



Refugee Week Conference 2020

Workshop Notes: Refugee Week in Challenging Environments 2

Facilitated by Nina Alonso and India Rose, Yellow Days Festival, Athens

Note: These notes were taken by our fantastic volunteers, with the aim of sharing some of the key points discussed in the workshop, rather than being an exhaustive record of the conversation. If you'd like more information about the workshop or its facilitator(s), drop a line to Emily on emily@counterpointsarts.org.uk.

This workshop was held by Nina Alonso and India Rose, the organisers of The Yellow Days Festival, an event that aims at creating a bridge between the local communities in Greece, starting in Leros island and now working and establishing roots in Athens, where their most recent festival took place. Through food, art, music and dialogue, those who take part in the Festival can come together and share experiences of tolerance, respect, and also fun, reigniting individual and collective power.

The first part of the workshop was taken by a 30 minute video that showed how Nina and India managed to create this space and establish a relationship of trust with locals and refugees. Some of the stories of those who crossed the Middle East to arrive to Greece were displayed, giving the audience a bit of insight of the pain these migrants feel for their past, but also the great hope that permeates their aspirations for the future.

In the second part, Nina and India engaged with the group in an interactive activity in which they explained the challenges they faced in the organisation of the festival, and then asked which challenges people in the group might have experienced on similar occasions. These challenges were divided in two categories - personal challenges and the ones related to the environment: many of them actually fell in both categories. Some examples were difficulties in gaining credibility and trust from the local community, raising sufficient funds, creating a familiar and comfortable environment, adjusting to different cultural rhythms and overcoming linguistic barriers.

The third and final part of the workshop consisted of a collective discussion in which the group and facilitators tried to come up with possible solutions to overcome the aforementioned obstacles, such as creating a powerful network, enabling imagination, redefining basic needs, being patient and seeking to have deeper understanding and empathy.