

PART II

COMMON FIELD IN PRACTICE

WHO IS

COMMON FIELD'S NETWORK FOR?

BY
IKRAM LAKHDHAR

A community of people is not just given; it needs to be earned. Our drive as a species is to seek kinship and be there for each other—to come together intentionally, deeply collaborating to create authentic artist-centered networks. I was sitting with two of my collaborators, in Washington, D.C., Martina Dodd and Georgie Payne, when I first heard about Common Field. In the early days of building our collective, Dirt, an independent platform, collective, and resource for accessible critical arts discourse, we applied for and received the Field Grant. As a Field Grant awardee, we published a seven-part essay, Dissecting the Archives.

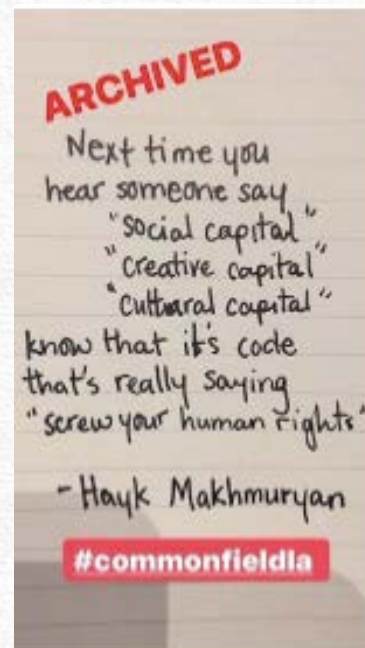


PHOTO CAPTION:
DIRT LIVE ARCHIVING,
PARTICIPANT SUBMISSION,
COMMON FIELD LOS ANGELES, 2017

Our participation expanded during the 2017 LA Convening as we conducted a Live Archiving performance, documenting everything from the content of the attendees' pockets, to their missed connections. Together, we questioned what's worthy of being archived, what's intentionally mis-archived, and why it's essential to allocate intentional meaning to everyday ephemera. This performance was our version of creating a slice of an evolving artist-centered field archive.

After completing my Master in Art and Public Policy at New York University Tisch School of the Arts, Common Field hired me as the first full-time staff to manage its Network memberships and the organization's communications. During my tenure, I acquired an insider purview into the challenges and aspirations of the Network.

From my perspective, a couple of entangled issues stunted the growth of Common Field's Network: the lack of a clear definition of its identity, and the misallocation of the organizational resources to institute proper network programming and resources to advance the Network's viability beyond membership support.

We each understand community in our selfhood and subjectivity. So, a community cannot be built without a common understanding. Building a network on the concept of mutuality when Common Field's identity was in crisis had raised many questions between the staff and board. Who is the Network for? How do we center the Network within the artist-centered field? Is the Network a mere live archive of the field? Can the Network nurture artists on the margins? Whose margins? Does the Network have enough radical and progressive edge to create safe spaces and platforms?

"WE EACH UNDERSTAND COMMUNITY IN OUR SELFHOOD AND SUBJECTIVITY."

By providing an entry point for artist organizers and arts organizations, Common Field successfully created a centralized shared space for the Network to take shape. To what extent is this entry point accessible and inclusive is a question at the heart of the organization's failure to sustain the Network. While the promise to create deeper connectivity and engagement between members was loud in the messaging, this goal was unrealistic at best, given the systems in place. The membership cost, for example, created the most significant access barrier for existing and new members. To benefit from grants and to submit a proposal to the Convening's open call, artist organizers and organizations needed to either pay a fee or have a coupon code to acquire a Common Field membership. These costs were on a sliding scale of \$50 for organizers and from \$50 to \$300 for organizations.

Many independent collectives and artist organizers who had joined with a coupon for free, like Dirt, had forgotten that their payment information lived in the back end and that it would (unknowingly) auto-renew. Most of my day-to-day consisted of "help-desk" assistance and building back-end functionality to reverse the auto-renew and make sure members were aware of the upcoming charges.

I advocated for changing the membership framework to eliminate the membership cost and for investing in all-year programs that advanced mentorship, knowledge exchanges, and publishing. And launched an application-based fee waiver program, helping more than fifty artist members to join.

As an organization with a mission to serve the artist-centered field, Common Field's Network included a considerable sum of radical collectives, artists, and organizers on the fringes of systemic frameworks pushing the boundaries towards more inclusivity in the artistic community. So, it made sense for Common Field to position itself as a social justice platform. While still progressive by nature, a lot more needed to be done to deliver on its mission. Our Meet-Ups programming, for example, aimed to reach artist organizers where they were in more inland cities. Besides the diversity of location and practice, Common Field could have more directly centered BIPOC, disabled, and queer artist organizers and widened their presence and representation across the board.

Another missed opportunity is Field Histories, a Common Field project consisting of essays highlighting the value of the archives, which centered on mainstream narratives already prevalent in the art scene. Instead of commissioning historically marginalized voices from our Network, the program regrettably focused on gathering stories from a small circle of the same people, lacking depth of narratives.

I often wondered about the world of difference it would make to meet the human side of community building. What would it take to be open toward the benefits of the artist-centered field, understanding that radical generosity can facilitate a positive exchange and a movement forward?

Capitalistic tendencies aimed at providing mutuality and care in community building are a farce of our times. My Graduate School professor Fred Moten taught me that coming together to do something different is hard work. Especially since the pace with which systemic changes happen does not often meet the speed of our desires for when those changes actualize.

To advance a future where a more radical Common Field might exist, we should ask and clarify: How can the Network be an intentionally socially just space? How do we hold space for experimental and radical collaborations and collectives to flourish? And how do we survey and archive this precarious arts field?

We can create possibilities for new paths in our field if we are bold enough to recognize that and apply criticality as a strategy at the root of sustainable community growth. It's one thing to come in and help one another, but it's more meaningful to keep showing up. We need to find the right people to take the necessary actions to create an impact. Sometimes, lofty intellectual ideas can fail us because we all need to be there for each other. But failures generate knowledge, and these we garnered from Common Field's growth and its sunsetting will hopefully offer the seeds to germinate more sustainable artist-centered community networks.

—Ikram Lakhdhar

AUDIO TRANSCRIPTION

EPISODE 2 —

COMMON FIELD IN PRACTICE

KEYWORDS

ORGANIZING

FIELD

CONVENING

PEOPLE

COMMON

WORK

ARTS

FEEL

CONFERENCE

NONPROFITS

NETWORK

EVENTS

THINKING

PROGRAM

ORGANIZING

QUESTION

PROJECT

COMMUNITY

SEATTLE

GATHERING

[Music fades in]

00:08 **Narrator 1**
Welcome to *Common Work: Learnings for the Future from Common Field*. This is the organization's final project as it closes in December 2022. In this four-part podcast and writing series, we'll explore what we've learned together through the life, work, and closing of Common Field, a network-centered arts nonprofit organization. You'll also hear about artist-centered work pushing our field forward today, and our dreams for the future of creative sustainability from network members across the country.

Each podcast episode is paired with commission writings from Ikram Lakhdhar, writer and former Common Field staff member, Racing Magpie cofounder, Mary Bordeaux, with artist Clementine Bordeaux; Allison Freedman Weisberg and Shaun Leonardo, co-directors of Recess; and Common Field board members, Sarah Williams and Jackie Clay.

You can access these writings, additional episodes in the series, and project materials for Common Work: Learnings for the Future on CommonField.org through April 2023. Beyond that, you can access the project in full on our platform partner websites, including Jack Straw Cultural center, and Lohar Projects.

[Thank you for listening.]

Music fade out]

1:34 Narrator 2

You are listening to Episode 2, Common Field in Practice. This episode invites Common Field staff members from across the years to be in conversation with one another around shared experiences and learnings from their time at the organization. This episode includes three dialogues, a conversation on the work of operating Common Field with Chris Tyler, Associate Director of Communications and operations, and Kristel Baldoz, Administrative Manager at Common Field. Second, a conversation on organizing convenings with Mars Avila, Producer for programs and special projects, and Kevin Ritter, former 2021 Convening Technology Producer. And finally, a conversation on membership and network engagement with Amanda Choo Quan, former Communications and Membership manager, and Hannah Grossman, former Convening Manager.

[Music fades in]

And now, Chris and Kristel.

[Music fades out]

02:44 Chris Tyler

Hey, Kristel, what's up? This is so wild, because this is the first time that I've ever seen you in real life.

02:52 Kristel Baldoz

Yeah, without the mediated screen.

02:55 Chris Tyler

For those of you who are maybe not familiar with the intimate internal operations of Common Field, we're a completely remote and itinerant organization. We have worked since 2020, really. And yeah, it's just really neat, to like, be here with you.

03:15 Kristel Baldoz

I started in May of 2021. I've only met Sheetal.

3:21 Chris Tyler

Right, because you guys were both based in New York at that point.

05:22 **Kristel Baldoz**

In remote, I remember, we tried to have like, tried to have like work sessions where we would have each other on Zoom (laughing) on like the screen while we're doing work, and just try to have like, some kind of coworking bond.

05:38 **Chris Tyler**

I think working in an itinerant way, largely through zoom, just kind of changes your relationship to your coworkers. And I think you have to hold more space for the other aspects of everyone.

05:55 **Kristel Baldoz**

Yeah. I've worked as an Operations Manager for other nonprofits. I feel like operations is so much intertwined with programming. Without operations, you have no program.

06:09 **Chris Tyler**

No, because how do you pay anybody? How do you facilitate any of the logistics?

6:14 **Kristel Baldoz**

Exactly, yeah.

6:16 **Chris Tyler**

Which I think also speaks to, like a larger, more seismic shift in the way that the organization has approached distribution of work and responsibility since I started. Because when I came on, it was incredibly compartmentalized. People are kept in their roles, you know not necessarily by other people, but just kind of by organizational structures. I think that the thoughtful adjustments to the way that budgeting happens within the organization demonstrates a shift away from that kind of silo operational model, because we're all participating in a more active way.

07:00 **Kristel Baldoz**

Chris, do you have an example of that?

07:03 **Chris Tyler**

Yeah, I mean, I think just looking at how we structure finances around Convenings and gatherings, like that core program of the organization.

When I came on, it wasn't clear to me how money was being allocated, where it was being allocated. I feel like as we've shifted, you see how the money is being allocated across different departments. Within programs, it's easier to get a sense of, oh, okay, this piece of the puzzle is getting quite a bit of money. So maybe we don't need to allocate more to it there.

07:43 Kristel Baldoz

Um-hm. I think one of the big steps is transparency. When I came on, that's when Sheetal and I were able to look more closely at the budget and work together, which then we would be able to talk about the budget with everybody else, so that everybody knew more about what you are getting in your department. I feel like there are a lot of nonprofits that have worked around this model of scarcity and prioritizing certain things that might need to be reevaluated.

When I got hired at Common Field, I was surprised of how much I would be making and the benefits I would be receiving. "Oh! I get a technology stipend, I get prorated health care." Which seemed to be like very basic benefits and needs that you should be getting from your job.

08:36 Chris Tyler

I do feel like there has been an investment in staff and I think that that investment in staff has only ever increased. Something I was thinking about earlier was, when I was asked to come on full-time in the fall of 2020, the rate that I was offered, the salary that I was offered, was lower than the salary range for the position. So I emailed back and I was like, hey, my understanding is that the range is actually here. The response I got was, "yes, of course, here." It wasn't complicated. That experience let me feel a level of trust in the organization that I don't know that I've ever felt in an organization.

9:20 Kristel Baldoz

Yeah, similarly.

9:22 Chris Tyler

And it changes how you work.

09:25 **Kristel Baldoz**

Yeah, when I find that the organization values me, then I actually want to do good work, then I actually really want to invest in the organization. For these nonprofits I've worked for, I actually believe in the mission, but the way that I have felt valued because I haven't received proper pay or benefits, makes me question if they are aligned with their mission.

09:51 **Chris Tyler**

That's a really good point. Something I've noticed is that all nonprofits have missions, but not all nonprofits have clearly articulated values. When you articulate your values and you share them out publicly, there's a different, I think, operational responsibility that necessitates that you uphold them in practice. That has been kind of the core saga, and the source of both much hardship, and also much growth and possibility within this organization. We have been wrestling with those values, if those values are being enacted in practice. We've asked ourselves at every level of this organization, those questions very critically, and intensively and...

10:40 **Kristel Baldoz**

And together, and we work on these things together. How was it to hear about our organization closing?

10:50 **Chris Tyler**

Oh my god. That was weird, that was definitely a weird day. It was, it was just, it was such an intense experience because of everything that I had moved through with this organization. After that shock hit, and I had a day, I just took a personal day. And I was like, I need to process this, what is going on? Yeah, it was like "hi, you guys, I'm gonna call out." (I remember that) Which also, we have personal days now. Yes, amazing. They're really useful. Everyone listening to this, who you know, leads an organization, give your staff personal days. I was like..

11:26 **Kristel Baldoz**

Paid personal days, by the way.

11:28 **Chris Tyler**

It just felt so clear that it was the right choice.

And that actually, it was kind of the only way to honor the lessons of that Audit and to uphold the values in our work and practice. I'm bummed on many levels, that we can't continue this work that we're doing together. Also, it's like, no, this is, this is the right decision, given all of the extenuating circumstances. It feels like we actually learned the lesson.

12:04 Kristel Baldoz

I feel like it was really hard when Sheetal and I were talking through the Public Threshold that we would have to make, just feeling really impossible. Then having to restructure the organization, restructure the staff dynamic, by having to let go of people, it just didn't seem right at all. I feel like that's the typical thing that, or the thing that makes sense. But like, what happens when you go against the grain? Maybe we can reevaluate and rethink? Is this actually beneficial for folks? And I feel like that's where the intentionality of the sunseting comes from, is to really stop and reflect and think about, does this organizational structure work?

12:48 Chris Tyler

I think there is more of a focus now on more local and regional projects and practices, relationships networks. I think this question of nation is one that requires more interrogation. Rather than simply a kind of declaration that like "we are the network of the USA." Because, what even is the USA, but you know, settler colonial nightmare? (laughing) Hey! (both laughing)

13:25 Kristel Baldoz

I feel like I've been really proud of this sunseting process, as a way to think about how certain structures that are in place can be reimaged, that work that's more equitable. Because I think that just a lot of people who've worked in the nonprofit industry, right now are just so frustrated. If there's so much frustration, that means that maybe something's not working. So hopefully, this project can serve as a way of maybe rethinking things.

14:04 Chris Tyler

I feel like there has to be a more strategic and creative way that we can think about organizing ourselves as arts and culture workers, and accessing those resources that we need.

[Music fades in]

14:28 **Narrator 1**

And now, Mars and Kevin.

[Music fades out]

14:35 **Kevin Ritter**

Hi, Mars, I'm really excited to be talking about Convenings with you today.

14:41 **Mars Avila**

Yeah, I know, I'm super pumped! Kevin and I, for the listeners, worked together at Common Field on the 2021 Convening, Sustaining Futures.

14:51 **Kevin Ritter**

Um, I think it was a really sort of transformative project for me to work on, and [it] really changed how I think about a lot of things surrounding arts programming.

Should we just like, dive in, I guess?

15:04 **Mars Avila**

Yeah, sure.

15:06 **Kevin Ritter**

I'm curious to hear a little bit about how you came to, this sort of, Convening work?

15:12 **Mars Avila**

I have a background in arts nonprofits, but like, in my personal practice, I make music and I produce music events. I have put together events, you know, two or three weeks out, just sort of like, "hey, like, I know, this space, I know these people, like we'll bring it in, we'll figure it out." But at this scale, you know, there's a lot of relationship building, a lot needs to be planned way farther in advance. You also will come from a conference background.

15:39 **Kevin Ritter**

Yeah. So I had a career, kind of, in arts nonprofits as well. And I was always working in, kind of like, front of house management. But of course, in 2020, things really changed. So I somehow pivoted to doing these sorts of online programs. I think I thought of this in a sort of techno utopian lens, this sort of online space is the way of the future. It's so much more accessible for people. But I think working on this program at Common Field with its commitment to accessibility, made me really question and reframe that intense optimism I had. I haven't totally rejected that idea but things are much more complicated than that, right?

16:33 **Mars Avila**

The series of events that led up to the 2021 Convening *Sustaining Futures* that was made, specifically and intentionally for an online space, I think we were trying to build out this program that centered accessibility at its core. One of our partners from the 2021 Convening was based in a rural area with low access to broadband. I think you did a lot of the work there to work with them, to develop a solution that involved having them be able to gather in space. Do you want to talk a little bit about what that was?

17:11 **Kevin Ritter**

We worked with Racing Magpie to develop a sort of in-person gathering at their space, where people could come and virtually come together and watch the sessions as a group. We also had to think about what gathering in physical space meant in 2021.

17:33 **Mars Avila**

What we took from that into 2022's hybrid program, it seems, the thing that I keep coming back to is accessibility, [it] obviously is a very broad word that could mean a lot for a lot of different people. The best approach is always like a multi-pronged approach. What we tried with 2022's program, our program was intentionally hybrid. There's just been this buzz, like, what are the possibilities of hybrid? What does and could hybrid gathering be? So I think we went into that thinking, we're going to serve all people, that we need to serve. We tried to have robust programming online and in person, we were kind of running two events concurrently, on the same weekend, which is a lot, you know.

18:25 **Kevin Ritter**

I'm curious about hearing more about the Discord and the connectivity. The ability to meet people, and have conversations I would say is one thing that's really sort of lost frequently.

18:40 **Mars Avila**

Yeah. Our hopes for Discord I think were that it would be a place for, network building, right? This conference was meant to highlight work actively being done in Seattle, by Seattle arts organizers, and use that as a model to talk about the shifting landscape in the second year of the pandemic for arts organizers across the country. It was more challenging. The primary goal for using the Discord was to have a resource for community building that could exist beyond the event. I see folks joining still from time to time. So I hope this is going to be a tool that has continued usage for the Seattle folks.

19:24 **Kevin Ritter**

We've had neither write these tools off nor overly embrace them, right?

19:30 **Mars Avila**

Yeah. Completely. The 2021 *Sustaining Futures* was really intentionally national, like with no regional focus. Like the whole program was meant to reflect national voice during the pandemic. 2022 had returned to that regional focus with a national audience, like Seattle regional with the national audience watching. It makes me think that it seems the solutions for this network building have to be different locally versus, you know, nationally.

20:06 **Kevin Ritter**

Yeah, I'm curious to hear a little bit about what gathering locally was like and what that sort of meant to you as someone who kind of, not from Seattle.

20:17 **Mars Avila**

This is the first time that I have produced an event in a community that I am not a part of. It was well, I mean, very humbling, of course; but I think it was an interesting moment. I think what we realized is that - this larger piece of this gathering, that is this relationship building aspect.

A lot of the ways that events like this come together and are impactful and valuable, is like the fact that they're coming from orgs, and organizers that they trust. Like a long part of our development process for this program was developing trust with the organizers, our lead organizers and our partner team in Seattle. We invited on a board of advisors in the summertime, folks from the communities that we were trying to serve- just to ask, "hey, like, what is valuable about this to you? What do you want to see?" I'm really, really glad that we had all of that, you know, all of this relationship building because it would not have been the same event without it. But it takes a long time. It's not something that you can expedite in any way, you know; trust is trust, you have to build it.

How did you feel that was... For the 2021 Convening, did you feel like the relationship building was hampered by it being all digital?

21:48 Kevin Ritter

I do think it was maybe a little different, in that there was almost a sort of individual approach with sort of each partner, their own sorts of things and initiatives and programming their own sessions. Those were relationships you had to be intentional about growing in a way tailored to each person and organization's needs.

I'm also curious about this sort of distinction between the local and the national, because it's not quite such an easy binary. I've been thinking a little bit about who benefits from that sort of arrangement? How do local communities benefit from that sort of event? And what benefit is it to the visitors who are coming into that community to learn from them?

22:40 Mars Avila

Yeah, totally. I, you know, I think this was hit on in the Audit. One of the pieces of feedback that we would get was that once it's over, what is the benefit to the organizers who put a lot into producing this event? Where is the lasting, enduring, you know, continued support? It's one of the reasons why we tried to create the Discord this year as a place for folks to stay connected and continue resource sharing.

Do you have thoughts on that? What do you think about value?

23:13 Kevin Ritter

I do think there is probably some value for you and your community in doing the work of organizing, it can be clarifying and helpful to tell the story of the breadth and depth of work you're doing. But I do have serious questions about how that helps in the long term. There's definitely value in learning from communities, but you have to be intentional. There's not an easy way to lift the model from Seattle, and then plop it down, as is, here in Brooklyn where I live.

23:53 Mars Avila

Right? It almost feels like you have to like... There's like a lot of intentional learning that you have to do as a visitor about the context.

24:03 Kevin Ritter

Yeah. What else does the future hold for artists [organizations]?

24:06 Mars Avila

Casual (laughing) no, just a small question. I'd love to see more experimental models for connectivity and support. I feel like there's a real chance to change up some of the support structures for arts organizers and arts organizing, and I'd like to see it, you know, diversify. What about you?

24:33 Kevin Ritter

I think lessons I've learned that I would like to continue in my work is not thinking of accessibility as sort of a one siloed thing; there's lots of different forms of accessibility that we've only but touched on here. These are all sorts of interlocking things. Thinking about it holistically, I think it is important for the field as it continues to gather and move forward.

25:02 Mars Avila

Totally, totally. Kevin, it has been a pleasure.

25:06 Kevin Ritter

It was a pleasure to speak with you too. And thanks for talking to me.

25:10 Mars Avila

Yeah, thank you.

[Music fades in]

25:19

And now, Amanda and Hannah.

[Music fades out]

25:24 **Amanda Choo Quan**

So Hannah, hey, I don't know (laughing) how we even begin to pass through our experience at Common Field, which has been like a lifetime ago. I'm Amanda Choo Quan, I used to work at Common Field. Now, I do not work in nonprofits at all. I am a student at USC in a Ph. D. program in creative writing.

25:50 **Hannah Grossman**

My name is Hannah Grossman. Amanda and I worked at Common Field at the same time. We were producing the Los Angeles conference and, all collateral sort of programmatic content having to do with that conference. I direct a commercial gallery in Los Angeles. It's nice to be in touch again, obviously. I know that, you know, we're sort of jumping in to talk about specific things. But it's nice to have an opportunity to sort of reconnect around some of some of the experiences that we had.

26:21 **Amanda Choo Quan**

So Hannah worked in programming. And I worked in communications and membership management? Which probably isn't my title, so let's just roll with it. (laughing) Yeah, what did you learn?

26:36 **Hannah Grossman**

When I actually started working at Common Field, I was actually also at USC in a graduate program. I was just finishing a master's program, a curatorial program—moved to Los Angeles, you know, to go to art school. I started really on the tailend of being in this program, where I had been doing a lot of writing and thinking about how I wanted to be involved specifically in sort of community-oriented organizing. And so, when I heard about Common Field, I think that I sort of came to the work wondering about this notion that there could be in fact, this larger itinerant network of connectivity, of different kinds of experimental and artist-run organizations. I love the idea of information sharing. I'd always been interested and yeah, Amanda, you were at CalArts at the time.

27:25 **Amanda Choo Quan**

Yeah, I just graduated. To be real frank, because I am not American, I was just looking for a way to stay in the country; I was looking for a job. So I was already kind of doing that within the literary world, I was hosting my own events and that kind of thing. You know, I knew nobody when I came to LA, so I was really, really, really invested in just meeting people, networking, and building community in a way that felt really authentic. So Common Field seemed like, stumbling into this new space that I knew nothing about except for what I had learned at CalArts, which, you know, wasn't like a neutral form of learning. It was a real white space. The art scene in LA felt really prohibitive, really clicky. So yeah, so there was interest and there was fear. I kind of want to know, what kinds of feelings do you have about taking up the position? Did they change over time?

28:18 **Hannah Grossman**

My experience is one that was very interesting, because of the nature of the national scale and scope of this conference. I think we learned a lot about and met a lot of people who were doing different kinds of work in different parts of the country. For that reason, the organization has a lot of real inherent value, just as a point of exposure and access to information for people to sort of be aware of what other people are doing. That was a quality of this organization that a lot of people really admired and found quite necessary. I think I was really drawn to aspects of that work. I don't know, in practice, like working for the organization, I think that's always the hard thing, right? I think it's when you're doing the labor of it, I think it also removes you from being able to be an active participant in other parts of it, perhaps some of the more interesting and joyful parts of it. But, what about you, Amanda? How would you answer that question?

29:15 **Amanda Choo Quan**

It made me think of a bunch of things. The first being like, how pleasurable it has been to watch the trajectory of your career, just like kind of after an experience that was maddening and sort of joyful. I will say joyful in terms of, we're able to bond through some real intense stuff. I will say, in relation to what you said about not being able to actually experience the Convening because we were so busy working for it. I think we were chosen because we were already part of that community.

So serving that community but not being asked to contribute was a little bit weird. I think I resolved some of the problems that were brought up during working at Common Field. All of these questions I was asking myself about, do I belong here? What purpose do I serve? And, yeah, I resolved some of those things. I think maybe it took Common Field, to really bring those questions to the fore. And it took leaving America to really answer that (laughing).

But I worked with refugees, I worked at the UN, these were not things that I thought that I would be capable of doing. But I do think it was like a milestone in my development. So that's something I can credit for, for good or for bad.

30:37 Hannah Grossman

I mean, for me as well. I think it felt like a real point of rupture, I think, around some of the ideological frameworks that I had been relying on to understand my place within this work. So, I just think that the organization changed shape very dramatically, when it moved to Los Angeles, largely because it then became centered somewhere. You know, the organization's structurally changed towards being something that was perhaps more of a nonprofit in a traditional sense, in a way that was more legible, even if just sort of public facingly. What is being left as the legacy of this work and sort of how people are thinking about the history of this organization? And, what it is sort of making space for in its wake and other ways. I think that, something that when we talk about wishing that we could have sat in sessions; I did [sit in], perhaps whether or not it was allowed, which was all about sort of intentionally sunseting organizations, and I found it incredibly inspiring.

I remember talking to a bunch of different people feeling some sense of relief and purpose from even the possibility of being able to talk about what happens when something chooses no longer to exist. You know, having come from I admittedly, I think, the archival quality of the importance of the work that had happened previously, is invaluable in a lot of ways. I mean, these histories, especially archiving these histories, and recording these histories, and making them accessible, I just think about people that I know who started their own nonprofits, and I had no idea what they were doing. But just being in community with other people who could sort of give you some sense of, any kind of knowledge of relationship, I think, was a really, really important part of it.

32:21 **Amanda Choo Quan**

I met with some of them, some of them became mentors; because of my prep for this, and [what] we're talking about, one of those people has sort of become, my sort of stand-in grandma, in a way. I hope she's not offended by that. But she's like an elder in the arts organizing community, who is one of the rare Caribbean immigrants that I've seen occupy some of those roles, and which also is, my descriptor, my identity. Because we recognized each other, as from the same country and same nationality, we've connected and been pretty strong ever since. I credit her with some of the really amazing opportunities I've had since then.

Another interesting thing you were saying was about this idea of being itinerant, but also about being grounded in a particular geographical location.

33:14 **Hannah Grossman**

Yeah. When you mentioned something about wanting the organization to just be able to sort of exist as a conference, I think it's so funny, because that for me, I think of its most valuable quality as being a library of information. (laughing) I love the idea of a Convening. I think, in theory, having attended many conferences of all kinds. I have a threshold for how much I feel like I'm actually able to absorb. So I feel generally that something that I really appreciate about so many of the organizations that chose to participate in this work and in these Convenings, were willing to also... and I remember, Amanda, because you were working on these, and I know that these tools sort of preceded the Los Angeles Convening, and I believe continued to be produced. But, there are lots of different kinds of information shares that were happening, different kinds of publications, different kinds of online resource guides. Even the website functionally in a major redesign was intended to sort of shift over to being this other kind of network, this other kind of resource where people could really learn about what other people were working on, have boards that were engaging, that we're both classified, but also skill related, that people can upload materials that it could really become a database in many ways. But I think I just want to make sure that I thank you Amanda personally, and also a lot of the people that I worked with. I think without even realizing, they were going to be some of the most influential people that I worked with throughout the process of working with Common Field. I think that was both incredibly powerful and I think it really sort of changed a lot of things for me, and helped me understand things about my own positionality in this work in a way that felt much more action oriented.

I feel excited to see what happens now, where perhaps a hole might be formed in the absence of this kind of an organization. I know there are many different kinds of organizations doing not totally dissimilar work. There are so many exciting voices, and perspectives that I really look forward to seeing sort of what sort of bubbles up I think—where people find new ways to be in community and continue to develop ways they're already in community, in ways that are perhaps accessible to larger swaths of people and geographic lines and regions.

35:49 **Amanda Choo Quan**

Yeah, even serving the purpose of [an] archive is sort of not, you know, it's not a hole, it's a transformation. When everything is archived, everything becomes really important. Even if it did work out, if it was hard, or if it was grueling or annoying, it all kind of serves a purpose. Yeah, you know, it really was a pleasure working with you as well. I do feel prompted to reminisce on things in a different way, now that I've grown. But my final thought is that it is possible to go through something really difficult, and then be happy. Any final thoughts, Hannah?

36:30 **Hannah Grossman**

I think I am excited to see what everyone is doing, in response to wanting to share the work that they're making with communities. I think that the work that the organization is doing in sunseting is incredibly important, and I think it's been done with a lot of care. I just wanted to say thank you for that as well.

[Music fades in]

36:53 **Narrator 2**

Thank you for listening to this episode of Common Work: Learnings for the Future from Common Field. This project was produced with Chris Tyler and Raquel DuToit, graphic design by Alexa Smithwick and copyediting by Nicolay Duque-Robayo. Jack Straw Cultural Center recorded, edited and produced this podcast series. Common Work: Learnings for the Future from Common Field was developed and curated by Sheetal Prajapati in collaboration with the Common Field team.

37:25 **Narrator 3**

Theme music by Josh Nucci. Common Field would like to thank The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, whose significant and ongoing support of the organization has made this work possible since 2013.

[Music fades out]