nemo 242
Tandem #12—Nóra Juhász
2060 256

Section 4: Southern Art Worlds

- 4.1 Performing Arts Scene in Greece: Timeless Texts, Sacred Ruins, and Weird Kinships
Iliana Dimadi 268
- 4.2 Questioning Cultural Decentralization. Participation and Values in French Cultural Policies
Julien Audemard 280
- 4.3 The Molecular Scene: Italian Theatre Between Centralism and Fragmentation
Graziano Graziani 286
- 4.4 A Brief Introduction to Catalonia and Its Cultural Policies
Tracy Sirés 294

- 4.5 Cultural Policies in Portugal—the Rhythm Beats the Hopes
Paula Varanda 302
- 4.6 A Perspective on Independent Theatre in Post-Communist Romania
Oana Stoica 320
- 4.7 Gaps in the Generational Reproduction of a Scene
Pia Brezavšček and Rok Bozovičar 332
- 4.8 Performing Arts in Croatia
Una Bauer and Agata Juniku 342
- 4.9 Endangered Species: Notes About the Fragile Ecosystem of Hungarian Independent Performing Arts
Tamás Jászay 354
- 4.10 The Role of Culture in Sustainable Development
Catherine Cullen 368

Section 5: Alternative Gazes from the South

- 5.1 “Periphery”, Power and Networks
Christos Carras 376
- 5.2 Practices of Self-Organization in Post-Yugoslavia and Residency Programmes for Artists
Marijana Cvetković 396
- 5.3 For a New and More Possible Meeting—Rehearsing Feminist Futures Platform as Feminist Practice of More-Than-Collaboration in the Contemporary Performing Arts
Kristina Lelovac 404
- 5.4 Peripheries and Experiments in Relational Place-Making: On the Importance of Coalitions of Goodwill
Eleonora Belfiore 412
- 5.5 Politics and Practices of Care
Marie Moïse 422
- 5.6 Quality in Artistic Residencies
Fabio Biondi 428
- 5.7 Lygophilia, Love From Darkness
Robertina Šebjanič 432
- 5.8 A Flesh and Blood Memoire
Madalena Victorino 440

Section 6: Recommendations for Action

- 6.1 Artistic Development Between Necessity and Pressure: Building Capacities of Artists in the Periphery of Performing Arts
Ksenija Marković Božović 460
- 6.2 Challenges of Process: Contextualizing Residential Policies in the Performing Arts
Jovana Karaulić 472
- 6.3 Futuring Workshop #2: Imagination and Reflection as Action-Generating Tools for a Desired Future
Lorena Copil 482
- 6.4 Cultural Policies in the Southern Peripheries: Implications for Territorial Policies
Pedro Costa and Ricardo V. Lopes 498

Section 7: Co-Constructing the Southern Coalition

- 7.1 A Quality of Participation Assessment Toolkit: A Co-Construction Process with Stronger Peripheries Partners
Pedro Costa, Ricardo V. Lopes, Félix Dupin-Meynard, Margarida Perestrelo 516
- 7.2 A Co-Constructed Toolkit to Better Understand Cultural Audiences: The Stronger Peripheries Experience
Margarida Perestrelo, Pedro Costa, Ricardo V. Lopes 556
- 7.3 Participatory Artistic Practices in Southern Peripheries: Impacts and Challenges
Ricardo V. Lopes, Pedro Costa, Margarida Perestrelo, Elisabete Tomaz 584

Section 8: Directory

Stronger Peripheries Partners 632
Stronger Peripheries Artists 636
Stronger Peripheries Authors 641

Artistic Development Between Necessity and Pressure

Ksenija
Marković Božović

For artists in the performing arts (PA) field, particularly those belonging to the independent scene, the reasons for remaining in the profession are less connected to financial or reputational aspects, but rather associated with an internal need for artistic creation, acquiring new skills and self-growth. Professional biographies of independent choreographers, dance artists, directors and actors prove the thesis that the most significant outcome expectations for them are “subjective or intrinsic measures of career success such as creative output and personal development, [while] compensation can be considered quite differently from traditional rewards such as career advancement or salary” (Bennett, 2009, pp.306–307). Within the discourse of career development theories, the mechanisms and dynamics of such professional development can be linked to the concepts of *portfolio career*, *boundaryless career*, and/or *protean career* (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1996; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Briscoe &

Hall, 2005; Greenhaus et al., 2008; Bennett, 2005, 2009), which describe the new logic of horizontal professional movement—from one project to another and from one professional context to another, continuously enriching the portfolio with new experiences, skills and knowledge. These models imply working with different employers, ignoring traditional hierarchies and career progression, or validating achievements from outside the employment situation (Bennett, 2009, p. 307). Boundaryless and protean (artistic) careers belong to an environment characterized by economic uncertainty, fewer opportunities for permanent employment and greater mobility, as well as systemic transformation in which the types of actors are diversifying and “traditional” resources and capacities are fading. In other words, these careers arise as a necessity prompted by the limitations of employment in large institutional structures, self-organization of artists (in the form of SMEs and NGOs) and production and

Building Capacities of Artists in the Periphery of Performing Arts

distribution dependence on project-based funding and participation in international cooperation processes.

“Put simply, boundaryless [and protean] careers are the opposite of “organizational careers”—careers conceived to unfold in a single employment setting” (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996, p.5). The difference between these two models lies in the fact that the term *boundaryless career* is primarily associated with transcending organizational boundaries, while the *protean career* emphasizes a self-directed approach to the career, driven by one’s own values (Briscoe & Hall, 2002, cited in: Briscoe & Hall, 2005, p. 5). In this sense, the characteristics of the protean career, guided by individual (rather than organizational) goals and capacities, motivated by a personal sense of success and progress (rather than achieved rank, gained power and financial compensation) and deeply integrated into the value system and overall life of the individual, may best suit

contemporary PA practitioners belonging to the independent scene.

Investigating this phenomenon, DeFillippi and Arthur suggest that “cumulative career competencies are embodied in people’s beliefs and identities (*know-why*), skills and knowledge (*know-how*) and networks of relationships and contacts (*know-whom*)” (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1996, p. 320), so that their generating is more enabled by these new “mobile” career models than it is attainable by “non-mobile” (organizational) careers (pp.318–319). In this regard, we can also notice that *know-how* (and *know-whom*), as predominantly desirable forms of capital in contemporary information society and knowledge economy,¹ are

¹ The theory of knowledge-based economics recognizes four types (components) of knowledge: 1) know-what; 2) know-why; 3) know-how; and 4) know-who. Acquiring different types of knowledge involves passing through various processes, so know-what and

“essential aspects of the entrepreneurship required by artists” (Bennett, 2009, p. 319). As such, they are crucial factors at play in the sustainability and resilience of artists in both local and global contexts.

“It is common to find artists working concurrently as a performer, director, manager, teacher, and in low-skilled administrative and technical roles” (Bennett, 2009, p. 308), which points to another aspect of the phenomenon we are addressing here—the trend of *horizontalization*, i.e. *de-hierarchization* of occupations in the field. The diversity of roles that artists undertake is explained also as the “hybridization” of the profession. Analysing this in the domain of dance arts, Vincs suggests that “hybridity” refers to “a kind of bridge through which they [dance artists] are able to expand their work in a satisfying way to include/encompass other contexts, both within and outside dance” (Vincs, 2005). In further discussions, she relates this phenomenon to the support it provides to the sustainability of artists’ work life, but also the current economic climate, which does not provide funding for enough artists with public money to an extent that would allow them to focus solely on their core art practice, whether that is dancing, choreographing, or both (Vincs, 2005). Additionally, understanding hybridization could be related to: the diversity of short- and long-term contracts that require a diversified range of skills (from project planning and implementation to those related to social engagement, audience involvement, participation, collaboration,

know-why is learned through reading books, attending lectures, or accessing databases, while acquiring the other two types of knowledge, which belong to the so-called “tacit knowledge” (Foray & Lundvall, 1996), requires practical experience.

etc.); responsibilities and duties in the context of running one’s own business; and, ultimately the fact that (especially for dance artists) the working life is relatively short resulting in frequent “career transition” (Bennett, 2008). This requires continuous improvement—most often in choreographic and teaching skills, but also in skills such as cultural mediation, dance therapy, curating, working with and within the community, advocacy, etc.

The phenomenon we are describing indicates the need for the field of education, as well as cultural policy and cultural management fields, to clearly establish whether and to what extent conventional paths of education enable (or inhibit) the diversification of skills and knowledge of PA artists. Significant questions in this context relate to the effectiveness of existing formally acquired knowledge, identifying knowledge, skills and abilities that are missing, and analysing available and possible programmes for further professional capacity building and development. Discussions and research on this topic are usually characterized by strong polarization with “classical” training at art universities and schools on one end, and on the other a “non-linear lifelong learning process” that involves developing existing and acquiring new competencies through professional engagement, various workshops, masterclasses, summer schools, courses, etc. In this discourse each collaborative project, to a greater or lesser extent, aims to expose the developmental needs of artists, mapping competencies that can be applied in new and innovative contexts, diagnosing knowledge and skills that need to be strengthened and those that are lacking but are significant for artistic sustainability.

Following this trend, on the subsequent pages, we present the results of

research conducted within the Stronger Peripheries project aimed at identifying the capacity-building needs of artists in Southern Europe. The aim of the research was to gain deep insights not only into the declarative needs related to continuous professional development of relevant skills and knowledge, but also into the functioning, challenges and needs of artists on the *periphery* of PA. In line with the project’s ideas, the peripheral connotation here refers to artists who are citizens of countries on geopolitical peripheries, who live and work in rural areas and southern regions of their countries, belong to ethnic, gender, or other minority groups, or belong to the independent scene and are not integrated into a greater organizational structure. In this sense, the frameworks and methods of their work are often incomparable with dominant models in the field, which is why building different capacities in these creators logically presents context-specific questions and methodical challenges.

Research Methodology

The research on *capacity-building needs* was organized over two years through focus groups composed of five to ten artists living and working in partner countries who were shortlisted to produce their project within the Stronger Peripheries open call. A total of 11 focus groups were organized and 61 artists were interviewed. The interviews were based on a set of open questions that formed two main streams of conversation that overlapped: i) skills development through formal education and ii) existing experiences and needs in the context of informal learning, training and improvement. Additionally, the discussion included broader questions about the socioeconomic frameworks of artists’ work—the position of their creativity in

the systems to which they belong, the position of actors and relationships within the system, current cultural policies, and so on.

Before proceeding to the findings of the research, it would be good to specify what is meant by the terms: *capacity* and *capacity building*. Among the most widely applied explanations of the notion of capacity is the one used by UNDP (1998)—“Capacity is defined as the ability of individuals, organizations, or systems to perform appropriate functions effectively, efficiently, and sustainably.” It is important to emphasize that capacities are not static but part of a continuing dynamic process, and thus the capacity of an individual, organization or system is never complete or in a steady state but requires continuous renewal and investment (Milen, 2001, p.4). Therefore, the concept of *capacity development* refers to training—increasing knowledge and skills in general, while *capacity building* emphasizes the need to build on what exists, to utilize and strengthen existing capacities (continuous professional development), rather than arbitrarily thinking of starting from scratch (p.5). Such understanding of the concept fully corresponds to how mapping the needs of artists on the periphery should be performed, i.e. the context of “support to subalterns” so that, besides adopting new skills “they could gain self-confidence in their own capacities and capabilities” (Dragičević Šešić, 2024, p.2).

Results and Discussion

In general, the findings of the research show that, despite common problems largely associated with belonging to smaller artistic collectives, experimental troupes, etc., artists from different countries actually have very different experiences and face different challenges. This is even more

important considering the perspective of artists outside the European Union, who are on the periphery in a narrower sense of the word, and whose feeling of (geopolitical) marginalization often includes the impression that artists from the EU share common (diverse and extraordinary) developmental perspectives. However, the reality is that even among them, opportunities differ greatly, affected by factors such as national policies, different educational infrastructures, different cultural/educational/political heritage, different socioeconomic circumstances, etc.

The observed differences also relate to various roots of identified feelings of isolation. For example, artists in Portugal speak of great differences in the opportunities for artists in large cities compared to smaller and rural areas; artists from Hungary feel sidelined due to a rigid political system that emphasizes differences between them “in the East” and colleagues from Western Europe; artists from Romania focus on the specificities of the transitional artistic system in which “three sacrificed generations” have been operating;² while Italian artists, speaking of the marginalization of their practices, mention how classical formats and institutions are still the focus both of cultural policies and the audience. On the other hand, artists from Greece and Croatia share a sense that the independent dance and drama scene is marginalized within interdisciplinary research, that, in contrast, represents the dominant contemporary trend.

2 The aforementioned pertains to the generations that have worked and are working within the circumstances of the sociopolitical transition that commenced in 1989 and formally concluded in 2007 with Romania’s accession to the EU. However, various challenges persist within Romanian society in this regard.

And the dominant narratives in the groups differ. In some groups the focus was on administrative and business skills, in others on project writing and management, yet others on the conceptualization of artwork as socially transformative and work with the local community. However, despite these differences all groups identified that education and training systems react slowly to new challenges in the performing arts, which leads to an obvious disparity between undergraduate curricula, the realities of professional practice (especially in the independent scene) and career opportunities. Artists often distance themselves from discussions of this kind—emphasizing that competencies are not the problem but rather the framework (social, economic, legal) in which they work. This said,—they still agree that determining what additional skills and attributes are needed for PA artists seeking to build sustainable careers outside traditional (public) institutions in this field would be significant in further developing the scene as a whole.

Borders of Formal Education

Regarding the question “To be or not to be a graduate?” i.e. how important studying art is for PA artists, the answers differ. This depends less on the domain of work, and more on the artist’s nationality (country of residence). For example, in Italy studying is “only something you do for yourself” and “no one cares about the qualification you have”, while in France not only the diploma but also which school the artist comes from significantly changes their position.³ Artists agree that this

3 Art schools in Italy are not part of the public university system, within which only history and theory of

is a “cultural thing”, while the overall impression is that in systems where formal education in the arts is less important frequent changes in educational paths are more common.

Generally, artists believe that there is a strong discrepancy between artistic education, the functioning of the artistic sector and European labour markets. It seems that the education and training provided by faculties in the countries analysed assume that graduated artists engage with large organizational systems (public, national ballet, etc.), while the reality is quite the opposite. The vast majority of artists are forced (or choose) to work in the independent scene, establish their own troupes, or work as freelancers project by project. However, skills that are essential for them in this context (international collaboration, management, communication, marketing, funding, etc.) are almost completely absent from academic curricula and training.

The Bologna Process, as well as Erasmus, CEPUS, and similar programmes, are partially contributing to the remodelling of the education system by introducing new subjects and project-based teaching, and creating a system that provides greater support for mobility and participation in competence development programmes. However, this is still not enough, especially in light of the parallel

dramatic arts are studied, while in France, conservatoires are under the patronage of the Ministry of Culture (although there are also numerous private schools of varying reputation and influence). A similar situation exists in other countries such as Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Hungary, where art schools (drama academies) are part of the official state university system (although private universities and faculties also exist).

existence of conservative (and outdated) mannerisms in defining values, modes of communication, and expected outcomes of artistic training at universities. According to a significant number of interviewed artists, this is also reflected in phenomena such as fostering a sense of competition among students, the authoritative position of professors, dropouts from studies, etc.⁴ Certainly, there are positive experiences of collaboration with teachers who bring contemporary artistic tendencies and innovative ways of working, but the general conclusion is that innovation and updating of education methods and content are largely dependent on individuals (not on the system).

The system of artistic education in PA is also characterized by weak cooperation between different departments and different artistic schools, resulting in an overall lack of interdisciplinarity in the field. Additionally, a stark divide between educational processes that consist of theoretical research (which takes place at universities) and of artistic training (at three-year academies) was identified in the discussions of different groups. Specifically, artists from Italy and Greece speak about this subject, claiming that such a division also affects people’s opportunities to obtain

4 For example, artists from Hungary had provided an extreme example of the conservatism within university education, describing the dialectics of acting studies where the prevailing idea is “you will be famous if you are lucky and have good connections with famous directors and managers”. Professors who are also in high-ranking positions as artistic and programme directors educate students “for themselves” according to their own standards, for future collaboration with them, which is why many talented individuals who do not fit the projected image “fall out of the system”.

professional work (and opportunities to access further, postgraduate education). They note that there is a huge gap between theory and practice, which leads to polarization in career terms—“either you are a researcher/theoretician or an artist”.⁵

Contrary to this, interviews with artists from Romania suggest a certain “paradigm shift” in formulating the content and outcomes of education in the field, related to current attempts by universities to “regain the public mission of art”. In addition to training artists for the stage in the most classical terms (for actors, directors, set designers, choreographers), universities are now developing programmes (especially at the postgraduate level) aimed at educating professionals who use artistic skills and knowledge in the service of community intervention, education, activism, etc. The phenomena and processes behind such intentions certainly relate to the rapid decline of traditional employment opportunities for PA artists, but also the trend of linking art with education, socially responsible and socially transformative action, which particularly finds support in the civil sector and EU funding policies.

The International Path of Capacity Development

Artists mention the importance of training abroad as a route to accessing additional education. Moreover, the further south the artists are, the more important

international experience (through education or work) becomes, among other things as a means of recognition and gaining respect. Artists from Greece, Croatia, southern Italy and Romania testify to positive experiences attending longer and shorter study programmes abroad—mostly in Western and Northern Europe, but also in America. Additionally, artists emphasize that it is impossible to circulate their work (even within national borders), so international cooperation is also mentioned as a possible way of “extending the life of production”.

On the other hand, these integration and engagement opportunities on the international scene pressure artists and art organizations (from EU funds, national cultural policies, international organizations, to educational and professional networks) to adopt internationally-oriented and entrepreneurial ways of working; essentially to become “cultural operators” (which entails roles as diverse as entrepreneur, manager, mediator, connector and networker) and create “spectacular or complex (consortium, network) projects that are demanded by public donors such as Creative Europe” (Dragičević Šešić, 2020, p.44). In other words, the perspective of mobility and working on a “common European stage” requires artists to develop specific competence sets ranging from planning projects and placing artistic ideas in a broader (social) context to presenting and pitching an artistic concept. An artist must be polyglot and familiar with digital tools, have strategic and managerial competencies—the ability to negotiate, hire, discuss and evaluate achieved results. Furthermore, as international work involves collaborative projects, skills that include communication and collaboration, adaptability and flexibility are becoming more important, as well as

knowledge of different social contexts, history, art history, etc.

The multilateral logic of cooperation within EU framework programmes effectively enables numerous learning benefits stemming from intense engagement with diverse traditions and practices, numerous cultural/professional/systemic differences (Klaic, 2007, p.125), but also entails numerous organizational risks and a constant danger of artistic failure (p.124). Therefore, the “articulation of artistic, strategic and relational competences” (Farinha, 2012, p.225), i.e. a combination of specific and meta-competencies (acquired through the process of personal development that largely surpasses university education) becomes necessary. Many of the required skills actually are learned only through general education and experiences gained in a narrower (family) environment, and are dependent on previously acquired educational, social and cultural capital. In that sense, the necessary competence set becomes “normal” for some artists, while for others, it represents a gap that needs to be filled through additional work and learning.

When the System Fails to Help

In discussing the experiences of artists from the perspective of education, life-long learning and collaboration, a critical reflection of the political system and its effects on the development of artists in the PA field also emerges as a transversal topic. These effects are most often assessed as negative (or at best insufficiently stimulating), reflected in stories of a continuous struggle to maintain production with insufficient funds; the impossibility of long-term planning due to inadequate financing models; dependence on generally unreliable political systems at the national level

(e.g., sustainability of artistic programmes and projects dependent on election results); allocation of public investments to develop cultural and educational infrastructure focused primarily on major and larger cities; (geographical) centralization of cultural, as well as educational, content; and cultural policies with a focus on public institutions. Particularly, artists from Hungary, Italy and Portugal speak of the existence of a “system” (that they equate with cultural policy), which determines the “context and rules of the game”. However, they feel that the system barely knows and recognizes them, which is emphasized in economically weaker environments, smaller regions and cities (or in more extreme sociopolitical circumstances).⁶ On the other hand, according to artists in France, their support system encompasses an impressive range of instruments that enable the sustainability of work for independent artists (funding, co-productions with larger

⁵ An interesting finding in this regard is that in Italy, there is not even a PhD programme in performing arts, so this type of advanced training involves studying abroad (and even then, it is almost impossible to accredit the acquired qualification in Italy).

⁶ The vast majority of artists are distrustful of decision makers—politicians, but also managers of cultural institutions, programmers, etc. They claim that people in high-ranking positions are often politically appointed, lack information and knowledge about PA (and even training in this field). Moreover, there is a strong antagonism towards decision makers and cultural policymakers in some cases. For example, discussions with Hungarian artists leave a very strong impression reflecting an extraordinary educational infrastructure trapped by traditional and regressive practices and curricula; and exceptional artists who say that they do not feel comfortable talking about capacity-building paths when they are worried about their existence as artists due to a populist, manipulative political system that cancels them, refusing them the time and space for expression.

institutions, competitions, etc.),⁷ although they also emphasize that opportunities to access that system often depend on personal connections with people in decisive positions, which is related to the aforementioned importance of educational capital.

Skills We Need, Skills That Trouble Us

Among the developmental needs identified, artists primarily point to the importance of acquiring techniques and methods for effectively communicating artistic work, self-promotion skills, as well as the ability to contextualize artistic ideas and articulate project proposals. Furthermore, artists leading small artistic groups highlight the need for training aimed at developing the skills required for everyday business operations, which encompasses training in project management at an intermediate level which incorporates the development of administrative competencies, financial management, time management, networking and marketing.

Conversely, there is a prevailing sense of dissatisfaction among artists regarding the pressure to “be managers” and/or to conform their artistic work to predefined frameworks, often imposed by application requirements that aim to align artistic ideas with the objectives of various social agendas. It appears that for artists, achieving and demonstrating broader societal

(instrumental) goals is becoming increasingly important, while the direction of their work is being determined by the objectives of EU funding calls. Letunic observes that, in accordance with the criteria set by CE calls (up to 2020), as well as national and transnational policies, artists and artistic collectives have mostly oriented themselves towards an “audience turn” (Letunic, 2019, p.46). Without questioning the general importance of the process of developing and diversifying the audience, pressure on such an orientation evokes various feelings among artists and curators—from understanding this agenda “in accordance with contemporary populist politics”, to “alienation of art from itself”, meeting the “criterion of visibility”, or (more positively) bringing artists closer to the “real interests of the community” (pp.344–346).

In any case, the problem is that these goals (as well as other globally advocated goals such as contributing to the inclusion of art, gender equality, ecological justice and so on) simultaneously represent a difficulty for artists, who often struggle to find an adequate language or understand how to respond to these expectations. Nevertheless, artists themselves consider it essential to strengthen skills relating to broader social contextualization, conceptualization and the presentation of artistic ideas, particularly due to their lack of financial resources to delegate these tasks to others, but also because of the identified shortage of cultural managers. Artists from almost every focus group specifically highlighted the lack of people with this professional profile, indicating the following: the lack of freelance cultural managers willing to work with smaller companies, troupes and independent artists; the lack of production managers, touring managers, administrative managers in the periphery and in the rural

regions; the tendency for professionals of this type to be oriented towards the more economically profitable fields such as advertising and the media industry or the institutional theatre (where they mainly undertake administrative tasks); their insufficient understanding of the concept of creative production.

Another notable aspect pertains to the imperative for artists “to be better informed”. They emphasize the necessity of learning and adopting new social practices, participatory methods, and community cooperation. Taking into consideration the topics of collaborative projects that advocate for social transformation, but also the immanent need for social intervention, artists wish for greater peer exchange on the topics of possible contributions of PA to social cohesion, accessibility, inclusion, gender equality, cultural mediation and ecological justice, through organized meetings and residential programmes that bridge social, political and artistic aspects. Speaking about the importance of community arts as new ways of exploring personal and collective identity and mapping common space between communities’ and artists’ needs, those interviewed also mention the need for more space and time oriented towards researching other fields (such as history, sociology, psychology, philosophy, philology, theology, etc.). As previously mentioned, artists in various contexts emphasize the importance of the research process in artistic work on the one hand, and on the other hand, the exclusive focus of formal education on developing practical skills and abilities. The impression is that, although not explicitly articulated, a prevailing attitude among artists is that the implementation of artistic research courses at all levels of study would be of great significance for future generations

(currently, this type of course is present only in doctoral artistic studies which are still not standard in the majority of countries in Southern Europe).

When addressing barriers to participation in capacity-building programmes, artists commonly cite economic constraints and limited accessibility to them. For instance, artists from Hungary highlight the necessity of informal education, particularly in the field of dance, but also its exclusivity due to the high costs associated with courses and masterclasses. Similarly, artists from Italy point out that the overall system of artistic education and training mirrors class divisions, underscoring the importance of scholarships and talent support programmes. Artists speak about the lack of shared spaces and venues for exchange, insufficient collaboration with professional associations in developing workshop programmes, as well as constraints related to time and financial resources (e.g. per diems for participation in the capacity-building and residential programmes are very rare). Additionally, more limited development opportunities for artists with disabilities are identified as a problem. In theory this topic is wide open and there are various initiatives, but in practice inclusion is still insufficiently achieved. Moreover in this context, the Italian artist’s view that practices of this kind are actually much more common in Southern Europe is interesting, because while the North is concentrated on the mainstream models, “the South is hungry” and is looking for new areas for winning funds and innovations.

Lastly, artists bear witness to the fact that the inability to articulate one’s ideas and experiences in their native language constitutes an objective barrier in the (collective) processes of exchanging know-how and building capacities. This was

7 The conversation with artists from France highlights their different understanding of the concept of an independent artist. “If you are a professional artist in France, you are a contestant/competitor? Getting/competing to get? (financial) help anyway... you are still part of the system.” For them, artistic independence manifests in their dependence on the public sector, or in their “independence” from the imperative of selling in the market.

identified not so much through responses to questions but rather through accompanying comments on the topic of one's own expressive capacities in the English language. Furthermore, in conversations with artists, a stance emerges suggesting that capacity-building programmes and international cooperation (which often go hand in hand) are significantly shaped in relation to the top-down advocated and "generalized" developmental needs of the PA field. Capacity-building programmes and international cooperation are seen in this way both in organizational and substantive terms and not only in the sense of the English language, but also more widely. This finding confirms the thesis presented in certain academic works that delve deeper into the specificities of periphery/margin/subaltern, which is that processes of internationalization (as well as education in culture and art)—continue to be "more westernization with an emphasis on Anglo-Saxon knowledge and trends" (Dragičević Šešić, 2020, p.47).

Conclusion

Today, performing artists need to articulate both specific and generic skills and knowledge proportionally. Moreover, as the degree of their peripherality on the EU common stage increases, so does the need to shape an "ideal mix" of meta-competencies and competencies closely related to the artistic field. With an "unfavourable" geographical position, being outside larger organizational structures and engaging in alternative and experimental artistic forms, there is a growing need for constant capacity building and strengthening. This is because the choice of protean careers, i.e. orientation towards mobility, flexible understanding of roles, different working contexts, self-assessment and

continuous learning and skill improvement, is motivated by an internal need for achievement but is also a means of achieving resilience for these artists.

Based on the findings of research—mapping a wide range of capacity-building needs for artists in Southern Europe, and considering that the current performing arts production and distribution system in Europe is geographically and sectorally (as well as genre, ethnicity, gender) imbalanced, we come to the conclusion that it is important to advocate for the creation of a fairer and more accessible "framework for people to obtain a wide set of skills, including hard skills, social, interpersonal and creative skills in order to be able to work in a multidisciplinary and diverse environment" (PEARLE, n.d.). Therefore, the objective should be the creation of a support system that could help to address the spectrum of issues within the continuous professional development in the European PA field characterized by positions of centre and periphery, which imply the acknowledgement of the thesis that "thinking from a subaltern epistemic location" (Dragičević Šešić, 2024, p.2) is a possible guideline for future alternative and innovative ways to develop. In this regard there is no need to strive for the creation of the singular development matrix through which the "weak become strong" by adopting globally advocated knowledge, but rather to devise various original ways to develop specific competencies that will be contextually implemented based on previously identified needs and the capacities of the artistic community. Considering that this is closely related to the needs of the (local) community, i.e. that the development of creators and the development of the audience should be complementary processes, capacity-building programmes for artists need to be planned and implemented

top down and bottom up, which implies interplay between cultural policies, international recommendations and funds, local municipalities, the civil sector, professional associations, cultural mediation organizations, academic communities and artists and artistic organizations.

References

- Bennett, D. (2008). "Dancer or Dance Artist? Dance Careers and Identity" in *The International Journal Of the Arts In Society*, 3(3), pp.73–77.
- Bennett, D. (2009). "Academy and the Real World" in *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, September 2009, pp.305–324. DOI: 10.1177/1474022209339953.
- Briscoe, J. & Hall, D. (2006). "The interplay of boundaryless and protean careers: Combinations and implications" in *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 69, pp.4–18.
- Defillippi, R. & Arthur, M. (1994). "The boundaryless career: a competency-based perspective" in *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 15(4), Special Issue: The Boundaryless Career, pp.307–324.
- Dragičević Šešić, M. (2020). "Contemporary arts in adaptable quality management: Questioning entrepreneurship as panacea in Europe" in *The Routledge Companion to Arts Management* (pp.39–53). edit. by Byrnes, W. & Brkic, A., London, New York: Routledge.
- Dragičević Šešić, M. (2024). "Tears in the classroom: teaching and learning cultural policy in a multicultural environment. Can the subaltern talk?" in *International Journal of Cultural Policy*. DOI: 10.1080/10286632.2024.2305263. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2024.2305263>
- Farinha, C. (2012). *Bound to Mobility: The building up of a performing arts community in the European Union*. PhD Dissertation. Porto, Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia—Ministerio da Educação e Ciência, <https://repositorio-aberto.up.pt/bitstream/10216/64538/2/tesedouteristina-farinha2012000172871.pdf>
- Foray, L. (1996). *The Knowledge-Based Economy*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development.
- Greenhaus, J., Callanan, G. & DiRenzo, M. (2008). "A boundaryless perspective on careers" in *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Behavior*, Vol. 1—Micro Approaches, pp.277–299.
- Klaic, D. (2007). *Mobility of imagination: a companion guide to international cultural cooperation*, Budapest: Center for Arts and Culture, Central European University
- Letunic, A. (2019). "Instrumental value of culture and curatorial responses from the European independent performing arts field. A plea for an arts-driven cultural policy research" in *Forschungsfeld Kulturpolitik—eine Kartierung von Theorie und Praxis*, edit by: Grad, D., Schröck, K. & Weigl, A.
- Milen, A. (2001). *What do we know about capacity building? A overview of existing knowledge and good practice*, Geneva: Department of Health Service Provision, World Health Organization.
- PEARLE. (n.d.). *On the European Stage 2019–2024: Priorities for the live performance sector*.
- Vinco, K. (2005). "Follow your heart and something will come: Subjective factors in the sustainability of early to mid-careers contemporary dance artists" from *Dance Rebooted: Initializing the Grid Conference Proceedings* published by Ausdance National on behalf of the Tertiary Dance Council of Australia, ISBN 1 875255 16 8

PARTNERS



AFFILIATED PARTNER



NETWORK MEMBERS



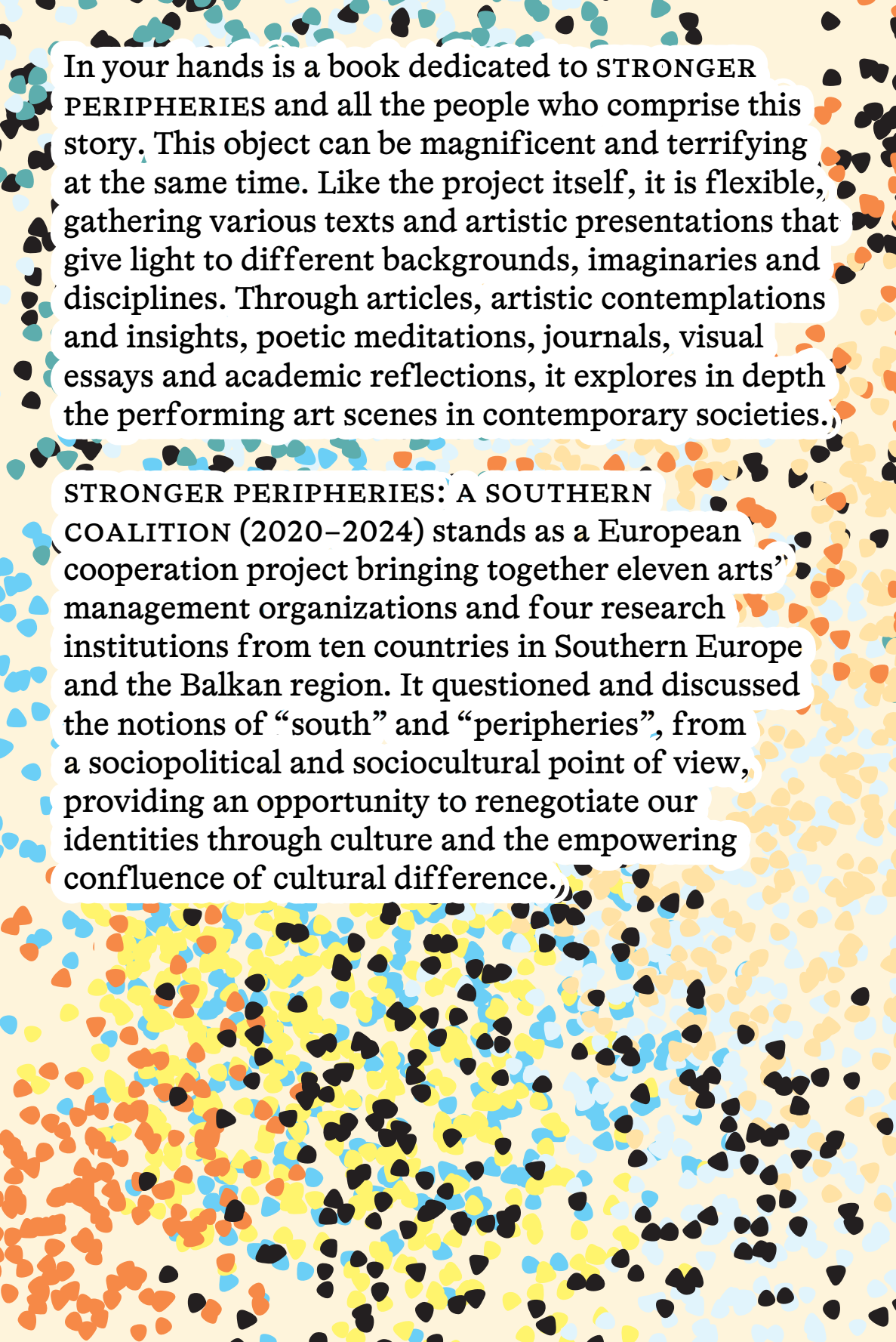
PARTNERS CO-FINANCING



FINANCING



Co-funded by the
Creative Europe Programme
of the European Union



In your hands is a book dedicated to STRONGER PERIPHERIES and all the people who comprise this story. This object can be magnificent and terrifying at the same time. Like the project itself, it is flexible, gathering various texts and artistic presentations that give light to different backgrounds, imaginaries and disciplines. Through articles, artistic contemplations and insights, poetic meditations, journals, visual essays and academic reflections, it explores in depth the performing art scenes in contemporary societies.,

STRONGER PERIPHERIES: A SOUTHERN COALITION (2020–2024) stands as a European cooperation project bringing together eleven arts’ management organizations and four research institutions from ten countries in Southern Europe and the Balkan region. It questioned and discussed the notions of “south” and “peripheries”, from a sociopolitical and sociocultural point of view, providing an opportunity to renegotiate our identities through culture and the empowering confluence of cultural difference.,,