

VERDENSROMMET MANIFESTO

FULL VERSION

www.verdensrommet.network

POST-CAPITALIST LEXICON FOR
IMMIGRANT ARTISTS:

www.verdensrommet.network/lexicon

To

address

the precarious conditions of non-EU/EEA creative professionals in Norway, we call for fairer immigration policies and better living and working conditions. This Manifesto exposes a number of systemic contradictions and structural inequalities which are urgent to the network. Hereby, we encourage new imaginations of the future of cultural work.

x/ The creation of a fair and inclusive immigration visa for non-EU/EEA creative professionals in Norway that takes into consideration their working conditions: fluctuating income levels and a “patchwork economy”.

x/ The formulation of a White Paper on a solidarity economy model for self-employed creative professionals that enables more equal income redistribution. The resource should propose commons-oriented protocols and encourage a hybrid economy through cooperative configurations that put community currency, affective economies, and blockchain technology at the heart.

x/ We should remain proactive in challenging and questioning current power structures, bureaucratic regimes, and institutionalized exhaustion. We reject the system of high-performance which is imposed upon artists (and others), demanding them to be hyper-productive in the pursuit of capital, the only non-negotiable means of sustaining a livelihood.

x/ The creation of a mutual-aid and retirement fund to help the management of economic uncertainty for artists in the present and in anticipation of the future.

x/ The maintenance and upgrade of mutual-support infrastructures that help construct anti-bureaucratic and sustainable artistic practices in order to make creative agency available and care practices possible.

x/ Universal and Unconditional Basic Income is the best measure for the arts and cultural sector. Art workers advocate for basic income not only for themselves but for everyone.

x/ A critical examination of the fallacies of meritocracy in relation to the operation and management of the contemporary art world and its resources.

x/ Our work is grounded in the ethics of mutual care, greater cooperation, economic self-determination and exchange of value. We want to enhance economic justice by tackling the roots of precarious labor for artists. We do so through practices of financial inclusion and the redefinition of artistic labor (and its value) through monetary and (non)monetary explorations.

x/ We must build and help maintain alliances with each other, as well as create P2P infrastructures of collaboration based on trust, in order to facilitate fair value-exchange of skills and ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’ knowledge sharing.

CALL FOR CHANGE

As creative professionals producing cultural and affective value in Norwegian society, we would like to propose the following changes in the immigration regulations that will help us continue to contribute to the cultural richness and diversity of Norway:

1. First and foremost, we demand that the loss of clients, audiences and the financial deficits caused by the pandemic in the field of culture be taken into account and the financial requirement for the renewal of the Self-Employed Visa be lowered for the years 2021-24.

2. The immigration regulations should take into consideration the working conditions in the field of art and culture. Below are our specific demands in response to the three key working restrictions that misalign with the way in which the cultural sector operates:

- The immigration regulations do not allow creative professionals to earn an income from any other field other than culture, even though it is well documented through data collected and analysed by the Kulturdepartementet via Telemark Forskning that creative professionals earn a living through a “patchwork economy” with multiple and diverse sources of income from both “skilled” and “unskilled” work. We demand that all creative professionals under the Self-Employed Visa be allowed to earn an income from outside the cultural field, especially in the establishing phase of their career.

- Currently, the immigration regulations only permit creative professionals to be either employed or self-employed as mutually exclusive conditions, and exceptions for the above are few and far between. It is essential that all creative professionals are allowed to have up to 50% employment alongside their self-employed activities and that the sum of the income from both sources be taken into consideration during visa renewals.

- Most importantly, the financial requirement for creative professionals (currently at 265 998 NOK per year) should be determined either as an aggregate of the past 3 years or the last year, whichever is greater. This would take cognisance of the fluctuating income of cultural workers.

3. Last but not least, we appeal to all cultural institutions in Norway to pay all creative professionals according to the government-recognised payment scales, in proportion to their qualifications and union-established rates.

Verdensrommet’s Manifesto was written collectively by the following members of the working group, artists Rodrigo Ghattas-Pérez and Prerna Bishnoi in conversation with Gabrielle Paré and Anthony Morton, in the summer of 2021.

VERDENSROMMET

is an artist-powered mutual support network by and for non-EU/EEA creative professionals based in Norway. The network is a grassroots and volunteer-led group of 170+ creative professionals across the country. The network was initiated in March 2020 to address the precarious conditions of visual artists whose citizenship led them to slip through the state’s support net. The low income levels, highly bureaucratic regimes, unrealistic immigration policies, limited accessibility to social assistance, and the cultural deficit in public life created by the Covid-19 pandemic have worsened the already precarious cultural workers’ economy.