

INDEPENDENCE & CONCENTRATION

discussion report

In September 2023, the team of concert promoter Dirty Old Town (who also organise the yearly festival Ravnedalen Live in Kristiansand, NO and are founding members of the Arena for Sustainability in Norway), hosted a Digital Safari.

After the presentation of the organisation's values and actions, Dirty Old Town wanted to raise awareness on the struggle many independent festivals have in front of a few big multinationals who own huge artist rosters, ticketing companies, organise events and hold some kind of monopoly (and thus, power) over the whole value chain of the (live) music sector.

Rather than fighting against each other, Dirty Old Town pleaded for the whole industry to cooperate together in order to find the ways of becoming a low-carbon industry as fast as possible. This is crucial so that our planet and societies can be viable.

This report presents some resources that were shared by participants to the Digital Safari, as well as some elements of discussion.

SOME INTERESTING INITIATIVES SHARED

“Vous n’êtes pas là par hasard” (« You are not here by chance ») Campaign in France – Syndicat des Musiques Actuelles

The *Syndicat des Musiques Actuelles* (SMA – Union for Popular Music) gathers 600 companies and organisations from the French music industry, including independent festivals (= which are not owned by big companies, but they can receive some forms of public funding).

Last year, the SMA developed a campaign aimed at festivals, policy-makers and audiences, called “Vous n’êtes pas là par hasard” (« You are not here by chance »). The campaign was accompanied by discussions and debates within the French music sector on topics surrounding the independence of festivals. In this context, a website was created to share some resources, notably some maps by Matthieu Barreira, showing how five billionaires have control over many large-scale festivals in Europe. Similar mapping were made focusing on France only. The French map was displayed at some festivals in order to raise awareness on the situation to a broad public.

The debates which took place during the campaign led the SMA to some interesting conclusions, notably that the future of independent festivals is in danger, and also that the ownership of ticketing solutions by these same companies is a major challenge (ownership and use of audience data, dependency of smaller festivals to ticketing solutions owned by big profit-driven companies...) and has a strong environmental impact (data lakes, energy used for big servers...)

Access the campaign website [here](#).

Access Matthieu Barreira's mapping for Europe [here](#) and for France [here](#).

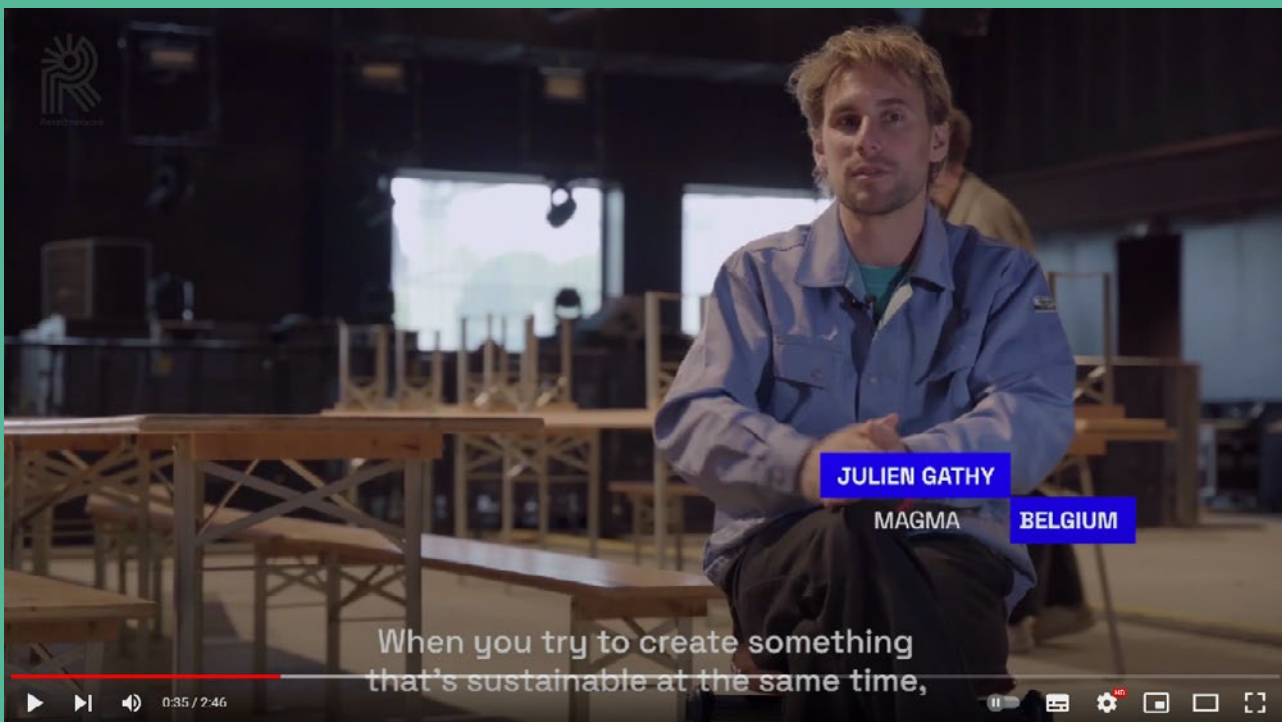
RESET ! – EU network of independent cultural, media and creative organisations

Reset! aims to highlight the fragile situation and specific needs of these independent actors, who are neither under the control of any public authorities nor affiliated with large private groups. The purpose of the network is to work together & redesign (reset) the cultural and media landscape in Europe around the shared values of pluralism, diversity, equality and sustainability, in an inclusive and circular economy.

Reset! members organized the past year a series of de-centralized workshops throughout Europe to gather information on the state of the independent sector from each country. Access [here](#) the list of workshops.

Reset! network noticed a concentration of power in all the sectors they represent, and even beyond (culture, media, tech...). They claim that the capitalistic and neo-liberal way of the world, which forces organisations to make profit in a short timespan, cannot be applied to the cultural sector. Moreover, they argue that only the smaller and independent organisations have the possibility to be disruptive in terms of creativity, ways of working and economy.

This subject is Reset!'s focus point for the campaign they launched for the 2024 EU elections. [Read more](#) about Reset!'s statement as part of their 2024 EU elections campaign.



SOME TOPICS OF DISCUSSION (summed-up & anonymized)

«Should we collaborate with the big players in the industry who have a monopoly?»

- YES, we should work all together, also with Live Nation or FKP Scorpio people to create a viable society as fast as possible, because there is no time left. We don't have the time to fight each other.
- UNSURE, isn't it only in smaller and independent scales that we can be disruptive in terms of creativity, economy, inclusion, etc? Small players are as relevant as the big ones, if not more. They should better be valorized.
- YES, even in capitalistic terms, the market is not free anymore, because of monopolies and concentration of power, ticketing companies, artist rosters, etc in the hands of a few. Let's work together to make the market free again.
- YES, because the people working in big companies are hurt by the market-logic as well.

“Should we push governments to regulate monopolies and its impact on the rise of artist fees? Or to give incentives to oblige organisations to work in a sustainable way?”

- YES, only a strict regulatory framework will make people, and the bigger players, transition towards fairer and more ecological practices. For example, what if people could only take a limited number of planes in their lifetime? Of course, this should be a collaborative process constructed by the whole of society (people, organisations, policy-makers, scientists...) We need to draw people in the process, not scare them away and be careful on how such regulations should be framed.
- YES, live music organisations can only have a limited power to incentivize people to enjoy live music in a sustainable manner. Other regulatory bodies need to come at play to bridge the gap and go where live music organisations have no power (example: public transportation partnerships)
- YES, because bankruptcy is close when you want to be a model. Regulatory bodies should help organisations which want to be a model.