



## **The Future is Now** **A podcast series | ArtsLink Assembly 2021: Future Fellows**

**Podcast by Rusanda Curcă**

Transcript abridged and edited by Anya Szykitka

Simon Dove:

Hello, and welcome to *The Future is Now*, a podcast series from CEC ArtsLink. My name is Simon Dove. I'm the Executive Director of CEC ArtsLink. And for this podcast series, we asked 10 independent artists and curators from different parts of the world, whom we call the Future Fellows, to talk about the current context of their work and to share their vision for how they see the future of arts practice. In this episode, we hear from Rusanda Curcă, based in Hîrtop Village, in Moldova.

Rusanda Curcă:

My name is Rusanda Curcă. I am a cultural, civic, and environmental activist and agriculturist living in Hîrtop Village, Republic of Moldova. For about five years, I am the Artistic Directrice of the Center for Cultural Projects Arta Azi. For about six months, I am the Directrice of the Coalition of the Independent Cultural Sector of the Republic of Moldova, an umbrella organization, which has as a main goal to improve the working conditions of independent cultural workers through advocacy campaigns.

I have a mini farm, five goats, two dogs, 20 chickens, four cats, and a thousand square meters of land where I am working together with my mom and sister.

Before we made this Coalition of the Independent Cultural Sector, we were working with our colleagues from the field, like twice a year, or when one of our colleagues had troubles. But starting this year, we are communicating a lot with our colleagues from the independent cultural sectors, and it's already a stronger community. It's not so strong as I wish, but we are already communicating a lot and speaking about our problems and how can we resolve them; they are more engaged in our advocacy campaigns.

In August, we had the public discussion on how to support independent artists organized in Hîrtop, my village, for the first time in history. We had invitees from the Moldovan Parliament and from the Ministry, and my colleagues from the coalitions. We were talking

about the measures that we should take to improve working conditions of independent artists. This is totally new for me.

My colleagues are changing their type of working because of the pandemic. They changed and rethink their projects. I could give some examples about my colleagues from Teatru-Spălătorie, Laundry Theater. During pandemic, they had a project called the Emergency Call, calling on people from around the country and were reading their performances for them. It was a success, in fact, because people were in slowdowns, yearning to talk with somebody about these problems, their feelings. They were very amazed about this.

In 2020, we've made some projects called the Art in Family, some workshops with kids, workshops on painting. And then this year, we've organized the Art in Neighborhood project, a series of cultural activities in 10 villages from Moldova. We are three co-coordinators. We did those cultural events for smaller numbers of people who could participate, but also very qualitative projects. Our goal was just to give access to culture in the communities that there is a lack of, and also develop critical and creative thinking.

We had community art residency workshops on documentary photography, classical music concerts, documentary movies. This was very important to do such projects in the villages where the culture is just missing. There are no cultural activities in those villages. They are abandoned.

The cultural activities had a strong impact on the public. They talked about: we didn't think art can be so powerful.

Art is not only about entertaining, but is also about speaking and talking about the issues we are facing. And art is not only to laugh, but also to think and to discuss our problems.

Artists should be supported firstly by the state authorities, because now in Moldova culture is on the lower place in all these industries. We are working with the coalitions on improving the funding mechanisms of the independent cultural scene. Also with this project Art in Neighborhood, we made a lot of advocacy on the local levels, on local authorities to fund and support our project. Not all local authorities funded us.

This is such a shame and a pity that they don't understand the value of culture and what role it plays for the community and the future. We want local authorities to support more, not only us as organizations, but also independent artists who come in the villages to make workshops.

Also, we are advocating on the level of Ministry of Culture to have some internal mobility grants like a cultural taxi. If you are an artist, and you want to come in the village, or the local authorities want to invite you, you have this opportunity to apply to grants. The funding mechanism on the local and regional levels are missing. We have a lot of work on these topics.

In Moldova, we don't have this culture of philanthropy where rich guy or a rich company can support independent artists or independent organizations to conduct activities in regions or international co-production. We only have little support from the state, and the biggest support comes from international institutions.

To speak fairly, in Moldova, when you are applying for grants, the Ministry of Culture is deciding who will get money or who will not get money. If the Ministry is from I don't know

which party, and you are a very critical artist, you will not get funds. I'm not sure that this works with the corporations who decide to give you money or no, because we don't have this funding mechanism, let's say, when the corporation is giving you money, but for non-critical arts products.

The main support should come from the state, from any independent institutions from the state, like Arts Council or something like that.

The coalition now is involved in one bigger project. It's called MoldArte, a unique project with some bigger partners like Goethe-Institut, the Romanian Cultural Institute, and the Austrian [Cultural Forum]. This transnational and international operation is super important for us and even more important now, when maybe mobility is not so allowed. We are working on the project in order to make visible the independent cultural scene from Republic of Moldova. We are open to those projects, and trying to get involved in others, because communications with artists from other countries gives us a whole picture of what happens in the world. So you are not in your bubble but know what is happening in the world, and how to create a common discourse about issues that we are all facing.

I'm not so optimistic about the future of the world because the environmental crisis is so huge that I don't believe that we can stop it without doing anything.

Not stopping the work of the big corporations that are the main polluters, we are not going anywhere.

Governments will not take actions because the money is ruling the world. When you are putting money in front of the life, yes, the money will gain this fight, and we are going to self-destruction. Everything is about money. With this thinking, we will not go anywhere.

But I am very optimistic about my future and the future of culture in the Republic of Moldova. I'm seeing my path where I should go and what is my goal. When my global goal is to make the world a better place to live, I am going there, using different tools and doing what I feel I should. So arts and environment, these are very powerful.

I'm optimistic about the future of culture among Moldova because we had the elections this summer, and the party who won are very open guys and girls. They just want to change the system, are really cooperating with us. They are inviting us to discussions and involving us in processes. For four years we have a lot of work, but we will do this work commonly, together with state institutions in order to change the laws and create those conditions for cultural workers.

My agricultural work is asking for a lot of time and attention. I am spending at least five hours working my land or taking care of my farm, my goats and other pets. I have a food independency of 80 percent, and for me, it's really important to have access to quality food, because food is influencing my feelings and thoughts. It's influencing your state of being.

Also, when you are seeing how the land is working, you are learning from it, how all those cultures are growing, and how different and diverse is nature. You are understanding how the world is made and all those diversities are common in our world. You are not thinking, Oh, this black guy is not okay; only white guys are okay. Diversity in nature is making you think about the diversity in our human being world.

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The human race is so un-powerful towards the power of nature because you are understanding that no money will help you to survive without taking care of nature. We are facing already, in my village, lack of potable water. I am filtering the water with clay, putting it on clay, then it stays two or three days, this clay is purifying the water, and then you can drink it.

I am really privileged to have this garden, this food sufficiency, because I am depending not only on markets and everything coming from another place, but I can be unemployed for a year, or not work at all, and live okay. This gives me total independence, almost. If I need money, I sell my products to somebody and just pay my bills. It gives you really independence from any other state or non-state bodies.

Not all artists need thousands of square meters, but they can advocate for urban gardens, because in Chişinău, where almost all artists are, there are a few tiny food gardens or urban gardens. This is really necessary now, to build gardens in the big cities, to have at least some food sustainability. Also this can go to homeless people; the situations of homeless people in Moldova is not so happy. We, as artists, would advocate for this, and more talk about food sustainability and environmental issues.

When you are planting the potato, and then the tomatoes, and then another flower and basil and everything, then a fruit tree, then another kind of tree. Permaculture is about how those diverse plants are helping together. They are collaborating to grow a strong and healthy society there between them. That's why urban gardens are so important.

Simon Dove:

You have been listening to *The Future is Now*, a podcast series from CEC ArtsLink with support from HowlRound. All interviews and post-production is by me, Simon Dove, Executive Director of CEC ArtsLink. The specially composed music is by the extraordinary bass player and composer Shri. This podcast is part of the ArtsLink Assembly 2021: Future Fellows, supported by the Trust for Mutual Understanding, Kirby Family Foundation, John and Jody Arnhold Foundation, and of course, generous individual donors. These podcasts are available to listen to, or download the transcripts at our website, [www.cecartslink.org](http://www.cecartslink.org), or at [howlround.com](http://howlround.com).