



cultural
leadership
programme

**International
Cultural Leadership**
Reflections,
Competencies and
Interviews

Julia Rowntree, Lucy Neal and Rose
Fenton

Development Priorities

Leadership Works
Excellence in Leadership

International Cultural Leadership: Reflections, Competencies and Interviews

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Foreword

“To be a true cultural leader you need to consider yourself part of the world.”
Cultural Leadership International participant, 2009

In January 2010 the Cultural Leadership Programme (CLP) and British Council (BC) commissioned Julia Rowntree, Rose Fenton and Lucy Neal to undertake an investigation into the international development experiences of a range of cultural leaders in order to better understand how leaders might be equipped to lead in an increasingly complex globalised world.

The Cultural Leadership Programme (CLP) and the British Council (BC) have both provided opportunities for UK and international cultural leaders to develop their leadership skills and behaviours through international experiences. CLP has sought to embed international practice in its programmes to ensure that current and future leaders are well equipped to nurture the vision, aptitude, behaviours and skills to deliver excellence, experimentation and innovation within the wider national and international context. International and intercultural exchanges provide experiential ways to extend and enrich UK leadership. CLP provision offers opportunities to develop international leadership competencies, ensuring accessibility to the global cultural leadership marketplace for employment and products and ensuring that the CLP offers access to international thinking about leadership. In addition to offering practical development of international competencies through placements, networks and events, the CLP is working in partnership with key international cultural agencies - the British Council on Cultural Leadership International (CLI) and with Visiting Arts on International Exchanges and delivering Powerbrokers International Leadership Placements (PILPs) with Freshwater Consulting, sharing expertise and developing models to ensure that UK leaders and organisations are truly equipped for the 21st Century.

The British Council's CLI is now in its second year and is a programme of activities which facilitate leadership networking and exchange in the broader cultural sector. The programme focuses on supporting a new generation of cultural practitioners to act internationally in their work: i.e. exchange knowledge and ideas with a global network of individuals and organisations beyond their usual sphere of operation.

In January 2010 CLP and the BC commissioned this research to explore what cultural leaders can draw from international experience to enable them to deliver excellence, experimentation and innovation within the wider national and international context. It draws on interviews with CLP and BC international cultural leadership participants, hosts and international cultural leaders, to propose a framework of international cultural leadership competencies. It examines the leadership role and challenges of cultural leaders in different national and international contexts.

This is not an easy task as, with all cultural leadership, there is no one linear development path. In commissioning this report we hope to publish a range of different

experiences and offer the starting point for debate about how we can ensure cultural leaders can access apposite and timely opportunities at different points in their careers.

The study is not exhaustive but the international experience of its authors offers a distinctive and authoritative voice to a challenging area of cultural leadership. With particular thanks to CLP Programme Partners Venu Dhupa, Sioned Hughes and Maureen Salmon for their advice on interviewees and background reports.

Nicola Turner, Assistant Director, Cultural Leadership Programme

The authors

Julia Rowntree, Rose Fenton and Lucy Neal were colleagues at the London International Festival of Theatre (LIFT) from the early 80s until 2005. An independent arts organisation in the vanguard of international contemporary performance, LIFT pioneered initiatives in artistic practice, education, civic engagement and professional development. Since leaving LIFT, all three continue to lead international cultural initiatives.

Introduction

This report sets out to identify the values, qualities, skills and ways of working common to a number of individuals in leadership roles whose development has been profoundly shaped by international experience.

In a world intimately connected through their economies, communications and technology, migration and environmental extremity, engagement with other peoples and cultures is fundamental to cultural leadership and its development today.

Through a series of interviews, we set out to gather perspectives on two facets of one question:

- What values, qualities, skills and ways of working does it take to lead in the international cultural field today?
- And what does international experience and engagement bring to the development of these skills and cultural leadership be it in a local, regional, national or international context?

Cultural leaders, in multiple guises the world over, shape their vision, practice, roles and responsibilities in response to changing external circumstance and local need. This report offers points of reference for deeper discussion about what this takes. This report provides neither an exhaustive evaluation nor a definitive framework. Our focus is on the experience, personal values, qualities, skills and ways of working that those interviewed are perceived to hold in common.

Whether operating solo, as a duo or collective, individuals working in the field of culture step into leadership positions driven by compelling ideas and underlying values and beliefs. They follow these ideas through, trying them out with others, reflecting on the results and adapting practice accordingly. Such roles often come with no prior formal training and fall outside recognised institutions. Even if the work of cultural leadership is conducted in a familiar setting, such as a theatre, gallery, festival, library or music business, the process of pioneering structural change, innovation and experiment, can be hard to define and articulate. For those leading cultural change in countries where no recognised field of cultural practice exists, every move is an experiment in a context with no infrastructure and few anchors.

All those interviewed operate in a wider context of uncertainty subject to political, social, economic and environmental changes at local and global level. These uncertainties clearly vary in degree according to individual circumstances. Nevertheless, for most at some point, guiding principles, like-minded colleagues and forms of support are hard to come by.

Comparing notes with others can help crystallise the path ahead. Wise words came from Wesley Enoch when chairing a talk with Project Phakama at LIFT in 1999. Wesley

at that time was Director of Kooemba Jdarra Indigenous Performing Arts, Australia.¹ Phakama is a youth exchange project born of the radical changes and future hopes of South Africa in the mid 90s. Amidst the difficulties of cultural exchange, Wesley advised of the need to stay with discomfort and hold one's nerve:

'Well you know the Aboriginal saying don't you? You sharpen your axe on the hardest stone.'

For many years as colleagues at the London International Festival of Theatre (LIFT) we evolved LIFT's role: artistically, in the city, in education, with artists and audiences, supporters and policy-makers. We frequently found ourselves taking the lead with no formal authority. No one said: *"Do this"*. As an international arts organisation, we had to find what we could uniquely bring to any particular situation. We then had to take responsibility for our own role, experimenting and assembling resources as we went. Although working in one of the world's richest cities, we were working outside the mainstream in a broader and constantly shifting socio-economic and cultural context. Each biennial festival required us to reflect on and reinterpret our purpose, approach to engaging supporters, organisational form and style of leadership, whilst remaining true to our values and artistic vision.

At times we found it difficult to articulate what we did and how we did it. We found it valuable to bring others in to reflect with us on the task we had set ourselves. Subsequently, we could draw on shared language and metaphor to realign or reinvigorate our ways of working. We also constantly reviewed our approach, comparing it with cultural practice in different parts of the world. This capacity for reflection and reinvention allowed us to adapt practice in tune with emerging reality and, to some degree, shape the UK cultural scene as a result.

"Over the past 20 years, LIFT has radically, and sometimes roguishly, redefined what we think of as theatre and much of the experimentation in this country can be traced to its influence."

(David Benedict, *The Observer*, 2002)

Work on this study has been suffused with paradoxes. The issues explored are deeply personal, the words 'international', 'cultural' and 'leadership' complex and slippery. Cultural leadership propositions borrow much from western managerial models that do not transport well across political viewpoints or boundaries of culture and geography. Following major economic recession and financial scandals in the west, approaches to leadership across the board are being rethought, with models from the business world coming under particular scrutiny. In former Soviet countries the word 'Leader' comes with unwelcome cultural and ideological baggage. Some of the "leaders" interviewed actively disliked that term and would never apply it to themselves. The field is limitless and the stories told here are few.

¹ Wesley Enoch is now Artistic Director, Queensland Theatre Company, Brisbane, Australia.

Our focus in this report is on the personal experience, qualities, values, skills and ways of working essential to international cultural leadership and its development. These facets of study have been brought together in the word “competencies”. This is a convenient, yet specialised term. Within academic social sciences, the term refers to the uniquely human capacity for language and the interdependence of this facility with vision, fine motor control, and the creation and interpretation of symbol systems. This specific meaning of “competency” is paired with another technical term “performance.” Taken together, competencies can be performed only in context. Social scientists try to determine how the performance of competence is shaped by different situations, social interactions, settings, and motivations. For the purposes of this report, the social science perspective on competence offers analogical (or comparative) power. We consider how cultural leaders think of their competencies as performed or realised in relation to the conditions or limits of their circumstances. What they learn from their colleagues in the arts who work in other situations internationally is often quite critical to the type and extent of their performance. These frameworks typically emerge in relation to desired outcomes. The implication is that both competencies and outcomes can be measured by quantitative means.²

“Competency” raises as many possibilities of meaning as the term “Leadership”. Its usage has proliferated with efforts to improve development of skills and behaviours in different educational and employment settings. Competency frameworks, i.e. a summary of competencies relevant to any particular role or type of performance, are most frequently used in a single employment or educational setting for assessment or self-assessment.

The field of international cultural leadership however, has no such unity or homogeneity with regard to competencies, their definitions, or anticipated outcomes. There is no single employment context or employer. Indeed the wide range of approaches taken to cultural leadership gives the field its dynamism. Even to call it a field may be seen by some as reductionist. This report does not seek to bring homogeneity to the range of endeavours explored.

Russell Willis Taylor, CEO and President of National Arts Strategies, US, offers a further caveat: *“Leadership comes in all shapes and sizes propelled by circumstance. To say that leadership is just an amalgamation of skills is delusional. Many of these attributes are innate. Timing and context is everything. In the words of George Eliot, beware attempts to ‘know everything about violets except the way they smell.’”*

Taylor’s view coincides with the social science perspective on the innateness or given human capacities that come to us with our competencies and that we can perform so long as time and context permit.³

² Personal communication with Professor Shirley Brice Heath, Linguistic Anthropologist, Stanford University, USA, scholar of the long-term effects on leadership of engagement in the international arts.

³ As above.

New definitions of internationalism, cultural diversity and their interplay are the current focus of debate, adding further layers of complexity.⁴ In cultural policy parlance “international” is most frequently used to indicate engagement with people away from one’s own country, or a term to indicate agency interaction at state-to-state level. “Intercultural” meanwhile often refers to engagement between people of different culture in a local setting. Or, within a European Union context, it means engagement between different EU countries and minority cultures within Europe’s borders. In cultural practice terms, these distinctions are increasingly seen as blurred and irrelevant, even dismissed as used “*only by funders*”. The international is seen as the aggregate of multiple local interactions parallel with the intercultural, simply merging to become engagement between infinitely different people. This study offers perhaps a timely set of reflections on these shifting and problematic terms.

Whilst taking a cautionary stance, we propose in this report a draft competency framework through which to consider international cultural leadership. What use will be made of this report? The primary purpose is to stimulate discussion about underlying common themes amongst those leading cultural initiatives around the world today. The competencies identified are offered as a basis for knowledge exchange and deeper debate. We trust that our report will also provide pointers to improve support and development for individuals or collectives in cultural leadership roles.

Regardless of definitions, intellectually curious people reach out to others with an impulse to learn from and challenge one another, to become part of something bigger, to become citizens of the world. International experience involves struggle and mystery, a sense of fellowship and shared humanity, even love. The joy of building trust and understanding across national and cultural difference, of seeing beyond stereotypes and overturning assumptions, is woven through much of the experience reflected in the interviews.

These affecting aspects of international engagement however risk sentimentality. They should not obscure more problematic aspects such as differences in power and financial resource, prejudice and conflict. These very difficulties force assumptions to the surface and demand that attempts at resolution are negotiated. New knowledge is created as a result.

Through the experiences related in the interviews, you will see that immersion in other worlds and engagement with other peoples accelerate insights for leaders of cultural initiatives whatever the scale. Around the world, profound structural changes in governments and financial supports bring about innovative adaptive approaches to social and creative enterprise. Relationship with the earth’s resources is an urgent underlying beat for some, propelling the need to reconceptualise what it takes to lead internationally.

⁴ Amongst others: Iniva – Global visions
http://www.iniva.org/events/2010/global_visions

You may be a lone operator or someone struggling to turn around the inevitable sluggishness of institutions. You may have a formal mandate to take the lead or you may have decided to take a lead without formal authority. You may be working to give expression to artists, to raise standards of design or to improve markets for creative work. You may be working through your chosen artform to address injustice and cultural inequity. You may be a student of culture or cultural policy. Or you may be responsible for helping individuals or groups build their capacity to lead by overcoming barriers real or imagined. Whatever the case, you will need to learn - above all to learn to adapt.

Whether arts practitioner or provider of development programmes, we trust that this study will give you insight and may help you to develop your sense of what it takes to lead with a commitment to engaging internationally, at a local, regional, national or international level, or with no regard for these geographic distinctions.

You are invited to use the report as a resource to be accessed at different levels of detail. Pages 16-17 will give you a summary and framework of the competencies identified, i.e. the values, skills and ways of working necessary to international cultural leadership and its development. In the Methodology section on pp. 10-14, you will find our approach to the research, a list of interviewees, rationale for our selection, and the questions posed.

Illustration of the common themes drawn from interviews follows the framework on page 17. The final section pages 30-35 summarises what leaders gain from international experience together with issues, barriers and questions for deeper discussion. Pages 36-84 provide edited versions of all interviews. A list of publications used as background is at the end of the report.

We thank all those we interviewed and consulted for their generosity with their time and openness.

Methodology

The brief was to draft a framework of the competencies necessary to successful international cultural leadership, whether in a local, regional, national or international context.

Taking our own knowledge and experience as starting point, we drew up a hypothesis of the vital dimensions as we perceived them. These included: personal characteristics; vision; team development; realisation of vision; partnership building; technical skills; and cultural practice.

We tested these broad dimensions against interviewees' responses to the questions below.

We sought perspectives from other individuals with an overview of and interest in the field of international cultural leadership and its development. Some provided additional background to individual programmes of CLP and BC. Also consulted were authoritative individuals and seasoned international players with an interest in questions of leadership as it affects their own decisions regarding practice, design of development programmes, facilitation of broader cultural development or the form and emphasis of funding interventions.

Interviews were conducted in English by telephone with the exception of a face-to-face meeting with members of Contact Theatre.

Interview questions

In each interview, we introduced our questions with a brief overview of definitional complexities outlined above.

PAST

1. *What international experience first inspired you?*
2. *And professionally, how did you build on that experience?*
3. *Thinking from your perspective as a leader, can you cite one or two key international learning experiences?*

PRESENT

4. *How would you briefly describe your current work or practice to someone from another sector?*
5. *What major changes in the wider world are affecting your practice and how are you leading navigation of these?*
6. *Are there specific dilemmas facing you and how are you attempting to resolve them?*
7. *What have new technologies afforded to you and your work?*
8. *As far as your responsibilities go as a leader to whom or what do you feel responsible?*
9. *How do you make the bridge from idea to reality with your team?*
10. *If there were a leadership development opportunity that might make a real difference to you now, what would it look like?*

FUTURE

11. *What are the ambitions you hold that really excite you?*
12. *In the field of international working, do you have a role model?*
13. *Are there any publications or websites that have been helpful or inspiring in understanding your leadership role?*
14. *If you were to hand over to someone starting out what one thing would you say?*
15. *What, in your view, is it that you really learn through working internationally or walking in other worlds?*

16. *Is there anything else you'd like to say?*

Interviewees

Ridwan Kamil, Architect and Chair of Creative City Forum, Bandung, Indonesia.

Dessy Gavrilova & Tsvetelina Iossifova, Co-founders, The Red House, Sofia, Bulgaria.

Wayne McGregor, Artistic Director, Random Dance, Choreographer in Residence, Royal Opera House, London.

Maxine Miller, Library Collection Manager, Tate, London.

Winsome Hudson, Chief Executive, National Library of Jamaica.

Nila Madhab Panda, Filmmaker and Social Activist, New Delhi, India.

Guy Gypens, Artistic Director, Kaaitheater, Brussels, Belgium.

Ling Min, Director of Overseas Arts Projects, College of Fine Arts, Shanghai University, China.

Toleen Touq, Independent Cultural Operator and Producer, Amman, Jordan.

Ammo Talwar, Chief Executive, Punch Records, Birmingham.

Ravi Naidoo, Chief Executive, Interactive Africa and the Design Indaba, Cape Town, Republic of South Africa.

Raj Sandhu, Public Art Co-ordinator, Liverpool Biennial, UK.

Aaron Cunningham, Yusra Warsama, Borhan Mohammedi, Baba Israel, Suzie Henderson, Kelly Morgan and Ruth Adkins, Members of Contact Theatre, Manchester, UK.

Others consulted

Nadine Andrews, Director, Culture Probe, UK.

Tessa Brooks, Independent Consultant, UK.

Shirley Brice Heath, Margery Bailey Professor of English and Dramatic Literature; Professor of Linguistics, Stanford University; Professor at Large, Watson International Institute, Brown University, USA.

Paul Domela, Programme Director, Liverpool Biennial, UK.

Rachel Fink, Director & Associate General Manager, Berkeley Repertory Theatre School, USA.

Adrian Furnham, Professor of Psychology, University College London, UK.

Sue Hoyle, Director, Clore Leadership Programme, UK.

Basma El Hussein, Managing Director, Culture Resource (Al Mawred Al Thaqafy), Egypt.

Dragan Klatic, Permanent Fellow, Felix Meritis Foundation, Netherlands.

Liz Margree, Associate Director, People Create, UK.

David Morris, Director, Fuzzy Logic Consulting, UK.

Robert Palmer, Director of Culture and Cultural and National Heritage, Council of Europe, France.

Russell Willis Taylor, President and CEO, National Arts Strategies, USA.

Chrissie Tiller, Independent Consultant, UK.

Julia Turpin, Project Director, Contact Theatre, UK.

Interviewees: Selection and Introduction

Interviews took place February- April 2010. The selection of interviewees was made from those who have recently participated in international programmes of the UK's Cultural Leadership Programme or of the British Council together with others working internationally with great experience to share but independent of these organisations. A balance was sought in the final list of interviewees: cultural or creative industry, gender, leadership level, formal and informal development experience, UK and non-UK based, geographic spread, lone and group leadership.

Perspectives include people of long experience and others earlier on in their careers. Roughly half work in the UK and half in other countries. Some work in institutions, others independently, some as individual leaders, others as a partnership or collective leaders. Some are financially well resourced; others less well so. Some are not only inventing their practice but are also inventing their own support and operating infrastructure. Some work in places where their governments, local or national, are

broadly supportive of their work, whilst others cannot or would not wish to rely on such involvement. Some interviewees have experienced formal international leadership development programmes whilst others have devised their own routes to international learning.

A brief introduction to each interviewee follows. Fuller biographical background and edited versions of interviews can be found towards the end of the report (Pages xx-xx).

Ridwan Kamil describes himself as an architect and lecturer at the university in his hometown, Bandung, Indonesia. He chairs Bandung Creative City Forum whose vision is to foster the best creative city in SE Asia.

Dessy Gavrilova and **Tzvety Iossifova** are co-Founders and co-Directors of the Red House Centre for Culture and Debate, Sofia, Bulgaria. The Red House Centre sets out to stimulate the development of the independent contemporary cultural sector in Bulgaria providing a meeting point for artistic experiment and public debate.

Wayne McGregor is a choreographer who collaborates across dance, film, music, visual art, technology and science. He is Artistic Director, Wayne McGregor | Random Dance, Resident Company at Sadler's Wells Theatre, London, UK; Resident Choreographer of The Royal Ballet and the UK Government's first Youth Dance Champion.

Maxine Miller is Library Collection Manager at Tate Gallery, London, UK. Maxine undertook a three-month CLP Powerbrokers International Leadership Placement (PILP) with Winsome Hudson at the National Library of Jamaica (NLJ). She led *Picture Dis: The National Online Album of Jamaica*, a project to digitise the Library's photographic collection. During her placement in Jamaica, Maxine was Library and Information Manager at the Institute for International Visual Arts (Iniva), London, UK.

Winsome Hudson is Executive Director of the National Library of Jamaica, Kingston, Jamaica. The Library houses a comprehensive collection of primary source materials covering all aspects of Caribbean life and society. It has an online presence to serve residents of Jamaica, diaspora communities and other researchers. Winsome hosted Maxine Miller during her CLP Powerbrokers International Leadership Placement at the National Library of Jamaica.

Nila Madhab Panda (Madhab) is a filmmaker and broadcaster from New Delhi, India. He has produced and directed over 70 films through Eleanora Images, creating awareness of social issues and transforming them into mainstream entertainment through film and television. He sees himself as a storyteller.

Guy Gypens is Artistic Director of Kaaitheater Brussels, Belgium, an arts centre with an international programme that commissions artists in theatre, music and dance. Kaai is evolving an ecological philosophy to be applied in daily practice.

Rajwant Sandhu, is Projects Curator for the Liverpool Biennial, UK, a festival presenting art in public and derelict spaces rather than a gallery. Rajwant has recently decided to leave the Biennial to work freelance and develop her own ideas. Rajwant undertook a three-month Visiting Arts Placement at Shanghai University of Fine Arts hosted by Ling Min.

Ling Min is Director of Overseas Arts Projects College of Fine Arts, Shanghai University, China, an education institution that also undertakes arts projects for Government such as the Expo Pavilion, the Metro station and two museums. Ling Min took part in a Visiting Arts International Exchange, funded by CLP. She was hosted by the Liverpool Biennial and in turn, hosted Rajwant Sandhu, Public Art Coordinator, in Shanghai.

Toleen Touq started her career in multimedia technology, web development and design and recently returned to Amman, Jordan, after studying and working for a number of years in Europe. She is now working to set up various cultural, educational and audience development initiatives in the city. Toleen describes herself as an artist, cultural operator and producer.

Toleen participated in the pilot year of the British Council's Cultural Leadership International (CLI).

Ammo Talwar is Chief Executive of Punch Records, Birmingham, UK, a company combining commercial and social aims: learning and education, events and a festival, and touring of visual arts and music. Ammo undertook a CLP funded International Placement for Creative Entrepreneurs (IPCE) at Interactive Africa and the Design Indaba, hosted by Ravi Naidoo.

Ravi Naidoo is Managing Director of Interactive Africa, a marketing and communications company based in Cape Town, South Africa. Described as "*Entrepreneurs with a socio-political conscience*", Interactive Africa harnesses compelling ideas, creative talents and private sector resources to address Africa's "*meta-issues*".

Ravi hosted Ammo Talwar during his IPCE and has previously hosted a NESTA Cultural Leadership Awardee.

Contacting The World (CTW) is an international youth exchange festival produced by Contact Theatre, Manchester, UK. Facilitated by the Internet, 12 companies are twinned with youth theatres from other countries sharing ideas, films and scripts to create new theatre for a summer festival and street parade.

The following were interviewed: Borhan Mohammedi, Yusra Warsama, Aaron Cunningham and Kelly Morgan, (all members of Future Fires); Baba Israel, CEO and Artistic Director; Suzie Henderson, Head of Creative Development and Ruth Adkins, International Development Associate (a CLP Peach placement). Future Fires was formed from experiences at Contact; Aaron Cunningham is also CTW Project Administrator; Kelly Morgan works in Creative Development and Outreach.

International Cultural Leadership and its Development: Common Themes

A significant number of common themes emerge from interviews. Four broad dimensions are identified as being critical to international cultural leadership and its development:

- values and beliefs,
- psychological attributes and life experience,
- intellectual capacities and practice,
- social and collaborative capacities.

Practice is central. Qualities of leadership and its development are seen to emerge from engagement in and realisation of projects, whether as a novice or seasoned leader. Values and beliefs propel cultural practice. They are in constant interplay with psychological, intellectual and social capacities in response to an ever-evolving external context.

International cultural leadership and learning does not exist in a vacuum. Multiple uncertainties characterise the operating environment for all. These uncertainties vary in degree according to context and play out against underlying cultural and social continuities. Cultural leadership requires developing and holding a vision of change, creating a space to involve others in this change, and working for and with them towards realisation of the vision.

The summary below outlines the common themes summarised in the competency framework overleaf and are illustrated by examples drawn from interviews in the section to follow.

- **Values and beliefs**

Strongly held values, humility and a passionate belief in the common good underlie the work of many of those interviewed. Several interviewees spoke with a degree of apology about their passionate - even Utopian - belief in the common good and their commitment to making the world a better place.

- **Psychological attributes and life experience**

Self-assurance and confidence are the hallmarks of cultural leadership together with an ability to thrive on uncertainty. The continuous search for rich routes to learning is a common feature amongst interviewees. Confidence and curiosity have often come from early or vivid experience of different worlds, through travel or parental encouragement. Keen awareness of ambiguity and of one's own assumptions emerges from immersion in other cultures.

- **Intellectual capacities and practice**

Leadership does not exist in the abstract. The daily renewal and constant evolution of practice is central. Neither does it exist in isolation. Any chosen artform or field has precedents to be respected and questioned. Reaching out to others takes place in the context of history, economics and power relations. Regular reflection on practice

underlies learning and adaptation. Organising ability depends on acquisition and development of a wide range of skills.

- **Social and collaborative capacities**

Leadership exists only in a context of ‘followership’. Working with and for others is integral to leadership regardless of geographic scope. Leaders create space for the voice and place of others in order to realise a vision of ambitious scale. Transformation requires pushing boundaries of many kinds, creating transversal and supportive networks across national or cultural boundaries, organisational silos and traditional spheres of operation. This means holding others to account in the work of changing attitudes and policy. The ability to make tough decisions and develop resilience is key to sustainability of the leadership role.

International Cultural Leadership Competencies: A Framework

Values, Attributes, Capacities And Ways Of Working

VALUES AND BELIEFS			
Holding passionate belief in the common good	Possessing humility	Assuming responsibility for change/transformation	
Seeing beyond stereotype. Openness. Possessing a sense of social justice.	Being ready to see another’s point of view. Possessing generosity of spirit.	Exploring wider world issues through practice rooted in a local context.	Believing in change and continuity.
PSYCHOLOGICAL ATTRIBUTES AND LIFE EXPERIENCE			
Possessing self-assurance	Thriving on complexity and uncertainty	Having an instinct for making the most of opportunity	Possessing curiosity and love of learning
Possessing confident sense of worldview and self. Trusting gut instincts.	Handling political complexity within multiple timeframes and making safe for others.	Perceiving what is needed. Having courage to take risks and lead beyond authority.	Gaining early and/or vivid experience of another’s world.
INTELLECTUAL CAPACITIES AND PRACTICE			
Daily evolving meaningful practice	Knowing context of practice	Reflecting on practice	Developing creative and technical skills
Possessing knowledge of and passion for chosen artform or field and its potential; seeing and articulating new	Cultivating knowledge of history, geography, culture, economics and power. Respecting yet	Being self-disciplined about continuous learning and reflection. Being politically aware and seeing	Honing and extending financial, entrepreneurial and curatorial skills. Knowledge of visas, tax and legal issues,

possibilities amidst multiple stimuli.	subverting canon/tradition through innovation.	self in the scheme of things.	languages, technology – its potential and limits.
SOCIAL AND COLLABORATIVE CAPACITIES			
Creating space	Working for and with others	Pushing boundaries	Changing attitudes and policy
Holding ambitious scale of vision and making space for place and voice of others. Establishing common ground, trust and consensus. Letting go and delegating space for autonomy.	Devising organisational form in tune with vision; seeing and encouraging potential in others; displaying passion to enthuse others. Giving and receiving encouragement.	Creating networks across boundaries of organisation and discipline. Finding new possibilities in neglected resources. Challenging power and assuming ambassadorial responsibility. Understanding the motivations and pace of others.	Influencing policy and creating support structures; holding others to account; possessing powers of decision making; balancing determination with grace; developing resilience in the face of obstacles.

Common Themes: Examples from Interviews

Drawing more detail from individual interviews, each broad dimension summarised in the table is developed below.

Values and Beliefs

Strongly held values, humility and a passionate belief in the common good underlie the work of many of those interviewed. Several interviewees spoke with a degree of apology about their Utopian values and commitment to making the world a better place through the sharing of knowledge and creative collaboration.

A passionate belief in the common good motivates Kelly Morgan, a young theatre-maker at Contact, who said: *“I feel responsible to what I believe in. To get the best for the society I live in. To the world as a place, to be honest. I know that’s a big thing. I want to take the good experiences I have had and give them to others. That’s why I love doing what I do.”* Winsome Hudson sees her role as a librarian as: *“contributing to nation-building at the micro-level. It sounds lofty, but that’s what inspires me.”*

Many spoke of the sense of shared humanity emanating from engagement with people from other places and other cultures. Contact participants describe their experience of

Contacting the World (CTW) as “*seeing all the world in one place.*” “*It’s a buzz, you feel it forever.* They are compelled by a vision of “*how people are with one another... a model of the world as it could be.*” (Noel Grieg⁵) The ‘intercultural’ and the ‘international’ are seen as inseparable and irrelevant labels in the process of simply engaging with different people.

Ravi Naidoo and colleagues at Interactive Africa seek to address their country’s urgent socio-economic issues. **Possessing a sense of social justice**, they challenge others to work to high standards for the benefit of fellow citizens: “*Why shouldn’t the poorest of the poor attract the best of the best?*”

In common with several interviewees, Toleen Touq encourages others to **see beyond stereotype**. “*People are generally eager to judge without analysis, they don’t know what happened in the last 500 years, and 9/11 is often their only reference.*” Aaron Cunningham of Contact tells how “*We have these images of everyone and they’re not correct.*” When reflecting on his conversations with international peers, he admitted: “*I’d had the wrong preconceptions of them all!*”

Kelly Morgan says: “*Young people feel they are stereotyped and their opinions not valued. Labels stop people branching out. CTW inspires people to ask questions to find out for themselves.*”

Dragan Klaić is clear that **humility** is an important personal quality in the development of cultural leadership and that international experience can foster this attitude. “*You learn to deal with situations with some sort of ‘humbleness’ - a good check on arrogance which is often an entrapment of leadership. Humbleness is awareness of things you don’t know.*”

Guy Gypens expresses how he is “*constantly reminded of how **we need to see things from another point of view.***”

Ling Min describes **the generosity of spirit** required: “*If you want to make people happy, you have to look at both sides’ issues.*” ... “*First I always have to know what others want. Not just think what I want. What’s the space to go together?*”

Assuming responsibility for change has become a given for Ridwan Kamil in common with all those interviewed. He realised that “*The Government won’t take initiatives.*” To change his city he has to “*take the lead on lots of initiatives and then people start to follow.*”

Toleen Touq has recently completed a project to change the soundscape of her city, Amman. “*I was thinking of the routine of sounds we hear in the public sphere... So I transmitted my own broadcasts across the city. These included sounds of the*

⁵ The late Noel Grieg was one of Contact Theatre’s Co-Founders.

neighbourhood - birds chirping on a tree, children playing, people chatting in a cafe and the announcements of the tomato seller from his van – as well as more surreal sounds such as the sea or rainfall in Brazil. I wanted this to make people look up and ask: ‘What the hell’s going on?’”

In the context of climate change and resource depletion, Guy Gypens questions how he and international associates will work in a sustainable way. *“How will we combine this globalisation and the need for mutual understanding with the global crisis of climate change? As artistic director of Kaaitheater, I want to put this contradiction on the agenda.”*

Responsibility for change in the wider world is expressed through **practice rooted in a local context**. Dessy Gavrilova and Tzvety Iossifova explain the approach echoed by other interviewees: it is only through local needs that wider issues can be addressed. *“The international inspires and gives strength to local work, but it can’t be the starting point. That simply does not work.”*

Psychological Attributes and Life Experience

Self-assurance and confidence are the hallmarks of cultural leadership together with an ability to thrive on uncertainty. The continuous search for rich routes to learning is a common feature amongst interviewees. Confidence and curiosity have often come from early or vivid experience of different worlds, through travel or parental encouragement. Revelation of assumptions and keen awareness of ambiguity emerge from immersion in other cultures.

Early experience of another world through travel is a common theme contributing to a **confident sense of worldview and self**.

Both Ammo Talwar and Rajwant Sandhu were inspired by travel to India when they were quite young. Ammo relates how *“That first visit made me want to do more. We visited our relatives, some elderly, and it got me interested in why we do certain things as human beings.”* Rajwant too was ten when she accompanied her parents to see family members. *“I remember feeling foreign somewhere so familiar to them. It opened my eyes to wanting to learn about other cultures and other people.”*

Nila Madhab Panda from an early age always had his own vision, crystallised through engagement with others. *“I knew I wanted to DO something, although what was never clear. Our dreams can never be ruled.”* He moved to Delhi and worked with a group of documentary filmmakers from the US. *“I came from a village in India where there were no schools, no roads. I was familiar with the daily poverty. For the US team this was a gritty reality. They came from a place where schools and clean water were taken for granted... None of what they saw was a surprise to me, but in seeing it through their eyes, I realised what we had gone through in India.”*

Yusra Warsama of Contact describes the origin of her **self-assurance and confidence**. *“You won’t necessarily hear about a young Somali woman and I use that in my art as a spoken word poet. I use my faith. I feel responsible to my background, to my faith, comfortable or not. I feel responsible to work and audiences. I have to be truthful. I’ve always been different. It’s what makes me an individual.”*

Wayne McGregor’s confidence grew as his parents *“encouraged me to try what I was interested in. ‘Just have a go’ they would say.”* *“We all have cognitive frameworks that we have inherited from growing up.”*

Travel was forbidden or difficult for some whilst young, due to racist or isolationist policies and attitudes. Vivid international experience in later years has proved critical to the leadership path subsequently taken.

Dessy Gavrilova relates how *“The Amsterdam Maastricht Summer University was a key moment in my professional life... First you must imagine the context – coming from a Communist country where until 1990 you could not travel. It was a shocking experience and very intense, meeting people from all over Europe developing interesting projects– thinking and conceptualising things in a way I could relate to. I found friends, as well as discovering a city filled with culture at every turn. It was a massive injection of experience, it was all so new and I was like a baby absorbing everything and growing and developing through this experience.”*

For Ravi Naidoo, who only gained a passport after the political changes in South Africa, *“My first international experience was the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona. I saw the metropolitan leverage that was brought to bear on forging a cultural identity. It really pinged with me.”*

Experience of racist attitudes meant that Maxine Miller associated travel with fear. Overcoming this barrier to take up her placement in Jamaica allowed Maxine to strengthen her confidence and extend her view of herself, such that she can say: *“I am not the woman now I was then.”*

Trusting gut instincts, as Ravi describes, is key to ensuring meaningful practice. *“When things don’t feel convincing, you drop them.”*

Ammo Talwar’s advice to those finding their leadership feet is: *“Do **you**. The band Common Sense has a track called ‘Do **You**’. Work on what you’re good at. It’s about authenticity and knowing yourself.”*

Dragan Klaić, Fellow at Felix Meritis Foundation, explains how **the ability to thrive on complexity and uncertainty** is fostered through international engagement. *“You are dealing with a greater range of unknown variables than at home, so you’re constantly measuring up, exploring, calibrating... so you have to be very alert and concentrated.”*

A critical factor in innovation is the capacity to recognise pattern, relationships, effects, and a sense of beauty amidst complexity. Fine aesthetic sense and attunement to gut instinct underlies this process of recognition.

Wayne describes this mastering of uncertainty: *“A leader is someone who can feel safe in a space where they don’t know what’s next, and who can encourage others to feel safe in that same space, to feel comfortable with not knowing.”*

Handling political complexity within multiple timeframes and making safe for others is a dimension of this skill.

Basma El-Husseiny, Managing Director of Cultural Resource (Al Mawred Al Thaqafy), Egypt, wryly describes the uncertainties of her operating context: *“The Middle Eastern Region has got ‘the whole package’ - corrupt administrative systems, wars, dysfunctional legal environment. How to navigate your way around this as a cultural leader?”* International networks can widen debate in these contexts, offering solidarity, new perspectives and resources.

Navigation of uncertainty is inherent in international cultural practice wherever it takes place, on home turf or elsewhere.

Rajwant Sandhu explains how *“Working on commissions, communicating about things that are very different to situations and culture here, can be extremely challenging. It’s about reading between the lines, being sensitive and aware of situations...”*

Maxine Miller had to overcome having a common language with colleagues in Jamaica, yet the meaning being different.

Having an instinct for opportunity in many different situations is essential if resources are to be secured or policies affected.

Ammo Talwar describes the horizon-scanning skills that inform his grasp of opportunity. *“You need to be practicing your pitches now to position yourself effectively in 2-3 years’ time. We’re lucky here [at Punch Records], we have good information-gathering able to foresee policy changes to reposition and resource particular areas such that potential partners can’t **not** work with us.”*

Toleen Touq finds that opportunities have come through discussing ideas, working in networks and creating support systems. She realises that *“you don’t always need cash, the network comes up with support in many different ways. And then sometimes unexpectedly someone comes with some financial support.”*

Nila Madhab Panda’s ideas emerge from **perception of what is needed**. *“It means there is always a sense of urgency around any particular issue.”* Vision informed by urgent current need connects with others.

Dessy Gavrilova and Tzvety Iossifova describe how, in an era when the Ministry of Culture was still in control of information and events in Bulgaria, they had the **courage to take risks and lead beyond their formal authority**. Their participation in the European Theatre Meeting inspired them to organise a meeting to encourage development of an independent sector in Bulgaria outside government control. *“A few independent groups were emerging to find their place locally. All were dying for international contacts. The title we gave the meeting was ‘Shall We Take Over?’”* Ravi Naidoo, dissatisfied with the status-quo in the advertising world, decided to experiment with a new approach: *“I was a bit bored with the picture/logo/promise formula which hadn’t changed in 150 years. The Design Indaba was set up to be an ideas exchange and concentrated a lot of experiences. I learned so much from doing it. It was really living it not just crafting strategy.”*

All interviewees expressed an unquenchable **curiosity and love of learning**. Indeed it can be said that all, in one way or another, constantly locate themselves in the richest places of learning, be it through practice, formal routes to learning and experimentation, or experimentation in altering work patterns. This thirst provides a starting point for innovation and adaptation.

Toleen Touq approaches *“each idea and its execution as a learning experience. Through my projects I learn more, I gain more knowledge.”*

At Contact, informal and shared learning happens through simply hanging out with colleagues: *“Sometimes you build your main friendships by cooking together. With the peer to peer mentoring, I feel proud and it is mutual. I look up to you and you look up to me...”* (Kelly Morgan)

When Aaron Cunningham visited other young arts practitioners in Brazil as part of Contacting the World, he saw how international exchange widens horizons for both host and visitor. *“I spent time with Rosalie from Afro Reggae. She’d never been out of her favela, just 9-10 streets. I’d seen more of Brazil in a day than she had seen in her life. My presence though made it safe for her to go into Rio. CTW gave her new freedom. When she came to the UK, she was so excited, like a child – exploring, touching, tasting, everything. I felt responsible and glad for her.”*

Common to all those interviewed this trait has been described as *“intellectual curiosity or fluid intelligence.”*⁶ Dessy Gavrilova uses the term *“intelligent curiosity”* as the quality she recognises in herself and seeks to encourage in others. This capacity finds an ever-evolving focus through practice.

⁶ Professor Adrian Furnham, email correspondence April 2010

Intellectual Capacities and Practice

Leadership does not exist in the abstract. Daily renewal and constant evolution of practice are central, and cannot exist in a vacuum. Any chosen artform or field has precedents to be respected and questioned. Reaching out to others must be seen as happening within the complexities of history, economics and power relations. Regular reflection on practice underlies learning and adaptation. Organising ability depends on acquisition and development of a wide range of skills.

Daily renewing and evolving meaningful practice in the context of a bigger picture preoccupies Guy Gypens. *“We’re helping people to see what the possibilities are for art and climate change. It helps though to have your own daily practice... You say something about eco issues every day through the work and help people to see what is possible. The whole ecological issue is central to how I look at the future.”*

At Interactive Africa, Ravi Naidoo and colleagues *“get up in the morning and have a lovely idea and then gather the resources to do it. We are not hired guns. Sometimes we get a brief. But most of the time we generate our own projects.”*

Russell Willis Taylor, President and CEO of National Arts Strategies in the US⁷, emphasises the importance of practice: *“leaders have to have the ability to refine mental frameworks through practice...an iterative process of constantly reviewing theory and practice: imagining the vision, moving to realisation, changing this in time according to changing circumstances. The relationship of theory to practice is essential. The school of hard knocks is not sufficient.”*

Possessing a passion for his chosen artform and its potential propels Wayne McGregor constantly to challenge the art practice for which he is recognised. *“This notion of ‘expertise’ is a real problem. You become a choreographer, but what does that really mean? A lot of the time I am lost, intellectually, socially, the world is a much bigger place and you have to look outside. And look outside dance too”.*

Wayne is currently collaborating with scientists *“to understand from a cognitive point of view what goes on in the brain when we create, in order to identify key principles that we can share more widely.”*

Nila Madhab Panda says: *“I’m not just a filmmaker. My films become platforms. They serve a purpose. I address social issues and a responsibility to society, holding a mirror up to society and applying that to the cinema.”*

Inner drive and passion is a common trait, essential to keeping on keeping on. Robert Palmer, Director of Heritage and Culture at the Council of Europe, when asked what kept him going replied that he retained a quality of the naïve child trying to change the world.

⁷ President and CEO, National Arts Strategies, since 2001, formerly CEO of English National Opera, London, UK.

Seeing and articulating new possibilities amidst multiple stimuli is a key capacity. Dessy Gavrilova and Tzvety Iossifova established the Red House to “*encourage people to be active and take a position as citizens. And when we become aware of a group tackling important issues we give them a platform at the Red House and put them in the spotlight.*”

Knowing the context of practice is vital. Overcoming stereotypes in a post 9/11 world for example, Toleen Touq realises “*how much politics is so much part of everyday life – this makes my work more relevant and interesting. I am navigating this through empowering myself and others, through being more political.*”

Maxine Miller, gives background to her work at the National Library of Jamaica: “*Setting up Picture Dis we used the national motto ‘Out of many, we are one’ but during selection of the images, hierarchy of skin colour became a factor. The legacy of slavery and colonialism is that any degree of lightness can be brought into play (for or against) particular choices. Generally the darker you are the more work you have to do.*”

The work of cultural **innovation** does not emerge from a vacuum. Whilst having **respect for the canon or tradition, it subverts it.**

As Maxine points out: “*New technologies offer many exciting opportunities for opening up the collections and diversifying the canon. There’s an old idea here [at Tate] of what an artist is – about the canon. ‘Born digital’ material⁸ is changing these boundaries.*”

Being politically aware and seeing oneself in the scheme of things preoccupies Dessy and Tzvety. Tzvety comments: “*Times have changed; everything is more structured. The early 90s was an exceptional time for us; there was a huge shift in mentality. Now is the time of functioning, not reflection. We have to fight against this.*” Hardening of right wing and racist politics in Europe is having its impact on cultural practice. Robert Palmer points to cultural conflict in the South Caucasus region and Contact reports a “*sense of fear and foreboding*” as the BNP⁹ increase their presence in Manchester.

Reflecting on practice is essential. Ravi Naidoo notes: “*We have a model that’s relevant to emerging economies. The Design Indaba could work in Brazil, China, India. Realities are all happening at once: we have soil squishing between our toes in the townships and, at the same time, are writing code. Half the world is in this space.*” For Guy Gypens, “*With this globalisation comes the greatest problem now of all... How will we combine the need for continued mutual understanding with the global crisis of climate change?*”

⁸ Material made by children of the digital age.

⁹ British National Party.

Developing a context for reflection includes cultivating **knowledge of history, geography, culture, economics and power**. Above all, **being self-disciplined about continuous learning and reflection**.

Rajwant Sandhu explained that behind her wish to go freelance was an opportunity *“to be more reflective and have time to think about how everything fits together internationally. I read and go to exhibitions and fly in and out but feel I’m missing so much. There’s no time to stand back.”*

When Maxine Miller was in Jamaica, she did not turn to leadership literature in the search for development, but *“read Neruda for the first time, Wilfred Owen and John Donne and returned to Toni Morrison and Beloved.”*

Ammo Talwar acknowledged how his placement in South Africa gave him *“REAL REAL thinking and reading time. It allowed me to get away from the company and think: How do I want it to grow? What the hell am I really doing? I need to plant the seeds and allow things to grow.”*

To fulfill the need for reflection, Wayne McGregor has developed a retreat for himself and others *“a place to think, to be,”* where colleagues *“can go for a month and do absolutely what they want.”*

Both Ravi and Guy deliberately create space and time to reflect. Twice a year, Guy takes time away from his daily business to *“participate in thinking procedures to reflect on the broader picture”*. He says it feels like a luxury but that *“we have to oblige ourselves to do this.”* Ravi cautions: *“you need to know how to detach. You need a good team to delegate so you are not on the treadmill. I go to an Ayurvedic centre in India to detox, declutter.”*

Robert Palmer points out: *“Really great leaders diversify life’s interests and handle concerns about health.”*

Developing creative and technical skills is a given. These include financial, entrepreneurial and curatorial skills. Knowledge of visas, tax and legal issues are essential to international working. Languages, it goes without saying, are invaluable not only for communication but for expanding and deepening worldviews. This is particularly true for UK practitioners, often rendered lazy in this regard in a world where English is the lingua franca. Knowledge of technology, its potential and limits, provides the foundation for communication, curatorial and artform innovation.

An ability to organise is essential too. Wayne acknowledges: *“I am very organised. I plan meticulously, always know what I’m doing in advance and always make sure I have got enough time.”*

Social and Collaborative Capacities

Leadership only exists in a context of 'followership'. Working with and for others is integral to the role whether the frame is local or international. This involves creating space for the voice and place of others in a vision of ambitious scale. Sensitive negotiation of this space and holding it for and with others becomes even more intricate when working internationally. The broader the geographic frame, the greater the proliferation of differences to be negotiated. Sometimes these differences are not even perceived at the outset but are revealed through the leadership effort itself.

Transformation requires pushing boundaries of many kinds, creating transversal and supportive networks across national and cultural boundaries, organisational silos and traditional spheres of operation. This means holding others to account in the work of changing attitudes and policy. The ability to make tough decisions and develop resilience is key to sustainability of the leadership role.

By **creating space** for a new vision of collaboration, Ridwan Kamil describes how he **established the common ground, trust and consensus** necessary to getting Bandung Creative City Forum off the ground: *"It takes a long time to build trust in the creative community. I went round talking saying 'Let's get together'. It took two years going door to door, discussing and convincing. It was very exhausting but very rewarding at the same time."*

At LIFT, this work of creating space for new ideas came to be called '*nemawashi*', a Japanese horticultural term describing the delicate process of loosening the earth around the roots of a plant prior to transplantation. Alliances need building in private space before being brought together in a more public arena.

Robert Palmer is alert to the space required at the Council of Europe to *"re-conceive cultural leadership with much broader concepts. Everywhere there is a crisis of governance. This needs addressing with a focus on interculturalism and cultural diversity and everywhere transversal teams working across disciplines."* He does this through reflection with experts, *"think tanks with academics, writers and practitioners, a lot of writers..."*

Contact theatre deliberately creates space for collective learning and cross-fertilisation of ideas. *"We're very lucky. We get to create work out of passion. I saw spoken word theatre and hip-hop and I recognised it was an arena I could play with. It's a mental playground. Freedom to play. I have a responsibility to maintain that space for emerging artists."* (Yusra Warsama)

Leading with an **ambitious scale of vision and making space for the place and voice of others** determines who follows and how.

Maxine Miller struggles with the word 'ambition' and explains she has *"to come at it from what I can do for other people. Leadership doesn't mean you have to do all the leading."*

Ridwan Kamil describes how he has learned to *"twist things from the developed world to fit the context here [Indonesia]"*... *"in developing countries we have to make a results-oriented vision... Once you have a good idea and it's well executed, it's amazing what happens..."*

Ambitious vision requires that leaders **let go and delegate space for autonomy**. Ammo Talwar's placement at Interactive Africa gave him an opportunity to observe how Ravi Naidoo *"was so good at letting things go, planting a seed and letting it grow. Even today I ask myself within my own work: how would Ravi do this?"*

Working for and with others is the foundation stone of working internationally. 'Partnership' hardly goes far enough to describe the depth of engagement and negotiation necessary to realise ambitious cultural change. Collaboration is the order of the day.

Ridwan explains how he worked on a project to regenerate poor areas of the city and, at the same time, encourage more sustainable ways of living. *"I operate more at the concept level and work with NGOs to ensure that the communication is at one frequency. Suddenly the slum area was more optimistic and more active. I learned from that process that I can't do everything. Collaboration is my new religion."*

Nila Madhab Panda has found *"There is scope for making things so much bigger when you open it out and collaborate with others."*

Toleen Touq works *"to create cultural contexts that are missing in the region, and to give to other people, as well as feed from other people, creating support systems for us all, so we can be more effective together. ... I feel a huge responsibility to my colleagues, sharing information and empowering through collaboration."*

When the Informal European Theatre Meeting was convened in Sofia, Dessy Gavrilova describes how *"It was a big journey for people from the region and made them realise what strength they had collectively, and gave them - and us - courage to pursue our ideas."*

A responsibility to pass on insights and learning to others was expressed by Yusra Warsama and Aaron Cunningham at Contact. *"I'd like to take skills I've learned here and teach them in Ethiopia. I'm very Mancunian and very Ethiopian. That would be fantastic."* *"You have to pass on that baton of knowledge."*

Devising organisational form in tune with vision is essential for effective working. *"At Punch, we used to do everything for everybody,"* according to Ammo. *"I learned*

from South Africa to focus on what we are good at, reducing and simplifying everything through the business plan to the website.”

Seeing and encouraging potential in others; *“You play to team members’ strengths letting others lead on some things.”* (Maxine Miller)

Displaying passion to enthuse others is essential to bringing people behind a new idea. During his placement in South Africa, Ammo had *“an opportunity to observe how Ravi worked with a team... I learned from his body language, his animation, his way of exciting other people.”*

Giving encouragement motivates team members. Maxine advises: *“Give credit and anticipate potential. You are often surprised at what you get back.”* **Receiving encouragement** is equally important.

Ambitious scale of vision involves **pushing boundaries**. **Creating networks across boundaries of organisation, discipline, sector** and geography enable this, turning the problems of one sector into the opportunities of another, thus **transforming neglected resources**.

After the political changes in Europe in '89, Dessy Gavrilova describes how she and Tzvety Iossifova grasped an opportunity to build networks through hosting a pan-European theatre meeting. *“It... attracted over 200 participants”* from Bulgaria, Europe and beyond. There was *“huge energy and enthusiasm, the sense of becoming more confident...people made use of their contacts and so many collaborations grew.”* For Madhab Panda, networks *“are really important. Coming from a developing country this is what helped me. I come up with ideas for films... then I work to build up rich and versatile networks of support”* including Government agencies and NGOs.

Understanding the motivations and pace of others is key to forging effective networks and enduring collaboration. Networks are difficult to maintain in the abstract. Shared projects allow for the development of ideas and practicalities, strengthening and testing relationships through experimentation.

Ling Min, as she works *“to build real cooperation for the future through practice”*, has become skilled in navigating between different operating contexts. *“In UK everyone has to report what they have done, lots of reviews. We never review what happened, we only look forward and have meetings on decisions and opinions. In China, we have one meeting and it can be settled.”* Ling Min, as Ridwan Kamil in Indonesia, operates in a context where a long delay means *“they will ignore you”*. Success is determined by rapid results.

Challenging power and assuming ambassadorial responsibility. The independent cultural sector is still not well understood or supported in Bulgaria. The Red House is obliged to navigate this *“challenge through maintaining a constant dialogue with the*

government, trying to change the situation. Though the government says they value our work, they still do not support us. We are still trying to make them understand that they can support independent organisations, that what is important is the work that is being done, its relevance and importance for society, and not the type of ownership of a given cultural organisation. This seems however to be a concept too hard to grasp for our policy makers.”

Toleen describes **changing attitudes and policy** based on practice. *“One of my inspirations is Samar Dudin, a cultural activist who has pushed lots of boundaries working in a community centre, creating change in the community, and through her work shifting ideas about cultural policy. One of my future goals would be to be involved in creating cultural policy in the municipality.”*

Programming decisions at Kaaitheater involve reconciling travel and ecological sustainability. Guy openly discusses his reasons. *“I say it is not just budget reasons and about the quality of the work. We must discuss the ecological reasons as well. This is a surprise for some people. I have recently openly criticised the Canadian government policy for touring. You have to challenge people. Step One is to make it clear to people that it is a part of the negotiation. It is still a new thing.”*

Influencing policy goes hand-in-hand with **creating support structures**. In South Africa, Ravi describes his approach to repositioning Africa by addressing the “*meta-issues*” through celebration of creativity. Nothing would change if Africa continued to rely for income on its rich natural resources alone. *“We had to box ourselves out of a corner if we wanted to grow the economy. Our economic problems were a ticking time-bomb. Creativity was the way forward. The question was how to harness this up front and make it central. The crisis of the day was job creation.”... “If 51 of the biggest economies in the world are companies, the theatre in which to make a difference are the corporate boardrooms. We have a well-defined conscience and harness those powers to make a difference. The skillset required is not sitting in the public sector.”* Influencing policy involves **holding others to account**.

The multiple layers inherent in international cultural practice demand exceptional **powers of decision-making**. As Ling Min says: *“If you really want something to happen, you can’t be too nice. You have to balance tough and nice.”*

Also required is a capacity to **develop resilience in the face of obstacles**. Maxine describes the approach she seeks to emulate: *“Mrs Hudson is my role model. She never stops asking: What more can I do? She disregards failure because even if it hasn’t gone right there’s something to learn.”*

Filmmaker Madhab says: *“We lose our light if everything is dark, dark, dark... We do have a sense of survival and we have to utilise this towards betterment.”*

What do Cultural Leaders Gain from International Experience?

The interviews conducted show that international experiences inspire vivid, hopeful and entrepreneurial responses to today's challenges. Immersion in other worlds brings fresh perspectives on familiar surroundings, overturns assumptions, and encourages individuals to look beyond stereotypes. International experience enlarges a sense of the world on which individuals can draw to develop innovation and opportunity. Through international experience, individuals build peer and mentoring networks that can help keep inspiration, support and commitment alive. Travel away from home provides the space and context for reflection and renewal – bringing greater clarity to the leadership role, its development and sustainability.

International experience re-tunes an individual's sense of their potential and place in the world, encouraging them to *"become less self-focussed"* and overcome the thought that *"everything is worse where you are"* (Dessy Gavrilova). It opens new doors; puts things in perspective; generates greater determination and respect on homecoming; offers experiences that inspire, liberate and transform.

Wayne McGregor acknowledges he would not be doing the work he now does without his international experience. *"What was amazing was that it gave me exposure to and a dialogue with international audiences, as well as to a range of aesthetics. I realised that there was not just one way of seeing things... By working internationally you realise how much you don't know."*

Sue Hoyle, Director, Clore Leadership Programme¹⁰, points out: *"international experience makes a huge difference. In India or New Zealand for example, they (UK participants) will not only be a long way from home, but also in very different cultural environment. It's challenging, but the difference these experiences make to their understanding of their own qualities, their resilience, their humility and their overall confidence is HUGE"*.

However, travel away from home is not always vital to engaging internationally and to deriving real benefits from cultural exchange. Members of Contact Theatre welcomed international peers to Contact's own city, Manchester, as part of creating work together. International engagement proves far from easy at times. Complexity of language at multiple levels can derail smooth communication forcing development of non-verbal skills, new powers of observation and a compulsion to strive for accurate understanding.

Rajwant explains of her work in the UK with artists from different countries: *"International cultural leadership is not about me transporting me and my work somewhere else. It's about reading between the lines, being sensitive and aware of situations."* *"To learn true intentions and aspirations it takes time. But you do know..."*

¹⁰ Director, Clore Leadership Programme

you get to a place where you can ask those very straightforward questions and be prepared to be honest yourself.”

Such challenges have made for life-changing depths of awareness of both self and others. Trust established in these conditions is the stuff of friendships and working relationships to last a lifetime.

Welcoming international guests following political change and isolation brought new confidence, hope, and aspirations to Dessy Gavrilova and Tsvety Iossifova and to Ravi Naidoo. Their international experiences gave rise to a rich well of critical events on which to draw thereafter.

Practical opportunities for innovation and risk-taking open up through international engagement. During her placement, Ling Min looked for these. *“At very detailed level I try to find links with precise opportunities.”* Her ability to *“create a space to go together”* ensured that successful collaboration was built between Shanghai University, the Biennial and other arts practitioners and institutions in Liverpool. Ling Min viewed international connections as essential to the development of artistic practice in China. Winsome Hudson explains that international differences are easier to overcome where there is a common culture or discipline such as librarianship. The same issues are largely shared regardless of economic situation: economics are *‘simply a question of degree’*. The learning is always two-way.

Ridwan’s social entrepreneurship capacities were developed through a visit to the UK. Innovation does not come from simply copying: *“You have to be contextually aware and creative. You cannot just cut and paste what you have experienced.”* Enterprising solutions and innovation come from recognising pattern and cultural continuities taking inspiration from one context and applying it in another.

The old adage: *‘Travel broadens the mind’* holds true today just as, in legends down the ages, a journey provides the route to reflection, renewal – even reinvention – whether it be to the next town or to meet strange peoples in strange lands. Transformation springs from the gifts of strangers, from getting lost and finding yourself anew. To illustrate the compelling nature of international experience, Rajwant Sandhu quotes the philosopher Alphonso Lingis: *“Trust is inherent in travel. We ask strangers for directions. We live among people whose language, culture and motivations we don’t understand. Trust binds us to one another with an intoxicating energy.”*

International Cultural Leadership Development: Issue and Barriers

The main gains to leadership development through international experience have been laid out. Issues arise for those offering such opportunities and for those seeking out such experiences for themselves.

Basma El-Husseiny, Managing Director, Cultural Resource (Al Mawred Al Thaqafy) points out the importance of taking the individual as the starting point for effective development programmes: *“some people are more able to learn from personal encounters. Some from more formal study programmes. A combination of both is good. A combination of theory and practice.”*

We asked interviewees what kind of development opportunity - international or otherwise- they would like now. Their response was *“TIME”* most especially to reflect. For Winsome Hudson it is to have the space and time to research and write. Some express a wish to improve specific skills. For Winsome this is to develop her curatorial skills in the digital field.

Toleen Touq also emphasises the value of learning *“nitty-gritty”* practicalities such as curatorial skills. She highlights the value of sharing this learning with others to create a cultural context in her region. For Toleen, *“The most effective leadership development is a placement with a more experienced group of people, one that is outside one’s own context so that you can begin to see things differently.”*

Levels of economic development, of national cultural policy, infrastructure and professionalisation of the cultural sector, all have a bearing on forms of development required.

Differences in economic situation are stark in some instances. In countries where there is no shared professional infrastructure, individuals work with little or no support, inventing their own networks, means of survival and forms of practice. Madhab Panda in New Delhi is the most challenged in this regard. International networks play a critical role in the entrepreneurial approach he takes to his work.

In parts of the world where corruption is rife, ingenuity, entrepreneurial skill and resilience are required in abundance. It becomes still more complicated where international exchange is concerned as the stakes are higher and the prospect of a visit abroad becomes an opportunity for funders to muscle in.

Surprisingly perhaps, financial sustainability or rather the lack of it was not mentioned as much as might be expected. Toleen, Mahdab, Ridwan, Winsome and others highlight the vital importance of developing networks, both in the region and internationally. Toleen explains: *“Through conversations and networks you find other people, people not only to participate but also to fund.”* When attention shifts from money as the sole preoccupation new opportunities can appear, in the form of finance or of collaboration. International development programmes play a vital part in opening up these networks and opportunities.

Invisible barriers to participation in international development programmes nevertheless exist. Some interviewees explained that this came from a sense that they were not entitled to participate. This comes from never seeing themselves as ‘leaders’ or the

kind of leader assumed to be sought by programme providers. Maxine explains: “*When I first had the application form (for the international placement), I didn’t see it as being for me.*” In addition, travel away from home for Maxine brought with it justified fear of prejudice and the unknown. Informal ‘permission’ and encouragement from others was needed before she felt the opportunity was for her.

One CLI participant (who did not wish to be named) commented that in Belgium there are few people working independently and independent cultural leadership is not well developed or understood. Those taking the lead at grassroots level are largely invisible and not widely supported through training and mentoring. Furthermore, the word ‘leadership’ itself is difficult to translate and take on board, as it is even seen as taboo by some against the backdrop of the egalitarian origins and principles of many in the cultural sector.

In those countries in which traditional gender roles prevail, female cultural leaders need endorsement from high status males to move forward. Once selected for international exchange programmes a woman’s status can be perceived as inferior by international hosts who do not consider them as appropriate representatives of the partner organisation. This can present difficulties when embarking on a placement.

Hardening of security and immigration restrictions mean that for those whose citizenship status is in question, or under negotiation, international travel is impossible for fear that re-entry will be disallowed. Passport and visa issues present hurdles of varying degree around the world.

Censorship comes into play in some states, or self-censorship, when taking a stand against the status quo threatens life or security. This also applies when critique of religion or religious leadership exposes artists to condemnation or exile.

Mobility of artists from totalitarian and closed states is clearly relevant to questions of cultural leadership and international engagement but fuller investigation is beyond the scope of this report.

New technologies and developments in social media have opened up the possibility of greater communication across distance. Opportunities for making and maintaining international relationships have been sparked in unprecedented ways. These bring with them challenges that must be balanced with person-to-person contact and maintaining the mental space for aspects of life outside work. Communication with closed states has at times been difficult. Contact reported that initial e-links were cut with Iran but that it was still possible to communicate through various social sites.

International working needs firm roots and values forged from a local base. In this light, qualities of international cultural leadership and of cultural leadership *per se* emerge as being inextricably linked.

Dessy Gavrilova cautions that it is unwise to plunge headlong into international engagement for its own sake or simply because it is fashionable. *“Now that ‘international’ and ‘intercultural’ is becoming the official policy line, there is a real threat that it is emptied of its meaning. There is too much talk and too many mechanisms that often lead to superficiality. It has become fashionable without any real thought. Networks spring up without any relevance to the local context.”*

Dessy describes the approach of those she thinks of as role models. *“They never call themselves networkers or internationalists... The international aspect of their work inspires and gives strength to their local work, but it can’t be the starting point for what they are doing... It has to be very local, designed for local needs. Their international work brings an extra dimension, offering access to and gaining inspiration and strength from other realities and issues.”*

Strong emphasis was put by several interviewees on the irrelevance of labelling one kind of interaction as ‘international’ and another as ‘intercultural’. *“Ultimately working internationally and interculturally is more about people than we really think.”* Toleen Touq sees it *“as different people working together, not different cultures”*.

Ammo Talwar says: *“With technology, the international and the intercultural has to be taken on board whether you’re a DJ, or the Opera House, or a small company. It’s about learning in different ways, different things from different people. It can only be like this.”*

As Rajwant points out: *“‘Intercultural’ and ‘international’ are related words but exist everywhere. You don’t have to be international to understand the intercultural because we are such a culturally diverse community.”*

An era of relatively cheap flights has widened access to international experience both through formal programmes and self-organised travel. Greater awareness of the environmental costs however is affecting institutional and individual choices to varying degree. Guy Gypens asks: *“How will we combine globalisation [of artistic programming] and the need for continued mutual understanding with the global crisis of climate change?”*

If the greatest scope for the development of cultural leadership is accessed through international experience, questions arise in an ecologically conscious age as to who comes and goes and how choices are made.

Main Discussion Points Arising from this Study

The following are proposed as points for wider discussion:

- How can wider political and strategic understanding of the vital role of international working be improved?

- Is re-conception of international cultural leadership required?
- How can tailor-made and long-term development processes be devised and delivered?
- How are meaningful international relationships ensured through practice rooted in local contexts?
- What are the practical steps to building networks and keeping them going?

Last Word

While scores of studies focus on leadership in business and politics this report is, to our knowledge, one of the few that focuses on international leadership in the field of culture. We set out to answer two facets of the same question. Through a series of interviews, we sought to establish what it takes to lead in an international context today and what international experience brings to the development of the competencies required. What have we learned?

- 1 Rewards of working internationally outweigh the challenges.
- 2 Cultural leaders must dig deep to know what is most worthwhile about their international work.
- 3 Cultural leaders play their roles on multiple stages from local settings to those with international reach.

We discover that by engaging internationally, cultural leaders seek out the richest places of learning and adaptation. They deliberately open themselves up to challenges at the point where emergent worlds and cultural continuities meet, creating new knowledge and new practice as a result.

In 2010, our cultural stories are part of a pivotal moment in change worldwide. Wesley Enoch's guidance seems apt for today. To reap the rewards of working internationally this will doubtless require *'sharpening one's axe on the hardest stone'* as the spaces in which we work resonate with wider global change, its challenges and opportunities. Cultural leadership is a role requiring constant recalibration and refinement of skill. We can take heart that the choices we make as cultural leaders contribute in tangible ways to imagining the world as it might be

INTERVIEWS (February - April 2010)

Ridwan Kamil, architect and Chair of Creative City Forum, Bandung, Indonesia

Ridwan Kamil describes himself as an architect and lecturer at the university in his home town, Bandung, Indonesia. He is also an entrepreneur and social activist. As Chair of Bandung Creative City Forum, which brings together twenty or more creative communities, his vision is to create the best creative city in SE Asia, to expand the creative sector and its contribution to the economy.

In 2006, Ridwan was awarded a British Council Creative Entrepreneur of the Year award and invited to visit the UK. He learned about creative industries and the creative city movement from a UK perspective through visits to Glasgow, Scotland and London. My first trip overseas was as a student representative to Singapore in 1994 when I was exposed to networking with student leaders in SE Asia. The exchange really opened my perspective to the importance of international networking and I decided I have to spend something of my time on forging international connections. In 2006, I was awarded Creative Entrepreneur of the Year and invited to visit the UK. I went to Glasgow and London to learn about creative industries and the creative city movement from a UK perspective. When I went home I saw my city was very strong in creative industries. We are a young democratic country but struggle in economic terms. We had made lots of initiatives to do something for the city but were not very strong. In 2008 about three years after the visit to the UK, we created Bandung Creative City Forum.

In the developed world, the government is already in line with the vision of the people and it's easy to find a creative council. Here in Indonesia, the issue of the creative economy is still new. The Government won't take initiatives. I realised that if I want to change my city, I have to take the lead on lots of initiatives and then people start to follow. Basically, you have to be contextually aware and creative. You cannot just cut and paste what you have experienced in London.

It takes a long time to build trust in the creative community. I went round talking saying let's get together. It took two years going door to door, discussing and convincing. It was very exhausting but very rewarding at the same time. I built new networks and had more than twenty groups willing to get involved. The approach was if we want to make a change we have to do it ourselves and strengthen civil society. For two years now we have a Creative City Festival promoting design and economic aspects of creative enterprise. Gradually we change the idea of the city, suddenly the city is a bit more excited, particularly from a sense we have gone from idea to implementation by ourselves. A local magazine awarded us the 'Man of the Year' award because we are offering a strong model of how a social and creative movement can make change.

Competition is a growing challenge today and people expecting you to deliver everything much faster. Networking is everything for me. You gain first hand knowledge of business opportunities. That's why I write, use Twitter and Facebook. I respond positively to changes.

Technology is integral to my practice as an architect. It's about space and form. Now without computers and technology, I cannot imagine delivering commissions on time or how I would imagine architectural forms.

You need the wisdom to twist things from the developed world to fit the context here. A vision for the most creative city in SE Asia came out of my trip to London but I have done it my own way. In Indonesia there is a lack of hope. If you just give a dream without a clear roadmap it's just like the promise of politicians. For example, before, public parks were the domain of government. Public space is now managed by people in Bandung. They can make suggestions. Participation is how it's developed.

I am responsible to the promise. I'm not responsible to a specific group or person. More to the vision and promise. We are reaching around 50% of our vision, which is good, and as more people see the results more people come on board. In developing countries we have to make a results-oriented vision.

I always say the future is collaboration. I can't do everything. I can connect and stitch things. Like our *Buy a Playground* project. This is to try and stop the urban crisis by buying a small piece of land in the slum areas and converting it to a playground. We are signing an agreement with the community to live more sustainably, not to throw rubbish and so on. Through collaboration with creative organisations we are changing the city. The question is the financing of this. We engage celebrities to become ambassadors of the programme and approach corporates to spend CSR¹¹ budgets this way. I operate more at the concept level and work with NGOs to ensure that the communication is at one frequency. Suddenly the slum area was more optimistic and more active. I learned from that process that I can't do everything. Collaboration is my new religion.

It's not to say that it's easy. There are all sorts of problems. Performance is very slow. I'm learning through trial and error through social networking and the change is becoming visible. We are getting responses in the papers, online. We can be very proud now. The creative energy is very rewarding.

In Indonesia, we have so many problems: social, political, economic. We can just do one thing at a time. In the future I'd like to spread the strategy to other cities. Me and my team have been to Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia, all want to learn from the Bandung Way. Once you have a good idea and it's well executed it's amazing what happens.

My role models in international working are Jaime Lerner, Mayor of Curitiba, because he made lots of innovations in urban design and design in his city in a difficult context. And Enrique Peñalosa, ex-Mayor of Bogotá.

¹¹ Corporate Social Responsibility

And as for books, Thomas L Friedman's *Hot, Flat and Crowded* and Richard Florida's *Who's your City?* are highly relevant.

To someone following on, I'd say: *"You have to ride the wave of change, it means – observe changes around you and in the global world, shift paradigms and transform things."*

Dessy Gavrilova & Tzvetelina Iossifova, Co-founders, The Red House, Sofia, Bulgaria

Dessy Gavrilova and Tzvetelina Iossifova are Co-Founders and Directors of the Red House Centre for Culture and Debate, a multifunctional cultural and socio-political centre, that sets out to stimulate the development of the independent contemporary culture sector in Bulgaria. It is designed as a space of artistic experiment and public debate on 'hot' socio-political issues both local and international, a meeting point that is about the *"openness of perception, the lack of prejudice and tolerance of difference"*.

Dessy describes herself as *"being in the business of provoking intellectual curiosity and civic participation"*.

Tzvetelina describes herself as a psychotherapist leading an independent socio-cultural centre that brings together social, cultural, educational and political projects. *"Some people see them as different categories, I see them as interrelated."*

Dessy and Tzvetelina were interviewed separately. Responses to each question were subsequently combined.

Tzvetelina Iossifova (TI): Attending the Amsterdam-Maastricht Summer University in 1993 made me realise for the first time that there were people interested in the same things as me from all over Europe, both East and West. I was able to create a live network of friends and colleagues, many of whom I had already been in touch with through letter or fax in my job in the theatre department at the New Bulgarian University. The New Bulgarian University was a new kind of institution for us in a post Communist society, set up by scholars interested in developing new models for education radically different from the previous ones. Later in 1996 I was part of Seeding A Network in the UK and visited several arts organisations including ArtsAdmin and the Playhouse in Newcastle. I learnt a lot about how organisations are run.

Travelling always brings new perspectives. 1980 was my first trip abroad and it made me look at the world differently. It was to a summer camp for young people in the Ukraine, at that time part of the Soviet Union. It was a town twinning initiative, and I met people from different countries across the Soviet Union and Communist Bloc. It took us 3 days by train and I remember being amazed how, when we entered the Soviet Union, the train compartments were lifted up and they had to change the wheels so the train could run on a different gauge! I noticed the difference in the way people dressed in the Ukraine and I felt that I was coming from a richer country. Also it gave me the opportunity to practice my Russian, essential to being able to communicate and speak Russian with ease later on.

Dessy Gavrilova (DG): The Amsterdam Maastricht Summer University was also a key moment in my professional life. In 1994 I was working at the Soros Foundation in Sofia. First you must imagine the context – coming from a Communist country where, until 1990, you could not travel. It was a shocking experience and very intense, meeting

stimulating people from all over Europe who were developing very interesting projects – thinking and conceptualizing things in a way I could relate to. Very importantly, I found friends as well as discovering a city filled with culture at every turn. It was a massive injection of experience, it was all so new and I was like a baby absorbing everything and growing and developing through this experience.

The main outcomes were the personal long-term relationships I developed. To know that there are people from your own 'blood group' out there, people who, even if you don't see for over a year or more, you can call on when you need them and you know they will talk in a relevant way. These connections bring you courage when you are dug in and overwhelmed by your local context...they make you strong.

As a direct result of the Summer University, Tzvety and I worked on the IETM Satellite Meeting in Sofia in 1996 with Felix Meritis¹² who became a long-term partner for us. In fact it was through this project that I came together with Tzvety, though I discovered that she had already done the Amsterdam Summer University before me. So we had a strong common experience and reference. It's funny but sometimes when you travel to meet foreigners you also often meet people from your own country and locality.

TI: The Amsterdam experience was essential and why I started to look for international contacts. After the changes in '89, new initiatives were not really understood in our country, so we were trying to connect with something that already existed elsewhere and to find people who think in the same way as us.

DG: You have to imagine at that time Bulgaria was still very much a closed country in the field of culture. Everything, events, information...all went through Ministry of Culture. Yet at the same time a few independent groups were emerging to find their place locally. All were dying for international contacts. The title we gave the meeting was *Shall We Take Over?* It was one of the first IETM satellite meetings, supposedly small. Yet it attracted over 200 participants, like an IETM General Assembly. 100 came from Bulgaria and another 100 from the region and western Europe. If you look at the photos from that meeting you can feel the huge energy and enthusiasm, the sense of becoming more confident. So many collaborations grew afterwards. One group was the graduating class of high school students – there they were speaking English, connecting with everyone. Many of the people in those photos are still around some are today internationally renowned artists, the founders of important independent companies or movements. It was a big journey for people from the region and made them realise what strength they had collectively. It gave them - and us - courage to pursue our ideas.

Through our work we want to provoke people to ask more questions. The Red House grew out of the need to create a space to stage debates that open up new questions,

¹² The Felix Meritis Foundation is an independent European centre for art, culture and science and a national and international meeting place in Amsterdam.

new horizons, to deal with issues that are not in their normal daily life, issues such as Iran or global warming. We want to encourage people to be active and take a position as citizens. And when we become aware of a group tackling important issues we give them a platform at the Red House and put them in the spotlight.

Bringing an idea to reality is very easy when the idea is a good one, when it is innovative and people believe in it. Ideas that you don't completely believe in are very difficult to realise. You need to inspire people, to make them believe in it, and then share the responsibility of making it happen. Accept that the idea evolves and changes and that the outcome is perhaps different to what you thought it would be, though as long as the core value of the idea is realised.

TI: We are a horizontal team here. It is important that everything is put on the table and discussed, important that nothing stays hidden. The Red House exists because of our experience and the experience of other people – it is a hybrid organisation that welcomes the knowledge of all the people involved. But whilst the work we do is recognised nationally and internationally, it continues to be a hard journey. Times have changed; everything is more structured. The early 90s was an exceptional time for us, there was a huge shift in mentality. Sometimes everything risks once again being uniform. We cannot do things that inspire us the most and the time for ideas has past. Now is the time of functioning, not reflection. We have to fight against this.

DG: Paradoxically, a key challenge arose in 2007 when Bulgaria became a member of the EU. This was great in terms of our mobility, but for the Red House it created a crisis. Up until then we did not receive Bulgarian public money and raised our funds on a project basis via the European Union. But as from 2007 decisions about EU monies were largely taken in Bulgaria, and because we are an independent organisation we are not in a position to receive funds from government. All funds are channeled through state or city institutions, which we are not. This has certainly something to do with corruption and in 2007 we were almost forced to close our doors. Fortunately we were able to turn to business. A personal friend, a businessman who is a fan of the Red House gave us a 3 year guarantee to cover half of our budget, though this is not a long term solution. And now the economic crisis is having an impact on our ability to raise funds from the private sector.

We navigate this financial challenge through maintaining a constant dialogue with the government, trying to change the situation. Though the government says they value our work, they still do not support us. We are still trying to make them understand that they can support independent organisations, that what is important is the work that is being done, its relevance and importance for society, and not the type of ownership of a given cultural organisation. This seems however to be a concept too hard to grasp for our policy makers.

TI: This is a very tiring job. You don't just have the role of running an independent venue, but also of pushing and changing policies. We do not give up. We are lucky in

that we share the characteristics of being strong women and we can rely on each other. In difficult times when nobody, apart from us, believed we would succeed, when you are two it helps you not to despair and start disbelieving. You have someone you can share with, tell things to. But if you have the advantages, you must also take the disadvantages. It is for example easier to make decisions if you are only one. Working together requires listening and being intellectually curious about the other's opinion.

DG: Each person has strengths and weaknesses – and this allows one of us to put the other forward according to the need and situation. As well as different skills and knowledge, each person brings with them their own specific interests and makes what you do somehow richer. But there are shared interests too – for us it was the arts and performance. Beyond that I am more interested in debates and politics, Tzvety in various artistic and social practices, psychotherapy and psychodrama.

TI: How to provide a long-term stability for the Red House independently of its founders is a big question. We feel a great responsibility to the people we work with and the work we do trying to change things, for example in psychotherapy and health fields. At the moment we are working on introducing new laws around psychotherapy into the Bulgarian legal system.

DG: We feel a huge responsibility to our local audiences and the need to contribute to their de-provincialisation against a national media that is becoming increasingly provincial.

Working internationally helps you become less self-focused. These experiences help to overcome a way of thinking that everything is worse where you are. They put things into perspective, inspire and give courage.

Our role models are people who never call themselves networkers or internationalists. The international aspect of their work inspires and gives strength to their local work, but it can't be the starting point for what they are doing. That simply does not work. It has to be very local, designed for local needs. Their international work brings an extra dimension, offering access to and gaining inspiration and strength from other realities and issues.

TI: Working internationally you learn to be sensitive to diversity. It is really important to say that it never occurs to me to define myself as Bulgarian – people cannot define themselves through their national identity. An international perspective is much more natural these days, and there is huge change in mobility. Also through new technology we can see and speak to each other, and often young people do not identify themselves as belonging to a particular place physically. Personally though at times I feel I am a victim of this new technology, and sometimes get carried away, tempted by everything that comes in - the stuff coming in consumes you. I try to keep away from internet based social networks, as I simply don't have time. But I do use Skype a lot.

DG: In the 90s international was a very natural process, pushed by individuals with a vision. Truly relevant international work was being done when it was not the mainstream tendency. Now that “international” and “intercultural” is becoming the official policy line, there is a real threat that it is emptied of its meaning. There is too much talk and too many mechanisms that often lead to superficiality. It has become fashionable without any real thought. Networks spring up without any relevance to the local context.

Tl: I always want to do something special, never make compromises. If you want to stay in this country you should create something you like. It’s quite an existential question – I cannot do things just to make a living. I am lucky in having choices.

DG: What keeps us going is the belief - or is it an illusion - that what you do matters. That it is important at a local level. Also the pleasure we gain in making something interesting, meaningful and valuable.

If I had to say one thing to someone starting out it would be: “Think globally, act locally. Be informed, curious about the world, and be inspired.”

Tl: I would say to someone starting out “Don’t ever give up”.

Wayne McGregor, Artistic Director, Wayne McGregor | Random Dance

Wayne McGregor is an award-winning British choreographer, renowned for his physically testing choreography and ground-breaking collaborations across dance, film, music, visual art, technology and science. He is the Artistic Director of Wayne McGregor | Random Dance, Resident Company at Sadler's Wells Theatre in London; Resident Choreographer of The Royal Ballet and the UK Government's first Youth Dance Champion. In 2004 McGregor was made a Research Fellow at the Experimental Psychology department of Cambridge University. He creates work for Opera, Ballet and film companies internationally.

Wayne describes himself as “*a choreographer with a portfolio career*”, balanced between his “*incubator work*” with Wayne McGregor | Random Dance, his commitment to the Royal Ballet; and his work as a freelance director.

I would not be doing the work I do without my international experience. My first exposure was back in 1993 touring through the European contemporary dance network, Banc d'Essai, with a group of international peers - all emerging artists at the time - to 8 different countries. What was amazing was that it gave me exposure to and a dialogue with international audiences, as well as to a range of aesthetics. I realised that there was not just one way of seeing things. I encountered people who were interested in investing in process not just product. I became Choreographer in Residence at The Place. John Ashford, Director of The Place, was a champion of my work, it's important to have champions - and I got a professional network. I met Madeleine Ritter in Köln who commissioned my next piece. It is a relationship that has endured to this day, even though she has moved to different places. It's the people you have relationships with, not the institutions.

The way that the touring economy works is that people buy your work and it gets shunted around. When a commissioner wants to buy a new piece, essentially what they want is a different version of the last piece. But there is another way. Pieter Hofman, Artistic Director of Het Muziektheater in Amsterdam, came to see different versions of a piece I made over the years, we had iterative conversations. A certain moment came when he felt he could commission me. It is essential to develop an ongoing dialogue, then you can have the harder conversations and know that the responses to the work are honest. It is easy to be seduced by the touring system, but it is crucial to look for sustainability and evolution of a relationship. It's really important to work out what it is that you want from the touring.

Money has never affected my ability to realise ideas, but the reality is that the funding system has changed. I have a large organisation at Wayne McGregor | Random Dance, a staff of 22 and there is a challenge here balancing the picture between what you really want to do and the demands that are put on you. It is important to remain fleet of foot. And having a portfolio career helps. I have also worked with commercial clients who funded my work in exchange for me sitting in on a group of thinkers – ideas

exchanged for money. I have a responsibility to remain true to my own artistic integrity, to the artform - I am ambitious for dance - and to young people so they can access a creative approach to dance making. I want to be a catalyst for new thinking. It is sometimes difficult, as there is a lot of room for things to change, such as freeing up space in the relentless continuum of the sector, where all the money in the portfolio is fixed. How to allow resources and space to work with new ideas, with new technologies? How to ensure that people can afford tickets to see work, so that it does not cost a fortune? The Government's ambition is that each person is touched by five artistic events each year. But this has to be matched by resources otherwise it sets up false expectations.

To create work you need to have a space for research and development. The Robert Lepage model in Canada where he invites artists to experiment is a great example. Or William Forsyth in Frankfurt where you started with an idea and everybody there was ready to resource it, to take it forward with no product pressure. I am often frustrated by a system supposedly for R&D where funders want artists to name the outcomes as part of the application process! I have a retreat in Lamu so artists across all artforms, or curators, can go for a month and do absolutely what they want as long as the practice and ideas are interesting.

I want to understand what goes on in the brain when we create, to identify key principles that we can share more clearly. We all have cognitive frameworks inherited from growing up. My parents for example always encouraged my interests: "*Just have a go*", they would say. I am developing a series of choreographic thinking tools to investigate how we can be physical with new technology and uncover the kinds of intelligences involved in contemporary dance making. I want to make this information available to choreographers in a useful format. I am collaborating on this with astronomers and other scientists at universities in the UK and the States, including EMPAC (Experimental Media and Performing Arts Centre) to become a "creative bank of ideas".

If there was a leadership development opportunity it would be around creative thinking, looking at things through different filters, finding ways of bridging thinking and understanding how it is that we learn. What is creative leadership? How do we talk to each other? From my experience the best choreographers are not necessarily those with the most extraordinary practice, but those who know how to talk to their dancers, so they release their potential. A leader is someone who can feel safe in a space where they don't know what's next, and who can encourage others to feel safe in that same space, to feel comfortable with not knowing. I love people to do what they do best and release them to do it.

In realising ideas it is important to establish and make clear an ethos and philosophy from the outset. A 'dendrinistic' or branch-like way of thinking is also key. By working internationally you realise how much you don't know. This notion of 'expertise' is a real problem. You become a choreographer, but what does that really mean? A lot of the

time I am lost, intellectually, socially, the world is a much bigger place and you have to look outside. And look outside dance too.

However, the international scene has become very regularised, very formalised. It is easy to predict who will programme what and how, and artists make work it seems for certain circuits. There is a rank conservatism today in the system, there is no real learning embedded. There must be a more interesting way of incubating work. If artists could find a way of creating work without touring I am interested in what that work would look like.

I feel very lucky and happy in what I do. I have always been encouraged to do what I want to do. I have a good private life. I am very organised. I plan meticulously, always know what I'm doing in advance and always make sure I have got enough time. And I've always got ideas I want to explore and realise.

A useful website? TED I read a lot of their things (<http://www.ted.com/>). In fact I'm going to speak at a TED meeting soon. One of the most fascinating things I have ever heard was about origami, and that was through their site.

The one thing I would say to someone setting out is: *"Practice. Engender as many opportunities as you can to practice. Keep having a go and from that something happens."*

Maxine Miller, Library Collection Manager, Tate Gallery, London, UK

Maxine Miller undertook a three-month placement at the National Library of Jamaica (NLJ). She led *Picture Dis: The National Online Album of Jamaica*, a project to digitize the Library's photographic collection. Hosted by Winsome Hudson, Executive Director, NLJ, the placement was a Powerbrokers International Placement funded by CLP. During her time in Jamaica, Maxine was Library and Information Manager at the Institute for International Visual Arts (Iniva), London, UK.

As a librarian, Maxine sees her role as encouraging passionate, discriminating users, who can make confident choices about the right information. The ability to eliminate the unnecessary and to organise chosen material for all users is key.

Growing up in Hackney, it was the norm to stay close to home. In 1979, I went on a school trip with a group to the French Alps. Around 18 out of 20 of us were Black. The hotel owner was completely racist. Scared and resentful, the paradox was when it was time to go home, we cried to leave the mountains and the green space. This experience made me think I had to go away and be seen to return so more people would go away.

At 19, I went to Sussex University. Students and staff came from all over the world but mainstream – not to say privileged - was the dominant ethos. I had never been humiliated anywhere by people in a shop not putting money in my hand. That happened at Sussex. Years later, I had similar experiences in Portugal. So international travel – indeed any travel - was a big deal. There's a lot of fear – sometimes justified.

When I was offered the opportunity in Jamaica, I was terrified but thought I've got to do it for Iniva. My parents are Jamaican but hadn't gone back 'home'. How could I refuse? When I arrived at the NLJ the staff were like mothers to me. It did amazing things for my confidence to work in a team that was all Black. I was beaming every time I looked around. Literacy and librarians are much more important in the Caribbean. That was a big culture shock.

I felt quite isolated, though, working with people like me but not quite like me. There were cultural differences about dress, socialising and drinking alcohol. The workplace had a strongly hierarchical feel. I had to overcome having a common language but the meaning being different. There are so many different assumptions. If something goes wrong in Jamaica, nobody says: "*Is it because I'm Black?*" But some things were much more complex. Setting up *Picture Dis* we used the national motto "*Out of many, we are one*" but, during selection of the images, hierarchy of skin colour became a factor. The legacy of slavery and colonialism is that any degree of lightness can be brought into play (for or against) particular choices. Generally the darker you are the more work you have to do.

Sundays were really homesick days. Because everyone was at church and I'm an atheist. Leaving my partner and children for three months had real ramifications. For me, the placement was amazing. I survived the aspects that were difficult. I gained lots of experience about managing teams and ideas on digitisation. The NLJ has 30 staff with 8 professional librarians and I delivered! Although I've been a librarian for 28 years, it wasn't until after my placement that I realised I had all the experience I had always had! I could actually own being me. It was not an accident.

The key was to have a really good placement buddy. NLJ's Executive Director Winsome Hudson and I had a lot in common. She'd lived away from Jamaica, trained in New York and travels regularly. She guided me in my leadership of *Picture Dis* giving me authority to access staff. I was then able to encourage everyone to value the Collection's brilliance and find my way to work round those who didn't engage.

I learned a lot about leading from the front during a presentation to peers about *Picture Dis*. It was the first time I'd spoken at and coordinated an event. The Head of Special Collections like me was shy of public speaking – but I enabled her to take part by doing it myself.

Stereotypically, librarians are seen as “gatekeepers” controlling information. Information is nothing without people's response. By asking a person what he or she is doing both librarian and enquirer's knowledge expands. It's a creative thing. The issue of access was an important part of *Picture Dis*. We hosted it on Flickr for the public to comment. I wanted to challenge that idea of control – besides, through online moderation, we still had a final say.

Now I'm here at Tate with more scope... I would not have applied and got the job without the placement. It is as though, before, I was afraid of success. When asked that question: what does success look like? It was me! It freed something. I am navigating major challenges needing all my skills to resolve reductions in staffing, set strategy and fundraise. The dilemma is that we're publicly funded but no one knows we are here. That's not right. I am planning to work with external partners. We can share if we can't get the cash. In a big organisation, the politics are important so I will have to network and push more deliberately for my ideas.

New technologies offer many exciting opportunities for opening up the collections and diversifying the canon. People will be approaching us with digital material. There's an old idea here of what an artist is – about the canon. ‘Born digital’ material¹³ is changing these boundaries. You need a high level of knowledge about IT infrastructure and capacity because the library is taking the lead for the whole organisation.

¹³ Material made by children of the digital age

When ideas are not taken up, it's good to listen carefully for the reasons and re-vision the idea. Have a big vision but work with what's possible. Some things you can't put away just because you have no money.

For example, there is a move to catalogue for convergence and move to RDA¹⁴ an international standard enabling collaborative data use across sectors. It's a major commitment we can't go back on but opening up enormous national and international possibilities.

As a leader, I feel responsible both to my team and people needing the service. The institution, to ensure the thing I want to lead can be delivered. I think you also have to be accountable to yourself. If it's not right for me, it's unfair to compel others.

I tend to work out things whilst trying to communicate them and need someone to talk things through with. You play to team members' strengths letting others lead on some things. But not let go entirely. Leadership doesn't mean you have to do all the leading. Give credit and anticipate potential. You are often surprised at what you get back.

There were many moments when I could have gained from leadership development. I stayed in some jobs for a long time. I had specialist expertise and didn't see that I had to manage people as well. The early 90s saw managerial approaches come in and librarian skills devalued. There were no leadership opportunities in that context. I saw my priority as maintaining continuity in diversity work through voluntary roles. I felt that as part of my identity and responsibilities as a Black British person I wished to ensure that a future generation would not have to struggle to feel continuity and understand a complex heritage. I didn't interpret it as leading.

When I first had the application form (for PILP), I didn't see it as being for me. I thought a leader was someone who just called without needing a response and went ahead alone. This approach made me uneasy. Now I realise I've been calling and getting responses for ages. I feel I can stick my neck out now, learning from the response whether I am successful or not. As to ambition, I struggle with that word. I have to come at it from what I can do for other people.

Mrs Hudson is my role model. She never stops asking: What more can I do? She disregards failure because even if it hasn't gone right there's something to learn. She is inspiring and has real strength. I received amazing pastoral support too. Maureen for example – she never knew what she was going to encounter on her visits and Hilary Carty and Dionne Walker - I am grateful they were all there for me. It has inspired me to be there for others.

¹⁴ Resource Description and Access, a metadata content standard intended for international use by a wide range of metadata communities.

My time in Jamaica refocused how I was experiencing my whole life. A walk became a different thing. The colours I saw. The way I felt when things were not going well could be changed by an unexpected view. And, oddly, that helped me to shift my view ... I read Neruda for the first time. I read Wilfred Owen and John Donne and returned to Toni Morrison and *Beloved*. I felt I could without being torn apart. My journey has given me a sort of psychic armour (in a good way) which can withstand annihilation or refusal.

From engaging internationally you learn: collaboration, sharing, taking on other people's points of view. It's easy not to listen in familiar surroundings. You don't need to go somewhere international but it helps.

It was life-changing and life-giving. The woman I was then is not who I am now. My advice to someone starting out? *"You're not alone. It's about finding continuity. You don't need to be at the top of a tree; wherever you are you can lead. When it works, you know it's been done before; when it doesn't, you change it!"*

Winsome Hudson, Executive Director, National Library of Jamaica

The National Library was founded in 1979 and houses a comprehensive collection rich in primary source materials covering all aspects of Caribbean life and society. It has an online presence, serving residents of Jamaica, diaspora communities and other researchers.

Winsome Hudson sees herself as contributing to nation-building at the micro-level so that every person who comes through the door of the Library finds the information they seek and can put it to good use. *“It sounds lofty, but that’s what inspires me.”*

Winsome hosted Maxine Miller during a three-month Powerbrokers International Leadership Placement (PILP) at the National Library of Jamaica.

Going back to high school I had a teacher from another Caribbean country. I have forgotten her name but not that experience of meeting someone from outside Jamaica. I read a lot of stories about English boarding schools and girls with names like Hilary. Names I was going to give my daughters but I ended up with boys. Television programmes in the 60s were from the US and elsewhere were very influential in particularly *The Flying Doctor* based in Australia.

After high school, like many others, I moved to the US to pursue tertiary education. Leaving behind a British formal style of education I encountered a more relaxed and informal one and met people from every corner of the planet. It broadened my world. This may have happened had I stayed in Jamaica. There are people who have not left who have an equally broad worldview, but this was my experience.

My international perspective has also been shaped by the many library-related conferences, heard from presenters and had the opportunity to benchmark what we are doing. It’s interesting that even though others are so much more affluent than we are, we are grappling with the same issues. It’s a matter of degree and we all can learn from each other.

My major challenge as Executive Director comes down to dollars and cents. For example, high fees mean we won’t be able to attend conferences this year and maybe next. We may need to seek help on digital plans. It’s easier to put requests to people with whom you have a personal connection knowing that you share the same issues. There is nothing to substitute for personal connections.

New technologies afford opportunities in so many ways. Maxine’s placement for example allowed us to put some of our photographic collection on the internet. This enabled us to reach beyond our walls to the diaspora community. But it’s not cheap and international partnerships are a way to progress. We can’t do it without an international partner. It’s not just a one-way thing but beneficial to both.

During the economic crisis, I feel responsible primarily to my staff, making the case for saving jobs and avoiding redundancies. Also to the National Collection to preserve it and ensure a protective system is in place today that will preserve the collection forever. This is a heavy responsibility. I also have a responsibility to the wider library community and our sector to address gaps in our industry.

I feel a responsibility to be an advocate and lobby for the right of access to knowledge. This may not be in tune with those with commercial interests. But I don't believe that copyright should tie things up needlessly and endure for longer than fifty years after the death of the creator.

There is the question of who can afford access and broader issues of access affected by copyright issues. One community that is left out is the visually impaired. Exemptions should be in place to enable the blind have equal access.

Each idea determines how it is delivered. Some are easier than others, some take years. For example, in a previous role, I wanted to extend the hours on a Saturday but changing the times was dependent on various things including staff. I kept on talking about it for a year until it happened. I kept on talking about it, selling the idea for a year until it happened. I like to work on staff buy-in but there are times when the buck stops here and I just have to make a decision. I like to work to gain support of all stakeholders. I am action-oriented and like to see things done. Government tends to be bureaucratic and take a little too long.

Things are on hold with the economic situation but my experience tells me that this will pass. So, we may not have the money to buy books and other resources needed but the work must go on; this may be an opportunity for us to get caught up with our cataloguing backlog.

If I were to take up a development opportunity it would be to know more about digital curation. I need to be able to lead that process. And TIME, time to follow research interests and to create one or two texts that are locally relevant. I need time to sit back and begin to document experiences as a librarian/manager.

My board Chairman is my role model. She is elderly, and very knowledgeable about the roles of advisory boards and the roles of the executive staff. I look up to other people who speak up for the profession. Librarianship, the profession, is not generally highly regarded, so advocates for the discipline and management side who are knowledgeable are my role models.

There is a culture within the discipline internationally in that we share the same values wherever the library. It transcends issues of race and class; libraries of all types are connected by the culture of the discipline of librarianship. I'm not naïve to think differences don't play a role but the culture of a discipline can do this.

I hope that opportunities like CLP placements and exchanges will long exist. At a personal level the benefits will vary but overall they do work to the benefit of the organisations, even if for “how not to do this”.

These exchange opportunities enable an organisation to see itself from the outside. Like going into your own house and imagining how someone else would see it. This outside perspective may validate what you are doing, and it may create new ways of seeing. It’s very valuable to learn if you’re up to par or operating below par, or above. It forces you to think freshly.

As to online information, I find the Unesco Resources website useful.

www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/resources/

My advice is: *“stay focused on the vision. Make your decisions based on that vision. Ask yourself why the organisation exists and make decisions from there.”*

Nila Madhab Panda, filmmaker and social activist, New Delhi, India

Nila Madhab Panda (Madhab) is an award-winning film-maker and broadcaster from New Delhi. He sees himself as a storyteller. Working through Eleanora Images, a multi media organisation, he has produced and directed over 70 films and describes his work as being “needs-based”, creating awareness of social issues and transforming them into mainstream entertainment through film and television. These range from one-minute films through to soap operas and feature films.

He is a member of the Indian Independent Filmmakers Worldwide (IIFW). His film *Climate's First Orphans* received special mention at the Granada Film Festival. His most recent film *I am Kalam* will be presented in the 2010 London Film Festival.

He took part in the Creative Future School and received a Creative Entrepreneur Award to travel to the UK, supported by the British Council.

How you connect to the world is always through you, you as a person, your family, your country, your cinema. I use film as an artform to create a platform. I grew up in a rural part of India. Our parents dreamt of us getting a regular job like a teacher or something. But from an early age I always had my own vision. I knew I wanted to DO something, although what was never clear. Our dreams can never be ruled.

When I came to the city, New Delhi, this became much clearer. I saw that the world was not one, it was so divided. My vision was to work in collaboration.

Early on, in 2000, I worked with a group of documentary filmmakers from the US. I remember thinking: “*Hey, these people are from a different universe.*” Excitement lay in discovering these differences. I came from a village in India where there were no schools, no roads. I was familiar with the daily poverty. For the US team this was a gritty reality. They came from a place where schools and clean water were taken for granted. We were making a film about child labour and I could connect to the poverty. None of what they saw was a surprise to me, but in seeing it through their eyes, I realised what we had gone through in India.

It was a good feeling to see things from a different perspective. It was exciting to share stories and we learnt from each other; they from me about my perspectives on rural India and I from them about how they viewed that. I felt I was truly extending myself. The world has become much more connected in many ways now. Globalisation has made this possible. We talk now of the world being like a village - I can reach London in 8 hours - but back then things were very different, contrasts were more marked. I am a storyteller and there are lots of these stories to tell to the world. After this first experience I realised there was a way of telling stories by working in collaboration and through building up networks. Networks are really important. Coming from a

developing country these are what helped me. I come up with ideas for films - often on subjects such as sanitation, child labour, climate change and drug addiction. Then I work to build up rich and versatile networks of support for them and innovative media strategies with for example the Ministry of Home Affairs, or of Health and Family Welfare, film producers, the British Council, US Aid, the UN, the World Bank and other NGOs.

I created a television soap opera, *Aatmaja*, a drama series which was innovative simply in showing the value of a girl. We have a census every 10 years in India, one in 1991 and there'll be another in 2001. In these the government has noted the fall in girl births – it is drastically less than boys. For every 1000 boys there are 700 girls. This is because no parents want girls and so they are killing them. We have to get inside this gender inequality. How do we do it? I convinced the UN and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to give money. Each member of my film team gave their 100% involvement. They said “*Here’s a challenge, let’s work on it*”. People come to work with me on these films. It makes people happy to work like that. The model is low budget, the style is innovative and I raise the money. I am not a building contractor. I come with an idea that has to be done.

Most of my work is “*needs-based*”. It means there is always a sense of urgency around any particular issue. I build bridges theoretically first. In 2005, I was the first person to do a lot of research on important issues. The questions are complex. You realise there are so many angles and it’s good to get different people’s perceptions of things. In any one situation you could be closing down many thoughts. There is scope for making things so much bigger when you open it out and collaborate with others.

So I’m not just a filmmaker. My films become platforms. They serve a purpose. I address social issues and a responsibility to society, holding a mirror up to society and applying that to the cinema. It has to combine with entertainment also so that a new language in the medium can emerge. At the same time I run workshops for younger practitioners that allow new talents to come through, thereby extending the platform for creative work that utilises the medium and experiments with techniques and audio-visual software.

Collaboration really is the key for me. Once I’d established this, I knew I could make things happen and it changed the way I approached my work. It extended my existing knowledge: I wasn’t just working with filmmakers but also on the financing, the communication and distribution – it was a big achievement to get it all done but it wasn’t only I that was getting the benefit.

Two recent projects are good examples of this. I was selected as a creative leader by the British Council and invited to collaborate with others on Creative Futures to make a selection of four films about climate change - *Climate’s First Orphans*. This led to working with arts organisation moti roti on 60x60 Secs, 60 one- minute films, 20 each

from Britain, India and Pakistan. They looked at how cultures and identities in an age of globalisation are always evolving.

This was a totally new concept for me – working on small short films. It was a really useful project for me working with other artists to express themselves in so many different forms and allowed me to see there are so many other platforms you can work with. Technology gives our existence some comforts, but we have to look at reducing the endless materialistic consumerist growth of it – how are we going to save water and make sure people have access to it? These are the real issues in many places.

There is no security of tomorrow. There is a new issue every day and I would rather find solutions than talk about the problems. We are looking at creating entertainment but it has to balance a bright picture of the world with realities. We lose our light if everything is dark, dark, dark. We do have a sense of survival and we have to utilise this towards betterment. We must not glorify India's problems though and there is always a tendency to show the problem. I want to find answers and solutions. This is why we never liked *Slumdog Millionaire*, as artists and as a country.

For 10 years or so now I have struggled. I get tired and it's really hard to get research money to support new ideas and continue the work. The world is very consumerist and commercial. There isn't a personal development programme I'd like: I just want to continue with my work and get support. I don't earn big money. I have few running costs. There are no funding structures here in India in the creative industries to support what I am doing. I don't work commercially and so the vision for an Indian Independent cinema has to be built from scratch. There is nobody to support what I do.

It's the 21st century and although India is economically 'big' we have poor caste people in India. We have religious conflict, drug addiction, 50 million children in child labour, problems with access to clean water, a lack of sanitation. This is disturbing. There seems no end to it. I will continue the struggle to fight to solve problems.

Gandhi wanted to bring peace to the world. No fighting. He would have to be my role model; he is always the one. My dream is to have no borders. I would like India and Pakistan to have no borders. If there were no borders, you would have to ask then why do we have to have an army?

As an artist I wanted to bring talent out of people. I want the Indian cinema to be global. I feel very responsible to a community of artists and how they can communicate with people. In India cinema is like a god along with TV. It can really change things. We have the largest cinema audience in the world but we have no real presence in the world cinema, although of course we do have Bollywood, so it's not straightforward. 50 years back though we had real filmmakers. I would like to be able to reach out and make good cinema from India.

I am Kalam is an award winning full length feature film. It highlights child labour and tells the story of rights to education, particularly for village children, any of whom could be the next Kalam - he is the inspiration behind the film and is our former president A P J Abdul Kalam who is a popular character with children. It shows the reality of the situation. It's going to the Berlin Film Festival and maybe Cannes. I mortgaged my house for it. I am now ready with a second feature film, a suspense thriller called "The Woman from Georgia" preparing for my next feature film.

One thing I would say: *Peace!*

Guy Gypens, Artistic Director, Kaaitheater, Brussels, Belgium

Guy Gypens is Artistic Director of Kaaitheater Brussels, an arts centre with an international programme, that commissions established and emerging artists in theatre, music and dance. Under Guy's leadership, Kaai is evolving an ecological philosophy to be applied in daily practice to everything they do.

Guy is the lead co-ordinator of IMAGINE 2020, a network of 11 European producers and festivals exploring how the arts can advance the cultural shifts needed to rise to the global challenge of climate change and energy depletion.

I lived in the provinces. My first international experiences were when I came to Brussels, to the 'big' city. When I was 17 I saw musicians like Steve Reich and Laurie Anderson for the first time. They felt definitely very different to me. It was the early 80s and I also saw some striking theatre coming out of Italy at that time. I'd never seen anything that vivid before - with very strong imagery, a kind of Arte Povera. It made a real impact on me.

I was drawn to the Beursschouwburg, a small arts centre in the middle of Brussels, but with an extensive international programme and I saw everything. I was excited by the international contacts - I saw Forced Entertainment's first or second show. I started working there in administration and, in a short space of time, was thrown into all aspects of the performing arts. It was a baptism of fire.

The artistic director asked me to travel to dance festivals abroad and the first one I went to was in Valencia in 1989. The context for my work broadened overnight. I came across international networks I did not know existed. In Brussels we talked about the dance work we saw, but usually in a café with the same people. Here was a new environment with programmers discussing the work of artists in relation to work from other countries. It was a framework 100 times bigger than anything I had experienced up to that point. It was a crucial moment for me. I understood my local point of view was not irrelevant but suddenly, it was not all there was. It started to feel one-sided.

Another baptism of fire came soon after I joined Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's dance company Rosas, as Tour Manager. A big tour of the US in 1991 was my first assignment and proved a crucial learning experience for me - not only finding out what was involved in organising a tour; how artists get treated and all the practicalities of working internationally - all the things that make life difficult! - work permits, visas, hotel bookings, flights, but we were also learning about the US. I'd been there before but not to Ohio and Seattle - I discovered a US I didn't know existed. The fact I pulled off the tour felt like a real achievement and I was proud of myself.

These experiences have proved essential for me in programming international work. I know - for producer, artists, and audiences, - it's absolutely essential to see the work you're going to programme. With the advent of the internet now, I can sit at home and

research my programme. In an evening I can explore 55 links to other projects world wide. Thats good and bad. A video or a DVD, although useful if you already know the artist's work, doesn't come close to the experience of seeing work live. Once you've met someone you can work quickly with them to establish projects, but you have to have to seen their work.

Once I have seen a piece of new work, I then feel very responsible to the audiences I am going to programme it for. I feel I need to be able to defend it. I also feel responsible towards artists - it is never a one-off thing. You build a sense of responsibility to them and their careers over time. The mutual understanding and the cultural exchanges between artists and between artists and audiences that this opens up is necessary and important. Whenever I travel in Africa, it comes as a surprise each time I go there to be reminded of the construction we have placed around the idea of the "intellectual" and "community". We've split them up and it's a fundamental mistake. I am constantly reminded of how we need to see things from another point of view. About half the programme at Kaai is international. The biggest change in the last 10 years working internationally in Europe has been the globalisation of the progamme. International programmes in Europe were focused mostly on artists in Europe and North America. Programming now though includes work from Africa, South America, the Middle East and Asia. This is a really big change. In simple terms you have a vast amount of information about many many more artists.

But with this globalisation comes the greatest problem now of all: it is not compatible with our current ecological crisis. This is the big challenge. How are we going to work in a sustainable way? How will we combine this globalisation and the need for continued mutual understanding with the global crisis of climate change?

As artistic director of Kaaitheater, I want to put this contradiction on the agenda. The ecological imperative means we have to incorporate systemic thinking into all aspects of our work. It's a real challenge for artists and for colleagues, but we do need to confront it and say *'let's not do this international work blindly, let's think about the consequences.'* It means you are working with a dilemma every day.

For example, you want to bring a company from Africa but you can't find enough partners to make a proper European tour. We must bring artists from Africa to Europe but the flights make the carbon footprint so large and a tour of 5-6 weeks is not always possible. Do you still bring them? An artist may say: *"Oh, let's just do it"* but we may say: *"Let's wait"*. Sometimes this is very difficult. There is a tension between the necessity for cultural exchange and the carbon footprint and we have to constantly present that.

We're playing a leading role in helping people to see what the possibilities are for art and climate change. It is not always easy to move this agenda forward. It helps though to have your own daily practice, and through making the work we do in the theatre as

sustainable as possible in the long-term – and fast. You say something about eco issues every day through the work and help people to see what is possible.

The whole ecological issue is central to how I look at the future. We can put systemic questions at the centre of our programme: around mobility for example or collectivity versus individualism. These are key issues linked to the transition we need to make to a low carbon way of living.

As artistic director I have led on these things and I recognise Kaai's staff need time to absorb these changes. It's not easy and it does take time, but things are beginning to change now. We need to look at it as an investment in the role Kaai can play. The decision-making processes in the organisation work in a layered way involving staff in each team to carry ideas through to delivery. What really excites me about the future is what we're trying to do in relation to these issues. There are artists now also very excited about the possibilities and so I seem to be having a lot of interesting conversations with them for ideas which is great!

I openly discuss my reasons – I say it is not just budget reasons and about the quality of the work. We must discuss the ecological reasons as well. This is a surprise for some people. I have recently openly criticised the Canadian government policy for touring. You have to challenge people. Step one is to make it clear to people that it is part of the negotiation. It is still a new thing.

Kaai is on a network of canals that go inland and out to sea and I am interested in connecting to these immediate communities in our vicinity - and the wider context of the city to put this ecological philosophy into practice in the theatre. Kaai is building links with other producers and festivals in Europe to share this practice and our learning. Imagine 2020 has secured funding from the European Union to do this over the next five years.

I am inspired by Zygmunt Bauman the Polish philosopher and sociologist and also Gerard Violette whose work building audiences at the Théâtre de la Ville in Paris was important to me.

I need reflective space for myself. Twice a year, if I can, I consciously take time to participate in thinking procedures to reflect on the broader picture. You forget daily business. This helps me the most and I recognise it as a necessity philosophically and conceptually. It feels like a luxury. Our diaries are filled three times over but we have to oblige ourselves to do this. I went to the Cultural Futures Conference at the Climate Talks in Copenhagen in December 2009 and I was invited to Madrid by a group of artists wanting to look at new ways of working with producers. Opportunities like this are very inspiring.

I am always on the look out for inspiring publications and websites. Worldwatch Institute in Washington - Vision For a Sustainable World is good. <http://www.worldwatch.org>

To someone picking up the baton I would say: *“Keep cool. You’ll have large numbers of artists standing on your doorstep and many people coming to you, physically in person and sending their proposals. And they are all going to get more and more interesting. You have to make the best of this, so I would say ‘Keep cool’.”*

Rajwant Sandhu, Public Art Co-ordinator, Liverpool Biennial, UK

Rajwant (Raj) Sandhu, is a projects curator for the Liverpool Biennial, a ten-week festival that presents art in public spaces, derelict spaces, squares and in public places rather than a gallery.

Raj spent three months on a Visiting Arts International Exchange, funded by CLP placement at Shanghai University of Fine Arts. Her host was Ling Min.

Raj has recently decided to leave the Biennial to work freelance, largely precipitated by her time in China. She will continue to work one day a week for the Biennial but will have time to pursue other things and develop her ideas.

I'm Indian, born in England. My parents are Indian, born in India. I was 10 years old when I travelled to India with my parents to see family members. That experience is very important to me. I remember feeling foreign somewhere so familiar to them. It opened my eyes to wanting to learn about other cultures and other people. I studied fine art at university and traveled to exhibitions in different places. You learn a lot about yourself when you're in other cultures and don't speak the language. I have traveled more in the last five years.

International cultural leadership is not about me transporting me and my work somewhere else. Working on commissions, communicating about things that are very different to situations and culture here, can be extremely challenging. It's about reading between the lines, being sensitive and aware of situations and about what I'm creating whether it's working with artists from Korea or Argentina. It's challenging but there are positive things too.

A couple of festivals ago, a wonderful artist, a really talented maker was working with our own partners in Liverpool. This particular artist had such difficulty talking to the curator it became a problem. I was aware of a situation developing. For me it was a negative and a positive. I ended up leading on many aspects of the project. The artist felt more comfortable. The project progressed at a pace with which he was happy. He was making a film in Liverpool itself and needed to be supported. It was frustrating to see that someone would not give that time to the development of the project.

It makes you learn about your own coping mechanisms, whether it's a holiday with your parents, or whether it's the place or the people. You learn how you make decisions in that zone that's very different. When I say 'make decisions' sometimes you take a riskier way, rather than a safer approach. Also you become more aware of your surroundings, more aware of things that hold everything together, more aware of small differences and similarities between your everyday world and the different situation. I've been in a wonderful situation and learned an awful lot. I have really grown with the organisation. But I have felt in the last eight months that I haven't been learning as I would want to. I have handed in my notice and decided to go freelance, continuing

working for Liverpool with an artist I've wanted to work with for a long time. My sense is that there hasn't been enough art in my work. I've had to move very quickly from idea to delivery. I need more time to think, and go at a different pace, work at different paces.

The challenge for Liverpool and many organisations is how we're funded and how we are shifting. We have a festival every two years but also manage longer-term arts projects, permanent and semi-permanent works, forging different links with the community. This aspect of our work is much more interesting than a ten week festival. I was asked: *"If you wanted to do something, anything you like, what would it be?"* It would be much more rooted and sustained rather than be in a festival. How are these two things sustained? How do we shift? If we were no longer a festival, could we continue to exist? How could we be supported?

Everything is always shifting as a city evolves. Because we are so much part of the city, we have shaped to some extent the culture of the city. The question is how much our decisions will impact on the city. Decisions should be slower and more thoughtful. The festival is very organic and collaborates. It's very wonderful.

Technology is opening up new things. I'm currently working on a project and the artist is dealing with an ambitious proposal, a laser design. He sends the drawings through to be transformed into a laser cutting process to produce a replica model. There's only one place in the country that can do that.

In terms of how I work, it's eased communication and made the world a smaller place. I spent three months in China a year ago and we have Skype so it's made it very easy to keep in touch. But it can also be frustrating so now for example I can see there are three or four artists on line. Your work is always there. I tend to be like that anyway but it leaves little mental headspace for other parts of life.

I feel responsible for working with artists and the Biennial people I am working with. Artists who work in public spaces. People don't understand sometimes what "public space" means. I'm responsible not just to the artist as an individual but curating and shaping an exhibition and how it fits with other things. So artists and the Biennial and to myself. I have feelings all the time, sometimes of guilt, about a lack of time for myself. There are moments, lasting maybe two weeks or a year, that help you decide about how you work knowing that when you come out of the cycle you can change things.

We are presented with ideas from artists all the time. We work in public space so first we have to find the right kind of space. I'll look for three kinds of space involving three different owners or developers. I have a conversation with the artist regarding feasibility and budget, building an understanding of what's feasible on every level. If it is we move forward. If not we'll keep talking and if it's beyond our budget we'll co-commission. It's done in a very practical way and the project itself might shift and evolve. The site may offer something fantastic.

I've wanted to make my own work for a long while but not yet made a decision to make new work. I'm questioning: does everyone just continue to do this, keep making stuff, or does it stop? I want to be more reflective and have time to think about how everything fits together internationally. I read and go to exhibitions and fly in and out but feel I'm missing so much. There's no time to stand back.

I don't really have role models. I talk to lots of people, like the friend I live with, she works in education and we talk a lot about how things are shaping in terms of the bigger picture: for example, the way a gallery in Italy is shaping its programme.

I was also feeling that way when I came back from China. Liverpool thinks that everything is happening in Liverpool. Actually there is so much happening. Do we know enough about how we operate?

When I was in China, I always felt very confused about what was going on. Although they were expressing their intentions, I was trying to work out what their *true, true* intentions were. For example, if you are wanting collaborations, is it the work, or because you've got money and want to spend it, or is it because we are an international arts organisation and you want to be connected to us?

To learn true intentions and aspirations it takes time. But you do know. You can understand another's remit and your own for your organisation. Over time you build trust. And you get to a place where you can ask those very straightforward questions and be prepared to be honest yourself.

"Intercultural" and "international" are related words but exist everywhere. You don't have to be international to understand the intercultural because we are such a culturally diverse community.

With Ling Min we are working together on some amazing projects. She effected wonderful bridging of those relationships and we did the same. It developed a really wonderful relationship for our organisations. It makes me think of a quotation from the philosopher Alphonso Lingis on Trust:

"Trust is inherent in travel. We ask strangers for directions. We live among people whose language, culture and motivations we don't understand. Trust binds us to one another with an intoxicating energy"

My advice handing on the baton would be: *"Ask questions to understand at a really practical level but question what you're doing. Answers you get back will shape what you do."*

Ling Min, Director of Overseas Arts Projects, College of Fine Arts, Shanghai University China

Ling Min is Director of Overseas Arts Projects at College of Fine Arts, Shanghai University, China. She undertook a four-month placement at the Liverpool Biennial and hosted Rajwant (Raj) Sandhu, Public Art Coordinator for a three-month placement in Shanghai, as part of a Visiting Arts International Exchange, funded by CLP.

The college in which Ling Min works is not just an education institution but also does arts projects for Government for example, the Expo Pavilion, the design of the Metro station and two museums.

I have many years' international experience mostly in Shanghai. I taught Mandarin to British business people and Japanese and US individuals. I knew the UK through my teaching experience first.

I advised companies on provision of English training and business skills too. I was also a senior manager of LCCI¹⁵ Examination Board in China. So I know lots of perspectives, not just art. It gave me a sound background to UK way of thinking and leadership. This was my part-time job.

All these experiences are quite good and different from other teachers at Shanghai University of Fine Arts where I was based in the Art History department. The University realised it was short of resources and skills for Art Management. So I was sent to Goldsmiths' College, London, for five months in the Art Curation Department. I observed the MA Course. The purpose was to learn something from the UK and set up the curriculum in our own university.. I interviewed students from different Asian countries.

Through my links with the British Council in Shanghai, I knew Lewis Biggs [Liverpool Biennial Director].

Before Raj came to Shanghai, I introduced the Liverpool Biennial to the students and our faculty. We were a key collaborator with the public art community and wanted to publish a magazine. Because we had a community public art project, when Raj came we wanted her to have her own views. It was very, very new. We asked her about every detail and quite small issues gave useful instruction, details about what they had done before. Raj is quite young, but we get along very well and keep closely in touch. Language issues are quite important on cultural leadership exchanges. Even my team asked Raj her views. I think it was useful. We like opinions from different perspectives. Before I went to Liverpool, I was very clear: I want to learn something from a very professional organisation about how you organise events and the programme. The other purpose was to build real cooperation for the future through practice.

¹⁵ London Chamber of Commerce and Industry

The placement was very useful, a very good experience. At very detailed level I try to find links with precise opportunities. I learned about the John Moores Contemporary Painting Prize and New Contemporaries. The Biennial introduced me to the managers of these two projects. I try to understand their situations. To take the lead I have to think quickly and come up with possibilities for the immediate future. English people think about doing something later on if they have too many concerns, but in China a long delay would mean they ignore you.

Lewis introduced us to art museums like FACT and Open Eye. I met Mike Stubbs at FACT and put two proposals to him for his AND festival.. I am very clear about the English way: it takes time to trust people. If you show your face then people can trust you, you can see opportunities, take the next step and go further. When Mike Stubbs from FACT came to China, he gave a lecture on digital art. I bring back E- Space Lab, a visual talk to have good communication between the two city's arts people.

We also have a faculty exchange programme with John Moores University. The artist-in-residence wants to have joint exhibition in Shanghai University in Liverpool Pavilion, then take it back to the Biennial.

Lewis Biggs said to me: *"Ideas are cheap. Making it happen is the important thing."* There are a lot of tough issues to sort out.

With John Moores Contemporary Painting Prize the whole thing was too big but we could bring the five prizewinners, which is significant. New Contemporaries takes place every year in UK for a long time based on students. We want it to happen in 2010-11 and it may become an annual event. Like you look after your children, you have to manage them bit-by-bit so somehow they will grow up better.

I talk with people about my ideas and what we'd like to do at a very practical level at every step. I think people trust me. I didn't feel any more difficulty between UK and China. In China, if the boss agrees, things happen very quickly. In UK it's very slow. I get used to your way. Project meetings, curator meetings, staff meetings. In UK everyone has to report what they have done, lots of reviews. We never review what happened, we only look forward and have meetings on decisions and opinions. In China, we have one meeting and it can be settled. It's quite a different approach. I did a presentation about our Public Art Programme at Liverpool and the high levels of support by the local government and community. Laurie, manager of the Biennial Community Project, said: *"Oh, I want to do a public art project in China"*. Most people haven't been to China. Through me, they know more.

Specific dilemmas?.. With FACT for example, each organisation is operating in a different way. Sometimes procedures are very slow. Mike Stubbs said: *"Ling Min is very tough!"* If you really want something to happen, you can't be too nice. You have to balance tough and nice.

I would like to promote Chinese art on the international stage. Previous experience was that some people were very famous through international galleries packaging them. First they had to establish an international base. Now even local artists can reach international audience and grow and develop through our collaboration. This is quite healthy in a Chinese context.

Making the bridge is easier if the idea to start with is not too difficult. First step is try to communicate, then work out if it's possible financially and whether we have the capacity. For example with Bluecoat, we said: "*what can we do together?*" We spoke about an E-Space Lab. A big screen talk would not cost much and it's easy to reach both sides and have quite a big effect with in-depth discussion. The proposal got people quite excited. From my side, I can handle it. On 2nd Feb this year [2010], we launched the topic of *Art in the City*. UK side brought *Dream* for discussion. Our side brought Metro Station public art works. People from either side asked questions about the other's approach. It took two months' preparation and went on very late. It was quite successful and was an experiment with a lot to learn including about the technology. It will definitely happen again. We need to think carefully about how to make it bigger maybe through television.

I invited three journalists to that first event. I just say I'm not sure how it will go. It's very rewarding but very busy because lots of things happening. That was the result of the exchange four projects to do in China. We have faculty exchanges with John Moores University. At the beginning it was very important to meet once a week with the artist. It was his first visit to China. He was to make a sound installation and I said: "*I'll give you a team, find a project by yourself.*" In fact he came up with two. One is very big that we will think about. Even when he is back in Liverpool, we still communicate. He has technical talks with the team. He is very, very happy in China. This summer, one China faculty member will be in Liverpool at Bluecoat and at John Moore's University. If you want to make people happy, you have to look at both sides' issues. We prepare here for the John Moores New Painting Prize in September. UK and Chinese prizewinners will exchange their work. I have almost settled a high quality venue. James Moores came to China to talk about that. We had a meeting to call for artists and had a very good response. In UK it's well known. Here it's totally new and have to spread the news to artists in Beijing, Guangzhou and Shanghai. There is a committee to ensure regulation of events.

My school is quite focused on public art. And more research will be formally published. Lots of ideas and resources came up now I try to gather cases and policy approaches in individual cities including London for a book. I have assistance. Different people will help me to do that. I'm more like the coordinator – bringing things together. All these things happened because of the placement.

When I reported to my senior management team when I was back, they say: "*four projects in four months, if you went for eight months you'd have eight projects!*"

New Contemporaries and John Moores University are into next year's plan so budget is allocated.

First I always have to know what others want. Not just think what I want. What's the space to go together? Artists are very, very emotional and need careful managing. They can be very happy or very annoyed. There are no regulations, no track in China. Everything is like an experiment and you have to look at the details. Because it's very new, there are lots of issues rather than strategy.

Beyond the placement, even if British Council has no money to support projects this year, their support is important and has implications for continuity and endorsement for it to happen successfully.

I have a very practical response.

My advice? I would say: *"Everyone will be different, everyone has different life experience."*

The John Moores Painting Prize in China was held in Shanghai in August 2010. Chinese prize-winners' works will also be shown at Liverpool Biennial at Walker Art Gallery in the near future.

Toleen Touq, artist and cultural producer, Amman, Jordan

Toleen Touq started her career in multimedia technology and has returned to Jordan after almost ten years in Europe, shifting her focus to arts and culture. She has been working as a freelance cultural operator and producer, most recently as the Executive Director of the Hakaya storytelling festival and as co-founder of the 'Aat' network of women artists.

She is now working towards initiating a platform for artistic production, education and research in Amman with a vision towards sustainable audience development. As a practising artist she also creates multi-media installations and temporary interventions using image, sound and found materials, and has taken part in several regional and international residencies and workshops.

Toleen was a participant in the pilot year of the British Council's Cultural Leadership International Programme.

I was born in Amman but at an early age the family moved to the United Arab Emirates where I spent 6 years of my childhood surrounded by an international community. My classmates were from Sweden, Lebanon. Ghana...I feel I am the product of different cultures. I don't see the terms international or intercultural, rather I see working in the way I do as simply different people working together, not different cultures.

My time working at the UN on knowledge management first in Vienna and then The Hague was hugely influential. Not only was I able to develop technical and creative skills through my work, but also the UN was an incredibly multicultural place. Trust was important when dealing with difficult topics, and my colleagues were open and honest about the things you can do and be.

The city of Amsterdam and Holland also had a big impact and I immersed myself in the Arts. There was an alternative 'squat' culture where one didn't necessarily have to have large sums of money to realise projects. Being in Amsterdam raised the bar. I was exposed to different genres, to experimental dance, film and performance.

The confluence of the rich artistic - and international - scene in Amsterdam and the creative work at the UN – another international place – made me realise my potential as an artist and communicator. Amsterdam was important as it gave me a sense of personal and creative freedom and not every country has this. And I started engaging with other artists not just as a consumer, but as a creator.

The financially secure environment at the UN gave me the ability to return to Jordan to experiment, take up an artistic residency and travel without the immediate need to earn a living. For the first time I felt I was an artist. Coming back to the region after so long has given me a new perspective on things. There are some good changes transcending differences because of technology opening up the possibility of being close to and exposed to people from many places.

I feel there is too much stereotyping in the world. People are generally eager to judge without analysis, they don't know what happened in last 500 years, and 9/11 is often their only reference. I realise now how much politics is so much part of everyday life – this makes my work more relevant and interesting. I am navigating this through empowering myself and others, through being more political.

Most of the artists in Jordan come from a liberal, educated middle class, able to talk about these things. It is not so with the majority of people here. Art can change things but a big preoccupation is how to reach and involve others. I have two dilemmas. Firstly the audience – I want to broaden the spectrum and I am currently engaged with an audience research project with a Belgian researcher who is doing a PhD on public interaction with art in Jordan. Secondly, arts production in Jordan – I want to create more opportunities for artists to produce for example, by starting residencies and educational programmes.

I want to bring my work to a wider audience through public interventions. I have recently completed a project that has attempted to alter the soundscape of my city. I was thinking of the routine of sounds we hear in the public sphere... So I transmitted my own broadcasts across the city. These included sounds of the neighbourhood - birds chirping on a tree, people chatting in a cafe and the announcements of the tomato seller from his van – as well as more surreal sounds such as the sea or rainfall in Brazil. I wanted this to make people look up and ask: "What the hell's going on?" I wove these sounds into a fictional narrative of daydreaming scenarios. Being open to change and being flexible is key to realising ideas. As is approaching each idea and its execution as a learning experience. Through my projects I learn more, I gain more knowledge. One of the biggest challenges here is that I see people being excited and wanting change, but then little happens. But now things are beginning to happen, we discuss ideas, work in networks and support systems. I realise that you don't always need cash, the network comes up with support in many different ways. And then sometimes unexpectedly someone comes with some financial support. Through conversations and network you find other people, people not only to participate but also to fund. For example, this year I was invited to the Sharjah March Meetings[1] to do a presentation on my workshop series, which will hopefully bring partnerships and ultimately funds.

There is still so much to do here – publications, educational workshops and learning programmes. Sharing the benefits of my Cultural Leadership International grant with others, so they too can participate in the workshops I have been offered, is part of my plan. I would like to create sessions on curating, cultural anthropology, cultural and political history. I want to reference cultural contexts that are missing in the region, and to give to other people, as well as feed from other people, creating support systems for us all, so we can be more effective together.

Out of this need came the idea to design a series of concentrated workshops aimed at artists, art professional, curators, writers and researchers tackling topics such as

contemporary Arab art and social history, arts production and policy in the region, curatorial practice, research methods and methodologies, and audience cultivation. And whilst I feel a huge responsibility to my colleagues, sharing information and empowering through collaboration, I also feel a huge responsibility to myself, to retain my integrity through creating progressive, unique and challenging work. I also feel responsibility to my audiences, ensuring as broad an audience as possible.

One of my inspirations is Samar Dudin, a cultural activist who has pushed lots of boundaries working in a community centre, creating change in the community, and through her work shifting ideas about cultural policy. One of my future goals would be to be involved in creating cultural policy in the municipality.

For me exposure to and seeing different perspectives, gaining a different set of knowledge and experiences is essential. It all adds to our options. And it enables us to see the local context from a wider perspective, which is very important. These international experiences make us who we are. And whilst there are specific and practical things like the number of projects that emerge, it is essential to recognise that the work is all part of a really big, complex equation and it is not so easy to measure results.

I would like to continue to work in and understand different contexts, so it's not just about the challenges you face here, but also about taking projects into new contexts, for example, in eastern Europe or Africa. My background is in new technology, it informs much of my artwork and ideas. Through it I learn a lot and it even can lead to connections with people internationally who perhaps I will work with one day.

The most effective leadership development in my mind is a placement with a more experienced group of people, one that is outside one's own environment so that you can begin to see things differently. At the same time programmes that look at the "nitty gritty", at specific skills and practical considerations - are essential. Ultimately working internationally and interculturally is more about people than we really think. I see it as different people working together, not different cultures.

Publications and websites I find useful: <http://www.thirdtext.com><http://www.e-flux.com><http://www.ubuweb.com>,
<http://www.springerlin.at><http://bidoun.com/bdn/><http://www.resartis.org/arts> collectives and organisations on Twitter and Facebook.

The one thing I would say to someone setting out is, "In order to pursue the things you want to do, learn, try and believe in yourself."

Ammo Talwar, Chief Executive, Punch Records, Birmingham, UK

Ammo Talwar undertook a three and a half-month placement at Interactive Africa and the Design Indaba, hosted by Ravi Naidoo, an International Placement for Creative Entrepreneurs, organised by the British Council and funded by CLP.

Punch Records is a company combining commercial and social aims: learning and education, events and a festival, and touring of visual arts and music.

When I went to India in 1982 at 10 years old it was a complete eye-opener about how three generations were connected. I was born in the UK, my father came here as a graduate, so we're physically attached to India but I wasn't so aware of it growing up. That first visit made me want to do more. It got me interested in why we do certain things as human beings. For example, in Punjabi culture, we all shout. We can have three conversations going on at once, puzzling for my Welsh-Bajan wife who'd say: *"Wow! You guys are loud!"*

I ran a record store and worked in pretty much in solitude until I was 24-25 when someone said we could take what we did internationally. Another promoter then took us to Malaga for a DJ residency. It was always around a practical project or product. From around 2002 I used to go to New York about once a year to explore hip-hop, all off our own back to build a network around meaningful work – film, events and records. Working over the long-term with a maximum of about five companies we established a shared vision, not just about taking our work to North America but exchanging in the other direction. The bedrock is developing trust and sharing a knowledge base. Then you can throw up other projects. We gain access through all the linkages we create. We need financial stability but it's also developing the sector in Birmingham and the UK. Art for Art's sake is great but ours is a business motivation too. It's really come to fruition in the last five years.

I learned loads during my time with Ravi at Interactive Africa and the Design Indaba Team. It was really poignant when I saw their business plan. It was full of pictures. I realised you could present your business plan differently – using images alongside the rigorous financial detail. Our own 2008-2011 business plan was in preparation at the time and we changed it radically as a result. Before, we thought that an arts business plan had to be text heavy but we wanted any Tom, Dick or Harry to be able to understand our ideas and ways of working.

I was really struck by the notion that when you go on a placement it turns out differently. Ravi was my mentor but I only had one hour of his undivided time in three-and-a-half months. So I had to say to myself, how do I learn? I decided early on to learn by observation. This was an opportunity to observe how Ravi worked with a team, how and what he let go of. I learned from his body language, his animation his way of exciting other people. I sat in an office opposite Ravi, his door was closed so I couldn't hear anything, and watched through the glass the way he managed things, his whole

demeanour. A maverick and an entrepreneur (even a bit of a dictator according to some staff) his management style presents a dichotomy, but you have to step back and look at the movement he's created.

I worked on five or six projects sporadically. The Design Indaba Team was skilled in how to use placements. I was lucky I had such an interesting time. Even today within my own work I ask myself: how would Ravi do this? He was so good planting a seed and letting it grow.

The placement gave me REAL REAL thinking and reading time. ACE¹⁶ had just published the Brian McMaster report. I read it three times and understood more about the power to influence policy. At home I would have read it quickly then put it aside. It allowed me to get away from the company and think: *"How do I want it to grow? What the hell am I really doing?"* I need to plant the seeds and allow things to grow.

At Punch, we used to do everything for everybody. I learned from South Africa to focus on what we are good at, reducing and simplifying everything through the business plan to the website. It is clear to staff and other sectors, like health and education. They can see a place to link to what we're doing. Our three strands now are:

- Learning
- Festival and Events
- Touring

There are big financial pressures. Shared artistic and financial risk is essential to developing contemporary culture. It's becoming harder to build partnerships now. We don't do 'safe', always on the edge. Now it's about showing people if you're successful in one centre or venue, it can also be in another. Lobbying and pitching is fundamental to every cultural company. If you don't have that capacity and skill you need to get it. You're seeing new service level agreements popping up, you need to be practicing your pitches now to position yourself effectively in 2-3 years' time. We're lucky here, we have good intelligence enabling us to foresee policy changes to reposition and resource particular areas such that potential partners can't not work with us.

With Skype you can do business internationally much more easily. You don't have to send an email and wait for an answer. We can get closer to markets. I'm a member of an international hip-hop network involving Germany, France, Holland, and the UK, developing leadership mentoring around how companies work. There needs to be more of this collaborative vision. For example, small, Black arts companies are funded very colonially, project-by-project. They need to create more networks forming pathways and new collaborations.

¹⁶ Arts Council England.

With technology the international and the intercultural has to be taken on board whether you're a DJ or the Opera House. It's about learning in different ways, different things from new people. It can only be like this, otherwise you die.

I feel layered responsibilities: to my staff, geographically to my city and young people, to the region's black music sector, to the music sector, to creative industries as a whole. It's glocal. In Birmingham there are particular wards in the city that we work in that will take around 20 years to make the changes we want. That's a responsibility. Whatever ideas you bring in, you have to test them. And you've got to let them go! The management style at Punch, it's quite erratic and particular. There's a lot of flexibility, there are no departments. It's quite fluid. People are comfortable with blurred responsibilities. There's a general consensus around roles and responsibilities and following through on the new ideas.

I had an absolutely great placement. I hadn't been interviewed for a job in twelve years and had no influence over where I went. It was because my personality was quite like Ravi's. He had forty people working with him and I had four. It was real, clever matchmaking. Venu Dhupa did that, but she was so hard in the interview, really hard but felt there was an opportunity there.

It changes your practice, it gives you a sense of how to do other things. Ravi had great connections to the corporate sector and politics. You have to work politics and get a good sense of where allegiances can be made.

I'm excited about building the company. Not to grow the size but the quality so that when people come into contact with us, whatever they look/see/feel they get a sense of real quality like when you go to Interactive Africa.

If I were to hand over my practice, I'd say: "**Do you**". *The hip hop artist Common Sense has a track called "Do You". Work on what you're good at. It's about authenticity and knowing yourself.*" I went to an RSA¹⁷ conference and people kept saying; "*What's your business model?*" That's ridiculous. I'd never have had a business if I followed a formula. Do what you're good at and if you get it right, people want your DNA.

¹⁷ Royal Society for Arts, Manufactures and Commerce

Ravi Naidoo, Chief Executive, Interactive Africa, Cape Town, Republic of South Africa

Ravi Naidoo is Managing Director of Interactive Africa, a marketing and communications company based in Cape Town, South Africa. Described as “*Entrepreneurs with a socio-political conscience*”, Interactive Africa is an unconventional business born to the new South Africa. The company harnesses compelling ideas, creative talents and private sector resources to address Africa’s “meta” issues. Projects include: the African Connection Rally, First African in Space, bid to host the World Cup, the Design Indaba and 10X10 Low-Cost Housing. Interactive Africa generates its own projects, allies and resources starting from a zero base each time.

Ravi and Interactive Africa hosted Ammo Talwar during his International Placement for Creative Entrepreneurs.

My first international experience was the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona. I saw the metropolitan leverage that was brought to bear on forging a cultural identity. It really *pinged* with me. I hadn’t been on international trips. I got my first passport in 1992. When we started the Design Indaba, we’d never been to a design event. We were a parochial, insular, inward-looking society. In the after-glow of the democratic elections people of my darker hue could step out. I was half way through an MBA and was keen to create new platforms with socio-economic impact. That’s when I made the first trip. I was interested in looking at the meta-issues and how we could have an impact.

I’d been working in advertising for two-and-a-half years and I was bored with the picture/logo/promise formula unchanged in 150 years. I wanted to create a strategy and communications tool kit and work out how we could use the power of the private sector to have socio-economic impact. We have a rational paradigm that makes sense in corporate boardrooms.

We worked on the African Connection Rally with NGOs entirely funded by the phone companies to set up telecentres along the route giving telephony to people who had never heard a dialling tone. We did the same with the bid for the Soccer World Cup, utilising this tool kit to convince CEOs to part with their money and to re-imagine Africa and South Africa. If 51 of the biggest economies in the world are companies, the theatre in which to make a difference are the corporate boardrooms. We have a well-defined conscience and harness those powers to make a difference. The skillset required is not sitting in the public sector. We have developed these skills over the last 16 years.

Our lack of international experience meant that we had no framework for the Design Indaba. We innovated. Because of the socio-political context we did not mimic what else was around. We looked at the economy and saw it flat-lining. We were suffering the classical African problem – well endowed with natural resources but just sitting

back. We don't even sell the commodities and determine their price. The X factor was creativity to turn those natural resources into products like jewellery.

We had to box ourselves out of a corner if we wanted to grow the economy. Our economic problems were a ticking time-bomb. The question was how to harness creativity up front and make it central. The crisis of the day was job creation. The Design Indaba was set up to be an ideas exchange and concentrated a lot of experiences. I learned so much from doing it. It was really living it not just crafting strategy. The first one, I so enjoyed it. There were around 200 South Africans. It was really magical, so wonderful to share ideas and stories. This was the source code. It has changed to some degree since and happens biennially. It was almost done as a 'love' project in the beginning, all done after work hours. It grew in 97, 99, 2001 when we had to make it an annual event. We were doing things so differently from anyone else. The world looked at creativity in silos. We were celebrating the creative industries all together with graphic designers, musicians, architects. "Indaba" means gathering of people. Design is the golden thread going through all industries: performance, design, architecture and fashion.

Local creative people needed a platform to show their produce. We have just received the economic impact study of last year. It's SA Rand 200million and this does not take into account subsequent orders coming in. Three elements make it successful:

- It's multi-sectoral including craft, fashion, media, product design.
- It's curated with an independent panel of judges, all leading lights in their field. People apply and this upholds standards.
- We have amazing international speakers. It's like a global conference with local products. The networking opportunities are superb. South African designers have been commissioned – SA designers like Richard Hart and UK design company Tomato get a lot of their backend web designing done here.

Relationships are created across the world. It's like Scott McNealy (Co-founder of Sun Microsystems) says: *"The network is the computer"*.

Interactive Africa is a marketing and communications company. We try to find a simple way of describing it after 16 years. We get up in the morning and have a lovely idea and then gather the resources to do it. We are not hired guns most of the time we generate our own projects.

For example, we have a series of housing projects - the 10X10 low-cost housing with architects like Thomas Heatherwick and David Adjaye taking part. We won't pay them. It's an open source project with real responses from the people who live in the houses. We are catalysts to think how we can improve the quality of life, make a difference. In the case of the housing intervention, it's probably generating more column inches than any campaign. If the project is good enough, it will get the coverage. We took the Design Award of the Year and pulled it out of obscurity. Youngsters are always asking

how they can crank up the PR. If the ideas are really strong then coverage is generated.

As for new technologies, there is more Internet activity now and you have to be “on” 24/7. You have to do something current, maintain continuity with ongoing communications to distribute your stuff globally. With the pervasiveness of communication, it means something can happen in the butt-end of Africa that has global impact.

But you need to know how to detach. You need a good team to delegate so you are not on the treadmill. I do take time out and go to an Ayurvedic centre in India to detox, declutter.

We are excited about the possibilities for the Design Indaba, to create our own tv channel on the web. The bar is set so high now for broadcast programmes, the answer is to just produce it yourself. Harnessing the content, I see the Design Indaba as a wonderful portal and media institution providing education online. I see this as a way of managing carbon footprint and making the most of the tools and bandwidth available. We have a model that’s relevant to emerging economies. The Design Indaba could work in Brazil, China, India. Realities are all happening at once: we have soil squishing between our toes in the townships and at the same time are writing code. Half the world is in this space.

In South Africa the energy of the last 16 years would be good to put into a bricks and mortar design centre. We are lobbying for the land and think we are getting somewhere. There is no single design gallery in the country. There is no national design council but we have become the de facto design council. We’d like the design community to be in a space where they take this forward.

I feel primarily responsible to my country, to the creative community, I constantly ask their opinion; to the global creative community and an amazing network; to our partners, corporate supporters who pony up the dosh for what we do; and to Design Indaba long-term so that all our partners feel they are getting something out of it.

As to how I make the bridge from idea to reality with my team...It’s part science, part art and instinct. It’s a process, but where one stops and the other starts, it’s difficult to say. Most of our projects are funded by the private sector so we always have to look for its relevance commercially. That’s the *raison d’être*. We ask: “*who’s this for and what’s in it for them?*” There has to be something there for them but you have to stretch their ideas of what’s there for them. You leave a trail of cookies and crumbs and have to take them on a journey. You need to believe it first off. Everything needs to be based on conviction, not marketing or spin. When things don’t feel convincing, you drop them. So for example, the housing project we went to the stock exchange and looked at the listed companies of building suppliers and laid our trail of cookie crumbs for them. We don’t believe our government is pushing the envelope where housing’s concerned. Why

shouldn't the poorest of the poor attract the best of the best? So we took rock-star architects to design a basic house for US\$10,000 per unit. We had to ask the companies why this was important. We sold it on the ideas that it was a good laboratory for them. We had to find common ground that would 'ping' with them. We have to wear their hat and find what's the motivating factor. We draw a lot of Venn diagrams to find the overlapping interests.

Passing on the baton I'd say: *"It's a hard task-master, you have to love what you're doing to be able to keep on keeping on. You have to have vast reservoirs of passion and love. It's unlike selling widgets where you are constantly building year on year. The business model is zero-based again each time. It's a whole new programme, you have to grow on your learning, your reputation and brand equity to a degree but you start from first base. You have to have passion, energy and love for it."* I'm an incurable romantic. The day I lose that I'll stop it.

Aaron Cunningham, Yusra Warsama, Borhan Mohammedi, Baba Israel, Suzie Henderson, Kelly Morgan, Ruth Adkins, Members of Contact Theatre, Manchester, UK

Contacting The World (CTW) is a pioneering international youth exchange festival produced by Contact Theatre, Manchester, UK, for young people aged 15-25. Facilitated by the Internet, 12 companies are twinned with youth theatres from other countries sharing ideas, films and scripts to create new theatre for a summer festival and street parade.

The 5th CTW in 2010 will convene a Leadership Summit, funded by the EU's Youth in Action, to explore development of leadership skills in young people, using CTW as a case study of creative participatory leadership.

The following were interviewed: Borhan Mohammedi, Yusra Warsama, Aaron Cunningham and Kelly Morgan, all members of Future Fires¹⁸; Baba Israel, CEO and Artistic Director; Suzie Henderson, Head of Creative Development and Ruth Adkins, International Development Associate (a CLP Peach placement).

The late Noel Greig, founding father of CTW with John McGrath, Julia Turpin, and Kully Thiarai, wrote about the *'twinning of difference'* and pinning down what made CTW so transformative. *"It has something to do with how people are with one another...a model of the world as it could be... equality... the constant and creative negotiation between formal structure and the challenge of the random."*

Greig was adamant about CTW's young people being *"leaders of today. This is a rehearsal for the future but also the future happening right now"*.

Baba Israel describes Contact's approach as being: *"young people centred, fusing participation, leadership development and professional artistic output. It integrates those values around professional development and innovation and what it means to be a leader in that context. We have young people in on interviews for staff and Board. Everyone's voice is equal. . There are three layers at Contact: board, staff and young people. There are ways through for everyone."*

Contact Theatre's artists and audiences include young people from Manchester's Somali, Iraqi, Kurdish, Nigerian, Zimbabwean, Irish, Bangladeshi and Jamaican communities. Diversity is embraced positively from the outset, as is the learning inherent in international cultural exchange. Whether your home is Manchester or the Gambia, *"you can't pull apart the international and the intercultural"*. (Ruth Adkins)
Suzie Henderson:

¹⁸ Future Fires was formed from experiences at Contact; Aaron Cunningham is also CTW Project Administrator; Kelly Morgan works in Creative Development and Outreach.

“Young people don’t use words like ‘international and intercultural and leadership’. The words feel artificial. Young people call you out on telling the truth. We’re SO not an education department.”

Those interviewed saw a bigger picture of the world early on through: touring on the road with parents; first experiences of international theatre at home; travelling abroad with a youth dance group; arriving as a young person in Britain for the first time from Kurdistan or Abu Dhabi; or the contrast of small town life in England to taking a play to Edinburgh and meeting people from all over the world.

This early international outlook is integrated at Contact into professional artistic practice. Pathways of progression offer roles of increasing responsibility to young people as Ambassadors and facilitators for drop-in sessions, writer and actor workshops and projects on the scale of CTW. The term leader was only recognized as *“I am here, doing it”* (AC).

Yusra Warsama:

“I didn’t just think: ‘Ah, I’m a leader now.’ It’s all around you, maybe chatting at the bar. I think ‘I can do that’, ‘I want to do that’. There’s a gradual progression. It’s organic. I hope I help others in the same way. It becomes a political thing. The local and global become a smaller and a bigger place at the same time. You won’t necessarily hear about a young Somali woman and I use that in my art as a spoken word poet. I use my faith. Being a part of British Council/CTW makes it easier. I can be myself.”
I was 19 when I went to Egypt with CTW - five young people from Egypt and five from UK - around the time of the Iraq war. We were engaging in international dialogue and I felt that nothing was a problem. I felt joy. I saw I was part of this. It was pure love, pure energy. I felt empowered. I feel responsible to my background, to my faith, comfortable or not. I feel responsible to work and audiences. I have to be truthful. I’ve always been different. It’s what makes me an individual.”

Borhan Mohammedi:

“I’m from Kurdistan, I feel responsible to Kurdish people (I know that sounds cheesy) but I want to represent them in the right way. I want to use my own stories. When I started out my family thought I was wasting my time - they say: ‘look your cousin has a house’. I would like my family to be happy, and they are starting to see this is something.”

Baba Israel:

“My mother’s from Australia, my father from New York. In my 20s I went to Australia: I saw theatre, hip-hop, youth participation, a range of cultures - Maori, Lebanese, Tonga, Aborigine. There was a shift in me as an artist. It happened by leaving the place where I was from. I went back to New York. That was a challenge. But that’s how the international works. You pull on the knowledge you have gained somewhere else.”

Ruth Adkins:

“I believe it is hugely important to have a physical shared experience in order to learn from international work, it needs time spent in proximity, the ‘being there’ to witness and participate, to get a sense of your own agency and react in person.”

Aaron Cunningham:

“Brazil opened my eyes to how much freedom we have. I spent time with Rosalie from Afro Reggae. She’d never been out of her favela, just 9-10 streets. I’d seen more of Brazil in a day than she had seen in her life. My presence though made it safe for her to go into Rio. CTW gave her new freedom. When she came to the UK, she was so excited, like a child – exploring, touching, tasting everything. I felt responsible and glad for her.”

CTW is an experience of immense significance for the artists as leaders, citizens and learners. For some this is the first intense experience of “*seeing all the world in one place*”. The effect on almost everyone is transformative. *“Its a buzz. You feel it forever.”* (KM)

Borhan Mohammadi:

“CTW 2006 was a once in a lifetime experience with friendship, honesty, a cultural mix, I knew I could be myself. I could adapt to UK. It was 9am and 400 people were dancing on tables. Like bees. It was unique. We were asked to dress up for the parade but I wasn’t sure...so I went in my CTW T-shirt and they gave me a flag to wave. Everyone was standing watching. We were taking over the city....so strong.. Artists should be the government. Everyone was smiling more. I remember that moment – I looked behind and the whole parade was following me. I remember that feeling. Then I rapped in Farsi on the stage. I never thought I would do THAT! The energy was so pure, so strong. There. I’ll never forget.”

Aaron Cunningham:

“We have these images of everyone and they’re not correct. I’d taken Raphael from Brazil, Tobias from Zambia and George from Palestine, up in the Manchester Ferris wheel. We talked about our expectations of each others’ countries: ‘I thought everyone from Zambia was poor and on the streets and everything’, ‘I thought everyone in Palestine was like that!’ I didn’t tell them that I was from England and I’d had the wrong preconceptions of them all!”

Creative use of new technology and social media build relationships prior to CTW. In this way 12 companies create 6 new theatre pieces and come together for a week at Contact to perform. The creative imperative overcomes most challenges of any digital divide. A theatre company in Iran had difficulties accessing the Internet when blocked by government. CTW participants from India worked around power cuts and intermittent access.

Kelly Morgan:

“Our group was from India and we were all emailing every night. When I started at Contact I didn’t have email. Now I’m on facebook, skype, myspace. I’m in touch with people from all over the world. You’re honest and feel obliged to be open. I have bonds with people I’ve actually only seen face to face for one week. You can be sitting on a bus with someone and not share these things.”

Baba Israel:

“IT doesn’t replace the need for face-to-face but there are creative ways of using it. We’re in the Oxford ‘corridor’ for fast speed connections. It helps the environmental footprint. Realtime streaming means someone could be teaching a writing class from New York. These are sustainable relationships that can be built on.”

CTW fuelled Future Fires’ onward creative work as a theatre company. The group was asked what they have each gained from each other and to whom or what they feel responsible:

Kelly Morgan:

“Just to be completely honest and open. Sometimes you don’t see an opportunity unless you are. Don’t be too formal but just say let’s go and have a cuppa tea. Sometimes you build your main friendships by cooking together. With the peer to peer mentoring, I feel proud and it is mutual. I look up to you and you look up to me.... I know I can take it out on you guys.”

Yusra Warsama:

“We’re very lucky. We get to create work out of passion. I saw spoken word theatre and hip-hop and I recognised it was an arena I could play with. It’s a mental playground. Freedom to play. I have a responsibility to maintain that space for emerging artists.”

What major changes happening in the world are affecting their work?

Kelly Morgan:

“Young people don’t have confidence, feel they are stereotyped and their opinions are not valued. Labels stop people branching out. The media sensationalises the Middle East, saying everyone is a suicide bomber. CTW inspires people to ask questions to find out for themselves. CTW allowed me to become independent-minded quite early. I had been messing around till I was 15 and then I said I want to do this and I can do it. I set up a dance group. It upsets me that people don’t have that sense that you can do things for yourself and grab opportunities. They stay in Manchester with what’s what. I broke away.”

Aaron Cunningham:

“I was in the North West Manchester and some young people ran up and hugged me. We can be positive people in society. What we’re doing influences someone’s life. You want them to continue. Young people go through some bad things. Some just need a chat and trust they can ask for help. Especially men. One young man kicked out by his

parents gave me a call. He wouldn't do that if I hadn't done the workshops with him. Whatever young people are going through, I realised I've got it cush."

Suzie Henderson:

"A big challenge is increased presence of the BNP bringing a sense of fear and foreboding. We're working in areas that are divided; it's all coming to a head. We have no choice but to respond as it impacts on our work. North Manchester is a white working class area with West African communities. We ran a workshop in a disused shop to bring the 2 communities together but the workshops self-selected and were very segregated." "This is an issue across the whole of Europe, compounded by the recession." (BI)

Suzie Henderson:

"There can be cultural differences in workshops: touching bodies, gender issues, CRB¹⁹ stuff, drinking alcohol. We try to address these matters on the spot without causing offence. We create a community, which many don't have. International travel can be scary. Young people who seem confident as emerging artists can take a lot of convincing to go abroad. One young man was intimidated. Many young people haven't had formal education – and the gaps show."

The group described their ambitions for the future:

Baba Israel acknowledges that in CTW's ambition there is no other project like it. His question is: *"how can we integrate and deepen it? The website has 70 countries connecting. How do we build on that? How do we shout out?"*

"I'd like to see CTW on a carnival scale." (BM)

"I'd like to be an artist facilitator in 2012, do site specific work in Australia and, when I am fifty, have established Contact theatre in a deprived area somewhere –Africa, Indonesia, Middle East."(AC)

"I'd like to take skills I've learned here and teach them in Ethiopia. I'm very Mancunian and very Ethiopian. That would be fantastic." (YW)

What advice would they give, handing on the baton?

"Don't take on too much." (AC)

"You'll get friends from different areas. Conversations, perspectives, different cultures, struggles of being new here. You need to challenge yourself " (KM)

"Prepare for the unexpected. No amount of planning will let you see what is going to happen. You have to be flexible to respond." (SH)

"I feel responsible to what I believe in. To get the best for the society I live in. To the world as a place, to be honest. I know that's a big thing. I want to take the experiences I have had that have been good and give them to others, that's why I love doing what I do." (KM)

¹⁹ Criminal Research Bureau

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