

Modes of Production

— Performing Arts in Transition

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TITLE

Arts management and production in the performing arts: time to reboot?

ABSTRACT

Having worked as an arts manager for over fifteen years in Portugal and internationally, I was struck by the inconsistencies in the discourses and practices regarding work and collaboration in the field of contemporary performing arts, especially in terms of the relationship between the spheres of artistic creation and production and management. For years I had been struggling with questions such as: how do artists and producers actually cooperate? How do they organize themselves? Is the idea of a 'company' or a 'collective' still powerful or have we completely transitioned into project-based work? And what does that mean for the role of arts managers and producers? What is considered 'success' in arts management and who gets to dictate it? What exactly is our contribution towards artistic projects? What is expected from us besides competent use of excel sheets and smart scheduling? Who thinks about the critical and ethical underpinnings of our daily practice as producers and managers?

Intersecting extensive field interviews and qualitative inquiries in Portugal with a range of case studies on alternative management experiences elsewhere in Europe, this three-year investigation allowed me to conduct an extensive review of the work practices, representations and aspirations of producers and cultural managers working in theatre, dance and performance. Their perspectives and concrete experiences – which are seldom documented and analysed - are brought centre-stage and serve as a platform to interrogate dominant work models and current paradigms of arts management.

The research highlights that although arts management and production are hybrid professions combining technical, strategic, and creative dimensions, they remain

poorly recognized and largely underexplored - both from a practical and epistemological point of view. Specifically, I look at emergent critical discourses on the ambiguous coupling of arts management with the neoliberal compulsion for success and growth and juxtapose it to concrete experiences of producing and managing *otherwise*.

BIOGRAPHY

Arts manager and researcher working in the performing arts field for over 15 years. Served either as in-house manager or external consultant in various national and international artistic institutions and projects, mainly in strategic planning, management and programming, both in the institutional and independent performing arts sector. She writes, teaches and speaks regularly about cultural policy and management, and has recently published “AS PRODUTORAS - Produção e Gestão Cultural em Portugal. Trajectos Profissionais (1990-2019)” [The Producers - Arts Management and Production in Portugal 1990-2019 - Professional Trajectories]. Master in Cultural Policy and Management by City University of London. Currently finishing a Phd in Artistic Studies at the University of Coimbra, focusing on the changing role of producers and managers and alternative models of collaboration and management in the performing arts. Researcher-Collaborator at Centre for Interdisciplinary Research - CEIS20/UC.<https://linktr.ee/vaniamariarodrigues>