# FESTIVALS AS ECOSYSTEMS OF CARE

Meaning, Relationships and Sustainable Festival Practice

A reader
for festival professionals
and stakeholders
by Mahir Namur

## PART I

## UNDERSTANDING FESTIVALS THROUGH CARE

EUROPEAN FESTIVALS ASSOCIATION

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## How to Use This Reader

This Reader invites you to explore your festival through care: to understand its relationships, consider what your choices make possible and examine the conditions under which people work together. It combines conceptual reading with reflection on experience. You can use it individually or as a starting point for learning with colleagues.

The two parts support different stages of this process. **Part I develops a way of looking. Part II supports a fuller reflection on your own experience.**

**Begin with Part I and follow the chapters in sequence.** Each chapter builds on what came before, gradually developing the concepts through which the festival can be understood as an ecosystem of care. Reading in order will help you follow these connections. You can pause whenever you need to and return to particular topics later.

The explanations and anonymous examples introduce the ideas and show how they may appear in practice. Short questions within the text invite you to connect a particular idea with something you have experienced. The questions at the end of each chapter focus on that chapter's subjects. You can explore them using what you have read so far.

You do not need to write an answer to every question. Choose those that help you notice something, reconsider an assumption or name a difficulty. A few notes may be enough to preserve a thought you want to revisit. Questions that feel difficult or unfamiliar can remain open.

**Continue to Part II after reading Part I.** Part II introduces reflection as a practice and offers an extended account of the Sinopale–International Sinop Biennial, in which one of its founders revisits the festival's history through twelve reflective territories. It closes with a reflective framework through which you can explore your own experience in the same way.

**Use the online format at your own pace.** Expand additional examples and supporting material when you want to explore further. Follow connections back to earlier concepts when they help, then return to the main reading sequence. The Care Insights offer brief observations to consider alongside your own experience.

# ABOUT THIS READER

This Reader was developed within the EUFEAST - Festive Pathways to a Sustainable Tomorrow project as a conceptual resource for festival professionals. It examines festival management through a care-oriented and existential perspective and develops a mental map through which purpose, relationships, organisational conditions, power, participation and sustainability can be considered as parts of one interconnected field.

The Reader therefore begins with the question of meaning: why do we make festivals? It then asks what kind of relational ecosystem is required if a festival is to realise its artistic, cultural and public purpose. Care enters not as an additional topic or a request for greater kindness, but as the practice through which a festival takes responsibility for the relationships, power and conditions that make its purpose possible.

## The Perspective of This Reader

This Reader approaches festival management through the combined perspective of cultural management and existential counselling. It has been developed by a practitioner whose professional work has taken place in both fields: through more than twenty-five years of cultural and festival management, and through the practice of existential and meaning-oriented counselling.

This combination is not incidental. Festival management is usually approached through planning, finance, production, marketing, governance, audience development and organisational efficiency. These fields remain necessary. Festivals must secure resources, coordinate complex processes, meet legal responsibilities and produce work within limited time and capacity. Yet festivals are not mechanical systems, and the people involved are not functions within a production process. Festivals are created through human beings who perceive, interpret, choose, relate, carry costs, exercise power, search for meaning and respond to uncertain conditions.

Existential counselling begins from these dimensions of human life. It asks what it means to live and act under conditions that cannot be fully controlled; how people respond to uncertainty, paradox, limits and responsibility; how freedom operates within given conditions; how meaning is perceived and realised; and how distinct human beings create connection without losing themselves. These are not only therapeutic concerns. They are also central questions of cultural and organisational life.

Drawing on existential philosophy, this Reader uses the perspective of existential counselling as a lens through which the human realities of management can become more visible. The aim is to humanise festival management: to complement conventional business and administrative approaches with an

understanding of the persons, relationships, meanings and living conditions through which cultural work becomes possible.

EXISTENTIAL PERSPECTIVE

**This reader brings an existential understanding of human life into the relational and organisational conditions through which festivals are made.**

Care belongs to both fields. In counselling, care concerns how a person is perceived, encountered and supported without replacing their freedom, judgement or responsibility. In cultural management, care concerns how relationships and organisational conditions are created, protected and repaired so that people can participate, contribute and develop without being reduced to instruments or depleted by the work they sustain.

In both contexts, care is more than kindness. It requires perception, judgement, boundaries, responsibility and the meaningful use of power. It asks what a particular person and situation require, what can and cannot be changed, whose agency must be protected or developed and what consequences different choices will create.

CARE CONNECTS THE FIELDS

**Care connects the two fields: it concerns how human beings are perceived and encountered, and how the relational and organisational conditions of their participation are created, protected and repaired.**

The Reader therefore moves repeatedly between personal experience, relationships, festival organisations, stakeholder ecosystems, communities, public institutions and wider social and ecological life. It begins with the human person not because care remains an individual matter, but because organisations and societies practise care only through people, relationships, decisions and structures. Personal attitude is the starting point; organisational and public conditions determine whether care becomes reliable, just and sustainable across time.

This combined perspective also explains the form of the publication. Existential thought resists the assumption that one predetermined answer can fit different persons and conditions. Instead, the Reader develops a way of perceiving and judging: a care-oriented mental map through which festival professionals can examine purpose, relationships, uncertainty, cost, expectations, power, participation and sustainability in their own contexts.

## One Orientation, Many Scales

The system described in this Reader is complex. Festivals involve many people, relationships, roles, structures, stakeholders, communities and living systems. Communication, cost, expectations, power,

participation, care and sustainability continually affect one another. Readers may therefore reasonably ask: How can I attend to all of this at once?

This Reader is intended primarily to help festival professionals develop a care-oriented way of seeing and a corresponding attitude towards their work. The emphasis is on understanding recurring principles rather than memorising a large number of separate techniques. Practical tools can support action; judgement is needed to recognise what care requires in each particular relationship, conflict or organisational condition.

The perspective developed here is less complicated than the range of its applications may initially suggest. The same basic principles recur at different scales: recognising the human being rather than reducing a person to a function; remaining curious about realities beyond one's own mental map; making relationships, conditions and power visible; asking who carries cost and who receives return; connecting responsibility with sufficient influence and support; respecting agency, distinctness and legitimate limits; and taking responsibility for repair when harm occurs.

**A COMMON ORIENTATION**

**Care offers a common orientation across different scales · the situations change, but the basic principles of seeing people, relationships, cost, return, power, responsibility, capacity and possibility remain.**

Care concerns human beings and begins in the way a person perceives, values and responds to another person. It becomes concrete in everyday encounters: how we listen, communicate, make decisions, recognise contribution, distribute cost and return, respect boundaries, use power and respond when a relationship is damaged.

For this reason, the Reader introduces relational principles first at the personal level. It uses situations that many people may recognise from family life, friendship, work and ordinary human relationships. These examples make the underlying dynamics visible before they are applied to festival practice. The aim is not to reduce organisations to personal relationships, but to understand the human processes from which organisational life is made.

Personal practice is necessary, but it is not sufficient. A festival cannot depend upon the goodwill, conscience or relational capacity of particular individuals alone. Caring judgement must also be translated into decisions, responsibilities, policies, procedures, budgets, working conditions, communication practices and organisational memory. This allows care to become more durable and less dependent upon who happens to occupy a role at a particular moment.

The movement is not only from the personal to the organisational. Organisational conditions also shape personal behaviour. A person may value care yet work within structures that reward urgency, conceal

cost, separate responsibility from authority or make attentive communication impossible. Conversely, well-designed structures can protect time for reflection, make contributions visible, support just decisions and help people act in accordance with values they might otherwise struggle to sustain. Personal practice and organisational form must therefore continually inform and correct one another.

From there, the field of attention expands. The festival relates to artists, employees, volunteers, audiences, funders, public authorities, partners and other stakeholders through particular people. These relationships form networks; repeated participation can develop belonging, community, shared responsibility and collective memory. Across time, the relational ecosystem created by a festival can contribute to wider cultural, social and ecological conditions.

**THE EXPANDING SCALE OF APPLICATION**

**Person → Relationship → Organisation → Stakeholder Relationships → Network → Community → Society and Living Systems.**

This sequence is not a rigid ladder. Every scale remains present within the others. Societal conditions shape organisations; organisational structures shape relationships; relationships shape people; and people can transform the conditions in which they participate. The sequence is a learning path: it allows readers to begin with recognisable human experience and gradually perceive the wider ecosystem created through many interconnected relationships.

The same principles do not change when the scale expands. What changes is the number of relationships and consequences that must be considered. In a conversation, care may require listening, clarifying meaning and recognising the other person's limits. In an organisation, the same orientation may shape a policy, budget, decision-making process or distribution of responsibility. Across stakeholder relationships, it may determine who can participate, whose knowledge is recognised and who can influence what is created. At community or societal level, it may guide how the festival contributes to shared capacity, cultural life and the living systems upon which continuation depends.

No reader is expected to apply every principle simultaneously. The first task is to notice differently. A change in perception can alter the questions a person asks; different questions can lead to different decisions; repeated decisions can become practices; practices can become organisational structures; and structures can gradually influence the wider ecosystem. The Reader therefore offers a lens rather than a complete set of instructions. One relationship, decision, procedure or recurring practice can be examined at a time. Care develops through repeated attention, judgement, action and repair—not through the immediate mastery of a complete system.

**FROM READING TO PRACTICE**

**Way of Seeing → Attitude → Practice.**

## How the Argument Develops

The chapters form a cumulative movement rather than a collection of separate subjects. Each chapter changes the reader's way of seeing and creates the question that the following chapter must answer. The movement begins with purpose, expands towards the festival ecosystem, establishes an existential account of human life and action, examines how relationships are made, defines care as a relational and organisational practice, and then follows its implications through community, power, democracy and sustainability. The conclusion returns to meaning and asks what possibility a festival can responsibly help bring into reality.

THE MOVEMENT OF THE READER

**Meaning and Purpose → Relational Ecosystem → Human Existence → Human Nature → Relationships → Care → Community → Domains of Care → Power → Democracy → Sustainability → Meaning.**

This is not only a linear progression. The argument is also circular. Meaning gives festival practice its direction. Care shapes the relationships through which that purpose is pursued. Power shapes the conditions under which people can participate, decide and act. Democracy concerns how that power and responsibility are shared. Sustainability asks what can continue across time without depletion. Meaning must then judge whether what continues still deserves to be sustained.

THE CIRCULAR ARGUMENT

**Meaning Gives Direction → Care Shapes Relationships → Power Shapes Conditions → Democracy Shares Responsibility → Sustainability Carries What Matters Across Time → Meaning Judges What Should Continue.**

### Chapter 1 — Why Do We Make Festivals?

The first chapter asks why festivals are made. It moves attention from producing an event towards creating meaning and distinguishes purpose from content, activity and performance indicators. Once purpose becomes the horizon against which festival practice is judged, the next question is what kind of ecosystem can bring that purpose into reality.

### Chapter 2 — The Festival as a Relational Ecosystem

The second chapter asks how a festival participates in cultural development through the ecosystem it creates. It moves the reader from seeing the festival as an event towards recognising a relational ecosystem that can inherit, interpret, practise and help transform culture. Because this ecosystem can either develop or deplete people, relationships, places and living systems, its cultural influence becomes a field of responsibility and leads to the question of how human beings act within it.

### Chapter 3 — Acting in an Unfinished World

The third chapter explains why the Reader turns to existential philosophy and psychology in order to understand the conditions under which human beings must judge, decide and act. Festival professionals work without complete knowledge, guaranteed outcomes or unlimited capacity. Uncertainty, paradoxes and dilemmas, and limits and limitations therefore shift attention from technical control towards responsible human judgement and raise the question of what kind of being can respond meaningfully within these conditions.

### Chapter 4 — Life as Dialogue

The fourth chapter asks what kind of being can respond to an unfinished world. Erich Fromm's account of distinctness and connection, Max Scheler's distinction between reality and possibility and Viktor E. Frankl's theory of meaning show how people can perceive possibilities and participate in what life becomes. This shifts the argument from human conditions towards human response and prepares the move into the particular relationships through which that response takes concrete form.

### Chapter 5 — How Relationships Are Made

The fifth chapter translates the existential foundation into a relational grammar: relationship equals communication, cost exchange and expectations across time. Beginning with a relationship between two parties, it makes visible how perception, value, capacity, trust, dependency, boundaries and conflict develop through ordinary interactions and become embedded in organisational conditions. Once these dynamics can be recognised, care must be defined as the orientation through which they are judged and shaped.

### Chapter 6 — Care as a Way of Relating and Organising

The sixth chapter defines care not simply as kindness, comfort or rescue, but as the relational and organisational practice through which the conditions of wellbeing are created, protected and repaired. This moves care from personal intention into repeated decisions and organisational structures. It then becomes necessary to ask how caring relationships grow beyond particular parties into belonging and community.

### Chapter 7 — When Does a Relational Ecosystem Become a Community?

The seventh chapter expands from particular relationships towards belonging and community. Belonging provides a legitimate place without requiring the loss of distinctness; community additionally requires shared practice, continuity, collective memory and shared responsibility. People must be able to determine their own meaningful responses and coordinate distinct contributions without a central authority assigning their roles or requiring sameness. This collective scale makes a synthesising framework of care necessary.

### Chapter 8 — The Domains of Care

The eighth chapter gathers the preceding principles into the relational, organisational, supportive, spatial and cultural domains of care. It shows where the same caring orientation becomes concrete and how judgement must consider agency, cost, return, capacity and consequence across domains. Each domain also raises the unavoidable question of power: who can define, decide, refuse and influence what follows?

### Chapter 9 — Power Is Already in the Relationship

The ninth chapter makes visible the power already shaping communication, cost exchange and expectations. It distinguishes power from official authority and follows the movement from the caring use of power towards enabling power, empowerment and a just and meaningful distribution of power. Once power is understood as relational capacity rather than domination alone, the argument must consider how agency, participation and responsibility can become part of democratic culture.

### Chapter 10 — Care, Participation and Democracy

The tenth chapter shows that recognition, judgement, boundaries, negotiation, dissent, responsibility and repair are also capacities of democratic life. It examines how authoritarian power may become meaningful through experiences of injustice, exclusion or powerlessness, and connects caring leadership with organised social agency as another possibility. Festivals, local authorities and communities can practise these capacities together, which raises the question of whether their effects can continue without depletion.

### Chapter 11 — Sustainability Without Depletion

The eleventh chapter adds repetition and time to wellbeing. It asks whether meaningful activity can continue without depleting the people, relationships, communities, places and living systems upon which it depends, and extends the relational framework towards ecological responsibility. Sustainability cannot decide what deserves to continue; the argument must therefore return to meaning.

### Conclusion — Meaning: Bringing Possibility into Reality

The conclusion returns to Scheler's distinction between reality and possibility and asks what a festival, within its particular power and limits, can responsibly help bring into reality. Care provides conditions for distinct contributions to meet, while meaning judges what deserves to be sustained, repaired, transformed or ended. Wider transformation, when possible, emerges through many proportionate contributions rather than heroic claims by a single festival.

## Scope and Purpose of the Reader

This Reader is not a comprehensive festival-management manual, a clinical or therapeutic guide, or a checklist that can determine the correct response to every situation. It does not replace the technical and professional knowledge required to plan, finance, govern, communicate, produce and evaluate a festival.

Its purpose is to provide an existential and care-oriented foundation through which those activities can be understood and judged. It invites festival professionals to consider not only whether something can be delivered, but what purpose it serves; what relationships and conditions make it possible; who participates in deciding it; who carries its costs and consequences; whose capacity develops or becomes depleted; and what kind of cultural, social and ecological world the practice helps create.

The Reader asks that this knowledge be placed within a wider responsibility towards cultural purpose, human dignity, relational wellbeing and living systems.

This Reader is a synthesis. It brings together the author's education and training, professional practice in cultural management and existential counselling, personal experience and a particular understanding of human life and society, and places them in dialogue with established ideas from philosophy and psychology. It is therefore not an academic monograph, a systematic review of research or a claim to present a definitive theory of care, and the connections and conclusions developed here are inevitably shaped by a particular mental map.

The Reader therefore does not ask to be accepted as a statement of absolute reality. Its interpretations should remain open to evidence, dialogue, disagreement and correction. They are offered as a basis for reflection: a perspective through which festival professionals can examine their own experience, test the proposed principles against different realities and develop responses appropriate to their particular relationships and conditions.

**PURPOSE OF THE READER**

**This reader seeks to humanise festival management by placing professional practice in the service of cultural purpose, human dignity, relational wellbeing and living systems.**

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# INTRODUCTION:
# READING FESTIVALS AS LIVING RELATIONAL ECOSYSTEMS

This Reader approaches festivals through the combined perspective of cultural management and existential counselling. The reasons for this interdisciplinary position and its limits are explained in About This Reader.

A festival is easy to describe as a programme. It has dates, venues, artists, audiences, partners, budgets and a sequence of activities. This description is necessary, but it is incomplete. A festival is also a temporary social and cultural environment in which people meet, work, wait, celebrate, disagree, remember and imagine. For a limited period it changes the rhythm of a place and the relationships that become possible within it.

Each edition of a festival creates a temporary social and cultural environment, but a recurring festival depends on—and gradually develops—a more persistent relational ecosystem. This ecosystem exists before, between and after individual editions. Across repeated cycles, relationships accumulate knowledge, trust, expectations, routines, dependencies, responsibilities and power. People and institutions may enter or leave, and formal structures may change, but the organisation carries relationships and conditions from one edition into the next. The temporary festival environment is therefore produced by a more enduring ecosystem.

The effects of an edition extend beyond this organising ecosystem. Audiences may carry memories and interpretations into their lives; artists may develop new relationships or directions; communities may experience changes in visibility, belonging or use of place; and material or ecological consequences may remain. These effects should not be confused with the ecosystem that produces the festival. The ecosystem refers to the continuing relationships and conditions through which recurring editions become possible; impact refers to what those editions generate or alter in the wider world.

To call the festival an ecosystem is not to claim that organisations are identical to natural systems. It is to direct attention to interdependence. No single role produces a festival alone. Artistic work depends on technical work; public participation depends on access and communication; organisational continuity depends on memory and care; cultural meaning depends on place, history and interpretation. Ecological conditions are not a backdrop but part of what enables and limits the gathering.

This perspective changes the central managerial question. Instead of asking only how to deliver the event, we ask what kind of ecosystem the festival creates through the way it is delivered. What forms of relationship become normal? Who is able to participate? Who holds uncertainty? Who has authority, and who carries consequences? What is strengthened through repetition, and what is slowly depleted?

The Reader follows the sequence why, how and what. It begins with purpose because methods cannot be evaluated without knowing what they are meant to serve. It then examines how people act under uncertainty, paradox and limits; how relationships and communication work; how care shapes power and conditions; and how belonging and participation can become meaningful without erasing difference. Only then does it turn, in Part II, to reflection on practice.

CENTRAL PROPOSITION

**A festival does not only present a programme. Through the way it is organised, it creates a relational ecosystem.**

## WHY CARE, AND WHY NOW?

Care has not entered cultural discourse by accident. Its growing visibility reflects a period in which social fragmentation, political instability, ecological crisis and the precarious conditions of cultural work have become increasingly difficult to ignore. The pandemic did not create these conditions, but it exposed them with unusual clarity. Artists, freelancers, producers and festival workers were among those whose livelihoods and professional identities became suddenly vulnerable. What had often been treated as a normal feature of cultural work appeared more clearly as a structural condition.

The crisis also revealed an imbalance in collective priorities. Societies possessed extensive systems for competition, security and emergency control, but the institutions and resources required to sustain health, solidarity, cultural life and collective wellbeing often proved fragile. For the cultural sector, the question was not only how to survive an interruption. It was what kind of world cultural work should help make possible, and what conditions would allow the people creating shared meaning to remain part of that world.

Across many parts of the world, political and economic priorities increasingly place financial interest, competition and strategic advantage before human and ecological wellbeing. Power is too often exercised as domination rather than as the capacity to create the conditions for meaningful coexistence. Human rights, cultural freedom, social justice and the urgent repair of damaged living systems compete for attention with demands for growth, security and control—and are frequently pushed further down the political agenda.

In such a period, festivals can acquire a significance that exceeds the programmes they present. At their best, they create temporary spaces in which another way of living together becomes imaginable and able to be experienced. People gather across differences, direct attention towards something they value, contribute to a shared event, encounter unfamiliar perspectives and experience forms of collective life that ordinary social structures do not always make possible. In this limited sense, festivals

can offer a form of lived utopia: not a perfect society or an escape from reality, but a temporary rehearsal of relationships, values and possibilities that do not yet sufficiently shape the wider world.

Festivals are not automatically caring or emancipatory. They can reproduce the same inequalities, exclusions, extractive practices and concentrations of power that characterise the societies around them. Their utopian potential depends upon how they are organised: whose voices shape the programme, whose labour carries it, who is able to participate, how authority is exercised, which costs are made invisible and how the human and ecological consequences of the event are addressed.

This is why care matters now. To include care as a value is to ask whether the temporary world created by a festival—and the more persistent ecosystem that sustains it—embodies the kind of culture the festival hopes to contribute to society. Care makes the festival's public purpose inseparable from its methods. It asks cultural organisations not only to represent dignity, justice, connection and ecological responsibility through their content, but to practise these values through their relationships, decisions, working conditions and use of resources.

A festival can therefore become more than a reflection of the world as it is. It can become a place where elements of a more caring culture are experienced, tested, revised and carried into wider social life. Repeated across time and connected through local, regional and international networks, such practices can influence organisational cultures, public expectations and cultural policy. The festival's contribution to wellbeing lies not only in the moments of joy, meaning or connection it offers, but in the forms of living together that it helps society learn.

Some cultural organisations moved beyond temporary emergency measures and began to examine how care might shape governance, programming, working conditions and community relationships. Practices that had previously existed in isolation acquired a shared language. Care gradually emerged not as another programme strand, but as a horizontal principle: a way of asking how cultural purpose is pursued, how power is exercised and what conditions cultural work creates for those involved.

The European Festivals Association's engagement with care, arts, wellbeing and mental health belongs to a wider field of work concerned with the conditions under which festivals, cultural workers, communities and their environments can flourish. The activities connected with this field do not all have the same institutional status. Some are initiated or coordinated directly by EFA; some are developed collaboratively with member festivals, invited experts or partner organisations; and others are European projects in which EFA participates as a consortium partner. Taken together, they constitute a developing ecosystem of inquiry, peer learning, experimentation and advocacy rather than a single EFA programme or the work of one working group.

EFA's engagement with care has developed from the inside out, beginning in 2022 with biennial wellbeing workshops for its own team and gradually expanding towards peer learning, projects and advocacy within the wider festival community. Within the spaces EFA convenes for its festival community, "The Time We Spend Together" began with a retreat hosted by Varna Summer International Music Festival in 2023 and has continued as a collaborative space for reflection on care, wellbeing and community. The "Share Care" workshop at the 2024 Arts Festivals Summit in Usedom, conceptualised and facilitated by Rarița Zbranca and Mahir Namur, focused on the systemic conditions of cultural labour. At the 2025 Arts Festivals Summit in Edinburgh, the "Festivals Care! Arts and Health" workshop, facilitated by Rarița Zbranca of the Cultural Centre Cluj with a contribution from Katey Warran, a researcher at the University of Edinburgh, examined the contribution of the arts to health and their impact on societal wellbeing within the framework of the Creative Europe-supported CARE — Culture for Mental Health project. EFA has also represented or carried these concerns into wider policy conversations, including the Mental Health Summit at the European Parliament. These activities are better understood as convening, peer learning and advocacy than as stand-alone projects owned solely by EFA.

A different category is formed by partnership projects. EFA is a partner in CARE — Culture for Mental Health, a Creative Europe-supported project coordinated by the Cluj Cultural Centre. Running from 2024 to 2027, CARE explores how engagement with arts and culture can support mental health and wellbeing among young people, working adults and people with disabilities. Within this partnership context, the Festivals Care! Working Group coordinated by EFA is contributing to the EFFE Seal Catalogue #2 on Arts, Health and Well-being. EFA's own and closely associated initiatives connect care with other parts of festival practice in different ways. The European Festivals Fund for Emerging Artists (EFFEA), an initiative of EFA, has produced a series of Duty of Care Protocols drawing on the residency experiences, reports and reflections of participating festivals and artists. Taken together, the protocols address issues including working conditions, power relations between artists and programmers, fair remuneration, inclusivity, wellbeing, sustainable touring and environmental responsibility. EFA's "Count Me In" campaign and report done in 2024 with the insight and support of Ceyda Berk-Söderblom – Arts manager, curator, and festival programmer specialising in social inclusion, diversity, and inclusion management – invited festivals to examine how diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility and belonging are addressed across decision-making, team structures, artistic programming, communication and outreach. Distinguishing these roles makes the wider picture clearer: EFA sometimes initiates, sometimes convenes or coordinates, and sometimes contributes as a partner to work led collectively with others.

EFA's work on environmental sustainability forms another essential part of this wider ecosystem. Through its "Up to Green" initiative, EFA offers learning and exchange on sustainable practices within

the festival sector in relation to wider European and international climate initiatives. This work has included the "Go Green, Festivals" campaign; annual sustainability workshops within the Arts Festivals Summit; the European Festivals Forest; collaboration with Pearle* on practical guidance concerning the European Green Deal and Live Performance Organisations; partnership with the EU Climate Pact; partnership with the New European Bauhaus; and its role as a co-initiator of Perform Europe, which supports fairer, greener and more inclusive models of cross-border touring. These initiatives approach environmental responsibility through policy, knowledge-sharing, practical experimentation and changes in festival practice rather than treating it as a separate technical concern.

Bringing this environmental work into the present Reader helps clarify the breadth of care. Care concerns the wellbeing of people and the quality of their relationships, but it also concerns the places, resources and living systems upon which those relationships depend. Social, organisational and ecological sustainability are not identical; nevertheless, they meet in a shared question: what and who is being depleted in order for cultural activity to continue? From this perspective, environmentally responsible practice is not an external obligation added to festival management. It is one dimension of taking responsibility for the complete ecosystem through which a festival becomes possible.

The EFFE Seal for Festival Cities and Regions initiative offers a particularly important bridge between festival practice, environmental sustainability and territorial policy. The "EFFE Seal Catalogue #1 on Environmental Sustainability" brings together practices, experiences and challenges reported by participating festivals, cities and regions during the 2023–2024 festival season. It organises them across six areas: policy, programming, operations, communications, experiments and innovative solutions, and challenges. The catalogue does not propose a universal model; it emphasises that its examples need to be understood within the geographical, social and economic contexts of the contributing cities and regions. It nevertheless makes different practices visible and creates a basis for exchange. It also demonstrates that environmental transformation cannot be carried by festivals alone. It requires relationships through which cultural actors and public authorities can connect festival knowledge with territorial responsibilities, resources, infrastructure and policy. This is especially relevant to EUFEAST, whose partnership structure brings cities and regions into direct cooperation with festivals and cultural stakeholders.

The EFFE Seal publication "Festivals in Context: The Role of the Arts in Local Cultural Policy", written by Elena Polivtseva, develops this festival–territory relationship further. Drawing on policy analysis, research and insights from sixteen local and regional cultural-policy contexts, it examines how cities and regions understand, support and value festivals. The publication situates festivals within pressures that include political instability, social polarisation, economic austerity and environmental urgency. It notes that culture is often recognised for its contributions to economic growth, wellbeing and social inclusion, and that festivals are asked to address local priorities ranging from sustainability and inclusion to

tourism and city branding. At the same time, it warns against reducing culture to an instrument serving objectives defined entirely by other policy fields and stresses the intrinsic value, freedom and integrity of artistic work. The task is therefore not simply to ask how festivals can deliver public-policy outcomes, but to create relationships in which festivals and public authorities can learn from one another and develop their territories without subordinating artistic practice to a purely instrumental logic.

These examples are directly relevant to the approach of this Reader. Festivals do not operate as isolated events. They exist within relationships involving artists, workers, audiences, communities, funders, public authorities, regional partners, international networks, places and living systems. Cities and regions do more than provide resources or permissions: their decisions help shape the conditions under which these relationships develop. Festivals, in turn, generate situated knowledge about participation, cultural meaning, community life and the environmental consequences of cultural production. A caring ecosystem requires this knowledge and power to circulate in both directions.

As a network, EFA's distinctive contribution lies in enabling such circulation, connection and advocacy. It can help practices and knowledge developed through care, wellbeing and environmental initiatives travel across its festival network, enter dialogue with cultural, health, education, social, ecological and policy networks, and become visible at European level. This movement is reciprocal: experiences from festivals, cities, regions and partnership projects can be translated into shared language, learning resources and policy arguments, while European debates, partnerships and opportunities can be carried back into the festival field. Through advocacy towards EU institutions and other decision-making arenas, EFA can help establish care, wellbeing and environmental responsibility not as marginal or temporary concerns, but as interconnected dimensions of cultural practice, capacity building and policy development.

Care can be understood as a living culture in another sense. Like a starter culture, an idea may begin in small spaces of experimentation. It develops through practice, adaptation and transmission. When people recognise a practice, give it language and share it, the practice can begin to alter a wider environment from within. Yet organisational culture does not spread automatically. It requires time, resources, reinforcement, accountability and a willingness to examine practices that contradict stated values.

When care is embedded in repeated festival practice, it can travel through the festival's wider relationships. A way of listening or sharing responsibility developed within a team may influence a partner organisation. An environmental experiment conducted by a festival may inform municipal infrastructure or regional policy. Shared experience may enter a professional network; recurring evidence may shape advocacy; and collective advocacy may contribute to regional, national or European cultural policy. Policy can, in turn, create stronger relational, organisational and ecological conditions for

festivals. Care thus moves across scales through reciprocal circulation rather than through a simple one-way progression.

FROM PROGRAMME TO CULTURE

**Care becomes culture when it repeatedly shapes governance, programming, working conditions, public practice and community relationships across time.**

# CHAPTER 1

## Why Do We Make Festivals?

*Purpose before technique*

The Introduction described the festival as a living relational ecosystem. Before examining that ecosystem, this chapter asks what it exists for. The question “Why do we make festivals?” can sound obvious. A music festival presents music; a heritage festival protects tradition; a city festival attracts visitors; a community celebration brings people together. Yet these answers usually describe content, function or expected benefit. They do not necessarily identify what organisers believe should become possible in human and cultural terms.

A useful definition of cultural management begins from this question of purpose. Cultural management can be understood as the practice of creating the conditions in which culture can develop. This definition does not begin with the tasks cultural managers perform. Producing an event, administering a budget, raising resources and communicating a programme are not ends in themselves. They are different ways of creating the conditions through which cultural expression, encounter, participation, interpretation and transmission become possible.

This distinction places cultural management beyond art production or event organisation without diminishing either activity. It asks cultural managers to understand the social, political, economic and ecological contexts in which cultural work takes place. It also asks them to examine what their work serves. A well-delivered event may still fail culturally if it closes inquiry, weakens relationships or treats participation only as consumption. Conversely, an apparently modest activity may have lasting cultural significance if it enables people to express, interpret or transmit something that could not otherwise enter public life.

The question of purpose asks what the festival is for beyond its own continuation. What change in experience, relationship, memory or public life would make the work worth doing? What would be absent if the festival did not exist? Who would notice the absence, and why? Purpose begins to emerge when the festival is understood as an answer to a situation rather than as a product seeking an audience.

A meaning-oriented approach does not assume that one universal purpose applies to every festival. Festivals may create spaces for artistic risk, celebration, mourning, dissent or the encounter between generations. Their purposes may conflict. A festival can serve artistic autonomy while also carrying public responsibilities; it can protect inherited practices while making room for reinterpretation.

Meaning is not a slogan that eliminates these tensions. It provides a horizon within which choices can be judged.

Purpose must also be distinguished from success indicators. Attendance, media visibility, tourism income and funding renewal may be important. They tell us whether certain objectives have been achieved, but they cannot by themselves tell us why those objectives matter. When indicators replace purpose, a festival can grow while its reason for existing becomes less clear. Continuation then risks becoming an end in itself.

A festival purpose is never realised by programme content alone. A festival that claims to strengthen community but exhausts its local partners contradicts its purpose through its method. A festival committed to artistic freedom may weaken that commitment if artists cannot question the conditions imposed on them. The ethical meaning of a festival is therefore carried not only by what it presents but by how it organises relationships.

The cultural manager is consequently involved in shaping more than a temporary programme. By deciding which practices receive attention, which relationships receive resources, whose knowledge is recognised and how people enter cultural processes, cultural management participates in shaping the conditions of cultural development itself. This is a form of responsibility on the cultural timeline: received forms are not simply preserved or discarded but interpreted and carried into possible futures.

Wellbeing enters here as a broad human and social orientation, not as a demand that festivals make everyone feel comfortable. Artistic and civic experiences may disturb, challenge or unsettle. Wellbeing concerns whether people and communities can live, participate and develop without losing dignity, distinctness or meaningful connection. Festival purposes can remain diverse, but the pursuit of those purposes should not systematically destroy the capacities on which cultural life depends.

This distinction protects art from being reduced to an instrument of wellbeing while also protecting people from being treated as instruments of art. The festival's specific purpose may be artistic, cultural or public. Care asks whether the way that purpose is pursued takes responsibility for its human, relational, organisational and ecological consequences.

**Pause for Reflection**
What does your festival seek to make possible through its artistic or cultural programme, and what broader human or social purpose does this serve?

How does the way you work with your team and stakeholders reflect that same purpose, and where might it contradict it?

If a festival's purpose is realised through the way it is pursued, the relationships and conditions through which it works become part of that purpose. The next chapter examines these relationships as a relational ecosystem: how it endures beyond each edition and how it takes part in shaping culture.

CHAPTER 1 — CARE LANDING

**A festival's purpose is realised not only through what it presents but through how it is made. Care asks whether the way a purpose is pursued takes responsibility for its human, relational, organisational and ecological consequences.**

# CHAPTER 2

## The Festival as a Relational Ecosystem

*The event is temporary; the conditions it creates endure*

The Introduction distinguished the temporary environment created by each festival edition from the more persistent relational ecosystem formed across recurring cycles. Chapter 1 then argued that a festival's purpose is realised not only through what it presents, but through the relationships and conditions by which that purpose is pursued. This chapter brings these two propositions together. It examines how a festival's recurring relational ecosystem participates in the production, transmission and transformation of culture—and why the festival's way of organising is itself a cultural practice.

Culture does not develop through isolated objects alone. It develops as people create, interpret, practise, transmit and revise ways of living and making meaning together. Language, embodied behaviour, aesthetic forms, practical knowledge, rituals and institutions carry accumulated experience across generations. Each generation receives this inheritance within new conditions and participates—consciously or otherwise—in deciding what will be preserved, reinterpreted, contested or left behind.

Culture should therefore not be understood as the simple opposite of nature, nor as one unified way in which a society thinks and feels. Human cultures emerge through relationships among people and through the ways people inhabit, interpret and transform the more-than-human world. They contain continuity and shared reference, but also disagreement, unequal power, loss and change. What a society inherits is never a single, innocent whole.

**WORKING UNDERSTANDING OF CULTURE**

**Culture is a living, relational process through which people inherit, create, practise, interpret and transform ways of living and making meaning together.**

Festivals take a temporary but active place within this movement. They bring inherited forms into present relationships and allow artistic work to encounter audiences, places, memories and contemporary questions. What is presented may affirm continuity, but it may also question inherited values, taboos and practices that have become exclusionary or harmful. Cultural transmission is not repetition alone. It includes interpretation, contestation and transformation.

**FESTIVAL AS A CULTURAL PROCESS**

**Cultural Inheritance → Present Encounter → Interpretation and Contestation → Transformation → Renewed Cultural Inheritance.**

This more persistent ecosystem is formed through continuing relationships among artists, organisers, workers, volunteers, audiences, public authorities, funders, cultural and educational institutions, civil-society organisations, local and regional communities, and national and international networks. It is also situated in relation to the places and living systems that host and support the festival. The organisation may have a legal boundary, but its relational ecosystem crosses that boundary and connects different geographical and institutional scales.

Through this ecosystem, a festival contributes to social culture in more than one way. Its artistic and cultural programme introduces works, stories, images, questions and experiences into public life. At the same time, the festival's way of organising models and reproduces particular ways of living and working together. How people are welcomed, heard, paid, recognised and involved in decisions; how authority is exercised; how conflict is addressed; how labour and resources are distributed; and how relationships with communities and places are sustained all become part of the festival's cultural contribution.

A festival therefore affects culture not only through what it presents but through the relationships and conditions it repeatedly creates. Its practices can reinforce existing cultural patterns or question and transform them. A festival may reproduce hierarchy, competition, exclusion and depletion while presenting progressive artistic content. Conversely, it may cultivate participation, reciprocity, dignity, ecological responsibility and the capacity to live with difference through the way it organises itself. Repetition gives these practices cultural force, whether or not that force is consciously intended.

A recurring festival can also become a point of connection among cultural scales. It can bring local knowledge and experience into regional, national and transnational conversations while translating wider artistic, social and policy debates into locally situated practice. Through partnerships, professional networks, advocacy platforms and European cooperation programmes, festivals may contribute to the language, priorities and development of cultural policy. Their practices can provide evidence, generate models, expose policy gaps and allow experience from particular places to influence wider institutional frameworks.

Participation in regional, national or international networks does not automatically give a festival—or the communities connected with it—meaningful influence over cultural policy. A festival may carry local experiences, stories and practices into wider professional and political conversations, but this raises several questions. Whose experience is being presented? Who has the authority to speak on behalf of a community? Does the community recognise itself in what is being said? And do the knowledge, opportunities and decisions produced through the network return to the people whose experience made them possible?

If local knowledge travels outward while recognition, influence and benefit do not travel back, the relationship becomes extractive. The local experience may increase the visibility of the festival or the

network without improving the conditions of the people from whom it was gathered. Meaningful participation therefore requires two-way movement: local experience should be able to influence wider decisions, while the knowledge, resources and opportunities created through those decisions should return to and strengthen the local ecosystem.

The question is therefore not only whether a festival participates in cultural networks or contributes to cultural policy. It is how that participation works, whose voices and interests it carries, and what kind of relationships and cultural practices it produces.

THREE CULTURAL PATHWAYS

**What a Festival Presents → Shapes Public Meaning**

**How a Festival Organises → Shapes Relational Culture**

**How a Festival Connects Places, Organisations and Networks → Can Shape Cultural Policy**

These three pathways show how a festival participates in cultural life, but they do not yet tell us what quality of relationships its ecosystem produces. The same relational network can enable participation, learning and cultural continuity, or it can make some contributions invisible, concentrate influence and transfer burdens to people and places with less power. Because a festival carries culture not only through its programme but through these relationships, the quality of the relationships becomes part of its cultural responsibility. This is where care becomes necessary.

A relational ecosystem is built through interdependence, but interdependence is not the same as equality. People may depend on one another while having very different capacities to shape the relationship. A director may depend on a freelance producer's knowledge, while the producer depends on the director for future work. A festival may depend on local trust, while residents have little influence over timing, noise or the use of space. Care becomes necessary because interdependence alone does not ensure recognition, reciprocity or a just distribution of influence and consequences.

This broader reading reveals work that organisational charts often miss. Introducing newcomers, remembering local sensitivities, calming conflict, translating between professional languages and noticing when someone is close to exhaustion may not belong to a formal job description. Nevertheless, these practices hold the ecosystem together. Their invisibility makes both the work and the worker vulnerable.

Ecosystems are also open. Weather, politics, funding, migration, technology, neighbourhood change and ecological limits affect what is possible. The festival cannot control this field, but it can decide whether to deny interdependence or work with it consciously. The aim is not harmony. Living systems include competition, conflict, breakdown and change. The aim is to create sufficient conditions for meaningful participation, learning and continuation without transferring hidden costs to those with the least power.

Care first appears here as an organisational and ecosystemic responsibility. It asks the festival to notice and take responsibility for the relationships, visible and invisible contributions, unequal capacities and wider conditions through which its purpose becomes possible. A festival does not become caring because its staff are kind. It becomes more caring when its practices and structures help people recognise consequences, share knowledge, connect authority with responsibility, protect boundaries and repair damage.

This is a working definition. The following chapters will make more precise what this responsibility requires, whose wellbeing and agency must enter the field of care, and how care becomes relational, organisational, cultural and ecological practice.

**WORKING DEFINITION**

**Care is the way a festival takes responsibility for the relationships and conditions through which its purpose becomes possible.**

**Pause for Reflection**

How does your artistic programme preserve, question or reinterpret the culture around it?

Imagine your festival could not take place for two years. Which relationships would continue without the event, and which would fade?

What ways of living and working together does your festival reinforce or make possible through the way it is organised?

The next chapter begins with the people who carry this responsibility: the uncertain, paradoxical and limited conditions in which they act, and the human capacities through which they can respond.

**CHAPTER 2 — CARE LANDING**

**The event is temporary, but the relationships and conditions it shapes can outlast it. A festival's way of organising is itself a cultural practice, and care takes responsibility for the relationships through which its purpose becomes possible.**

# CHAPTER 3

## Acting in an Unfinished World

*Uncertainty, paradoxes and dilemmas, limits and limitations*

Chapter 2 described care as the way a festival takes responsibility for the relationships and conditions through which its purpose becomes possible. To understand what this responsibility requires, we first need to understand the people who carry it: the conditions they face and their capacity to respond. Why should a Reader for festival professionals turn to existential thought? Festival management is often approached through production, finance, scheduling, marketing, risk, governance and evaluation. These fields are indispensable. Festivals must use resources responsibly, fulfil obligations, coordinate complex work and remain economically and operationally viable. Yet management becomes incomplete when the efficiency of the work is treated as more important than the wellbeing and agency of the people through whom the work becomes possible.

Some inherited and dominant managerial logics view an organisation as a mechanism and people primarily as the functions required to operate it. Workers become resources, roles become replaceable units and relationships are valued mainly according to their contribution to delivery. This perspective can produce impressive short-term efficiency while concealing exhaustion, dependency, fear, lost meaning and the unequal distribution of cost. It can also mistake human variability, vulnerability and freedom for problems to be controlled.

An existential approach begins from another direction. It asks what kind of life human beings live, what kind of beings they are and what conditions allow them to perceive, choose, participate, develop and take responsibility without being reduced to instruments for someone else's purpose. This does not make efficiency, professional discipline or the business realities of festivals unimportant. It places them within a larger question: efficiency for what, achieved through which conditions and at whose cost?

The relationship between effective delivery and human wellbeing is therefore a paradox, not a choice between caring for people and accomplishing the work. A festival that ignores delivery cannot sustain its purpose; a festival that secures delivery by depleting or instrumentalising people contradicts the human and cultural purpose it claims to serve. Care keeps both realities in view. It seeks ways of organising in which people can contribute effectively while retaining dignity, agency, boundaries, meaningful connection and the capacity to continue.

Festival professionals also act without complete knowledge. They plan for audiences they have not yet met, artistic processes whose outcomes cannot be guaranteed, weather that may change, partnerships

that may evolve and social conditions that can shift quickly. Human action is always directed towards a future that is partly open. Planning matters precisely because certainty is unavailable. But planning alone cannot answer how people should judge, choose and respond within what remains uncertain.

MANAGEMENT PARADOX

**Effective delivery matters · Human wellbeing and agency matter · Care does not choose one against the other · It asks how purpose can be realised without reducing people to functions or transferring hidden costs.**

Existential thought begins with two closely related questions: What is human life like? And what kind of being is the human being who lives it? The first question concerns the conditions of existence. Human life is unfinished and uncertain; it confronts us with paradoxes and dilemmas that cannot always be resolved, and with limits and limitations that shape what is possible.

The second question concerns the human capacity to respond. Human beings do not merely undergo these conditions. They can perceive possibilities, take distance from immediate reactions, exercise judgement, make decisions, develop capacities, assume responsibility and bring something into reality that did not exist before.

This Reader approaches these questions as practical lenses for festival work. They are not included to provide an exhaustive account of existential philosophy or psychology. They help us distinguish the kinds of situations we face, understand the human capacities those situations require and examine the relational and organisational conditions through which responsible action becomes possible. Section 3.1 considers what human life is like through three universal existential issues: uncertainty; paradoxes and dilemmas; and limits and limitations. Section 3.2 asks what kind of being can respond to these conditions through judgement, decision, responsibility and action.

CHAPTER 3 OVERVIEW

**3.1 What Is Human Life Like? · 3.1.1 Uncertainty — What cannot yet be known or has not yet been decided · 3.1.2 Paradoxes and Dilemmas — What cannot be reduced to one simple answer · 3.1.3 Limits and Limitations — What must be accepted and what can be changed · 3.2 What Kind of Being is the Human Being? — How we judge, decide, take responsibility and act.**

## 3.1 What Is Human Life Like?

Human life unfolds without complete certainty, simple answers or unlimited freedom. We act towards a future that remains partly open, encounter realities that must be held together rather than reduced to one side, and live within conditions that both restrict and enable what is possible. This section examines these three universal dimensions of existence—uncertainty, paradoxes and dilemmas, and limits and

limitations—not as abstract philosophical subjects, but as conditions within which festival professionals must perceive, judge, decide and act.

### 3.1.1 Uncertainty

Human life is filled with uncertainty. We cannot know the next moment with complete certainty, guarantee how other people will respond or control all the consequences of our actions. The lived experience of uncertainty is anxiety. Anxiety is therefore a constant condition of human existence, although it is not always consciously felt and does not remain at the same level of intensity.

Human beings are also free. In existential thought, freedom begins when a person has a choice: more than one possible response is available, and the person can decide which one to realise. Each choice opens a possibility while leaving others unrealised, and no decision can guarantee its own success. Freedom therefore produces another continuing source of uncertainty. Søren Kierkegaard, a Danish philosopher and theologian, names this relationship directly through the formulation “anxiety is the dizziness of freedom”: we experience anxiety because possibilities are open, because we must choose and because choosing makes us responsible for a future that remains uncertain.

External openness and mental uncertainty should nevertheless be distinguished. External openness belongs to a world whose future cannot be fully known or controlled. Mental uncertainty concerns how the person relates inwardly to the possibilities, questions and conditions within that open world. The two are connected, but they are not identical.

Through what Viktor E. Frankl, the founder of logotherapy (meaning-oriented psychotherapy), calls the noetic dimension—the specifically human capacity for self-distancing, judgement and responsible choice—a person can take the more demanding path of working consciously with uncertainty. They can accept what cannot presently be changed, decide where choice is possible and reflectively adopt values that provide direction without pretending to guarantee the future. They can also distinguish uncertainties that require attention from those that are irrelevant, unnecessary or beyond their responsibility, and focus on the questions to which they can meaningfully respond. In this way, the person narrows the possibilities that must be held in mind and can reduce mental uncertainty up to a certain extent. They may be able to say, “I know what matters, what is mine to do and how I intend to respond.” This does not eliminate the openness of the world or the anxiety that accompanies freedom. It gives attention and action a direction.

There is also an easier route. A person can adopt a fatalistic explanation, remain loyal to ready-made social patterns, or submit judgement to a doctrine or authority that decides in advance what is true, valuable and required. Fatalism can reduce the burden of uncertainty by presenting what happens as already determined; obedience can reduce the burden of freedom by transferring judgement and

responsibility to someone else. Because both can offer relief from anxiety, people may sometimes prefer submission to the more demanding work of reflection, decision and responsibility. Authoritarian leaders may exploit this tendency by joining dogmatic certainty with obedience: they offer simple explanations, define which possibilities may be considered and present compliance as protection from an uncertain world. Dogma and submission then reinforce one another—not because every follower lacks judgement, but because the promise of certainty can make the surrender of judgement feel safe or meaningful.

This observation does not apply to every religious commitment or inherited tradition. Faith, tradition and shared principles can also be examined, interpreted and freely affirmed. Nor is existential anxiety the only reason people support authority or authoritarian leaders. Material interests, identity, fear, resentment, social pressure and experiences of injustice may also be involved. Yet the largely unconscious wish to escape the anxiety inherent in freedom may be especially powerful because it can operate beneath and reinforce these more visible motives. A doctrine or authority that offers certainty can relieve the person of the burden of judging among possibilities, making decisions and carrying responsibility for an uncertain outcome. The relevant distinction is therefore whether a belief or authority supports the person's capacity to judge and take responsibility, or replaces that capacity with ready-made certainty and obedience.

The wellbeing proposed in this Reader follows the first path. It is not tranquillity obtained by surrendering freedom to a group, doctrine, authority or inherited social pattern. It is the capacity to remain a distinct and responsible participant in life: to reflect, judge and choose, and to develop values and commitments that orient freedom without abolishing it.

Freedom therefore requires courage: not the absence of anxiety, but the willingness to judge, choose and take responsibility without transferring one's freedom to a ready-made answer or an unquestioned authority. Courage allows a person to remain open to uncertainty while giving their actions a consciously chosen direction.

In a festival, this principle becomes relational and organisational. Caring leadership does not remove uncertainty by deciding everything for other people. It creates sufficient clarity, safety and support while preserving meaningful fields of individual freedom. It enables artists, team members, volunteers and partners to exercise judgement, propose possibilities, question decisions and assume responsibilities appropriate to their capacities. Encouragement is therefore more than reassurance. It is a relational use of power that helps another person find the courage to exercise their own freedom. Later chapters develop this relationship among care, power and empowerment in greater depth.

**Pause for Reflection**

When a situation is uncertain, where do you look for an answer that would spare you from deciding: a rule, a precedent, someone with more authority, or “the way festivals are done”? When has relying on it supported your judgement, and when has it replaced it?

#### *3.1.1.1 Anxiety as an Existential Paradox*

Anxiety is not a malfunction to be eliminated. As the previous section showed, it cannot be removed completely because uncertainty and freedom are continuing conditions of human existence. Yet anxiety is uncomfortable, and a person who experiences it without understanding its existential function may begin to treat the feeling itself as a threat. They may become anxious about being anxious. This fear of anxiety can intensify attention to bodily sensations and anticipated dangers, creating an escalating cycle in which anxiety appears to confirm that something is wrong. When this pattern becomes persistent and disruptive, it may contribute to clinically significant anxiety and require professional support.

Understanding anxiety as part of human existence can interrupt this cycle. The aim is not to glorify suffering or leave harmful anxiety untreated. It is to distinguish the anxiety that accompanies freedom, responsibility and meaningful possibility from anxiety that has exceeded a person’s present capacity and begun to restrict life. Anxiety should therefore be understood, given direction and, where necessary, supported—not treated as evidence that the person or their freedom is malfunctioning.

The Yerkes–Dodson curve, named after the psychologists Robert M. Yerkes and John D. Dodson, helps make this paradox visible. Anxiety-related activation can support attention, presence and performance up to an optimal level. Too little activation may leave a person below their capacity; too much can overwhelm the capacities required for action.

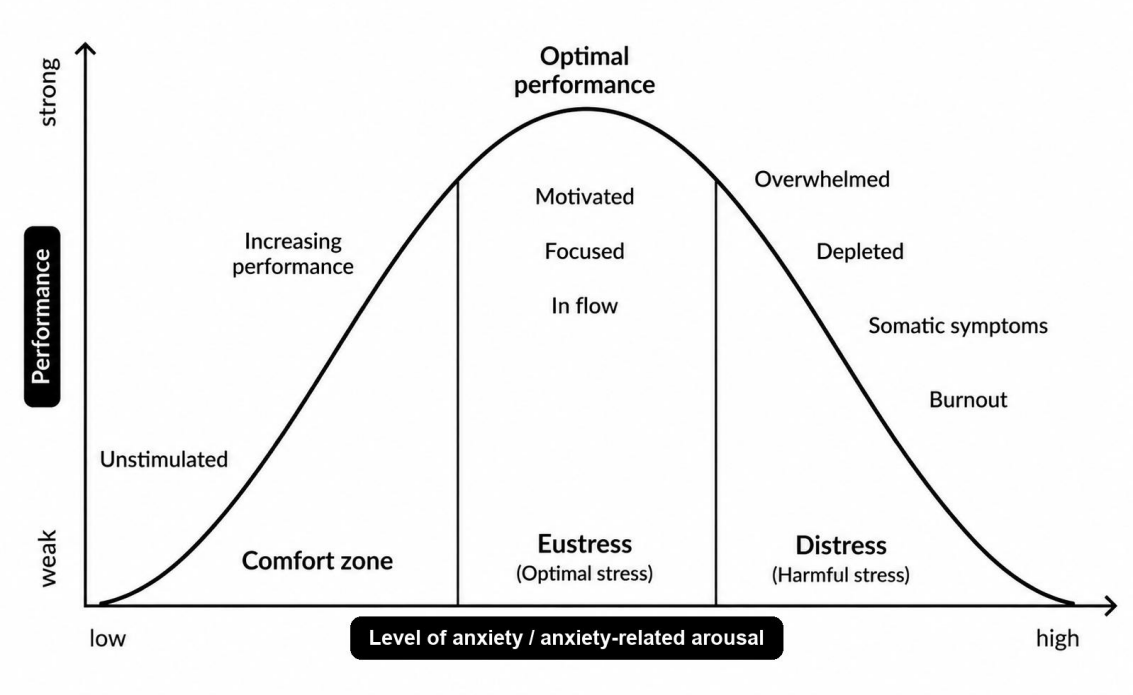



*Figure 1. The Yerkes–Dodson curve: performance in relation to activation. Anxiety-related arousal may contribute to this activation; anxiety and stress are examined separately below.*

A performer waiting to enter the stage makes the curve concrete. The outcome cannot be guaranteed: the performer may forget a line, miss a note, lose contact with the audience, be judged unfavourably or encounter something unexpected. If anxiety were only destructive, it would be difficult to understand how anyone could perform. Yet a workable degree of anxiety can heighten attention, sharpen perception, intensify emotion and make the performer more present to the body, the other performers, the audience and the unfolding moment. What everyday language sometimes calls excitement is often anxiety experienced within a meaningful possibility. Beyond the person's present capacity, however, the same activation can narrow attention, disrupt coordination and impair performance.

Anxiety and stress should not be treated as synonyms. Anxiety is the lived experience of uncertainty, possibility and anticipated risk. Stress is an internally generated psychophysiological tension through which the organism mobilises itself to realise a want, protect something valued or turn intention into action. It heightens sensitivity to relevant information, prepares the nervous system and body for movement and directs energy towards a target. In this sense, stress is not simply an effect imposed upon a passive person from outside. It is part of the organism's motivational mechanism.

An external demand, pressure or workload can activate stress, but only through the person's internal relation to it. A request from a funder, a deadline or an artistic standard may become an inner expectation: I want to meet this demand, avoid its consequences, protect my role, fulfil my commitment or prove that I am capable. A technician facing a compressed but predictable schedule may therefore

experience stress even when little is uncertain, because the body is mobilising to meet an internalised goal. A performer may simultaneously experience stress as the body prepares to perform and anxiety because the reception and outcome remain uncertain.

Following Hans Selye, stress research distinguishes eustress, the form of stress that mobilises a person towards purposeful action, from distress, the form that overwhelms capacity and remains unresolved. When mobilisation can become proportionate and purposeful action, stress functions as eustress: attention sharpens, energy receives direction and the tension can move towards resolution. When action is blocked, the target is impossible, several wants pull in incompatible directions or the demand exceeds available capacity, the mobilisation remains unresolved and can become distress. Like anxiety, stress is therefore not inherently a malfunction to be eliminated. It must be understood and resolved: by acting towards a chosen and attainable aim, by changing the conditions that block responsible action, or by reconsidering and genuinely releasing an expectation whose cost should not or cannot be carried. Anxiety may generate stress, and unresolved stress may intensify anxiety, but the two processes remain distinct.

The same broad performance principle can nevertheless be observed in relation to both. The Yerkes–Dodson relation concerns performance and physiological activation rather than anxiety itself. Read here as an interpretive aid, the figure introduced above helps show how the activation accompanying anxiety—or the stress through which the organism mobilises a want into action—may remain too low to engage capacity, become workable and energising, or rise into harmful distress. On the left side, a person remains below present capacity: choosing only the familiar, carrying little responsibility and attempting nothing whose outcome genuinely matters. This may feel comfortable, but perception, engagement and performance remain low because capacities are not being called into use.

If this pattern continues, comfort becomes more than rest; it becomes withdrawal from possibility. Work grows repetitive and boring. Days may remain busy while feeling empty. Frankl described the deeper form of this condition as the existential vacuum: a loss of experienced meaning that emerges when a person cannot see what their life asks of them or how they might answer. Courage, like a muscle, weakens when it is not exercised. Each avoidance can make the next challenge feel larger, gradually increasing the person's dependence on the comfort zone while narrowing the field in which they exercise freedom, develop capacity and realise meaningful possibilities.

As a person moves towards the middle of the curve, anxiety and the related activation may rise because they are approaching the edge of what they can presently do. Here manageable stress and anxiety can support engagement: attention sharpens, energy is mobilised and the person becomes more fully involved. Choices become actions and abilities are exercised. Effort and responsibility produce learning, and a meaningful possibility can take form in the world. This does not mean glorifying discomfort.

Courage is not the absence of anxiety. It is choosing and acting despite anxiety in order to realise something meaningful.

The right side of the curve carries the opposite danger. When uncertainty, demand and responsibility exceed a person's present capacity—or continue without sufficient authority, information, resources, support and recovery—the stress response can become distress and anxiety can become overwhelming. Perception contracts, judgement weakens and performance declines. Prolonged, this can produce physical symptoms, burnout or collapse. What appears to be courage may then be a refusal to recognise limits, while what is described as development may in fact be depletion.

This overload may be imposed by conditions: insufficient funding, understaffing, insecure contracts, compressed schedules, unrealistic expectations or responsibilities assigned without adequate authority and resources. But it may also be self-generated. A person may not recognise their limits, may treat every expansion of capacity as proof that still more should be possible or may seek achievement, recognition and meaning through continually increasing effort. In practice, these two sources often reinforce one another. An under-resourced organisation can survive by relying on people who are strongly inclined to carry more, while those people can interpret the organisation's dependence upon them as evidence of their commitment, value or indispensability.

Both tendencies are common in cultural work because people often believe deeply in what they are doing. They experience their work as socially necessary, artistically meaningful or capable of contributing to communities. This meaning can sustain resilience, but it can also make refusal difficult. Workers and leaders may repeatedly compensate for inadequate resources with their own time, health and relationships, taking pride in achieving a great deal with very little. A temporary act of commitment can gradually become an organisational expectation: scarcity is normalised, invisible sacrifices become part of the operating model and the most committed people carry the cost of continuity.

This pattern is intensified by a wider economic culture that equates success with continuous growth: larger audiences, more productions, greater visibility, wider reach, more partnerships and more measurable impact. Festivals and their makers may internalise these demands even when funders or markets do not state them explicitly. Last year's exceptional effort becomes this year's baseline. Expansion is interpreted as vitality, while remaining at an appropriate scale may be experienced as failure. Care requires questioning this logic. The relevant measure is not how much more can be extracted from people and resources, but what scale and rhythm allow the festival to fulfil its purpose without depleting the human, relational, financial and ecological conditions on which its continuation depends. When these conditions deteriorate, reducing the festival's scale, frequency or operational demands should therefore remain a legitimate option. Becoming smaller for a period may protect people, relationships, resources and future capacity more effectively than maintaining visible growth or

continuity at any cost. Such a decision is not necessarily a retreat from purpose. It may be the most responsible way of sustaining that purpose under changed conditions.

The location of these zones varies with the person, task, experience, health, resources and context. The curve cannot be used by managers to calculate an ideal degree of anxiety or stress for someone else or to justify pressure. Its organisational lesson is different: care should not keep people permanently within a comfort zone, because doing so can deprive them of agency, development and meaning; nor should it leave people caught in unresolved mobilisation that becomes distress or exceeds their capacity. Care creates conditions in which people can approach meaningful difficulty with sufficient clarity, authority, resources, support, boundaries and recovery. It also helps them clarify the wants and expectations mobilising their stress, decide which should become action, change conditions that block responsible action and release demands whose costs should not be carried. In this way, care distinguishes anxiety that accompanies meaningful possibility from anxiety unnecessarily produced by poor organisation, and eustress that directs capacity towards action from distress that traps the organism in unresolved tension.

For festival work, this model must be read relationally and organisationally. A demanding artistic process may involve enlivening anxiety and eustress when people understand why it matters and have the skill, trust, time, authority and support to turn commitment into action. The same process may become distress when roles are unclear, decisions are arbitrary, resources are missing, goals conflict or refusal carries a disproportionate cost. Festival managers therefore have two connected responsibilities: not to maintain preventable conditions that generate unnecessary uncertainty or trap people in unresolved demands, and to help people meet the unavoidable anxiety and proportionate stress of meaningful work without either retreating into underuse or being pushed into depletion.

**ANXIETY PARADOX**

**Anxiety and Stress are Related but Not Identical · Too Little Challenge can Produce Boredom, Underuse and Existential Vacuum · Workable Anxiety and Stress Can Awaken Attention, Courage, Agency and Performance · Distress Can Overwhelm and Deplete · Care ≠ Keeping People in the Comfort Zone · Care ≠ Pushing People into Distress · Care Supports Meaningful Challenge within Developing Capacity.**

**Pause for Reflection**

Looking at your current work, where are you working below your capacity, where are you meaningfully stretched, and where are you overloaded? Where you are overloaded, how much comes from the conditions you work in, and how much from your own tendency to take on more?

#### *3.1.1.2 Decision Transforms Uncertainty*

Decision is central because it transforms the relationship between freedom, possibility and anxiety. Before a decision, anxiety concerns which possibility to choose: Which direction is right? What will be lost? Can responsibility for the choice be accepted? The mind moves among futures that remain simultaneously open.

A decision closes some possibilities and commits to another. It does not make the outcome certain. It creates a different kind of certainty: direction, commitment and responsibility. After the decision, anxiety takes a new form. The question is no longer only which possibility to choose, but whether the chosen possibility can be realised. Can the plan be carried out? Will others participate? Will changing conditions permit success?

Planning is one of the principal tools through which people and organisations improve the quality of these decisions. It does not decide in their place, and it cannot guarantee that a decision will be right. It creates a structured process for examining reality and possibility before committing to action. Planning makes assumptions discussable, brings relevant knowledge into view, connects choices to purpose and enables alternatives and consequences to be compared. In this sense, planning is not opposed to freedom or improvisation. It helps freedom become informed, directional and responsible.

Strategic planning can resolve or reduce many avoidable uncertainties. Vision clarifies the future the festival seeks to contribute to. Mission clarifies why the organisation exists, whom it serves and what contribution is distinctively its own. Aims and objectives translate purpose into priorities and observable commitments. Values clarify the principles that should guide choices when more than one course of action remains possible. An honest assessment of strengths and weaknesses shows what the organisation can presently carry and where capacity must be developed or support sought. Attention to risks and opportunities prepares the organisation for plausible changes instead of treating every disruption as unforeseeable.

Stakeholder thinking adds a relational dimension to this clarity. It asks whose knowledge is needed, who will be affected, who holds authority or resources and who carries risk. It also asks what kinds of relationships the festival seeks to build: with artists, workers and audiences; with public authorities, funders and partners; and with local communities, places and wider networks. Defining these intended relationships does not control other people or predetermine every encounter. It clarifies the organisation's relational commitments and provides a basis for deciding how participation, communication, responsibility and power should be organised.

A plan therefore creates several forms of provisional certainty. It clarifies purpose, direction and priorities; the criteria and capacities on which decisions rest; and the relationships, responsibilities and foreseeable risks involved. It also makes the remaining uncertainty more precise. The organisation can

distinguish what has been decided from what remains open, what can be prepared from what requires adaptation and what must be accepted because it cannot be controlled. Planning reduces uncertainty most responsibly when plans remain guides rather than guarantees and when changing information can lead to review, learning and revision.

PLANNING AND DECISION

**Planning gathers knowledge, clarifies purpose, examines capacity, risks, opportunities and relationships, and makes alternatives comparable → Decision chooses a direction and creates commitment.**

EXISTENTIAL DECISION CYCLE

**Freedom → Possibilities → Uncertainty → Anxiety → Decision → Provisional Certainty → Action → New Conditions → New Uncertainty**

Festival organisations move through this cycle continuously. Their wellbeing does not depend on eliminating uncertainty, but on creating decision mechanisms through which possibilities can be examined, choices can be made, responsibilities can be assigned, decisions can be communicated and new information can lead to review. When decision-making remains unclear, uncertainty and anxiety are transferred through the organisation—usually towards those with the least authority.

Decision creates several possible forms of certainty. Decisional certainty clarifies what has been chosen. Procedural certainty clarifies how the choice will be implemented and reviewed. Relational certainty clarifies who is responsible, who can ask, challenge or refuse and how people will be supported. Ethical certainty clarifies which values will guide the organisation even when the outcome cannot be guaranteed.

**Pause for Reflection**

Think of a situation in your festival work in which uncertainty made you anxious. How did making a decision affect your anxiety, and what remained uncertain afterwards?

### *Participation, Authority and Shared Clarity*

Planning clarifies possibilities and decision chooses a direction. Within a festival organisation, however, a decision becomes collective action through the relationship among participation, authority and shared clarity.

If everyone is invited to contribute but nobody knows who has the authority to decide, discussion may continue while responsibility becomes so widely dispersed that no one can act or be held accountable. If a person with authority decides without listening to those who possess relevant knowledge or will carry

the consequences, the decision may be faster but less informed, less just and more difficult to implement.

Care does not require everyone to decide everything. The appropriate form of participation depends on the nature and consequences of the decision. People should be able to contribute in proportion to their relevant knowledge, responsibility and exposure to its consequences. At the same time, it should be clear who will make the final decision, within what limits and with what accountability.

An urgent safety decision during a performance cannot wait for consensus among everyone present. The person authorised to stop the performance must be known and able to act. A decision about working hours, fee policies or accessibility arrangements has a different character. It should draw upon the experience of those who will work under these conditions, carry their costs or encounter their consequences.

The clarity created through a decision must also become available to the people whose actions depend upon it. A decision known only to the person who made it does not reduce uncertainty for anyone else. People need to understand what has been decided, what remains open, what they can rely upon, how the decision affects their responsibilities and where questions or unforeseen consequences can be raised.

The same decision may not create the same degree of certainty for everyone. What feels like freedom to improvise for a director may feel like exposure to a freelance worker whose income, reputation or access depends on the outcome. Communication must therefore occur in time, through accessible language and channels, and with enough specificity for those affected to understand the decision's implications and remaining uncertainties.

Care works from the system to the person and back again. It reduces avoidable uncertainty through clear decisions, defined authority and accessible communication; notices how the remaining uncertainty is experienced by particular people; and uses feedback to test whether clarity, agency and capacity have actually been created.

This does not mean protecting people from every form of anxiety or deciding everything for them. Caring organisation creates sufficient clarity for people to exercise judgement and assume responsibility without being abandoned inside preventable confusion.

**PARTICIPATION, AUTHORITY AND SHARED CLARITY**

**Participation brings relevant knowledge and consequences into the decision · Authority makes responsible action possible · Communication makes clarity relationally available · Feedback tests its effect.**

DISTINCTION AND RESPONSE — UNCERTAINTY

**Uncertainty requires clarity about what can be known, decided, planned or accepted.**

**Pause for Reflection**

When a decision feels clear to you, how do you check whether the people affected have the clarity they need to act?

### 3.1.2 Paradoxes and Dilemmas

Uncertainty is not the only universal condition of human life. Life is also structured through dualities, and these dualities continually confront human beings with paradoxes and dilemmas.

A duality consists of two distinct but interdependent parts of a whole. Each exists and becomes intelligible in relation to the other. The familiar image of yin and yang makes this structure visible. Darkness exists in relation to light, and light exists in relation to darkness; night and day form a cycle in which each gives way to the other. Good and evil are likewise conceptually interdependent: without the concept of good, the concept of evil could not exist, and without the concept of evil, the concept of good could not exist.

Similar dualities can be recognised in body and mind, inner world and outer world, giving and receiving, cost and return, and transmission and perception. Happiness and unhappiness, health and illness, and success and failure also become intelligible through their relation to one another. Duality is therefore not a problem to be solved by eliminating one side. It is a fundamental structure through which reality and human experience acquire distinction and meaning.

Human beings do not merely observe these dualities from outside. They live within the tensions they produce. We want to be distinct individuals and to experience connection. We need stability and must remain open to change. We plan because we need direction and improvise because reality cannot be completely predicted. We need freedom, yet every choice brings responsibility and consequences. We need to receive care, yet we also develop through carrying cost and taking responsibility. We want festivals to grow, while growth may deplete the people, relationships, places and living systems on which their continuation depends.

These are paradoxes. A paradox emerges when two apparently opposing requirements are simultaneously present and cannot be adequately addressed by simply eliminating one of them. Its tension cannot be permanently resolved by choosing one pole as universally correct. A festival needs both planning and improvisation, continuity and renewal, artistic freedom and organisational responsibility, individual distinctness and collective coordination. The appropriate relationship between the two sides must be judged again within each concrete situation.

A dilemma arises when a person must decide between possibilities that contain competing values, needs, benefits, costs or consequences. Both alternatives may represent something important, and neither may offer a cost-free result. A dilemma is not the same as indecision. The dilemma exists in the structure of the situation; indecision is one possible response to it.

A dilemma therefore requires both decision and a dialectical approach. The decision-maker must resist reducing the situation to a simple opposition in which one side is entirely right and the other entirely wrong. They must recognise what each alternative protects, what each sacrifices, whose wellbeing and agency each affects, and what consequences each transfers to others. The purpose is not always to find an equal compromise. It is to perceive the whole tension and identify the most meaningful possibility available within the actual conditions. This may mean giving priority to one alternative, combining elements of both, sequencing them over time or creating a third possibility that was not initially visible.

A festival director may face a dilemma between maintaining an ambitious programme and protecting the team from depletion. Cancelling artistic work may undermine the festival's purpose, while continuing unchanged may exhaust the people who make that purpose possible. A dialectical response asks whether the programme can be reduced, rescheduled, differently resourced or reorganised so that artistic purpose and human sustainability are not treated as mutually exclusive. If no such synthesis is possible, a decision must still be made and responsibility taken for the costs it creates.

The human mind often makes these tensions more difficult. It works in some respects like a camera: when attention focuses sharply on one point, the surrounding field becomes less distinct. Under anxiety, desire, pressure or conflict, a person may concentrate on one side of a paradox and lose sight of the other. A manager focused on artistic quality may stop perceiving exhaustion in the team. A person focused on protecting another may overlook how repeated protection prevents that person from developing capacity. Someone focused on participation may neglect the need for a clear and timely decision; someone focused on efficiency may cease to perceive the knowledge, agency and dignity of those affected.

When one side is treated as the complete truth, the neglected side does not disappear. Its costs and consequences emerge elsewhere. Unlimited flexibility can destroy continuity. Excessive stability can prevent adaptation. Giving without receiving can lead to depletion and dependency. Receiving without contributing can weaken capacity and value. Freedom without accepted responsibility transfers costs to other people, while responsibility imposed without freedom undermines agency and meaning.

Dilemmas can lead to indecision when a person treats every loss as proof that a decision must be wrong, or waits for an option without cost to appear. Yet postponement does not suspend the situation. It prolongs uncertainty, increases anxiety and may transfer costs to other people. Within an organisation, delayed decisions can prevent planning, unsettle expectations, obstruct the allocation of resources and

leave responsibility unclear. The problem is not the existence of the dilemma but the failure to engage with it and decide.

Human beings are not, however, completely determined by this tendency to narrow their attention. As discussed later in relation to Frankl, the specifically human or noetic dimension enables a person to take a position towards their immediate psychological and physical reactions. Through self-distancing, a person can notice the side towards which they are automatically drawn, recognise the side they have excluded and examine the situation from more than one perspective. They can ask not only, “What do I want?” or “What do I fear?” but also, “What does this situation require of me?” and “What is the best possibility currently available for all those affected?”

This makes a dialectical attitude possible. A dialectical attitude does not mean remaining indefinitely in the middle, mechanically balancing two sides or treating every alternative as equally valid. It means holding the whole tension in view long enough to discover a response that recognises what is true and necessary on both sides. Sometimes this response gives greater priority to one side because the situation requires it. Sometimes it alternates between the two over time. Sometimes it transforms the apparent opposition by creating a third possibility that could not be seen while attention remained fixed on either pole.

Care requires this wider field of perception. It asks what and who becomes invisible when one value, need or objective dominates the situation. It also requires decision. Caring for every perspective does not mean avoiding judgement or postponing action until everyone wants the same thing. It means perceiving the relevant people, values, costs, capacities, limits and consequences before taking responsibility for the most meaningful possibility available.

For festivals, this attitude is particularly important because their work is formed by tensions that cannot be removed once and for all. Festivals are artistic undertakings and organisational systems; temporary events and persistent relational ecosystems; places of celebration and spaces in which difficult realities may become visible. They require resources and must question forms of growth that produce depletion. They need leadership and must protect the agency of those who participate. They inherit cultural forms and can also contest and transform them.

Care does not abolish these paradoxes. It changes how festivals perceive, carry and respond to them. It helps prevent one legitimate purpose from becoming so dominant that the people, relationships, places or living systems supporting it disappear from view.

**Pause for Reflection**

Think of a tension in your festival work between two things that both matter. What might you overlook by focusing on only one, and how could keeping both in view change your response?

#### *3.1.2.1 Distinguishing Problems, Dilemmas and Paradoxes*

Problems, dilemmas and paradoxes require different forms of response.

A problem is a difficulty for which a workable solution can be found in principle. If a venue lacks an accessible entrance, the organisation can examine the physical conditions, consult those affected, identify alternatives, allocate resources and implement a solution. The process may be difficult, but the aim is to change the condition so that the problem no longer exists in the same form.

A dilemma requires a decision between alternatives that carry competing values, costs or consequences. More information may improve the judgement, but it cannot always remove the need to choose. Its appropriate response combines dialectical judgement with decision: the alternatives and their consequences are made visible, those affected are heard, and responsibility is taken for selecting the most meaningful possibility available within the actual conditions.

A paradox cannot be solved by permanently choosing one pole and eliminating the other. Planning does not make improvisation unnecessary. Individual freedom does not abolish responsibility. Artistic autonomy does not remove relational consequences. The appropriate response is to recognise the continuing tension and develop practices that allow both requirements to inform judgement over time.

Confusing these categories creates avoidable harm. When a solvable problem is called a paradox, an organisation may accept an unnecessary limitation. When a paradox is treated as a problem with one final solution, one necessary side is likely to be suppressed. When a dilemma is described as though more discussion could eliminate every cost, decision is postponed and uncertainty is transferred to others.

**PROBLEMS, DILEMMAS AND PARADOXES**

**A problem calls for a solution. · A dilemma calls for dialectical judgement and decision. · A paradox calls for an ongoing capacity to hold tension, exercise judgement and respond again.**

**Pause for Reflection**

Think of a time when you delayed a decision because every option meant giving up something important. What were you hoping further discussion would resolve, and what still required you to choose? Looking back, was it really a dilemma, or could it have been a problem to solve or a tension to hold over time?

#### *3.1.2.2 Planning and Improvisation*

Festival work makes the paradox between planning and improvisation particularly visible. Planning reduces uncertainty that can reasonably be anticipated. It translates experience into preparation, clarifies roles and decision routes, protects safety and prevents avoidable risk from being passed to others. Plans are therefore a form of care. Yet no plan can contain every artistic, relational, political or ecological development. When conditions change, fidelity to the plan may become irresponsibility towards the situation.

Improvisation is the capacity to perceive what the plan did not foresee and respond with available knowledge, intuition and relationship. It keeps a living organisation responsive. Yet improvisation without preparation can transfer uncertainty, urgency and hidden labour to those with the least authority. What feels like creative freedom to a decision-maker may feel like preventable chaos to the team expected to implement the change.

Planning and improvisation are therefore not opposing personality types from which an organisation should choose. They are complementary capacities that can clash when their purposes are misunderstood. Planning without openness becomes control. Improvisation without preparation transfers risk. Care does not permanently resolve the paradox; it helps the organisation decide when more structure is required, when the plan must yield and who will carry the consequences of adaptation.

PLANNING PARADOX

**Planning gives structure. Improvisation preserves responsiveness. Care holds them together without allowing either control or chaos to become normal.**

**Pause for Reflection**

Think of a time when you had to change a festival plan. How did the preparation already in place help or hinder your response, and what did adapting require from the people involved?

#### *3.1.2.3 Crisis, Resilience and Learning*

A crisis threatens wellbeing, continuity and the capacity to choose. It can also interrupt routines strongly enough to expose dependencies, neglected risks and practices that needed to change. This does not make crisis beneficial. Crisis creates a possibility of learning, not a guarantee. Learning requires sufficient safety, recovery, reflection, shared interpretation and the authority to alter what produced or intensified the damage.

Resilience contains a similar paradox. People, relationships and organisations need capacities to adapt, recover and continue because not every difficulty can be prevented. Resilience becomes harmful when

it is used to make preventable difficulty appear inevitable or to return people efficiently to unchanged conditions. Care supports resilience while reducing the organisational conditions that require people to be endlessly resilient.

Meaning can help people remain oriented during difficulty. Cultural professionals may recover energy by remembering what their work contributes to communities, artistic life or relationships. Yet meaning also has a shadow: the more deeply people care about the work, the easier it can become to request sacrifice in its name. Meaning helps answer why the work matters. Care asks whether the way the work is organised remains faithful to that meaning.

FOUR RECURRING PARADOXES

**Planning ↔ Improvisation · Resilience ↔ Changing Conditions · Meaning ↔ The Risk of Sacrifice · Continuity ↔ The Capacity to Stop.**

DECISION WITHIN PARADOX

**Decision does not prove that one pole contains the whole truth · It chooses the most responsible response available, makes loss visible and accepts the consequences.**

DISTINCTION AND RESPONSE — PARADOX AND DILEMMA

**A dilemma requires decision · A paradox requires a dialectical response.**

**Pause for Reflection**

Think of a crisis you experienced in your festival work. What, if anything, did you and your organisation learn from it? Afterwards, did the conditions that produced or intensified it change, or were people mainly expected to recover and carry on?

### 3.1.3 Limits and Limitations

The third universal issue of human existence concerns limits and limitations. Our lifetime is limited. This is the most fundamental limit of human existence.

We encounter many other limits and limitations. We cannot fly without technological assistance, remain awake indefinitely, be in two places at once or live without food, sleep and recovery. Our senses, attention, memory and knowledge are limited. Geography creates physical limits through distance, climate, terrain and location. Political borders and laws limit where people can travel, live and work. Financial resources limit what individuals and organisations can afford. Language, education, disability, discrimination, technology and social position may also limit what a person can access or do.

Human imagination and desire are not confined in the same way. We can imagine places we cannot presently reach, capacities we do not yet possess and social conditions that do not yet exist. We can want more than our time, bodies, knowledge or resources allow us to realise.

When we try to realise a desire, we may encounter an obstacle. Yet the obstacle itself does not necessarily become a problem. Hunger creates a need. If food is available and I have the means to obtain it, fulfilling that need does not become a problem. It becomes a problem when an obstacle between the need and its fulfilment exceeds my present capacity to overcome it.

A problem therefore emerges in the relationship between an obstacle and the capacity presently available to respond to it. The same obstacle may be manageable for one person and insurmountable for another. It may cease to be a problem when knowledge, skill, resources, relationships or conditions change.

This is why we must distinguish between a limit and a limitation. If an obstacle cannot be changed at the time when action is required, it functions as a limit and the response must begin by accepting it. If it can be overcome by developing capacity, reorganising a system or changing the surrounding conditions, it is a limitation and calls for action or development.

The finitude of human life is a limit: no development or organisational change can make a person live forever. The fact that one person cannot be in two places at the same moment is also a limit. If a storm begins during an outdoor performance, the festival cannot stop the storm. It must decide how to respond within that reality.

Not knowing how to use a particular technology is a limitation: the person can learn. An inaccessible entrance is a limitation: it can be redesigned or replaced by an accessible route. An inadequate decision-making process is a limitation: responsibilities and procedures can be reorganised. A festival's present fundraising capacity is a limitation rather than a limit if knowledge, relationships and experience can be developed to improve it.

When faced with a limit, we may ask, "Why did this happen to me?" or "Why can I not do this?" We may rebel against the situation, remain focused on what is missing or see ourselves as victims of circumstances. A limitation calls for a different response: it may be changed or overcome by developing capacity, redesigning an environment or reorganising a system. Limits and limitations are both facts of life; neither is inherently positive or negative. What makes their effect constructive or destructive is the position we take towards them and the way we respond.

The distinction is not always permanent. A condition that functions as a limit today may become a changeable limitation over time. A festival cannot alter a national visa regulation before tomorrow's performance, but festivals and cultural networks may work collectively to influence mobility policy in

the longer term. A person cannot perform a skill they have not yet developed during an immediate crisis, but they may acquire that capacity through training and experience. Time and scale therefore affect whether something must presently be accepted, can be changed through personal or organisational development, or requires collective action, solidarity and advocacy.

The distinction can change over time. What functions as a limit within one generation's knowledge and technology can later be redescribed as a limitation open to development. Human beings once could not fly, communicate across long distances or treat many fatal illnesses. Within the knowledge and technology available at the time, these functioned as limits to immediate action. Sustained inquiry and invention gradually turned them into limitations open to development and then made it possible to overcome them. A limit that resists present capacities can still direct attention towards long-term invention, while a limitation already open to present capacities can motivate learning, practice and change now. Human development occurs partly because people perceive a possibility beyond their present capacities and work to make it real. What presently cannot be changed defines the field of action; what can be changed creates a direction for development.

Making this distinction is necessary because the way a constraint is understood shapes the response it receives. A real limit must be recognised, and a changeable limitation calls for development or action. A condition must be assessed to determine whether it presently functions as a limit or as a changeable limitation. A boundary is a deliberately established limit intended to protect integrity, responsibility or capacity. Organisations may naturalise a changeable limitation by saying "festivals are always like this." They may deny a real limit by expecting passion to overcome fatigue. They may treat a boundary as a lack of commitment, or ask an individual to solve a limitation that only leadership can change. When limits and limitations are confused, people and organisations may surrender where change is possible, struggle against what cannot presently be changed or destroy the very capacities that a boundary exists to protect.

Yet distinguishing between them is only the first task. People and organisations can become so preoccupied with a present limit or limitation that the possibilities remaining within that field disappear from view. Attention remains fixed on what cannot be done, what is missing or what should have been different. Energy flows towards the wall rather than towards the possibilities that remain. A real constraint can then occupy the whole field of perception, even though it defines only part of the situation.

A football match offers a simple analogy. Players do not spend the match objecting that the pitch has lines, that the goal has a fixed size or that they may not handle the ball. These rules and boundaries do not merely restrict play; they make the game possible. The relevant question is not how to play without them, but how to play well within them. Players read the field, develop tactics, coordinate with others

and train the capacities the game requires. The fixed conditions give judgement and creativity something to work with. Without boundaries there would be no skilful play, only indeterminate movement.

Festival work has its own field: finite time and money, the physical capacities of people and places, legal duties, ecological carrying capacities, artistic commitments and relationships that cannot simply be ignored. Accepting these conditions is not the same as surrendering agency. It makes the actual field of action more precise. Once the field is seen clearly, attention can turn from “Why is this boundary here?” to “Given these conditions, what remains possible, what response serves our purpose and how can we use our capacities creatively?” Limits can intensify creativity because they require selection, invention, collaboration and judgement rather than the fantasy that every possibility can be pursued at once.

Limitations require a second movement. A player who cannot yet reach the far side of the pitch does not move the touchline; they train. In the same way, a festival may develop its communication, access, decision-making, conflict capacity, technical knowledge or relationships over time. Acceptance and expansion are not opposites. Acceptance says: this is our present reality and capacity. Development says: some aspects of that reality and capacity can be changed through deliberate effort, learning and support.

For immediate action, present conditions delimit the field. Treating them as present limits allows the team to stop fighting reality, protect what matters and use its actual freedom responsibly. But describing them as permanent and inevitable would conceal the possibility of development and collective change.

Three-time horizons therefore need to be held together. In the present, care accepts the limits of the actual situation and asks what can still be done within the available field of action. This may require reducing scope, changing a route, protecting rest, redistributing responsibility or choosing the most meaningful action that remains possible. Acceptance here is not approval of the condition. It is accurate contact with reality so that finite energy can be directed towards an achievable response.

Over the medium term, care strengthens capacity. People and organisations can learn, practise, revise systems, build reserves, improve access, develop decision-making and communication, and enlarge the range of situations they are able to meet. What exceeded present capacity can then cease to function as a limitation. Development does not mean demanding more from already depleted people. It means creating the resources, challenge, support, recovery and learning through which greater capability becomes sustainable.

Over the longer term, some limitations cannot be overcome by individual or organisational development alone. Inadequate cultural policy, unequal funding structures, precarious labour, discrimination,

restricted civic space and ecological degradation require solidarity, networks, collective organisation and advocacy. Festivals may work with peers, communities, public authorities and regional, European or international networks to alter the conditions within which cultural work takes place. Care therefore moves from responsible action within conditions, to capacity development, to collective efforts to change unjust or destructive conditions.

THREE HORIZONS OF CARE

**NOW: accept present limits and act within the actual field of possibility · MEDIUM TERM: develop capacity and overcome changeable limitations · LONG TERM: build solidarity and advocacy to transform shared conditions**

Care supports all three movements. It helps people distinguish fixed limits from changeable limitations, prevents avoidable constraints from being presented as inevitable and makes the possibilities remaining within the actual situation visible. It also creates the conditions through which capacity can develop: proportionate challenge, practice, resources, feedback, shared responsibility, boundaries and recovery. Care does not promise unlimited possibility, nor does it romanticise scarcity as a stimulus to creativity. It asks what must be accepted, what can be changed, what capacity can responsibly be developed and where finite energy can make a meaningful difference.

**Pause for Reflection**

Think of something that currently restricts your festival work. What remains possible within these conditions, and what could become possible through learning, support or working with others?

#### *3.1.3.1 Fate and Freedom: A Paradox Within Limits*

Limits bring another existential paradox into view: fate and freedom. The word fate can suggest a future already determined, whatever a person chooses or does. In the existential perspective adopted here, informed by Frankl, it refers instead to what is given and lies beyond our power to change at the moment of response. This includes what has already happened and those present conditions that cannot now be altered. A person cannot undo their history or begin this moment with a different past. A festival cannot make yesterday's conflict not have happened or stop a storm already underway. Another person may feel hurt even when we consider their grievance unjustified. We cannot make that feeling disappear simply by deciding that they should not feel it. Their hurt is part of the present reality to which we must respond, although how we listen, communicate and act may influence how the feeling and the relationship develop. These given facts are not opinions and cannot be removed by optimism, blame or willpower. They constitute the actual material and conditions of the present response. In the terminology established above, these conditions function as limits: they define what must be

acknowledged when deciding how to respond. Fate concerns the reality from which the response begins; it does not mean that the response or its outcome has already been decided.

Freedom is not freedom from these conditions. It is the capacity to take a position towards them and to decide what will be created with, within or in response to them. Fate is absolute as the given reality of now, but it is not a complete determination of the future. It establishes the field; it does not prescribe the move. The future remains partly open because a person or organisation can perceive possibilities, choose among them, act and thereby make a response that becomes part of the next reality. At that later moment, the consequences of this free response will themselves belong to fate: they will form part of what has been made real and must then be responded to.

The distinction between limits and limitations helps clarify this field of freedom. A limit marks what cannot presently be changed; freedom concerns the possibilities for taking a position and acting within those conditions. A limitation may be open to change through learning, additional resources, reorganised relationships or collective action. Working to overcome such limitations is itself an exercise of freedom and may enlarge the field of possibility for future responses.

Optimism, in this sense, means recognising the possibilities within the available field of freedom while remaining in contact with facts and limits. It does not require believing that everything will turn out well or denying what has been lost. A limit may close one possibility without closing every possibility; a limitation may be open to change. The optimistic question is therefore: given this reality, what remains possible, what can be developed or changed, and which response is worth realising? Optimism joins an accurate understanding of conditions with openness to meaningful possibility.

Imagine a painter who has only three colours and cannot obtain additional materials within the time available. For this act of painting, the available materials constitute a present limit. They belong to what is given—the artist's fate in this situation—while the ways of working with them remain a field of freedom. Remaining preoccupied with "Why do I not have the colours I should have?" does not enlarge the freedom available now; it allows the missing materials to dominate the entire field of perception. The creative turn begins when the painter says: "These are my materials. What can I make with them?" The artist may mix the three colours in unfamiliar ways, use contrast more deliberately, introduce texture, earth, fabric or found objects, or allow the restriction itself to become the organising language of the work. The missing colours do not merely obstruct the painting. Once accepted as conditions, they can provoke perception, judgement, invention and the development of new capacities. The work may become distinctive precisely because the artist did not have every material available.

Accepting a present limit does not make deprivation desirable or permanent. If additional materials can be obtained within the available time, their absence is a changeable limitation and seeking them belongs to the artist's field of freedom. If they cannot be obtained now, the painter can work with what

is available while also seeking better resources or access for future work. The distinction depends on time, circumstances and the possibilities for action. Optimism lies in seeing both what can be created under present conditions and which limitations can be changed. The given defines the starting point; judgement and creativity help shape the response.

Festival practice makes the same paradox concrete. An organisation may inherit a reduced budget, an unsuitable venue, a damaged relationship, a contractual obligation, a political restriction or an ecological condition it cannot presently alter. These facts delimit the current field, but they do not write the next move. The festival can still decide what to protect, what to stop, whom to involve, which form the programme can take, which capacity to develop and what position to embody. A restriction may lead to a smaller but more relational programme; an inaccessible space may prompt work to move into neighbourhoods; political pressure may clarify the values the festival must publicly protect. The response does not erase the condition. It transforms what the condition can mean and what may emerge from it.

A human being is shaped not only by what fate gives, but by the way they respond to what has been given. Through response, people transform aspects of their environment and develop capacities, commitments and ways of being that did not previously exist. In this sense, identity is neither entirely chosen nor simply imposed. It is co-created between given conditions and the positions, decisions and actions through which a person answers them. What initially appears as a restriction may become part of the form through which a life, a practice or a festival becomes recognisably its own.

Care holds fate and freedom together by helping people distinguish present limits from changeable limitations and recognise the possibilities available within their actual situation. It acknowledges loss, injustice and pain while supporting the capacities, resources and relationships needed for a response. Optimism becomes practical when people can see a meaningful possibility and receive support to pursue it. Acceptance of a present limit can coexist with efforts to change the conditions of future action through development, solidarity and advocacy. Care therefore asks: What must presently be accepted? Where can we exercise freedom now? Which limitations can we work to change? And which possibility deserves our finite attention and effort?

**FATE AND FREEDOM PARADOX**

**FATE = What is given and cannot be changed now · Limits define the present field of action · FREEDOM = Taking a position and realising possibilities within that field · Changeable limitations call for development and action · Optimism recognises reality and the possibilities still open · Our response shapes the world and who we become**

LIMITS

**Care ≠ Denying limits · Care = recognising limits, changing unnecessary limitations and developing capacity**

DECISION IN RELATION TO LIMITS

**Decision distinguishes what must be accepted from what can and should be changed · It directs finite energy towards genuine possibility**

**Pause for Reflection**

Think of something that happened in your festival work that you could not undo. What choices were still available to you, and how did your response shape what followed?

## 3.2 What Kind of Being Is the Human Being?

### 3.2.1 The Human Being Between Reality and Possibility

The three existential issues describe the territory of human life. We must now turn from the territory to the being who lives within it. Why can human beings experience uncertainty as possibility, hold paradoxes in thought, distinguish limits from limitations and deliberately alter the conditions of their lives? Without this question, judgement and decision can sound like technical management functions rather than expressions of what is distinctively human.

#### *3.2.1.1 Max Scheler: Living in Two Worlds*

Max Scheler, a philosopher and a pioneer of philosophical anthropology, offers a useful starting point. Other living beings inhabit a world of immediate reality shaped by bodily capacities, environment and species-specific patterns. Human beings also live in this world: we are embodied, vulnerable, dependent upon material conditions and affected by forces we did not choose. Yet we simultaneously inhabit a world of possibility. We can hold in mind what is absent, imagine a different future, compare what exists with what could exist and orient action towards something that has not yet become real. This applies both to the world around us and to ourselves: human beings can imagine not only a different situation, organisation or society, but also a person they are not yet capable of being.

This does not give human beings unlimited freedom. Birth, body, history, culture, resources, relationships and political conditions shape and restrict the possibilities available to each person. But they do not determine every response in advance. The future self is therefore not simply a projection of present conditions or the predictable result of what has already happened. Within real limits, a person can take a position, decide, practise, learn and participate in becoming someone different. Between the

conditions a person receives and the life or practice that is eventually realised lies a field of possibility—and within that field, judgement and choice.

The gap between reality and possibility produces tension. It allows a person to recognise that a working condition is unjust, that a relationship could be repaired, that a festival could organise itself differently or that a cultural practice not yet present could be created. It also allows the person to recognise unrealised capacities and ask: who might I become in responding to this situation? The same capacity produces uncertainty: more than one future and more than one possible self can be imagined, and none has yet been chosen. Human beings experience anxiety because they are not only what they presently are; they remain oriented towards what they might become and what they might bring into reality.

This tension is not merely a burden to be reduced. It is a primary source of human motivation and the dynamic through which meaning can be realised. Meaning emerges as people respond to the distance between what is and what ought or could be: by transforming the external world in the direction of values and ideals, and by developing their own capacities in order to become more able to realise them. Neither movement is complete on its own. Ideals without self-development remain wishes; self-development without a value or task beyond the self becomes directionless. Meaningful action joins the two: the person transforms reality while being transformed through responsible commitment to it.

The same movement operates on a wider social and cultural scale. Here, possibility must be distinguished from projection. A projection extends current conditions and observable trends into the future: it asks what is likely to happen if the present continues along its existing course. Possibility is different. It concerns what does not yet exist and may not emerge from current conditions by itself, but could be brought into reality through imagination, judgement, decision, coordinated action and the development of new capacities. It is not merely the future towards which the present appears to be moving; it is a future that human beings may choose to work towards because they recognise it as valuable.

Human beings can therefore recognise that the dominant culture is neither the only culture possible nor the inevitable destination of present development. They can imagine a global society in which care is not confined to private goodwill or occasional projects, but informs institutions, economic choices, public policy, cultural relations and humanity's relationship with living systems. Such a society is not a ready-made utopia waiting to be implemented, nor a prediction that history will naturally produce it. It is a horizon of possibility: a value-oriented direction from which present conditions can be judged and towards which people, organisations and communities can make concrete choices.

Festivals participate in this movement when they do more than reflect the culture that already exists. Through the relationships, responsibilities and conditions they establish, they can bring elements of another possible culture temporarily into reality. People can experience, practise and evaluate different

ways of living together; these experiences may then alter expectations, capacities, relationships and wider cultural practices. In this sense, festivals do not predict the future. They become places in which a consciously chosen possibility can begin to acquire social form.

**POSSIBILITY AND PROJECTION**

**Projection asks what is likely to follow from present conditions · Possibility asks what does not yet exist but could be realised through value-oriented judgement, decision and action**

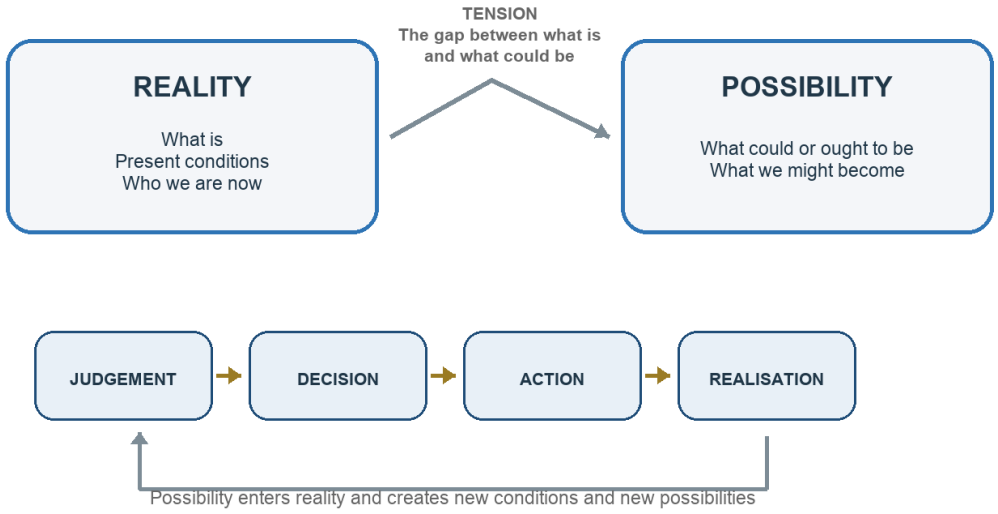



*Figure 2. Reality and possibility are held together through tension. Judgement, decision and action transform a selected possibility into a new part of reality, from which further possibilities become visible.*

**SCHELER BRIDGE**

**Reality presents what is and who we are · Possibility reveals what could exist and who we might become · Tension motivates · Judgement examines the gap · Decision commits us to what we will try to make real**

**Pause for Reflection**

If your festival continues along its current path, what future seems likely? How does that compare with the future you would consider worth working towards?

### *3.2.1.2 The Bird of Paradise: From Given Form to Cultural Realisation*

The Bird of Paradise offers a vivid analogy. Its display combines colour, movement and sound in an astonishingly integrated performance. The bird does not design its plumage, compose its call or decide upon its choreography. The form has emerged through evolution and arrives largely embodied in the

creature. Its beauty is not the result of an individual project through which the bird imagined what it might become and trained itself to realise that possibility.

A human performer arrives differently. Precision of movement, vocal range, musical interpretation and stage presence are developed through years of practice. What eventually appears effortless carries accumulated effort, correction, failure, teaching and bodily adaptation. A costume carries the knowledge of dyers, weavers, designers and makers. A musical work carries the capacities of composers, instrumentalists, singers, technicians and many others whose contributions were developed separately before they could meet in one performance.

Opera makes the contrast especially visible. What appears in the Bird of Paradise as an integrated biological display is produced in human culture through many people, many forms of knowledge and many years of capacity development. No participant contains the whole. Someone imagines a possibility; others interpret it, contribute distinct skills, coordinate their work and bring it into reality together. The finished performance is therefore not only an artistic object. It is a temporary achievement of interdependence across people and time.

A festival works in the same way. It brings artistic, organisational, technical, social and material capacities into a temporary shared form that none of its participants could produce alone. This is one reason care matters: cultural possibility depends not only on talent or vision, but on the conditions through which people can learn, practise, contribute, coordinate and sustain the costs of participation. When those conditions are exploitative or depleting, the public work may still appear successful while the ecosystem that made it possible is weakened.

The analogy should not be turned into an absolute opposition. Animals are not mechanical beings; many learn, adapt, communicate and develop behaviour through relationships with their environments. Human beings are not free from biology, history or circumstance. The distinction concerns a particular openness: people can relate deliberately to what is given, imagine possibilities beyond present reality, develop capacities across a lifetime and coordinate distinct contributions through culture. The human work remains unfinished—and must continually be learned, chosen and remade.

**FROM NATURE TO CULTURE**

**Given Conditions → Perceived Possibility → Practice and Capacity → Distinct Contributions → Coordination and Care → Cultural Realisation**

#### *3.2.1.3 Human Beings as Designing and Realising Beings*

To realise has a double meaning: to become aware of a possibility and to make it real. Human beings perceive possibilities, learn what they require, design ways of approaching them, act, encounter failure, revise and try again. Through this movement they shape themselves and transform their environments.

Tools, organisations, artistic forms, customs and institutions are accumulated expressions of this capacity.

Festivals are particularly clear examples. A festival begins as something that does not yet exist: a possible gathering, encounter, programme or cultural intervention. Organisers imagine it, interpret a context, choose among alternatives, mobilise relationships and resources and gradually make the possibility real. The festival then changes the reality from which future possibilities will be perceived. Cultural management is therefore not only administration; it is organised movement between reality and possibility.

This movement from possibility to reality resembles a composer who hears or intuits sounds that do not yet exist as a composition. The possibility is neither invented from nothing nor delivered ready-made. The composer listens, selects, combines and gives form to what is sensed, working with available instruments, conventions, skills and limits. Decisions transform possibility into a work. In being realised, the composition changes the sonic world, affects performers and listeners and develops the composer who became capable of bringing it into existence. Festival-making follows a similar movement: it perceives a possible form of living together, organises the conditions through which it can be experienced and, in realising it, transforms both the existing culture and the people involved.

This movement has an ethical dimension. Human beings do not ask only what can be done, but what should be done. The ability to imagine alternatives allows us to recognise ideals such as justice, dignity and care—standards that may never be perfectly realised but can orient concrete improvement. The existence of possibility therefore creates responsibility: if conditions can be otherwise, someone must judge which possibilities deserve commitment and how their costs and consequences should be distributed.

Frankl's theory of meaning is compatible with this account of reality and possibility. Scheler helps explain the distinctively human capacity to perceive a possibility that is not yet real—including a different world and a different way of being oneself. Frankl clarifies how this openness becomes meaning: among the possibilities present in a concrete situation, the person is called to discern the response that is both possible and worth realising, take responsibility for choosing it and bring it into reality through action. Meaning is therefore neither a private fantasy imposed upon the world nor a future mechanically produced by existing conditions. It is realised in the person's responsible encounter with the situation—through transforming some aspect of reality while also becoming the person capable of that response.

**Pause for Reflection**

Think of an idea you helped turn into reality through your festival. Why did it seem worth realising, and what did you and others have to learn or develop to make it possible?

### 3.2.2 Frankl: The Capacity to Take a Position

Viktor E. Frankl (1905–1997), a psychiatrist and neurologist, developed logotherapy and existential analysis, placing the human search for meaning at the centre of his approach. His work connects meaning with freedom and responsibility: people encounter conditions they have not chosen, yet can take a position towards them and respond within the possibilities available. This perspective helps explain how people can find direction and act responsibly amid uncertainty, and provides an important foundation for the understanding of care developed in this Reader.

Viktor Frankl develops this human openness through a three-dimensional understanding of the person. The terms are Frankl's own. *Somatic* derives from the Greek *sōma* (body). *Noetic* derives from the Greek *noûs* and renders Frankl's German *geistig*: the spiritual dimension, understood not in a religious sense but as what is specifically human. The noetic is therefore not a part of the psyche. Thoughts and emotions belong to the psychic dimension; the noetic is the capacity to take a position towards them. The somatic dimension concerns the body and its biological processes, capacities and vulnerabilities. The psychic dimension concerns emotions, thoughts, memories, drives, learned patterns and personality. The noetic dimension concerns specifically human capacities such as self-distancing, intuition, conscience, humour, creativity, self-transcendence, situational assessment, will and the ability to take a position.

These dimensions belong to the person as a whole. Within this unity, the somatic and psychic dimensions are closely interconnected and their processes run in parallel. For example, a period of sustained pressure may be experienced bodily as fatigue and psychologically as anxiety or discouragement. In Frankl's account, the noetic dimension names the specifically human capacity to take a position towards these conditions and discern how to respond. A festival organiser may experience exhaustion and apprehension while also recognising that the situation calls for seeking support, renegotiating a responsibility or setting a limit. The bodily and psychological conditions remain part of the experience, but they do not fully determine the person's stance towards it. This capacity is exercised within actual bodily, psychological and situational limits, through the whole person's engagement with what the situation asks of them.

THE HUMAN CAPACITY

**Body and psyche present conditions, needs and reactions · The noetic dimension enables distance, judgement, stance, meaning and responsible choice · Care responds to the whole person.**

This capacity also shapes how we meet the three existential issues examined earlier: uncertainty, paradoxes and dilemmas, and limits and limitations. These concern both the conditions we encounter and our experience of living within them. The following sections explore how self-distancing, stance-taking and self-transcendence enable us to develop a response, and how meaning can be realised through our engagement with these conditions.

#### *3.2.2.1 Self-Distancing*

Self-distancing is the capacity to notice an emotion, impulse, belief or habitual reaction without treating it as the whole self or an automatic command. It also allows a person to gain perspective on how they interpret and respond to external circumstances. Faced with uncertainty, competing demands or an obstacle, a person can examine both the situation and their immediate reaction to it. “I am anxious” can become “I notice anxiety in relation to this uncertainty; what is it showing me, and how do I want to respond?” Similarly, “This demand leaves me no choice” can become “What does this demand actually require, what constraints does it impose, and where is there room to respond?” The emotion and the external conditions remain real. What changes is the person’s relationship to them: a space for judgement opens between what is experienced and how one responds.

In festival work, self-distancing makes it possible to recognise that urgency is affecting judgement, that fear of conflict is encouraging avoidance, that a familiar plan is being defended because it provides psychological security or that commitment to the festival is making exhaustion difficult to admit. This is not emotional detachment. It is the capacity to include emotion in judgement without allowing it to decide alone.

**Pause for Reflection**

Think of a moment when you felt under pressure to react. What do you notice about the situation and your own reaction when you step back from the urge to respond immediately?

#### *3.2.2.2 Stance-Taking and Freedom Within Conditions*

Human freedom is not the power to control every circumstance or outcome. It is the capacity to take a position within conditions. Some facts belong to what has already happened or cannot presently be changed. Others remain open to influence. Judgement draws this line as accurately as possible; decision turns towards the available field of freedom.

Each of the three existential issues calls for judgement about how to respond. Within uncertainty, a person can choose a direction while remaining open to revising it as the situation develops. Within a paradox, they can attend to both interdependent requirements; within a dilemma, they can decide while acknowledging what the choice protects and what it sacrifices. In encountering an obstacle, they can distinguish a limit that must presently be accepted from a limitation that may be changed through

learning, support or collective action. Taking a position gives practical direction to how the person lives and acts within these conditions.

A funding loss, illness, storm or political decision may initially belong to the given situation. The organisation may not have chosen it and may be unable to undo it. Yet possibilities remain: what to protect, what to stop, whom to inform, what support to provide, which responsibility to accept and what meaning or principle should guide the response. The available freedom may be narrow, but it is not therefore unreal.

**Pause for Reflection**
Think of a situation in your festival work that you could not change, in which, looking back, you feel your reaction was not constructive. What different stance might have been possible, given what you knew and could do at the time?

#### *3.2.2.3 Self-Transcendence and Meaning*

Self-transcendence is the capacity to direct attention and engagement beyond immediate self-concern towards another person, a task, a value or a meaning to be realised. In cultural life, this can involve contributing to an artwork or a shared undertaking, opening oneself to an encounter with another person, art or nature, or allowing a meaningful commitment to guide one's stance towards a reality that cannot be changed. It connects people with a world that matters beyond their own immediate comfort or advantage. This orientation can enlarge life, develop care and provide strength during difficulty.

Self-transcendence is not self-erasure. Frankl's distinction is decisive: the meaningful is neither egoism nor altruism. A meaning-oriented choice does not give automatic priority either to the self or to another person. It seeks the best possible option for all parties involved in the specific moment and situation. The decision-maker is included within this field—neither its centre nor the person who must automatically be sacrificed.

In meeting these existential conditions, attention to a person, task or value beyond immediate self-concern can help orient the response. A commitment to an artistic encounter may give a team reason to continue amid uncertainty, while care for the people making it possible may call for a smaller programme or a pause. What matters in the situation helps the team judge how to hold competing commitments together and what can responsibly be undertaken within available capacity.

Frankl describes three principal ways in which meaning can be realised: through what we create or contribute; through what and whom we experience; and, when a situation genuinely cannot be changed, through the position we take towards it. Self-transcendence can find expression through each of these pathways: it names our capacity to orient ourselves towards meaning beyond immediate self-

concern, while the pathways describe how that meaning may be realised in a particular situation. These are not competing methods or stages. A single festival may open all three routes at once, and the same person may move among them within one process.

### *Meaning Through Creating and Contributing*

Meaning is realised when a person brings something into the world through a work, deed or contribution. Artists compose, perform and create forms that did not previously exist. Curators establish relationships between works, contexts and publics. Festival teams translate an idea into conditions in which encounter becomes possible. Technicians, producers and venue staff turn plans into lived reality. Volunteers contribute attention, time and local knowledge. Partners, funders and public authorities provide resources, legitimacy or access, and communities may contribute stories, practices, spaces and decisions. The meaningful contribution is not measured only by visibility. Much of what makes a festival possible is created away from the stage.

For example, when resources fall short, a team may redesign a programme to preserve an important artistic encounter while reducing demands on colleagues. Through this work, its response to changing conditions and competing responsibilities takes concrete form: a possibility judged worth realising becomes part of the world.

### *Meaning Through Experiencing and Encountering*

Meaning is also realised through receiving: encountering an artwork, a person, a place, a tradition, nature, truth, beauty or love. Audiences are therefore not merely consumers of a finished cultural product. Through attention, interpretation and response, they enter a relation with what the festival makes present. Artists experience audiences and one another; local communities encounter unfamiliar practices; visitors encounter a place and its histories; generations meet; colleagues experience trust, recognition or belonging. A festival creates meaning not only through what it produces, but through the quality and depth of the experiences and relationships it enables.

Such encounters involve openness to what cannot be fully anticipated. Listening to an unfamiliar perspective or allowing an artwork to unsettle an established belief can bring different possibilities into view. Meaning may be experienced in the encounter itself, even while uncertainty or tension remains.

### *Meaning Through the Position Taken Towards What Cannot Be Changed*

When a condition truly cannot be altered at the time a response is required, it functions as a limit in the sense established earlier. Meaning may still be realised through the stance taken towards that unavoidable reality. This particular route to meaning concerns such a stance; the wider capacity to take a position also informs creating, contributing, experiencing and encountering. A cancelled performance, irreversible loss, illness, disaster or political restriction may narrow the field of action without eliminating freedom altogether. People and organisations may respond with honesty, dignity, solidarity,

learning, courage and care. Resilience belongs here: not as silent endurance or the demand to continue at any cost, but as the capacity to acknowledge reality, protect what still can be protected, recover and choose a responsible response.

This third route must never be used to spiritualise preventable harm. Frankl's emphasis concerns what is genuinely unavoidable. If an exploitative workload, inaccessible system, discriminatory procedure or unclear decision can be changed, the caring response is to change it. Attitude is not a substitute for organisational responsibility. It becomes decisive where action reaches a real limit.

**THREE ROUTES TO MEANING**

**Creating and contributing · Experiencing and encountering · Taking a responsible position towards what cannot be changed.**

#### *3.2.2.4 Festivals and the Three Pathways to Meaning*

Drawing on Frankl's three pathways, a festival can be understood as an environment that supports people in realising meaning in different ways. It offers artists and cultural workers opportunities to create; teams, volunteers, partners and communities opportunities to contribute; and audiences and participants opportunities to experience and encounter. When those involved face a reality that genuinely cannot be changed, meaning may also be realised through the stance they take towards it and the way they respond together. These pathways are not confined to particular stakeholder groups: the same person may create, contribute, experience, encounter and take a stance within the life of a festival. Care supports these possibilities by asking whose contribution is possible, whose experience is recognised, who carries the costs and whether people have sufficient agency and support to take a responsible position.

How a festival is organised can support these capacities. Shared information and room to revise decisions help people act within uncertainty. Opportunities for dialogue allow competing values and interdependent needs to be considered together. Realistic responsibilities, adequate resources and time for recovery help people recognise limits and address limitations. Care thus creates conditions in which people can develop and exercise their capacity to respond, individually and together.

**Pause for Reflection**

Drawing on Frankl's three pathways, think beyond your team to artists, volunteers, audiences, local residents and partners. Who has the fewest opportunities to create or contribute, rather than only carry out tasks or attend? What stands in their way?

Have you ever been encouraged to accept a difficult situation with a positive attitude, such as constant overtime or missing resources, when it could in fact have been changed? What kept it from being changed?

### 3.2.3 Judgement and Decision: Learning to Act Responsibly in an Unfinished World

These three existential issues cannot be removed from festival practice. Uncertainty asks what can be clarified, planned or decided and what openness remains. Paradoxes and dilemmas ask which realities and values must be held together and what loss a choice will produce. Limits and limitations ask what must be accepted, what can be changed and where a protective boundary is required. In each case, decision is the movement through which a person or organisation takes a position, accepts responsibility and acts.

Decision does not abolish uncertainty, resolve every paradox or overcome every limit. It creates direction within them. A responsible decision identifies what matters, distinguishes the kind of situation being faced, includes the knowledge and consequences of relevant parties, clarifies authority, chooses the best possible response available and establishes how effects will be reviewed. Care improves the quality and justice of this movement by making people, power, cost and consequences visible.

#### *3.2.3.1 Judgement Is Not the Same as Decision*

Judgement is the capacity to perceive, distinguish and evaluate a situation and its possibilities. Decision is the act of committing to one possibility and accepting responsibility for acting upon it. Judgement asks what is happening, what kind of situation it is, who is involved, what remains uncertain, which values and power relations are present and what each option may produce. Decision asks which possibility will be chosen, what will be relinquished, who has authority, how action will be organised and when the choice will be reviewed.

JUDGEMENT AND DECISION

**Judgement without decision can become paralysis · Decision without judgement can become arbitrariness · Responsible action requires both.**

Rules, procedures and data can inform judgement but cannot replace it. No rule can anticipate every relationship, context or consequence. Equal application may produce unjust effects when needs, capacities or vulnerabilities differ. Judgement asks what a rule exists to protect and whether its

mechanical application in this situation would contradict its purpose. A caring organisation therefore needs reliable structures and people capable of interpreting them responsibly.

Judgement begins with distinction. A problem may need technical knowledge; a dilemma requires choosing between competing goods or losses; a paradox requires holding necessary realities together; a limit requires acceptance; a limitation may require change; a boundary may require protection; uncertainty may require information, planning, decision or acceptance. Applying the wrong category produces the wrong response.

#### *3.2.3.2 Decision, Freedom and Wellbeing*

Having more than one possible response opens a field of freedom. Exercising this freedom involves perceiving realistic possibilities, judging among them, deciding and taking responsibility for the consequences. These capacities can be developed through practice and support. A person unable to decide may have many abstract options while remaining unable to act. Possibilities stay open, anxiety remains unresolved and energy circulates through repeated evaluation rather than entering commitment.

Decision is therefore closely connected to personal wellbeing. People participate more fully in their lives and work when they can understand their situation, distinguish their own wants from inherited expectations, recognise needs and values, establish boundaries, choose a direction and experience themselves as capable of response. Agency does not guarantee comfort or success. It allows the person to become a participant in what happens rather than only the object of circumstances and other people's decisions.

**FREEDOM**

**Freedom involves having possibilities for response · Exercising it calls for perception, judgement, choice and responsibility · Care supports the development of these capacities.**

#### *3.2.3.3 Judgement Must Be Learned Through Practice*

Judgement develops like a capacity: through use. People learn by encountering situations proportionate to their present ability, considering real alternatives, making decisions, carrying appropriate consequences, receiving feedback and reflecting upon what happened. If others always decide for them, they may be protected from error but deprived of the experience through which judgement develops. If they receive responsibility without information, authority or support, they are not being developed; they are being abandoned.

A learning organisation therefore provides real but proportionate decision responsibility, access to relevant information, clarity about authority, opportunities to hear affected perspectives, permission to question assumptions, boundaries within which experimentation is possible, feedback on consequences

and routes for review and repair. The aim is not to prevent every mistake. It is to prevent avoidable harm while allowing better judgement to develop.

Festivals should not depend exclusively upon the private judgement of one experienced director. When reasoning remains concentrated, other people learn to wait, institutional knowledge remains personal and succession becomes fragile. Leaders strengthen collective capacity when they make their reasoning visible: what they perceived, which distinctions they made, whose knowledge they considered, what remained uncertain, which values were in tension, why one option was chosen and what would justify review.

**CHAPTER 3 MAP**

**Human Life Presents Uncertainty, Paradox and Limits → Human Beings Perceive Reality and Possibility → Care Enlarges Perception → Judgement Distinguishes and Evaluates → Decision Creates Direction → Action Produces Consequences → Reflection Transforms Consequences into Learning.**

These three lenses stay active throughout the publication. Care turns preparation, judgement and discernment into practices that can be shared, reviewed and made accountable.

The paradox lens will therefore recur rather than disappear after this chapter: distinctness and connection; openness and safety; support and autonomy; belonging and difference; continuity and change; authority and participation; local specificity and international circulation; resilience and structural transformation. Care is not a formula that selects one pole for all situations. It is the capacity to remain responsible within tensions that cannot be permanently resolved.

**Pause for Reflection**

Recall a decision you took part in during your festival work that affected other people and was difficult to make. You may have faced competing priorities, limited resources or uncertainty about the consequences. Choose an experience you can now look back on, and use it for the questions below.

1. What did you need to understand before choosing a response, and what responsibility did that choice bring?

2. How much room did you feel you had to make or influence the decision? What strengthened or restricted that freedom, and how did this affect you?

3. Looking back, what, if anything, did you learn from taking part in the decision? What opportunities and support would help you or others develop your judgement through future decisions?

## From Human Response to Life as Dialogue

This chapter began with the conditions of human life: uncertainty, paradoxes and dilemmas, limits and limitations. It then examined the human capacities through which these conditions can be met: perception, self-distancing, judgement, decision, responsibility and action. Human beings do not merely undergo the conditions in which they live. Within the freedom available to them, they can take a position, develop capacities and participate in what those conditions become.

Yet this response never takes place in isolation. A situation already places the person in relation to something beyond the self: another person, a task, a community, an institution, a living system or life as a whole. The person's response affects that relational world and is, in turn, answered by its consequences. Judgement and decision therefore do more than resolve an internal uncertainty. They become ways of entering into relationship with life.

The next chapter develops this relational movement. It asks how a distinct human being remains connected to a larger whole, how life can be understood as a dialogue, and how personal responses become contributions to a shared world.

CHAPTER 3 — CARE LANDING

**Festival work takes place within uncertainty, paradoxes and dilemmas, limits and limitations. Care does not remove these conditions; it supports the human capacity to perceive, judge and decide within them, and asks who carries their costs.**

# CHAPTER 4

## Life as Dialogue

*From the human need for connection to relational responsibility*

Chapter 3 examined the conditions of human life and the capacities through which human beings can respond to them. This chapter develops the relational character of that response. Human beings do not perceive possibilities, make decisions or create meaning as isolated individuals. They become distinct persons while remaining connected to other people, shared worlds and life as a whole.

The chapter therefore begins with the human need to become a distinct person while remaining connected to a larger whole. It then examines the most encompassing relationship in which a person participates—the dialogue between the human being and life—and moves towards the concrete relationships through which that dialogue is lived. The purpose is not to treat relationship as one topic among others, but to recognise relationality as a basic condition of human existence.

Human beings become themselves in relationship with others. We are neither self-contained individuals nor undifferentiated parts of a group. We experience ourselves as distinct, yet our language, identity, confidence and possibilities develop through relationships. This creates a continuing tension: we need meaningful connection, but connection that demands the loss of distinctness becomes submission rather than belonging.

The image of the womb offers a powerful starting point for understanding this condition. Before birth, the human being lives in physical unity with the mother and within a surrounding ecosystem that maintains warmth, nourishment and protection. Needs are met without the infant having to identify them, choose among alternatives, act upon the external world or carry responsibility for outcomes. The uncertainties, paradoxes, limits and costs that will later create the tensions of human existence have not yet entered life in the same form. In this sense, the womb represents a primary condition of protected wellbeing: dependence is complete, but separation has not yet been experienced.

Birth brings a radical change. Physical unity is broken, while dependence continues. The child must gradually differentiate, recognise needs, develop capacities, act, choose and influence the environment in order to obtain what life requires. Individuation, the process through which a person becomes a distinct self, therefore creates freedom and agency, but it also creates separation. The human being becomes increasingly able to stand as a distinct person and increasingly aware of no longer being identical with the surrounding whole.

Erich Fromm, a psychoanalyst and social psychologist, understands this as a fundamental human tension. As people become more separate and self-aware, they gain freedom and possibility, but may also experience isolation and powerlessness. They therefore continue to long for connection with something larger than the isolated self.

People may seek unity by dissolving distinctness: losing themselves in a crowd, conforming to a group or experiencing temporary fusion through collective rhythm. A football match, a ritual or immersion in nature may offer a powerful experience of belonging to a larger whole. Such experiences can be enlivening and meaningful. The same longing can also be expressed while the person remains distinct: by entering relationships in which they affect the whole, are affected by it and participate in what it becomes.

Frankl's three ways of realising meaning, examined earlier, are therefore compatible with Fromm's account of the movement from primary unity towards mature connection. Creating and contributing connect the person to the whole through what they bring into it. Experiencing and encountering connect the person physically, emotionally and in the noetic dimension with people, nature, art and values. Taking a responsible position towards the unchangeable allows the person to affirm a distinct human presence through courage, resistance, dignity or resilience. Meaning does not require the person to disappear into the whole. It is realised when a distinct person reaches beyond the isolated self and participates in what the shared world becomes.

The person experiences belonging to the whole through the field of contact between their distinct existence and what lies beyond it. Through creating, they bring something of themselves into the world and transform a part of that world. Through experiencing, they allow another person, nature, art, beauty or truth to affect and transform them. Through the position they take towards what cannot be changed, they make their existence present within conditions they did not choose. In each case, meaning arises through relationship: the person affects the whole, the whole affects the person, and neither side of the encounter remains entirely unchanged.

## 4.1 Meaning as Co-Creation

The movement described above—from primary unity, through individuation, towards forms of connection in which distinctness can remain alive—leads directly to Frankl's understanding of meaning. His three ways of realising meaning show how a distinct person participates in something beyond the isolated self: by creating or contributing something to the world; by experiencing or encountering someone or something beyond the self; and by taking a responsible position towards what genuinely cannot be changed.

These three routes describe meaning as a relational process. Meaning is neither delivered ready-made by the situation nor invented by the person without reference to reality. It emerges through contact between what life presents and how the person perceives, judges, decides and acts. In this sense, meaning is co-created between the human being and life.

Human beings frequently ask: What is the meaning of life? Viktor Frankl reverses the direction of this question. Human beings, he argues, should understand themselves as those being questioned by life. Each situation presents particular conditions, possibilities and responsibilities. A person answers not through an abstract statement about life, but through the position they take, the decision they make and the action through which they participate in what the situation becomes.

The word co-creation does not mean that the person controls the situation or can make any preferred choice meaningful. Life has already contributed conditions the person did not choose: previous events, other people's freedom, material realities, responsibilities, losses, limits and consequences. Viewed from the present moment, what genuinely cannot now be changed forms the person's fate. Fate is not the whole story, but it establishes the actual scene within which freedom must operate.

Freedom begins within this given scene. The person may not be free to remove a limit, reverse an event or guarantee an outcome, but they retain a field of possible positions and actions. They can perceive more or less carefully and interpret from different perspectives. They can accept or refuse a responsibility, ask for help, set a boundary or repair a relationship. They can also create something not yet present, or change their stance towards what cannot be altered. Limits therefore do not simply oppose freedom; they give concrete shape to the freedom that remains.

Because this field contains more than one possibility, freedom requires judgement and decision rather than preference alone.

Decision is the turning point of co-creation. Before a decision, several futures may remain possible. Through decision and action, one possibility is given a place in reality. The person changes the situation and may also be changed by carrying the cost and consequences of the choice. What emerges becomes part of the conditions from which the person and others must act next. Meaning is therefore realised through an encounter between fate and freedom: life provides the conditions and question; the person contributes perception, judgement, decision, action and stance; together they shape what becomes real.

### 4.1.1 The Meaning Potential of the Moment

Frankl's approach directs attention away from an abstract "meaning of life" towards the meaning potential of the present moment. In German, Frankl speaks of *Sinnmöglichkeit* and *Sinnpotential*; in English, his texts refer to the potential meaning of a situation. This Reader uses *meaning potential* for

this idea: the possibility for meaning inherent in a concrete situation, which calls to be recognised and responsibly realised. Not every possibility is a meaning potential. The question becomes:

THE MEANING POTENTIAL OF THE MOMENT

**What possibility is this particular situation asking me to realise?**

The word potential matters. Meaning is not yet a completed reality. It is a possibility that can be perceived and brought into existence, but it can also be overlooked, refused or lost. Once the moment has passed, precisely the same possibility may never return. Another response may still become possible, but it will belong to a changed situation.

Meaning is also situational. A response that is meaningful in one moment may be irresponsible in another. Continuing to work may be meaningful when a difficulty can be overcome through proportionate effort; stopping may become meaningful when continuation would produce serious harm. Giving support may develop another person's capacity in one situation and replace it in another. Speaking may be necessary when silence protects injustice; silence may be responsible when speaking would violate confidence or prevent another person from finding their own voice.

### 4.1.2 Discerning the Meaningful Response

A situation may contain several possible responses, but they are not necessarily equally meaningful. Meaning cannot be identified merely by asking which option is most attractive, comfortable, heroic or personally advantageous. Nor can a general rule determine the right response independently of the particular person, moment and conditions involved. The person must exercise judgement.

**1. What is the best possible response for all the parties involved in this particular situation?**

A meaning-oriented response does not give automatic priority either to the self or to another person. It considers the needs, dignity, rights, capacities and foreseeable consequences of all those affected. "Best possible" does not mean an ideal solution without loss or difficulty. It means the most just and responsible possibility available within the actual limits of knowledge, time, authority, capacity and resources.

**2. What response calls for a contribution that I, with my distinct characteristics, capacities, experience, position and responsibilities, am particularly able to make?**

Meaning is not only specific to the situation; it is also specific to the person. Different people may encounter different responsibilities within the same event because they do not bring the same knowledge, capacities, relationships, authority or life experience. A meaningful contribution is therefore not necessarily the most visible or prestigious action. It is the contribution through which this particular person can respond to what the situation actually requires.

### 3. What most urgently requires a response now?

Some meaning potentials can wait; others may be lost if nobody responds in time. Urgency refers to what may be harmed, lost or left unresolved if action is delayed. It does not mean whatever a manager, institution or powerful person labels “urgent.” In festival work especially, manufactured urgency can be used to transfer excessive costs to committed people. Discernment must distinguish a genuine demand of the situation from pressure created by poor planning, unequal power or unrealistic ambition.

These three questions are not a mechanical formula. They may reveal tensions that still require judgement. The best possible response for all parties must be considered together with the contribution this particular person can responsibly make and the issue that most urgently requires attention. A person may be capable of helping but not authorised to intervene. They may possess a useful skill but lack the physical or emotional capacity to carry the cost safely at that moment. Another person may be better situated to respond. Meaningful responsibility therefore includes recognising both one’s distinct possibilities and one’s actual limits.

**THE MEANINGFUL RESPONSE**

**The best possible response for all parties in this particular situation · The distinct contribution this particular person can responsibly make · The matter that most urgently requires an answer.**

For this reason, no general formula can decide the meaning of every situation in advance. Principles, values, professional knowledge, laws and organisational procedures can guide judgement, but they cannot replace it. Meaning requires attention to the actual people, conditions, possibilities, responsibilities, capacities, limits and consequences present in that particular moment.

Human beings perceive these conditions imperfectly. Their mental maps may be partial or distorted; emotion and desire may narrow attention; fear may make avoidance appear responsible; ambition may disguise depletion as commitment. The capacity for self-distancing described earlier is therefore essential: it allows a person to notice immediate reactions, interests and assumptions without allowing them to determine the response automatically.

Frankl gives conscience an important role in this process. Conscience can be understood as the intuitive human capacity to perceive the meaning potential of a concrete situation. It does not function as an infallible internal voice or a ready-made moral rule. Conscience can be mistaken and must remain open to evidence, dialogue, knowledge of consequences and correction. Its significance lies in enabling the person to ask not only “What do I want?” or “What am I allowed to do?” but “What is this situation asking of me?”

### 4.1.3 Meaning Cannot Be Assigned by Another Person

Because the meaning potential is specific to the person as well as to the situation, the judgement cannot finally be made by somebody else on that person's behalf. Other people can provide information, reveal consequences, clarify legal or professional responsibilities, communicate needs, offer guidance and draw attention to possibilities that have not yet been perceived. An organisation can define roles, authority, safety requirements and necessary limits. These forms of coordination inform judgement, but they cannot replace it.

The person must still consider what the situation asks, what contribution they are actually able to make and responsible for making, what costs that response requires and whether they are willing and able to carry them. They must decide whether to say: "This is mine to do," "I can contribute in another way," "I need support in order to carry this responsibility," or "I am not competent, authorised or able to assume this role." The response becomes meaningful through personal discernment and freely assumed responsibility, not merely through compliance with an externally assigned function.

This does not make responsibility subjective or arbitrary. Personal judgement remains answerable to the reality of the situation, the rights and needs of others, professional knowledge, consequences, limits and shared values. Freedom does not mean choosing whatever one prefers. It means accepting responsibility for discerning and realising the best possibility one can perceive within the concrete situation.

Meaningful judgement also requires a person to distinguish responsibility from the wish to please, avoid guilt, receive approval or appear morally good. What other people want from us matters, but their wishes do not by themselves determine the meaningful response. Social expectations, family roles and the desire to be seen as caring can all exert pressure while disguising themselves as conscience.

Consider an adult caring for an ageing mother who strongly wishes to remain at home. The mother's wish must be taken seriously; she is not an object whose life can simply be organised by others. Yet suppose her condition now requires continuous professional care that the adult child cannot safely provide. The same person may also have a young child whose wellbeing depends upon their presence, attention and emotional availability. Continuing home care may please the mother and temporarily protect the adult child from guilt, while gradually reducing the quality of care available to both generations and exhausting the caregiver.

In such a situation, arranging professional residential care may become the most meaningful available response, even when it causes sadness, disagreement or social criticism. Its meaning would not lie in disregarding the mother's wishes or choosing personal convenience. It would depend upon whether the decision offers the best possible care and dignity for the mother, protects the legitimate needs of the

child, recognises the caregiver's actual limits and considers less restrictive alternatives. Wherever possible, the mother must remain involved in the decision and retain agency over the aspects of her life she can still determine.

Care therefore cannot be measured simply by whether another person is pleased with our decision. A caring decision may disappoint someone, establish a boundary or refuse a demand. Conversely, self-sacrifice may look caring while producing depletion, dependency and poorer conditions for everyone involved. The meaningful response is neither the option that satisfies every expressed wish nor the option that protects the decision-maker from discomfort. It is the response that judgement identifies as the best possible for all parties within the actual conditions.

MEANINGFUL CHOICE

**Meaningful choice ≠ Pleasing others, avoiding guilt or appearing good · Meaningful choice = Taking every party seriously while accepting responsibility for the best possible response.**

Imagine witnessing a fire in a building while people may still be inside. The meaningful response will not be identical for everyone. A trained and authorised firefighter may participate directly in rescue. A doctor's distinct contribution may be to prepare for triage and provide first aid to those brought to safety. A person without relevant training may call emergency services, clear access, follow professional instructions or offer practical support. If that person is likely to panic and obstruct the response, withdrawing to a safe distance may be the most responsible action available to them.

The most meaningful-looking action is therefore not necessarily the meaningful action for this person. Entering the building may appear heroic, but without training it may increase the danger and create another person who needs to be rescued. The situation must be judged in relation to the distinct person who is responding. Nobody can discover their responsibility merely by copying the most visible action or accepting a role assigned without regard to their capacities and limits.

PERSONAL JUDGEMENT

**Meaning cannot be assigned · Conditions, needs and responsibilities can be made visible · The person must judge and freely assume their response.**

Once a possibility has been discerned, it becomes real only through decision and action. Decision commits the person to one of the possibilities; action gives the chosen possibility a place in reality. Responsibility means recognising that the response and its consequences now belong to the person's participation in the situation.

FROM POTENTIAL TO CO-CREATION

**Given Conditions and Limits → Meaning Potential → Perception and Conscience → Judgement → Decision → Action → A New Reality and New Conditions**

### 4.1.4 Life Asks; the Human Being Responds

A film offers a useful analogy. While watching a film, the meaning of each scene cannot always be known in advance. A detail that appears unimportant may acquire significance only after later events. At the end, a revelation may alter how the viewer understands everything that came before.

When the final scene reveals that the murderer was not the landlord but the butler, previous actions, objects and conversations acquire a meaning that could not be fully understood while the film was still unfolding. The viewer can then interpret the earlier scenes in relation to the completed whole.

Human beings cannot occupy this final position in relation to their own lives. While living, we remain inside the unfolding sequence. We do not know every future event, the full consequences of our actions or the place that one experience may eventually acquire within the whole. Asking for the complete meaning of one's life while it is still being lived is therefore like asking for the definitive meaning of a film before its final scene.

This does not make meaning unavailable. Although the meaning of the completed whole cannot be fully known in advance, the meaning potential of a particular scene can still be perceived and realised. A person may not know what their entire life will mean, but they can ask what this moment requires: whether to speak, create, contribute, listen, protect, refuse, repair, endure or change direction.

Human life differs from a completed film in another decisive respect: its script is not already available to us. Life presents scenes and conditions, but human beings participate in composing what follows through their responses. We are simultaneously characters within conditions we did not choose and participants in writing the next part of the story.

We do not control the whole story. The scene contains elements we did not choose: the time and place of our birth, the relationships into which we entered, previous events, other people's freedom, social and political conditions, finite resources and the consequences of decisions already made. These conditions form part of what is given in the present moment.

Yet the given situation does not contain only one predetermined future. As discussed earlier through the relationship between reality and possibility, human beings can recognise that a relationship could be repaired, that an unjust working condition could be challenged, that a festival could be organised differently or that a cultural form not yet present could be brought into reality. Through judgement and decision, a person participates in transforming both the situation and themselves.

Freedom therefore does not mean writing the whole script alone. It means recognising and taking responsibility for one's part within a scene that is being co-created with life and with other people. What the person does becomes part of the conditions to which others must respond. Their responses, in turn, create new conditions and possibilities. Life continues to ask, and human beings continue to answer.

LIFE AS DIALOGUE

**Life presents conditions and meaning potentials · Human beings answer through perception, conscience, judgement, decision and action · Each answer participates in creating the next situation.**

**Pause for Reflection**

Recall an unexpected situation in your festival work in which you faced uncertainty, a dilemma or a constraint on what you could do, and had to decide how to respond.

How did you initially understand the situation, and what did you decide to do?

Looking back, identify the responses that were realistically possible, including any you did not initially notice. Consider them through these three questions:

1. Which response would have been best for all those involved, including you, within the actual conditions?
2. What contribution were you particularly able and responsible to make, given your capacities, position and limits?
3. What most urgently required a response at that moment?

Given what you could reasonably have known and done at the time, would you now choose the same response or a different one? Why?

Now recall an unexpected opportunity in your festival work, such as an offer of funding, access to a venue or a new collaboration.

How did you initially understand the opportunity, and what did you decide to do? Identify the responses that were realistically possible and assess them using the same three questions above.

Given what you could reasonably have known and done at the time, would you now choose the same response or a different one? Why?

### 4.1.5 From Personal Meaning to Shared Life

Chapter 4 has shown that human beings develop as distinct persons while remaining oriented towards connection with others and with a meaningful whole. Relationships are among the principal forms through which this existential paradox is lived. They allow distinct people to participate in a shared world without requiring either isolation or the surrender of difference.

The dialogue with life becomes concrete through the situations a person encounters. A situation may involve a task, an opportunity, a loss, a place, an artwork, an institution, a group or another person. The person responds through what they perceive, the position they take, the decision they make and the action they bring into reality.

When another person is involved, the situation acquires a specifically interpersonal dimension. Two distinct centres of perception, experience, freedom and response now participate in what follows. My response becomes part of the conditions to which the other person must respond, while their response becomes part of the conditions I encounter next. A conversation, promise, refusal, contribution, silence, boundary or act of care therefore changes not only the immediate situation but also what may become possible between the people involved.

The other person is not simply one of the conditions to which I respond. They are another centre of perception, experience, freedom and response. They interpret the situation through a mental map that is not identical to mine. They may confirm, resist, misunderstand, correct or transform what I bring into the relationship. I affect what becomes possible for them, but I cannot fully determine their response. They affect what becomes possible for me, but they do not completely determine mine.

Relationship is therefore not the action of one person upon another. It is a continuing field in which distinct human beings encounter one another and participate in shaping what follows. Something may emerge between them that neither could have produced alone. The encounter can disclose a possibility that did not previously belong to either party separately; it can also confirm a harmful pattern, create dependency or restrict what each party can become.

This is why relationship carries both possibility and responsibility. Every response leaves a relational consequence. It may increase or reduce trust and clarify or distort expectation. It may develop or replace another person’s capacity, recognise or conceal contribution, and strengthen attachment or create dependency. Through repetition, these consequences become patterns. Patterns gradually acquire the force of a relational reality.

Communication is one of the principal means through which this relational participation becomes perceptible, but it is not the whole relationship. People also shape relationships through the costs they pay or avoid, the responsibilities they assume or transfer, the returns they provide or withhold and the expectations their repeated actions create. A relationship therefore develops not only through what people say, but through what they repeatedly make possible or necessary for one another.

**RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS TIME**

**Relationships carry responses across time · What people communicate, carry, give, withhold and repeat becomes part of what they make possible for one another.**

Frankl's theory explains how a person can enter into a meaningful relationship with life. When many people perceive and realise meaning potentials in relation to one another, something further becomes possible: their distinct responses can contribute to a meaningful shared life. A community does not perceive, decide or act as if it were a single person. Meaning is still realised by human beings. Yet their responses enter a relational field in which one person's contribution alters the conditions, possibilities and responsibilities encountered by others. Social meaning emerges through this network of interdependent responses.

Modern societies necessarily depend upon specialisation, professional institutions and public services. People perform particular forms of work, receive income and use that income to obtain other goods and services. They also finance collective responsibilities through taxation and entrust many decisions and tasks to public authorities. These arrangements make complex social life possible. The difficulty begins when participation in the common world is reduced almost entirely to payment, consumption, voting or compliance. People may then outsource not only technical work but also opportunities to deliberate, contribute, cooperate and take responsibility for what their shared life becomes.

Money can finance a public good, but paying money does not provide the same existential experience as helping to imagine, create, sustain or repair something with others. When collective contribution is reduced mainly to financial exchange, some meaning potentials remain unrealised. People encounter society primarily as users of systems created elsewhere rather than as participants capable of affecting their common world. Their agency, relational knowledge and capacity for shared responsibility may consequently remain undeveloped.

### 4.1.6 Co-Creating Meaning Through Festival Relationships

Section 3.2.2.4, Festivals and the Three Pathways to Meaning, considered how a festival can support the different ways in which people realise meaning. The focus here is on how their distinct contributions and responses affect one another and participate in shaping a shared world.

Festivals can give this movement from personal meaning towards a meaningful shared life a concrete cultural form. A festival does not create this relational field by itself. The situation in which meaning potentials can emerge is brought into being through the different contributions of the people involved—as artists, workers, volunteers, partners, public representatives, residents and audiences. Through their work, knowledge, resources, hospitality and attention, they create the conditions in which people, artworks, stories and experiences can enter into relation.

A festival can therefore offer not only experiences of attendance but also practices of contribution. People may participate in bringing a shared possibility into reality, experience the effects of their own contribution and encounter what others have contributed. Each person may perceive and respond to

different meaning potentials, yet those responses take place within a shared situation and can affect what becomes possible for others. An artist can bring a possibility into perceptible form without controlling what every participant will experience or understand. An audience member can participate in the same event while retaining a distinct inner world. Cultural and social meaning emerge through the encounter among artistic work, people, contributions, place and circumstance; they are not contained entirely in any one of them beforehand.

Art is particularly important within this field because it can give sensory and symbolic form to realities, feelings and possibilities that ordinary language does not easily contain. Through image, sound, movement, material, space and performance, an artwork can make something available to perception while leaving room for different responses. A festival intensifies this potential by composing conditions in which many such encounters can take place and affect one another.

The festival is therefore not only a distributor of completed cultural content. Through curatorial framing, spatial organisation, communication, participation and the relationships surrounding production and encounter, it helps shape the relational field in which meaning may be co-created. What emerges can alter how artists, audiences and festival workers perceive themselves, one another and what may be possible in their shared world.

When festivals repeat, these possibilities accumulate beyond the temporary event. Ways of collaborating become habits. Habits influence organisations. Organisations shape networks, policies and expectations. Experiences alter how people perceive one another and what they believe is possible. A festival transforms culture not only through the content it presents, but through the possibilities it realises in its relationships and conditions. In doing so, it changes aspects of the existing world and develops the capacities of the people who participate in making that change.

Participation alone, however, does not guarantee meaningful contribution. If people are invited only to carry costs, provide legitimacy or implement decisions made elsewhere, participation can become another form of instrumentalisation. Dividing work and assigning tasks may be necessary for coordination, but an authority distributing predetermined roles is not by itself a participatory process.

Meaningful participation creates conditions in which people can understand the shared situation, perceive what may be required, bring their distinct capacities into the process, negotiate their roles and freely assume appropriate responsibilities. It also allows them to communicate their limits, refuse responsibilities they cannot safely or legitimately carry, and propose forms of contribution that were not anticipated by the existing plan.

Agency is therefore inseparable from meaningful participation. A person exercises agency when they can judge what contribution is theirs to make, decide what cost they can responsibly carry and influence

what their contribution helps bring into reality. Their role is not simply given to them; it is discerned and negotiated within the needs, limits, responsibilities and relationships of the shared situation.

MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION

**Participation ≠ The distribution of predetermined roles · Participation = Creating the conditions in which people can discern, negotiate and assume their distinct responsibilities.**

FROM MEANING POTENTIAL TO SHARED LIFE

**Meaning Potential → Agency → Contribution → Co-Creation → Shared Responsibility → Meaningful Social Life**

Yet encounter alone does not determine the quality of the relationship that forms. The same festival can enable recognition or instrumentalisation, agency or passivity, connection or exclusion. Its relational consequences depend upon how people communicate, what costs and responsibilities they carry, what returns they receive and what they learn to expect from one another across time. The existential account of co-creation therefore leads to a practical question: how are these relationships made?

**Pause for Reflection**

Think of an artwork presented at your festival. Drawing on Frankl's three pathways to meaning, in what ways is your involvement with it meaningful to you? What meaning might an audience member find in it? What meaning might a mayor find through supporting the event and participating in it?

How do these different ways of contributing and taking part shape the shared experience around the work?

### 4.1.7 What This Means for Relationships

The preceding movement can now be brought together.

Human life is uncertain, paradoxical and limited, yet open to judgement, decision and transformation. Human beings are embodied and conditioned, yet capable of self-distancing, conscience, self-transcendence and responsible response. They develop as distinct persons while remaining oriented towards meaningful connection. They realise meaning within situations that are already relational, and their responses shape the conditions in which other people must live and act.

Chapter 4 has therefore treated relationality not as an optional social skill but as a condition of existence. A person lives in relation to their own body and inner world, to other people and communities, to inherited histories, institutions and values, and to nature, living systems and life itself. None of these relationships stands entirely alone. Each belongs to a wider network in which one

response changes the conditions of another relationship and becomes part of what the whole network can subsequently sustain.

The dialogue between the human being and life is the most encompassing level of this relational existence. It does not occur separately from everyday life. It is realised through countless concrete encounters: with another person, a task, a group, an organisation, a community, a place, an artwork or a living system. The macro dialogue is therefore carried by smaller relationships, and the accumulated quality of those relationships helps determine what kind of shared world can emerge.

**FROM LIFE TO RELATIONSHIP**

**Life presents situations · Human beings respond · When responses meet, relationships form · Relationships carry, accumulate and transform consequences across time · Interconnected relational patterns shape what becomes possible in shared life**

This leads to the practical question developed in the next chapter: How are relationships made?

**CHAPTER 4 — CARE LANDING**

**Human beings become themselves in relationship with others and realise meaning by responding to what a situation asks. Care protects connection without demanding the loss of distinctness.**

# CHAPTER 5

# How Relationships Are Made

*Communication, cost and expectations across time*

## Relationships Between Two Parties

Chapter 4 ended with a practical question: How are relationships made? To answer this question and understand the larger relational ecosystem of a festival, this chapter begins with its smallest unit of analysis: a continuing relationship between two parties. In its most immediate form, this is a relationship between two people. It may also be a relationship between a person and an organisation, or between organisations such as a festival and a funder, partner or public authority. Organisations, however, do not perceive, communicate, value, decide or take responsibility independently of people. They enter relationships through particular representatives, while roles, policies, resources and institutional conditions shape what those representatives can promise, decide and provide.

Beginning with two parties does not mean treating a relationship as an isolated unit. Every relationship is connected to other relationships and takes place within wider social, organisational, cultural and material conditions. The two-party perspective is a temporary analytical lens: it allows us to see relational dynamics clearly before examining how many such relationships interact within organisations, festival ecosystems and communities.

Beginning with people also does not confine the analysis to private or interpersonal skill. Organisational messages, curatorial texts, campaigns, meetings and programmes are conceived and enacted by people, while roles, timelines, budgets, channels, policies and working conditions shape what those people can communicate and what others can perceive. Each relational element will therefore be followed from its operation between people into festival practice. The later examination of relationships within organisations will not repeat these applications; it will ask how their underlying principles can become reliable organisational conditions rather than remaining dependent upon the skill, goodwill or availability of particular individuals.

For the purposes of this Reader, a continuing relationship is formed through three interacting elements:

**THE THREE ELEMENTS OF RELATIONSHIP**

**Relationship = Communication + Cost Exchange + Expectations Across Time.**

**Communication** concerns how messages from one person's inner world become available to another, how they are perceived and interpreted, and how different mental maps enter into contact.

**Cost exchange** concerns what each party gives, carries, risks, postpones or relinquishes; what return each receives; and how this exchange affects capacity, value, attachment, dependency and power.

**Expectations across time** concern what the parties learn to anticipate from one another through promises, roles, previous experience and repeated behaviour.

These elements do not operate separately. Communication creates, clarifies or distorts expectations. Expectations influence which costs each party is prepared or required to carry. Cost exchange affects capacity, value, trust, attachment, dependency and power. These consequences then change how later messages are transmitted and perceived. A relationship is therefore not a fixed connection between two parties but a continuing cycle through which responses become consequences, consequences become patterns and patterns shape the conditions of future responses.

The chapter begins with communication—not because communication is the whole relationship, but because it is one of the principal ways through which the inner worlds, intentions, perceptions and differences of the parties become available within the relational field.

## 5.1 Communication

### 5.1.1 Why Do Human Beings Communicate?

#### *5.1.1.1 The existential function of communication in relationship*

Communication is the movement through which relationships are initiated, lived, tested, developed and repaired. It allows distinct persons to reach towards one another, make themselves present, encounter realities beyond themselves and create a relational world that neither could create alone. Human beings communicate because separation makes direct access to another person's inner world impossible, while the longing for connection makes remaining enclosed within one's own world insufficient.

FROM HUMAN CONDITION TO COMMUNICATION

**Individuation → Separation → Longing for Connection → Relationship → Communication → Encounter → The Relational "Between" → Mutual Transformation.**

Cultural professionals already devote a large part of their work to communication. They write emails and funding applications, negotiate with artists and partners, brief teams, frame programmes, address audiences, design campaigns, mediate conflicts and explain decisions. This chapter is therefore not an introduction to basic communication technique. It proposes a shift in perspective. Communication is often treated primarily as the transfer of information or the management of response. This chapter understands it instead as a fundamental way in which human beings establish relationships and

encounter and understand the world. Through communication, they also test what they think they know, make themselves present and take part in shaping shared reality.

THE EXISTENTIAL PURPOSE OF COMMUNICATION

**Communication = The movement through which human beings enter into relationship with the world.**

This movement should not be reduced to transaction. Organisational work necessarily includes transactions: information must be exchanged, responsibilities assigned, contracts fulfilled and decisions implemented. Yet when transaction becomes the whole relationship, the other person is encountered mainly as a function, resource, audience segment, problem or means to an outcome. Martin Buber, an existential philosopher, distinguishes between the basic word pairs I–It and I–Thou. This distinction helps clarify what is lost in that reduction.

I–It is the mode through which human beings experience, classify, compare, plan, use and organise the world. It is indispensable: without it there would be no contracts, schedules, budgets, technical knowledge or coordinated action. Its danger appears when this necessary subject–object mode becomes the only way of relating, so that a person is treated as if their role, category, usefulness or predictability exhausted who they are.

I–Thou is not simply a warmer, more empathic version of I–It. It names an encounter in which I turn towards the other as a whole and irreducible presence rather than as an object contained within my existing categories. The other is not an extension of my mental map and cannot be fully possessed by my explanation. The encounter requires presence, openness and response. It also requires difference: I and Thou do not merge into sameness. They remain distinct and meet in reciprocity.

For Buber, the centre of this relation lies neither inside the I nor inside the Thou, but in the “between” that comes into being through their encounter. This means that dialogue is not adequately described as two separate contributions placed side by side. When each person is genuinely available to be addressed and affected, the relationship can generate a meaning, recognition, possibility or transformation that neither participant could have produced alone. In contemporary language, one might say that the encounter creates more than the sum of two individual inputs. Yet this “more” is not a product extracted from the participants or a third object owned by them. It is an emergent relational reality: something that happens between distinct persons and may also change the kind of I each becomes within the encounter.

THE RELATIONAL BETWEEN

**I + THOU ≠ Two separate contributions placed side by side · In genuine encounter, the “between” can bring forth meaning and possibility that neither person could create alone.**

The transformation is therefore not confined to the meaning, decision or work produced between the participants. Because each person is addressed by a reality that does not originate within their own mental map, both may leave the encounter with a changed understanding, position, capacity or sense of possibility. This is not guaranteed, symmetrical or necessarily permanent. The decisive point is that neither party enters genuine dialogue only to act upon the other; each also becomes available to being affected and changed.

Seen through this lens, communication is approached differently. Its purpose is not only to transmit a position accurately or obtain a desired response. It is also to create an encounter in which both parties can become more fully present, perceive what their previous position could not contain, respond and allow a new relational possibility to emerge. Better perception is therefore not simply preparation for more effective transmission. It is openness to the possibility that what I perceive may revise what I intended to transmit, the decision I expected to defend or the person I understood myself to be.

DIALOGICAL COMMUNICATION

**Care in communication does not only seek to make the other understand · It creates conditions in which both parties can perceive, respond, affect one another and be changed by the encounter.**

Seen through Buber's lens, the first significance of encounter does not lie in the quality of the idea, decision or project it may produce. It lies in a transformation of how the other person is approached. The artist is not only a provider of artistic content. A community member is not a source of local information, legitimacy or participation. A colleague is not merely a function through which organisational work is completed. Each is a person whose existence exceeds the role through which the festival first encounters them.

Care begins before a caring behaviour is selected. It begins as an attitude of valuing the person. Listening, supporting, including or responding do not by themselves constitute care. The same actions can be performed mechanically, paternalistically or instrumentally. A person may be listened to in order to secure cooperation, included in order to legitimise a decision or supported only because their work is needed. The decisive question is how the person is being regarded.

Buber's "between" gives this value a relational dimension. What emerges through a genuine encounter is unique to the persons who participate in it. If one participant were replaced, another relationship and another "between" would emerge. A role may be reassigned and a task may be completed by someone else, but the person is not relationally interchangeable. Replacing the participant changes what can come into being through the relationship.

CARE AS AN ATTITUDE

**Every person is valuable because every person embodies a life that no one else has lived · A function may be replaced, but a person cannot be relationally reproduced · Care is the attitude of valuing the person; caring behaviours are the forms through which this attitude becomes visible.**

This ethical orientation may also change festival practice. A conversation between a programmer and an artist may disclose an artistic possibility neither had previously imagined. Dialogue between a festival and a community may alter the purpose, form or ownership of a project. Collaboration may become co-creation when participants can affect one another rather than being confined to predetermined functions. These are possible consequences of encounter, not its justification. The person is not approached as a Thou in order to extract a better idea, secure community approval or produce a more innovative project.

I–Thou should not be romanticised as a permanent condition. Human life continually returns to I–It because encounters must be remembered, described, planned and organised. Nor is every professional relationship fully reciprocal; differences of role, authority and responsibility remain. The ethical question is whether necessary transactions are organised in ways that keep open the possibility of genuine encounter, or whether people are fixed entirely as functions and prevented from affecting what happens.

The relevant paradox is the need to sustain functional coordination and genuine human encounter at the same time. Festivals require transactions in order to exist: tasks must move forward, responsibilities must be clear and practical results must be achieved. Meaningful cultural work also requires self-transcendence—the capacity to turn beyond immediate self-interest towards another person, a shared task, a value or a possibility worth realising. Care holds these requirements together. It enables the work to proceed without reducing the person to the work. A message may seek an operational result, while the relationship remains capable of recognition, response, disagreement, mutual influence and continuation.

COMMUNICATION AS ENCOUNTER

**Care does not eliminate transaction · It organises necessary I–IT relations without allowing them to close the possibility of I–THOU encounter.**

Valuing the person is the personal starting point of care, but it is not yet its complete practice. To translate this relational attitude into practice, we must first examine how messages move between distinct inner worlds and how they become perceived and interpreted.

**Pause for Reflection**

Think of two encounters with people in your working environment: one you recognise as predominantly I–It, and another in which you experienced I–Thou. What differences do you notice in how you regarded the other person, how you responded to one another and what emerged between you?

Choose one of these people and consider different situations in your work together. When is relating through roles and tasks (I–It) sufficient for the practical matter at hand? When do you feel it is important to make room for an I–Thou encounter?

## 5.1.2 How Does Communication Operate?

### *5.1.2.1 Transmission and perception*

At its most basic level, communication is the exchange of messages. Whatever we wish to communicate—information, emotion, intention, need, imagination, expectation or value—must acquire a form that can become perceptible in the outer world. We transmit through words, voice, sound, rhythm, facial expression, gesture, movement, image, touch, silence, behaviour, bodily proximity and the organisation of space. We perceive messages from the outer world through our five senses: sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste.

Communication therefore involves two complementary directional movements. Transmission carries messages from our inner world into the outer world by giving them a perceptible form. Perception brings messages from the outer world into our inner world. Every participant is involved in both movements: while I transmit, I am also perceiving the other person and the situation, and the other person is doing the same.

THE COMMUNICATION MOVEMENT

**Transmission: Inner World → Outer World · Perception: Outer World → Inner World.**

Messages from the outer world do not enter the inner world as complete and unchanged copies. Human beings cannot see, hear, feel or attend to everything around them. We select some messages and overlook others. We relate what we perceive to previous experience, organise it through language and culture, give it meaning and draw wider conclusions from it.

These processes are necessary. Without selection, we would be overwhelmed by the information available. Without comparison with previous experience, we could not recognise what we encounter. Without forming wider conclusions, experience could not become learning. But the same processes can narrow or alter our understanding. We may notice what confirms an existing belief, interpret an

ambiguous message through a previous injury or hope, and turn one experience into a general rule: “They never listen,” “Audiences do not care about this,” or “I always have to solve everything myself.”

Strong desires and fears can intensify this tendency. When I need to be right, I may select supporting information, overlook what complicates my position, choose convenient criteria of comparison and accept a small amount of favourable evidence as sufficient for a broad conclusion. This need not involve conscious dishonesty. I may sincerely experience my interpretation as obvious because the filtering and interpretation that produced it remain outside awareness.

The result is a mental map: an inner representation through which a person understands the self, others and the world. It is formed from real experience and contains knowledge necessary for recognising patterns, anticipating consequences and acting. Yet it is not merely an incomplete version of reality. A mental map contains valuable knowledge, unavoidable omissions and possible distortions. Some distortions arise from the limits of perception and interpretation; others arise because desires, fears and preferred self-images influence what we notice, how we interpret it and what we allow ourselves to recognise. This influence need not involve conscious dishonesty. A person may sincerely believe an interpretation that also protects them from an unwelcome reality. In this sense, a mental map can become a vehicle of self-deception as well as understanding.

Recognising this distinction is important. It does not mean that reality is unknowable or that every interpretation is equally adequate. It means that no individual perspective can contain reality in its entirety or represent it without the possibility of distortion. What we know is always partial, situated and open to testing and correction.

This awareness can change our orientation towards truth. If I assume that my mental map is reality itself, I have little reason to continue looking. I may interpret disagreement primarily as error, ignorance or resistance. If I recognise that my map may both omit and distort aspects of reality, uncertainty becomes an invitation to pay closer attention, seek further evidence, compare perspectives, question my assumptions and revise interpretations that do not withstand encounter with the world. The possibility of error does not make the search for truth meaningless; it makes that search necessary.

If there are billions of people in the world, there are billions of mental maps. Even people present in the same meeting, performance or conflict notice different messages, connect them to different histories and carry away different meanings.

Recognising this does not require us to accept every interpretation as true. It can awaken curiosity about what another perspective may reveal that our own has not perceived.

We may never possess the whole truth from a single position. Yet through evidence, dialogue and encounters between different perspectives, we may move closer to a fuller and more responsible

understanding of reality. Another person's perspective is therefore not valuable merely because it is different. It is valuable because it may disclose a dimension of reality that remains invisible from where we stand.

CARE AND AN OPEN PERSPECTIVE

**Care begins with recognising that i do not see the whole picture · Another person may perceive something my own perspective cannot reveal.**

Communication consequently takes place between different inner worlds. One person cannot place an inner meaning directly inside another person. They can only give that meaning an external, perceivable form. The other person perceives and interprets that form through a different mental map. What was intended, what was transmitted, what was available to perception and what was understood may therefore differ.

This difference does not make genuine encounter impossible; it makes dialogue necessary. In Martin Buber's terms, communication can remain within an I–It relation, in which the other person is approached primarily as a role, function, category, audience or means to an outcome. But it can also become part of an I–Thou encounter, in which the other is recognised as a distinct and irreducible human being whose reality cannot be contained within my mental map.

An I–Thou encounter does not dissolve the distance between two inner worlds. It changes how that distance is approached. Rather than assuming that I already know what the other person is, means or needs, I remain present and open to being answered, corrected and changed. Communication then becomes more than the transmission of a pre-existing meaning. Within the relational space between us, an understanding may emerge that neither person possessed beforehand. Both participants—and the relationship itself—may be transformed through the encounter.

ACROSS INNER WORLDS

**Inner Meaning → Transmitted Message → Perceived Message → Interpreted Meaning.**

CARE BEYOND MANAGEMENT

**Care is not the management of another person · Care begins by recognising the other as an irreplaceable human being who cannot be reduced to my mental map, their role or their usefulness to me.**

This understanding has important philosophical roots. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, a French phenomenological philosopher, treats perception not as a detached recording of the world but as an embodied and situated encounter. Hans-Georg Gadamer, a German hermeneutic philosopher, similarly understands interpretation as taking place within a horizon formed by language, history and previous understanding; dialogue becomes transformative when another horizon reveals the limits of our own.

Situated perception does not mean that every interpretation is equally adequate or that shared reality disappears. It means that no single perspective contains the whole of it, and that responsible understanding remains open to evidence, dialogue and correction.

#### *5.1.2.2 Every perspective comes from a lived life*

The phrase “the map is not the territory” names an important limitation: the inner map through which I understand reality is not reality in its entirety. Its relational meaning goes further. If my map has been shaped by my history, relationships, culture, body, opportunities, losses, fears and choices, the other person’s map has also emerged from a lived life.

This does not mean that an interpretation is necessarily accurate simply because it arises from experience, or that every perspective should determine a decision. It means that a perspective which contradicts mine should not immediately be reduced to ignorance, incompetence, irrationality or bad intention. Before it became a statement with which I disagree, it formed within a life I have not lived.

The person speaking is therefore more than the message I receive. Their age, education, professional status, experience or ability to express themselves may affect the form and relevance of their contribution, but these do not determine the human value of the life from which it emerges. Respect is not only respect for an opinion. It is respect for the person and the life history that I cannot see in its entirety.

Recognising this can awaken curiosity. Instead of asking a question to expose an error, confirm my judgement or lead the person towards my answer, I can ask because I genuinely do not yet understand how the situation appears from their position. Curiosity opens perception. It makes listening and questioning movements of encounter rather than techniques for managing a response.

Communication still has practical purposes. People communicate to share information, coordinate work, make decisions, set boundaries, resolve problems and create action. Care does not remove these purposes. It prevents them from closing the relationship. While seeking an outcome, caring communication remains open to discovering who the other person is, what they have experienced, what they perceive and what my own mental map has not allowed me to see.

This openness expresses something more fundamental than a communication technique: it expresses that the other person is valued. Care begins with valuing the person—not only their usefulness, agreement, status, knowledge or contribution, but their presence as a distinct human being whose life and perspective cannot simply be replaced by another.

Valuing is therefore not an abstract feeling or a general declaration of goodwill. It becomes visible in what we are prepared to invest in the relationship. If I recognise that another person may reveal something about reality that my own mental map cannot contain, I have a reason to give time, attention

and effort to understanding them. I may need to listen longer, ask another question, tolerate uncertainty, examine my assumptions, acknowledge a misunderstanding or allow what I learn to change my decision.

This valuing-generated curiosity is also what can interrupt automatic communication and make communication conscious. Much everyday communication proceeds through habit. We react to familiar signals, repeat established interpretations and prepare our response before we have fully perceived the other person. Curiosity creates a pause. It turns attention towards the person and the situation, making it possible to choose a response rather than merely reproduce a pattern. In this sense, the familiar practices of effective communication—attentive listening, clarification, checking interpretation, differentiated expression and appropriate feedback—depend upon a prior relational orientation.

Without valuing and curiosity, the same practices can remain mechanical or become techniques for managing another person.

Valuing increases our willingness to bear the necessary costs of communication, but it does not require limitless availability, endless explanation or self-erasure. Caring attention must remain proportionate to the relationship, the situation, the needs involved and the person's actual capacity. Boundaries, pauses, disagreement and ending a harmful exchange may also protect the conditions for responsible communication. Care asks us to invest enough time, attention and effort for the other person to become perceptible beyond a role or category; it does not ask one person to carry the whole relationship alone.

**CARE, VALUING AND CONSCIOUS COMMUNICATION**

**Care = Valuing the person · Valuing awakens curiosity · Curiosity interrupts automatic reaction and opens perception · Value becomes visible through the necessary and proportionate time, attention and effort we invest in understanding one another.**

**COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIP**

**Communication builds relationship when it seeks not only to transmit a message or produce a result, but also to encounter and understand the person before us · Curiosity opens perception · Perception makes encounter possible.**

**Pause for Reflection**

Recall a disagreement or conflict in your festival work in which you responded by defending your position.

Looking back, what had you observed, and what had you assumed or interpreted? What could you have asked or checked before responding?

Did anything you learned afterwards—from conversations with others, getting to know the person better or new information about the situation—lead you to see that they might also have had a valid point? If so, what changed your understanding?

#### *5.1.2.3 The first law of communication: attention*

THE LAW OF ATTENTION

**As attention becomes more occupied with transmitting our own inner world, the capacity to perceive the outer world decreases.**

Human beings have a natural need to make themselves present in the world. We want our intentions, experiences, needs and ideas to become visible and to have an effect. Attention therefore tends to move towards transmission. But attention is limited. When I prepare my next argument, choose persuasive words, defend my position or control how I appear, I may hear the other person's words while failing to perceive hesitation, fear, confusion, resistance or meaning.

This creates a paradox. The more strongly I want to be understood, the more intensely I may transmit; yet the more attention I give to transmission, the less I perceive the person and conditions that determine whether my message can be understood. Better transmission therefore often begins with better perception.

When Frankl's theory of meaning is applied to communication, we can distinguish between ego-focused and meaning-focused communication. This is an application of his meaning theory, not a separate communication model proposed by Frankl.

In ego-focused communication, attention becomes excessively occupied with the effect we want to produce: being understood, appearing competent, proving that we are right, securing agreement or obtaining action. These aims may be legitimate. The difficulty begins when the desired effect absorbs so much attention that we perceive less of the person and situation through which it must become possible. Our transmission then becomes less responsive and may become less effective.

Meaning-focused communication turns attention towards what the situation asks, what matters between the people involved and what can responsibly be realised. Clearer expression may then emerge

because we perceive what requires explanation, understand the other person's concern and mental map, and recognise the conditions in which the message must become meaningful. The shift is from trying to manufacture an effect through transmission alone to participating in the conditions through which understanding and response can arise.

THE TRANSMISSION PARADOX

**When producing the desired effect becomes the whole focus, our capacity to perceive the conditions that make that effect possible decreases · Better transmission often emerges as a side-effect of better perception.**

Concrete situations, as Frankl argues, contain meaning potentials. Perception therefore precedes responsible transmission: before responding, we must recognise who is involved, what is at stake, which values require protection, what consequences different responses may create and what remains genuinely possible. Yet what we first perceive is not the situation in its entirety. Our mental map may omit or distort aspects of reality, while desire, fear, previous experience and the need to protect a preferred position may influence what becomes visible to us. Communication oriented towards meaning in this sense therefore asks not only, "What do I want to say?" but also: "What am I actually observing? What meaning have I added? What may I be overlooking? What evidence or perspective could require me to revise my interpretation?"

The meaningful option is neither egoistic nor self-erasing. It is the best possible option, within the conditions of that moment, for myself and all other parties involved—including people who may be affected without being present in the conversation. Justice helps us consider legitimate needs, responsibilities, capacities, boundaries and consequences. Meaning-focused communication begins by perceiving this wider relational field and continues by expressing a responsible response within it.

Discernment does not require waiting until the whole reality becomes certain. A responsible decision must still be made within the limits of what can presently be known. But it should remain open to correction when dialogue, feedback, consequences or new evidence reveal what the original mental map could not contain.

MEANING-FOCUSED COMMUNICATION

**Perceive the Situation and Its Meaning Potentials → Distinguish Observation from Interpretation → Test the Mental Map through Evidence and Other Perspectives → Consider the Self and all Other Parties Involved → Discern the Best Possible Option → Transmit a Responsible Response → Remain Open to Correction.**

Self-distancing, Frankl's term for the capacity to step back from one's own first reaction, is relevant here. Human beings do not have to remain completely identified with their first perception, emotion or

reaction. We can notice what is happening within us, take a position towards it and redirect attention. I can recognise my need to prove that I am right without allowing that need to determine what I am able to perceive. I can also step back far enough to observe my position within the relationship and the context: the role I occupy, the authority I hold, the expectations and history between us, the pattern we are creating together and the conditions that shape what each person can perceive, say and do.

This capacity does not make self-knowledge a solitary achievement. A person can reflect inwardly and reason about themselves, but cannot verify the truth of those conclusions from within the same mind that produced them. Human beings can deceive themselves, protect a preferred self-image, overlook their effects on others and interpret events in ways that serve what they already want to believe. What I think I know about myself must therefore encounter realities that are not under my control: another person's experience, the consequences of my actions, resistance, difference, disagreement and the material facts of the situation. Relationship is not merely one source of information about the self. It is the field in which self-understanding meets an independent reality and can be confirmed, corrected or transformed.

RELATIONAL SELF-KNOWLEDGE

**We can reflect on ourselves inwardly · But we can know ourselves only by testing that understanding in relationship with others and the reality of the outer world.**

Self-distancing therefore does not mean withdrawing from a relationship or claiming a neutral view from outside it. It means creating enough inner distance to see oneself, the other person, the relationship and the surrounding conditions as parts of a larger field. This makes different questions possible: What is happening within me? What position am I occupying here? What pattern are we creating together? What is the other person's response showing me that my own account cannot show? What conditions shape what each of us is able to perceive, express and do?

Self-distancing

**Self-distancing ≠ Withdrawing from the relationship**

**Self-distancing = Creating enough inner distance to see oneself, the other, the relationship and the context as parts of a larger field.**

CARE AND ATTENTION

**Care in communication = Remaining in contact with one's own inner world while staying open to what enters from the outer world.**

**Pause for Reflection**

Recall a conversation in which you were preparing your reply while the other person was still speaking. How did this affect what you heard or noticed? What helped, or could have helped, you redirect your attention?

### 5.1.3 What Makes Communication Caring and Effective?

#### *5.1.3.1 The second law of communication: received meaning*

THE LAW OF RECEIVED MEANING

**The meaning communicated is not determined by the speaker's intention alone · It emerges through what the other person can perceive, interpret and understand.**

A thought associated with Rumi, the thirteenth-century Sufi poet and thinker, captures this communication principle: "What I say is only as much as the other person understands." What is communicated is not simply what the speaker intends to say, but what the other person is able to perceive, interpret and understand.

The law does not mean that the speaker's intention is irrelevant. Intention gives direction to transmission, but it does not complete communication. A message must take a perceptible form and then be interpreted through another person's mental map. What I intended to say and what became understandable may therefore differ. "I sent it" or "I said it clearly" describes an action taken by the speaker; it does not by itself establish that shared meaning was created.

Nor does the law make the speaker responsible for every possible interpretation. People may refuse to listen, protect an established belief, interpret strategically or lack information that the speaker could not reasonably anticipate. Responsibility for understanding is shared, although it is not always equal. The person who holds greater authority, knowledge or control over the conditions of communication usually carries a greater responsibility to make purpose, context, language, consequences and possibilities for response accessible.

The speaker's responsibility is to give meaning a form that the particular listener has a fair possibility of perceiving; to check what was understood when the matter is important; and to adapt the form when doing so is reasonable and does not distort the meaning or violate a legitimate boundary. The listener's responsibility is to offer attention where possible, distinguish perception from assumption, ask for clarification and communicate uncertainty rather than silently converting it into certainty. The organisation's responsibility is to provide sufficient time, appropriate channels, accessible formats and relational safety for this shared work to occur.

This changes the standard by which communication is evaluated. Completion is not the moment at which a message leaves the sender. Effective communication requires a feedback movement through which meaning can be received, tested, clarified and, where necessary, repaired. The relevant question is therefore not only, “What did I say?” but also, “What became possible for this person to understand, and how do I know?”

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FOR UNDERSTANDING

**Communication is not completed by sending · It becomes effective when meaning can be received, tested and clarified · Responsibility for understanding is shared but not always equal.**

**Pause for Reflection**

Recall a time you gave a new colleague or volunteer instructions that seemed clear to you, but they lacked the background needed to understand them. How did you realise it, and how could you have checked sooner?

Now recall a time you received unclear instructions from someone with more authority. Did you ask for clarification? What made asking easy or difficult?

#### *5.1.3.2 The third law of communication: perceptual intensity*

THE LAW OF PERCEPTUAL INTENSITY

**When the amount or intensity of external messages exceeds our capacity to receive and process them, more transmission produces less perception.**

Communication reaches us through multiple perceptual channels. We receive visual, auditory, tactile, spatial and bodily messages, and every channel has limits. When too much light enters the eye, the pupil contracts to reduce the amount received. If the light becomes more intense, we close our eyes, raise a hand or turn our head away. More light no longer produces more vision.

The same principle operates through hearing. When sound becomes excessively loud, many people speak simultaneously or speech continues without pauses, more sound does not produce more understanding. Messages become difficult to distinguish, attention filters them out and the person may withdraw or stop trying to follow. It also applies to touch, proximity and space. A message intended as closeness may reduce openness when it exceeds another person’s boundary.

Linguistic communication follows the same perceptual principle. When a message becomes too intense, repetitive, rapid or continuous, it may exceed the receiver’s capacity to process it. The receiver may filter parts of it out, lose the thread, withdraw or stop trying to follow. This does not necessarily mean

that the person refuses to understand. The form and intensity of transmission may have reduced the conditions required for perception.

Effective communication therefore asks not only, “How can I make the message clearer or stronger?” but also, “Under what conditions can this person receive, interpret and respond?” Clarity may require less intensity, a pause, a different rhythm or channel, acknowledgement of emotion and room for response. Communication succeeds not when the maximum amount has been transmitted, but when sufficient meaning has become perceptible and answerable.

CARE IN COMMUNICATION

**Care in communication ≠ Maximising the amount or intensity of input · Care in communication = Calibrating form, channel, intensity and timing so that perception and response remain possible.**

**Pause for Reflection**

Recall a conversation or presentation in which the amount, pace or intensity of what was being communicated made it difficult for you to follow. How did you react? What would have helped you understand and respond?

Think of someone whose messages are usually very long and detailed. How do you tend to read them? Could others be reading your own messages in the same way?

#### *5.1.3.3 The principle of differentiated transmission*

Because communication takes place between different mental maps, the same transmission will not be perceived or understood in the same way by every person. Differentiated transmission begins with this recognition. It does not mean changing the truth for different people. It means giving the same central meaning a form that this particular person has a fair possibility of perceiving, interpreting and answering.

In personal communication, people often repeat the message that would have worked for themselves. If the other person does not understand, they may say the same thing again, add more detail or increase its intensity. Yet the difficulty may lie not in the other person’s intelligence or willingness, but in the distance between their mental maps. A caring response asks: What does this person already know? Which words do they use? What are they attending to? What may they fear, assume or need to clarify? What form would allow the meaning to become perceptible without reducing the person to a category?

Differentiation can therefore mean replacing an abstraction with a concrete example, offering context before making a request, reducing unnecessary detail, changing the sequence of an explanation, pausing for a response or asking the other person to describe what they understood. It may also mean recognising that some people need time before answering while others understand through dialogue.

The aim is not to discover a technique that works on the person. It is to remain responsive to the person who is actually present.

The same principle extends from interpersonal communication to organisational communication. A generic message may be formally equal while remaining practically inaccessible to some of those affected. Caring communication keeps the central meaning, responsibility and relevant boundaries consistent while adapting the form, context and support through which different people can access them.

A technical team may need precise operational information; an artist may need to understand how a condition affects artistic choices; a volunteer may need role boundaries, a named contact and permission to ask; a local resident may need context that an established partner already possesses; and a person carrying stress or unfamiliar with institutional language may need information divided into manageable stages. Sending everyone the same document does not by itself create shared understanding.

People may differ in the perceptual channels they habitually use, prefer or find easier to process. In personal communication, we can often learn something about these preferences by attending to how a person perceives, describes and communicates experience. Some people may respond more readily to visual examples, others to spoken explanation, written language, physical demonstration or direct experience. Adapting our transmission in response to such observations can add considerable value to communication.

This does not require reducing a person to a fixed visual, auditory or kinaesthetic type. A perceptual preference is a useful clue, not a complete definition of the person. People use several sensory and interpretive channels, and their responsiveness may change according to the subject, context, familiarity, emotion, fatigue, disability and purpose. Caring communication therefore pays attention both to relatively consistent individual preferences and to the person's actual condition in the present situation.

The same principle applies beyond one-to-one communication. A seminar should not assume that every participant receives meaning most readily through extended speech or written slides. It can combine spoken explanation, images, examples, movement, written concepts, discussion and opportunities for practical engagement. Public and institutional communication can similarly use complementary forms so that people with different perceptual preferences and capacities can enter the message through more than one route.

Differentiation is therefore neither a rigid typology nor a reason to communicate with everyone in the same way. It is a practical tool for becoming more attentive to how particular people perceive and

express meaning, while designing collective communication with enough sensory and expressive variety to remain accessible to different participants.

Nor does differentiation mean manipulating different people more effectively. Its ethical purpose is not to engineer compliance by finding each person's most vulnerable route. It is to make the relevant meaning, limits and choices genuinely perceptible so that people can judge, question and respond. The test of differentiated transmission is therefore not whether everybody produces the response management wanted, but whether each person had a fair possibility of understanding what mattered and exercising agency.

**DIFFERENTIATED TRANSMISSION**

**Perception of the Person → Understanding Their Conditions → Differentiated Transmission → Checking What Was Perceived → Adaptation.**

**CARE AND DIFFERENTIATION**

**Care in communication = Observing how people receive and express meaning · Adapting transmission without reducing the person to a category · Designing collective communication through complementary perceptual channels.**

**Pause for Reflection**

Have you developed a good working relationship with a new team member with whom communication was initially difficult? If so, what did you learn over time about how they understood and expressed ideas? How did you adapt the way you communicated with them?

#### *5.1.3.4 Meaning-oriented communication*

The person who speaks has an intention, but intention does not determine impact. Between intention and perception lie form, timing, role, context, prior experience and unequal risk. "I did not mean it that way" may be relevant, but it does not complete the inquiry. A relational approach asks both what the speaker intended and what became possible or difficult for the other person as a result.

Effective communication begins before speaking. It requires a distinction between why we are reacting and what we are speaking for. "Why?" looks towards the experience, emotion, interpretation or unmet expectation that moved us. "What for?" looks towards the future: what do we want this communication to make possible, protect or change? I may speak because I feel angry about an injustice; I may speak in order to make that injustice visible and contribute to changing the situation. The first explains my reaction. The second gives direction to my response.

Clarity of purpose does not require suppressing emotion. It allows us to choose a form of expression capable of serving what matters. Effective communication therefore involves listening for meaning

rather than waiting to reply; distinguishing observation from interpretation; making expectations and constraints visible; checking understanding rather than assuming agreement; and choosing channels accessible to those affected.

Purpose, however, is not the same as impact. After communicating, we must ask what our words actually made possible. Did they clarify the issue, invite responsibility and support change, or did they produce defensiveness, silence or further uncertainty? Relational responsibility examines the whole movement from source to purpose to expression, perception, effect and relational trace.

CARE LENS

**Why? — What moved me? · What for? — What am I trying to make possible? · With what effect? — What did my communication actually create?**

**Pause for Reflection**

Recall a time in your festival work when you spoke up about something you felt was unfair and the conversation became tense. What moved you to speak, and what did you hope your words would make possible? Looking back, what effect did your communication have? Would you change anything in how you expressed yourself to serve that purpose more effectively?

These principles operate not only in conversations between two people. They also shape how festivals communicate through their organisations, programmes, artistic languages and public presence.

### 5.1.4 How Does Communication Shape Festival Practice?

Relational work is a central dimension of cultural management. Cultural managers connect artists with other artists, designers, craftspeople, producers and technical workers; connect cultural work with audiences and communities; develop relationships with public authorities, funders, media and other sectors; and create routes through which cultural questions can enter public attention. These relationships support production, but they also shape who can encounter the work, interpret it, contribute to it and carry it forward.

To describe the cultural manager as a mediator is therefore useful only if mediation is not mistaken for neutral message-carrying. By selecting partners, allocating resources, setting schedules, choosing language, defining participation and deciding which concerns require response, cultural managers shape the relationship itself. Mediation involves judgement and power even when its purpose is connection.

This mediating role is exercised not only through individual encounters, but also through the volume, timing, sequencing and sensory form of what the festival makes available.

#### *5.1.4.1 Perceptual capacity in organisations and programmes*

The law of perceptual intensity applies institutionally. Repeated emails, continuous instructions, excessive information, urgent messages across multiple channels and meetings without time for interpretation may create less shared understanding rather than more. People begin to filter, postpone, ignore or protect their attention. What management interprets as insufficient engagement may partly be a response to communicative overload.

It applies equally to artistic and curatorial programming. A festival transmits through the number, sequence, duration, density and spatial arrangement of the experiences it offers. Works, performances, screenings, talks, exhibition texts, catalogues, signs, speeches, digital notifications and parallel events all enter the participant's perceptual field. When their combined intensity exceeds available time and attention, an extensive programme may produce less perception rather than a richer encounter.

An exhibition may contain more works than visitors can meaningfully attend to. A conceptual text may become so long that it occupies the attention through which the work itself could be perceived. An opening speech intended to welcome and explain may exhaust the experience it is meant to support. A schedule filled with simultaneous events may increase formal choice while reducing the participant's ability to remain present, reflect and allow any one experience to acquire meaning.

This does not mean that programmes should always be smaller, simpler or immediately accessible. Difficulty, complexity, abundance, duration and sensory intensity may be deliberate artistic choices. The question is whether intensity serves the artistic and cultural purpose or results from accumulation, anxiety, competition for visibility or an inability to select. Selection is not merely exclusion; it creates sufficient space for what has been selected to become visible.

**THE CURATORIAL LAW OF PERCEPTUAL CAPACITY**

**When the density of a programme exceeds the capacity for attention, more content can produce less encounter · Curatorial care creates the rhythm, space and conditions through which complexity can be perceived and given meaning.**

#### *5.1.4.2 Art and the expansion of mental maps*

However abstract, complex or spiritual the meaning may be, human beings encounter it through embodied perception. An artist cannot transfer an idea, emotion, memory, value or imagined possibility directly into another person's inner world. It must acquire a perceptible form: sound, image, colour, movement, rhythm, texture, weight, spatial relation, bodily presence, duration, silence or language. The body and its perceptual capacities are not secondary containers for meaning; they are conditions through which meaning becomes available.

Mental maps are not created through language alone. They begin in bodily, sensory, emotional and relational experience before a person can speak. Nevertheless, spoken and written language becomes one of the dominant ways through which adults organise, explain and communicate reality, especially in education, management and institutional life. This gives language great power, but some experiences cannot be adequately reached through explanation alone.

Art diversifies the languages through which inner and outer worlds can meet. Music works through sound, rhythm, resonance, silence and bodily vibration. Visual art works through colour, form, scale, material, light and spatial relation. Dance and performance work through movement, gesture, breath, proximity, repetition and presence. Theatre joins language to voice, body, image, time and collective attention. These are not decorations for ideas that could be communicated equally well in words; they make other forms of perception and understanding possible.

Through these languages, art can disclose dimensions of reality that habitual perception or ordinary explanation leaves unavailable. It may make us hear what has been silenced, recognise structures of power behind familiar appearances, feel the human weight of an issue previously known only in abstract terms, notice beauty that habit has obscured, or confront suffering, destructive practices, silenced histories and taboos that culture has normalised. Art does not merely add information to an established picture of reality; it can interrupt the perceptual habits through which that picture has become familiar and unquestioned.

Art can also disclose possibility in Scheler's sense. Possibility is not simply a projection of how present conditions are likely to develop. It is something that does not yet exist but could be brought into reality through human imagination, decision and action. Artistic form can make such a possibility perceptible before it can be fully explained, planned or named, allowing people temporarily to inhabit another way of seeing, relating or living together.

Art therefore extends and transforms a mental map in two connected movements: it reveals dimensions of present reality that the map has omitted or distorted, and it makes imaginable possibilities available to perception. It can loosen what culture has made appear natural, enlarge the routes through which experience becomes meaningful and invite a person to revise both what they believe exists and what they believe could exist.

Festivals intensify this potential by bringing different artistic languages, experiences, histories and publics into relation. Participants may encounter speech, music, movement, image, architecture, food, ritual, touch, landscape, collective rhythm and silence within a shared conceptual and social frame. That frame can orient attention and create relationships among experiences without reducing their distinct sensory languages to a single verbal interpretation.

This is why curatorial care concerns perceptual diversity as well as perceptual capacity. Different bodies, histories, abilities and cultural experiences make different forms of access possible. A caring festival asks which aspects of experience each artistic language makes perceptible, whose access the programme assumes or overlooks, and how multiple modes can support one another without producing overload.

**ART, PERCEPTION AND POSSIBILITY**

**Art does not only communicate different content · It diversifies the perceptual languages through which reality, meaning and possibility can be encountered · Festivals create conditions in which different maps can meet and change.**

#### *5.1.4.3 Persuasion and manipulation*

Persuasion is an intentional attempt to influence another person's perception, judgement, attitude, intention or action through communication. Manipulation also seeks to influence through communication, but it does so by concealing, distorting or selectively arranging relevant meaning or conditions in order to direct the person's response without allowing them to recognise fully how their judgement is being influenced.

The difference therefore lies not in whether communication seeks influence. Both persuasion and manipulation do. The difference lies in how they relate to the other person's freedom and capacity to judge.

Persuasion makes its purpose reasonably visible, provides information relevant to the choice, allows questioning and disagreement, and leaves refusal genuinely possible. Manipulation attempts to bypass, narrow or exploit these capacities.

A communicator's belief that the desired outcome is beneficial does not remove this distinction. A festival may sincerely believe that attendance, participation or support would benefit the person or the public. This does not justify manufacturing need, hiding relevant information or bypassing free judgement.

**PERSUASION AND MANIPULATION**

**Persuasion addresses the capacity to understand and choose · Manipulation attempts to circumvent, distort or exploit that capacity.**

Caring persuasion may invite, argue, frame and move, but it protects the other person's capacity to question, disagree, refuse and decide.

**Pause for Reflection**

Picture a participant spending one full day at your last edition. Where might the density of the programme have left too little room for any single encounter to become meaningful?

Think of a recent message written to persuade someone to attend, fund or take part. What did it leave out that the person would have needed in order to decide freely?

Communication shapes what people can perceive, expect and choose. But every choice, commitment and relationship also requires someone to give, carry, risk or relinquish something. This brings us to the second element of relationship: cost exchange.

## 5.2 Cost and Cost Exchange

### 5.2.1 What Do We Mean by Cost?

#### *5.2.1.1 Life is structured through cost and return*

Life unfolds through relationships of cause and effect. A result becomes possible when the conditions and actions capable of producing it are brought together. If I want to bring something from possibility into reality, I must participate in creating its causes. I must give, use, carry, risk or forgo something. This is what we mean here by cost. In ordinary speech, cost often means money or loss. Here it has a wider meaning: cost is whatever a person invests or carries in order to obtain something, develop a capacity, sustain a relationship, realise a purpose or respond to what matters. It may take the form of time, attention, effort, practice, restraint, responsibility, uncertainty, vulnerability, opportunity, discomfort, risk or material resources.

If I want to own an object, I must pay its price. Paying that price is the monetary cost through which ownership becomes possible. If I want to strengthen my right arm, I must exercise it; the effort and repetition produce the physical change. If I want to play an instrument, I must give time and attention to practice. Paying the price may buy the instrument, but it cannot produce the capacity to play it. That capacity requires a different cost: time, attention and practice. Different results require different causes, and therefore different costs. In each case, I must pay the relevant cost for the result I want to become possible.

Although costs take different forms, they share a common psychological demand. To carry a cost, a person must tolerate some present discomfort, tension or deprivation and postpone an immediately available gratification in order to prevent or overcome a greater difficulty, develop a capacity, realise a

valued possibility or serve a meaningful purpose. This shared demand is why such different experiences can be considered together under the concept of cost.

Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, distinguishes between the pleasure principle and the reality principle. This distinction helps explain this mechanism. The pleasure principle inclines us to avoid unpleasure and seek immediate satisfaction; the reality principle enables us to tolerate present discomfort and delay gratification for something more important or lasting. Cost is what must be carried in this movement. Frankl adds a further question: not only whether we can carry a cost, but what is meaningful enough to make that cost worth carrying.

We will now examine the laws of cost. Here, "law" means a recurring tendency that helps make human and relational patterns intelligible—not a deterministic natural law that removes context, freedom or exception. The first laws examine what happens when one person pays a cost: how cost develops capacity, shapes value and produces consequences across time. We will then examine cost exchange between two people and, finally, the wider festival ecosystem formed through many interconnected exchanges.

**FIRST LAW**

**Human life is structured through cost and return.**

### 5.2.2 How Does Paying Cost Affect the Person Who Pays It?

#### *5.2.2.1 Paying a cost develops capacity*

The person who pays a cost becomes stronger in the capacity that cost exercises. If I want to strengthen my right arm, I must use it; the effort and repetition are the cost. When the arm is immobilised in a cast, the muscles I cannot use weaken. I have not become weaker in every respect. A specific capacity has weakened because I have been unable to pay the cost through which it develops.

The return is therefore specific. Exercising my right arm does not automatically strengthen my legs. Making decisions develops my ability to decide; solving problems develops my ability to find solutions; carrying responsibility develops my ability to take responsibility. General effort cannot replace the particular cost of a capacity I continue to avoid.

Different costs can nevertheless exercise something in common: the capacity to carry cost itself. Tolerating discomfort, postponing immediate gratification, remaining patient when the return is delayed and continuing when stopping would be easier can develop emotional endurance and perseverance. These capacities do not make a person invulnerable, but they can increase resilience when an unexpected load appears.

Education illustrates this wider development. A student pays costs through reading, repetition, practice, attention, frustration and time. Learning a language, solving mathematical problems, writing essays or rehearsing an instrument develops subject-specific knowledge and skill. Education can also develop more transferable capacities: learning how to learn, organising time, working under pressure, preparing for evaluation, continuing after failure, setting goals and completing work whose immediate value may not yet be visible. A student may never directly use every subject later in life, but the capacities developed while learning it can remain available when another meaningful purpose requires effort, uncertainty, delay or discomfort. Education develops a broader capacity to carry cost before the future load appears.

The principle becomes more demanding when we apply it to what we want from life and work. Every desire has a cost, and the cost includes parts we may not enjoy. If I want to make a festival, I cannot do only the artistic programming I love. I must also pay the costs of fundraising, budgeting, administration, permissions, schedules, difficult conversations, practical problems and responsibility when something goes wrong. I may have to build a working relationship with a mayor from a political party I do not support, or speak patiently with a company's dismissive marketing manager because that conversation is necessary to secure support. These may be among the costs of bringing the festival I want into reality.

The capacities in which we remain weak are often those whose costs we have avoided. If I continually leave fundraising to others, I do not develop fundraising capacity. If I avoid conflict, I do not develop the capacity to remain present and constructive during disagreement. If I postpone planning, documentation or setting limits, those capacities remain weak even though I may be highly capable in artistic programming. Wanting the festival and giving much effort in general do not develop every capacity required to realise it. General effort cannot replace the particular cost of a capacity I continue to avoid.

Avoiding one cost does not mean escaping cost altogether; it often changes the form, timing and bearer of the cost. A festival professional who avoids planning, documentation, difficult communication or setting limits may become highly capable at rapid decisions, improvisation and rescuing productions under pressure. That capacity is real and valuable, but it can conceal what remains undeveloped and preserve the conditions that make rescue repeatedly necessary.

This is why the capacity to do what we do not want to do matters. It makes us less dependent on momentary preference and more capable of realising what we value. We naturally prefer not to become tired, tolerate frustration or assume responsibility. Yet avoiding every unpleasant cost narrows what we become able to do. Wellbeing cannot therefore mean comfort alone. Appropriate cost can produce a return in capacity, freedom and resilience.

There is also a psychological difference between consenting to a cost and being forced to carry it. In the gym, I choose the weight because I understand its return. I experience the difficulty as part of strengthening myself. If someone forces me to carry the same weight without choice or a purpose I can recognise, the physical effort may be similar but the experience can feel like coercion or punishment. When I understand what a cost serves and willingly accept it, effort becomes connected to meaning. Consent does not remove the difficulty; it changes my relationship to it.

None of this means that every cost strengthens or that suffering should be glorified. A cost can contribute to development when it is connected to a meaningful purpose, proportionate to a person's present capacity and accompanied by sufficient agency, support and recovery. A suitable weight can strengthen; an excessive one can injure. Excessive, chronic or unjust costs can narrow freedom, damage health and reduce the very capacity they appear to demand. Care therefore does not protect people from every difficulty or keep them permanently within their comfort zone. It helps them carry the costs through which their capacities can develop, while recognising, reducing and redistributing the costs through which they are being depleted.

This distinction is essential in cultural work. The aim is neither to remove every difficulty nor to romanticise overwork. Care asks whether a cost develops a capacity that the festival's purpose genuinely requires, whether the person can carry it with appropriate authority, support and recovery, and whether organisational failure is being disguised as an opportunity for individual growth.

FESTIVAL WORK AND COST

**Festival work requires more than passion · It requires the capacity to carry the different costs through which purpose becomes practice.**

SECOND LAW

**Paying a cost develops capacity · It can also develop the capacity to carry future cost · Costs that exceed the conditions for development may deplete rather than strengthen**

**Pause for Reflection**

Think of one task in your festival work that you usually leave to others or postpone, such as fundraising, a difficult conversation or documentation. What capacity does this leave undeveloped in you, and who carries that cost instead?

#### *5.2.2.2 Paying a cost creates value*

A person values what they pay a cost for, in proportion to the cost they pay.

Imagine two identical pens. One costs fifty cents and the other costs one hundred euros. Which pen would its owner value more? Suppose one hundred euros represents an hour of that person's work. The

second pen is no longer experienced as only a pen. It also carries the meaning of an hour of effort. Losing it would feel as though that hour of life and work had been lost with it. The greater cost changes the value the person gives to the object. The same price does not represent the same cost for every person: its significance depends upon the time, effort, resources and opportunities the person must give in order to pay it.

The relationship between cost and value can also be seen when a baby is born. If we ask who is likely to value the baby more intensely at the moment of birth, the answer is often the mother. She may already have paid substantial costs directly to the baby through pregnancy, physical discomfort, risk, pain, childbirth, interrupted sleep, changes in work and less time for herself. These costs do not create maternal instinct or love, but they can deepen the value she gives to the child. The baby carries the meaning of what she has lived, given and endured.

The father has not paid the same physical costs before birth. His relationship with the child therefore develops through the costs available to him: waking at night, feeding, comforting, changing routines, giving time, remaining physically and emotionally present and assuming responsibility for care. When he shares these costs, he does more than distribute the mother's burden more justly. Through repeated attention and response, he comes to know the child's rhythms, expressions, needs and distinct character. The child becomes more visible and more valuable to him through what he gives.

The more active role of fathers in contemporary family life is therefore important not only for equality between parents. It also creates the conditions through which fathers can develop attachment, presence, practical knowledge of their children and the capacity to recognise and respond to their needs. Sharing the cost of care develops the relationship itself.

The same movement occurs in festivals. An employee, artist, volunteer, resident or active participant who gives time, thought, labour and responsibility to a festival sees part of that investment in what has been created. The festival is no longer only an event made by others. It carries the meaning of what the person has given. This is one reason active participation can deepen belonging: people are more likely to value, protect and feel connected to something for which they have freely paid a meaningful cost.

This principle also matters when working with institutional stakeholders. A marketing manager, board member or mayor may allocate institutional money without paying it from their own pocket. The decision may involve responsibility or risk, but funding alone does not necessarily create a personal relationship with the festival. That relationship can deepen when the person also contributes time, attention, thought, reputation or responsibility: attending an event, understanding the programme, introducing another funder or opening a partnership.

The purpose is not to manufacture obligation. Contribution creates value most reliably when it is freely chosen, meaningful to the person and genuinely useful. Care invites stakeholders to participate in a shared purpose rather than treating them only as sources of money, status or access.

Institutions do not experience value, attachment or care in the psychological sense in which people do. People encounter the festival and may translate the value they develop into decisions, budgets, responsibilities, policies, procedures, partnerships and organisational memory. Personal engagement becomes institutionally durable through these structures; without that translation, support may disappear with the representative, while formal cooperation without people who understand and value the festival may remain procedural and fragile.

A cost strengthens and increases the value of the relationship to which it is actually paid. Parents may say that they pay a cost to their family because the money they earn supports them. Yet the hours of work, discipline, problem-solving and responsibility are paid first to their job and workplace. Their family benefits from the income, but this indirect benefit is not the same as the costs paid directly to their partner or children through time, attention, listening, shared experience and care. A person may therefore become increasingly capable at and attached to work while the relationships for whose sake they believe they are working receive too little direct investment.

The same distinction matters in festivals. Two people who both work hard for a festival are each paying costs to the festival. Their contributions may bring them into contact and help a community develop, but one person's cost to the festival is not automatically a cost paid to the other person. Likewise, a professional may believe that every sacrifice is made for the festival while much of their attention is actually directed towards satisfying a manager, funder or partner. Asking where the cost is paid helps us see which capacity is developing, which relationship is receiving value and which relationships may be benefiting only indirectly—or being neglected.

THE DIRECTION OF COST

**Ask to whom or to what the cost is actually paid.**

When a person freely pays a meaningful cost to a festival, project or community, they can recognise part of themselves in what has been created. An employee carries responsibility through months of preparation. An artist takes a creative risk. A volunteer gives a weekend. A resident opens a courtyard, shares local knowledge or helps welcome visitors. An audience member returns, participates in discussion and brings others. Each pays a different cost to the festival. The costs do not have to be equal in order to create value and belonging.

Their separate costs may also bring these people into shared practice. They see one another working, solve difficulties together and carry memories of what they made possible. Connection grows around contribution.

Seeing another person pay a cost can itself increase value. Their time, effort, risk or responsibility communicates that what is being created matters and is worth contributing to. This recognition may encourage others to carry a cost of their own. Contribution can therefore become generative: one person's visible commitment invites another's, mutual recognition grows and responsibility begins to be shared. This movement can become an important driving force in the formation of community.

Yet cost alone does not guarantee community. A contribution made without choice may create resentment. A cost that remains unseen may create alienation. If the same people continually carry the cost while others are given no meaningful way to participate, visible commitment may produce spectatorship or dependence rather than reciprocity. Responsibility without influence or authority may become exploitation. Community develops when people can recognise their own and one another's contributions, influence what they are creating and share responsibility for sustaining and repairing it.

THIRD LAW

**A person values what they pay a cost for, in proportion to the cost they pay.**

**Pause for Reflection**

Recall a time when someone suggested changing or ending a project you had invested a great deal in. What was your first reaction? Looking back, what did that project mean to you, and how had your own contribution shaped its value?

#### *5.2.2.3 Every result eventually requires its cost*

Every result has a cost. The cost may be paid before the result, while it is being created, or afterwards.

A person can save first and then buy something, or buy it immediately with a credit card and pay later. In the first case, the person pays the cost before receiving the result. In the second, the result comes first and the cost follows in instalments, often with interest. When the later bill arrives, it may feel like a punishment. It is not a punishment for having bought the object. It is the delayed cost of receiving it before paying for it.

The same can happen in working life. A person receives income, recognition and successful results while paying too little attention to sleep, health, recovery and family. Burnout, illness or conflict may arrive much later. Because the achievement came first and the bill came afterwards, the consequences may appear unrelated or unfair. Yet they may be costs postponed during the period in which the result was

produced. Some of the bill may also have been transferred: family members carry absence, colleagues carry mistakes and future colleagues inherit neglected work.

People organising a festival may reach opening night by shortening preparation, expecting constant availability and relying on last-minute heroics. The performance happens and the audience applauds. Months later, people leave, trust has weakened, knowledge has disappeared and the next edition begins with an exhausted team. These are not necessarily new and separate problems. They may be costs of the previous result that were deferred or transferred, and that have now returned with interest.

A cost that is not paid when it could prevent a problem may return later in another form. When the people responsible for a festival do not pay the earlier costs of planning, communication, documentation, maintenance or setting realistic limits, other people may later pay through emergency decisions, overtime, conflict, mistakes, damaged trust and recovery. The delayed cost may be greater than the preventive cost would have been. It may also be transferred: employees lose sleep, families absorb absence, partners manage confusion and the following year's team inherits exhaustion and unfinished work. In this sense, the cost is paid later and with interest.

Repeated crisis management can genuinely develop improvisation, speed, endurance and practical judgement. Yet the interest may include chronic stress, damaged relationships, physical symptoms and burnout. A capacity can grow while the person developing it is simultaneously being depleted and the surrounding relationships absorb the consequences. Strength in crisis is therefore not evidence that the crisis-producing structure is sustainable.

**FOURTH LAW**

**Every result has a cost · A cost not paid before or during the result is deferred or transferred.**

**Pause for Reflection**

Recall a time in your festival work when you knew something needed to be done but decided, "Let's get through the event; we'll deal with that afterwards." What did you leave for later, and what eventually happened? Looking back, did postponing it change the cost—or who eventually paid it?

#### *5.2.2.4 Cost must be distributed justly*

A person has limited time, attention, energy and money. Cost paid to one part of life cannot be paid in the same moment to another. Someone who gives nearly all their effort, imagination and responsibility to work becomes highly capable at work and increasingly attached to it. Meanwhile their body, partner, children, friendships and community may receive less. Work may then become the person's only source of competence, recognition and meaning partly because other relationships have been deprived of the costs that would keep them alive.

This makes work–life balance more than a division of hours. It concerns how a person distributes finite cost among the people, purposes, responsibilities and values that make a meaningful life possible. Justice does not require equal hours for everything. A child may need more attention during illness; an urgent production may temporarily require more work; the body may require recovery after intense effort. A just distribution responds to real needs and responsibilities without allowing one part of life to consume the costs through which the others remain alive.

Giving nearly everything to work can create dependence on work. Giving nearly everything to another person can make that relationship the principal source of identity and meaning. Care therefore asks not only whether I am willing to pay a cost, but where I pay it, what capacity and attachment it develops, and what else is being deprived of the cost it needs. The task is not perfect balance. It is a distribution through which the important dimensions of life can remain alive together.

**FIFTH LAW**

**A person has limited capacity to pay cost · Cost directed to one part of life cannot be directed to another at the same moment · Cost must therefore be distributed justly · Justice is not equality.**

**Pause for Reflection**

If you stepped away from festival work for a while, what else in your life would give you meaning and connection? How are you sustaining those relationships or activities through the time, attention and effort you give them now?

### 5.2.3 What Happens When Two Parties Exchange Cost?

#### *5.2.3.1 From individual cost to cost exchange: capacity*

Until this point, we have examined one direction: a person pays a cost towards something in the outer world and receives a result in capacity, value, attachment or achievement. Cost exchange begins when we examine a relationship between two people. I pay costs to another person, and that person pays costs to me. The two directions must be seen separately.

At the relational level, cost can make care concrete through time, attention, effort, restraint, responsibility, adaptation and support. But cost is not automatically care. It becomes care when it contributes to the wellbeing, agency and just relationship of those involved rather than serving control, manipulation, indebtedness or the need to remain indispensable.

Cost theory is a lens for understanding relationships, not a method of accounting. Cost has no fixed unit: the same action can represent a different cost according to a person's capacity, age, health, resources, responsibilities and freedom to choose. A child and a parent, for example, cannot be expected to pay

equal costs. Justice asks whether each carries what is appropriate to their capacity, role, responsibility and development—not whether both give the same amount.

The purpose is therefore not to calculate who owes whom. It is to make visible how capacities develop or remain undeveloped; how attachment, dependence and entitlement emerge; and whether care strengthens the people in a relationship or gradually weakens one of them.

JUSTICE IN COST EXCHANGE

**Just cost exchange ≠ Equal cost · Just cost exchange = Cost carried in relation to capacity, responsibility, need and development.**

Human relationships are interdependent, and perfect equality is neither possible nor necessary. One person may carry more financially while the other carries more practical care; during illness or crisis, one may temporarily carry much more. The issue is whether both people remain able, according to capacity and responsibility, to give, receive, develop and influence the relationship.

In a relationship, the person who pays more cost in a particular area becomes stronger in that area; the person whose cost is repeatedly paid by the other becomes weaker in that area.

Suppose one partner always plans, remembers appointments, resolves practical problems and makes difficult decisions. Each time, that person pays the costs of attention, organisation, problem-solving and responsibility. They become increasingly capable in those areas. The other partner benefits from the results but pays less of the relevant cost. Their capacity has fewer opportunities to develop. The first partner may appear naturally stronger and the second naturally weaker, although the difference has partly been produced by the repeated distribution of cost between them.

This is the paradox of over-care. By carrying another person's appropriate cost, I may appear to help them while reducing their opportunity to develop the capacity to carry it. At the same time, I become more capable but also more burdened and increasingly indispensable. What appears caring in the immediate moment can harm both parties when it becomes the permanent structure of the relationship.

A healthy relationship cannot eliminate asymmetry, but it prevents asymmetry from becoming fixed across the whole relationship. I may pay more cost in one area while the other person pays more in another. During illness or crisis, one person may temporarily carry much more. What matters is that each person continues, according to capacity and responsibility, to have areas in which they contribute and develop. Care supports people without unnecessarily replacing their agency.

Seen through the wellbeing framework, the issue is not whether each person remains comfortable or carries an equal load. Relational wellbeing requires conditions in which people can contribute, receive

support and develop capacity without losing either their distinctness or their meaningful connection to the other. Organisational wellbeing likewise depends on work being distributed so that capability becomes shared rather than concentrated in a permanent rescuer. Care therefore helps a person carry a meaningful and proportionate cost, while ensuring that support does not quietly take away the agency through which capacity grows.

CARE AND WELLBEING

**Care does not remove every cost · It helps each person carry a meaningful and proportionate cost without being abandoned, replaced or depleted.**

FIRST LAW OF COST EXCHANGE

**The person who pays more cost in an area develops more capacity there · The person whose cost is repeatedly paid by the other develops less capacity there.**

**Pause for Reflection**

Think of someone you regularly help by taking over a task or responsibility they find difficult. How did this arrangement begin? Over time, how has it affected what each of you can do independently?

If the other person could reasonably have carried more of that responsibility, what kept you taking it on for them?

#### *5.2.3.2 Unequal cost exchange changes how the parties value one another*

When the Third Law is applied to a relationship between two parties, each direction must be examined separately. A person who repeatedly pays cost to the other tends to value that person more. A person who repeatedly benefits from the other's cost while paying little meaningful cost to them tends to value them less.

The person who pays costs of time, effort, sacrifice and responsibility to the other sees the meaning of those costs in the relationship. The more cost they pay, the more invested they become in preserving it. When the exchange is seriously unbalanced, valuing can turn into excessive attachment: the person who pays the cost becomes increasingly devoted to the person for whom so much has been carried, even while becoming exhausted or exploited.

The person whose costs are continually paid by the other may move in the opposite direction. Because they have paid little cost to the person who cares for them, they may value that person less and become increasingly ungrateful towards them. Repeated care can become normal, then invisible and finally expected as a right. When that care is limited or withdrawn, the person whose costs have been paid may experience the limit as an injustice and respond in punitive, ruthless or cruel ways towards the very person who has carried them.

A second consequence develops at the same time. When another person repeatedly carries the costs that properly belong to me, I have fewer opportunities to develop the capacities required to carry them myself. I may therefore value the person who pays my costs less while becoming increasingly dependent upon them. This is one of the central paradoxes of unequal cost exchange: the contribution of the person who pays the cost may become increasingly invisible, while the person whose cost is paid becomes increasingly dependent upon what that contribution provides.

Imagine parents who want to give their child every possible advantage. They pay for the child's education, housing, transport and everyday needs. They ask for little in return—not even the age-appropriate costs through which the child would participate in making use of these opportunities: sustained study, care for what is provided, contribution to family life, patience, planning, responsibility or perseverance. The child therefore receives the benefits while paying too little of the costs that properly belong to their own development.

School achievement should not be treated as a debt owed to the parents, and care should not be withdrawn when a child fails. The problem is not the absence of a guaranteed result. It is the absence of meaningful participation and responsibility. The parents may finance the education, but the child must pay the costs of learning: attention, practice, frustration, discipline, failure and continued effort. If the parents also remove or continually compensate for these costs, the opportunity remains available while the capacity required to use it may remain undeveloped.

OPPORTUNITY AND DEVELOPMENT

**Parents may pay the cost of making an opportunity available · The child must still pay the age-appropriate cost of using that opportunity and developing through it.**

The support initially appears as generosity. Over time, however, what is repeatedly received without a meaningful cost can become normal, then invisible and finally experienced as a right. The child may no longer perceive the parents 'effort, restraint and sacrifice behind what is provided. The apartment, money, car or continuing financial support appears to be simply what the parents are supposed to provide.

Years later, the family's financial situation deteriorates. The parents explain that they can no longer maintain the same level of support. The child does not necessarily experience this as a painful change in shared circumstances. Because the support has come to be perceived as an acquired right, its withdrawal may feel like an injustice: something belonging to the child is being taken away.

The child may then respond with accusation, withdrawal, punishment or cruelty towards the parents. They may insist that the parents have failed, compare them unfavourably with other families or withhold affection and contact. This response is unjust because it disregards both the costs the parents

have already paid and the limits they now face. Yet it becomes psychologically understandable: the child has learned to experience the return without recognising the cost through which it was produced.

At the same time, the child may remain dependent upon the very parents they now devalue and attack. Because the parents repeatedly carried the relevant costs, the child had fewer opportunities to develop the capacities needed to replace their support. The paradox is therefore complete: the parents have become excessively attached through the costs they paid, while the child has become less valuing and increasingly ungrateful, yet more dependent.

A similar story can unfold between two people working in a festival organisation. A festival director notices that a less experienced coordinator is struggling with budgets, difficult partners and time pressure. Wanting to protect both the coordinator and the production, the director begins to intervene. At first, the director corrects a budget, answers one difficult email and takes over one negotiation. The production succeeds, so the same solution is used again. Gradually, the director pays not only the costs belonging to the director's own role, but also the costs through which the coordinator would learn to plan, decide, make mistakes, solve problems and carry responsibility.

With every repetition, the director becomes more experienced, more capable under pressure and more indispensable, but also more burdened. The coordinator, whose relevant costs are repeatedly paid by the director, has fewer opportunities to develop judgement, negotiation skills, resilience and responsibility. The director may then interpret the coordinator's limited capacity as proof that delegation is impossible, even though that capacity remains limited partly because the director continues to pay its developmental costs. When the director finally asks the coordinator to carry a difficult task independently, the coordinator may experience this not as an opportunity but as abandonment or unfairness. The director may feel unappreciated; the coordinator may resent the director while still depending upon the director's knowledge, authority and rescue.

This is first a pattern between two people. If similar patterns are repeated across several relationships, their consequences become organisational: the festival gradually becomes dependent upon a small number of people who continually pay the costs through which others would otherwise develop. What solves an urgent problem today can reproduce the relational conditions that create the next problem.

#### *5.2.3.3 Reciprocal care creates attachment*

Attachment and dependence are therefore not the same. Healthy attachment can grow through reciprocal care: two people pay meaningful costs to one another in forms and proportions appropriate to their different capacities, needs and responsibilities. Through these costs, they come to know and value one another, participate through their own agency and become connected without either person's development being replaced by the other. Reciprocity does not require equal cost at every moment; it requires that both people remain capable of contributing to, receiving from and influencing the

relationship. Dependence grows when one person cannot sustain an important part of life or work because another person has repeatedly paid the costs through which they needed to develop their own capacity.

ATTACHMENT AND DEPENDENCE

**Reciprocal care can create attachment · Repeatedly paying another person's developmental cost can create dependence.**

#### *5.2.3.4 Boundaries interrupt the cycle*

These laws describe tendencies, not destiny. Through self-distancing, the person whose cost has been paid can notice anger or entitlement without being determined by it. They can recognise what the other person has carried, respect changed limits and choose gratitude, participation and responsibility. Gratitude is not only a spontaneous feeling; it can also be a responsible stance.

Self-distancing is equally important for the person who repeatedly pays the cost. Good intentions do not guarantee that repeated help remains helpful. That person can ask whether they are carrying a cost that properly belongs to the other; whether their intervention develops the other person's capacity or replaces it; and whether a need to be loved, appreciated or indispensable has become entangled with care.

The person whose cost is being paid remains responsible for their own attitude and behaviour. They can choose gratitude, participation and responsibility. Yet when a harmful cycle has developed, the person who pays more cost usually has greater capacity and greater practical freedom to interrupt it. Greater power does not make that person solely responsible for the relationship, but it does create a greater responsibility to act. The necessary action is often to establish a boundary: to stop paying the cost that the other person needs to carry, while offering proportionate support for carrying it.

This is rarely easy. Early damage may be invisible; later, the person who pays the cost may be deeply attached and the person whose cost has been paid dependent upon the arrangement. When support is reduced, fear or deprivation may appear as accusation, pressure or aggression. That reaction does not prove that the boundary is uncaring; it may reveal how firmly the unequal exchange has become established.

BOUNDARIES AND CARE

**A boundary does not withdraw care · It prevents one person from continually paying the cost that the other person needs to pay in order to develop.**

Without a boundary, the cycle may continue until the person who pays the cost becomes depleted or can no longer provide what has come to be expected. The conflict then appears sudden although it has

been prepared through a long history of unequal exchange. Recognising the pattern makes intervention possible before exhaustion, dependence and resentment reach a breaking point.

“I did not deserve to be treated this way. I have always given so much to this person. Is this really what I receive in return?”

Many people who repeatedly pay another person’s costs eventually ask this question. They may have expected—often without saying it even to themselves—that continued generosity, sacrifice and helpfulness would bring love, appreciation, gratitude or lasting connection. When they instead encounter indifference, entitlement, increasing demands or cruelty, the result feels both painful and incomprehensible.

The paradox is that the behaviour through which they hoped to secure love and appreciation may have helped create the opposite response. By continually paying the other person’s costs, they became more attached, while what they provided became normal and expected. The other person had fewer opportunities to participate, contribute and recognise the cost behind what they received. The painful outcome does not make generosity wrong or justify the other person’s behaviour. It shows why care needs boundaries: good intentions alone cannot prevent repeated care from becoming an unhealthy relational structure.

THE PARADOX OF OVERPAYING COST

**Continually paying another person’s costs in order to be loved may help create the conditions in which one is less valued.**

This pattern may spread across family, friendship and work, or remain limited to one relationship. A person may delegate well professionally while repeatedly paying a partner’s costs in private life; another may carry substantial responsibility at home while depending heavily upon colleagues. These are relational patterns, not fixed personality types. They can fit together because one person feels needed by paying cost while the other avoids costs they do not want or do not yet know how to carry.

High capacity can itself reinforce the cycle. A person who has paid many costs in an area may be able to complete a task more quickly and reliably than somebody who is still learning. Under time pressure, work therefore returns to the person who can already do it. Each urgent intervention strengthens that person further, deprives the other person of another developmental cost and makes future delegation appear still less practical. In festival work, where deadlines are real and resources are limited, this cycle is especially easy to mistake for efficiency.

URGENCY AND CAPACITY

**What saves time today may prevent the capacity that would save time tomorrow.**

The laws of cost therefore describe pressures and tendencies within relationships, not an inescapable destiny. Care must understand these tendencies while continuing to address each person as capable of awareness, self-distancing and responsible choice.

The problem is not receiving care. Every person needs support, and differences in capacity mean that cost exchange can never be mathematically equal. The problem is a lasting structure in which one person repeatedly pays costs that the other needs to carry, while support becomes disconnected from contribution, responsibility, recognition and development. Care does not mean that the more capable person always carries more; it asks what each person should carry, what support they need in order to carry it, and whether responsibility is accompanied by sufficient authority, resources, recognition and recovery. It protects the person who pays the cost from depletion and excessive attachment, while protecting the person whose cost is paid from diminished capacity, dependence and entitlement. Boundaries help both parties remain contributors rather than becoming permanently fixed as rescuer and dependent.

Frankl's account of meaningful choice offers an ethical orientation: in a concrete situation, the meaningful option is the best possible option for the self and all other parties involved. It is neither egoism nor self-erasing altruism. Applied to cost exchange, this means seeking a distribution that protects the limits of the person who pays the cost and the development and agency of the person whose cost might otherwise be paid. Relational and organisational wellbeing depend upon this double responsibility. Care seeks reciprocity appropriate to the parties 'different capacities, needs and responsibilities—not exact equality—and keeps contribution, recognition, authority and support sufficiently connected for both parties to remain present as responsible participants.

SECOND LAW OF COST EXCHANGE

**Chronically unequal cost can produce excessive attachment in the person who pays the cost · The person whose cost is paid may become dependent and entitled and may value the cost payer less.**

COST LENS

**Who are the two parties in this relationship? · Who pays what cost to whom or to what? · Who benefits directly or indirectly? · Whose capacity develops? · Whose capacity is replaced? · What cost is deferred, transferred, concentrated, invisible or unjust?**

**Pause for Reflection**

Think of a relationship you have observed in which one person seems to carry most of the cost over time. How does the other person respond to their efforts? What seems to keep this pattern going? If either person has tried to change it, what happened?

## 5.2.4 How Do Cost and Return Become Questions of Ecosystem Justice?

### *5.2.4.1 From Cost Exchange to Ecosystem Justice*

A festival ecosystem is not a single relationship. It is formed through many interconnected relationships between people: employee and director, artist and programmer, volunteer and coordinator, audience member and festival professional, resident and organiser, funder representative and festival leader, public official and community member. Each relationship contains its own movements of cost and return, but none remains isolated. Decisions made in one relationship alter the conditions under which costs and returns are experienced elsewhere.

The festival ecosystem therefore emerges from multiple relational exchanges across time. A festival is not a person that psychologically pays cost, values or cares. People acting within and around it do. Organisational structures shape the conditions within which people contribute, receive, develop, decide and become depleted. Policies, budgets, hierarchies, procedures and established habits influence who carries necessary costs, who receives the returns made possible by them and whose experience remains visible. Relationships, communities, places and living systems do not all pay cost in the same sense; they may carry or absorb the consequences of these arrangements.

The question of justice must therefore move beyond whether one exchange appears balanced. It must ask how many interconnected exchanges form a wider pattern. A decision may look reasonable within one relationship while transferring cost to another person, family, community, place or living system that was absent from the decision. Ecosystem thinking makes these transfers and accumulated effects visible.

**A PRACTICAL LENS FOR COST, RETURN AND CARE**

**Who carries the cost? → Who receives the return? → How can justice be discerned? → What does care require? → What capacity to continue does this create?**

These questions are not a calculation or checklist. They describe a movement of attention through which organisational arrangements can be examined. Because cost and return are experienced subjectively, no formula can determine justice in advance. Conscience helps people sense what a particular situation may require; caring communication makes different experiences visible and allows that judgement to be tested, corrected and shared.

People directing a festival decide—deliberately or through established habits—how budgets, time, authority, responsibility, risk and opportunities to develop are distributed. Almost everything may go to programme growth, visibility or one funder's demands while too little remains for staff development, relationships, maintenance, recovery or ecological responsibility. Work may also be organised so that

one committed person carries almost every difficulty. The organisational arrangement determines why cost repeatedly falls where it does.

When too little is invested in planning, prevention and shared capacity, cost becomes concentrated in repair and crisis management. The question is therefore not simply how much cost people carry, but who carries it, what influence and support accompany it, and whether it creates lasting value or repeatedly repairs avoidable damage.

Justice concerns not only the distribution of cost but also the distribution of return. People who carry the costs through which a festival becomes possible must also be able to receive meaningful and proportionate returns. These may include payment, security, recovery, recognition, influence, learning, capacity development, belonging, meaning, credit and future opportunities. They do not need to be identical or mathematically equivalent to the cost paid. They must, however, be sufficiently related to the person's contribution, capacity, responsibility and need for the relationship to remain meaningful and sustainable.

Injustice occurs when one group carries the cost while another accumulates the return. Employees may carry overtime and emotional strain while senior figures receive visibility and recognition. Artists may carry creative risk while the organisation accumulates reputation. Volunteers or community members may provide labour, knowledge, trust and access while receiving little recognition or influence over what is created. The problem is not only that cost has been distributed unjustly. The returns made possible by that cost have also been concentrated elsewhere.

A meaningful return must not be confused with purchasing power over the festival. A funder who carries a large financial cost does not thereby acquire the right to determine the artistic programme, silence criticism or override the rights and needs of other stakeholders. Return should recognise contribution without allowing one form of cost—especially money—to dominate every other value. Justice seeks the best possible option for all those involved, not the maximisation of return for the most powerful contributor.

Cost and return cannot be measured through a single objective unit. An hour, a task, a public acknowledgement or a sum of money does not carry the same meaning for every person. The significance of a cost depends upon the person's capacity, resources, freedom, responsibilities and circumstances. The significance of a return likewise depends upon what the person needs, values and experiences as recognition.

This is where human judgement becomes necessary. Conscience can be understood as the intuitive capacity to sense what a particular situation asks of us and what may be just for the people involved. Yet conscience is not infallible. Personal intuition can be shaped by habit, privilege, fear, guilt, self-interest

and incomplete perception. Caring communication is therefore essential. It allows people to make costs visible, describe how they experience them, express what forms of return matter and test one person's judgement against the realities of others.

Return is not always material or formal. A sincere thank-you, attentive listening, public acknowledgement, remembering a person's contribution, asking how they are, inviting their perspective or showing through action that their effort mattered can constitute meaningful returns. Such gestures communicate value and may sustain a relationship in ways that money alone cannot.

Symbolic recognition, however, must not be used to replace a return that justice requires in another form. Gratitude cannot substitute for fair payment when payment is due. Visibility cannot replace rest and recovery. Belonging cannot compensate for unsafe working conditions. A public thank-you cannot justify excluding a person from decisions for which they carry responsibility. Care asks what kind of return is appropriate to the cost, the person and the relationship—not which inexpensive gesture can be presented as sufficient.

Care therefore follows both directions of the exchange. It asks who pays the cost, who receives the return, what kind of return is needed and whether the relationship between them is just. Caring communication makes this exchange discussable; conscience helps people remain responsive where no formula can decide the answer in advance.

ORGANISATIONAL DISTRIBUTION

**Organisational decisions shape who carries cost and who receives return · Justice requires both to be distributed fairly.**

JUDGING COST AND RETURN

**Cost and return cannot be reduced to numbers · Gratitude and recognition may matter, but they must not replace payment, recovery, safety or influence when these are what justice requires.**

A festival cannot be sustainable unless the necessary costs of continuation and the returns they make possible are distributed justly. Avoidable consequences must not be transferred to people, relationships, communities, places or living systems with too little power to refuse or repair them. An unjust distribution creates points of fragility across the festival ecosystem. Some people become overburdened and depleted, some receive too little return for what they carry, while others are deprived of the responsibility through which capacity, agency and commitment develop. Relationships, communities, places and living systems absorb the effects. The event may continue for a time, but unresolved imbalances accumulate as relational and organisational fault lines. Under greater pressure, these fault lines may become points of breakdown: burnout, withdrawal, conflict, loss of trust, dependency, institutional failure or ecological damage.

Conversely, sustainability becomes stronger when different stakeholders freely carry meaningful and proportionate costs towards the festival. Artists, employees, volunteers, audiences, public authorities, funders, partners and communities contribute through particular people who give time, attention, labour, knowledge, money, trust, reputation, responsibility and care. Through these personal contributions, people develop a relationship with the festival. They recognise part of themselves in what it makes possible and may come to value and protect it. Their contributions can form a network and, through repeated shared practice, a community capable of advocating for the festival and mobilising resources. Such a community carries knowledge, repairs relationships and helps the festival recover when difficulty arises. When personal commitment is also translated into institutional commitments, this capacity can endure beyond particular individuals.

Care shapes how costs and returns are recognised and distributed. It makes invisible costs visible, prevents necessary responsibility from remaining concentrated on the same people and creates meaningful ways for others to contribute according to their capacities. Care does not ask stakeholders simply to carry more. It also asks whether those who contribute receive a meaningful and just return. By connecting contribution with recognition, influence, support, recovery and opportunities to develop, care allows necessary cost to be shared without becoming extraction. Separate contributions can then develop into value, belonging and shared responsibility. Sustainability becomes more than the organisation's ability to produce another edition: it becomes the relational ecosystem's capacity to protect, repair and renew what people consider worth continuing.

COST AND SUSTAINABILITY

**Unjustly distributed cost and return create fault lines · Just cost and return develop capacity, value and shared responsibility · These become relational foundations of sustainability**

CARE, COST AND RETURN

**Care is the relational and organisational practice through which cost, return, responsibility and power are made visible and held in a just relation.**

**Pause for Reflection**

Think of one contribution that made your last edition possible, such as the work of a volunteer team, a local partner or a technician. What did they receive in return, and who received the visibility or credit their work made possible? Was any thank-you offered where payment, rest or a say in decisions was due?

Justice asks how cost and return are distributed across the ecosystem. Meaning adds another question: what does the cost serve, and what kind of life or shared possibility does it help bring into reality?

## 5.2.5 How Does Cost Contribute to a Meaningful Life?

### *5.2.5.1 Cost, meaning and the life we create*

Human beings pay costs throughout life, willingly and unwillingly. Some arise from conditions we did not choose—illness, loss, separation or change. Others follow from possibilities we decide to realise: an education, a relationship, an artistic work, a festival, a public responsibility or a life organised around particular values. Even avoidance has a cost: decisions postponed and difficulties escaped can leave capacities undeveloped and transfer a larger burden into the future.

Freedom does not mean living without cost. It lies partly in deciding which costs to carry, what they will serve and how to respond to costs that cannot be avoided. This does not make every hardship valuable or strengthening. Care distinguishes developmental and unavoidable costs from excessive, imposed or unjust costs that deplete, injure or traumatise.

The question is therefore not only, “What is this situation costing me?” but also, “What meaningful response can I make through the cost this situation requires?” Purpose does not remove effort, but it gives direction to it and allows a person to decide whether it is worth carrying. Frankl describes meaning as something concrete that a situation asks a person to realise: by creating or contributing, by encountering another person or experiencing something valuable, and—when a situation truly cannot be changed—by the stance taken towards unavoidable suffering.

Consider someone who has never liked cats and finds the cats in the street irritating. When their mother becomes ill, they reluctantly agree to care for her cat. At first, feeding it, cleaning after it and arranging veterinary care feel like unwanted duties. But repeated attention begins to reveal what annoyance had hidden. The cat waits by the door at a particular hour, becomes cautious when frightened, seeks closeness in its own way and shows preferences, moods and a character that cannot be reduced to “just a cat.” The person begins not merely to tolerate it, but to feel affection for this particular living being.

Something wider then changes. Cats in the street no longer appear as an indistinguishable nuisance. The person notices that one is bold, another wary, one sociable, another fiercely independent. They begin to see lives and characters where they once saw only irritation. Caring for one cat has enlarged their capacity to perceive, value and care for others. The world contains more beings whose existence matters to them; in that sense, their own life has also become richer. Cost has not purchased affection, but the attention, responsibility and encounter carried through care have made affection and a wider field of meaning possible.

A meaningful life is therefore not necessarily an easy life or a life from which cost has been removed. It is a life in which the costs we choose are connected to purposes and relationships we value; the unavoidable costs we encounter are met with the greatest freedom and responsibility available to us;

and unnecessary or unjust costs are recognised and changed. As our capacity to contribute, encounter and care develops, more of the world can become visible, valuable and meaningful to us.

Festivals extend this movement across a far wider relational field. A festival is a rich source of meaning potentials, but it is also produced through an extensive network of costs. Artists, team members, volunteers, partner representatives, funders, community members and audiences give time, attention, effort, knowledge, trust, responsibility, vulnerability and material resources—not only to the festival as an organisation, but to one another, to particular works, to shared places, to communities and to purposes they are trying to realise together.

As in the story of caring for the cat, paying these costs can alter perception. Through working with someone, carrying responsibility for something together or repeatedly giving attention to a place or community, people begin to notice what previously remained outside their field of concern. A colleague is no longer merely a function, and a community no longer an abstract target group. A place is no longer merely a venue, and an artistic work no longer simply an item in a programme. Each begins to acquire a history, a character and a value. By contributing to them, people may enlarge the range of persons, relationships, places and possibilities that matter to them.

The production of a festival can therefore create a multilayered network of valuing. People may come to value the festival because of what they have carried for it; value one another because of what they have made possible together; value a community because they have entered into sustained relationship with it; and value artistic and social possibilities because they have helped bring them into reality. Their costs do not merely produce an event. They can expand the relational world within which meaning becomes possible.

When care consciously informs this network, it can become a network of care. This does not happen automatically. Cost that is imposed, invisible, unjustly distributed or disconnected from agency and return may produce depletion, resentment or exploitation rather than meaning. Care makes contributions visible, protects people's limits, distributes costs and returns justly. It allows those who carry responsibility to participate in shaping what their contribution serves. Under these conditions, the cost network through which the festival is produced can also strengthen people's capacity to perceive, value and care for one another.

Festivals consequently create meaning in several interconnected ways. Their artistic content can reveal realities and possibilities that audiences have not previously perceived. Participation can allow people to experience themselves as contributors rather than consumers. Collective production can create belonging around something made possible together. Encounters can enlarge mental maps and relational worlds. Over time, the relationships sustained through a recurring festival can carry these experiences beyond the temporary event and into organisations, communities and wider cultural life.

A festival thus creates meaning not only through what it presents, but through what people are invited to notice, experience, contribute to, carry and learn to value. When organised through care, it can increase not only the number of things people care about, but also their capacity to care.

Yet meaning must never be used to justify unlimited sacrifice. Because festival work can feel profoundly meaningful, people may consent to costs that gradually exceed their limits. Institutions may then treat devotion as an endlessly available resource. Care asks whether the cost is freely chosen, whether it serves a meaningful purpose, whether it is proportionate to capacity and whether the person carrying it has corresponding authority, recognition, support and recovery.

This is where cost, care and power meet. Power influences who can choose a cost, who can refuse it, who defines its meaning, who receives its return and who carries its consequences. Care makes these arrangements visible. It does not attempt to remove every difficulty or create permanent comfort. It creates conditions in which meaningful costs can develop capacity and contribution without allowing unavoidable, unnecessary or unjust costs to be silently transferred to those with the least power.

MEANING AND COST

**A meaningful life ≠ A life without cost · A meaningful life connects cost with purpose, value, responsibility and care.**

CARE AND COST

**Care asks which costs develop life · Which costs protect what matters · Which costs must be shared · And which costs must no longer be required.**

**Pause for Reflection**

Have you ever taken on a responsibility reluctantly and later found that the person, place or activity involved had become important to you? What did you come to notice through the time and attention you gave? Did this experience change what you cared about elsewhere in your life?

## 5.3 Expectations Across Time

### 5.3.1 How Do Expectations Form?

#### *5.3.2 How communication and cost exchange become a relational future*

Communication and cost exchange do not disappear when an interaction ends. They leave expectations: beliefs about what is likely to happen and what each party should give, receive, tolerate or carry next time. Expectations are therefore a distinct element of relationship, but not an isolated one. They are one

of the principal ways in which communication and cost exchange accumulate, acquire meaning and shape the future of a relationship.

An expectation is not the same as a need. A need concerns what a person requires for wellbeing, participation or development. An expectation concerns what the person believes another party will provide, permit or carry in relation to that need. A need may remain real even when nobody has promised to meet it; an expectation may exist even when no corresponding need is present. Care requires both to be perceived, but it does not treat every expectation as an entitlement or every need as another party's automatic obligation.

EXPECTATIONS ACROSS TIME

**Expectations are how communication and cost exchange accumulate, acquire meaning and shape the future of a relationship.**

## 5.3.2 How Do Expectations Shape Satisfaction and Trust?

### *5.3.2.1 Expectation, satisfaction and trust*

Satisfaction is shaped not only by what a person receives, but by the relationship between what they expected and what they experience. When an experience exceeds expectation, the difference may be felt as a pleasant surprise. When it falls below expectation, the difference may be felt as disappointment, even when what is received remains valuable. The greater the distance between expectation and experience—and the more important the anticipated return—the stronger these responses are likely to become. A sense of abundance can arise when reality offers more than was expected; a sense of deprivation can arise when a promised future fails to materialise.

Consider two employees in the same organisation. Existing employees have received a ten per cent salary increase every year, but this year the increase is five per cent. Although their salaries have still risen, many experience the result as disappointing because it falls below the expectation created through repetition. A new employee who expected no increase receives the same five per cent and experiences it as a welcome gain. The material return is identical; the relational meaning differs because each person judges it against a different expected future.

EXPECTATION AND EXPERIENCE

**Experience Above Expectation → Pleasant Surprise · Experience Below Expectation → Disappointment**

This gives expectations considerable relational power. A person who wants to make someone happy may promise more than they can responsibly provide. Marketing may similarly present an attractive possibility as if it were a reliable outcome. Such promises can produce immediate enthusiasm, but they also enlarge the future against which the actual experience will be judged. When less is delivered,

disappointment concerns more than the missing benefit. Trust is damaged because the other person organised attention, hope, time, money or action around the promised future.

The pleasure principle can intensify this distortion on both sides. The person transmitting an offer is inclined to emphasise its pleasures and minimise its difficulties because they want the other person to accept, participate or feel enthusiastic. The person perceiving the offer may also enlarge the anticipated pleasure and overlook the future cost, especially when they strongly desire the opportunity. One party presents the most attractive version; the other completes it through hope.

**Pause for Reflection**
Recall a time in your festival work when you felt let down by someone. What had led you to expect something different: an explicit promise, previous experience or your own assumptions? How did this experience affect your willingness to rely on them afterwards?

### 5.3.3 How Should Future Benefits and Costs Be Communicated?

#### *5.3.3.1 Promise benefit carefully; make possible cost fully visible*

A small festival had to invite its artists approximately six months before receiving the result of an important funding application. From resources already secured, it could guarantee each artist a fee of €500. If the application succeeded, it hoped to increase the fee to €1,000.

In earlier years, the festival explained both figures. It told artists that it had applied for €1,000 but might ultimately be able to pay only €500. The distinction appeared clear to the festival: €500 was guaranteed; €1,000 was only a possibility. Yet some artists naturally organised their hopes around the more attractive figure. When the application did not produce the expected funding and the festival confirmed the €500 fee, the amount was experienced not as the original offer but as a reduction.

The festival changed its practice. It began by communicating only what the artist could responsibly rely upon: “The fee for this commission is €500.” If additional funding later became available, the festival increased the fee and explained it as a new development. The additional amount could then be experienced as a pleasant surprise rather than as the restoration of something the artist felt had already been taken away.

The lesson extends beyond money, but money makes it particularly visible. Where a return can be measured precisely, communication should be equally precise. A hoped-for benefit should not be made psychologically present before it becomes materially real.

#### *5.3.3.2 A temporary benefit should not silently become a permanent expectation*

Receiving the increased fee creates another responsibility. If the additional funding applies only to the present edition, the festival should say so when it offers the increase: “An additional grant allows us to increase the agreed fee by €500 for this edition. This funding is not part of our regular budget, so we cannot yet commit to the same level in future editions.” The explanation does not diminish the value of what is given. It prevents a temporary advantage from silently becoming a continuing promise.

If the same advantage is provided repeatedly, however, calling it exceptional can eventually become misleading. Repeated practice teaches people what to expect. The organisation should then consider whether the benefit has become a reasonable expectation that needs to be formalised, funded or openly renegotiated.

**TEMPORARY BENEFIT**

**A one-time benefit needs clear temporal and conditional boundaries · A repeated benefit may become a reasonable expectation even when it was never formally promised**

#### *5.3.3.3 When the return cannot be measured precisely*

The same festival faced a different problem when describing the artistic residency itself. Artists were invited to spend ten days in a city they might never have visited and create a site-specific work. Before arriving, neither the festival nor the artist could fully know what encounters, materials, difficulties or artistic possibilities would emerge. Unlike the fee, the value of this experience could not be measured precisely.

The festival could sincerely hope that the residency would be inspiring, transformative and professionally valuable. Yet saying, “This will be an unforgettable experience,” or, “You will create an important new work and develop lasting relationships,” would turn aspiration into expectation. The organisers might genuinely want these outcomes, but intention could not guarantee them. Each artist might also give the words a different meaning and imagine a different future.

The festival therefore promised the conditions it could responsibly provide rather than the experience it hoped the artist would have. It explained that each artist would have a local assistant; the team would facilitate introductions to relevant people and places; agreed production resources would be available; previous difficulties and examples would be shared; and the artist would not be left alone when uncertainty or problems emerged. The festival could offer serious attention, practical support and a responsive process. It could not promise inspiration, artistic success, emotional fulfilment or a particular effect on the artist’s future career.

At the same time, uncertainty about the artistic outcome did not justify vagueness about the cost the artist might carry. The festival described the ten-day period, expected working rhythm, site conditions,

available equipment, production limits, public presentation, documentation requirements and any known physical, emotional or logistical demands. It distinguished the agreed commission from anything that might later be proposed. If additional funding created an opportunity to expand the work, the expansion required a new conversation, appropriate additional resources and fee, and the artist's renewed consent.

In matters that cannot be measured exactly, a useful principle is to promise slightly less than one responsibly believes one can give and, where possible, give slightly more than was promised. This is not a technique for manipulating satisfaction by artificially lowering expectations or withholding information. It acknowledges that goodwill can overestimate future capacity and that words may generate hopes beyond what the speaker intended.

Possible cost requires a different rule. A person's future effort, discomfort, risk, restriction or responsibility must never be made to appear smaller in order to secure agreement. If a festival normally requires one intensive week of overtime each year, saying, "We generally do not work overtime," may be factually defensible but relationally misleading. Caring communication begins with the intensive week: when it occurs, how long the working days may become, what work it involves, what support and compensation are available, and how recovery is protected. Only then should the organisation describe the broader pattern.

Care therefore makes a necessary distinction. It does not create hope around a favourable possibility that cannot yet be guaranteed. It makes visible any uncertainty that may change another person's cost, risk, responsibility, working conditions or freedom to choose. A possible benefit need not be announced merely because it is hoped for; a possible burden must not be concealed merely because its exact form is not yet known.

**PROMISE, EXPERIENCE AND COST**

**Promise the conditions you can provide · Do not promise the experience another person will have · Do not exaggerate an uncertain benefit · Do not minimise a possible cost.**

**CARE AND UNCERTAINTY**

**The outcome may remain uncertain · The process, support, foreseeable costs and responsibilities can still be made reliable.**

Because expectations concern the future, they always contain uncertainty. They also differ among people. The same message may create different expectations according to previous experience, need, hope, fear and interpretation. People may also carry expectations of rejection, rescue, loyalty, betrayal, permission or punishment from one relationship into another. Caring communication therefore asks not

only, “What did we promise?” but also, “What did the other person reasonably understand that promise to mean, and what cost might they be agreeing to carry?”

**Pause for Reflection**
Think of one invitation or offer your festival made recently, to an artist, a team member or a partner. Was any hoped-for benefit or experience presented in a way that could be heard as certain? Was any possible cost, such as extra hours, travel conditions or unpaid tasks, described vaguely or left until later?

### 5.3.4 How Do Expectations Shape the Festival Experience?

#### *5.3.4.1 Expectations across the festival ecosystem*

Expectations operate throughout the festival ecosystem, not only in relationships with audiences. Every promise, repeated behaviour and distribution of responsibility teaches employees, artists, volunteers, funders, partners, communities and public authorities what they can expect from the festival—and what the festival expects from them. What survives as a pattern can become more credible than what the organisation says it values.

Within a team, a manager may describe a position as flexible and collaborative while repeatedly expecting the employee to remain available outside working hours. The formal message promises autonomy; repeated practice creates an expectation of unlimited availability. Even a statement such as, “We generally do not work overtime,” can conceal a material cost if one intensive week is known to occur every year. The exceptional week should be described first and concretely, because it may matter more to a person’s decision than the annual average. A highly capable team member may repeatedly solve last-minute problems. Colleagues then plan on the assumption that this person will rescue the situation again. No explicit promise has been made, yet repetition turns exceptional contribution into expected organisational capacity and transfers the cost of weak planning to the same person.

An artist may be invited with language suggesting substantial creative freedom, while contractual, financial or political limitations emerge only after work has begun. Care requires the festival to distinguish what is genuinely open to artistic influence, what has already been decided and what remains dependent on funding, permission or other uncertain conditions. Volunteers may similarly be promised experience, learning, access or belonging in exchange for their contribution. If they are used only for repetitive labour, the problem is not simply that the work is demanding: the return around which their participation was organised has not been provided.

A partner or funder may interpret visibility offered in one year as a continuing entitlement in later editions. A festival may likewise treat a partner’s previous flexibility as evidence that deadlines,

payments or reporting arrangements can always be renegotiated. Community participants may invest time, knowledge and trust after being invited to influence a process, only to discover that the decision had already been made. In each case, care requires the actual scope of commitment, contribution and influence to be made visible rather than allowing generosity or participation to become an invisible permanent obligation or an empty promise.

Public authorities may expect a festival to deliver tourism, visibility, social cohesion, cultural participation and economic development simultaneously while providing resources sufficient for only part of these aims. The festival may accept these expectations to secure support and later transfer the gap to workers, artists or communities. Caring communication makes the relationship between desired outcomes, available resources and realistic capacity visible before commitment is made.

Audience expectations remain one part of this wider field. A festival cannot guarantee how an artwork will affect each person, but it can be reliable about conditions it controls, including access, timing, welcome, safety and the practical scope of participation. Care distinguishes the experiential possibility a festival hopes to create from the conditions for which it can take responsibility. It neither markets every possibility as a promise nor hides behind uncertainty to avoid commitments it can reasonably make.

#### *5.3.4.2 Expectations and the design of the festival experience*

A festival does not begin for an audience member when the first performance starts. The experience may begin when a person first encounters an image, announcement, recommendation, ticket price or programme text. Before arriving, they already carry expectations formed by the festival's reputation, artistic field, location, previous editions and their own earlier experiences. Communication then adds another layer by suggesting what kind of event this will be, what people may encounter and how participation may feel.

Designing a festival as an experience therefore requires attention to three related layers: the expectations audiences already bring, the expectations created by communication and the experience the festival is actually able to offer. These are not separate responsibilities belonging respectively to marketing, programming and production. Together, they shape the audience's relationship with the festival.

The offered experience includes more than the artistic programme. It begins with the clarity and accessibility of information and continues through ticketing, arrival, welcome, orientation, waiting, spatial organisation, accessibility, encounters with staff and volunteers, food and rest facilities, safety, atmosphere, participation and departure. Each element communicates what and whom the festival values. A programme that speaks about openness and belonging, for example, may create an expectation contradicted by inaccessible spaces, unclear information or an unwelcoming arrival.

Communication should neither inflate the experience nor reduce it to what is easiest to advertise. If it creates expectations that the festival cannot fulfil, the difference may be experienced as disappointment even when the programme has genuine artistic value. If it fails to make the character and meaning of the experience perceptible, people who might value it may not recognise that it is for them. The aim is not to lower expectation artificially, but to make the actual offer understandable, attractive and trustworthy without manufacturing promises the experience cannot carry.

This coherence is also a curatorial responsibility. Consider an exhibition designed as an experience for its visitors. Its conceptual text does more than provide information: it directs attention, frames interpretation and creates expectations about what the visitor may encounter. The artworks, their selection and sequencing, the spatial design, lighting, sound, interpretive materials and possibilities for movement should make the proposed conceptual relationship perceptible.

The exhibition does not need to illustrate its conceptual text literally, and visitors should not be expected to reach the same interpretation. Artistic experience must retain ambiguity, openness and surprise. Yet if the conceptual text promises a question, relationship or experience that cannot be encountered in the exhibition itself, a gap emerges between expectation and offer. The visitor may conclude that they have failed to understand the exhibition, although the difficulty may lie in the lack of coherence between the curatorial promise and the perceptible experience.

Care therefore asks curators and festival teams to examine the exhibition from the visitor's position. What expectations does the conceptual language create? Through which visual, auditory, spatial, tactile or relational elements can visitors encounter what the text invites them to consider? What prior knowledge does the exhibition assume? Where is uncertainty artistically meaningful, and where does it result from inaccessible language or insufficient mediation? The purpose is not to eliminate ambiguity or predetermine interpretation. It is to create trustworthy conditions in which the conceptual frame and the experienced exhibition remain meaningfully connected.

Designing the festival as an experience does not mean controlling what every audience member will feel. Different people arrive with different mental maps and may interpret the same event differently. It means designing coherent and caring conditions in which programme, communication, environment and human encounters support rather than contradict one another.

**EXPERIENCE AND EXPECTATION**

**The audience brings expectations · Communication shapes expectations · The programme and its conditions create the experience · Care seeks coherence without eliminating artistic openness.**

Unspoken expectations can organise any of these relationships without being open to negotiation. Cost exchange can also turn expectation into entitlement: when one party repeatedly carries another party's

relevant costs, help may gradually become expected service, and a later boundary may be experienced as the loss of an unconditional right. Naming expectations helps distinguish what was promised, reasonably inferred, learned through repetition or privately assumed, making the real disagreement and the distribution of cost more visible.

Care works to create justified expectations through honest communication, realistic commitments and reliable practice. When a commitment cannot be met, repair may require acknowledgement, explanation, changed conditions, restitution or a new agreement—not only a revised message. Repair prevents one failure from becoming the unspoken forecast for every future interaction. Across the festival ecosystem, trust grows when messages, commitments, cost exchanges and repeated practices tell a sufficiently coherent story.

EXPECTATION PRACTICE

**Make important expectations explicit · Promise benefits with restraint · Make foreseeable costs fully visible · Distinguish what was promised, inferred, learned or assumed · Align commitments with capacity and resources · Revise and repair when conditions change.**

EXPECTATIONS ACROSS THE ECOSYSTEM

**Expectations exist throughout the festival ecosystem · Care aligns what is communicated, what is expected, what each party carries and what they can responsibly rely upon.**

**Pause for Reflection**

Follow an audience member from the first announcement they see to the moment they leave. At which point might what they experience contradict what your communication led them to expect?

## 5.4 How the Three Elements Shape a Relationship

### 5.4.1 The relationship cycle

The three elements form a continuing cycle. A message creates or alters an expectation. An expectation shapes who is assumed to carry a cost. The distribution of cost changes capacity, value, trust and power. Those changes affect how the next message is transmitted and perceived. Every cycle leaves a relational trace.

RELATIONSHIP CYCLE

**Communication → Expectation → Cost Distribution → Relational Effect → New Expectation → Future Communication.**

Invisible overwork teaches an organisation that unrealistic planning is possible. A boundary repeatedly surrendered teaches the other party that the boundary need not be respected. The cycle is shaped not only by what people say they value, but by what communication, expectations and cost distribution repeatedly make normal.

In organisational life, communication is also the process through which a plan or decision becomes shared reality. Sending information is not sufficient. People need to know what has been decided, why, what is expected of them, what remains uncertain and where they can ask or challenge. Communication is part of care because organisational certainty becomes real for people only when it is shared, understood, questioned and connected to their particular situation.

Listening is not agreement. It is the disciplined effort to allow another person's reality to alter one's understanding. An open question can create this possibility, but only if the answer is allowed to matter. When an organisation invites people to speak but decisions cannot be influenced, "listening" can become a performance of participation.

Power shapes communication at every point. Who can request a meeting? Whose urgency changes the schedule? Who can be direct without being judged difficult? Who needs to soften a message to remain safe? Who receives explanations, and who is simply informed? Communication skills cannot eliminate these asymmetries, but they can help make them visible and prevent technique from disguising control.

### 5.4.2 Conflict as a normal condition of relationship

Conflict begins when two parties want, need, value, expect or prioritise things that cannot all be realised in the same way at the same moment. Two friends may face a conflict because one wants to go to the cinema that evening while the other wants to stay at home. Nothing dramatic has happened and neither person has necessarily behaved badly. Their wishes simply point in different directions.

Even this small incompatibility is a conflict. It does not yet have to be a crisis, a fight or a serious problem. Human beings are distinct persons with different needs and mental maps; people who live or work together therefore meet many conflicts every day. Most remain almost invisible because the parties negotiate them, adapt and continue their relationship. Conflict is not evidence that a relationship has failed. It is one of the normal conditions of relationship.

**CONFLICT**

**Conflict ≠ Crisis · Conflict begins when different wishes, needs, expectations or priorities cannot all be realised in the same way at the same time.**

The two friends may decide to go to the cinema today and stay at home tomorrow, watch a film at home, spend part of the evening outside and return early, or give priority to the more urgent present need. The incompatibility has not been denied; it has been transformed into an arrangement through

negotiation. What turns conflict into a problem is not difference alone, but how the parties react, what attitudes they bring and whether power replaces dialogue.

### 5.4.3 Avoidance and the emotional enlargement of conflict

Many people avoid conflict because it creates discomfort and anxiety. They may fear anger, rejection, punishment, loss of affection, employment, funding or professional reputation. Silence can appear caring — "I do not want to upset the other person"— but it may protect immediate comfort while transferring a greater cost into the future. Small conflicts are often easier to negotiate while they remain visible and specific; when avoided, they can accumulate into resentment, entitlement or rupture.

The original incompatibility may be small, but its emotional meaning can enlarge it. A person may experience a decision not simply as an unwanted outcome, but as evidence that they have been treated unfairly, ignored, disrespected, controlled or taken for granted. Anger, fear, hurt, shame or resentment then becomes part of the conflict. The person may avoid speaking because they fear that their words will reproduce the anger destructively.

Emotion does not have to dictate response. Through self-distancing, a person can recognise: "I am angry because I believe I have been treated unfairly. My anger is real, but it does not have to decide how I speak." They need not wait until the anger disappears. A respectful, solution-oriented response may reduce the other person's need to defend themselves and redirect the relational cycle. Reciprocity cannot be guaranteed, but the automatic reaction need not determine what the conflict becomes.

A chosen response can also influence emotion. When a person acts consistently with their values, expresses what matters and experiences themselves as capable of entering the conflict without attacking or disappearing, helplessness may decrease. Anger may become clearer and more proportionate, available as energy for change rather than destruction.

EMOTION AND RESPONSE

**Emotion informs the response · It does not have to command it · A meaningful decision can redirect the emotional and relational cycle.**

**Pause for Reflection**

Recall a small disagreement you chose not to raise in order to preserve a working relationship. Did it remain small for you, or did it begin to affect how you interpreted the other person's later words and actions? Looking back, what were you trying to prevent by staying silent, and what actually happened?

### 5.4.4 Understanding is not approval

Conflicts do not always remain on a rational surface. People may argue about a deadline, fee, decision or division of labour while responding emotionally to what it has come to mean. One person may be defending a proposal; another may be defending dignity, recognition, security or belonging. Rational arguments alone may fail because they address the visible event while leaving its emotional meaning untouched.

Understanding another person does not mean approving their behaviour, accepting their interpretation as the whole truth or agreeing to their demand. It means making a serious effort to perceive the experience, needs, emotions and mental map from which their position has emerged. A person can say, "I understand why you experienced the situation in that way," while also saying, "I interpret part of what happened differently," or, "I cannot accept the way you responded."

A person's interpretation may be partial or distorted while the emotion produced through it remains real. Recognising that someone felt excluded does not prove that exclusion was intended, nor does it require accepting every conclusion they draw. Yet a feeling that has no legitimate place in the conversation can block rational proposals: accepting the proposal may feel like accepting that the person's experience did not matter.

Care therefore listens on two levels: what happened and how should it be understood; and what did the situation produce emotionally and relationally for those involved? Emotion cannot determine factual truth by itself, and factual explanation cannot erase emotional consequence.

UNDERSTANDING

**Understanding ≠ Approval · Recognising an experience ≠ Accepting every interpretation · Care seeks to understand before it judges, responds or sets a boundary.**

**Pause for Reflection**

Recall a time when you explained the reasons for a decision, yet the other person remained hurt or angry. What were you trying to clarify, and what might they have needed you to recognise? Looking back, what could you genuinely acknowledge, even if you still disagreed with their interpretation of what happened?

### 5.4.5 From reaction to negotiation

Self-distancing allows a person to look from their own perspective, attempt to understand the other party's perspective and then step back to examine the relational field. What does each party want? What need, value, expectation or fear may be carried by each position? Where do their aims overlap?

Where do they genuinely differ? What power, responsibility and cost does each party carry? What might happen if the conflict is ignored?

Negotiation begins when the parties stop treating the other person as the obstacle and begin treating the conflict as the shared matter requiring attention. Caring communication expresses one's own position without erasing the other's and perceives the other's position without erasing one's own. When underlying meanings become visible, possibilities may appear that were unavailable while the parties defended only their stated demands.

A caring conflict conversation can move through a simple sequence. First, show what you have understood: "I understand that the delay left you feeling disregarded and uncertain." Second, name what you can honestly affirm: "I agree that we communicated too late." Third, distinguish the point on which you differ: "I do not agree that the delay means the team did not value your contribution." Fourth, make your own experience visible. Fifth, explain the conditions without using explanation to cancel impact. Sixth, invite a shared search for the meaningful and just response. Finally, offer a proposal and ask what it still fails to address.

This is not a script that guarantees agreement. Understanding is not surrender; agreement with one part does not require agreement with everything; explanation is not absolution; and offering a solution does not end dialogue before the other person can influence it. "What do you think?" matters only when the answer is allowed to change the understanding or proposal.

### 5.4.6 Justice, cost and power in conflict

Resolving conflict usually requires a cost. Sometimes one party postpones a wish; sometimes both change their positions; sometimes the solution combines elements of each. Justice does not require identical sacrifice or an exact ledger of concessions. It requires that neither party's dignity, legitimate boundaries, consequences or contribution become systematically invisible.

#### *5.4.6.1 Meaningful Judgement Within Negotiation*

As Chapter 4 established, the meaningful response cannot be assigned to a person by somebody else. This remains true within conflict. Neither party can decide on the other's behalf what they should want, relinquish, contribute or endure. Each person must exercise judgement: What is the best possible response for everyone affected? What distinct contribution am I particularly able and responsible to make? What most urgently requires a response now?

Negotiation brings these separate judgements into relationship. Each party makes perceptible what they understand the situation to require, what they can contribute, which costs they are able and willing to carry, which boundaries they must protect and what consequences they foresee. They then allow their judgement to encounter information and perspectives that may confirm, correct or transform it.

The meaningful response is therefore neither egoistic—my wish must always prevail—nor self-erasingly altruistic—my wish must never matter. It includes the self, the other person, the relationship and anyone else affected. Yet inclusion does not mean that every person must carry the same cost, make the same concession or assume the same responsibility. Their capacities, roles, authority, previous contributions and exposure to consequences may differ. Justice asks what each person can and should responsibly contribute within this particular situation.

Agency is essential to this process. A person participates meaningfully when they can decide whether to say: “This is mine to carry,” “I can contribute in another way,” “I need support or authority to assume this responsibility,” or “This cost cannot justly be transferred to me.” The purpose of negotiation is not to pressure the parties towards a predetermined compromise. It is to create conditions in which their distinct judgements can encounter one another and a more responsible shared response can be formed.

RELATIONAL JUDGEMENT

**Relational judgement ≠ One party defining the meaningful role of the other · Negotiation = Distinct people making their judgements, capacities, costs and boundaries perceptible while searching for the best possible shared response.**

Both parties may have responsibility for participating in the resolution of an ordinary conflict, but their responsibilities are not necessarily equal. Responsibility must be considered in relation to power. The party with greater authority, resources, security, knowledge or capacity to affect the outcome carries a greater responsibility before, during and after conflict.

Before conflict, greater power brings greater responsibility to reduce unnecessary uncertainty, injustice, exclusion and unspoken contradiction. During conflict, it brings greater responsibility to make disagreement safe, refrain from retaliation, provide information and interrupt escalation. In resolution and repair, it brings greater responsibility to change decisions, workloads, budgets, procedures, boundaries or channels of participation where these conditions are producing harm.

Greater responsibility does not authorise the more powerful party to determine the solution or assign the other person’s meaningful role. That would reproduce inequality through the language of care. The more powerful party’s greater responsibility is to create fair conditions for judgement and negotiation: to provide relevant information, make actual constraints visible, protect the other party’s capacity to speak and refuse, connect responsibility with sufficient authority and support, and accept a proportionate share of the costs of repair.

The less powerful party’s agency must not be confused with carrying an equal burden. A person cannot meaningfully choose among options that have not been made visible, reject a responsibility when

refusal carries disproportionate cost, or influence an outcome that has already been decided. Participation becomes real only when their judgement can affect what happens.

POWER AND CONFLICT

**The greater the power to shape the conditions of a relationship, the greater the responsibility to prevent avoidable conflict, interrupt escalation and make just resolution and repair possible.**

**Pause for Reflection**

Recall a disagreement in which someone with less authority than you accepted your proposed solution. What led you to believe that the disagreement had been resolved? Looking back, how much could they influence the solution, and what might it have cost them to disagree or refuse?

### 5.4.7 From fencing to dancing

Two images help reveal the relational dynamic. In fencing, one person attacks and the other defends; then the positions reverse. Each watches for weakness and tries to overcome the opponent. A request is heard as pressure, an explanation as an excuse and a concession as defeat. The parties may forget the original issue because winning has become the organising purpose.

Dancing is different. The partners remain distinct and do not make identical movements. Sometimes one leads and sometimes the other; each movement responds while contributing something of its own. Both carry cost through attention, adjustment, restraint, effort and presence. What emerges cannot be produced by either alone.

A conflict may initially feel like fencing. Resolution becomes more likely when the question changes from “How can I make the other person accept my solution?” to “What are we being asked to resolve, and what can we create within the realities, needs and responsibilities carried by everyone involved?” This does not remove disagreement or boundaries. It transforms opposition into coordinated inquiry.

CONFLICT DYNAMIC

**Conflict becomes destructive when the other person becomes the problem · Negotiation begins when the conflict becomes a shared matter.**

### 5.4.8 Conflict in festival relationships

Festivals continually bring different artistic, organisational, financial, political and community priorities into relation. A programmer may protect artistic risk while a production manager protects feasibility and safety. An artist may need more time while communications needs confirmed information. A funder may seek visibility that conflicts with the curatorial framework. Team members may agree on purpose while disagreeing about how much cost can responsibly be carried.

These conflicts do not necessarily indicate an absence of care. They may arise because people are caring for different aspects of the same ecosystem. Care does not dissolve the differences through goodwill. It makes needs, values, risks, authority and likely consequences visible, and gives those who will carry the consequences a meaningful place in negotiation. When agreement is reached, it must be translated into communication, responsibilities, cost distribution and revised expectations so that the same conflict does not return invisibly.

**FROM REACTION TO NEGOTIATION**

**Conflict makes difference visible · Care slows reaction, clarifies what each party perceives, expects and carries, and transforms the conflict from a contest between opponents into a shared matter they can negotiate together.**

## 5.5 When Conflict Is Not an Adequate Description

Not every harmful relational situation should be described as conflict. Conflict implies that different positions have become incompatible and require negotiation. Workplace bullying and mobbing involve a different pattern: power is used repeatedly in ways that intimidate, humiliate, isolate, discredit, control or weaken another person. Asking the target simply to communicate better or meet the aggressor halfway can transfer responsibility to the person carrying the harm.

Terminology differs across countries and fields. In this Reader, workplace bullying refers primarily to repeated harmful behaviour by an individual. Mobbing refers more specifically to a collective process in which several people systematically target one or more persons, although in some European contexts the terms are used interchangeably. Bullying may develop into mobbing when others join, repeat, legitimise or silently enable the targeting.

**OPERATIONAL DISTINCTION**

**Bullying = Repeated abuse of power by an individual · Mobbing = Collective bullying in which a group systematically targets one or more people.**

The pattern may include repeated mockery, interruption or exclusion from meetings. Information may be withheld, deadlines made impossible or responsibility given without authority. Expectations may keep shifting, the person may be blamed for failures of the system, and standards may be applied to them that are not applied to others. Any incident may be explained away as pressure, humour or poor management. Across time, however, the same person carries the negative consequences, loses influence or belonging and becomes less able to defend themselves without further risk.

Not every disagreement, critical feedback, unpopular decision or demanding period is bullying. Relevant questions include whether conduct is repeated; whether the same person is targeted; whether it concerns legitimate work requirements or humiliation and exclusion; whether standards are applied consistently; whether the person can disagree without disproportionate risk; and what consequences are being produced for health, participation, reputation, work and belonging.

In bullying or mobbing, direct negotiation may be unsafe or inappropriate. Mediation is not a substitute for accountability, and reconciliation should not be demanded as proof of professionalism. Protection, documentation, impartial examination, boundaries, consequences and structural change may need to come before dialogue.

### 5.5.1 Care, witnesses and collective responsibility

Care is not suspended when an organisation lacks a policy, reporting channel or formal safeguarding mechanism. A person who notices repeated humiliation, isolation or intimidation is already part of the relational field. Care asks them not to reduce what they see to a private personality conflict and not to leave the targeted person alone with an experience that the surrounding group can also perceive.

Support can begin quietly: checking in with the person, listening without demanding disclosure, affirming that the behaviour has been noticed, asking what form of support is wanted, documenting what one directly witnessed, accompanying the person to a meeting, helping identify external support, or refusing to repeat gossip and exclusion. Where safe and proportionate, a witness may name the behaviour in the moment or raise it with someone who has authority to intervene.

This responsibility is not identical for every witness. A temporary worker may face serious retaliation for speaking, while a director, board member, senior artist or funder may be able to intervene with far less personal risk. Care does not impose heroic self-sacrifice on those with little protection. Responsibility grows with knowledge, power, security and capacity to act. Those with greater power have a greater duty not only to avoid joining the pattern, but to interrupt it and protect those exposed to it.

Silence can have different meanings. It may express fear and powerlessness, but it can also protect status or convenience. The ethical question is not simply whether a witness spoke publicly. It is what possibilities were genuinely available to them, what risks they carried, and whether they used the freedom they did possess to reduce harm rather than allowing the pattern to become normal.

**WITNESSING AND CARE**

**Care requires those who notice harm to ask what support, protection or truth-telling is possible · responsibility increases with the power and safety to act.**

**Pause for Reflection**

Have you ever witnessed someone being repeatedly belittled or excluded at work? If so, what did you consider your responsibility at the time, and how did you respond? Looking back at the influence you had and the risks you faced, what other ways of supporting the person, if any, were open to you?

### 5.5.2 A caring organisational response

A caring organisation does not begin by asking whether the person reporting harm can become more resilient. It asks what is happening, what protection is needed, whose power is involved and what conditions have allowed the pattern to continue. It provides a safe route for raising concerns, protection against retaliation, fair documentation and examination, appropriate interim measures, and consequences and repair proportionate to what is established.

Procedural fairness matters. Taking a report seriously does not mean deciding the outcome before examination; it means neither dismissing the report nor exposing the reporting person to further harm while facts are established. The opportunity for all relevant parties to be heard must not become false equivalence between the person using power and the person whose capacity to respond has been reduced.

Festival work can conceal harm through intense deadlines, temporary contracts, informal hierarchies, dependence on reputation, scarce opportunities and emotional investment in the event. A manager may be protected as indispensable, a senior artist excused because of status, a volunteer told that humiliation is part of gaining experience, or a person reporting harm accused of endangering the festival before opening. Artistic purpose, urgency and loyalty must never be used to justify intimidation or silence.

CARE, PROTECTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

**Care seeks dialogue where dialogue is possible · Care creates protection and accountability where power has made dialogue unsafe.**

Conflict resolution therefore requires judgement before technique. Where distinct parties can participate with sufficient safety and agency, care supports understanding, negotiation and a just response. Where power is being used to suppress agency or produce repeated harm, care must protect, document, investigate, establish boundaries and change conditions. The question may no longer be “How can these people understand one another better?” but “What must stop, who has the authority to stop it, how will the person at risk be supported and what must change so that the pattern cannot continue?”

CONFLICT AND CARE

**Conflict is a normal consequence of human distinctness · Care transforms negotiable conflict into a search for a just response and responds to bullying or mobbing through protection, accountability and structural change.**

## 5.6 When Relationships Become Organisational Culture

An organisation does not communicate, value or care independently of people. Every message is written, every decision is made and every responsibility is carried by someone. Yet these actions do not remain merely personal when they are repeated. People begin to learn what normally happens: where information comes from, whose questions receive an answer, who is expected to solve an emergency, which commitments are reliable, what can be refused and what must be carried silently. A recurring relational pattern gradually becomes an organisational condition.

Imagine a festival in which incomplete information is repeatedly sent at the last moment. Each message is written by a person and received by another person. Yet when this happens across many tasks and editions, the problem can no longer be understood only as an individual communication failure. People begin to anticipate uncertainty, build extra checking and emergency work into their routines, and depend upon those who have learned how to compensate for missing information. Communication has shaped expectations; expectations have redistributed cost; repeated cost has created particular capacities and dependencies.

The same movement can begin with goodwill. A highly capable person may repeatedly step in when something is unclear or unfinished. Their contribution protects the festival, and they become increasingly skilled at responding under pressure. Others learn that this person will carry what remains unresolved. What began as a caring response may gradually become an organisational dependency. The issue is no longer simply whether the person should set a boundary or whether colleagues should take more responsibility. The organisation must also notice the pattern and the conditions that allow it to repeat.

Personal care is therefore necessary but insufficient. A thoughtful director, attentive curator or supportive colleague can transform the quality of an encounter. If clarity, fairness, safety or continuity depend entirely upon that person’s presence, however, the organisation has not developed a reliable capacity. When the person becomes unavailable or leaves, the quality they privately carried may disappear with them.

Organisational care begins when a relational quality becomes less dependent upon personality, memory and private goodwill. Shared roles can reduce the uncertainty that personal reassurance repeatedly has

to repair. Accessible information can prevent dependence upon one informal gatekeeper. Realistic schedules can prevent urgency from becoming the normal distribution of cost. Documentation and shared learning can allow knowledge to remain after particular people leave.

This does not mean converting every difficulty into a policy or procedure. Formal arrangements cannot replace attention, judgement and conversation. Their purpose is to support these human capacities and make important relational qualities more reliable. The necessary response may be modest: clarifying a role, changing when information is shared, redistributing one responsibility, recording why a decision was made or ensuring that more than one person learns how an essential task is carried.

The consequences extend beyond the internal team. A pattern of unclear communication, concentrated cost or unreliable expectation will also affect artists, volunteers, partners, audiences, public authorities and communities. Conversely, an organisational capacity for clarity, recognition, responsibility and repair can travel through these relationships and shape the wider festival ecosystem. The organisation becomes the point at which repeated interpersonal practices acquire continuity and wider consequence.

The purpose of this analysis is not to ask festival professionals to redesign every organisational system at once. It is to support a change in perception. When a difficulty repeats, the question need not remain: "Who handled this badly?" It can expand to include: "What relational pattern is being repeated, what organisational condition allows it to continue, and what could make a healthier response more reliable?"

FROM RELATIONSHIP TO ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

**People create relationships · Repetition turns relational patterns into organisational conditions · Organisational conditions shape what becomes possible across the festival ecosystem.**

**Pause for Reflection**

Think of someone you regard as indispensable to your festival. If they stepped away, what would become difficult beyond completing their assigned tasks? What does this reveal about the care the organisation relies on them to provide personally? What would need to change for that care to become a shared responsibility?

Chapter 5 has followed relationships from two parties to the organisational conditions that repeated patterns create. The next chapter asks what care contributes to this movement: how it orients judgement within relationships and how it becomes more reliable when it is repeated through organisational practice. Chapter 7 will then ask what can emerge when relationships across the festival ecosystem develop continuity, collective memory, shared practice and shared responsibility.

CHAPTER 5 — CARE LANDING

**Healthy relationships require clear communication, just expectations and a fair, capacity-developing distribution of cost. Care attends to what is transmitted, what is perceived, what is expected and what each party actually carries.**

# CHAPTER 6

## Care as a Way of Relating and Organising

*From purpose and wellbeing to practice*

Care has appeared in this Reader as an attitude, a lens, a form of judgement, a practice and an organisational principle. These are not competing definitions. Care begins as an attitude of valuing persons and the living world. It operates as a lens through which relationships, conditions and consequences become perceptible. Caring judgement asks what the particular situation requires. Care becomes practice when responsibility is expressed through decisions and actions, and it becomes an organisational principle when those practices are made reliable through roles, resources, policies, procedures and accountability. When these principles shape repeated relationships and practices across time, care becomes part of culture.

Earlier, care was described as the way a festival takes responsibility for the relationships and conditions through which its purpose becomes possible. We can now make that definition more precise. Festivals may pursue different artistic, cultural and public purposes, but the way they pursue them affects the wellbeing of the people, relationships and organisations that make them possible. Care is the practice through which responsibility for these effects is exercised.

**REFINED DEFINITION**

**Care is the relational and organisational practice through which the conditions of personal, relational-collective and organisational wellbeing are created, protected and, when damaged, repaired.**

These forms of wellbeing also depend upon material places, resources and living systems. Their ecological conditions will become increasingly visible as the Reader moves from care and power towards sustainability.

Because care is often associated with kindness, harmony, rescue or protection, it helps to show how this definition differs from these common understandings.

Care is not the same as kindness: it includes kindness but reaches beyond it. Kindness is valuable, but it can remain interpersonal while organisational conditions continue to harm people. A warm manager may still maintain an impossible workload. A hospitable festival may welcome audiences while relying on exhausted workers. Care connects interpersonal quality to responsibility for structures.

Care is not conflict avoidance: it makes room for conflict. Protecting a relationship may require naming an unacceptable behaviour, declining a request, questioning authority or changing an arrangement that

benefits some participants. A surface without conflict can indicate trust, but it can also indicate fear or exclusion. Care asks whether tension can be expressed without disproportionate cost to those who express it.

Care is not rescue or unlimited availability: it shares responsibility. Rescue may temporarily protect an outcome while preserving the system that produced the emergency. When the same people repeatedly compensate for missing resources, unclear decisions or weak planning, their commitment becomes part of the organisation's hidden infrastructure. Care interrupts the cycle by asking why rescue was required and who has authority to change the condition.

Care is not paternalism: it involves the people it affects. Deciding what is good for others without their meaningful involvement can be motivated by concern and still reduce agency. Care combines attention with humility: the person affected may know something that the decision-maker does not. At the same time, participation cannot be used to transfer institutional responsibilities to those already carrying consequences.

## 6.1 Care as Relational Judgement

Chapter 5 described how communication, cost exchange and expectations shape a relationship. Care now asks how we should judge and act within that relational field. It does not add a fourth element to the relationship model. It provides an orientation for deciding what should be made visible, protected, shared, developed, limited or repaired.

A caring response therefore examines all three elements together. What has been transmitted, perceived or left unsaid? What expectations have been promised, inferred or produced through repetition? Who carries time, effort, risk, responsibility and consequence? Which capacities are being developed, which are being replaced, and whose contribution or depletion remains invisible? Caring judgement therefore attends not only to immediate need or intention. It also attends to agency and authority, to power and boundaries, to cost and return, and to consequences, capacity and sustainability.

CARING JUDGEMENT

**Communication: what is being transmitted and perceived? · Expectations: what has been promised, assumed or learned? · Cost: who contributes, benefits and carries consequences? · Care: what should be created, protected, redistributed, developed or repaired?**

### 6.1.1 The just distribution of care

Care should not be directed only towards the self or only towards others. Care directed exclusively towards the self can protect one person's interest while making the consequences carried by others disappear. Care directed exclusively towards others can erase the caregiver's needs, boundaries, values and capacity to continue. The person who gives care is also one of the parties entitled to receive it.

Justice does not mean equal care or equal cost. It gives each party what is due in relation to relevant need, capacity, responsibility, authority, vulnerability and circumstance, at the time it is required. Positive action can therefore be just when identical treatment would preserve disadvantage. Yet visible need cannot be the only criterion: the person who appears strong may carry the greatest accumulated cost and remain unseen precisely because they have learned to cope. Caring judgement must also consider urgency and risk, and who has access to authority, resources and support. It asks whether help will strengthen or replace agency, and it respects the legitimate boundaries and sustainability of those providing care. Continuing support is not failure, and interdependence is not a condition to be eliminated. The aim is to protect agency within interdependence.

JUST CARE

**The self must not occupy the whole field of care · The self must not disappear from the field of care · Care is distributed according to need, capacity, responsibility and circumstance—not equality or visibility alone.**

**Pause for Reflection**

Think of someone in your festival team who gets things done under pressure and rarely asks for help. How does this affect the amount of work you give them and how often you check whether they need support? What do you know about the time, effort or sacrifices their work requires?

### 6.1.2 Justice, Agency and the Meaningful Choice

Chapter 4 identified three related dimensions through which a person can discern the meaningful response. The response seeks the best possible option for all parties involved in the particular situation. It calls upon the distinct contribution that this particular person, with their capacities, experience, position and responsibilities, can make. It also responds to what most urgently requires an answer before an important possibility is lost or avoidable harm increases.

These dimensions deepen the relationship between care and justice. "All parties" prevents care from protecting one person by making another person's needs, costs or wellbeing disappear. "Distinct contribution" prevents justice from being reduced to equal tasks, equal costs or interchangeable roles. "Urgency" introduces time: some needs can wait, while others require attention now. Justice therefore

concerns not only what is distributed, but to whom, in what proportion, for what purpose and at what moment.

The three dimensions must remain connected. What appears best for everyone cannot be separated from who is actually capable, authorised and responsibly situated to contribute. Distinct capacity does not justify transferring every urgent task to the most competent person. Urgency does not justify manufactured pressure, the suspension of boundaries or the concentration of cost upon people whose commitment is already being exploited. Caring judgement holds the parties, the distinct person and the demands of the moment in the same field.

The judgement itself remains personal. An organisation may clarify the situation, provide relevant information, define legitimate authority, communicate needs, make consequences visible and offer support. It may not determine another person's meaningful response on their behalf. The person must still judge what contribution is theirs to make, what responsibility they can legitimately assume and what cost they can responsibly carry. Care protects the agency through which this judgement becomes possible.

This does not mean that every organisational responsibility becomes optional. Employment, professional roles, public obligations and safety procedures create legitimate duties. A technician cannot freely disregard a safety responsibility that belongs to their role, just as an organisation cannot describe its institutional obligations as matters for voluntary participation. Yet even within a defined role, the person remains capable of judgement: they may identify a danger the procedure did not anticipate, communicate that they lack the authority or resources required to carry a responsibility, refuse an unsafe instruction, ask for support or recognise that another person is better placed to respond.

For a festival, the field of responsibility may include employees, artists, volunteers, audiences, communities, partners, public authorities, future participants, places and living systems. A meaningful choice asks which response protects legitimate dignity and boundaries; which person or institution is distinctly situated to contribute; what requires attention now; whether responsibility is accompanied by sufficient authority, information and support; how unavoidable costs and returns will be distributed; and whether the response develops agency or replaces it.

Care therefore does not provide a universal answer that can be applied from above. It improves the conditions under which people can perceive, judge, decide and coordinate their distinct responsibilities. Justice gives this process its relational direction: the meaningful response should not purchase one party's wellbeing through another's invisible depletion. Nor should it assign responsibility without agency or treat the most capable person as an unlimited resource.

THE MEANINGFUL CHOICE

**The best possible response for all parties · The distinct contribution this particular person can responsibly make · What requires the most urgent response care makes the conditions of judgement visible · Agency allows the person to assume their responsibility · Justice guides how responsibility, cost and return are distributed.**

### 6.1.3 The care–comfort paradox

As Chapters 3 and 5 showed, care does not eliminate every burden. It distinguishes among burdens: which develop appropriate capacity; which should be shared; which belong to the organisation; and which are unjust, excessive or depleting and should not be imposed. Capacity-matched challenge can develop agency; excessive or continuous demand can damage the capacity it claims to strengthen.

CARE AND FREEDOM

**Care ≠ Comfort · Care creates conditions in which people can meet meaningful challenges, develop capacity, assume responsibility and expand their freedom without being abandoned, exploited or depleted.**

RELATIONAL BOUNDARY

**Do not remove the weight through which another person needs to develop · Do not abandon them with a weight that exceeds their capacity, authority or responsibility · Do not assume that the person who carries the most needs the least care.**

For a caring organisation, the question is not simply whether employees are comfortable or motivated by every task. Nor is it how much pressure they can tolerate. It is whether responsibility, challenge, authority, support, recognition, limits and recovery are aligned so that people can learn and contribute without being used up. A capable worker's reliability must never be treated as evidence of unlimited capacity.

**Pause for Reflection**

Recall a time when you asked for help with a difficult task and the other person encouraged you to try it yourself. How did you experience their response at the time, and how do you see it now? What support did you have, and was it enough for the responsibility you were carrying?

## 6.2 From Relational Judgement to Organisational Practice

Care operates through practices of noticing, interpreting, responding and reviewing. Noticing asks what and who might otherwise remain unseen. Interpretation distinguishes observation from assumption and brings multiple perspectives into the picture. Response aligns action with authority and responsibility. Review asks what happened, whose account is missing and what should change next time.

Care must also be organised. Shared principles clarify how decisions should be approached when rules cannot anticipate every situation. Clear roles reduce uncertainty that would otherwise be passed downwards. Accessible information supports agency. Realistic planning protects limits. Feedback and grievance routes make repair possible. Budgets reveal whether stated values are supported by resources.

This does not produce a perfectly caring organisation. Care is not a final state or moral identity. Organisations remain capable of overlooking effects, reproducing inequality and making decisions that cause loss. The difference lies in whether they can notice, acknowledge, learn and alter conditions without asking the least powerful to carry the work of repair.

Care of this kind is still exercised relationship by relationship, decision by decision. When its principles shape repeated practices and organisational conditions, however, it can support a wider relational ecosystem in which people are able to participate, develop capacity and take responsibility without losing their distinctness. Such an ecosystem does not automatically become a community. That is a further relational possibility, and it leads to the next question: Under what conditions does a caring relational ecosystem become a community?

CHAPTER 6 — CARE LANDING

**Wellbeing names the capacities we seek to support · Care names the relational and organisational practices through which their conditions are created, protected and repaired · Care sees both the person and the system and returns to experience to examine whether greater wellbeing and capacity have actually been created.**

**Pause for Reflection**

Have you ever made a change intended to help your team, then discovered that it created a new difficulty for someone? If so, how did you learn about their experience, and how did you respond? What, if anything, changed in the way the work was organised afterwards?

# CHAPTER 7

## When Does a Relational Ecosystem Become a Community?

*From interdependence to a shared relational world*

Chapter 5 examined the smallest unit of relational life: a relationship between two parties shaped through communication, cost exchange and expectations across time. Chapter 6 then showed how care orients judgement within these relationships and becomes more reliable when repeated through organisational practice.

A festival's relational ecosystem is formed when many such relationships become interconnected. A curator's relationship with an artist affects production workers; a director's commitment to a funder creates expectations and costs for others; a volunteer coordinator's communication shapes whether volunteers can participate responsibly; an audience member's encounter may influence how the festival is spoken about within a family, community or network. The relationship between two parties remains the basic unit, but its consequences do not remain between those two parties. They travel across other relationships.

When similar relational patterns are repeated, they also become organisational conditions. Information may become reliably accessible or repeatedly delayed. Responsibility may be distributed or concentrated. Contributions may be recognised or allowed to disappear. Expectations may support trust or produce recurring disappointment. In this way, relationships between people form organisational culture, while relationships within and beyond the organisation form a wider relational ecosystem.

Every recurring festival develops such an ecosystem, whether or not it does so consciously and whether or not the relationships are caring. The ecosystem may be collaborative or fragmented, sustaining or depleting, open to influence or organised around dependency. It is a field of interdependence in which what happens within one relationship can alter the communication, costs, expectations and possibilities carried within others; it is not automatically a community. Some relationships may appropriately remain contractual, temporary or primarily instrumental. A supplier can be essential to the festival ecosystem without becoming part of a festival community. A funder, artist or audience member may be connected to the festival without experiencing belonging or assuming responsibility for anything held in common. Different artistic, professional, local and participant communities may also overlap within the same ecosystem without becoming one community.

Community is a particular relational possibility that can develop within this wider ecosystem. It begins when some relationships move beyond contact and exchange towards shared practice. People

contribute through their own agency, perceive and recognise one another's contributions, develop expectations of continuity and assume appropriate responsibility for something they understand as partly held in common.

CONCEPTUAL MOVEMENT

**Relationships Between Two Parties → Interconnected Relationships → Relational Ecosystem → Shared Practice → Belonging → Continuity → Collective Memory → Shared Responsibility → Community.**

This is not a fixed formula, nor must every relationship within the festival ecosystem complete this movement. It is a lens for recognising how the relational principles already examined in this Reader can, under particular conditions, generate a shared relational world.

## 7.1 From connection to shared practice

Connection means that people are in contact or relation. Shared practice begins when their distinct actions contribute to something they can recognise as partly held in common.

People may attend the same festival without forming a community. They may stand in the same queue, watch the same performance and leave with no continuing relationship to one another or to the festival. A different possibility appears when people participate through their own agency: when they help shape an activity, contribute knowledge, welcome newcomers, solve a problem, preserve a memory or assume responsibility for something that matters to the group.

Participation alone is not sufficient. A person can be asked to perform a task without having any influence over its purpose or form. They may contribute labour while remaining replaceable and unseen. Shared practice develops when contribution is connected to agency: people can recognise how their action affects what is being created and can perceive that their presence makes a difference.

### 7.1.1 Agency, Meaningful Choice and Contribution

Agency means more than being allowed to perform a task. It includes the capacity to perceive the shared situation, judge what contribution is meaningful, decide which responsibility to assume and determine what cost one can responsibly carry. The person is not merely given a function within somebody else's plan. They participate in discerning how their distinct capacities, experience, position and limits can contribute to what the shared situation requires.

This does not mean that every role is invented individually or that all responsibilities become optional. A festival needs coordination, professional authority, agreed roles, safety responsibilities and work that

may not be attractive to anyone. Yet these necessary conditions do not require people to be treated as interchangeable functions. Participants can understand why a responsibility exists, make their capacities and limits visible, negotiate how it should be carried, ask for the authority and support it requires, and influence the practice to which their contribution belongs.

The three dimensions of meaningful response identified in Chapter 4 remain active within shared practice. Each participant exercises this judgement for themselves. Nobody can assign another person's meaning from a central position. People can communicate needs, define legitimate obligations, invite contribution and coordinate responsibilities, but the person must still decide how they will respond and what responsibility they will consciously assume.

The cost attached to contribution is part of this judgement. A person exercises agency when they can decide: "This matters enough for me to give it my time and effort," "I can carry this responsibility if the necessary support is available," "I can contribute in another way," or "This cost exceeds my capacity or does not justly belong to me." Freely assuming a cost does not mean that the work is easy or enjoyable. It means that the person can recognise the relationship between the cost they carry and what they are helping to make possible.

Shared practice cannot, however, be reduced to a collection of individual preferences. If everybody selects only the most visible, enjoyable or prestigious contribution, urgent and necessary responsibilities may remain uncarried. Meaningful agency remains answerable to the shared situation. Participants must be able to perceive what the whole practice requires, including forms of maintenance, coordination, care and repair that may otherwise remain invisible.

Community begins to become possible when these distinct judgements can be communicated and coordinated. One person recognises what is theirs to do; another recognises a different responsibility; others identify a gap, offer support, question an unjust distribution or decide that a practice should change. Their roles do not have to be identical, and their costs cannot be mathematically equal. What matters is that responsibilities are made visible, freely and consciously assumed where possible, supported by appropriate authority and resources, and brought into relation with one another.

**SHARED PRACTICE**

**Shared practice ≠ An authority distributing predetermined functions · Shared practice = Distinct people exercising agency, assuming meaningful costs and coordinating their different contributions around something held in common.**

The laws of cost help explain what follows when agency becomes contribution. When people freely assume meaningful costs for a festival, they tend to value what those costs help sustain. When they pay appropriate and mutual costs to one another through listening, explaining, coordinating, keeping

promises, negotiating disagreement and repairing relationships, they become more able to recognise and value one another. A team member who consciously gives attention, effort, judgement and responsibility to a festival is therefore likely to perceive both the festival and the relationships through which it is made differently from someone who encounters only the finished event. This can deepen attachment and belonging.

Cost produces another consequence that is equally important for community: people develop capacity in the particular practices for which they repeatedly pay a cost. A team does not become capable of collaboration merely because its members value collaboration as an idea. They develop this capacity by doing the work collaboration requires.

When people pay the cost of planning together, they can become more capable of planning together. When they make the effort to communicate clearly and understand different mental maps, their communicative capacity can develop. When they remain present through disagreement, examine what each party wants and search for a just response, their capacity for negotiation develops. When they acknowledge a mistake, face its consequences and repair what can be repaired, their capacity for repair develops.

The same law applies to collective memory, welcoming newcomers, sharing responsibility and adapting practice. Each capacity requires attention, effort, uncertainty, restraint and repetition. Avoiding these costs may create short-term comfort, but the corresponding relational capacity remains weak. A group that repeatedly avoids disagreement does not become peaceful; it remains inexperienced in conflict. A team that depends upon one person to solve every crisis may become effective at emergency response while remaining weak in planning, delegation and shared responsibility.

The return is therefore not only a valued festival or a stronger sense of belonging. It is also a developed capacity to create and sustain something together. People pay the costs; the capacities first develop within and between them. When these capacities are shared, remembered and supported by organisational conditions, they become available to the wider group.

This is one reason active participation can deepen belonging while also making community possible. Belonging grows as people recognise their contribution within something they value. Community becomes possible when the relational capacities developed through these contributions begin to work together across many relationships.

**COST, BELONGING AND COLLECTIVE CAPACITY**

**People value what they help sustain · They develop capacity in the relational practices for which they repeatedly pay a meaningful cost · Community becomes possible when these developed capacities begin to work together.**

**Pause for Reflection**

Recall a time when a festival project began to feel like something you were creating together, rather than someone else's project you were helping with. What made that shift possible? How did it change what you felt able to influence and the responsibility you were willing to take?

## 7.2 Belonging without the loss of distinctness

Belonging is the experience of having a legitimate place within something shared. It means more than being present, included on a list or welcomed symbolically. A person belongs when they can participate without repeatedly having to prove that they have the right to be there.

Belonging cannot be inferred from the amount of cost a person carries. A person may give enormous time, labour or emotional energy to a festival while feeling used, unseen or unable to influence what their contribution serves. Cost imposed without agency can produce exhaustion, resentment or dependency rather than belonging. Cost strengthens belonging when the person can recognise it as their own contribution to something they value, exercise judgement over how it is carried and perceive that their presence affects the shared practice.

Belonging responds to the human longing for connection examined earlier in this Reader. Yet belonging becomes caring only when connection does not require the disappearance of distinctness. A person should not have to silence disagreement, conceal part of their identity, accept harmful behaviour or imitate those with greater power in order to remain included.

A group can create a powerful feeling of unity by encouraging conformity, identifying outsiders or punishing dissent. Such unity may feel emotionally intense while remaining relationally unhealthy. Belonging is therefore not automatically ethical. Its quality depends upon what the group requires from people in return for membership.

A caring form of belonging allows people to be recognisably different. They can disagree, question a decision, establish a boundary, change their role, leave and—where circumstances permit—return without being treated as disloyal. Their difference is not merely tolerated after the group has defined itself; it participates in what the group can become.

BELONGING AND DISTINCTNESS

**Caring belonging gives people a legitimate place within something shared without requiring them to surrender difference, dignity, boundaries or freedom.**

**Pause for Reflection**
Recall a time when you disagreed with a group you cared about, or said no to something it expected of you. How did others respond? What did their response change, if anything, in your sense of belonging?

## 7.3 Continuity across endings, editions and re-entry

A shared practice takes place within a particular situation. People come together, contribute and make something possible. Community requires an additional relation to time: participants can recognise how a present practice is connected to what came before and to something they may continue to develop together.

Continuity does not mean uninterrupted activity. Festivals are temporary by design. An edition begins and ends. Artists arrive, create or present work and leave. Temporary workers complete their contracts, audiences disperse and community members participate with different levels of intensity at different times. These endings do not contradict continuity.

Consider an artist invited to create a site-specific work. The artist arrives, encounters a place and its people, produces the work and eventually leaves. The production process ends, but it does not leave everyone exactly where they were before it began. Knowledge, memories, relationships and altered perceptions may remain. The artist also carries something of the encounter into future work. Continuity lies not in keeping the artist permanently present, but in how the bounded encounter enters what people and place can remember, value and make possible next.

A festival edition operates in the same way. The public programme ends, yet the relationships, learning, capacities and expectations it has produced may become part of the conditions from which another edition begins. Separate editions can therefore be related without being identical.

Continuity becomes especially significant when a festival serves a purpose that cannot be realised through one event. A biennial festival may do more than produce an event every two years. Its longer-term vision may include contributing to the cultural and physical transformation of its city. Each edition, artistic encounter, local collaboration and public intervention can contribute to this wider movement.

No single edition completes that purpose. Nor must each edition repeat the same programme, participants or form. Continuity becomes perceptible through progress: people can recognise that distinct actions at different times contribute to a transformation larger than any one action.

Community members may participate actively in one edition, remain absent from another and return in a different role later. Their participation is not continuous, but they may still understand themselves as part of the longer movement. They can recognise what their earlier contribution helped make possible, perceive what has changed and find a legitimate way to participate again.

Re-entry therefore reveals whether continuity belongs to the community or depends only upon uninterrupted personal presence. A returning person should not have to pretend that they never left, and the community should not pretend that nothing changed during their absence. Collective memory allows past contribution, present conditions and future possibility to be brought into relation.

Continuity distinguishes community from a succession of disconnected encounters. It gives people a temporal orientation: a shared capacity to understand that what they are doing now emerges from a history and contributes to something that may continue beyond their present participation.

Absence and ending nevertheless raise a further question. When a person or practice stops, who carries what remains? Continuity does not answer this question by requiring somebody else to absorb the cost. It makes the change visible so that the community can decide what should be remembered, continued, altered or allowed to end. How that responsibility is distributed belongs to the questions of shared responsibility, invisible labour and power developed later in this chapter.

CONTINUITY ACROSS TIME

**Continuity ≠ Uninterrupted activity or permanent participation · Continuity = The capacity to connect bounded actions, changing participation and distinct editions to a purpose and shared history that develop across time.**

**Pause for Reflection**

Recall a time when you returned to a festival or group after a period away. What remained of the relationships or shared work you had helped build? What made it easy or difficult to take part again in a way that suited your present circumstances?

## 7.4 Collective memory

Continuity requires memory. Yet collective memory is more than storing files or remembering successful events. It is the shared capacity to understand what has happened, why decisions were made, what was learned, whose contribution mattered and what must not be repeated.

An organisation may possess extensive archives while lacking collective memory. Information may exist but remain inaccessible, disconnected from context or held by only one person. Conversely, stories may

circulate strongly while excluding the labour, conflict and failure that also formed the festival. What a community remembers—and what it repeatedly forgets—shapes its identity and its future choices.

Newcomers make the quality of collective memory visible. Long-term participants may understand unwritten references, routines and relationships without noticing how much knowledge they share. A newcomer encounters what has not been made accessible. If they must depend upon guessing, informal favour or proximity to an established insider, memory becomes a form of power. If the history, language and reasons behind practices can be communicated, the newcomer can enter the shared world without pretending to have been present from the beginning.

Collective memory should not force newcomers to inherit every previous assumption. Its purpose is not to preserve the past unchanged. By making the past available, it allows people to understand it, question it and participate in what comes next.

**Pause for Reflection**
Recall a time when a suggestion you made was met with “We have tried that before.” What were you able to learn about what had happened and why? How did access to that history—or the lack of it—affect your ability to reconsider your idea or contribute to the discussion?

## 7.5 Adaptation and repair

A practice that once supported community may stop working. The group may grow, circumstances may change, resources may decline, new participants may reveal an exclusion that established members did not perceive, or an arrangement may begin to place an unjust cost on particular people.

A community does not prove its strength by preserving every practice. It proves its capacity through adaptation and repair.

Adaptation asks whether the form of a shared practice should change so that its purpose can remain alive. Repair begins when harm, broken trust or an unsustainable pattern is recognised and responded to. Both require collective memory: people need to know what the practice was intended to make possible, what has changed and what consequences the current arrangement produces.

Repair does not always restore the previous relationship. Some harms require boundaries, accountability, changed authority or separation. Nor can an apology replace the alteration of conditions that repeatedly produce the same damage. Repair means taking responsibility for what has happened and creating the most meaningful response that remains possible.

A community capable of repair does not interpret every criticism as disloyalty. It understands that naming a problem can be a form of commitment to the shared world. The possibility of disagreement, correction and change is therefore not a threat to community. It is one of the conditions of its continuity.

**Pause for Reflection**
Recall a problem in your festival that returned even after an apology and a promise to do better. What did its recurrence reveal that the first response had missed? Looking back, what needed to change in the way people worked together?

## 7.6 From negotiation to collective agreement

As Chapter 5 showed, distinct people will not always want, perceive or prioritise the same things. Negotiation allows two parties to make their wishes, needs, perceptions and boundaries present, attempt to understand one another and search for the best possible response without treating conflict as a duel in which one must defeat the other.

When people repeatedly undertake this work, they pay the cost of negotiation. They tolerate the uncertainty of not knowing whether their preferred outcome will prevail. They listen to perspectives that may disturb their own mental map. They explain their position, revise assumptions, make just concessions, protect necessary boundaries and accept responsibility for the consequences of the agreement reached.

This cost develops capacity. People can become more able to remain in relationship during disagreement, distinguish a difference from a threat, recognise the legitimate concerns within an opposing position and search for possibilities that were not visible from either position alone. The result is not merely the settlement of one conflict. It is an increased capacity to produce agreement without requiring sameness.

In a festival, this capacity develops first through particular relationships: between two colleagues, a curator and an artist, a coordinator and a volunteer, a festival representative and a community member, or a director and a partner. The wider group cannot negotiate independently of these people. Yet the ways in which they repeatedly handle disagreement can travel across relationships.

When people observe that conflict can be expressed without humiliation, exclusion or retaliation, they become more willing to speak. When agreements are communicated, remembered and honoured,

expectations become more reliable. When different people are able to influence outcomes, negotiation becomes part of the organisational culture rather than a private skill possessed by a few individuals.

At this point, interpersonal negotiation begins to create a collective capacity for agreement. The group develops ways of identifying what must be decided, making relevant perspectives perceptible, distinguishing negotiable interests from non-negotiable responsibilities, reaching a workable decision and returning to it when conditions change.

Collective agreement does not mean unanimous opinion or permanent harmony. Nor does it require every participant to prefer the final decision. It means that sufficient common ground has been created for distinct people to act together while understanding what has been decided, why it has been decided, what remains unresolved and under what conditions the agreement may be reconsidered.

At a wider social scale, this capacity contributes to what can be called social consensus. Social consensus should not be understood as the disappearance of political, cultural or personal difference. It is the continuing capacity of different people and groups to negotiate the conditions of shared life without replacing dialogue with domination, exclusion or violence.

Festivals can practise this capacity in concrete form. They bring people with different roles, histories, interests, forms of knowledge and degrees of power into situations that require coordination and decision. When these differences are not suppressed but engaged through caring communication, meaningful participation and just negotiation, the festival does more than produce an event. It develops and rehearses a culture of living together.

This is one way in which the capacities formed in relationships between two parties can contribute to community. Community does not arise because conflict disappears. It becomes possible because the relationships within it develop sufficient capacity to negotiate difference, create workable agreements and repair those agreements when they no longer serve the shared world.

FROM NEGOTIATION TO COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT

**Interpersonal Negotiation → Repeated Relational Practice → Collective Capacity for Agreement → Social Consensus.**

AGREEMENT AND DISTINCTNESS

**Agreement ≠ Sameness · Agreement creates sufficient common ground for distinct people to act together.**

**Pause for Reflection**
Recall a group decision in your festival work that you were willing to support even though it was not your preferred outcome. What made that possible? What happened to any concerns or differences that remained?

## 7.7 Who holds the community?

Every community depends upon forms of labour that may remain invisible. Someone welcomes newcomers, remembers previous decisions, notices tension, repairs misunderstandings, checks on an absent participant, translates between different perspectives, keeps relationships alive between meetings or ensures that a shared practice continues when enthusiasm declines.

This work is often described as natural generosity, personality or informal support rather than recognised as labour. It may become concentrated among people who are considered reliable, emotionally available or naturally caring. The community benefits from what they provide while remaining unaware of the cost they carry.

The question “Who holds the community?” therefore reveals both care and power.

If the same people continually preserve continuity, memory and relationship, their contribution may become indispensable while their needs and authority remain marginal. Others may experience the community as welcoming and sustainable precisely because someone else is privately absorbing its tensions and interruptions. What appears to be a collective quality may actually depend upon concentrated and invisible labour.

Making this labour visible does not mean turning every caring gesture into a formal transaction. It means recognising that community has conditions and that those conditions are produced by somebody’s attention, time, judgement and effort. Shared responsibility begins when this work can be recognised, supported, distributed where appropriate and connected to sufficient influence.

WHO HOLDS IT?

**A community may appear to hold itself together while its continuity, memory and repair are being carried by a small number of people.**

**Pause for Reflection**
Think of someone in your festival you describe as “naturally caring” or “good with people”. What do they regularly do that helps people feel included and work together? How is the time and effort this takes recognised and supported? What say do they have in decisions about how the group works together?

## 7.8 Shared responsibility

A community becomes more than a collection of people who value the same festival when the capacities developed across its relationships begin to work together. People communicate, coordinate, negotiate, remember, adapt and repair through many distinct relationships. When these capacities become connected through shared practices, they give the community a capacity that no participant possesses alone.

This does not mean that the community becomes a single organism with one mind or will. People remain distinct, and every act of perception, judgement and responsibility is still carried by particular people. Yet their coordinated relationships can form a living relational system: one capable of perceiving changes through its members, preserving experience through collective memory, reaching agreements, responding to difficulties and altering its practices.

Community becomes visible through what people hold together. Shared responsibility does not mean that everyone carries the same task, cost or authority. Roles, capacities and obligations differ. A director, a temporary worker, an artist, a volunteer and an audience member cannot be expected to assume identical responsibility for the festival.

Shared responsibility means that the continuation and quality of what is held in common are not treated as somebody else’s concern. People understand how their role contributes, what they can responsibly influence and where responsibility must remain with those who possess greater authority and resources.

This distinction protects shared responsibility from becoming disguised abandonment. An organisation cannot describe underfunded labour as community participation or transfer professional duties to volunteers in the name of collective ownership. Nor should participation be used to distribute responsibility without distributing the information, authority and recognition required to exercise it.

Responsibility must therefore be appropriate to role, capacity and power. Those with greater decision-making authority carry greater responsibility for the conditions affecting everyone else. Those with less

authority must still have meaningful ways to perceive, contribute, question and influence what they are helping to sustain.

**Pause for Reflection**
Recall a time when someone in your festival raised a problem they could not resolve within their own role. What happened next? How was responsibility shared between them and those with the authority or resources to act?

## 7.9 Community is not sameness

A caring community is not a group in which everyone agrees, behaves similarly or remains permanently connected. Sameness may reduce visible tension, but it can also conceal exclusion, fear and unequal power.

Community is better understood as a capacity. It is the capacity of distinct people to participate in a shared practice, sustain relationships across time, carry collective memory, assume appropriate responsibility and respond when relationships or practices need adaptation and repair.

This understanding allows movement at the boundaries of the community. People may join, change their level of participation, disagree, leave or return. Newcomers can influence what the community becomes. Established participants can question practices they previously supported. The continuity of the community does not depend upon freezing either its membership or its identity.

COMMUNITY IS NOT SAMENESS

**Community ≠ Sameness · Community = The capacity of distinct people to sustain, develop and repair a shared relational world.**

## 7.10 From Community to the Domains of Care

A relational ecosystem becomes a community when shared practice acquires belonging, continuity, collective memory and shared responsibility. Yet these qualities do not develop in a neutral field. Some people decide who can participate. Some control information, money, space and recognition. Some contributions become visible, while others are treated as naturally available. Some people can disagree safely; others risk losing work, access, reputation or belonging.

Community therefore brings several fields of care into the same picture. Its quality depends upon relationships between people, organisational conditions, the support available when limits are reached,

the spaces through which participation becomes possible and the cultural practices that shape what is remembered and valued. The next chapter gathers these fields into a single map rather than treating them as separate kinds of care.

Each domain also leaves a question that care alone cannot answer without examining power: Who has the power to shape what the community and its conditions become—and who carries the consequences of that power?

**CHAPTER 7 — CARE LANDING**

**A relational ecosystem can develop into a community through contribution, mutual recognition and shared responsibility over time. Care asks how belonging can sustain distinctness, how relationships can be repaired, and whether the costs of community are justly carried.**

# CHAPTER 8

# Domains of Care

*Bringing the relational framework together*

The preceding chapters have developed a connected way of seeing care across different scales. The reader has already followed the movement from human conditions and relationships towards organisational practice, belonging and community. This chapter does not introduce another layer of theory or repeat that movement as a list. It brings the earlier ideas together so that their relationships can be seen within a single framework.

The five domains—relational, organisational, supportive, spatial and cultural care—are not five separate kinds of care. They are fields in which the same orientation becomes visible. The framework allows the reader to move between a relationship involving two parties and the wider festival ecosystem, while asking how the conditions of personal, relational-collective and organisational wellbeing—and the material and ecological conditions upon which they depend—are created, protected and, when damaged, repaired. Each domain also leaves questions that become fully visible only when care is examined together with power.

THE DOMAINS OF CARE

**Relational Care · Organisational Care · Supportive Care · Spatial Care · Cultural Care.**

## 8.1 The Framework at a Glance

The table below is a map of ideas already developed. It does not introduce new standards and should not be used as a checklist for certifying that a festival has "completed" care. It helps the reader locate a situation within the framework, retrieve the earlier argument and recognise connections that may otherwise remain dispersed across different parts of festival practice.

| Domain | Earlier ideas brought together | What the care lens reveals | Wellbeing capacity supported |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Relational Care** | Distinctness and connection; mental maps; perception and transmission; cost and return; expectations across time; boundaries; conflict and repair. | The quality of encounter—including what each party communicates, carries, receives and comes to expect—determines whether people remain visible as human beings rather than functions in another person's plan. | Recognition, dignity, trust and the capacity to relate without losing distinctness. |
| **Organisational Care** | The organisational distribution of cost and return; formalised expectations; responsibility and authority; capacity building; policies, learning and repair. | Relational patterns of communication, cost exchange and expectation become organisational conditions through roles, workloads, budgets, decisions, policies and procedures. | The capacity to contribute and sustain collective work without depletion. |
| **Supportive Care** | Limits and limitations; uncertainty and anxiety; resilience; agency; interdependence; boundaries. | Support can protect and strengthen agency, or unintentionally replace the capacities another person needs to develop. | The capacity to receive support, recover and remain an agent within interdependence. |
| **Spatial Care** | Embodied limits; perception; accessibility; clarity; meaningful challenge; depletion. | Space, time and sensory conditions reveal whose body and participation have been anticipated. | The capacity of different bodies to enter, remain, participate and recover safely. |
| **Cultural Care** | Shared practice; contribution; belonging; collective memory; community; continuity; ecological responsibility. | Repeated festival relationships can cultivate a shared world without requiring distinct people to become the same. | The capacity to belong, contribute and sustain a meaningful shared world. |

The domains overlap. They describe different views of the same relational and organisational reality rather than separate areas that can be completed independently. A decision located primarily in one domain may alter the conditions experienced in all the others.

## 8.2. Reading the Framework as One System

Relational care begins with the smallest unit examined in this Reader: a relationship between two parties. A continuing relationship is shaped through communication, cost exchange and expectations across time. Care does not add a fourth element to this relationship. It is the orientation through which the three elements are handled. It asks whether each party remains perceptible as a distinct and irreplaceable human being; whether communication remains open to realities beyond one mental map;

whether cost and return are justly related; whether expectations are communicated responsibly; and whether boundaries, disagreement and repair remain possible. The power question is who can define the terms of the relationship, whose perception is treated as credible, who can negotiate or refuse a cost and whose agency can influence what the relationship becomes. The other domains develop from this relational foundation.

When relational patterns are repeated, they become organisational conditions. Communication, cost exchange and expectations are stabilised through roles, workloads, procedures, budgets and policies. Organisational care is therefore relational care made reliable across time. It does not replace personal responsibility. It prevents the wellbeing of people and relationships from depending entirely upon exceptional personal goodwill. It affects the distribution of cost and return through the relationship among workload, resources, recognition, authority, learning and recovery. Learning becomes organisational when an insight changes a role, resource, procedure, policy or decision—not only the attitude of one person. The power question is who can translate recognition into organisational change and who must continue depending upon another person's goodwill when the conditions remain unchanged.

Supportive care becomes especially visible when illness, loss, anxiety, conflict, overload or another difficulty reduces a person's capacity to participate. Its central question is not simply whether help is given, but what the help makes possible. Support becomes uncaring when it abandons a person with a burden they cannot carry—or when it automatically replaces what they could meaningfully perceive, decide or learn to carry. A caring response may require protection, practical help, recovery, changed conditions, a boundary or continuing support. In festival practice, this may include psychological support for teams and artists, physical care for performers, first aid and harm-reduction services at events, and places where people can rest and recover. Such support is most reliable when it is planned and resourced before it is needed, rather than improvised by whoever happens to be present. Its purpose is not to eliminate interdependence but to preserve agency within it, in relation to the person's actual needs, limits and capacities. Support redistributes cost by asking who should carry the immediate burden, what return the support should make possible and whether it protects or replaces the recipient's capacity. The power question is who decides what help is needed and whether the person receiving support can understand, influence, accept or refuse its form.

Spatial care makes these existential and relational conditions material. Many material conditions are involved: timing, sound, light, access, crowding, seating, food, transport, rest, sanitation, safety and sensory intensity. Together they affect who can enter, remain, perceive, contribute and recover. Space and schedule therefore communicate whose body and participation were anticipated—and whose were not. This does not introduce comfort as a new definition of care. Care may support meaningful challenge, unfamiliarity and effort while preventing avoidable distress and depletion. The question is

whether people possess the access, information, safety, support and recovery conditions that allow a demanding experience or cost to remain meaningful and possible. Spatial decisions distribute cost by making entry, orientation, participation, exposure and recovery easier for some bodies and more difficult for others. The power question is who defines the body, capacity and sensory experience treated as normal, whose difficulty becomes visible and who possesses the authority and resources to alter the material conditions.

Cultural care concerns what repeated festival practices help a shared world learn to notice, value, sustain and transform. Festivals do not contribute to culture only through the works and ideas they present. Their relationships, decisions, rituals, working practices and forms of participation also cultivate ways of seeing and living together. Contribution may deepen value and belonging; collective memory may connect changing participants across editions; and community may coordinate distinct contributions without demanding sameness. Ecological responsibility also enters this domain because culture shapes whether places, resources and non-human life become visible within the shared field of value, relationship and responsibility.

Cultural care affects how attention, recognition, authorship, memory and opportunities to contribute are distributed. It therefore influences whose experience enters the shared world, whose contribution becomes visible and what returns to the people and places whose knowledge sustains the festival. The power question is who selects what becomes perceptible, whose interpretation receives legitimacy, what is remembered or excluded and who can influence the culture the festival helps produce. The sustainability chapter will develop the consequences of this relationship across repetition and time.

A single situation may activate all five domains. Imagine a festival inviting an artist to create a site-specific work with local participants. Relational care concerns how the artist, participants and team perceive, communicate with and value one another. Organisational care concerns the invitation, fee, schedule, workload, resources, authority and distribution of responsibility. Supportive care concerns what support is in place before it is needed, and how the process responds if somebody struggles or conditions change. Spatial care concerns access, safety, sensory conditions and opportunities for rest and recovery. Cultural care concerns how local knowledge, identities, memories, ecological relationships and artistic possibilities enter what is created.

The purpose of the framework is not to require five separate procedures for every decision. It is to prevent success in one domain from concealing harm in another. A project may be participatory but physically inaccessible. It may be ecologically responsible while depending upon invisible unpaid labour. It may be culturally powerful while exhausting its team, or interpersonally warm while leaving organisational injustice unchanged. A practice cannot be called caring solely because it performs well in one domain.

Conflict and repair also move across the domains; they are not separate domains of care. Conflict may arise within a relationship, through an unjust workload, when support replaces agency, when a space excludes particular bodies, when cultural identities are devalued or when ecological costs are transferred elsewhere. Its presence does not by itself prove that care has failed. Conflict can make needs, values, limits and power relations perceptible when they were previously ignored or concealed.

Repair does not necessarily restore what existed before. It may require acknowledgement, changed behaviour or restitution. It may also require redistributed responsibility or altered authority, a redesigned space, a new policy or ecological restoration, and in some cases a stronger boundary or separation. An interpersonal apology cannot replace a change in the organisational or material conditions that repeatedly produce harm. Care asks what must be protected, repaired or transformed so that the same pattern does not simply continue.

No individual can perceive or carry every domain alone. Different people encounter different parts of the situation and possess different knowledge, capacities, responsibilities and forms of authority. Care therefore requires coordination. Information must travel. Different perceptions must be allowed to influence judgement. Responsibility must be connected to sufficient authority and resources. Those who carry consequences must have meaningful ways to affect the conditions producing them. At this point, the domains lead beyond the question of good intention towards questions of power.

**A FRAMEWORK FOR CARING JUDGEMENT**

**What and who is present? → What matters? → What is perceived and what may be distorted? → Who has agency and authority? → Who carries the cost and consequences? → What response protects dignity, develops capacity and serves the best possible option for all parties?**

**Pause for Reflection**

Recall a festival activity you considered successful. What had shaped that judgement? Looking across the five domains of care, whose experience might add to or challenge your view? What would you need to find out before deciding what, if anything, to change?

## 8.3 From the Domains of Care to Power

The domains make the field of care visible, but they also reveal that care cannot be separated from power. Who decides what another person needs? Who defines an acceptable workload? Who controls information and resources? Who can alter a schedule, reopen a decision or redesign a space? Whose cultural knowledge is treated as authoritative? Who can refuse a cost? Who has responsibility for repair, and do they possess the authority required to change the conditions that produced the harm?

These questions do not introduce an unrelated subject. Power has been operating throughout every domain. Care requires power because recognising a need or injustice is not enough to change its conditions. Power requires care because the capacity to shape conditions can otherwise reduce people, communities and living systems to instruments of another purpose.

The next chapter therefore examines power not as the opposite of care, but as the capacity through which care can become effective—or through which its language can be imitated while agency, justice and responsibility are suppressed.

CHAPTER 8 — CARE LANDING

**Relational, organisational, supportive, spatial and cultural care are not separate kinds of care but fields in which the same orientation becomes visible. In each domain, care raises questions about who has the power to act, who can influence decisions and who has access to support and protection.**

# CHAPTER 9

## Power Is Already in the Relationship

*Authority, agency and the responsibility to shape conditions*

Chapter 8 showed that every domain of care eventually raises questions of power. Power should not be understood only in its narrow and negative sense as domination over other people. Power can be used to protect or to exploit, to enable or to restrict, to develop capacity or to create dependency. It can make participation possible, alter an unjust condition and support repair; it can also silence, exclude and transfer consequences to those with less influence. Power is not inherently caring or uncaring. Its meaning becomes visible through how it is exercised, what it makes possible and whose agency and wellbeing it affects.

**POWER**

**Power is the capacity to influence what becomes possible, what is decided and who carries the consequences.**

Power exists in every relationship. It is present wherever one party can affect the conditions under which another person perceives, decides, contributes, receives, carries cost or anticipates the future. Formal authority is one source of power, but it is not the only one. Information, knowledge, money, reputation, access, emotional influence, organisational memory, specialist capacity and the ability to refuse or leave can all affect what becomes possible within a relationship.

Power therefore becomes visible through practical questions:

- Who can initiate contact or define the issue?
- Whose interpretation is treated as credible?
- Who possesses information, resources or recognised knowledge?
- Who can decide?
- Who can influence which possibilities are considered?
- Who can refuse a request or question a decision safely?
- Who can change the conditions of participation?
- Who carries the cost, risk and consequences?
- Who can leave the relationship—and for whom would leaving carry a disproportionate cost?

These questions move power beyond position and title. A person may occupy a formally senior role while remaining dependent on a funder, public authority, board or essential partner. Someone lower in the formal hierarchy may hold knowledge, relationships or organisational memory without which the

festival cannot continue. Power is therefore relational and situation-specific. It concerns the actual capacity of a party to affect what happens within a particular relationship and set of conditions.

## 9.1. How Power Shapes the Elements of Relationship

Earlier, this Reader described a continuing relationship through three interacting elements:

RELATIONSHIP

**Relationship = Communication + Cost Exchange + Expectations Across Time**

Power should not be added to these as a fourth form of exchange. It shapes the conditions under which all three operate.

In communication, power affects who can speak, whose messages receive attention, whose interpretation is accepted and who is expected to adapt their mental map. A person who controls information can also shape what another party is able to know and expect. In cost exchange, power affects who can define, negotiate, refuse or transfer a cost, whose contribution remains invisible and who receives the return. A person who controls resources can influence which costs another party must accept. In expectations, power affects whose assumptions become obligations, whose future is made more uncertain and who can change an agreement without carrying equivalent consequences.

A person whose refusal carries little consequence possesses a different degree of power from someone whose disagreement may threaten their income, reputation, access or belonging. Power must therefore be read through the actual relationships in which communication, cost exchange and expectations take place—not only through the positions people formally occupy.

## 9.2 Power and Official Authority Are Not the Same

POWER AND AUTHORITY

**Power ≠ Official Authority**

The relevant question is not simply who officially has authority, but who can shape the situation, whose agency is constrained and who will carry what follows. Organisational charts identify formally assigned responsibilities and decision rights; they do not reveal every source of knowledge, dependency, influence or vulnerability operating within the relationship.

**Pause for Reflection**

Recall a decision in your festival that was strongly influenced by someone who had no formal authority to make it. What gave them that influence, and how did they use it to shape the decision? Who benefited, and who carried the costs or responsibilities that followed?

## 9.3 Care and Power Need One Another

Care and power may initially appear to belong to opposite fields. Care is often associated with attention, protection and relationship, while power is associated with authority, control and decision. Yet care cannot become effective without some capacity to influence conditions, and power cannot serve wellbeing without a caring orientation towards the people and living systems affected by its use.

Care is not simply being kind, avoiding discomfort or keeping everyone satisfied. Because it takes responsibility for wellbeing, agency and shared conditions, it may require the use of power and authority: setting a boundary, refusing a harmful demand, protecting a person, allocating responsibility or making a decision that cannot be postponed.

Recognising exhaustion does not change an unrealistic schedule. Perceiving exclusion does not by itself redesign an inaccessible space. Understanding that a responsibility is unjust does not redistribute the workload, budget or authority required to carry it. Protecting a person from bullying requires more than empathy; it requires the capacity to interrupt harmful behaviour, create a safe reporting route and prevent retaliation. Care needs power because attention and good intention alone cannot alter the conditions producing harm.

Power without care moves in the opposite direction. It can pursue an objective while treating people, relationships, communities and living systems as instruments. It can transfer costs to those with less influence, define another person's needs without listening, separate decisions from their consequences and preserve dependency because dependency makes control easier.

Care and power are therefore not alternatives. They need one another. Care gives power a relational and ethical direction; power gives care the capacity to become effective in the world.

CARE AND POWER

**Care without power may remain sentiment or good intention · Power without care can become domination, extraction or violence.**

The question is not whether care should replace power. The question is how power can be exercised, enabled and developed through care.

**Pause for Reflection**
Recall a time when someone in your festival told you they could no longer manage their workload. Looking back, what could you influence, and what gave you that influence? What lay beyond your power in that situation, and why? How did you respond within those possibilities and limits, and what, if anything, changed?

## 9.4 The Power Lens Revisits Familiar Principles

The reader may reasonably ask whether this chapter introduces another set of principles that must be remembered and applied in addition to everything already discussed. The power lens does not introduce another definition of care. It revisits the relational and organisational principles already developed by asking what care requires when conditions must be influenced, protected or changed. Chapter 5 treated the relationship between two parties as the smallest relational unit through which festival ecosystems, organisations, communities and wider social life are continually formed and transformed. Listening before acting, remaining open to another mental map, making costs visible, providing a just return, communicating expectations responsibly, respecting boundaries, protecting refusal, connecting responsibility with the capacity to respond and avoiding the replacement of another person's agency were already practices that shaped power, even when power was not yet placed at the centre of attention. This chapter revisits those familiar relational principles in order to make their consequences for influence, authority, dependency and decision-making visible.

The change of scale nevertheless matters. Power does not operate only through the attitude of one person towards another. When relational patterns are repeated, they become roles, workloads, budgets, contracts, policies, procedures, hierarchies and decision routes. Personal care provides the relational foundation; organisational care makes that foundation more reliable across time and less dependent upon the goodwill of particular individuals. The same relational principles also shape how people and institutions participate in the wider social and living systems upon which cultural practice depends.

The reader therefore does not need to apply every idea at once. The practical starting point remains the relationship in front of us:

- What power do I possess in this situation?
- How am I using it?
- What can the other party already perceive, judge or contribute?
- What prevents them from exercising that capacity?
- Does my response strengthen their agency or replace it?

- What relational pattern may become an organisational condition if it continues?

The same care principles remain. This chapter changes the lens through which their consequences are examined.

A FAMILIAR FOUNDATION

**This chapter does not add a new set of care principles · It makes the power consequences of the existing relational principles visible.**

Seen through this lens, care shapes power through three connected responsibilities. A person must consider how they use the power they already possess. They must consider whether other people can exercise the knowledge, judgement and influence they already possess. They must also consider whether the relationship and organisation support the development of greater capacity and agency over time.

These responsibilities lead towards a just and meaningful distribution of power rather than an automatic or equal distribution of authority.

THE POWER–EMPOWERMENT MOVEMENT

**Power → The Caring Use of Power → Enabling Power → Empowerment → Just and Meaningful Power Distribution.**

## 9.5 How Care Shapes the Use of Power

The caring use of power concerns what a person does now with the capacity they possess. Power can be used to protect a boundary, alter an unjust condition, share information, provide resources, stop harmful behaviour, reopen a decision or support repair. It can also be used to preserve uncertainty, transfer costs, silence disagreement or make other people serve a purpose they did not meaningfully choose.

Caring power cannot be reduced to a generally “soft” style of leadership. Its appropriate form depends upon the person, the situation, the urgency, the risks involved and the capacities and responsibilities of those affected. Care may require listening and opening a decision; in another situation, it may require decisive intervention. The relevant question is whether the use of power is necessary, proportionate and directed towards protecting, developing or repairing wellbeing, agency and shared conditions.

Decision-making makes this distinction concrete. Power includes the capacity to choose, but also the capacity to define which possibilities can be considered, whose knowledge enters the discussion, when deliberation ends and whether a decision can be reopened. A participatory process may still concentrate

power if people can speak but cannot alter the available options or the criteria by which they are judged.

Dependency makes power relational. A festival may depend on an artist's participation while the artist depends on the festival for income and visibility. A municipality may depend on local goodwill while residents depend on public authorities for access or permission. Mutual dependence does not make a relationship balanced. The relevant question is how costly refusal, disagreement or exit would be for each party.

Care changes the exercise of power; it does not pretend that power can disappear. Leaders retain responsibilities that cannot always be distributed. Care asks whether relevant knowledge has been heard, whether reasons are explained, whether consequences are considered and whether those carrying the effects have meaningful routes to influence, question, review or seek redress.

CARING USE OF POWER

**Caring power uses the capacity to shape conditions without reducing other people to instruments.**

**Pause for Reflection**

Recall a decision you made in your festival despite objections from some of those affected. What were you trying to protect or make possible? How did their concerns influence your decision or the way you carried it out?

How did the decision affect their workload and their ability to make choices or raise concerns? In light of those effects, what would you keep or change in how you used your authority?

## 9.6 Enabling People to Exercise the Power They Already Possess

People often possess knowledge, experience, judgement, relationships or a legitimate stake that could influence a situation, yet lack the conditions required to exercise that power. A team member may perceive a risk but lack access to the meeting where it is discussed. A freelancer may possess relevant knowledge but fear that disagreement will threaten future work. A community participant may be invited to speak after the decisive choices have already been closed.

Enabling power does not begin by giving a powerless person something they entirely lack. It begins by identifying the barriers that prevent an existing capacity from operating. Information, understandable communication, time, safe routes for disagreement, protection against retaliation, genuine alternatives, access to decision-making and clarity about what remains open to influence can turn potential agency into effective participation.

The relationship between responsibility and authority is central. Responsibility without sufficient authority exposes people to expectations they cannot meet. Authority without accountability allows decisions to become detached from their effects. Formal permission is also insufficient when the person lacks information, time, resources or institutional support.

For each significant decision, care therefore asks who holds responsibility for the decision, whose knowledge is necessary, what remains genuinely open to change, who will implement the decision and who will carry its consequences. It also asks whether those people possess the authority and resources required to respond, and under what conditions the decision can be reviewed. The aim is not universal consensus. It is to ensure that responsibility, voice and influence are not offered symbolically while the actual conditions of power remain unchanged.

ENABLING POWER

**Enabling power means creating the conditions in which people can exercise the knowledge, judgement, agency and influence they already possess.**

**Pause for Reflection**

Recall a decision in your festival in which you had relevant knowledge or experience but little opportunity to contribute. What stood in your way? What would have enabled your knowledge to inform the decision, and who could have helped create those conditions?

## 9.7 Empowerment Develops Across Time

Empowerment adds development and time. A person becomes more powerful in a particular field as they acquire knowledge, practise judgement, carry meaningful responsibility, build relationships, gain access to resources and see the consequences of their decisions. Empowerment is therefore not simply the transfer of authority from one person to another. It is the development of the capacities through which greater agency and influence can be exercised responsibly.

The laws of cost help explain this development. Paying cost develops capacity in the field in which the cost is carried. Someone who repeatedly plans, negotiates, raises funds, resolves conflicts or maintains stakeholder relationships becomes more capable in those areas. If another person continually carries these costs for them, the opportunity to develop may be reduced even when the intention is supportive.

Cost also gives this development a human and emotional dimension. As discussed in Chapter 5, people tend to value the persons, relationships and shared purposes for which they freely carry meaningful costs. When two parties contribute to one another and to something they are creating together, a just

and recognisable exchange of cost can deepen mutual value, attachment and responsibility. Care then becomes less likely to be experienced merely as an assigned duty or organisational requirement. It can grow from the value developed through participation, contribution and shared experience. Empowerment therefore does more than distribute tasks or develop competence: it enables people to become active contributors who value, care for and assume responsibility for what they help to sustain.

Capacity can create a paradoxical power relation. The person who repeatedly solves problems may gain informal influence, while the same competence exposes them to unlimited demands. Their ability is treated as evidence that they need no care, and the organisation becomes dependent on the function they provide. Colleagues whose costs are continually carried may remain underdeveloped in those specific capacities while retaining comfort or formal status. Care therefore asks not only who appears weak, but whose strength is being extracted and whose development is being prevented.

A caring leader does not empower others merely by stepping back or distributing tasks. They share relevant information, allow manageable costs, provide support and feedback, connect responsibility with real influence and permit people to learn from consequences. This may introduce short-term uncertainty, but it reduces long-term dependency on a single controller and develops collective capacity.

EMPOWERMENT

**Empowerment is the development of capacity, agency, legitimacy, resources and influence through which a person can shape conditions more meaningfully over time.**

**Pause for Reflection**

Think of a responsibility in your festival that you gradually learned to handle. What did you have to learn or practise yourself, and what support helped you? As your capacity grew, how did your workload and your say in decisions change?

## 9.8 Power Can Empower or Disempower

Actions may be presented as care while producing very different effects. The distinction does not depend only on good intention. It depends on whether the use of power protects agency and develops capacity, or replaces judgement and increases dependency.

| Relational field | Empowering use of power | Disempowering use of power presented as care |
|---|---|---|
| Autonomy and voice | Listens before acting; makes room for the person's perception, judgement and refusal. | Assumes "I know what is good for you"; interrupts, silences or replaces the person's perspective. |

| Relational field | Empowering use of power | Disempowering use of power presented as care |
|---|---|---|
| Capacity and responsibility | Provides support while allowing meaningful, manageable costs through which capacity can develop. | Overprotects, takes over repeatedly or assigns responsibility without the authority and resources required to carry it. |
| Safety and agency | Creates protection and clarity so that the person can participate and exercise choice. | Uses safety as a reason for unnecessary control, passivity or permanent restriction. |
| Needs and boundaries | Responds to the other person's actual situation and remains open to correction. | Shapes support around the powerful party's comfort, ego, emotional needs or preferred solution. |
| Information and decisions | Shares relevant information, explains reasons and clarifies what can be influenced. | Withholds information, narrows perceived alternatives or invites participation after decisions are effectively closed. |
| Development across time | Builds knowledge, legitimacy, resources and influence so that dependency can decrease. | Preserves a relationship in which the receiver remains dependent and the giver remains necessary. |

Paternalism belongs on the disempowering side of this distinction. It should not be treated as a form of the care defined in this Reader. It uses the language or intention of care while replacing perception with assumption, agency with obedience and relationship with unilateral control. Protective intervention may sometimes be necessary because of immediate danger, legal duty or seriously reduced decision-making capacity, but caring intervention remains proportionate, explainable and oriented towards preserving or restoring agency wherever possible.

CARE AND PATERNALISM

**Paternalism decides for the other while claiming to care for them · Care creates conditions in which the other can perceive, judge, contribute and develop agency.**

**Pause for Reflection**

Recall a time in your festival work when someone supported you in carrying a responsibility that stretched your abilities. What did their support enable you to do and learn through your own effort?

Now recall a time when someone kept taking over a responsibility to spare you difficulty, even though you wanted to try. What could you realistically have handled at the time, and what support did you need? How did their approach affect your ability and opportunity to carry similar responsibilities later?

## 9.9 A Just Distribution of Power Is Not an Equal Distribution of Authority

The result of caring power is not that everyone receives identical authority. Equal distribution would ignore differences in knowledge, responsibility, legal accountability, capacity and the extent to which people will carry a decision's consequences. Care seeks a just and meaningful distribution of power.

Such a distribution connects influence to relevant knowledge, responsibility, capacity and accountability, and to the extent to which people are affected. At times, care requires a leader to use authority decisively to protect people or uphold a necessary boundary. At other times, it requires opening a decision, recognising knowledge held lower in the hierarchy or giving another person the opportunity and support through which greater responsibility can be assumed.

Care does not abolish hierarchy. Some festival roles carry responsibilities that cannot be distributed universally. Yet care makes hierarchy more permeable, explainable and accountable. As power is shared, hierarchy becomes more horizontal without losing the clarity of roles and final responsibilities. Knowledge and initiative can move upwards; people affected by decisions can influence them; and developing capacity can lead to greater responsibility and authority. Status does not permanently determine whose knowledge, agency or development matters.

JUST DISTRIBUTION OF POWER

**A just and meaningful distribution of power connects influence on relevant knowledge, responsibility, capacity and accountability, and to the extent to which people are affected.**

The movement from caring power to just distribution becomes especially visible when the power lens is applied to areas in which formal structures conceal who actually sustains the organisation, who can negotiate conflict safely and whether authority remains open to question and correction.

## 9.10 Invisible Labour Can Carry Unrecognised Power

Invisible labour often occupies the gap between formal organisation and actual continuity. Someone calms tensions, anticipates needs, welcomes newcomers, remembers agreements, translates between perspectives or compensates for unclear leadership. Because this work is relational, it may be described as personality rather than labour. The organisation depends on the function while the person carrying it may lack recognition, authority, resources or an appropriate return.

Care does not require every spontaneous human gesture to become a calculated transaction. It does require repeated and necessary labour to become perceptible. A care–power analysis asks who is expected to care, who can decline, whose contribution is recognised, whether recognition brings

appropriate return and influence, and whether care flows only downwards or outwards while the people sustaining the organisation receive little care in return.

INVISIBLE POWER

**Care makes the labour of continuity, attention and repair visible without reducing every human gesture to a transaction.**

## 9.11 Unequal Power Changes the Conditions of Conflict

Conflict can occur between parties with different wishes, expectations and mental maps. Power affects whether that conflict can be negotiated safely. Two people may formally possess the same right to disagree while facing very different risks to income, reputation, access or belonging. Every party remains responsible for their conduct, but responsibility for the relational conditions is greater where the capacity to shape those conditions is greater.

Bullying, mobbing, harassment, discrimination and abuse should not be treated as symmetrical conflicts requiring both sides simply to negotiate better. Formal reporting routes, documentation, protection against retaliation and clear authority to intervene are necessary. Care also requires witnesses to perceive what is happening, refuse its normalisation, support the affected person and help the issue reach someone with sufficient power to act.

POWER AND PROTECTION

**The greater the power to shape conditions, the greater the responsibility to prevent harm, enable voice and support repair.**

## 9.12 Care Is Incompatible with Unaccountable Authoritarian Power

Authoritarian power treats one perspective as sufficient and reduces disagreement to disloyalty. It expects compliance without meaningful explanation and separates decision-making power from responsibility for consequences. It may distribute roles and costs from above while limiting the agency through which people could perceive, question, refuse or contribute differently.

Care operates through an incompatible orientation. It recognises that no mental map contains the whole reality and treats people as irreducible human beings rather than instruments. It makes cost and consequence visible and connects responsibility with authority and support. It also regards disagreement as information that may reveal what the existing structure has failed to perceive.

Care does not guarantee that authoritarian behaviour will never arise again. Its principles create a counter-culture and an organisational capacity that prevent such behaviour from becoming legitimate, invisible and impossible to correct.

Caring authority responds to a particular person and situation and remains proportionate, explainable, accountable and open to review. Authoritarianism turns authority into a generalised and enduring mode of relationship in which obedience replaces agency and power protects itself from question and correction.

Care therefore limits authoritarianism without eliminating leadership or decisive action. A leader may still make an unpopular decision, a festival may establish non-negotiable boundaries and urgency may sometimes require action before broad participation is possible. In an immediate safety emergency, for example, a festival director may need to stop deliberation and make a binding decision. Refusing to decide could itself be a failure of responsibility. Using the possibility of emergencies to centralise information, judgement and initiative across every process, however, turns a situational necessity into an authoritarian mode of organisation. What care prevents is necessary authority becoming unquestionable, unaccountable and self-justifying.

CARE AND AUTHORITARIANISM

**Where care is integrated into relationships, decisions and organisational conditions, authoritarian power cannot remain unquestioned, unaccountable or detached from its consequences.**

**Pause for Reflection**

Recall a decision in your festival, perhaps one of your own, that was made without hearing those it affected and could not be questioned, because it was justified as urgent or too important. Was that necessary at the time? Has the same way of deciding continued since?

## 9.13 From Empowerment to Participation

Caring power is not limited to making better decisions on behalf of others. It creates conditions in which distinct people can exercise their own perception, judgement, contribution and responsibility. Empowerment makes participation meaningful because people enter the shared situation not only as recipients of decisions, but as agents capable of affecting what becomes possible.

Meaningful participation does not require everyone to decide everything. The appropriate form and degree of participation depend upon who possesses relevant knowledge, who will carry the consequences, whose legitimate interests are affected, what each person can contribute and where

final responsibility lies. Care asks whether voice and influence are proportionate to these realities, and whether authority remains accountable for the decisions it cannot delegate.

The next chapter therefore asks what happens when artists, employees, volunteers, audiences, partners, public authorities and communities are approached not merely as recipients, resources or target groups. It considers them as participants with knowledge, agency and responsibilities, who have legitimate stakes in the shared world a festival helps create.

CHAPTER 9 — CARE LANDING

**Care ≠ Powerlessness · Caring power uses power responsibly, enables others to exercise their existing power and supports empowerment towards a just and meaningful distribution of influence, responsibility and authority.**

# CHAPTER 10

# Care, Participation and Democracy

*How shared power becomes a relational and cultural practice*

Chapter 9 ended by asking what happens when the people and groups a festival works with are approached as participants with knowledge, agency and legitimate stakes. This chapter takes that question to the scale of democratic life.

## 10.1 Democracy Is More Than a Procedure

Democracy cannot be sustained by elections, formal rights and administrative procedures alone. These structures are indispensable, but they acquire democratic meaning only through the relationships they make possible. People may possess the formal right to vote, speak or participate while experiencing little meaningful influence over the conditions shaping their lives. They may be addressed as electoral categories, consumers, beneficiaries, audiences or problems to be managed without feeling recognised as persons whose experience, knowledge and contribution matter.

The relational substance of democracy concerns whether people can perceive what is happening, express a distinct judgement, contribute to shared decisions, question authority safely and participate in shaping the conditions whose consequences they will carry. It also concerns whether those who exercise institutional power remain connected to the people, places and living systems affected by their decisions.

DEMOCRATIC PROCEDURE AND RELATIONSHIP

**Democratic procedures create formal rights · Democratic relationships allow people to exercise agency, influence shared conditions and hold power accountable to its consequences.**

A political system may retain democratic procedures while allowing power to become concentrated, inaccessible and detached from consequence. When people can speak but cannot alter the possibilities under consideration, participation becomes symbolic. When decisions are made far from those who carry their costs, representation loses relational substance. When communication is used primarily to persuade, manage expectations or conceal consequences, citizens are treated as objects of governance rather than participants in a shared world.

Care brings a different question into democracy: not only whether power was acquired through legitimate procedures, but how power is exercised, whose reality it perceives, whose agency it develops and what conditions it creates for future participation.

## 10.2 From Participation in Name to Participation in Practice

The preceding chapter moved from empowerment to participation. The practical question is what must change for participation to carry real agency and influence rather than remain a name given to attendance, consultation or contribution.

Stakeholder mapping is often introduced as a managerial tool: identify those with high influence or high interest and choose how to engage them. This can support planning, but it may also position people as external variables to be managed. A relational ecosystem approach begins elsewhere. It asks what people and groups contribute, how they are connected, what consequences they carry and what agency they have in shaping the festival.

Collaboration has a particular significance in cultural work. It cannot be understood only as an exchange between organisations seeking to maximise separate gains. At its strongest, collaboration allows different actors to contribute distinct capacities to a purpose that none could realise alone. Artists, residents, public authorities, funders and local organisations may enter the festival ecosystem through different relationships, missions and forms of knowledge.

Collaboration can extend resources, participation and public relevance, but more collaboration is not automatically better collaboration. Partnerships can multiply meetings while obscuring responsibility. A sponsor may expand reach while narrowing artistic freedom. A local organisation may lend legitimacy without gaining meaningful influence. Collaboration must therefore be judged by its fitness for purpose and by the quality, clarity and fairness of the relationships it creates.

Participation is not a single condition. Attendance allows presence. Interpretation allows people to make meaning. Expression allows them to articulate a response. Contribution allows them to add knowledge, labour or material. Co-production involves making something together. Co-decision and co-governance involve formal influence over choices and conditions. These forms may all be legitimate, but they should not be confused.

| Form | What becomes possible | Care and power question |
|---|---|---|
| Attendance | Being present or gaining access | Who can enter, remain and participate safely? |
| Interpretation | Making and sharing meaning | Whose interpretation is treated as legitimate? |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Expression | Articulating experience or response | Is expression heard, and can it affect what follows? |
| Contribution | Adding knowledge, labour or resources | Is contribution recognised and fairly conditioned? |
| Co-production | Making an activity or work together | Who defines the frame, resources and outcome? |
| Co-decision | Influencing a defined decision | What is genuinely open to change? |
| Co-governance | Sharing continuing authority | How are accountability and unequal capacity addressed? |

Co-production is not automatically co-decision. People may build, perform or host without influencing schedules, budgets or credit. Expression is not the same as being perceived. Consultation is not influence when the decision is already closed. Precise language prevents participation from becoming a flattering description of unequal arrangements.

Participation must not become a polite name for free labour. Contribution can be meaningful and voluntary, but its conditions matter. Who can afford to participate without payment? What opportunity costs are carried? Does refusal threaten belonging or future access? Is the invitation clear about what will and will not be influenced? Recognition, reciprocity and resources are part of care.

Community engagement creates connection when people do something meaningful together—not merely when an organisation delivers information or collects opinions. Agency transforms effort into contribution; contribution makes mutual perception possible; and recognised contribution can deepen value, belonging and responsibility. What was previously an abstract “target group” becomes a field of particular people, capacities, memories and relationships.

This also produces a participation–cost paradox. With no real contribution, connection may remain enjoyable but fragile. With agentic, proportionate and recognised contribution, capacities and belonging can develop. With excessive cost, weak choice, insufficient authority or absent recognition, participation becomes extraction. Contribution creates a legitimate stake, but not absolute ownership: established contributors must be able to honour past investment while making room for newcomers, new agency and necessary change.

**PARTICIPATION AND COST**

**No Real Contribution → Fragile Connection · Agentic and Recognised Contribution → Value, Belonging and Capacity · Extracted or Excessive Contribution → Alienation, Dependency or Depletion.**

A recurring biennial festival offers a useful practice example. Artistic processes connect children, residents, local craftspeople, artists and volunteers through recognition, interpretation, expression and

co-production. Local knowledge can alter what becomes artistically possible. At the same time, limited resources and voluntary energy create a tension. Openness can invite agency, but insufficient structure can also transfer uncertainty and labour to participants.

This is the planning–improvisation paradox introduced in Chapter 3. Planning without openness can reduce participation to implementing choices made elsewhere. Improvisation without adequate preparation can transfer risk to those with the least authority. Care creates enough structure for people to participate with clarity and dignity, while preserving enough openness for relationships, art and place to influence the result.

Professionalisation contains a related tension. It can create fair contracts, continuity, safety and institutional memory. It can also close spaces previously shaped by community knowledge if expertise becomes a claim to exclusive authority. The question is not whether to professionalise, but which conditions require reliability and which processes should remain permeable to contribution and change.

A meaning-oriented stakeholder map therefore records more than interest and influence. It asks: What shared purpose connects us? What does each party contribute? What do they need in order to participate? What consequences do they carry? What authority do they possess? Where is there dependency? What must be communicated, negotiated or repaired? Who is absent from the map because the organisation does not yet recognise their stake?

PARTICIPATION

**Participation ≠ Presence · Participation ≠ Free Labour · Meaningful participation requires a real part, recognition, appropriate influence and non-depleting conditions.**

**Pause for Reflection**

Choose one activity your festival describes as participatory. What could participants actually influence in it? Does the way your festival describes it match that? Think of one person who took part: what did it cost them to do so, and what did they receive?

## 10.3 When Authoritarian Power Becomes Meaningful

The following argument is the interpretive position developed by this Reader. It brings Frankl's account of meaning into dialogue with the relational understanding of care and power developed in the preceding chapters. It should not be read as a single-cause explanation of authoritarianism, but as one possible account of the relational conditions in which authoritarian power becomes meaningful and attractive.

Authoritarianism does not rise only because authoritarian leaders impose themselves upon passive societies. It may also gain support where formally democratic institutions have failed to recognise significant parts of society as people whose experience, knowledge and contribution matter. A population may possess electoral rights while large groups experience themselves as unseen, underestimated or excluded from meaningful influence. Previous governments and their supporters may describe themselves as democratic while treating these groups as ignorant, backward, irrational or politically inconvenient.

Such experiences are not merely intellectual disagreements. Repeated dismissal can create humiliation, resentment and a sense of powerlessness. People may feel that others have been permitted to define reality, distribute resources, establish cultural legitimacy and decide whose lives deserve attention. Democratic language then begins to sound disconnected from lived experience.

Under these conditions, the force exercised by a leader who appears to come from the same social world may be experienced as a recovery of collective agency. The leader's aggression can appear not as domination but as strength exercised on behalf of those who previously felt powerless. People perceived as superior, dismissive or protected from consequence become the targets against whom power is displayed. What looks from outside like support for authoritarian behaviour may be experienced from within as recognition, restitution or justice.

The leader's authority can then become psychologically incorporated into the supporter's sense of power:

**IDENTIFICATION WITH POWER**

**The leader is strong · The leader is one of us · Therefore we are no longer powerless.**

This may help explain why behaviour that would otherwise be condemned can be celebrated when performed by a leader identified with one's own group. Humiliation inflicted upon an opponent may be experienced as symbolic repayment for earlier humiliation. Silencing the other side may be interpreted as finally making one's own side heard. The exercise of unequal power may be mistaken for the restoration of justice.

Yet reversing the direction of domination does not create justice. It reproduces the same relational structure with different people occupying the powerful and powerless positions.

Frankl's theory helps illuminate both the attraction of authoritarianism and the possibility of responding differently. Human beings are oriented towards meaning, but the search for meaning does not guarantee that they will accurately recognise the most meaningful possibility or choose it when it appears. Revenge, obedience, collective victory, belonging or the humiliation of an opponent may be mistaken for meaning when they provide emotional relief, certainty or a recovered sense of power.

A meaningful choice requires judgement. It asks what is the best possibility available at that moment for all the parties involved, what contribution specifically requires this person's distinct capacities and what situation most urgently calls for a response. This judgement cannot be assigned by a leader, group, institution or therapist. It must be made by the person whose responsibility is being called upon.

A logotherapeutic approach therefore does not prescribe the correct political or moral answer. It helps a person widen perception sufficiently to recognise the situation's meaning potentials: the people affected, the costs that will follow, the values at stake, the freedom that remains and the responsibility that belongs specifically to them.

A person who has suffered injustice faces more than two possibilities. The alternatives are not limited to remaining powerless or becoming powerful enough to reproduce the same injustice. A third possibility can become visible:

**A THIRD POSSIBILITY**

**Neither submission nor reproduction of domination · Power can be developed and exercised in order to create more just conditions.**

Experiences of injustice may lead people towards identification with dominating power. They may also lead towards solidarity, democratic organisation and a determination that others should not suffer the same conditions. The decisive question is which possibility becomes perceptible, credible and possible to realise.

Care cannot guarantee that people will choose the meaningful possibility, and it must not make that choice on their behalf. It can help create the relational and organisational conditions in which alternatives to submission and domination can be perceived, considered and brought into reality. Authoritarianism narrows the field of meaning towards obedience, collective victory and the defeat of an enemy. Care reopens it towards responsibility, distinct contribution, justice and the best possibility available for all those involved.

This Reader therefore proposes that authoritarianisation may grow within a relational and existential vacuum produced when democratic systems fail to practise care.

This does not mean that a lack of care is the sole cause of authoritarianism. Economic insecurity, perceived threat, status conflict, political organisation, propaganda, polarised media systems, institutional weakness and many other forces also matter. Nor does this account remove responsibility from citizens or leaders who choose authoritarian practices. The claim is more limited but still substantial: when democratic institutions fail to recognise people, listen to their experience, enable meaningful participation and respond to injustice, authoritarian power can present itself as the restoration of dignity and agency.

The same critique applies internationally. Political and economic systems may describe themselves as democratic while concealing colonial, extractive, socially unjust or ecologically destructive practices. Human rights may be defended selectively. Economic interests may be given priority over people and living systems. The social and ecological costs of production and consumption may be transferred to communities that possess little influence over the decisions creating those costs.

These are failures of care because they separate power from perception, decision from consequence, cost from return and authority from accountability. Democratic procedures alone cannot correct this separation if citizens are treated primarily as audiences to be persuaded and managed. A caring democracy must make consequences visible, take different realities seriously and provide meaningful routes through which people can influence the conditions they are expected to inhabit and sustain.

**Pause for Reflection**

Recall a time when your experience or knowledge was dismissed by people with more power. What response did you feel drawn to? Looking back, what other response might have been possible?

Now recall a moment when a view held by people around your festival, such as residents, audiences or colleagues, was dismissed as uninformed or out of date. How might it have felt to be on the other side of that dismissal?

## 10.4 Caring Leadership and Organised Social Agency

Care is politically significant only when it possesses or develops the capacity to alter unjust conditions, protect rights, establish boundaries, distribute resources and prevent retaliation. Democratic transformation therefore requires both caring leadership and organised social agency.

Caring leaders use institutional authority to recognise needs, make relevant information accessible, protect disagreement, open appropriate decisions to participation and develop the capacities through which others can exercise power. They do not abandon leadership or submit every decision to universal consensus. They remain responsible for decisions that require their role, knowledge and authority. Their power remains proportionate, explainable, accountable and open to review.

Organised social agency moves in the other direction. People do not wait passively for a caring leader to recognise and protect them. They build relationships, share knowledge, identify common concerns, develop capacity, assume responsibility and organise to alter conditions that exceed their individual power.

Neither movement can substitute for the other. Leadership without organised social agency may produce beneficial decisions, but the change remains dependent upon the judgement and goodwill of particular leaders. When leadership changes, the practices may disappear. Even benevolent leadership can become paternalistic if it continually acts on behalf of people without developing their capacity to perceive, decide and contribute.

Organised social agency without access to institutional power can create solidarity, knowledge and resilience, but may remain unable to alter budgets, laws, policies, procedures and structural conditions. Communities can support one another while becoming exhausted by responsibilities that public institutions continue to avoid.

More durable democratic transformation becomes possible when the two movements meet:

**DEMOCRATIC TRANSFORMATION**

**Caring leadership + Organised social agency → Accountable institutions and democratic transformation.**

Caring leadership uses institutional power to widen participation and strengthen collective capacity. Organised communities use that capacity to contribute, question, correct and hold power accountable. Institutions make the relationship more durable by translating it into rights, policies, budgets, procedures, partnerships, organisational memory and routes for review and redress.

The purpose is not to replace representative institutions with continuous direct participation or to require every person to participate in every decision. Care asks who is affected, whose knowledge is relevant, what is genuinely open to influence, who remains accountable and how distinct contributions can be coordinated without dissolving people into a collective identity. Democracy becomes a living culture when people can experience themselves not merely as recipients of governance but as distinct contributors to a shared world.

## 10.5 Festivals as Democratic Cultural Ecosystems

Festivals can give this relationship between caring leadership and organised social agency a concrete cultural form.

A festival necessarily exercises organisational power. It establishes a conceptual frame, curates artistic content, allocates resources, invites some practices and not others, determines conditions of participation and makes decisions for which somebody must remain accountable. A festival without leadership, boundaries or decision-making power cannot fulfil its responsibilities.

At the same time, artists, employees, volunteers, audiences, partners and communities can do more than receive or implement decisions. Caring festival leadership uses organisational power to establish purpose, protect boundaries, allocate resources and remain accountable, while opening appropriate spaces in which other people can exercise and develop power. Its task is not to assign meaning or participation from above, but to make distinct contributions perceptible, possible and consequential.

As Chapter 7 showed, attendance or identification alone does not create community. Community develops through agentic contribution, mutual recognition, shared responsibility and repair. Carrying meaningful and justly recognised costs can develop capacity, value, responsibility and a durable stake in shared practice.

In this way, a festival can become more than a programme delivered to an audience. It becomes a relational ecosystem in which people practise contributing to a world they can influence together.

A single edition can offer a temporary experience of this relationship. Repeated participation can develop knowledge, confidence, responsibility and influence. Informal contributions may become recognised roles. Relationships may become partnerships, and shared values may enter policies, procedures, budgets and organisational expectations. The public event remains temporary, but the democratic practices developed through recurring relationships can acquire a more durable cultural and organisational form.

Festivals do not strengthen democracy merely by presenting political content, celebrating diversity or describing themselves as participatory. They strengthen democratic culture when their own relationships allow people to experience that:

- Difference can remain present without exclusion.
- Belonging does not require conformity.
- Authority can exist without becoming authoritarian.
- Conflict can be negotiated without silencing.
- Contribution can develop capacity and value.
- Participation can influence a shared practice.
- Power can remain accountable to those carrying its consequences.

Festivals can also reproduce the opposite culture. Participatory language can conceal decisions already made. Community engagement can extract unpaid labour. Artistic authority can become unquestionable. Diversity can be displayed without redistributing influence. Caring individuals can compensate for structural failures until they become depleted.

A festival becomes a democratic cultural practice only when care shapes not merely its public message but its communication, cost exchange, expectations, power relations and organisational conditions.

FESTIVALS AND POSSIBLE WORLDS

**Festivals do not only represent possible worlds through art · Through the relationships and conditions they create, they can allow elements of those worlds to be practised.**

People may then carry these relational experiences beyond the festival. An artist who has been genuinely heard may organise future collaborations differently. A volunteer who has developed responsibility and influence may participate differently in civic life. A community member who has experienced negotiated difference may develop greater confidence in collective action. A public official who has contributed personally to a shared process may carry its value into institutional decisions, budgets, procedures and policies. Through local, regional and international networks, these practices can travel between festivals, organisations, cities and cultural-policy environments.

## 10.6 Festivals, Local Authorities and the Wider Social Ecosystem

In the context of EUFEAST, the relationship among festivals, local authorities and organised communities gives this argument particular institutional significance.

Local authorities possess public mandates, budgets, policy instruments, regulatory authority, long-term organisational memory and responsibility for the conditions of local life. Festivals possess a different capacity: they can bring distinct people into relation, make social questions perceptible through artistic and embodied experience, create temporary spaces for experimentation and enable forms of participation that conventional administrative processes may struggle to generate. Communities bring lived experience, situated knowledge, existing relationships and the agency required to judge what particular conditions mean in everyday life.

Care can connect these capacities:

A CARING DEMOCRATIC ECOSYSTEM

**Local Authority + Festival + Organised Community.**

Festivals can create and test relational practices through which people experience recognition, contribution, negotiated difference and shared responsibility. Local authorities can help protect, resource and institutionalise the conditions that allow valuable practices to continue beyond a single event or edition. Communities, artists and other participants contribute the knowledge and judgement through which these practices remain responsive to actual lives rather than becoming solutions imposed from above.

This does not mean that festivals should become instruments for delivering municipal policy. Artistic and cultural organisations must retain the autonomy through which they can question existing reality, reveal what institutions have failed to perceive and bring new possibilities into cultural form.

Nor should local authorities transfer their public responsibilities to festivals, volunteers or unpaid community labour. Festivals cannot substitute for social services, democratic institutions or accountable public administration. Communities should not be expected to compensate indefinitely for structural failures without receiving the authority, resources and return needed to sustain their contribution.

The partnership remains caring only when the parties retain their distinct roles, relevant knowledge, agency and capacity to question one another.

Local authorities cannot ask festivals to practise care while leaving their own exercise of power unchanged. Care must become visible in how public institutions listen, communicate uncertainty, design funding, establish expectations, recognise costs, distribute resources, enable participation and remain accountable for consequences.

A municipality may publicly celebrate participation while designing funding calls that transfer unrealistic costs and risks to cultural organisations. It may invite communities to consultations after the decisive options have already been closed. It may support inclusive artistic programmes while maintaining inaccessible administrative procedures. It may rely upon the relational labour of festival teams to repair mistrust that public institutions continue to reproduce.

In such cases, the festival temporarily compensates for institutional failures without changing the conditions that create them.

Integrating care into local government does not mean replacing administrative responsibility with emotional goodwill. Chapter 9's power questions remain active, but public institutions must ask in particular:

- How will participation affect the final decision?
- Who carries the costs and risks created by public funding and policy?
- Can people and organisations question or refuse safely?
- How can successful practices and learning become institutionally durable?

The responsibility of local authorities is therefore not to take a model created by a festival and apply it to society from above. It is to work with festivals and communities to create conditions in which caring relational practices can be evaluated, adapted and integrated into the wider social ecosystem.

**PUBLIC POWER AND CARE**

**Local authorities should not integrate care into society on behalf of people · They should use public power to enable festivals, communities and institutions to develop caring conditions together.**

## 10.7 From Temporary Practice to Institutional and Cultural Change

When the distinct forms of power held by festivals, local authorities and communities remain connected through care, temporary cultural practice can contribute to institutional and social development.

A relational practice first tested through a festival may inform a longer-term partnership. A participation method may enter a municipal procedure. Recognition of invisible labour may alter a budget. Experience with accessibility may become a policy. A community relationship may develop into a continuing forum. Knowledge created through one edition may enter organisational memory and shape future decisions.

Institutionalisation should not freeze a living practice into a rigid model. Conditions change, and care remains responsive to persons, relationships and situations. Institutionalisation means protecting the principles, resources and routes of participation that allow the practice to continue learning and adapting.

**FROM FESTIVAL TO PUBLIC ECOSYSTEM**

**Festivals can make caring forms of shared life perceptible and practicable · Local authorities can help create the conditions through which they become continuous, public and institutionally durable.**

Festivals cannot by themselves defeat authoritarian politics, repair social injustice or transform public institutions. Local authorities cannot create democratic culture through policy alone. Communities cannot be expected to carry structural change without resources and institutional power.

Yet together they can create and circulate practices that authoritarian culture cannot sustain: recognition of irreducible human value, curiosity towards different realities, accountable authority, meaningful participation, protected dissent, solidarity and shared responsibility.

This is why care is politically significant. It does not ask people to remain gentle in the face of injustice, substitute kindness for power or wait passively for a caring leader. It asks people to use the power available within their relationships while organising to change conditions that exceed individual power. It asks leaders not to withdraw, but to use institutional power to protect agency, widen meaningful participation, develop collective capacity and make authority accountable to its consequences.

Democratic transformation becomes more sustainable when caring leadership and organised social agency develop together. Festivals can provide recurring cultural environments in which elements of this relationship are experienced and practised. Local authorities can help connect those practices to the longer time of public institutions. Communities can ensure that the process remains grounded in lived realities and open to correction.

Democracy then becomes more than a political procedure. It becomes a relational culture through which distinct people participate in shaping a shared world.

**Pause for Reflection**

Recall a time your festival repaired trust or filled a gap that a public institution had left, for example by mediating with residents or providing a service the institution did not. Did anything change in that institution afterwards? Who carried the cost of the repair?

CHAPTER 10 — CARE LANDING

**Care treats stakeholders as people and groups with knowledge, agency, relationships and legitimate stakes—not merely as resources, audiences or obstacles. Care asks who has a real part, who can influence what happens and who carries the cost of participation.**

This argument also prepares the movement towards sustainability. A democratic and caring ecosystem must ask not only whose human voice enters a decision, but whose consequences remain unrepresented. Places, ecosystems, other living beings and future generations cannot participate in institutional processes in the same way as present human stakeholders. Their absence does not remove their stake.

Care therefore extends democratic responsibility beyond those who can speak most loudly or exercise immediate influence. It asks power holders to perceive and represent the social and ecological costs transferred beyond the visible boundaries of a festival, organisation, city or generation.

The partnership among festivals, local authorities and communities can make these connections more perceptible. Artistic practice can reveal relationships and consequences that ordinary administrative language leaves abstract. Communities can bring situated knowledge of places and living conditions. Local authorities can translate recognition into planning, policy, resource allocation and long-term responsibility.

The question of democracy therefore leads towards the question of sustainability:

BRIDGE TO SUSTAINABILITY

**Can the shared world we are creating continue without exhausting the people, relationships, places and living systems that make it possible?**

# CHAPTER 11

## Sustainability Without Depletion

*What wellbeing requires across time, repetition and living systems*

Chapter 10 ended by asking whether the shared world festivals help create can continue without exhausting the people, relationships, places and living systems that make it possible. Earlier, wellbeing was described as a capacity that exists at personal, relational-collective and organisational levels. Sustainability adds time and repetition. It asks whether these capacities can be maintained through successive festival cycles without exhausting the people, relationships, organisations, places and living systems on which they depend.

This does not make wellbeing and sustainability identical. Wellbeing can be distributed unequally. The comfort of audiences may depend on invisible exhaustion backstage. A stable organisation may externalise costs to freelancers, residents or ecosystems. Present wellbeing may be purchased at the expense of future capacity. Sustainability asks whose wellbeing is being sustained, across what period, and at whose or what cost.

Financial continuation is necessary for most festivals, but it is not sufficient evidence of sustainability. A festival may balance its budget while losing trust, knowledge and people. It may increase attendance while weakening the place that hosts it. It may protect cultural heritage as a product while reducing the agency of those for whom that heritage is lived practice.

Human sustainability concerns workload, health, boundaries, learning and the ability to remain in cultural work. Relational sustainability concerns trust, reciprocity, conflict and repair. Organisational sustainability concerns authority, knowledge, resources and the capacity to adapt. Cultural sustainability concerns living transmission, reinterpretation and access. Ecological sustainability concerns material use, mobility, energy, waste, biodiversity and the carrying capacity of place.

These dimensions interact. Ecological change affects working conditions and communities, while organisational pressure can narrow attention to short-term delivery and push both human and environmental responsibility outside the frame. An ecosystem approach resists treating any dimension as an external add-on.

The central question is therefore not simply whether the festival can continue. It is what and who is being depleted in order for it to continue. Depletion may appear as fatigue, turnover, cynicism, damaged trust, lost local legitimacy, degraded space, reduced biodiversity or the disappearance of knowledge held by people who can no longer afford to participate.

CONCEPTUAL LANDING

**Sustainability ≠ Continuing at any cost · Sustainability = The capacity to continue without exhausting the people, relationships, places and living systems that make continuation possible.**

**Pause for Reflection**

Think of your last edition that was considered successful. Recall one small sign that did not fit that picture, such as someone who did not return, a tired partner or a practice quietly dropped. What might that sign tell you about what your festival's continuation is using up?

Care contributes to sustainability by making interdependence and cost visible before breakdown. It creates feedback routes, protects limits, distributes responsibility, supports repair and asks whether plans are realistic. It also remains responsive when conditions change. This is not softness. It is the organisational capacity to perceive what continuation actually depends upon.

Making depletion visible is not sufficient; an organisation must also develop the capacities through which responsibility can be carried differently over time. An organisation cannot continue responsibly if essential knowledge, judgement and care remain concentrated in a few overfunctioning people, or if support repeatedly prevents others from learning to carry appropriate responsibility. Sustainable care distributes opportunities to learn as well as burdens to carry. It protects highly capable people from becoming invisible infrastructure and ensures that challenge is accompanied by authority, support, recognition and recovery.

## 11.1 Ecological Sustainability as a Relationship of Care

Ecological care does not add an unrelated concern to the Reader's understanding of care. It follows from the recognition that personal, relational-collective and organisational wellbeing depend upon living systems whose limits, regenerative capacities and transferred costs must also enter caring judgement.

Human beings did not create the living systems upon which their lives depend. These systems developed through long processes of interdependence, circulation, adaptation, disturbance and renewal. They are not morally fair, nor do they consciously practise care. Yet their continuity depends upon relationships, feedback and limits that no single organism controls.

Human beings are participants within these systems, not external managers standing above them. Nevertheless, through technology, economic organisation and institutional power, they have acquired an exceptional capacity to transform living conditions. Human decisions can now alter places, consume

resources and produce consequences faster—and on a larger scale—than ecosystems can regenerate or adapt.

The ecological question therefore begins as a question of power: How do human beings use a capacity whose consequences are carried by other people, other species, places and generations that may have little or no influence over the decision?

Power becomes ecologically destructive when those who make decisions receive the benefits while transferring the costs elsewhere or into the future. A festival may create cultural, social and economic value for its audiences, partners and host city while its environmental costs are carried by distant communities, exploited workers, damaged ecosystems or future generations. These parties may never appear on a stakeholder map, but they remain part of the relationship through which the festival becomes possible. Ecological care begins by making these relationships and transferred costs perceptible. It extends responsibility beyond interpersonal goodwill towards the conditions of shared life, asking people and institutions to recognise their dependence upon living systems, respect ecological limits and use power without destroying the capacities through which life renews itself.

ECOLOGICAL CARE

**Ecological care begins by recognising that human power operates within—not above—living systems.**

The relational principles developed throughout this Reader remain relevant at the ecological level. Interdependence, cost and return, limits, power, responsibility, depletion and repair continue to matter. However, they cannot be transferred mechanically from interpersonal relationships.

A river cannot negotiate the conditions under which it is polluted. A forest cannot give or withdraw consent. Future generations cannot attend the meeting in which today's resource decisions are made. Other species cannot communicate their expectations through the organisational channels recognised by human institutions. This absence of equal agency does not reduce human responsibility; it increases it.

The more power one party possesses to alter the conditions of another's existence, the greater its responsibility to perceive consequences, respect limits and protect the capacity for regeneration. Ecological care therefore requires human beings to represent interests that cannot represent themselves within existing decision-making structures.

The laws of cost are also visible here. Ecological costs do not disappear when they are excluded from a budget. They are transferred. A cheap material may carry a high cost in extraction, pollution or labour. Rapid international travel may save organisational time while transferring environmental costs into the

atmosphere. A disposable production system may reduce immediate workload while passing waste and depletion to a place that remains invisible to the festival.

Sooner or later, every result carries a cost. The question is not whether a festival can avoid all cost, but which costs it chooses, who or what carries them, whether the return is meaningful enough to justify them and whether the affected systems retain the capacity to recover.

Without a care perspective, environmental sustainability can become a technical checklist: measure emissions, reduce plastic, separate waste, select efficient equipment and report the results. These actions are necessary, but they do not by themselves transform the relationship through which environmental damage is produced. Care adds perception, responsibility and judgement. It changes the guiding question from “How can we make this festival appear greener?” to “How can the cultural value of this festival be produced without depleting the people, places and living systems that make it possible?”

This shift matters because even an environmentally well-intentioned measure may transfer cost unfairly. A new sustainability policy may reduce emissions while imposing additional unpaid labour on an already exhausted team. Sustainable travel requirements may exclude artists who have disabilities or limited time. Locally sourced products may still depend upon exploitative labour. Digitalisation may reduce printed material while increasing energy demand, equipment consumption and electronic waste.

Care therefore prevents ecological responsibility from being isolated from social and organisational wellbeing. It asks whether environmental measures are effective, but also whether their costs and returns are visible, proportionate and justly distributed. It seeks solutions that strengthen ecological, human and organisational capacity together.

**NO TRANSFERRED DEPLETION**

**Ecological sustainability is not the transfer of depletion from one part of the ecosystem to another.**

## 11.2 How Does This Relate to the European Green Deal?

The European Green Deal provides a public-policy framework for transforming Europe into a climate-neutral, resource-efficient and socially fair society. Its interconnected ambitions include climate neutrality by 2050, a reduction of at least 55 per cent in net greenhouse-gas emissions by 2030 compared with 1990 levels, a circular economy, cleaner energy and mobility, zero pollution, and the protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems. The transition is also intended to be just, so that its costs are not concentrated upon the communities and people with the least capacity to carry them.

These aims correspond closely to the care perspective developed in this Reader. Climate neutrality and circularity concern the consequences of present decisions across time and whether materials return to productive cycles rather than becoming depletion and waste. Biodiversity and zero pollution concern interdependence, regeneration and the transfer of harmful costs to bodies, communities and places. A just transition asks who participates in decisions, who receives their benefits and who carries their consequences.

The Green Deal should therefore not appear to festivals merely as a funding condition or regulatory framework. It represents a wider transformation to which culture can contribute. European cultural policy recognises that the performing arts can support the green transition both by adopting more environmentally sustainable practices and by raising awareness, enabling learning, communicating and sharing knowledge. Care gives this contribution an ethical and relational foundation. It connects European environmental objectives to the daily decisions through which festivals organise labour, mobility, procurement, production, participation, partnerships and relationships with place.

## 11.3 What Responsibilities Can Festivals Assume?

A festival becomes ecologically caring not simply by reducing waste or complying with environmental standards. It must examine the full network of relationships through which its cultural value is produced. It can begin by asking:

- What do our activities take from people, places and living systems?
- Where are their environmental costs carried?
- Which consequences remain invisible because they occur elsewhere or later?
- Who participates in defining what an acceptable cost is?
- What can be avoided, reduced, shared, reused, returned, repaired or regenerated?
- Which cultural returns justify environmental costs, and which costs make an activity no longer meaningful?
- How can ecological learning become part of organisational memory rather than being reinvented for every edition?

Purpose and artistic direction. Ecological responsibility begins before operational planning. A festival can examine whether continuous expansion, increasing audience numbers and international visibility are always meaningful objectives. Cultural meaning can motivate ecological care, but it can also be used to justify continued growth. Festivals can therefore consider quality, depth, local continuity and cultural value alongside growth. Artistic programmes can make invisible ecological relations perceptible, help audiences encounter realities beyond habitual language and enable possible ways of living together to acquire cultural form.

Mobility. Festivals can examine the movement of audiences, artists, teams and materials; prioritise collective and lower-impact transport; coordinate routes and schedules; reconsider unnecessary short visits; and develop longer residencies or regional collaborations when these produce greater cultural value from the cost of travel.

Production and procurement. Materials can be selected with their whole life cycle in mind. Sets, exhibition structures, equipment and signage can be shared, rented, repaired, adapted and stored for future use. Purchasing decisions can consider durability, labour conditions, transport, toxicity and the possibility of reuse rather than price alone.

Energy, food, water and waste. Measurement is important because invisible costs cannot be responsibly judged. Yet measurement should lead to decisions: reducing demand, selecting cleaner energy, preventing waste at source, working with seasonal and responsible food systems, protecting water, and creating practical conditions in which audiences and partners can participate.

Place and biodiversity. A festival does not merely use a location; it enters an existing ecological and social relationship. It should understand the carrying capacity of the place, consult those who possess local ecological knowledge and avoid treating temporary cultural value as permission for permanent damage.

Working conditions. The ecological transition cannot depend upon invisible labour by a few committed employees. Responsibilities, authority, time, knowledge and resources must be aligned. Teams need the capacity to learn, make decisions and improve practices across successive editions.

Partnerships and advocacy. Festivals can use procurement, funding relationships and public visibility to influence suppliers, sponsors, venues and public authorities. In cooperation with local government, communities and regional or international networks, they can help turn individual experiments into shared infrastructure, policy and durable institutional practice.

## 11.4 Festivals as Cultural Laboratories of the Green Transition

As earlier chapters showed, festivals create temporary environments while their repetition produces more persistent relationships, expectations, knowledge and cultural habits. This gives them a distinctive role in ecological transition. Policies can establish targets and regulations, but social transformation also requires people to perceive why change matters, imagine alternatives and experience those alternatives as possible. Festivals can make abstract ecological questions visible, audible, embodied and collectively discussable. They can enable communities to practise different ways of producing, travelling, sharing resources and inhabiting a place.

Their contribution is therefore both operational and cultural. A festival can reduce the damage it causes, strengthen the regenerative capacities upon which it depends and influence the culture within which ecological decisions are made. Care connects these operational and cultural responsibilities by treating ecological transition as a continuing practice of perception, judgement, participation, responsibility and repair. It prevents sustainability from becoming an isolated environmental department, a communication campaign or a claim of moral purity.

From this perspective, ecological sustainability is not simply the continuation of a festival with fewer emissions. It is the capacity to continue creating cultural value without exhausting the living relationships and systems that make both culture and continuation possible.

Sustainable continuation may require doing less, changing rhythm, sharing resources, redesigning mobility, limiting growth or ending a practice that no longer serves its purpose. Closure can sometimes be more responsible than repetition. The aim is not institutional immortality; it is fidelity to meaning under changing conditions.

**Pause for Reflection**

Choose one part of your festival with a significant environmental cost, such as artists' travel, set materials or energy. Where, and by whom or what, might that cost be carried? If you reduced or stopped it, what would be lost, and what might remain or even be gained?

Think of one environmental measure your festival has introduced. Who carried the extra work or cost it created, and was that recognised?

If continuation is not an end in itself, a further question remains: what deserves to be brought into reality? The Conclusion returns to the question with which this Reader began and asks what a festival, within its particular power and limits, can responsibly help bring into the world.

CHAPTER 11 — CARE LANDING

**Care makes sustainability concrete by asking what continuation depends upon, whose capacities are being depleted and which costs are being transferred across people, places, systems or time.**

# CONCLUSION:
# MEANING: BRINGING POSSIBILITY INTO REALITY

This Reader began with a question: Why do we make festivals? It now returns to a more fundamental question: What kind of world are human beings capable of bringing into reality?

Scheler's distinction between reality and possibility offers a way to understand this question. Human beings are not confined to accepting the world exactly as they encounter it. They can perceive that a condition could be different, recognise a value that has not yet acquired social form and orient their actions towards a possibility that does not presently exist.

A possibility, in this sense, is not simply a prediction based upon the continuation of current conditions. Nor is it a complete utopian design waiting to be imposed upon society. It is something that becomes perceptible within the tension between what exists and what ought—or could—exist. This tension enables human beings to judge present reality, imagine an alternative and take responsibility for bringing part of that alternative into the world.

This is one of the sources of meaning. Human beings create meaning when they use their distinct capacities to transform a possibility into reality: by producing something, encountering and experiencing someone or something, or choosing a meaningful stance towards conditions they cannot change. In doing so, they alter not only the external world but also themselves.

The same movement is possible collectively. Societies are not restricted to reproducing the relationships, institutions and uses of power they have inherited. They can recognise that another way of living together is possible. But a meaningful shared world cannot be designed by one authority and assigned to everyone else. It emerges when distinct people perceive meaning potentials, exercise judgement, assume responsibility and coordinate their contributions through relationships.

Care creates the conditions for this co-creation. It protects connection without demanding sameness. It allows difference, dialogue, boundaries, contribution, conflict and repair to remain possible. It asks who carries the costs of a decision, who receives its returns, whose reality remains unseen and whose agency needs to be protected or developed.

Power is indispensable to this movement. Without power, a perceived possibility may remain only an intention. Human beings need power to decide, create, protect, resist, organise and transform conditions. The question is therefore not whether power should exist, but what it serves and how it is exercised.

Across the chapters of this Reader, one principle recurs: the more power a person, organisation or institution holds over the conditions of others' lives, the greater its responsibility to perceive the consequences, respect limits and protect others' capacity to act and to recover. The same principle applies at the scale of societies. When relationships between parties of very unequal power, such as a government and the citizens who protest against it, or a state and a people it dominates or exploits, are described simply as a conflict between two sides, the language of symmetry conceals an asymmetry of power and therefore of responsibility. Greater power does not free the weaker party of all responsibility, but it places the greater responsibility on those who can alter the conditions of others' lives.

Power shaped by care does not use people, communities or living systems merely as instruments for somebody else's purpose. It makes consequences visible, connects authority with responsibility, enables people to exercise their existing power and supports empowerment over time. It protects the regenerative capacities upon which future action depends. In this way, power can become the capacity through which a more just and meaningful possibility acquires social form.

A world in which care is prioritised and power is used for meaningful purposes is therefore possible. It is not guaranteed. Human beings can also choose indifference, domination, exploitation and short-term advantage. Care cannot remove freedom or make the meaningful choice on behalf of another person. It can help make that choice perceptible, credible and possible to realise.

Festivals have a distinctive role within this movement. Through art, they can reveal what habitual perception leaves invisible: suffering that has been normalised, beauty that has been overlooked, destructive patterns treated as inevitable and possibilities for living together that have not yet found language or form.

Yet festivals do more than represent possible worlds. They create temporary social and cultural environments in which some elements of those worlds can be experienced and practised. Their ways of communicating, distributing costs and returns, forming expectations, exercising power, enabling participation and relating to places determine what kind of possibility they bring into reality.

This does not mean that festivals—or the cultural field as a whole—can claim the power to change the world. Such a claim would disregard the scale of the forces shaping political, economic, social and ecological conditions. It could also turn responsibility into an unlimited demand, encouraging cultural organisations and already committed people to carry costs that exceed their authority, resources and capacity.

The existential perspective developed in this Reader leads to a more proportionate conclusion. Human freedom always operates within conditions. A person, organisation or festival is not responsible for

everything that needs to change. They are responsible for perceiving what the situation asks of them, recognising the power and limits they actually possess and making the most meaningful contribution available through their distinct capacities.

For a festival, this contribution may involve making an unseen reality perceptible through art, changing the conditions under which people meet, creating a fairer relationship with artists or workers, enabling a community to exercise agency, using institutional influence responsibly, protecting a place or bringing people and organisations into a relationship through which further action becomes possible. None of these actions transforms the whole world. Each can alter a particular field of relationships and possibilities.

Care therefore protects responsibility from two opposite distortions. The first is powerlessness: the belief that because a festival cannot change everything, it has no meaningful responsibility. The second is omnipotence: the belief that cultural work must compensate for every social, political and ecological failure. A caring festival neither withdraws from the power it possesses nor claims power it does not have.

**PROPORTIONATE RESPONSIBILITY**

**Responsibility is not the duty to change everything · It is the commitment to use the power one actually possesses in response to what matters.**

When festivals fulfil this responsibility, their contributions may connect with those of artists, communities, public authorities, networks and other institutions. Wider transformation, when it becomes possible, emerges through the interaction of many distinct contributions rather than through the heroic action of a single festival or cultural sector.

The same principle applies within an organisation. Transformation does not have to wait for a complete organisational change. While structures, budgets and policies are being reconsidered, each person can begin within the field of relationships they already influence. They can notice the signs of depletion, exclusion or unclear expectation around them, and take responsibility for the small changes that are theirs to make: how they listen, what they make visible, which cost they stop passing on and whom they invite into a decision. Such actions do not replace organisational responsibility, and they must not be demanded most from those with the least power; responsibility still grows with authority. Yet when many people act within their own reach, their contributions can connect, make wider change more credible and prepare the conditions in which organisational change can take hold.

**Pause for Reflection**

Think of one issue that matters to you and that your festival cannot resolve on its own. What would be a proportionate contribution: one that uses the power and capacities your festival actually has, without withdrawing or claiming more than it can carry?

Within your own role, what is one small change you could make now, while wider organisational change is still being pursued?

A recurring festival creates relationships, capacities, memories, expectations and institutional traces. When caring practices are repeated, examined, repaired and carried into partnerships, policies and public life, a temporary experience can contribute to a more persistent cultural change.

The future is not simply what will happen to us as present conditions continue. It is also shaped by the possibilities we perceive, the decisions we make, the costs we choose to carry, the relationships we form and the responsibilities we assume.

The task of a festival is therefore not only to continue. It is to ask what deserves to continue, what needs to change and what possibility its distinct capacities allow it to bring into the world.

MEANING

**Meaning emerges when human beings respond to reality by bringing a valuable possibility into existence.**

CARE

**Care creates the relational and organisational conditions through which distinct people can participate in that creation.**

POWER

**Power makes transformation possible · Care helps ensure that transformation serves people, shared life and the living world.**

A more caring world is not a finished utopia waiting somewhere in the future. It begins wherever people recognise that existing reality is not the only reality possible—and accept responsibility for what they can bring into existence together.

# FURTHER READING

The following books offer ways to deepen, question and extend the ideas explored in this Reader. Some have shaped the author's thinking; others offer complementary or critical perspectives.

## Foundations of This Reader

Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (German original 1946; first English edition 1959). Boston: Beacon Press, 2006.
An accessible introduction to Frankl's understanding of meaning, freedom and responsibility, grounded in his own experience.

Viktor E. Frankl, *The Will to Meaning: Foundations and Applications of Logotherapy* (1969). Expanded edition. New York: Plume, 2014.
Frankl's systematic account of the will to meaning, self-transcendence and the three dimensions of human existence.

Elisabeth Lukas and Bianca Z. Hirsch, *Meaningful Living: Introduction to Logotherapy Theory and Practice*. 2nd expanded edition. Purpose Research, 2019.
An accessible introduction to the theory and practice of logotherapy, exploring meaning, freedom and responsibility through practical methods and concrete life situations.

Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* (1941). New York: Henry Holt, 1994.
On primary unity, individuation and the temptation to escape from freedom into submission or domination, the movement traced in Chapter 4.

Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving* (1956). New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2006.
Love understood as an active capacity involving care, responsibility, respect and knowledge.

Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (1923). Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970.
The distinction between I–Thou and I–It relationships that informs Chapter 5.

Max Scheler, *The Human Place in the Cosmos* (1928). Trans. Manfred S. Frings. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2009.
A philosophical anthropology of the human being, examining spirit (*Geist*), openness to the world and the human capacity to step back from immediate reality and relate to what is possible.

## Complementary and Critical Perspectives

Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (2012). London and New York: Verso.
A critical examination of participatory art, questioning both its democratic claims and the tendency to judge artistic value too readily by ethical or political criteria.

Mary Parker Follett, *Creative Experience* (1924). New York: Longmans, Green.
On conflict, difference and "power-with" as a basis for collective decision-making.

Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968). Trans. Myra Bergman Ramos. 50th anniversary edition. New York: Bloomsbury, 2018.
On dialogue, agency and the capacity of people to transform the conditions of their own lives.

Shannon Jackson, *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (2011). New York: Routledge.
On the social, organisational and material support systems that make artistic work possible.

Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass* (2013). Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions.
On reciprocity and the human relationship with the living world, extending the ecological care of Chapter 11.

Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (1984). 2nd edition, updated. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.
Care understood as a relational practice grounded in receptivity and response rather than an abstract virtue, with implications for how schools and other institutions can support caring relationships.

Joan C. Tronto, *Caring Democracy: Markets, Equality, and Justice* (2013). New York: New York University Press.
Extends care from personal relationships to democratic institutions, equality and public responsibility.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mahir Namur is a cultural manager, educator, psychological counsellor and existential coach based between Istanbul and Vienna. His work brings together international cultural cooperation, cultural policy, organisational development and meaning-oriented approaches to human relationships and collective life.

He studied civil engineering in Istanbul and construction management and economics in Vienna, and began his career on international construction projects. In 1998, he brought this experience of project management and cross-cultural work into international cultural cooperation. In 2003, he co-founded the European Cultural Association in Istanbul, serving first as president of the board and later as secretary general. Until its closure in 2019, the association worked to strengthen cultural cooperation between Türkiye and Europe and to develop the capacities of cultural organisations and professionals. In 2006, he co-founded Sinopale – International Sinop Biennial. He served on the advisory committee of Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture and has been a member of the Strategy Group of A Soul for Europe since 2004.

Alongside this work, he trained in coaching, logotherapy, existential analysis and psychological counselling. He has taught cultural management and project development at universities and cultural institutions across Europe, developed the training programmes Relationship Management and Meaning-Oriented Strategic Planning, and has worked as a coach and counsellor since 2010.

*Festivals as Ecosystems of Care* grows out of this combination of professional practice, philosophical learning, personal experience and reflection. It invites cultural professionals to reconsider not only what festivals make possible, but also how they are created, whose contributions sustain them and what responsibilities arise through their work.

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