



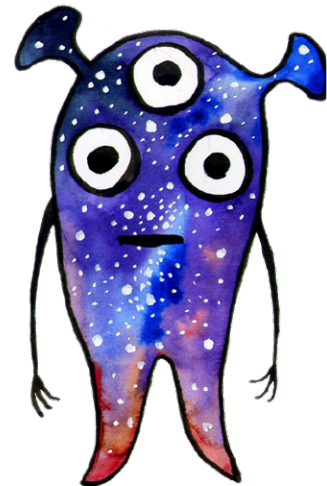
State of the Arts

Arts Managers

in Foreign Regions

Arts and cultural managers cannot travel at the moment. But it is still possible to learn a lot from the experiences of professionals who have spent a long time in completely different cultural contexts and felt like legal aliens there.

Focus starting on page 17



Feeling like legal aliens

This issue aims to explore the potentials, such as personal development and the broadening of individual horizons and perceptions, that arise when arts and cultural managers work in a region for a longer time that in many aspects is different from their previous living context. But it also shows the difficulties that may occur under such circumstances, even with the best of intentions, anticipation and the will to create. When we began working on this issue, international cooperation and stays abroad in the arts and cultural sector were flourishing. At the same time, the difficulties of such forms of international and intercultural exchange became increasingly clear and were also discussed more intensively: Power hierarchies and the dominance of primarily Western regions and cultural management approaches, verbal and non-verbal communication difficulties, unequal financial conditions, and so on. Now, due to COVID-19 the cultural sector has been at a standstill for about two months in most countries of the world. And even though much will change, we hope that this will not diminish the important role of arts and culture for intercultural encounters and that, thanks to digital communication, cooperation across national and cultural borders will continue to exist. In the meantime, we hope that this issue will contribute to a deeper reflection and that it will positively change the efforts regarding internationalization in the arts and cultural sector.

State of the Arts

Dirk Schütz
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BOOK REVIEW

Music Practices across Borders: (E)Valuating Space, Diversity and Exchange

Transnational music practices have been paid large attention to by musicians, arts management professionals, social scientists as well as internet-mediated audiences. This book addresses these practices and how musical genres are interconnected by mass migration and globalisation.

by **Xiao (Lucia) Lu**

http://bit.ly/review_music_across_borders

ARTS MANAGEMENT & COVID19

**The cultural ecosystem endangered**

Analysis of the likely impacts of COVID-19 show that there will be no ‚back to normal‘ for the cultural sector. This first of a series of three articles shows why the sector will be globally (but not equally) affected and what can we expect.

by **Beth Ponte**

https://bit.ly/COVID_culture_pt1

SERIES „ARTIST ENTREPRENEURS“

Our series on and for artist entrepreneurs presents approaches for skill and strategy development, as well as examples of self-employed artists from different cultural sectors, art forms and world regions. They all show: In order to be successful as an artist and self-trained manager, you need artistic, but also entrepreneurial creativity and professionalism.

https://bit.ly/AMN_series_artist_entrepreneurs

AN EXERCISE IN AUTONOMY

Building a Cultural Space and its Framework in the Brazilian Countryside

The creation of a self-managed cultural space is not an easy task. Bruno Vilela, educator, curator and founder of the Área Criativa project in an indigene community of former enslaved people in Brazil, talks about the work and methodology that raised a local „Open Roof Space“.

interview by **Lorena Vicini**

https://bit.ly/ETA_Pinhoes

BOOK REVIEW

Museum Cooperation between Africa and Europe. A New Field for Museum Studies

The restitution of African objects in European museums has been widely debated after French President Macron’s important call in November 2017. This publication does not provide solutions to the manifold issues raised in this debate but shows a number of useful ways forward for working with contested colonial collections across the two continents.

by **Annika Hampel**

https://bit.ly/Review_MuseumCoops_Africa_Europe

THEATRE MANAGEMENT IN CHINA

The Rapid Rise of the Poly Theatre Management Company

Beijing Poly Theatre Management, a state-owned company founded in 2003 in China, has become the world’s largest theatre chain and performing arts agency. This article tries to delve into the reasons why the company could grow so fast in less than two decades and the key role it has been playing.

by **Tan Shuo**

http://bit.ly/PTM_China

Reading for change

Artist at Work Proximity of Art and Capitalism

Bojana Kunst,

Zero Books 2015

This book offers new questions and thinking of how cultural production and creative processes (by artists & artists with communities) feed, resist, and are shaped by capitalist systems. In other ways, this collection of essays also prompts questions of how we define labour: the interpretation of 'time' and 'work' in a world shaped by project working and entrepreneurial thinking. I would recommend it for researchers & practitioners thinking about how we refashion our ways of working and work in the arts field in the coming years.

Decolonising Methodologies

Linda Tuhiwai Smith,

Zed Books 2012 (2nd edition)

This book is a valuable starting point to challenge or 'de-westernise' scholarly disciplines and theoretical approaches rooted in imperialism. It proposes that decolonising research itself is an essential component of this process. Now more than ever, the fields of arts management and cultural policy are reflecting on their purpose in a significantly altered world. This is a moment of re-localising and deglobalizing that may last for some time. This book's attention to how we understand the individual, society, space from the position of the indigenous and colonised has significant value in how we think of our future research approaches.

The Curfew Tower is Many Things

Bill Drummond (ed.)

Penkiln Burn 2015

Better known as part of pop group The KLF, Bill Drummond is the owner and guardian of a 19th century curfew tower, a prison in the small village Cushendall in Northern Ireland. This publication is a collection of short extracts from writers who stayed there over one year. It was given free to local residents and left in public spaces with a small print run for sale to cover printing costs. No one was paid, no one was funded. Notwithstanding challenges to writers' livelihoods, the book is an example of de-economised cultural production, distribution and collaboration. It situates the writers and an historic site within the community and reminds us that there are different ways to think how arts and culture are put into the public realm.



Dr Ali FitzGibbon is a Lecturer in Creative & Cultural Industries Management and Subject Lead for Arts Management & Cultural at Policy Queen's University Belfast. She has worked as a producer, programmer, researcher, fundraiser and arts/non-profit consultant on an international level for over 25 years.

If you like to share your reading tips, just write us an email to office @artsmanagement.net!

Past, Present and Future of Arts and Humanities Education

By D. Paul Schafer

An education in the arts or the humanities is considered unprofitable “fun” in many parts of the world today. Academics and cultural managers try to counteract this image. In order to do so, they need to understand how this image emerged. Today, one important factor to change the image of the arts and humanities is arts education in school, higher education and in arts and cultural institutions around the world.

How the arts and humanities lost their role

There is no doubt about what the most important factor was in determining the present context of arts education. It was the publication of C. P. Snow’s book *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* in 1959. In this book, Snow made the case that intellectual life in the western world was divided into two cultures – the artistic-humanistic culture and the scientific culture. To Snow, this was a real hinderance in coming to grips with the world’s problems at that time because the artistic-humanistic culture was given too much and the scientific culture too little attention in western countries and their educational systems. Snow made such a powerful case for giving more attention to the sciences and scientific education that a shift began to occur away from the arts, humanities, and an artistic-humanistic education. It wasn’t long after this that the sciences were treated as “hard subjects” and the arts and humanities as “soft subjects.” This was accompanied by a shift in favour of the sciences in educational institutions in the western world.

If this practice had been limited to education, Snow's case may not have had the powerful effect it eventually had in determining the present context of arts education. But it was not to be. Not long afterwards, this determination became popular in the western world as a whole. This is because science was linked to economics, politics, industry, and technology – and therefore the beliefs of businessmen, politicians, civil servants, corporations, and governments. And much as Snow had proposed, it was seen as the key to solving the world's most difficult problems and returning to the economic age after the stock market crash and the Great Depression in the 1920s and 30s, the Second World War and post-war recovery. By this time, it was no longer a case of treating the sciences as hard subjects and the arts and humanities as soft subjects. More fundamentally, it was a case of treating the sciences as “hard activities” – the important “basics of life” – and the arts and humanities as “soft activities” – “the frills in life” as part of people's “spare time.” Viewing activities in this way now was entrenched also in the minds of citizens and the “Snow thesis” became a macrosocial phenomenon. Visualized and dealt with in this way, artistic and humanistic activities had little to do with the necessities and essentials of life. Their purpose was to “round people out” and make them more civilized, as well as provide them with recreation and entertainment.

„Visualized and dealt with in this way, artistic and humanistic activities had little to do with the necessities and essentials of life.“

When Snow saw what was happening, he wrote a second book on this subject in 1963 called *The Two Cultures: And a Second Look: An Expanded Version of the Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*. In this book, Snow attempted to rectify the rift that had developed between the arts and humanities on the one hand and the sciences on the other. However, it was too late. The pendulum was swinging away from the arts and humanities and towards the sciences and Snow was powerless to prevent it, as often happens in situations that get polarized like this.

The impact on education

In the years to follow, courses and programs in the arts and humanities began to be cut in many educational institutions throughout the world

because a much lower priority was placed on them in both the curricular and extra-curricular sense. This worsened in the final decades of the twentieth century and first decades of the twenty-first century, especially as this practice became more commonplace and entrenched in governments and educational systems around the world.

As this occurred, arts educators were confronted with a very difficult problem in more and more countries because they were forced to decide what courses and programs would be cut and what would be maintained. Seen and treated largely as recreational, entertainment, and leisure-time activities – and valued primarily for their economic benefits – arts educators had to make the best of a dreadful situation. This was not an easy task, since the context of arts education was stacked against them. Nevertheless, they fought back, and began to justify arts educational courses and programs not only for their ability to teach students to play musical instruments, paint pictures, act in plays, dance, write, and prepare people for enjoying the arts later in life, but also for their ability to address important social and cultural issues and stimulate people’s creativity.

An excellent illustration of this “added dimension of arts education” was the creation of the “Seoul Agenda” produced by delegates at the Second World Conference on Arts Education convened by UNESCO in Seoul, South Korea in 2010. Included among the goals and objectives of this Agenda were:

- Apply arts education principles and practices to contribute to resolving the social and cultural challenges facing today’s world;
- Support and enhance the role of arts education in the promotion of social responsibility, social cohesion, cultural diversity, and intercultural dialogue; and
- Affirm arts education as the foundation for balanced creative, cognitive, emotional, aesthetic, and social development of children, youth, and life-long learning.

This describes the present context of arts education in most parts of the world. It is still heavily oriented towards seeing and treating arts education as a soft activity, arts educational courses and programs as soft courses and programs, preparing students for living in an economic age where the arts are valued primarily for their leisure-time abilities and economic impact, and, more recently, focusing on their ability to come to grips with important socio-cultural issues and stimulate individual and collective creativity.

This context manifests itself conspicuously in Canada, where I live, when students in secondary schools talk about the need to take the “six pack” – three sciences and three maths – if they want to get into a good university, receive more job offers, land a better job, bring home a bigger pay cheque, and enjoy a higher standard of living. This is endorsed by many parents who are reluctant to see their children get involved in arts education and especially think about a career in the arts.

The impact on society

Fortunately for arts education and arts educators, “the moving finger writes, and having writ, moves on” as the Persian poet, Omar Khayyam, stated in his poem “The Rubáiyát”, translated into English by Edward FitzGerald in 1859. Clearly the moving finger is writing a great deal these days, moving on and exposing some very difficult and dangerous global problems in the process. Over the last few decades, powerful signs have been emitted that the economic age is not capable of coming to grips with current global problems. Not only is it having a devastating effect on the environment and producing colossal disparities in income and wealth, but also it is not able to come to grips with the hostilities and conflicts that are erupting throughout the world due to the increased interaction of people, groups, cultures, and religions with very different worldviews, values, traditions, customs, beliefs, and ways of life.

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To do this, it is necessary to pass out of the economic age and into a cultural age. Whereas the economic age makes economics and economies in the partial sense the principal preoccupation of global development and human affairs, a cultural age would make culture and cultures in the holistic sense of the development of societies the principal preoccupation. Hence the central priority of a cultural age would be to achieve balance and harmony between the many different factors, forces, disciplines, and activities that constitute sustainable development and environmental and human well-being. It would also provide a much better context for arts education because

¹ See e.g. the research of the [International Laboratory for Brain, Music, and Sound Research \(BRAMS\)](#); the studies by Jonathan Burdette, a neuroaudiologist at Walk Forest Baptist Medical Centre; or the studies and empirical evidences by the International Arts+Mind Lab of the Brain Science Institute at John's Hopkins School of Medicine as well as by the Scientific Research Institute of Spiritual Development of Man and UNESCO Chair "Spiritual and Cultural Values of Upbringing and Education" at Volodymyr Dahl East Ukrainian National University in Kyiv.

there has been an intimate connection and incredible bond between the arts and culture going back to classical times.

There are many signs to confirm that things are moving in a favourable direction in this regard. One of the most important of these signs is the rapidly evolving realization that arts and culture in general – and their education in particular – have an essential role to play at all stages and ages in life, from the earliest to the final days of life. These signs also indicate that arts and culture have a major role to play in dealing with different types of illnesses and diseases, such as depression, anxiety, autism, Parkinson's, ALS, Alzheimers, and many others.

New synergies between sciences and the arts

What is kind of ironic about this is the fact that the sciences are playing a key role in this area. This is because they are shedding a great deal of light on the nature and functioning of the human brain, the interaction between the right and left hemispheres of the brain, and the necessity of achieving balance and harmony between these two if good health and well-being are to be assured. Scientists involved in Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI), for instance, have discovered that music provides "a total workout for the brain" whereas most other activities provide only "a partial workout for the brain." This is because music stimulates blood flow, the brain, the mind, the body, the senses, and all other human organs and faculties. It also reduces blood pressure and relieves pain, improves sleep, increases motivation and mental awareness, and enhances memory.¹

Empirical and scientific findings like this have not only been revealed in music, but also in other art forms. Take the visual arts as another example of this. Scientific research has confirmed that paintings enhance many brain functions by having an impact on brain wave patterns and emotions, the nervous system, and increased serotonin levels, as well as neural systems that yield a broad range of additional benefits such as motor skills, creativity, and improved emotional harmony. And this is not all. Research conducted by Professor Semir Keki, Chair in neuroaesthetics at University College, London, has revealed that "there is a strong activity in that part of the brain that is related to pleasure" And blood flow increases in certain parts of the brain quite considerably when people look at paintings.

These studies, and many others, confirm that the arts and sciences – like arts education and science education – are mutually complementary rather than mutually exclusive, and cooperative rather than competitive when it comes to researching and finding solutions to a whole set of basic human problems and improving people’s health and well-being. In other words, the pendulum has started to swing back towards the centre rather than remaining stuck on one side, just as most people in the arts and likely many people in the sciences have hoped. Studies and findings like these that are taking place throughout the world confirm that the time is ripe to visualize and deal with arts education in a whole new way in educational systems and institutions around the world.

„These studies confirm that the arts and sciences are mutually complementary rather than mutually exclusive.“

Rather than cutting back on arts education courses and programs, it is time to broaden, deepen, diversify, and intensify arts and cultural education in schools, adult education institutions and learning centres throughout the world. Not only does the emerging cultural age confirm that arts and culture have a central rather than marginal role to play in society, but also it provides a much better context for developing arts and cultural education in the future. In Part II of this article, I will delve into how this change in context affects the contents of arts education.

Broaden, Deepen, Diversify, Intensify

One major development is to broaden the scope of arts education to include not only the performing, exhibiting, and literary arts but also the film, photographic, architectural, design, environmental, culinary, material, and language arts, as well as what different countries deem to be arts in the first place. In Japan, for example, tree-dwarfing and flower-arranging are considered art forms, just as calligraphy is in China or in Arab countries and tattooing in Tanzania. Without doubt, there is a great deal to be learned from each of these art forms, and others such as the horticultural arts, that appear less frequently on the list but are extremely important in the diverse and globalized world we are living in today. What is true for the scope of arts education is also true for artistic styles. This counts especially with respect to what is usually referred to as the “classical arts” and the “popular

arts.” Surely it is time to incorporate more popular art forms into arts educational curriculums, courses, and programs in the world, such as folk music and art, art in public places, street theatre, wall murals, popular and country music, ethnic dancing, jazz, and so forth.

There is a great deal to be learned from all these different styles. This can be achieved by understanding the social context and class structures that have been created over many centuries and separate these different styles, as well as focusing much more attention on the pedagogical benefits and educational rewards that accrue from this. As Leonard Cohen said in his popular song “Anthem,” “Forget your perfect offering. There is a crack, a crack in everything. That’s how the light gets in.”

Then there are the different art genres. If, as the saying goes, “all is known by comparison,” then it makes a great deal of sense to compare and contrast different artistic genres, especially in various periods of history and different parts of the world. What are the similarities and differences, for example, between the arts in the ancient, medieval, early modern, and contemporary periods of history in diverse parts of the world, as well as between musical and visual art genres in different countries of the world? What are the major differences between occidental and oriental art, or, to push the point a bit further, between music as it evolved in England, Germany, France, Spain, Russia, and Japan over the last four hundred years? What do differences here say about other aspects of the cultures of these countries, as well as their different worldviews, values, and ways of life?

There is also the creative dimension of arts education. While most arts and humanities educational programs around the world are strong in performing, analyzing or organizing performing, exhibiting, literary, and presentational arts, they are less strong and often weak on the creative side, largely because far less attention has been paid to this particular dimension of the arts in both the historical and contemporary sense. This has been addressed in music education by the Canadian composer, author, and educator, R. Murray Schafer, who worked in many classrooms in elementary, secondary, and post-secondary schools in Canada, United States, Europe, and South America. He took an approach to music education that was based much more on exploring sound, soundscapes, and composing music than on melodies, learning to play musical instruments, and performing music. While his approach was strongly resisted at the beginning, the international popularity of his many books on this subject – such as *Composer in the Class-*

room; Ear Clearing: Notes for an Experimental Music Course; Creative Music Education: A Handbook for the Modern Music Teacher; and especially The Thinking Ear: Complete Writings on Music Education – confirm that there is a great deal to be learned from taking a creative and experimental approach to music education.

In the comprehensive and full-fledged arts education curriculum of the type advocated here, a great deal more attention would be given to the multiplicity of ways in which the arts can enhance and enrich our knowledge, understanding, awareness, and appreciation of both the natural and the human-made worlds. As far as the natural world is concerned, the mind boggles at how many artistic works have been created over the centuries that are concerned with this world in all its diverse forms and dimensions, and especially how it cleans, expresses, and manifests itself, creates communication among its myriad components, and connects everybody and everything in different ways. There are millions of artistic works that do this. While they provide an incredible amount of pleasure in a recreational and entertainment sense, they also expand our comprehension and affection for the natural world immensely, especially at a time when we are losing contact with nature and the natural environment due to increased urbanization and other factors when this is required more than ever.

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This brings us to the human-made world, which is also composed of countless elements, ingredients, and complex entities such as towns, cities, countries, cultures, civilizations, and the universal cultural heritage of humankind. There is a vast reservoir of artistic works in this world that can not only be enjoyed and appreciated, but also studied in great depth through the arts and humanities because the arts teach us a great deal about how people in the past and present in every part of the world have imprinted their thoughts, ideas, and beliefs on a very specific piece of the world’s geography. This is especially true for artistic works that are “symbolic” of towns, cities, countries, cultures, civilizations, and the cultural heritage of humankind in the all-encompassing sense that have countless stories to convey

about them. They act as “gateways” to cultural creations as dynamic and organic wholes and total ways of life that are constantly evolving, changing, transforming, and transcending.

In the case of United States, one person that has contributed a lot to our understanding of this miraculous symbolic process and holistic capability is the American documentary filmmaker Ken Burns. He has demonstrated an uncanny knack for selecting works of art – as well as specific people, events, stories, and achievements – that are not only significant in their own right, but also highly representative of American culture as a whole and total way of life. This is also true for the works of many other American artists, such as Andy Warhol, Jackson Pollock, and Georgia O’Keeffe through their paintings, as well as Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein II, Irving Berlin, Aaron Copland, Samuel Barber, Leonard Bernstein, and a host of others through their music and especially such favorites as the Sound of Music, “God Bless America,” “Adagio for Strings.” Appalachian Spring, or West Side Story. These works convey a great deal about what this culture and way of life are really all about in the all-inclusive sense.

There are also artists from other cultures and regions who have created art that represents their way of life as a whole. This underlines the indispensable role the arts and artists play in this symbolic and all-encompassing process. Think, for example, of the symbolic importance of artistic works by Rabindranath Tagore and Ravi Shankar in Indian culture, Gabriel Garcia Márquez in Columbian culture, Gabriela Mistral in Chilean culture, or Jorge Luis Borges and Astor Piazzolla in Argentinian culture. To engage with such art works should be one of the principal goals of all arts educators and arts educational courses in the future, namely to teach students to create portraits of their own cultures and the cultures of other countries as wholes or total ways of life through symbolic works of art by their own and other artists using this same representative process. If, as Gandhi said, „a nation’s culture resides in the hearts and the soul of its people”, then without doubt the arts are the gateway to this.

Finally, there is the universal cultural heritage of humankind. Due to countless technological advances and the work of UNESCO over the last five or six decades, it is now possible for teachers and students in many countries, cultures, and schools in the world – as well as at most levels of the educational system – to gain access to and information about almost every element and item included in this heritage. Not only is this a remarkable achievement

at present, but also it promises to be an even more remarkable achievement in the future. This is where the tangible and intangible heritages of all the diverse countries of the world – historic monuments and sites, cherished urban and rural districts, communities, and hubs, priceless architectural masterpieces, exquisite poems, rare paintings, stories, songs, and dances, captivating and challenging games, literary heavyweights, oral traditions, and so forth – come to light and shine brightly in the world. Should this not also be an indispensable part of all arts and humanities educational courses, programs, and curriculums in the future?

While all people will benefit immensely from the type of comprehensive arts educational curriculum espoused here, it will be particularly helpful to young people and future generations. Through teachers, courses, technology, social platforms, and cultural networks they are able to gain access to most historical and contemporary works of art by every artist in the world. My experiences in arts education and studies in culture and cultures over many years have convinced me that artistic, educational, and cultural experiences like this are capable of producing exquisite feelings, emotions, and sensations, powerful images, evocative ideas, and spiritual states that are without equal and border on the ethereal, the sublime, and the divine. This is something that young people and future generations in all parts of the world should think about very seriously and very often, especially because it does not carry any health risks or personal dangers and yields numerous rewards that can be enjoyed, cherished, and appreciated over a lifetime.

One doesn't have to stretch the mind or imagination very far to conjure up all the benefits and opportunities that can be derived by people of all ages and classes everywhere in the world from arts and humanities educational courses, programs, and curriculums like this. Not only will this enhance people's knowledge and understanding of their own culture, other cultures, and the natural environment – thereby enhancing their awareness of the need to engage in environmental conservation and reduce the tensions and conflicts that arise from an inability to understand the different cultures and civilizations of the world – but also it will open up an endless array of rewards and possibilities that can be reaped and enjoyed throughout life.

We have progressed with the need to broaden, deepen, diversify, and intensify arts education in the world long enough to realize how valuable this would be in terms of coming to grips with some of humanity's greatest problems and challenges as well as most fundamental needs and requirements

going forward into the future. Not only will this open the doors to a whole new era in the history of the arts and humanities in general and arts and humanistic education in particular, but also it will come at a time when this is of crucial importance to people and countries in all parts of the world and the world as a whole.

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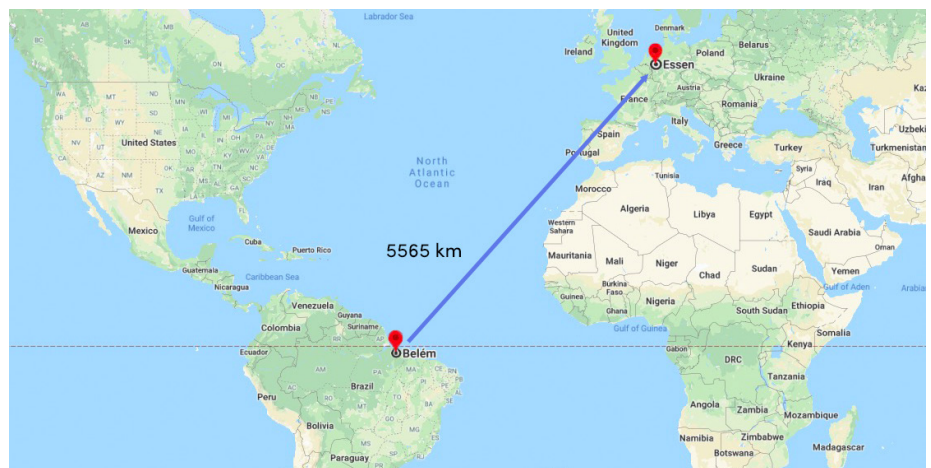
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Reflections on cultural mobility through a post-colonial lens

From the (so-called) South to North

By Suelen Silva

I moved from Brazil to Germany in 2018 when I was selected for the German Chancellor Fellowship Programme by Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. Already before, but even more during my time here, I not only learned and researched on the differences in Cultural Management and Cultural Policy, but further the higher number of opportunities that exist for cultural managers and artists from the Global North compared to those from the South (as these terms have been coined) became apparent to me.¹ The particularities that I faced to be able to move to Germany, as well as some professional and personal experiences I had when already here, made me reflect on the resemblances and differences between me and other cultural professionals who are also in a situation of mobility. Why, even though we



¹ Classifications that operate through dualisms “civilized x savage”, “normal x exotic”, “objective x subjective”, “rational x emotional”, “North x South” are a tool whose origin is colonial, as observed by post-colonial critique. For an introduction on the matter, consult Ashcroft (et al.) 1995.

² Until February 2020, in Germany, for instance, for non-European experts to apply for a working visa they would need to have a job proposal offering an annual earning over 45,530 euros. Besides that, there was a list of professions “on demand” in the country and which the bureaucratic apparatus saw as “suitable” to non-Germans/Europeans (none of them in the cultural field). This law, to say the least, went against the increasing debate on the need to have more diversity among German cultural institutions staff. A new and less rigid law came into force in March 2020.

are in similar situations (that is, working – or trying to work – in a context other than our own), our experiences can sometimes be so diverse? Why wasn’t feeling “out of place” or “like an alien” something new to me, or something I felt only after I arrived in Europe? In this brief text, I’d like to particularly address some inequalities related to the access to and exercise of cultural mobility.

Choices?

Whereas the phenomenon of internationalization of cultural management is a field yet to be better understood (see e.g. Henze 2018 and Mandel 2017), it is relevant to observe under which conditions it takes place and (in) which unbalance it has been reproducing (itself). Why such a reflection is necessary, becomes especially obvious when one looks at the issue of cultural mobility.

First, let’s recall that global North professionals have more chances of mobility when compared to global South ones. In other words, chances to visit, work, or live in a different country will depend on where your passport was issued. This fact was confirmed in the [most recent Unesco Convention Monitoring Report](#). The 2018 report informs that, for instance, cultural professionals from the global North don’t need a visa to enter 156 countries, whereas, for professionals from the South, the number drops to 75. Besides, global South professionals have access to only 18% of mobility funds from the North. The report indicates that this gap will remain unless joint efforts are adopted, as measures that favor South professionals.

“Chances to visit, work, or live in a different country will depend on where your passport was issued.”

Moreover, if we consider the restrictive laws some countries adopt to grant working visas to foreigners, we see that working abroad for an extended period is something far beyond a simple personal choice (see Spivak 1988 on the “power of choice of subalterns”), for it is a process cross-cut by instances of economic and geopolitical powers at various levels.²

At the micro level, these macro dynamics of power can greatly influence the lives, career paths and possibilities of cultural professionals abroad. For instance, I recently had to give up two interesting short-term jobs in

³ Mandel (2017) pointed out that some common tools (such as schedules, budgeting, etc.) can be explained by the predominance of Anglo-American literature, which again reflects how power dynamics of scientific production, dissemination, and legitimization influence the field.

my area, due to limitations on my current residence permit in Germany. A colleague, also in the cultural field, shared that one of her motivations for seeking to establish herself in Europe was the fact that she was under political persecution in Turkey. Not a long time ago, a Brazilian colleague shared that, despite many years in Germany working as a freelancer, he was considering returning to Brazil not because he wanted to, but because the frequent bureaucracy to keep living here (and the impossibility of a working visa permit) was affecting his mental health.

That said, it is worth asking: Is there a typical (geographic, ethnic, gender, age etc.) profile of cultural professionals working in international contexts and/or (re)building a career in a place that is not their places of origin? How much does the origin of these professionals influence their motivations for the said change (work possibilities, personal/social risk in their place of birth, etc.)? And under what conditions does that profile influence their career chances?

Listening to learn or silencing imposed?

When I arrived in Germany, I already had seven years of experience in the field of cultural management in Brazil, as well as personal contact to peers from other countries, such as Argentina, Germany, Bolivia, Spain, France, and Peru.

Because of this background, I noticed that, although some of us have common elements/ understandings of cultural management, the strategies and goals of our practices mainly relate to the realities in/for which we develop these practices.³ And, if we recall that cultural management especially in



The Kunstverein (art association) in Lingen, Germany. © City of Lingen (left).

Production of a Brazilian artist's exhibition at Kunstverein Lingen © Suelen Silva (right).

international contexts deals with “resources” and contexts that are fundamentally different from one another, seeing that these practices have their own challenges and potentialities comes as no surprise.

Although cultures are not homogeneous or determined by geographic regions (see Sen 2006 on the matter), this fact requires a double exercise from professionals working in places that are not their contexts of origin or cultural background:

1. Remembering that our (conceptual or practical) repertoires are not necessarily better or worse than anyone else’s; they are only repertoires whose applicability in other realities, far from ensuring success, calls first for deep analysis and caution.
2. Our understanding of a new reality will probably be different from that of “local” professionals – whose experiences must be prioritized. On the other hand, the “fresh gaze” we bring may drive new reflections, combinations, and practices yet unexplored. So, it is vital to have an environment that favors trust-based relationships, mutual interest, and (not less important) equity, as well as actual effort for intercultural dialogue not only for a result-driven but also a process-driven work. Additionally, it is important to remember that, as stated by Craide and Barboza (2012, p. 108), “the interaction between different cultures tends to favor organizations due to heterogeneous views, but it can become harmful if there is no concern with offering some support to those professionals who arrive with good expectations about their new workplace”.



“Women of Cultures” made art practices and traditional knowledge of Amazonian women visible, resulting in a cultural program and an online documentation (left).

“The Arpilleras” Project consisted of an exhibition, movies, talks and workshops on dams, environment and culture. (right)

© both: Suelen Silva

⁴ Brazilian colonisation began in the 16th century with the European invasion and the genocide of indigenous people, and deepened with the enslavement of black people. It is essential to name the problems this yielded and to identify its agents / subjects. This means understanding colonialism beyond a historical fact, but rather as a process whose consequences endure and shape the current systems and structures of power.

Besides, we who have (or had) the experience of “re-settling” probably faced some common challenges, such as learning new references, rules, legislations, work ethics, or even languages in our new contexts – especially in cases in which the first language is not a widely spoken one, such as English (on the matter of language and cultural management see e.g. Henze 2018 and Jacobsen 2018). However, if we remember that knowledge and education are not neutral fields and that the power dynamics that exist in society are also reproduced in micro-political relationships, I ask myself where the space for active (necessary and constructive) listening to learn with what is new ends; and where a regime of silencing and denying my knowledge and my abilities starts, just for being who I am (“black-indigenous”, “woman”...), from where I am (“the global South”, “Amazon”...), and for being where I am now (“the global North”, “Europe”...)?

Not a few times, being here in Europe, I caught myself trying to recognize the limits between essential listening and imposition of silence, and they were blurred to me.

Between “out of place” and “place outside”

By the way, the title of the edition “I am a legal alien. Arts Managers Working in a Different Cultural Region” resonates peculiarly in me: in Brazil, I also felt like “an alien”. That is because, despite the statistics, I accessed the fields of academia as well as art and culture, which are systematically denied to many people with a similar profile as mine. Even in Brazil, the country with the largest number of multiracial and Black people outside Africa, cultural management is mainly white. Racism, which is a consequence of colonialism, makes us feel out of place in our own land (Ribeiro 2017).⁴ So, I soon noticed that learning to navigate “outside one’s place” is a survival strategy. But indeed, my current feeling of non-belonging now is based on more explicit layers of distance (geographic, linguistic, cultural). And even the systems of oppression I already knew and that exist both here and there, here in Germany affect me differently.

As a reflection, in informal talks with colleagues from the global South, the issues of condescending/ paternalist treatment, the request to perform tasks below their abilities, and the lack of knowledge on the power that Europe has exercised in several systems (cultural, political, and social) are commonly addressed when talking about their work experiences (either temporary or not) in Europe. So, I remember the times I had the chance to talk to

some global North professionals while they were working in Brazil. Their gratefulness for our hospitality, our curiosity and openness to exchange was a recurring topic. Although this is for sure a circumscribed account, it gives room to reflect on the impact of colonial heritage on our individual and professional paths when we have the chance to work in different environments.

So, I quote Kilomba (2016, p. 29), who stated that

„within racism, Black bodies are constructed as improper bodies, as bodies that are ‘out of place’ and therefore bodies which cannot belong. White bodies, on the contrary, are constructed as proper; they are bodies ‘in place’, at home’, bodies that always belong. They belong everywhere: in Europe, in Africa; North, South; East, West, at the centre as well as at the periphery.”

That said, I do not deny the challenges we all face when working in different cultural regions; but I intend to make evident that being “in a place outside” has a weight and distinct potentialities depending on from “where we speak” and by whom “we are listened to” (or not). We should keep in mind that our bodies/voices occupy and represent unequal (and not merely different) places within the historical and contemporary power dynamics where cultural management as a discipline and a work’s field evolved and operates.

“Being “in a place outside” has a weight and distinct potentialities depending on from “where we speak” and by whom “we are listened to”.”

Changing the colonial past is undoubtedly out of reach. But if, as cultural managers, we see ourselves as “agents of social change” (Mandel 2017), then, it seems legitimate to ask: how much are we available to reflect in favor of creating a new present and future based on our professional practices? What can we do so that our current practices do not reproduce and deepen the old colonial values in cultural management and in our (micro) political and professional relationships, primarily when we work in intercultural environments? What prevents us from making a genuine movement toward a cultural management that does not lose sight of the social change some of us say want to strengthen?

Possibilities

Wherever we as cultural professionals are, we have to deal with the consequences of the internationalization of cultural management, either directly or indirectly. In this sense, I would like to point out some possibilities for reflection and some practices that could be useful in intercultural working contexts:

- Learning the difference between equality and equity. Equality means to treat everyone the same and thereby ignores individual/ social circumstances. Equity means to provide everyone with what they need to be successful and thus considering individual/ social needs and preconditions. The acknowledgement that „we are equal” because we share a common perception of humanity (or the same professional field) does not erase the fact that – especially when comparing our different contexts on an international level – we still live and work in conditions that are unequal or even unfair at various levels. Treating a professional from the global South (or, for instance, a woman, a non-white, a person with disabilities, etc) as „equal” in a working context does not solve the problem of inequity, it just does not bring the issue to the center of our discussion or practices.
- Adopting preferential measures for underrepresented professionals not as a form of „generosity” (which operates in keys of paternalism and patronized superiority), but in recognition that this is one of the ways to make the artistic and cultural field less unequal and to reflect the diverse societies in which we live. On the other hand, beware of tokenism. Consider these professionals for the qualities and differentials they have, and not for their ability to do the same as you.
- When working with professionals from another cultural context (especially if they are in a situation of cultural mobility, for example, from South to North), do not assume that they have to completely „integrate” into the new context or to exclusively take a learning position. See the encounter as an opportunity for mutual learning and discovery. What, in our different experiences and from our (still) unequal contexts, can we create together? What needs and obstacles do we need to solve or mitigate to make this happen? And not less important, why are we working or wanting to work together?
- The competence for intercultural dialogue also needs an understanding of what European colonialism was and what its global

consequences still are in today's world (and also in the artistic and cultural field). Beyond understandings regarding budget, financing or marketing, there are aspects like (institutional) racism, neo-colonialism, power relations and geopolitical notions that we can and have to address in daily debates and practices within cultural management.

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A Pre-digital Migrant

A German arts manager in Asia and the Near East

By Gabriele Landwehr

My migration started well before the „global“ times in the late 70s. My postings were determined by my employer, the German Goethe-Institut, and not always corresponded with my preferences, but always turned out satisfying. Migrating as an official of an organization is quite comfortable. Many of the life and work conditions have been established long before, and an organizational framework exists. For example, the Goethe-Institut provides a clear description of living conditions in each country and all employees have to have a detailed preventive medical checkup to prove fitness for a post. In the following, I describe some experience of my postings in India (six years) and in the United Arab Emirates (five years).

In periods of three to five years the management of each Goethe-Institut changes. The local staff remains and has to adapt to each new individual. Even though the system implemented by the head organization and the transfer are – ideally – well documented, the local team must deal with



the performance of each new person. So do the local partners, and the reception of the new official is often affected by the performance of the predecessor.

The reception is always coined by the experiences of the host country with German researchers, intellectuals, artists, travelers. The value and quality of German products also affects the reception of the alien manager. The shadows of wars and alliances dim the atmosphere of the reception or, in some cases, raise expectations of commonalities. Knowledge of historical relations with the host country can avoid embarrassment. As a history graduate, I was very well prepared.

In India: the past is present

Choosing Chennai as my posting (in 2003) was a challenge. Whilst India had been on my wish list years ago, I had meanwhile been formed by my experiences in the Americas. India was (and is) a tremendously interesting country, with an immense power to challenge you and make you discover who you are. More than in any other country, my capabilities and limits were tested. The constant heat and humidity exhausted me. The environment with waste and pollution appalled me. It cost me a lot of energy to keep my balance, although I knew most of this before. But I got a great chance to reflect my way of life, to experience the meaning of spirituality, to realize why we think the way we think.

“India was (and is) a tremendously interesting country, with an immense power to challenge you and make you discover who you are.”

Goethe-Institut administration

The Goethe-Institutes in India have been named after the German Indologist Friedrich Max Mueller (1823–1900) who was a celebrated hero in the educated Indian society. The Max Müller Bhavan (MMB, Bhavan means “guest house”) was founded in 1960 and is well established. The team at the Goethe-Institut greeted me very warmly. The organizational staff were all female and, as I learned with time, all Brahmins. The maintenance crew was all male and of a low or no caste. Had India overcome its caste divide?

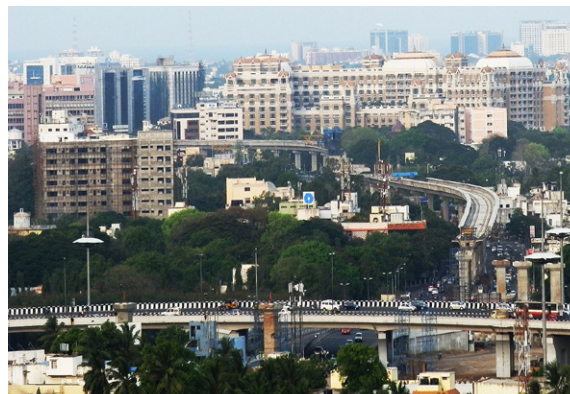
Hundreds of ads in the weekend daily papers were looking for spouses, and most announced „caste no bar” but requested „fair“ skin. It took me little time to understand that in real life caste was more an issue than fair skin, and also subliminally determined all relations.

An important lesson was about office interworking. Reporting the progress of work had to be requested and was not an implicitness. In the beginning, this confused me, but our regular and structured weekly meetings installed the reporting and gradually worked out successfully.

Arts management and infrastructure

A cultural or arts management infrastructure as in the western world barely existed in India, neither was there any significant cultural education in schools. A liberal arts policy had been attempted by Jawaharlal Nehru in the 1950s, but foremost the arts were a national legacy, with the Brahmin Indians as the custodians. This resulted in bottom-up initiatives by artists and culturally committed people who became the founders of their own arts institutions and thus self-organized arts managers.

For example, the traditional Bharata Natyam dance was mainly taught at Kalakshetra (home of the arts), a private institution founded in 1935 by a prominent dancer of the theosophy movement. Most of the students were female, only in the early 2000s they opened up also for young men. But there was also a very different school of dance, which had been created in the 1970s in Chennai by the grand dame of Indian dance, Chandralakha, who was an internationally active and connected impressive political woman. A Bharata Natyam trained dancer, she turned a choreographer



The two sides of India as it is usually presented

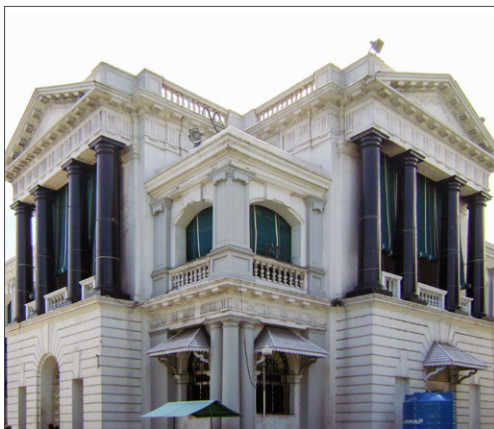
Temple at Sri Ramakrishna Math Chennai (left).

Skyline of Chennai - Vineeshkoomully/ Wikimedia Commons - CC BY-SA 3.0 (right).

and created new, sometimes quite erotic performances. Since her school of dance was without a home, she had built an open air performance space in her lush garden where young dancers, sometimes together with German choreographers, could perform their modern narratives.

Regarding museums and material cultural heritage, the self-defined non-materialistic society of India did preserve only a small number of historic cultural objects. Objects of daily life or decorative craft works like stained glass windows and beautifully carved doors are scattered at old, historic houses' demolition sites. Therefore, in museums such as the local Fort St. George which were created by the British rulers, the employees until today often have only rare knowledge on the maintenance of historic objects. Quite astonishing was the discovery that the oldest library in the city had some historical prints which needed restauration, so we brought a German expert there to have a look at these treasures. But a course for librarians to handle them properly and to do some basic restauration did not find the support of the respective authority.

Art exhibitions with paintings and other artworks of national artists were noted as worth being presented to the public, usually organized by upper class, western educated persons and shown in hotel facilities. Therefore, networks among artists, facility owners and sponsors depended on these people. With lack of rooms, our first Goethe-Institut event during my time was "Art in the Yard". Young professional and self-taught artists showed their paintings and interacted with the visitors. Thus, a new network got started and our house became a meeting point for it. Regarding contemporary fine art I also learned about censorship and religious tension in the



The typical European Colonial Style Fort St George in Chennai - L.vivian.richard - Wikimedia Commons - CC0 (left).

Traditional Bharata Natyam dance at Kalakshetra Academy in Chennai - U.S. Consulate General Chennai/ Flickr - CC BY-ND 2.0 (right).

society, the renowned painter Maqbul Fida Husain had to leave India, because his portrayals of Hindu deities had stirred controversy and right wing organizations had called for his arrest.

Organisational challenges

The missing of specialized knowledge also influenced transport and exhibition tasks. The Lalit Kala Akademi of Plastic Arts was a sleeping beauty and we woke it up with an exhibition of contemporary photography. We had to have the gallery walls painted before, and the pictures looked great – except that some could not be shown as the boxes had arrived during the rainy season, the local workers at the airport could not read and thus had driven the boxes unprotected to a store. The outcome was that water had run into the frames and washed out some colors.

How strong the mystic forces were, I learned when I had to build a new facility. The building plans were perfect, yet when we just started the investor informed me that we could not clear the plot: The mango tree in one back corner was home to powerful ghosts, some tribesmen had claimed. The investors idea was to build around the tree. All reasons given by tree experts and my proposal to have it dug out widely and replant it in a park area were without avail. We picked wonderful mangos right after moving into the building, and then the mango tree died.

Despite restrictions and censorship, Indian arts activists are very ambitious. For example, Chennai's local film club planned to establish the Chennai International Film Festival, with nothing less than the Berlinale structure as the blueprint. So we sent them to Berlin and they came back with good professional contacts. When we managed to get Margarethe von Trotta's film "Rosenstraße" to open the 2005 edition, the festival had gained a name. The



Contemporary Indian art and architecture.

„Art in the Yard“ exhibition by Goethe-Institut that connected local artists to the public. © Gabriele Landwehr (left).

Facade view of VR Chennai, a lifestyle destination in Chennai – Deepak229/ Wikimedia Commons – CC BY-SA 4.0 (right).

director herself came to the screening – with soaked shoes because it was rainy season and the streets were flooded and jammed. The film was very well received, and the women in the film business adored her.

Different, but not worse

In India, I overcame the by then habitual expectation that project work has to follow certain (western) ways and that our kind of management is the only right way. Organizing arts and culture in the face of seemingly chaos, dealing with short-termism, spontaneity and change, with almost no chance to make appointments are skills that Indian society has ahead of many others. Yet all partners were friendly and patient, and a first meeting usually ended with mutual understanding. I got plenty lessons in patience and humbleness and learnt to trust and relax. The challenge here is not to adapt, because that happens by itself, but in international projects to reconcile the approaches of all partners.

“In India, I overcame the by then habitual expectation that project work has to follow certain (western) ways and that our kind of management is the only right way.”

The majority of cultural activists were working people in daily life. They impressed me with their enthusiasm. How much they achieved with their efforts to enrich cultural life in their city, is shown by a look at today’s activities: the Chennai International Film Festival has grown impressively, the director and most of the team are still the same as in 2003. They have gained wide support in the community and great respect for their achievements. Partnerships in arts and culture might connect renowned institutions but connecting many people for a common purpose is much more rewarding.

In the Gulf: the future has arrived

The UAE strives to hold a name on the world map as a super modern, efficient, culturally abundant state. On my first visit to the Emirates in 2012 I knew that this must be my next destination. On a visit to Saadiyat Island, I saw the plans for the Louvre Abu Dhabi, the Zayed National Museum, and the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi. And I saw an introductory exhibition with works of Yves Klein next to religious artworks of the European middle ages.

I wondered what the concept of this exhibition was. And I knew there was a lot to discover. What meant culture in this desert society, what role did the arts play?

As the Goethe-Institut had only been established in 2007 in Abu Dhabi, a detailed field research by the founding colleague gave me a good framework for what to expect. There is no cultural policy for all UAE states (only founded in 1971), thus culture lies in the hands of each separate emirate and is considered part of the economic, urban and regional development.

The team at my new place was very supportive from the very first moment. Yet they were not locals, they all were expats from more than ten different nations, the majority of them female. (I later learned that such teams were common in cultural and educational institutions.) It was a pleasure to experience their self-reliant and professional work, and they were very good advisors for me. Most communication with Emiratis, Bahrainis, Qataris, Kuwaitis and Omanis (we operated Gulf wide) was done in English, despite my attempts to use the Arabic language with locals. The language of the former British protectors in the Gulf was and is also a means of distinction for the Khaleedji (=Gulf) people from a towering majority of expats.

Arts organizations

When it comes to the United Arab Emirates, many people think of strict legal restrictions or censorship. But art and culture play a major role there and are intensively fostered by the state. Many beautiful and well equipped cultural institutions and facilities have been built in the young states of the Gulf, provided mostly by the rulers, but also by private sponsors or art collectors. Genuine creativity, however, has little room.



Modern arts architecture in the UAE

*Abu Dhabi Theatre
- Guilhem Vellut/
Flickr - CC BY 2.0
(left).*

*Louvre Abu Dhabi
- Wikiemirati/
Wikimedia Commons
- CC BY-SA 4.0
(right).*

The Sharjah Museums Authority (SMA), for example, is very well and effectively organized and the 16 museums – from arts to science – offer attractive objects and programs. Their staff consists of young Emiratis who graduated in all subjects but museum studies. With a bilateral, German/western and Arab/Islamic academy (SAWA Museum Academy) we established an educational program to train the predominantly female staff for the needs of the museums. A focus was on audience development, both for locals and internationals, and the language the museum uses to explain its objects to different cultures. The learning for everybody, including myself, was amazing.

“When it comes to the United Arab Emirates, many people think of strict legal restrictions or censorship. But art and culture play a major role there and are intensively fostered by the state.”

Nonetheless, political issues can influence work live in the Gulf states immensely: The UAE are in constant competition with its neighbor Qatar. The breakup between the two states in the midst of the 2017 Qatar-Germany Year of Culture meant long and cumbersome travels – to fly to Doha you needed to fly to the opposite direction to Muskat and from there to Doha. Not only was travel hindered, but also other forms of transport: mail, books, and more. Artists or experts from countries allied with UAE could not fly to Doha. In some cases, I had to carefully ponder my words when I discussed projects in Doha or in UAE.

Arts, culture and traditions

The Islamic culture of the Gulf states is characterized by the absence of figurative visuals. It shows, however, a most beautiful abundance of abstract patterns and calligraphy which makes pictures redundant. This tradition affected my work in the visual arts and resulted in the preference for non-figurative art. And whereas I did not see any figurative art from Qatari artists, rarely any from Emirati artists, I marvelled the daring works of Omani artists. The Ibadite school of Islam prevails in Oman and is more open minded than the Sunni or Shia. In the evolving art shows in Abu Dhabi and the big art fairs in Dubai the traditions were ignored and the variety of objects ranged from great to kitsch. It seemed that there was a market for everything.

The visual arts are blooming in the Gulf states. Most artists, however, have either had an education in a western country or are self-taught. Training for nationals in the traditional arts or in modern western art skills is provided, but it will take more time to build up own national artist communities and cultural networks. Therefore, among all the intensively financed public cultural institutions, one of the main and special tasks of the Goethe-Institut with its comprehensive experiences in trainings and networks is to support artists and arts managers. In 2014 we started the Young Emerging Artists residency program at Stal Gallery in Muscat, a meeting point for Omani (and residing Khaleeji) artists and intellectuals. The program encourages an exchange between Oman and Germany, presents new works and artists, and promotes Omani art and culture. It also provides access to professional skills development to foster artist's careers.

In the state of Bahrain our projects also aimed at the professional training of artists. Bahrain has a very active art scene and great cultural institutions, thanks to the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities. In 2014, we started to work with Bahraini photographers about the authenticity of photos and created a project with an educational purpose. In several workshops with international journalists, photographers and artists we developed the exhibition „Do you trust me?“ that attracted a large audience and press response. The project also started a photographers' network in Bahrain.

In a project in the United Arab Emirates for illustrators of children's books we had some very talented Emirati men and women. Yet I was disappointed with the illustrations. They all were Manga style! My cautious hint that I would love to see a Khaleeji trace found no understanding with the illustra-



Contemporary art from the UAE

An Emirati installation at Abu Dhabi Art Fair, 2017 (left).

The works of the photo project „Do You Trust Me“ exhibited in Bahrain, 2017 (right).

Both © Gabriele Landwehr

tors. „We want to compete in an international market“, they explained. And this is true for all their artistic/cultural productions: they want to conquer an international market and use their arts, events and creations as a means of their cultural diplomacy. This was a very new attitude for me, as most countries where I worked before had strived to keep a very own ethnic style. Our project did not end with the production of books. It was also a qualification program to foster reading at large by supporting local book production and present authors and books at the UAE national book fairs and the Emirates Airline Festival of Literature. We had a very important cooperation partner with the UAE Board on Books for Young People, based in the Emirate of Sharjah. Soon the first book won an award, another book is now listed in the school compendium of the UAE. At least one of the authors has established herself as an editor with her own publishing company.

No consistency

Whereas in India a bottom up process is developing arts and cultural events and institutions, the Gulf states work almost exclusively top down. There are few exemptions such as Cinema Akil in Dubai’s Al Quoz area, a cultural hub supported by the Alserkal Foundation that brings quality films from across the world to the audiences in the UAE. Its founder Butheima Kazim had taken part in a training by the Goethe-Institut and established for herself a solid network of cinematographers and cinema operators. Butheima is one of the strong and decisive women who I found in the Gulf’s cultural sector. Women are a driving force in the promotion of arts and cultural education.

“Whereas in India a bottom up process is developing arts and cultural events and institutions, the Gulf states work almost exclusively top down.”

Did I find out what culture meant in the Khaleeji society? Not quite and not sufficiently, because the states in the Gulf are different. In Oman, culture is highly treasured as a human achievement and enrichment, and the Muscat citizens flock the opera and museums founded by the late Sultan Qaboos. In Abu Dhabi and Dubai cultural events and institutions are seen as means for cultural diplomacy and attractions for tourists, as a prestigious and profitable business area within the economic diversification process. Here, organizations or agencies are busy importing world class artists to the many

spectacular concert halls, theaters or arenas to entertain a global population. But there is still no Emirati audience for cultural life. And for Qatar with its beautiful new National Museum, culture is the playing field of the Sheikhas of the ruling Al Thani family.

Compared to India, the management and public support for cultural organizations have very high standards. But the reason for this are not necessarily good educational backgrounds or working conditions in the states themselves. Quality is ensured by the many Western expat managers, but the political conditions are still very restrictive. Arts managers from western countries have a large playing ground, but the game is tough. There is no room for trial (let alone: error). Additionally, housing eats most of the salaries. Gradually, a young national elite will replace foreign art managers and leave only the service work to organize or assist for national superiors.

Today

Although it can be difficult, both professionally and privately, to find oneself in ever new conditions and to change one's place and country again and again: I would do it again!

The experience of working in a foreign culture is a highly rewarding experience. This is especially true for the field of culture and the arts, which resist to fit into patterns and allow fantasy and new ideas to root and grow. The jobs for art managers are rare compared to business jobs, and salaries are only high in superior functions and in major institutions. Nonetheless, I find them rewarding in very different and non-material ways. I have enjoyed this work, and I am very glad that it gave me a closer look at the world and a wider understanding of why we are the way we are.



Dr. Gabriele Landwehr is a German arts manager. She has headed Goethe-Instituts all around the world, the last in Abu Dhabi for six years until 2018. Before, she was in Chennai/India, New York, Mexico City and Los Angeles. She is an expert in intercultural management and cultural diplomacy. She currently holds a lectureship in cultural management at Heilbronn University of Applied Sciences.

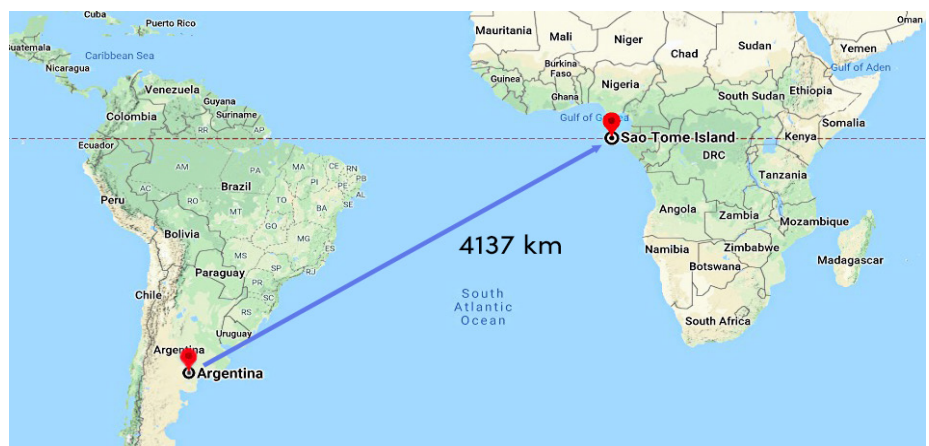
Reflections from an African experience

From Buenos Aires to Diogo Vaz

By Federico Escribal

I always had a deep fascination for Africa. It was based on an admiration for the contribution of enslaved Africans to the construction of economies, societies, cultures and identities all over both American continents, as well as on my interest in the question of how it was possible that this was made invisible in the process of falsifying a cultural history derived exclusively from Europe and Western civilization. The geopolitical use of this strategy is, in my opinion, one of the most worrying aspects of the colonial legacy on the American continents, and I have always understood the function of cultural management as a way of returning the own cultures, history and identities to the core of daily social reflection.

This interest led me to apply to run an Arts and Crafts School in Sao Tome and Principe, the smallest country on that continent, in 2006. At the age of 25, it was a difficult decision, as I had recently got hired at Argentina's Ministry of Culture, where I aimed to develop professionally. After some reflection, I understood that the possibility of getting some first hand impressions of the African reality was unique, and I prioritized it. I received the tickets and started



already a fortnight later: I didn't even make it in time to complete the minimum vaccinations suggested for the context I was traveling to.

The project was sought to train young people without previous schooling in technical skills in crafts: plumbing, carpentry and agriculture, among others. Objective conditions – basically, living in a huge building that used to serve as a hospital and was abandoned for more than 20 years, without electricity and 5 kilometers away from the nearest town – did not turn out to be an obstacle; but subjective conditions did. Cultural distances between my cultural background plus personal experiences and those of the youngsters I needed to stimulate made it difficult to connect in order to achieve the project's objectives as imposed by the association that had hired me – located a two hour drive away, in the national capital – based on a productivist logic that the local population did not necessarily share.

I must admit that initially this was frustrating (spending a whole year in such conditions and having such a meagre result), but as it is often the case, over time – and in hindsight – the experience acquired new personal and professional interpretations.

Personal background at the moment of the experience

When I applied to travel, I had volunteered for almost ten years in the rural areas of Formosa – a northern Argentinian province, bordering Paraguay – with similar conditions to that which hosted me in Africa. We worked in rural schools very similar to the one I found in Santo Tomé. This previous work guaranteed my adaptability: my social environment as the main concern (how I would live without electricity and in rustic conditions) was



São Tomé – a beautiful, but poor island in Western Africa

São Tomé, Inhame Beach © Chuck Moravec/ Flickr - CC BY 2.0 (left)

The craft school where the author was situated © Federico Escribal (right)

no challenge for me. I had also previously worked for two years in a secondary school in Buenos Aires, as a preceptor and dealt with youngsters. In this former experience, we assisted an indigenous community in matters related to access to and quality of education, so dealing with intercultural contexts was a skill I had started to develop.

“Understanding Western art as universal, there is very little room for thinking about diversity in terms located outside the central position that we, due to historical and colonial conditions, do not hold.”

In 2005, a year before travelling, I completed a degree in Cultural Management: four years reading primarily North Atlantic authors who had developed knowledge in radically different contexts both in relation to mine and to the one that would receive me in that African island. Northern-Atlantic authors, on whose basis the academic discipline had been built in South America, usually operate from a perspective that equates culture with the arts and reflects on institutional frameworks that are very different from those of our region. In addition, understanding their local (Western) art as universal, there is very little room for thinking about diversity in terms located outside the central position that we, due to historical and colonial conditions, do not hold. One of these terms refers to art forms themselves. Thus, I did not find much operative support from that theories learned at my university regarding the arts management contexts I was dealing with in Africa: crafts as a form of cultural entrepreneurship.

The experience: true definition of being a foreigner

I regret to say that I received very little information about the project before starting my participation. It seemed my arrival was organized at the last moment, with the urgency of the start of classes. Language barriers turned out to be less critical than I feared, since I did not speak Portuguese, as they do in Sao Tomé, but my Spanish was understandable for them. I was able to learn some basic Portuguese – and its local slang – by the third month. There was no great age gap between the students and me: the group consisted of 30 young people between 16 and 22 years old, mostly boys, and I was 24. Sports practice was a space from which I started to be able to get closer to the juveniles whose daily lives were marked by the fishing culture of

their parents, and with whom I had few points in common. Soccer became a common territory, as they knew about the existence of my country, Argentina, merely because Argentinian footballers participated in the Portuguese league, the only league televised on the island.

Daily challenges were addressed with diligence and commitment on behalf of the school staff, and the educational project was developed with dignity and efficiency, beyond objective conditions, always deficient due to the context of extreme poverty. I believe that the greatest lessons to be learned from this experience concern the design and implementation of the policy on behalf of the organization.

“The absence of a desire for progress – in a Western orientation – could not be replaced by top-down administrative decisions, but only by alternatives based on the cultural reality of the communities.”

Beyond this, the impact of the local working culture on my students – whose sociability was already consolidated and who were considered adults in various dimensions in their communities – was a hard challenge. Most of them had abandoned their schooling by the age of ten (if not earlier), since there were no educational services nearby, and very few had the means to travel every day to continue their studies. The project proposal had aimed to build professional trajectories for young people who had been brought up in cultural patterns that give higher weight to integral harmony between the subject, his or her community and the natural environment than to progress in terms of knowledge, money or any other accumulation, as Western perspectives do. In this sense, the project appeared to be dissociated from the socio-cultural reality on which it intended to focus, with risks to become an instrument of cultural acculturation and homogenization, forcing behaviors that were contrary to the own cultural structure of the participants.

Results: For whom?

The absence of a desire for progress – in a Western orientation – could not be replaced by top-down administrative decisions, but only by alternatives based on the cultural reality of the communities. The lack of participation of these in the project’s design, as well as in its evaluation, constituted a

weakness that systematically affected the impact of the program, and that led to a constant mismatch between the expectations of the board and those of the students (families – curiously or not – were not involved in the project at all).

As a consequence, at the end of my time, only a few of the youngsters involved were able to take advantage of the experience and project to develop new life scenarios for them. Although there were some who initiated professional paths that led them to improve their income and living conditions, most of the students only sought to guarantee themselves some basic matters, such as a daily meal or a room that they did not need to share with several brothers.

The correlation between the efforts invested and the social impact of the project was somehow frustrating, and I learned that I should have acknowledged the level of social participation in the development of the project before I became involved in it. The way in which I lived this experience has helped me to be more thoughtful in my later options, managing to evaluate with more precision in which projects I should get involved, and prioritizing those in which the social impact is more effective.

When I returned to Argentina, I started directing a public program aimed to create forums for debate and participation with intellectuals and academics throughout the country. To make sure that these forums would also meet the topics and perspectives of the local non-academic community, I fostered a quota of local speakers. These received the same payment and recognition as the national ones. In the same way, I always tried to include local actors and establish a quota for them to shape the conditions in which policies are implemented in their territories and communities.



Federico with Afro-Argentinean actresses during the celebration of the first day of Afro-Argentinean Culture (November 8, 2014) (left)

Federico with indigenous leaders of the Martina Chapanay organization in the province of Mendoza during the Indigenous Film Week in 2014 (right)

© both: Federico Escribal

I firmly believe that cultural managers must develop skills to understand different cultural realities, with diverse ontological bases, to be able to operate consistently in diverse contexts. At the same time, organizations operating territorially must ask themselves on the pertinence of introducing foreign professionals on the field, as cultural management processes oriented towards community development tend to be more sustainable when driven by members of the community group, aware of cultural subtleties, and situated in their own symbolic framework.



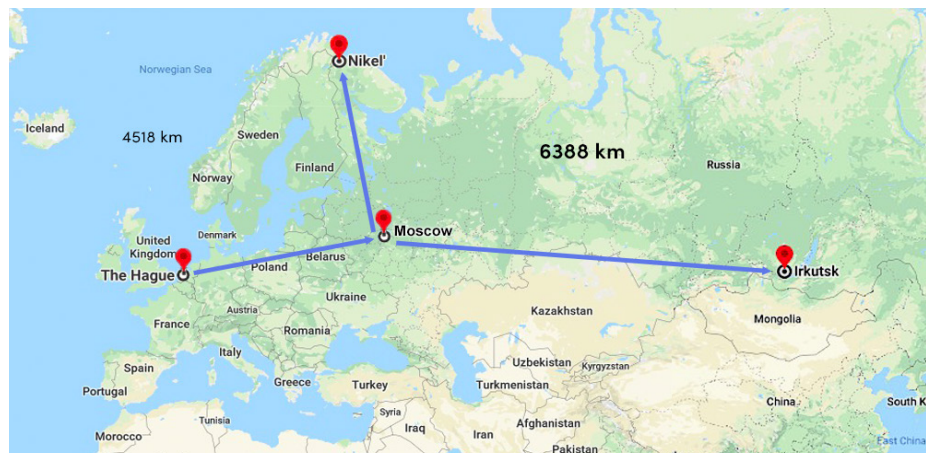
Federico Escribal studied Cultural Management and Cultural Policy at the Tres de Febrero National University in Buenos Aires, Argentina, with a focus on cultural diversity. He was National Director for the Promotion of Cultural Rights and Cultural Diversity at the National Culture Secretariat. Until November 2019, he was in charge of the department for Vocational Training in Buenos Aires, and currently works as consultant for Argentina Futura, a presidential initiative for future prospectives. He is a professor at the National Arts University, and has been a guest lecturer at the National University of Colombia.

Flexibility is a must

Working in the Creative and Cultural Industries in Russia

by Nicole McNeilly

As an Irish and British citizen, hailing from Northern Ireland and now living in the Netherlands, I count myself as internationally mobile. For several years, I had a dream to live and work in Russia's cultural and creative industries (CCIs). This started when I was young as a desire to travel in and to get to know Russia, but it was in the first few years after University (2011–2013) that it became both a personal and professional goal. This was thanks to an opportunity to work at a fairly small but international popular music education and industry festival in Latvia for a few days every year, which attracted musicians mostly from countries of the former Soviet Union. Seeing first-hand the contrast in repertoire choices, singing and movement styles, approaches to music education, and how differently the music industry had evolved during and since the Soviet Union, was a great experience and an eye-opener – at the time, my field of vision was predominantly Western Europe-focused. I also fell in love with the Russian language, appreciating its complexity and its role as a tool that could widen my horizons.



As a recipient of an Alfa Fellowship in 2018/2019, I finally had the opportunity to emerge myself into the Russian cultural context. My experience in Russia was diverse, and ranged from creating an evaluation framework for a bilateral cultural relations programme to observing and advising a cultural and urban development programme in the Arctic North, and using creative co-working spaces on a working tour of Siberia. With a background in cultural policy and arts management, the fellowship allowed me to carve out my ideal work portfolio, bridging research, evaluation and project management in international cultural relations, the arts and heritage. I've been happy to continue working on these topics since moving back to the Netherlands.

Learning by doing

The [Alfa Fellowship Programme](#) is an international professional development initiative, funded by Russia's largest bank, Alfa Bank, to bring future leaders of different sectors to Russia to grow new networks and to gain wider international experience. It is unlike any fellowship I had come across before: it provided the visas, insurance, salary and support that let me throw myself no-holds-barred into a new country, professional context and network. Learning about a new cultural ecosystem, social context and supporting infrastructure by living there for an extended period of time undeniably increases your knowledge of the new setting, and it helps you gain that knowledge in a practical way. Travelling and getting to know the cultural sector across diverse regions creates specific and measurable value that an arts manager can bring to international collaborations, such as wide national networks and insights into risky partners or potential funding opportunities. It's important to know more than just the capital.

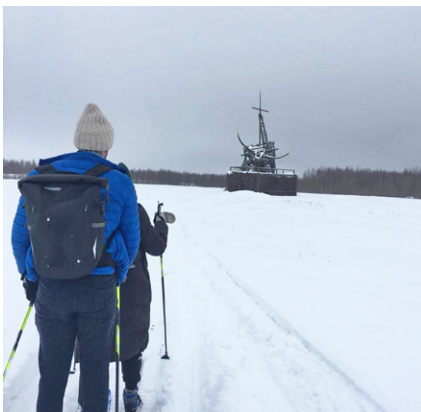
Insight into sector challenges

Russian contemporary culture is dynamic and innovative. I've met many exceptional and collaborative arts professionals that I've been proud to work alongside. Understandably, they face different challenges to someone working in the UK or the Netherlands, in particular, relating to state funding for culture. State-supported grants have been promoted more visibly in the past few years, resulting in a [website](#) and a publication listing funding opportunities. However, corporate support is in many cases the go-to funding source (at least in the big cities of Moscow and St Petersburg), alongside earned income and other philanthropic sources (including, for example,

funding from international cultural institutes like the Goethe Institute or Pro Helvetia). State support benefits mostly state organisations, often to the deficit of contemporary, controversial or cross-disciplinary creative industries programming.

When exploring cultural relations between the UK or the EU and Russia, it became clear that Russian ‘classical’ culture is dominated by state-funded showcasing (e.g. tours of the Bolshoi Ballet). Yet in response to the quality and diversity of contemporary Russian culture, new mechanisms – mostly privately-funded philanthropic organisations – are emerging to bring the best of it to new international audiences. Some examples of organisations doing this include [RUSH Initiative](#) (music, different genres), [V-A-C Foundation](#) (visual arts, with a focus on London and Tel Aviv) and [M.ART Foundation](#) (cross-disciplinary culture).

Comparing this situation to the standard state-supported or state-aligned cultural relations and export models in European nations, challenges emerged that I had not encountered before, such as restrictions that hinder collaborations with Russian artists or entities, whether or not they are state-funded or aligned (e.g. contemporary Russian artists may not be able to perform in certain EU-funded festivals). As the arts are increasingly seen for their strategic value in external diplomatic and business relations (see e.g. European Commission 2016), and when organisations are increasingly encouraged to diversify their international partnership working (Vecco and Conrad 2017), international experience helps to increase your ability to handle challenges like these that might emerge in unexpected or unpredictable ways.



With friends at a sculpture in the vast art park Nikola-Lenivets © Nicole McNeilly (2019), CC BY-SA (left)

The city Nickel, Murmansk Oblast, Russia - Nicole McNeilly 2019, CC BY-SA (right)

A new perspective on entrepreneurialism

In Russia there is a sense of ‘nothing is impossible’, inspired by the need to be entrepreneurial and to make more with less. Russians also benefit from an informality (at least in the cultural sector) that enables someone of any career level to be reached by Facebook or phone. Once, after a presentation at a conference, I went to ask a question to a former Minister of Culture. He was too busy to speak, instead handing me a scrap of paper with his phone number and email address on it. In some regions of the EU, it could be argued that we can be held back by the financial safety net that has nonetheless been key to a thriving sector. We don’t exploit corporate funding to any great degree, and we talk about entrepreneurialism in the CCIs without acknowledging that our creative education systems rarely provide the training or drive needed for this.

“In Russia there is a sense of ‘nothing is impossible’, inspired by the need to be entrepreneurial and to make more with less.”

In this context, it’s interesting to bring up another positive and pervasive aspect of Russian working culture – flexibility. This may be the result – or the cause – of a parallel lack of long-term planning. From my own perspective, it was a challenge to adapt to a context where flexibility is often (implicitly) valued more than structure or planning. When I was advising and observing a project in the Arctic North, for example, I learned that agendas might be considered more as an outline of how you might spend your day and I saw peers being called to meetings with external stakeholders several hours’ drive away with less than a day’s notice. This made me re-evaluate skills that I had up until this point undervalued: adaptability, flexibility, problem-solving and creativity in finding solutions.

Communication – personal and professional

Rather than rely on propagated stereotypes, it’s important to focus on what unites us and what we can learn from one another. In that sense, a lot more effort is needed to communicate the reality of life in the CCIs in Russia through collaboration, communication and research. I realised this early in my time there, and began researching and [interviewing key figures](#) in the

cultural scene in Moscow. I wrote [regular features](#) about Russian society and culture for my local print-only newspaper in rural Northern Ireland, offering a very localised form of citizen diplomacy. Importantly, the proposed liberalisation of the Russian visa system is likely to have a transformative effect on a greater understanding of Russia as a nation and its contemporary culture.

“It made me re-evaluate skills that I had up until this point undervalued: adaptability, flexibility, problem-solving and creativity in finding solutions.”

My time in Russia was an opportunity to work on improving my language skills. It was undeniably useful in professional and personal settings. Collaborating with talented, educated and well-travelled Russian professionals reinforced the benefits of multilingualism, not only in terms of work opportunities but also in adapting into a new culture, better understanding work environments and learning new things about how to interact with others in unfamiliar contexts. My proudest moment was delivering a workshop on project planning and evaluation mostly in Russian (though with the support of a volunteer translator). The very activity of translating a presentation into Russian exposes the elusiveness of certain concepts (like impact) and approaches I have taken for granted (like stakeholder consultation).



Nicole on the border between Europe and Asia, just outside Yekaterinburg © Nicole McNeilly (2019), CC BY-SA (left)

Photo after Nicole's workshop in Nickel, © Evgeny Chernyakov (right)

Conclusion

The most beneficial outcome of working internationally is that the best bits of the culture you encounter can stick to you. I left Russia feeling more entrepreneurial, flexible and ready to reach out. Working in a new country brings new perspectives, as well as a lens through which to reflect on the culture(s) you think you already know well. This was precisely what happened in my case, as I gained a new perspective on the wider European cultural sector's challenges and opportunities, like intercultural communication and collaboration styles, accessing funding and the urban-rural divide.

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Nicole McNeilly is living and working in the Netherlands. She works in research, evaluation and project management in the arts, culture and creative industries. Managing a small consultancy from the Hague, she is working across multiple international projects for a diverse range of clients including Europeana Foundation and the British Council.

Co-creation of critical, cross-cultural, creative collaborations

The un-learning and meta-learning from transnational experiences

By Sudebi Thakurata

The current paradoxes of being hyper globalised yet humanly disconnected, and the perceived yet unimaginable threat due to social distancing are some of the drivers for me to rethink how one might use this situation to unlearn and relearn, rethink and reimagine, instead of using 'technology' as the solution to every problem we face. And they especially are drivers to reflect about what is known and what is unknown. What does the word 'management' mean in this world where structures, control, certainty, plans, rules and order seem to be ironical? I believe those who work within arts and culture have a lot to ponder over about the roles we all play in the lives of each other, especially in remote contexts, where often we do not realise that we play a role at all or how much a certain geo-political context impacts our lives.

The guiding questions and the context

How do seemingly unknown contexts unleash opportunities, not only to learn about another place but about one's own as well, while discovering invisible elements that connect and catalyse creative collaborations? What really binds individuals from diverse socio-cultural and/or geo-political contexts and what are challenges in an increasingly inter-connected world, which is currently shaken? How could cross-cultural, transnational creative collaborations be facilitated among people from diverse contexts and disciplines and where the facilitator is from a different context as well? Can

facilitation act as a bridge between an ego-centric competitive ‘boxed’ past and an eco-centric, interconnected, regenerative future, bringing seemingly different stakeholders together towards the well-being of both people and the planet, in creative and collaborative ways, with a heightened sense of purpose?

I would like to locate the above lines of inquiry within my lived experience of the last few years. I am a designer and artist myself, and an art and design educator for more than a decade in a premiere institute of India. I also facilitate transformative, adaptive and emergent leadership programmes through art and design across various contexts, domains and disciplines. Understanding context from multiple perspectives is a significant element of my work.

Interestingly I have also had the opportunity to work in unknown, uncertain, ambiguous and complex contexts. This juxtaposition fosters a unique experiential perspective, regarding what I otherwise teach in my critical place-based pedagogy-oriented classes: to identify and map underlying nuances of communities and practices, to understand the process of meaning making, to navigate through various given contexts, to explore and engage with ambiguity and uncertainty and to be able to navigate seamlessly between the local and the global, keeping the individual in the intersection of it.

I would essentially focus on my learnings from a unique blended programme, called [SEAA](#), that I co-design and co-facilitate with colleagues and partners from a minimum of twelve different countries, working in three new countries every year. This programme creates spaces for a wide range of practitioners from the arts sector from ten countries every year to reflect on how their work in arts and culture can contribute to sustainable development within South-East Asia through their individual and collective leadership. During the programme the Fellows creatively collaborate with each other over four stages:

1. exchange actionable project ideas,
2. co-create their plans and processes with our implementation partner,
3. share the project with the larger team and public
4. and reflect on the learning experience.

Beyond co-creation, the programme is designed to give opportunities to develop confidence, resourcefulness, entrepreneurialism and other leadership skills with which the fellows could actively grow their networks in South East Asia, increase mutual learning and understanding, and seed collaborations between the arts and other sectors.

As one of the two Creative Facilitators we work with three main categories of people, the fellows, the teams of the curatorial organisations and the implementation partners. Further, for each stage of the collaborations we need to facilitate the design and delivery of those in different locations with different partners, and also look for meaningful collaborations in these fields. So in a way, the programme is a meta-facilitation enabling inclusion at every level, working with diversity, in various geographical and other associated contexts, to catalyse action by, for and with people who work in, for and with the arts to address the sustainable development goals.

My discoveries and learnings

Using many lenses

Being a creative facilitator allows me to explore multi-layered landscapes, understand how individuals and groups interact with, perceive and understand their environment, taking their points of view into consideration. I get to understand the modes of expression of cultural knowledge in various settings. This, I realise, can be done by unpacking perceptions, symbols, practices and narratives. Facilitation then becomes a quest through materials, medium and meaning.



The fellows of the second cohort of the SEAD blended learning programme, with its facilitators in Phnom Penh (left)

A glimpse of a network mapping exercise (right)

© both: SEAD

Once this process starts, I also start to see and identify the layers and use them for the design of the facilitation. Some of these layers are: the spatial aspects of social experience, the cultural aspects of geo-political situations, the personal aspects of collective memories, the relational aspects of an individual perspective, the ecological aspects of a socio-economic context or the pedagogical aspects of systemic interventions. Through the rest of this paper I would explain some of these with examples.

The role of narratives

I love delving into the process of facilitation amongst groups of people with diverse and even contrasting points of view. Facilitation, I have realised, is a deep, experiential, embodied process of self-discovery while navigating amongst the overlapping acts of curation, mediation, design, storytelling, visualising, enabling, mapping and inter-connections. It is both a humbling and empowering process that makes me know myself better in the process of knowing the others. This programme has strengthened it further.

“Facilitation, I have realised, is a deep, experiential, embodied process of self-discovery”

I have learnt that while designing experience it is extremely important to inter-weave narratives. It is through these narratives that one can make people think, reflect and give shape to their thoughts by making them visible while sculpting out meaning from conversations, observations and communications. In this context, facilitation is a form of curation, a process of meaning-making, which allows me to pause, reflect, collect, inter-connect and synthesise to construct a new whole. It allows me to be vulnerable and the sheer volumes of the choices and things make me choice-less. It helps me question the politics of gaze, selection, portrayal and representation. When I use aspects of these in my facilitation, I focus on bringing in multiple interpretations, deep listening, informed choices and unheard voices that do not always find a way in the middle of a crowd.

Mapping experiential perspectives, memories, position and power

To rethink cultural aspects of geo political situations is a great way to help people come together, making them curious and eventually discov-

er things about each other which otherwise do not get revealed. When someone works with people from neighbouring countries or countries which have weaker or difficult relationships, one needs to keep in mind how popular media and narratives have shaped their knowledge and hence stereotypes about each other. The role of representation is very important to understand, in terms of lack of representation or mis-representation. Food, music, performance or crafts are great examples of ways that can be powerful hooks to immerse, engage and explore aspects that are otherwise difficult to address. The kind of confluences that one gets to see in the way different cultures and geographies get intermingled, and the similarity in patterns in various forms of crafts creates a sense of awe, belongingness and plurality. This aspect is one of the most fundamental one in cross-cultural collaborations – for example, how certain similarities in food ingredients are similar between India and Vietnam or India and Cambodia, how textiles and food in Myanmar are shaped by China and India. Or how the unequal relationships between many countries guide a lot of narratives and perceptions about each other. How certain narratives have travelled from India to Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Cambodia and the like and morphed into different forms of storytelling.

“To rethink cultural aspects of geo political situations is a great way to help people come together, making them curious and eventually discover things about each other which otherwise do not get revealed.”

One needs to explore if the same sense of belonging in terms of a collective identity emerging from a continent exists between people identifying themselves as European, African or Asian. It is in the attempt to understand this and to explore why such differences exist that one starts understanding geo-political realities in a very humane way.

Similarly, bringing in personal aspects of collective memories and exploring shared memories of a landscape can help to sustain one’s personal inquiries while connecting and reflecting. The issues of migration, climate change, refugee crisis, identity politics, water politics, political turmoil, urbanisation, ecological threats and the like are all relevant although contextual and become relatable through socio-cultural lenses. At the same time,

working with one another and making sense of one's worldview belief and behaviour with a cultural lens sometimes enables us to foster better understanding and sensitivity.

Various kinds of mapping enable one to understand the impossibility of "objectivity" and "neutrality" when the maps are drawn from many different lenses. In several mapping exercises, I have realised that even geographical maps are remarkably different in different countries, and that locations, borders, size, orientation, what is shown and what is hidden reveal the country's geo-political and socio-economic position. For example, a political map purchased in a particular South-East Asian country showed Europe and Africa in the West and America in the East, which automatically positioned this country right in the centre of the atlas, more visible, capturing a larger area than it actually does and showing certain countries bigger or smaller than their actual size, depending on the current political relationship. This insight itself is powerful enough to realise the fallacy of "objectivity" and makes one more sensitive to the relativity of any position and perspective. However, it also was important to realise how this might shape the way how someone from a certain country might see another one.

"Various kinds of mapping enable to understand the impossibility of "objectivity" and "neutrality" when the maps are drawn from many different lenses."

The invisible elephant in the room: Colonialism

I have realised that when people come together in a programme where one cannot but undermine their national identity, due to the ways our nation-states are connected with each other, some people tend to become overtly politically correct, some overtly aggressive and some overtly apologetic, depending on which kind of history, especially colonial history, their countries share with each other.

In order to gracefully disagree, having authentic conversations, give and receive honest feedback sensitively but assertively, it is extremely important to be able to connect at a human level. This assures one of not being misunderstood and misrepresented. This kind of exposure gives a country a human face. But one might never forget that every country has many faces

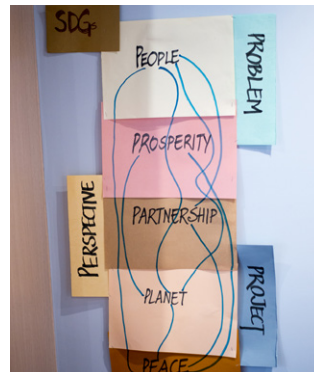
and often two countries might have similar faces as well, while within the same country the faces might be contrasting.

Generalisations can lead to unintended stereotypes, othering and maybe even discrimination. For example, not all white people are rich and colonial. Such misconceptions also lead to ignoring internal problems that the erstwhile victims of history might have within their own communities. I also feel across the globe, depending on the context, some issues are given more importance than others. It is extremely important to be aware of these perceived, planned and partial hierarchies in order to eliminate bias and prejudice.

“One might never forget that every country has many faces and often two countries might have similar faces as well, while within the same country the faces might be contrasting.”

Communication and the act of meaning-making: complexity, clarity and ambiguity

One of the biggest learnings for me is the idea of communication as a two-way process. One key insight from my experience here is that words have contextual baggage and ambiguity. It is pointless to argue with each other about the meaning one derives out of used words. Instead it is very important to frame our inquiry with a shared understanding of words, and to move beyond the limitations of a word to its intended and maybe even unintended meaning. This is particularly true for English as a language



A space set up for a facilitated exercise with playful, visual, tactile, conversational, spatial stimuli in Taipei (left)

Inter-connecting multiple elements to address the SDGs through complex systems thinking in the arts, visualised by Sudebi (right)

Copyright: SEAA

of communication among people who have no other common language. Nothing can be taken for granted in this situation. For example, words such as leadership, management, curation, creativity, art, design, education, empathy, business, storytelling, systems, journey, mapping and even media can have different connotations. It is therefore extremely important to establish a shared understanding of these words.

The second learning is to be able to use the art of non-verbal modes of communication as that makes it easier, especially when people are not aware or comfortable with each other's kind of communication and meaning-making. Knowing English or not becomes a very political aspect with its colonial baggage in this regard.

Arts management, cultural leadership and the challenges of 'problem' solving

The same is true for what is known as 'problems'. 'Problems' are contextual, relative, complex and subject to interpretation. What is negative about a problem for one might be positive to another. The ability to frame problems contextually and situating the problems in a larger system are the two most important parts to any process. This can be done when the starting point is not a hypothesis or, even worse, an assumed problem but an inquiry framed through a series of inter-connected, inter-related and inter-dependent questions.

"The ability to frame problems contextually and situating the problems in a larger system are the two most important parts to any process."

Similarly 'universal' does not mean something has to be uniform – a major misconception people have. A cosmopolitan local has the skill to collectively adapt, experience, map and craft futures, through the power of imagination that turns every constraint into an opportunity to design possibilities. One needs to hone the ability to choose, to consciously perceive one's own impact and to place intentionality in the intersections of aspects, which might also lead to unintended consequences. Such an immersive process eventually enables one to critically evaluate prior knowledge, inter-connect seemingly disjointed parts to create a holistic overview, generate new

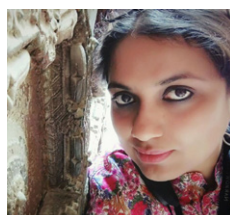
insights and identify actionable concepts. This process enables them to collaboratively discover different barriers and constraints (social, cultural, geo-political, economic, legal, ecological and technological or something else) towards materializing opportunities across boundaries, with essential future skills.

Transcending borders as a life-long self-directed journey

Marcel Proust says: “The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.”

I truly have become a better traveller, being able to rethink the notion of mobility and permeability, dissolving and not by breaking borders, by identifying the true resources that are shared by many of us, by being more flexible, becoming a life-long learner, being aware of my presence, being more aware of the notions of the ‘other’, the fear, the obstacles and yet the ability to see people through many layers of their identity, not shy away to speak with the conviction of the possibility of interweaving futures together through the constructs and concepts that make us who we are. And I believe this is possible through the power of metaphors and especially the arts. As the world is facing its trouble for excess tourism and movement, we perhaps need to learn how to be a true traveller. How can we journey through modes and media that do not perish but create? And how can we all, irrespective of our job descriptions, lead in regenerative ways?

Metaphors help us go beyond binaries, look beyond dichotomies, each having its pros, cons, challenges and opportunities. ‘Management’ therefore needs to be led by inquiry, interpreted by artistic lenses, interwoven with our humanness and our ability to play with the inter-dependent pieces of the jigsaw that is life, in order to walk towards the shifts that are necessary.





Sudebi Thakurata is a narrative designer, creative facilitator, and educator for socially, environmentally and culturally relevant issues, as well as a writer and singer. She designs experiences, engagements and environments that allow people to think, have dialogue, and enable them to design their own solutions and nar-

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Arts Management Quarterly is published by
Arts Management Network.

A service by

KM Kulturmanagement Network GmbH

Postbox 1198, D-99409 Weimar

Address: Bauhausstr 7 c, D-99423 Weimar

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CEO: Dirk Schütz

Chief Editor: Kristin Oswald

Mediadata: <http://advertising.artsmanagement.net>

Layout: Maja Krzanowski

Typesetting: Kristin Oswald

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ISSN 1610-238X