

Arts. Environment. Sustainability.

How can Culture make a Difference?



Compiled and edited by Claire Wilson (ASEF)

Image credit (front page): Artwork by artist Megumi Shimizu (Japan/China) “the wind is strong” performance from the 360° Land Art Biennale 2010, organized by the Modern Mongolian National Art Gallery in Ulaanbaatar. Image courtesy of the Modern Mongolian National Art Gallery – Ulaanbaatar.

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Arts. Environment. Sustainability. How Can Culture Make a Difference?

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Foreword

The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) is pleased to present this dossier exploring the role of culture and the arts in the global debate on environmental sustainability.

Climate change and sustainable development are common challenges, acknowledged by governments and civil societies worldwide. This year, the governments of Asia and Europe reaffirmed their commitment to sustainable development as a common denominator for achieving economic growth, social progress and environmental protection, in occasion of the 10th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Hungary, in June 2011,

Therefore, as part of our mission to promote understanding between Asia and Europe, ASEF – the only permanent institution of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) – has been consistently working on these issues over the years. In compliance with ASEM priorities, ASEF's has been engaging with the topic through programmes such as the *Asia-Europe Environment Forum*, the *Asia-Europe Journalists' Seminar* and *Connect2Culture*.

Furthermore, by recognising a growing awareness of the transversal role of culture, ASEF's Department of Cultural Exchange has been particularly interested in deepening alternative and cross-disciplinary approaches to the topic of environmental sustainability.

Since the early 90s, civil society has emerged as a key actor and partner in the search for environmental sustainability and, more recently, the role of the artists and cultural workers, as catalysts of change in society, has come to be widely discussed in the context of climate change.

The need of the hour, therefore, is for innovative platforms of exchange between governments and civil society; as well as between different actors within civil society, including academics, scientists, artists, businesses and the social sector.

Therefore, while acknowledging the imminent threat of climate change, *Connect2Culture* recognises the opportunities for a multi-stakeholder dialogue afforded by this common challenge. Since 2008, the program has facilitated bi-regional dialogue and collaboration on the value of culture and the arts in addressing one of the most pressing challenges of our times. And in doing so, it has also served to reaffirm culture as the fourth pillar of sustainability.

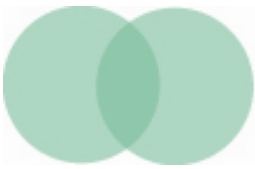
With this publication, we extend that commitment. The two Discussion Papers that form the core of this dossier serve as excellent starting points for more conversations on the subject. The dossier also records ASEF's work at the intersection of the arts, culture and environment

through the first edition of *Connect2Culture* (2008-11), and includes a directory of partners and alumni who have helped to build greater synergies between Asia and Europe, within the framework of this programme.

As we celebrate the creative intersections between art and environment at the Fifth World Summit on Arts and Culture (Melbourne, October 2011), It is our hope that this dossier can serve as inspiration for further collaboration and discussions between artists, cultural practitioners and other relevant stakeholders, en route to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) scheduled to take place in Brazil in June 2012.

Sabina Santarossa

Director, Cultural Exchange, ASEF



Why art and environment?

Why Connect2Culture?

There is a growing recognition of the contributions of culture and the arts to finding creative solutions for global challenges. Both civil society and governmental stakeholders are beginning to acknowledge the transversal nature of culture and consequently, its value to sustainable development, environment, education, health and social cohesion, among other fields. In its role as a catalyst, culture can contribute to a better quality of life.

Recognising the important *and* changing role of culture in contemporary society, the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) initiated a programme called *Connect2Culture* in 2008. The programme's main objective is to investigate the evolving role of arts and culture in society. To this end, the programme has been bringing together professionals from different sectors including government, arts, science and technology to address pertinent issues from their unique perspectives. Dialogue within the programme has been fostered through a variety of formats including artistic projects, workshops, research and policy meetings. Through these encounters, the programme not only fosters cross-disciplinary networks between civil society stakeholders Asia and Europe, but also serves to channel recommendations to ASEM governments on the significant role of the arts and culture in addressing the most urgent issues of our times.

Why focus on arts and environment?

Climate change is among the most pressing global issues of concern. It is at the forefront of debate in Asia-Europe relations, a dialogue that is often dominated by politicians and scientists. Climate change has become a hot topic in public opinion and media, yet for most people it is still an abstract concept. The effects of climate change call for creative and innovative solutions by civil society and governments alike.

They call for a change in the way we live and raise many questions such as: How is this change possible without a cultural change? How can we gain a deeper understanding of climate change by analysing it in a trans-disciplinary approach? How have artists from different fields responded to climate change and to sustainability issues? How can art support a process of change towards more sustainable societies? And how can exchange and collaboration between East and West, between Asian and European cultures, bring additional value to the creation of more sustainable societies?

ASEF took a proactive responsibility to focus the first edition of the *Connect2Culture* programme (2008-2011) on raising awareness on climate change and

strengthening the role of arts and culture in the dialogue on, and actions related to, global environmental challenges. ASEF did this by actively engaging the culture sector with other sectors on environmental issues at the levels of practice, networks and policy. It aimed to link Asia and Europe through interdisciplinary and multi-stakeholder network activities and collaborative projects, as well as bridging knowledge gaps on best practices related to climate change and sustainability, where arts and culture can play a role in this process of change.

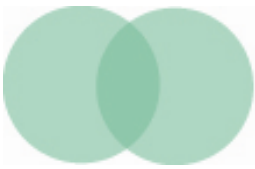
ASEF explored in particular the connections between the arts, culture and environment within the discourse of sustainable development. The programme was launched in Beijing prior to the 7th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Summit of Heads of State and Government which had a particular focus on sustainable development. The Summit stressed the importance of the Millennium Development Goals, climate change, environment and energy as key policy areas of ASEM for action in the next decade.¹ ASEF, as an organisation which connects ASEM priorities with civil society concerns, reflected on how it could respond to these challenges from a cultural perspective. In addition to linking in with this important platform, the *Connect2Culture* programme was also conceived to connect with the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP15) which took place in Copenhagen in 2009.

What concrete initiatives were taken?

In its first year, *Connect2Culture* facilitated the multidisciplinary platform in Beijing, *Dialogue on Arts Culture and Climate*, which brought together 45 individual artists, scientists and sociologists to debate their perceptions of, and attitude towards, environmental issues, in particular the topic of climate change. As part of this programme, a public forum was set up to discuss perceptions, facts and creative solutions towards climate change. This was followed by intensive open space workshops on the theme of Yi Shi Zhu Xing (Clothing, Food, Shelter and Transport). Concrete projects were discussed and developed, some of which were later supported by ASEF. Contributing to the discussion was an artist residency and an exhibition on climate change.

In the second year, the *Connect2Culture* programme brought together cultural experts from Asia and Europe for two conferences that took place alongside the 15th Conference of Parties of the United Nations Framework in Copenhagen (COP 15). ASEF organized a vision group meeting of 16 cultural leaders from Asia and Europe which was called *Arts, Culture and Sustainability: Building synergies between Asia and Europe*. In a process of joint reflection, they discussed their personal and institutional visions for the sector's engagement on environmental and sustainability issues. They articulated

¹ <http://www.asem7.cn/download/bdsd.pdf> (date last accessed 6/9/2011)



their visions which were brought together in a discussion paper by Mary Ann DeVlieg and Pooja Sood. Their ideas were presented at the conference *CulturelFutures: The transition to an ecological age 2050* also organised alongside the COP15. The discussion paper was further developed by Mary Ann DeVlieg in the paper entitled *Arts, Culture and Sustainability: Visions for the Future*, which can be found in this dossier. Input from the vision group meeting was also taken forward into a workshop on *Sustainable Creative Cities: the role of the arts in globalised urban contexts* which was part of the Connecting Civil Societies Conference set up in 2010 by ASEF to give civil society input to the 8th ASEM Summit.

In 2009 and 2010 ASEF also supported nine projects through the Connect2Culture programme and through other ASEF initiatives. The projects covered a wide range of topics, many of which were a direct result of the exchanges between cultural practitioners and scientists who met during the ASEF initiated dialogue platforms in 2008. These projects consisted of artistic initiatives, workshops and residencies exploring a variety of relevant issues. They were selected through an open call for proposals circulated among the alumni of the Connect2Culture programme as well as to the wider public.

The details of each of the programmes can be found in this dossier, but outlined here is an overview of the activities. *Ecolocated: Litteral Lives* was a travelling residency in UK and Ireland exploring geo-political and ecological issues posed by human impact on marine ecosystems. An *Asia-Europe Knowledge Exchange towards Sustainable development* (HK-Berlin) resulted into the *Put Garbage Back to Work* publication on the feasibility of a Used Material Center (UMC) in Hong Kong. ASEF collaborated with the British Council on a capacity building workshop in Thailand for 30 young leaders entitled *Young Climate Leaders: Release your Creative Powers. How can art enhance our ability to think and act differently?* As input to this workshop, ASEF commissioned artists and educators Jaya Iyer and David Haley to write a discussion paper on *The Art of Sustainable Living: A creative approach to global social and environmental crisis*.

In 2010 the *First International Summer School of Arts and Sciences for Sustainability and Social Transformation* took place in Bulgaria. It focused on issues of trans and interdisciplinary processes and the notion of complexity as central to developing cultures of sustainability. *Making Our Futures: The Art of Sustainable Living* was an arts-led collaborative research project concentrating on how artists can contribute to city communities in Manchester and Beijing. In the area of new media an *Expert Meeting on New Media, Civil Society and Environmental Sustainability* was set up in Indonesia to formulate strategies and policy recommendations related to environmental sustainability and empowerment

of civil society actors in the field of new media. Another travelling residency programme in India called *Mobile Artistic Platform (M.A.P.)* explored issues relating to sustainable tourism, community based practices and notions of hospitality. Linking the *Arts to Environment and Sustainable Development Issues* was a research project conducted in eight countries in Asia. This research was commissioned as a result of the dialogue in Beijing, which highlighted a need to close knowledge gaps in the area of art and sustainability in Asia.

Finally, in 2011 ASEF supported a roundtable on the topic of a *Climate for Change* at the 5th World Summit of Arts and Culture, held in Melbourne, Australia. This roundtable explores the creative intersections between the arts and environmental sustainability in order to facilitate a global discussion on the topic. All of these projects are described in the annexes of this dossier.

What were the results?

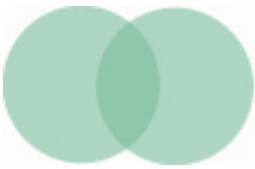
As one of the few foundations with a focus on the intersection between culture and environmental sustainability, ASEF contributed in a timely way to raise awareness and strengthen the voice of arts and culture by stimulating a multi-stakeholder dialogue as well as interdisciplinary collaborative practise between Asians and Europeans. As a result of the Connect2Culture programme, a strong network of almost 100 professionals in arts and culture was established. These practitioners have a strong vision for the future and are committed to do their part in addressing issues of climate change and sustainability in their work.

The emerging interest and commitment of the arts and culture sector in actively engaging with issues of sustainability was validated by their recommendations to Heads of State of Government of ASEM in 2010. In addition, the results on the Connect2Culture programme are communicated to the ASEF stakeholders, as well as the general public, through online documentation as well as being presented at important civil society and governmental platforms.

Some reflections on the first edition of the Connect2Culture programme, and the changing context in which it took place, are summarised below.

From circles of engagement to circles of influence

In the past few years, there was clearly an expanding circle of engagement in climate change and sustainability issues in the cultural sectors in Asia and Europe. In Europe, initiatives by artists and cultural institutions mushroomed to an extent that it became 'fashionable' to work on the topic of climate change. European funding started to support regional initiatives and platforms like European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC), and European cultural networks started to become



actively involved in climate change. The circles have certainly also grown in Asia where initiatives tend to be smaller, artist-driven and with a focus on local environmental challenges, which is in contrast to the often more abstract concepts favoured by European artists. The absence of formal pan-Asian cultural networks makes it difficult for the cultural sector in Asia to push for a stronger voice of arts and culture in the climate and sustainability debate. It can be seen that initiatives are also being taken by environmental NGOs who use art as an instrument to voice their concerns. Through ASEF's *Connect2Culture* programme, the communities of Asia and Europe were able to engage with each other so that the circles could expand beyond regional borders. It is through this ability to bridge geographical divides that ASEF is in a unique position to facilitate dialogue on global issues, such as climate change. What is necessary now is to expand the circles of engagement to circles of influence with stronger voices from artists directly at relevant cross-sectorial international platforms.

From climate change to sustainability

ASEF initiated its *Connect2Culture* programme on the theme of environmental sustainability with a particular focus on the discussion of climate change. This was conceptualised with the immediate objective in mind of connecting to the on-going debates at ASEM and UN levels. After the first dialogue platform in Beijing, it was clear that the narrow focus on climate change needed to be expanded, as an in-depth discussion on climate change cannot happen without an understanding of sustainable social and economic development. It became evident that the programme had to analyse the issues of climate change in a larger context.

Asia-Europe: similarities and differences in needs and approaches

While not always explicit, all the initiatives in the *Connect2Culture* programme did give Asia-Europe perspectives on the different notion of sustainability, development and the role of culture in society. Some participants highlighted that "the very words and approaches used in sustainability debates are based on western hierarchical classification and theories of progress".²

This East/West dichotomy was further elaborated in discussions on maintaining traditional practices versus technical innovation as well as approaches to cities and urban development. However the "[The participants of the 2009 project] highlighted the positive contributions of both East and West and cited similarities in Asian traditions and new Western thinking".³ A common

concern for both Asian and European participants was the need for a more humanistic and holistic approach in order to bring about a sustainable future. A call was made for "exploring the possible roles of arts and cultures as catalysts in contemporary processes of social and cultural transformations".⁴

What are the challenges and opportunities?

Initiating a programme in this field is a challenge, as it opens a broad spectrum of discussions on complex issues which need to be communicated to a wide range of stakeholders, including those outside of the cultural sector. Reducing this complexity into short and simple messages, and in a language politicians can apply, proved to be especially difficult for artists and cultural practitioners. However, it is not a magical formula of recommendations and waiting for governments to do things, but a combination, with a series of big and small actions which can make big changes.

But we all know that the impact of these initiatives is slow and that awareness building on climate change and sustainability is a matter of continuous practice. The challenge is to get artists and cultural practitioners to use bigger cross-sectorial platforms to make their voice heard through the language of art. A lot of work still needs to be done to assure the presence of culture in the sustainability debate at platforms such as United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) scheduled to take place in Brazil in June 2012.

A programme like *Connect2Culture* is a process of exchange and of building up knowledge and networks that focus on areas of particular concern in Asia and Europe. ASEF experimented with different formats of dialogue and exchanges: conferences, open space workshop, papers, residencies and online debates. Non-hierarchical methodologies of sharing (such as open space technology) seem to be the best approach for assuring greater access where language might be the only barrier left. A very important part in the programme was the combination of dialogue platforms with practical artistic exchanges. They each served a distinct purpose each with a different channel of action.

What are the next steps?

As *Connect2Culture* is a programme which addresses the global challenges of sustainability, it is no surprise that it will raise questions about the sustainability of the programme itself. In a world which is going through economic, social and environmental crisis, there is definitely a need for exchange between practitioners and

² Mary Ann DeVlieg Arts, Culture and Sustainability: Visions for the Future.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Sacha Kagan and Katelijn Verstraete (eds), *Sustainable Creative Cities: the role of the arts in globalised urban contexts*, p. 4 available at <http://sachakagan.wordpress.com/writings/> (date last accessed 6/9/2011)



a need to continue to connect to important international political and civil society platforms.

While the emphasis in the past years has been on climate change and SUSTAINABLE development, there is a need to discuss sustainable DEVELOPMENT and to see what role culture plays in human development. Future discussions need to address how culture can become the 4th pillar of sustainable development.⁵ This 4th pillar includes essential values like wellbeing, happiness, balance, harmony and identity. These values emerge in many places in the world and have been traditionally very important in Asia. This approach to development would ensure that culture has its rightful place in public policies alongside economy, environment and society.

This focus on development, and in particular on the 4th pillar, would not only build further on some of the recommendation of the 8th ASEM Summit on the topic of quality of life, achieving “greater well-being and more dignity for all citizens”,⁶ but would also be of input to the on-going discussion on culture and development at UNESCO. ASEF will investigate what are the best approaches to work on this in an Asia-Europe framework in order to stimulate the already existing network and encourage new partners to join in this joint reflection and action.

As Mary Ann DeVlieg, *Connect2Culture* participant, states:

“A sustainable global future can only come out of the diversity of cultural, historical, pragmatic and intellectual practices that enable new conceptions to arise. New, global, multidisciplinary networks of committed people who have the capacity to realise change in their localities, must be supported.”⁷

Katelijin Verstraete

Assistant Director, Cultural Exchange, ASEF

⁵ <http://www.fourthpillar.biz/about/fourth-pillar/> (date last accessed 4/9/2011)

⁶

<http://www.asef.be/sites/default/files/ASEM%20Chair%27s%20Statement.pdf> (date last accessed 4/9/2011)

⁷ Mary Ann DeVlieg, Arts, Culture and Sustainability: Visions for the Future.



Discussion Papers

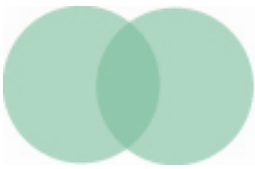
The first edition of the *Connect2Culture* programme, run by ASEF between 2008 and 2011, addressed the topic of art and environment. As part of this programme, there were many projects, including workshops, artistic residencies, summer schools, conferences, forums, expert meetings and online exchanges. Out of these projects we have selected two discussion papers to highlight here in this review of the programme.

The first paper was composed by Mary Ann DeVlieg (Secretary General of IETM) following the ASEF supported programme presented alongside COP15 in 2009: *Arts, Culture and Sustainability workshop: Building Synergies between Asia and Europe*. In this workshop 16 experts gathered from different fields to discuss climate change and environmental sustainability and how art plays a role in this debate. As part of this process the experts each wrote a vision paper which expressed their hopes and aims for a more sustainable future. From these papers, the debates at the workshop and further interviews, DeVlieg drew out the main themes as expressed by the experts and presented them in this paper, *Arts, Culture and Sustainability: Visions for the Future*. It was not the aim of this paper to provide an in-depth analysis of the entire and complex field of arts and environmental sustainability, but rather to draw out some of the key points expressed by the expert participants.

The second paper, written by practitioners David Haley and Jaya Iyer, was a result of the ASEF supported workshop for young climate leaders held in Thailand in 2009: *Climate leaders: release your creative powers. How can art enhance our ability to think and act differently?* In this workshop 30 young climate leaders gathered together to develop climate change solutions for local communities with an emphasis on the role that culture and creativity can play in finding these solutions. The participants developed personal project plans for their future initiatives as well as fostering international networks with other up-and-coming climate leaders. The paper, *The Art of Sustainable Living*, was a response to this process and encourages further debate by presenting theories and giving examples of artistic practice while at the same time questioning how we view our own way of life. This paper has since been used as an educational tool.

Both papers canvas a wide range of issues and involve the input and opinions of many of the *Connect2Culture* participants. However, they are not intended as a comprehensive view of ASEF's activities in this area. Rather they are intended to provide a launching point into the complex area that is the cross-section of arts and environment. As Haley and Iyer point out, "A dialogue is not so much about generating new knowledge, as it is about changing the way we think." It is with this in mind

that ASEF presents these two discussion papers from our *Connect2Culture* arts and environment programme. We encourage the use of these papers in dialogue on the subject, with due credit to ASEF.



Arts, Culture and Sustainability: Visions for the Future

Discussion Paper from Arts, Culture and Sustainability workshop: *Building Synergies between Asia and Europe, Copenhagen 2009* by Mary Ann DeVlieg

1. Introducing the topic: Art and Environment

“Achieving significant reductions in CO₂ emissions requires effort and a change of mind-set by government, business and community. While the environmental lobby targets and criticizes governments and vested interests, the arts and cultural sector can work with the people and start, bottom up, from the community. The cultural sector is a natural change agent, instigator and provocateur in paradigm shifts and mind-set changes. (Ada Wong)”

Sustainability involves more than climate change. Rather it includes concerns such as migration, urban and rural issues and changing cultural values that touch us all. In addressing these concerns, culture ministries, public bodies, private foundations and sponsors engage with the issues for a variety of reasons – because of a commitment to taking communal action to save our natural environments, a desire to support activity which addresses the needs of a broad public, an investment into social innovation and a recognition of the responsibility to start in one's own backyard.

Artists also are very aware of the current debates and engage with them on a variety of levels. There are artists who have turned to issues around sustainability and climate change because they are passionate about them and feel the need to take a stand. Others engage with these topics because they are the current challenges to our humanity, and thus form the essential material with which artists reflect contemporary life.

The arts and culture sector's increasing involvement with climate change and sustainability issues found a focus in the UN's COP 15 Climate Change Summit in December 2009.¹ Although the world's attention was clearly on the 115 political decision makers (and their industrial lobbyists' influence) either reinforcing or abandoning the Kyoto agreement, civil society was present in extremely high numbers, voicing their concerns in parallel conferences, activist events and installations. Klimaforum, the Danish-organised, alternative 'people's climate summit', alone gathered over 50 000 people over 12 days, featuring 202 debates, 70 exhibitions, 43 films, 16 concerts and 11 plays from all over the world.²

COP15, the result of two years' negotiations to enhance international climate change co-operation, was seen to be one more disappointing failure in the eyes of civil society. It reinforced frustration that commercial interests and politics - together with nation states' protective behaviour and inability to undertake worthy compromises - continuously obstruct meaningful agreements and effective actions of the scale and force that are required. In particular, the process highlighted the "larger, and unresolved tensions between the North and the South".³ The Copenhagen Accord which was produced, "is neither a COP decision that can be operationalized through the FCCC institutional architecture and draw on the existing normative corpus, nor is it an independent plurilateral agreement with its own operational architecture and normative core, (and it) will likely present significant legal and procedural challenges..."⁴ Meanwhile, the financial crisis is both a real reason and a convenient excuse for slowing action, cancelling investment in experimental projects and putting efficient reins on the most powerful polluters.

At the same time, it must be said that COP15 also "showed the enormous potential of other players on the field: individuals, organisations, companies, regions and cities."⁵ The argument is that if interacting national governments cannot be fluid, flexible, innovative and collaborative, then civil society initiatives can.

This paper describes one initiative, ASEF's Connect2Culture programme, which has taken a proactive responsibility. The workshop undertaken in 2009 as part of this overarching art and environment programme was entitled *Arts, Culture and Sustainability: Building Synergies between Asia and Europe*. The workshop was in fact the centrepiece in a web of related activities that explored the role of culture in environmental sustainability. There were three elements to ASEF's activities held alongside COP15 in Copenhagen, 2009: a collective workshop with a vision group of 16 art and cultural experts from Asia and Europe; a "virtual circle" of contributors who followed the process at a distance; and the experts' active participation in the Culture/Futures conference which followed and which was part of a larger conference at COP15.

This paper follows the workings of the vision group as they created a paper outlining their vision for a more sustainable future, written in preparation for the workshop at COP15. After the disappointing results of COP15, we return to a group of these experts and ask them if their vision has changed one year on.

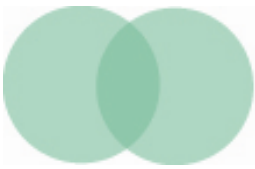
¹ UN summit: the 15th Conference of Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change <http://en.cop15.dk/>

² <http://klimaforum.org/>

³ Navroz K. Dubash, "Copenhagen: Climate of Mistrust," Economic and Political Weekly, December 26, 2009. <http://www.cprindia.org>

⁴ Lavanya Rajamani, "Neither Fish nor Fowl," Seminar, February, 2010.

⁵ <http://sustainablecities.dk/en/blog/2010/01/frustrated-after-cop15>. January 27, 2010, Georg Guensberg



2. Experts with a Vision

The value of the arts and culture sectors can be recognised through their intrinsic qualities, such as investigative approaches, alternative perspectives, creative freedoms and collaborative processes. Artists and other cultural professionals can add insight, self-reflection and inspiration which, together with players from other sectors, can help imagine new responses to some of the world's pressing problems. In the context of their art and environment Connect2Culture programme, ASEF brought together a group of 16 key Asian and European arts and cultural figures, activists, decision makers and international networks. The group included people working at the policy level (in key national, regional and international organisations representing civil society and governments) as well as practitioners (artists from performing, literary, visual and new media arts, architects, critics, curators, educationalists, designers, theorists, urbanists and heads of key institutions).

“ Art is able to excite our curiosity. That is its primary function. Curiosity leads to debate, and debate leads communities to engage themselves. ”

(Rosina Gomez-Baeza)

The 16 experts shared a deeply-felt sense of urgency for concerted action to address key challenges that face the current global violence - the 'violence' of today's dependence on technology, a narrowly-defined development agenda and social as well as environmental injustices. They shared a belief that the arts and culture sector can play an active role to support the identification of, engagement with and positive adaptation to important changes in our societies. As members of a global community, the contributors to this vision believed, unlike many who spread the 'politics of fear', that something must be done, that something can be done and that this 'something' lies in the realm of culture.

2.1. Introducing the experts & their visions

Below are extracts from the short essays written by 15 of the 16 experts in preparation for the workshop in Copenhagen in 2009. (See Arts. Environment. Sustainability. A Collection of Visions for the papers in full.)

Ada Wong on the bulldozer in Hong Kong

Solicitor; politician; environmentalist; educationalist; activist broadcaster; cultural advocate

“Here in Hong Kong artists and social activists have worked together successfully to highlight the importance of heritage conservation in this city where the bulldozer reigns. Their joint efforts have facilitated reflections and change especially in young people, and have brought about changes in our land policy. The cultural and arts sector can naturally and easily align with educators, environmentalists and social innovators at the community level and work with stakeholders to find innovative solutions to sustainability issues.”

Guy Gypens on the laboratory festival Burning Ice

Founder Performing Arts Research and Training Studios (PARTS); Artistic Director, Kaaitheater, Brussels, Belgium

“I have been trying to 'act' on different levels: Investigating different artistic strategies to tackle the socio-ecological crisis and trying to inspire a young generation of artists. Kaaitheater organises a laboratory festival, Burning Ice, which addresses four thematic frames: Re-routing mobility; Re-imagining the landscape; the art of waste and Re-writing the future. We engage in 'Platform Kanal', a local social and civil platform connecting artistic practice with social movements and urban planning. We also engage with a wide range of art institutions via a regional think tank on "re-thinking performing arts practice to reduce its carbon footprint”.

Yusaku Imamura on the human condition

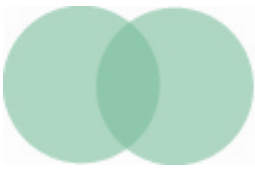
Architect; advisor to the Tokyo Metropolitan Government; director, Tokyo Wonder Site, Japan

“Tokyo Wonder Site (TWS) started the “On Site Lab” workshop in 2006. We thought we should start engaging more on social issues and engaging to this world - our contemporary society, cultural diversity and environmental issues. We are convinced that art is a message to the human being and society itself. Therefore art is political and also beyond political. I suppose even environmental issues are not limited to scientific numbers and facts. It is a question about 'the human condition' as Hannah Arendt pointed out.”

Marco Kusumawijaya on cities

Architect-urbanist; activist; Founder/Director, Rujak Center for Urban Studies, Indonesia

“My interest in both arts and environment stems from the source of my curiosity: cities. The issue on sustainability of cities is appealing not only because of its urgency with regards to climate change, but also because it offers an opportunity to think of, and search for, new ways to live wholly sustainably by also taking care of other problems pre-existing in cities. This opportunity challenges societies to be humane again, to take care of other



ecological and non-ecological problems that have been outstanding in cities, such as poverty, social justice, and migrant workers.”

Mary Ann DeVlieg on becoming more human

Advisor to think tanks on arts and creativity; Founder Arts Rights Justice; Secretary General, International Network for Contemporary Performing Arts (IETM)

“Neither technology, statistics nor pedagogy have convinced people to massively change their behaviour in order to face up to sustainability challenges, and although art and culture is not a saviour for all global ills, strong proof is emerging which shows that the methods used in the arts sector can promote deeper awareness, reflection, creative problem solving and sense of civic engagement in our publics. For too long now, art has become associated with elites when in fact it is among the most basic human activities. Engagement with art – whether as amateur, professional, participant or spectator – is about becoming more human.”

Nik Gaffney on local sustainability

Graphic designer; artist; programmer; media+systems researcher; Founding member, FOAM, Brussels, Belgium

“FoAM is a distributed laboratory, guided by the motto ‘grow your own worlds’. We focus on culture that is locally dynamic & diverse and globally resilient & stable. Similar to William McDonough, we were ‘tired of working hard to be less bad’ – we wanted to talk about the possibility of doing good, while living an abundant life and being surrounded by generous people. Luminous Green became an event about creative thinkers, doers and makers, deploying their imagination and ingenuity to shape a brighter future, disentangling from the unsustainable and unnatural.”

Ong Keng Sen on artists engaging the world

Artist; theatre writer/director; founder and Artistic Director, TheatreWorks, Singapore

“I believe in artistic processes as a means to engage the world. I want to continue to see artists playing vital roles in key issues of the world and of course, increasingly we have to engage with sustainability. The Flying Circus project attempted to connect cultural and artistic sustainability with context, site, memory and reconciliation, i.e. social sustainability. Ultimately I would like to engage with artistry, imagination, personal choice. I would like to bring about intimate conversations rather than large mass conferences, I would like sensitivity to be a major concern in bringing about these processes with small groups of targeted public, intimacy and sensitivity to specific contexts.”

Pooja Sood on arts as an agent for change

Curator; Artistic Director, KHOJ International Artists' Association, New Delhi, India

“To feel the potential of the arts as a change agent in a visceral manner is new. My experience of curating a large scale project on art and ecology across 8 public sites in Delhi provided me with a vigorously renewed belief in this paradigm. In this city where contemporary art is restricted to posh commercial galleries and where museum going is virtually non-existent; where the stratification of society is as intense as it is diverse; where multiple languages coexist and levels of literacy are lean – the various art projects in public spaces cut across barriers of language, literacy and class, providing an experiential understanding of complex issues of land, the river and the city. They allow for shared moments of reflection and precipitate conversations and thought – two imperatives which help shift perception and mobilise action.”

Maria-Rosalie Zerrudo on the effects of cultural development

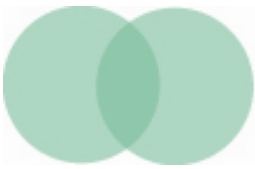
Poet; film maker; chanter; dancer psychology graduate; recycling artist; Director, EcoPeace Fair Travel; Creative Director, Enigmata Creative Circle, Camiguin Island, Philippines

“We need to strengthen cultural development as part of total human development. We invest in people as we invest in something tangible and intangible...cultural development affects a society’s fundamental identity and self-respect; cultural development can change what a people think, feel, prioritise and negate. As artists we naturally engage ourselves in the creative documentation of our community stories. For the past ten years, Enigmata Creative Circle, engaged in community art education, has developed multi-media materials used by schools and communities in Camiguin which were the output of an on-going biodiversity art education project. Our schoolchildren are direct beneficiaries and co-creators.”

Rosina Gomez-Baeza Tinturé on LABoral

Founder, ARCO International Art Fair, Madrid, Spain; Director, LABoral Centro de Arte y Creación Industrial, Gijón, Spain

“For ‘World Wide Views on Global Warming’, hosted by LABoral, one hundred Spaniards were chosen as representatives of public opinion, to express their positions on the issues that are now the subject of negotiation at the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen. The guideline for all our actions is the ‘perception of territory, ecology and sustainability’. We also organise Huerta Guerrilla, a weekend activity geared towards children and families, putting them in contact



with various ecological agricultural technologies, urban and guerrilla gardening.”

Sacha Kagan on aesthetics of sustainability

Founder and coordinator, Cultura21 International; writer; director; Research Associate, Leuphana University Institute for Theory and Research on Culture and the Arts (IKKK), Lueneburg, Germany

“The deep and qualitative complexity of the world does not fit with the clear, coherent, uni-dimensional logic of theories and world views we have learned to design. We have to engage in an unprecedented creative leap towards complexity, which will require giant transdisciplinary advances in all cultural sectors (and especially in arts education and education through art&science) or we will miss the 2050 mark for an ‘ecological age’. Art could contribute to moving towards a future dia-logic, ambiguous, complex paradigm. The arts should develop what I try to characterise as ‘aesthetics of sustainability’...There are many exemplary practices. But at a wider level, these are still pioneering works and we have to promote a change process also in the wider art worlds.”

Shiv Visvanathan on 50,000 varieties of rice

Writer; consultant to the National Council of Churches and Business India; Professor, Dhirubhai Ambani Institute of Information and Communication Technology, Gandhinagar, India

“...To break bread is to share ideas but if ideas belong to different worlds because they belong to different ways of life, one must seek a new language of translation which holds both our truths together in the full life blood of meaning. One cannot reduce it to the dullness of sustainability. This is a prosaic term that hides the poetics of survival... /...I remember a scientist telling me that India has 50,000 varieties of rice, that is, 50,000 varieties of dreaming, cooking, myth-making, memory making and story-telling. A sustainability in uniform has no understanding of diversity. When sustainability is commodified, diversity becomes instrumentality. It cannot then say a seed is, therefore I am.”

Singh Intrachotoo on collaborations

Design Principal, OSISU, Bangkok, Thailand; Head, Building Innovation and Technology Program, Kasetsart University, Bangkok, Thailand

“I am convinced that artists and designers should be active players in demonstrating environmentally responsible practices in the society. In fact, it is the role that designers need to assume. Who would be closer to the general public than designers? Why haven't art &

design been at the forefront of environmental solutions? My main interest in the interaction of art/culture and sustainability is the intricacy in collaboration among designers, technicians, craftsman, local community and governing bodies who work toward mitigating environmental problems.”

Tea Mäkipää on the 10 commandments of the 21st century

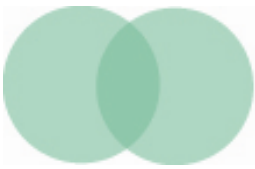
Installation artist; filmmaker; photographer

“Instead of reducing one's actions and desires, it is more popular to hand the responsibility to higher entities, such as ‘technology’. This is seen almost as a great magic fairy, who will swing her magic wand and allow us to consume more and more. In 2005 I produced a text-based work, ‘10 Commandments for the 21st Century’. It is a collection of moral imperatives that define good and bad behaviour from the viewpoint of mankind's survival in the long run. The rules refer to current technical solutions, instead of better ideas and practices for the future.”

Trevor Davies on the need to participate

Founder of many arts initiatives; Artistic Director, Copenhagen's Metropolis Biennale; Director of Copenhagen International Theatre (KIT)

“After launching the new biennale, Metropolis Copenhagen in 2007, I have never experienced such a deluge of international requests to participate – from artists, designers, architects and media creators. They wish to become engaged in a project which is questioning our constructed urban reality and also trying to find solutions in cities which have for too many decades been forced to translate pressures of profit and standard architecture, and where citizens are reduced to being holders of life style magazines and carrier bags.”



3. The Visions

Throughout the workshop held during COP15 many aspects of art, sustainability and climate change were debated by the 16 invited experts, the bulk of which fell into four key areas:

What does sustainability actually mean?

- Why do arts practice, and activism on sustainability, actually work well together?
- Do practitioners from the East and the West see differences (or similarities) in their values and approaches?
- What is the role of arts and culture in addressing sustainability issues?

In the following segment we will debate the issues raised by the experts in their vision papers as well as during the workshop discussions.

3.1. How do we understand sustainability?

“ *Apathy and paralysis among the general public and expert communities has as much to do with the way the issues are presented as the lack of clear and readily available alternatives.* ”

(Nik Gaffney)

Today we inhabit increasingly complex contexts, where diversity is our greatest challenge yet potentially also holds the crucial key to innovative new solutions. Simplistic quick fixes and sound bites are no longer



feasible. Sustainability is seen as inextricably linked to a number of factors including technology, advanced individualism and notions of freedom. The issues that surround sustainability include a number of factors such

as: environmental degradation; lack of consensus on the impact of climate change; a concern with maintaining the status quo; a separation of humankind and nature; the manipulation of the media; and the notion that we have a right to consume. As we become more aware of the challenging environment in which we live, sustainability is a topic that is being debated with increasing fervour.

“ *The new word for waste, at the lower octave, is displacement. As the crescendo rises, one reaches genocide. A sustainability that is silent about violence of modern technology and development is too illiterate to be considered as a part of the vocabulary of new global imagination.* ”

(Shiv Visvanathan)

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predicts a coming world which is half uninhabitable with rising seas and temperatures, drought and water scarcity and massive species extinction. This future world will undoubtedly provoke geopolitical challenges regarding resource distribution, environmental justice between developed countries and the global South, and vast climate migration.

Environmentalists are not united in their responses on the topic of climate change or sustainability, nor are governments, industries, or development agencies. Predictions and proposed solutions range from optimistic or opportunistic to pessimistic or apathetic.

The development agenda is seen by many as a machine of destruction rather than a force for equitable humanist construction. So-called sustainable development merely maintains the status quo. It aims to make existing production methods more ecological but does not take this a step further by modifying globally and locally harmful consumer habits. Essentially it still maintains existing models of capitalist growth and technological progress.

There is the perception that science and technology have become separated from society, while humankind has become distant from nature. Nature is seen simply as a limitless resource for human exploitation. Invisible today, the longer term consequences of this go unheeded. Advanced individualistic society has led to notions of freedom which embrace unbridled freedom to consume and a further distancing of individuals from the social contexts and subsequent responsibilities. Tourism and cheap, easy mobility is destroying the very objectives of the travellers’ desires. Ever-increasing urbanisation has encouraged these tendencies, and the industrialisation and standardisation of globally available goods has led to the decrease in bio-diversity.

Overly technical media coverage has made the issues around sustainability abstract to most ordinary people, provoking questions such as “How can I counteract massive ozone depletion, deforestation, carbon emissions?” or “What is carbon trading anyway; is it good or evil?”. Yet these reactions of ignoring the problem or feeling incompetent to do anything about it will do nothing to stop the effects of climate change which include: increasing numbers of climate change refugees, migrations which stand to escalate existing homelessness, hunger and wars. In order to reach people, it is necessary to present the problems on a human level, to encourage empathy regarding the dangers, losses and conflicts.

“ *Other animal populations are regulated by the limitations of their environment, but we are able to change our surroundings as we like.... until a certain point.* ”

(Tea Mäkipää)

A paradigm shift is required to move from ‘sustainable development’ to the ‘development of sustainability’, which would involve a more humanistic model for wealth creation and distribution, more just relations between communities and human beings and a shared responsibility for the environment and the related challenges which now face us. The bottom line is that humans must – and immediately – learn to consume less, consume in less ecologically-damaging ways, and with more responsibility for justice and the rights of others locally, globally and inter-generationally.



Research cruise on Sumida River, On Site Lab Workshop Series 2 “Dialogue and Commitment to the City-towards Creative Education” Japan, 2007

However, the need to link all of the factors that contribute to the complexity of sustainability with how we currently approach sustainability opens up new opportunities. These opportunities involve value-based decision-making both on political levels and in people’s daily routines; they involve bottom-up, community policy-making and involvement in urban architecture and planning. Importantly – and the experts came back to this

again and again in their papers and through discussions at the workshop in Copenhagen – it demands cross-sector, inter-disciplinary teams to work together to find solutions that address the complex sustainability puzzle.

“ *By developing an ecology of imperfect, complimentary solutions, rather than striving to perfect a single one which might work in some indefinite future, we not only spread the risk, but open up possibilities to unexpected and previously unimagined outcomes.* ”

(Nik Gaffney)

The very nature of sustainability is its interconnectedness. Therefore small changes in behaviour, use of materials and habits are crucially important. These smaller changes can add up to the radical shift which is needed and can complement and feed into the research conducted by interdisciplinary teams as they seek overarching solutions to an on-going dilemma. Real solutions will be those that not only reflect the complexity of our current situation, but also create new ways of thinking.



3.2. Why do art and sustainability go together?

Creating a more sustainable world demands that all sectors of society work together and artists and arts organisations must also play their part. All of the experts invited to participate in the workshop in Copenhagen believe that the broad field of culture includes all of society's relations including relations between environment, art, artists and the broader community. Thus on the most utterly basic level society, art and environment are all intrinsically linked. Yet there has been a noticeable "culture deficit"⁶ in the current models of addressing the issues around sustainability.

Human behaviour since time immemorial has been reflected, recorded, debated and represented by artists. This puts art into the public or 'political' arena, even if artists are not political activists as such. Artists set up situations which encourage the public to analyse, reinforce or question and thus investigate understandings of our complex existence. They creatively interpret the human condition. In that sense, art plays a role in developing values in society.

“ *There is a whole set of nitty-gritty works that need our creative capacity and personal commitment to change individually and collectively.* ”

(Marco Kusumawajija)

In recent years, creativity has been identified as a crucial factor needed to envision and then build a more sustainable future. Culture today is seen as dynamic. It is seen as a way of life and of living together, of creatively using the synergies that arise from human diversity and cooperation. In their work, artists are eclectic in their choice of materials and they improvise new ways to use and to stretch both their materials and the technologies needed to work with them. Artists synthesize, they work in teams or gather inspiration by interacting with a variety of people, processes, experiences and products. Artists in fact use the very same processes and creative approaches which are needed today to address climate change.

Interaction with these kinds of artistic processes stimulates the development of creativity and confidence within a population. Contemporary artists encourage their publics to have multiple perspectives and therefore to be more at ease with complexity. They work with different concepts of time and space, thus provoking their publics to imagine alternative ways of being in the world. They



Excursion & lecture in Meiji shrine with plant ecologist Akira Miyakawa, On Site Lab Workshop Series 3 "Creative Dialogue and Commitment to the Environment", Japan

work within a mesh of histories and cultures, thus reflecting the richness of cultural diversities.

Arts projects can offer hands-on experiences to different kinds of participating audiences, not only to raise awareness, but to demystify some of the larger, seemingly distant or abstract consequences of climate change. This leads people to feel empowered to make changes in their lives instead of feeling paralysed and unable to contribute. Arts experiences are often intimate and specific to a certain community, context or locality. Art that debates the challenges of climate change and sustainability is able to bring distant concepts to a local level and is therefore able to be more effective at empowering communities.

The arts are about questioning or testing values in society and should not be exploited for mere advertising or publicity about these issues. If artists were to become an uncritical mouthpiece they would stop being original or authentic in their artistic creation – they would thus cease to be artists. Being involved in awareness-raising about climate change and sustainability is not about using art solely as a tool to convince a public. The role of artists is not to endorse climate change like celebrities endorse soap powders, but to delve deeper into the issues surrounding climate change in order to further enrich the debate.

“ *Public space depends on private spaces for feeding into its content. Arts critically process values in private space, then feed them into the public space of civil society, and through it into the political and economic spheres.* ”

(Marco Kusumawajija)

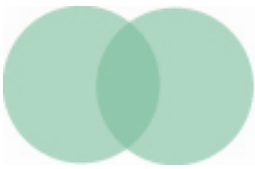
⁶ Read more about Hildegaard Kurt's research and practice, including concepts of "cultural deficit", at http://www.hildegard-kurt.de/cms/front_content.php (date last accessed 4/9/2011)



The arts' true role is to encourage new ways of looking at daily habits through facilitating thinking, reaction, discussion, debate and deliberation in public spaces and thus stimulating creative invention. In this sense, artists – together with educationalists and other actors in society – help to create a more responsible society that is able to see how its actions affect others, one which is more confident at imagining new and concrete methods to address problems. Creativity is the key to finding effective solutions to complex issues and it is through arts and artists that society can gain the new perspectives that build the capacity for change.

“ *Our roles as artists are not just to bring theatre-in-education and outreach projects to schools. The arts can play a part in making each and every individual personally responsible for his or her actions through inspiring dialogue, through negotiating conversation, through enhancing the human dimension, through igniting the imagination.* ”

(Ong Keng Sen)



3.3. Do the East and the West think the same?



Sustainability needs a theory of memory and story-telling that allows for diversity.



(Shiv Visvanathan)

Given the make-up of Asian and European participants in the workshop in Copenhagen, it is not surprising that the difference between Eastern and Western cultural approaches were frequently debated. One topic that was highlighted in these debates was the concern for maintaining traditional practices versus technical innovation. While Asians may value and use traditional materials and tools, Westerners may focus on technological development. The role of tradition in a society raised allusions to the loss of cultural memory. As new technologies are developed to advance the development of sustainability, what are the roles of artisans or of the ancestors who created and maintain



Results of the workshop at Copenhagen.

our histories? Are tradition and technological advancement mutually exclusive or can we find a middle ground, a dialogue?

The West's emphasis on individual freedoms has encouraged selfishness and a loss of shared responsibility in communities. The very words and approaches used in sustainability debates are based on western hierarchical classification and theories of progress. Some of the expert participants in the workshop equated the dominance of the Western, individualistic, technological philosophy of constant progress with alienating humans from their spiritual selves and from nature. In other cases some of the experts felt nostalgia for a more humanistic, natural way of life which they felt was represented by the East. In this paper we have discussed how an increasingly humanistic approach is required to bring about a more sustainable future and it is perhaps through a difference sense of community that this change in attitude can be achieved.

Another point of difference was in the approach to cities and urban planning. While many governments in the West focus on "greening" their cities, in Asia there is still a strong mentality that "prosperity is still measured in terms of height of buildings".⁷ Before good examples can be adapted from initiatives in the West, there needs to be a shift in attitude.

Growing up in a colonized country, what is left of us is a culture of pure imitation. But our cultural roots are as powerful as any other ancient civilization with a very high level of sense of dignity and nobility. It is a question of 'owning' this.

(Rosalee Zerruda)

However, some participants in the workshop raised a different approach in the East/West dichotomy by refusing to take a geographical stand. Rather, they pointed out the vast differences in generations, governing trends and economic periods. They highlighted the positive contributions of both East and West and cited similarities in Asian traditions and new Western thinking. Creative and respectful interchange between Asia and Europe, it was felt, could breed positive multiple perspectives which would take the place of the West's predominant association of guilt and remorse to the challenges of sustainability.

A sustainable global future can only come out of the diversity of cultural, historical, pragmatic and intellectual practices that enable new conceptions to arise. New, global, multidisciplinary networks of committed people who have the capacity to realise change in their localities, must be supported.

⁷ Ada Wong vision paper.

3.4. What role do the arts play in the sustainability debate?

Throughout history, human behaviour has been reflected in the arts. In turn it can be said that art and cultural work fulfils intangible human needs which aren't always pragmatic. Yet the arts' compelling power to provoke thought via stories, images and performance can in turn lead to behavioural change.

“ *Artists are no longer artists. The divisions between media, artists, activists, social anthropologists, constructivists is increasingly blurred. There are 62 million art works in the world – 14 are created every second. Artists of the ecological age don't just want to make art works but to make art than works.* ”

(Trevor Davies)

Making art – whether dance, theatre, film and visual arts, music, literature, architecture – involves creative ways of working on problems and in engaging with people. As previously mentioned, artists' roles include inspiring empathy, thought and debate as well as providing a platform for audiences to experiment with risk and innovation. Artists identify, research and study a series of problematics. They focus, analyse and select materials. They change what might be an everyday perspective or way of seeing, into an unfamiliar one which often brings out new understandings of what we take for granted. They demonstrate the ability to work collaboratively across disciplines and in some cases can provide innovative, laterally-thought, simple and effective solutions to complicated problems. Artists critically question themselves and their surroundings and as a result they can often provide the bigger picture while at the same time communicating these messages to local communities. They work with both real and symbolic meanings. They take risks in order to reach creative solutions. Therefore, the difference between Eastern and Western traditions, perspectives and systems does not have to be viewed in a negative light, but rather as an opportunity to instigate exchange and innovation.

“ *The argument that art can be, and is, a potent agent of change is not a new one for cultural practitioners. Several of us share a general belief in this paradigm even as we smart at being relegated to the fringes of society as impotent stakeholders.* ”

(Pooja Sood)

In their work, artists encourage their public to engage with multiple layers of meaning. People who regularly engage with contemporary art practice learn to question what they see, to find new meanings and new perspectives, and to feel increasingly comfortable with complexity. Artists are in the position of being able to challenge pre-conceived ideas and assumptions by presenting unexpected perspectives in new ways. Artists today reveal complexity because they reflect their environments. They see the world differently thus make us see it differently.

Unanimously and repeatedly throughout the workshop at COP15, the 16 invited experts called for collaboration between different actors in society. Everyone has a role to play, within their circle of influence as well as via the formation of new collaborative approaches. We need an emerging breed of creative, curious, connecting people who can listen and join disparate ideas together to create new models of thought and action.



However each sector should also look in its own backyard to identify small, incremental and large systemic changes that could be implemented in order to achieve a more sustainable practice. Several of the art experts at the workshop concurred that the art world is no exception from all other sectors and that they need to look critically at their own myths, professional habits and economic models. But in looking at their own backyard, it is important not to lose sight of the value of working with other sectors and that sharing good practice and other approaches inspires as well as stimulates.

By connecting with their communities, art practitioners, designers, architects and creative thinkers are superbly placed to solve problems using ideas based on community input and lateral thinking. Activists, advocates, community workers and educationalists are in daily touch with their communities and can thus help to organise the meeting of these various civil society actors with the aim of facilitating positive change.

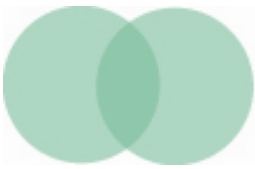
These facilitators and creative thinkers are also able to make bridges to the politicians who legislate. Educators



and cultural actors can help local people realise the dangers and lead them to form educated opinions about the preferred solutions. However, politicians should also be supporting and listening to bottom-up community consultations. They need to work in collaboration with local actors as well as in conjunction with their international colleagues, to achieve significant and effective reduction in CO2 emissions.

“ *It is certainly not easy to ‘infect’ an institution like Kaaitheater with a desire for real change. What I see happening though is a creation of positive tension and struggle through relations with the outside. Connecting Kaaitheater with a range of civil society partners, social movements and smaller, more activist art organizations has challenged our normalised and channelled structures already.* ”

(Guy Gypens)



4. One Year Later, Have the Priorities Changed?

Has the passion and motivation for sustainability that was demonstrated in the workshop in 2009 changed? In this section, we returned to four of our experts to find out what they have been doing since COP15. Was the experience in Copenhagen useful? Have they continued with their engagement in climate change and sustainability issues? Has their vision changed?

4.1. Ada Wong (China/Hong Kong)

Ada Wong's commitment to climate issues has not waned a bit: The Hong Kong Institute of Contemporary Culture successfully bid for a grant from the Hong Kong government's Environment Enhancement Fund to retrofit their school for lower carbon usage. It's an unusual action for a school, but Wong wants to set a good model for her city.

Having organised the second edition of a major project called Make a Difference (MaD), which attracted 1,200 young people from Hong Kong, China and Taiwan, Wong strongly believes that it is the younger generation who will have to take a lead in addressing current challenges. MaD is a continuing event, a series of projects, activities, programmes and products, including MaD Products – sustainable, high design-value products made from up-cycling waste materials.

Hong Kong, says Wong, is a place where the priority is still 'development at all costs' – property developers simply do not believe that the climate is changing. It is difficult to change mind-sets when much of the city's wealth derives from its dominant, monopoly developers, and this has a knock-on effect on what private foundations will fund. But change is happening, including a recent popular demonstration (70,000 signatures on Facebook) against the private purchase of one of the area's most beautiful beaches by a developer.

Wong feels that although Hong Kong (and Asia) are starting slowly, they do believe in creativity and sustainability. Change will happen and the critical mass will form, although it will take a few more years.

Wong believes that Hong Kong should behave like a developed city such as London or New York, putting more emphasis on energy efficiency and pushing standards for low carbon usage in the built environment. In addition, artists and creative people should be invited to join in the collective thinking. Young Asian artists, for example, should be involved in projects such as David Buckland's Cape Farewell.⁸

Foundations that support sustainability issues could do more to influence or build capacity in those foundations that are still focused solely on welfare or health. They

should be supporting small initiatives which can have a large influence. Foundations should take the lead and support research, gatherings, expeditions and projects which allow artists and cultural workers to engage in these issues.

Ada Wong very much appreciated meeting the participants to ASEFs Connect2Culture at COP15 and subsequently invited Peter Head as opening speaker at MaD. She re-met several of the COP15 participants in Hong Kong in November 2010 where Olaf Gerlach Hansen (of Culture/Futures) also organised a session on culture and climate change.

4.2. Marco Kusumawijaya (Indonesia)

Marco Kusumawijaya ended his term as the head of Jakarta's Arts Council on January 2010, and co-founded a new organisation, Rujak Center for Urban Studies (RCUS), deepening his activities on sustainability issues. The vision of RCUS is to work together with communities in generating innovative knowledge and practices to build sustainable cities and regions. By sustainability RCUS means not only surviving climate change and other ecological disasters, but also solving other urban problems that have predated our awareness about ecological issues.

Over the past two decades, Kusumawijaya and RCUS's other two co-founders have been doing research, capacity building and policy advocacy and are now proposing several exciting and diverse programmes linking community initiatives, activism, academic insight and bottom-up local policy formation as part of RCUS's activities. The programmes include professional working experiences in the fields of good governance, arts and culture, heritage, development strategy, and post-disaster reconstruction (in Aceh).

Working with arts and artists is continuing and increasing for Kusumawijaya and he is now a member of (ANA) Arts Network Asia's peer panel selecting grantees every year. In this capacity, projects related to arts and environment have been his priority.

In November 2010 Kusumawijaya also participated at Connect2Culture's pre-ASEM meeting in Brussels where he spoke on arts and sustainability.

Kusumawijaya feels that in Indonesia's context there are very many things to do and to change, thus he remains locally-focused. Yet international exchanges are important for global collective actions, as inspiration for local actions, and in order to nurture the global solidarity.

Marco Kusumawijaya remembers the people he met in Copenhagen: "It was inspiring and a great relief to meet a group of good people with deep concerns and creative articulation on the subject." He admits, "This has seriously made me go on".

⁸ <http://www.capefarewell.com/people/arts/david-buckland.html> (date last accessed 4/9/2011)

4.3. Pooja Sood (India)

Pooja Sood is the Director of Khoj International Artists' Association which has been working continuously on the themes of sustainability and the exchange of ideas and experiences on new ways of working. Their projects take place 'glocally' across India first and foremost with local communities, and secondarily in connection with international artists and projects. Their Arts and Science residencies bring people from various sectors together to work in an 'open village' format in order to examine a place. As an example, in one project children in the village worked with filmmakers from which a cookbook was produced of recipes from local Indian as well as migrant African women.



Participants at a Summer School project, initiated by Sacha Kagan

'In Context: Public.Art.Ecology', is a series of projects by artists from India and abroad that took place from August 2009-July 2011. Supported by the Norwegian Embassy, it includes art projects, symposiums and workshops. The first 'In Context: public.art.ecology' residency invited artists from India, Germany, Japan and the USA whose projects focused on interventions in the public sphere. Projects included: mapping weather patterns and the effects of climate change on local communities; an interactive video sculpture; examining the signification of trees in the context of road zones; designing a tableau to interact with people around conservation questions; building a natural biological water purification system; tracing the paths of people and their constitutive objects from Chandni Chowk to Gurgaon.

'Negotiating Routes: Ecologies of the Byways', is a 2 year project inviting artists to reflect on the anxiety of 'development' embodied in India's infrastructural development and its coexistence with local ecologies. The context behind the instigation of this project is the Road Transport Ministry's projected plan to develop 15,000 km of roads and highways over the next three years across India. Steps have already been taken to fast-track land acquisition and clearances and to take

legal and police action against contractors, displaced villagers and tribes who do not conform.

Arts projects run by Khoj are site-specific, with an interdisciplinary approach combining research and art creation by artists and local communities. They address the visible and invisible transformations currently taking place in their immediate environments. The projects encourage archiving of local knowledge about ecologies like flora, fauna, home remedies, stories and folklore. Khoj will map the various projects across the country, creating an alternative road map where artists and communities have come together and have been involved in discussions on the regeneration of the local ecology of the places they inhabit.

Khoj would really like to continue this type of work. These listed above are small projects, trying to push change through on a local level. As Sood says, "We are just doing things because they need to happen. The first step is to work with the artistic community, to encourage them to collaborate, to see what is the meaning of collaborating between disciplines and sectors and to experiment with how to do it." This is "exploring the edges of art and activism."

Meanwhile the public are intrigued by the work. Sood is convinced that artists can make a difference, and that they'll reach a tipping point by continuing with small projects across India. She feels it's important to work from the bottom up, to support initiatives which feed new ideas and experiment with new practices and to work together across Asia.

For Pooja Sood, the importance of the ASEF project in Copenhagen was in meeting up and interacting with the other participants, focusing together on the topics around sustainability and exchanging ideas and experiences on these new ways of working: "A critical mass has not yet formed, but it's coming!"

4.4. Sacha Kagan (Germany)

Sacha Kagan is a key figure who works to unite sustainability, arts and culture. The network he founded, Cultura21, is continuing its work on sustainability and climate change, including its involvement at COP16 in Cancun (together with the Cultura21 members in Mexico).

Kagan founded and helped to organise the first edition of the International Summer School of Arts and Sciences for Sustainability in Social Transformation (AssiST) which took place in Gabrovo, Bulgaria in August 2010. Based around walking as a means to reawaken sensibilities, it looked at issues specific to cities and explored local biodiversity.

Kagan also was instrumental in the ASEF conference, Connecting Civil Societies of Asia and Europe, in Brussels just before the ASEM 8 Summit, critiquing, among other topics, what he deems are Richard Florida's very

unsustainable notions on the creative class. Kagan feels that the aim should be to ensure that cities are more deeply involved in climate change issues, and not only in market-oriented initiatives. Therefore, with this involvement of cities in the core issues of the debate, climate change will be more connected to other city policies.

A week after Brussels, Kagan led a session on 'The Cultures of Unsustainability' together with his Lueneburg colleague, Volker Kirchberg, at Bocconi University in Milan during the European Sociological Association conference. The session asked how much international cultural policies can actually provide alternatives to unsustainable mind-sets and models. By December 2010 Kagan was leading a workshop in Ljubljana on systems theories for the Sostenuto project, an EU-funded partner project looking at arts and culture as catalysts for social innovation.



Participant of the International Summer School of Arts and Sciences for Sustainability in Social Transformation

Kagan feels it is important not to polarise, fragment or otherwise separate policy areas, but rather to create transversal policies which facilitate holistic approaches. Whole lifestyle changes, rather than small technical changes, are necessary. Therefore arts and culture projects (in the widest sense) may be effective. Projects such as guerrilla gardening are an example. Kagan believes that it is important to support emergent solutions, experimentation and initiatives such as the Transition Towns, which can be inspirational as well as learning models.

Sacha Kagan found the ASEF-initiated workshop insightful, learning from others' perspectives, especially with regards to the realities of 'public space' in Asia. However, the wider experience at COP15 took Kagan from expectation to disappointment, dominated as it was by superficial and communication-oriented attitudes.



5. Final Priorities

As outlined throughout this paper, there is a need for a new approach, like the artistic approach, that comprises creative intellectual leaps, trial and error, risk-taking, critical analysis of self and surroundings, heightened sensitivity and the synergies of collaborating with others.

Professionals in the arts and culture sector have clear ideas, sound experience and deep commitment to playing their part in the urgent work of addressing local and global sustainability issues.

Below are eight points that outline directions and strategies for a more sustainable future, as raised by the experts participating in the workshop in Copenhagen.

1. “Incite reflection and replace indifference with awareness. Something can be done.” (Rosina Gómez-Baeza)

As Gómez-Baeza highlights, small is beautiful and change starts in the community. Consumption patterns need to be modified immediately and communities are going to need to reinvent their daily lives, to face change creatively and positively.

2. “Art and culture is transgression and rebellion, anti-indifference...Communication is its life-blood.” (Shiv Visvanathan)

Arts and culture professionals can help by raising awareness of the issues, offering different perspectives on the problems and encouraging the emergence of bottom-up, feasible and attractive actions to fight ecological damage and in turn support sustainability.

3. “Re-sourced, re-sponsive and re-sponsible organisations and meeting places are prerequisites.” (Trevor Davies)

Arts and culture professionals should be able to more easily access the resources they need in order to do this work well: time, space and resources to work with creative people; freedom to experiment with small, local initiatives close to communities; and opportunities to meet and work alongside professionals from other sectors and disciplines.

4. Continuity is essential.

Processes and partnerships take time to build, consolidate and evaluate. This involves a strong and interlinked ‘value chain’ in the sector comprising training, creation, production, diffusion and documentation. It also means ensuring equal access to all of the elements of the chain.

5. International exchange is critical.

International exchange is vital for inspiring new ideas, mainstreaming best practices and reinforcing the work back in the local territory. Practitioners in the various culture fields, including design and urban planning as well as the arts, highlighted this.

6. “Sustainability has to be not a theory of political correctness but a part of the new imagination of eccentricity, dissent and justice.” (Shiv Visvanathan).

Including artists and other culture professionals in think-tanks and committees brings imagination, alternative perspectives and inspires innovative models.

7. Education is essential to combat sustainability challenges.

Education at all levels from school through to life-long learning incorporates knowledge which can be experiential as well as academic, but above all else it must be accessible.

8. “After all, this is not a competition between countries to slash green-house gas emission targets. Ultimately it is about humanity, and extending humanity.” (Ada Wong).

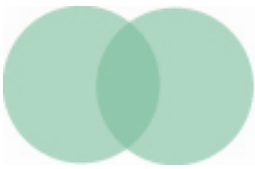
Local authorities, governments and politicians play a huge role in safeguarding and promoting a free, interactive public space where communities can be encouraged to define what is valuable to them and state their own ideas on how to respond imaginatively to problems.



About the author

Mary Ann DeVlieg

Mary Ann DeVlieg is currently the Secretary General, IETM (International Network for Contemporary Performing Arts) She has served as Chair of the EU Working Group on Creativity and Creation (EU Culture Platform, Access to Culture), on the Steering Committee for the conference “Culture and Creation as Vectors of Development in the ACP Countries” and on the High Level Reflection Group on Mobility of the European Commission’s DG for Education and Culture. In 2006 the EU’s DG for Employment and Social Affairs awarded her the Individual Award for her life-long services to artists’ mobility. She is a founder of the Roberto Cimetta Fund for Mobility of Mediterranean Artists and Operators, and founder of www.on-the-move.org, a mobility portal for the arts, as well as a co-founder of ICARJ (International Coalition for Arts, Human Rights and Social Justice).



The Art of Sustainable Living

A Creative Approach to Global Social and Environmental Crises

Discussion Paper for

Climate leaders: release your creative powers

How can art enhance our ability to think and act differently?

Workshop presented by the British Council

in collaboration with the Asia-Europe Foundation

12-19 October 2009

Bangkok, Thailand

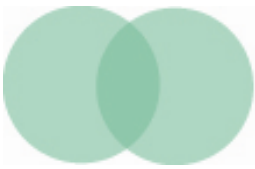
“We hope this paper will evolve as a ‘living document’. This document can only hope to comment on some of the ideas and issues in the works of artists of many forms across the planet that are focused on the social and environmental challenges of the 21st century. It cannot begin to glimpse, scan, whisper or brush against the art itself. That is for the reader to experience.

The title, The Art of Sustainable Living is meant to convey the idea that ‘art’ may be thought of as a way to do something really well (the art of cooking, gardening, football, archery¹, business, even war²). For the most part, the ‘art’ that is referred to here is more to do with what may be called ‘the creative process’; the way of seeing, hearing, touching, thinking, creating, making, writing, composing, moving, playing, choreographing, sculpting, devising, drawing, directing, performing and negotiating our place in the world. It is not concerned as much with the products of these endeavours, the paintings, sculptures, books, poems, the CDs, DVDs, concerts, plays, dances, and operas. These physical artefacts and manifestations are understood to be integral to the whole artwork, but we do not wish to focus on their material value, preferring instead to explore the most challenging issues of our time through the practice of art.”

David Haley and Jaya Iyer

¹ *Zen in the Art of Archery* is a short book written by Eugen Herrigel which brought Zen to Europe after World War II. It was first published in 1948 in Germany.

² *The Art of War* is a highly influential ancient Chinese military treatise written by Sun Tzu in the 6th century BC. *The Art of War* (Dell'arte della guerra) is also one of the lesser-read works of Florentine statesman and political philosopher Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527).



The Art of Sustainable Living

A Creative Approach to Global Social and Environmental Crises

The philosopher/novelist Robert Pirsig, in his book *Lila: an Inquiry into Morals*³, offers a valuable insight into the origins of the word ‘art’. He suggests that it is derived from the Proto-Indo-European and Sanskrit word ‘rta’ that first appeared in the Rig Veda and emerged in Ancient Greek as ‘arete’. It passed through Latin, French and Old English before we receive the word ‘art’, and even appears in Hebrew. Rta is also the etymon for arithmetic, aristocrat, architecture, arm, earth, rhetoric, rite, ritual, wright, right [handed], right [correct]. It originally meant and continues to mean in modern Hindi: the dynamic process by which the whole cosmos continues to be created, virtuously.

Reflection:

What is the word for ‘art’ in your mother tongue? What are its roots?

Its meaning developed the ideas of the first and original correct order and course of things with entailments of justice and righteousness, before evoking ‘dharma’. Rta is also the root of ritu – meaning the cycle of seasons, the natural harmony where opposites exist as parts of a larger whole creating a greater and richer cosmic order – the order of harmony. The Greek philosopher Philolaus attempted to touch that harmony in words, ideas and living:

“The Similar and the Like would not need harmony; the Dissimilar and Unlike, however, had necessarily to be united by harmony, if it were to endure in the Cosmos.”

It is worth noting the way evolutionary, aesthetic and ethical concepts co-join, as this characteristic is often found in forms of environmental, ecological and activist arts (e.g. Joseph Beuys, Critical Art Ensemble, Platform, Circa, some of whom you will learn more about in subsequent sections of this paper). The green economist, Paul Hawkin recently observed the re-emergence of ‘justice, grace and beauty’ as the predominant values among social and environmentally concerned people. This is, perhaps, not surprising in itself, but interesting to note how together they closely resemble the meaning of rta – particularly when one of the little known meanings of the word grace is ‘becomingness’. So, in ancient and

contemporary, Eastern and Western cultures art may embody much wider and deeper meaning than is popularly understood.

Reflection:

As an environmentally conscious person and a young Climate Leader, what are the values that inform and guide your life and work?

Our societies generally agree that adopting a ‘creative approach’ to doing something is a good idea, so applying such ways of working to global, social and environmental crises must be good. This text, therefore, explores some of the practical applications and approaches that arts and creative practices can contribute to our future challenges. It explores what the Scottish sculptor, Eduardo Paolozzi called for: ‘... an endless set of combinations a new culture in which way problems give way to capabilities.’⁴

To return to the title, it was also important to differentiate between ‘sustainable development’ (maintaining the economic status quo) and ‘sustainable living’ (promoting the value of life). So, we hope to encourage those who read this text to explore with us the potential for art to create better ways of living for all. Attention to details, sensitivity, care and respect for the other (the animate and the inanimate) are timeless yet imminent.

³ PIRSIG, R. (1991) *Lila: An Inquiry Into Morals*. Black Swan, London.

⁴ PAOLOZZI, E. (1985) *Lost Magic Kingdoms and Six Paper Moons from Nahuatl*. British Museum Publications, London. Pp 7



1. The Art of Seeing the Challenges

“Violence anywhere is a threat to peace everywhere.”

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948)

“It doesn't take a genius to pump up the GNP [of a developing country] by burning down rainforests, using slave labour and social repression to keep things in place.”

Hazel Henderson (b. 1933 in UK; futurist and economic iconoclast)

Looking at the earth as a whole, it is important to understand the challenges (socio-cultural, economic, political and ecological) and their causes in the same interconnected manner.

Global warming and climate change threaten all the present as well as all of the future. They could be considered the most democratic of all challenges for they affect all, yet with their own unique set of discriminations. Global warming is surely more than thermal inconvenience - melting polar caps are causing sea levels to rise, which, in turn, threaten to swallow several island nations and huge chunks of coastal regions (which are also amongst some of the most populated regions in the world). Glaciers are shrinking and the river systems downstream carry much less water leading to acute water scarcities. Rain-fed farming, which provides food security to some of the most marginalised communities in the world, is failing due to the vagaries of new weather patterns. New diseases - many vector borne - are increasing manifold. The loss of floral and faunal diversities is alarming, to say the least. This may be a severe lesson on our oneness - a very grotesque and potentially annihilating illustration of the impact of rich nations, communities and individuals on others. And, is the warming only on the outside - is there not a seething heat wave raging through the inner realms of human minds and hearts as well?

Violence is being packaged in many brand names and is unprecedented in its spread and impact - religious terrorism, armed internal conflicts, urban street violence, class/communal clashes, besides the bad old domestic violence and abuse of children. Economic and political violence at the systemic level grow more viscous. Oppression of displacements and disenfranchisements, large scale trafficking and social apathy are amplified by the ecological degradation and alienation from our natural surroundings. The abject poverty and marginalisation of traditional communities multiplies in proportion to the opulence elsewhere.

The challenge here is probably the hardening of the boundary between the self and 'the other'. Probably photography, film, TV, audio and the computer have enhanced the objectification of 'the other' which has, in turn, made the commodification and the demonisation of 'the other' a much easier task.

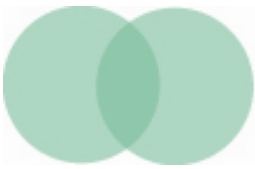
When nature itself becomes 'the other' and human beings are a separate entity, instead of being an integral part of it, there is a fundamental break and fragmentation. Being separated from the human community is a further step in this fragmentation. The range and scale of emotional and psychological disorders (substance abuse, breakdown of families and individuals depression and suicides) are showing unprecedented increase.

All these are imminent challenges that require direct, urgent attention and energy. However, if seen as mechanical problems, to be fixed by technology, economics and through hard negotiations (much as our climate negotiations are treated internationally), without appreciating the whole as interconnected issues, and without sensitivity and creativity, the true changes are unlikely to happen.

Reflection:

What does art mean to you? How does your environmental consciousness relate to the role of art in your life and work?

Art in all its forms may help to connect, reassert, diffuse, restructure, create and evolve in relationships - within ourselves, with other people and with nature. To look at art merely as entertainment, an escape from self and boredom, from here and now, is a sad state indeed. Art is ecological outside and spiritual inside. As it plays out, art is a manifestation of the spiritual connection between human beings and the environment. In its core, art incorporates an intuitive and embodied awareness of all life and engages a relational view of person to planet, inner to outer landscape, and soul to soil; of the oneness that celebrates its ability to be diverse.



Tsa – Nimo, the earth and sun as the oppressed

Jaya Iyer

“I was working with a group of young people from Ladakh, the high altitude desert in the Himalayas, improvising along the lines of Theatre of the Oppressed. (The Theatre of the Oppressed uses theatre as means of knowledge and transformation of interior reality in the social and relational fields. The public becomes active, so that the ‘spect-actors’ explore, show, analyse and transform the reality in which they are living. This method was elaborated by the Brazilian director, Augusto Boal).

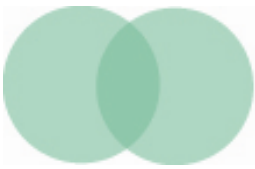
We were looking at issues that affect their lives. Their houses, built using traditional methods such as sun-baked earth and costing almost nothing, are very effective against the extreme weather of the region; but were being replaced by artless concrete cement structures, which besides being expensive, roasted them in the heat of the day and froze them mercilessly at night.

We played along using the Theatre of the Oppressed methodology. I asked my stock question: who are the oppressors? Who is the oppressed? In reply came this: poor people, the sun and the earth are the oppressed. They are devalued and hence, they suffer...people and also the sun and the earth. The conviction was strong and the play was thus created along these lines. When people in the villages saw the play, they moved into the roles of sun and earth as easily as they did into that of people.

The differences we commonly perceive between people and nature are probably not that real or natural or inevitable.”



Snapshots of Leh, capital of Ladakh province in northern India.



2. The Art of Making Questions

Sir David King, former Chief Scientist to the UK Government, recently said that there are no 'techno-fix solutions' to the 'carousel of 21st century challenges'. To stop the excesses of 'relentless development' and 'aspirational lifestyles' he called for 'a cultural revolution, with revised priorities, innovative thinking and more sensitivity to our environment if we are to achieve a sustainable and fairer world.'⁵ In this sense, 'culture'⁶ refers to the whole of society and in his Report⁷, British economist and academic Sir Nicholas Stern joins King in the belief that the scale of the crises we face amounts to an enormously changed world in the very near future.

Reflection:

How do you learn? Do you ask new questions as part of your learning process? What merits do you see in the act of creative questioning?

These changes require us to make a paradigm shift in our thinking in order to cope and to adapt creatively. Let us consider here also the difference between 'engineered resilience' and 'ecological resilience'⁸. The former is concerned with the duration of suffering (how long can we hang on before we let go?), whereas ecological resilience considers the likelihood of 'collapse'⁹, or 'ecological perturbation'. Although this potentially disastrous prospect seems to be the most bleak, once we come to terms with this possibility, it may be liberating, as it offers a 'worse-case scenario' for which we may prepare and from which we may evolve. However, such an outlook requires all disciplines and communities to collaborate with utmost creativity and good will.

Now let us consider the concept of 'question-based learning'. Practiced intuitively by many artists and creative people, this approach opens up situations for exploration in non-linear ways. Problems may be found

⁵ DOYLE, E. (2009) Press Release, Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management. URL: <http://docs.google.com/Doc?docid=0AXmNVQGRLZyMZGNocms4YiRfMzBnY21tbmM2QA&hi=en>

⁶ WILLIAMS, R (1968) Culture and Society 1780-1950. Columbia Press, NY.

⁷ Sir Nicholas Stern (2006). The Stern Review HM Treasury, UK Government. URL: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/stern_review_report.htm

The Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change is a 700-page report released on October 30, 2006 by economist Nicholas Stern for the British government, which discusses the effect of global warming on the world economy. Although not the first economic report on climate change, it is significant as the largest and most widely known and discussed report of its kind.

⁸ KINZIG, A. P. et al (2006) Resilience and regime shifts: assessing cascading effects. Ecology and Society 11(1): 20. [online] URL: <http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol11/iss1/art20/>

⁹ DIAMOND, J. (2006) Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Survive. Penguin Books, London.

and resolved; in addition, new questions may be formed in the process. This questioning is based on 'whole systems' seeing and thinking; it promotes wider and deeper ways of learning, rather than being driven by the need to find solutions. This is potentially an ecological approach to learning ('eco-pedagogy'¹⁰, or 'Eco Literacy'¹¹) generated by context, relationships and complex systems. It is not an analytical, reductionist method of understanding the world by focusing on the parts. In a similar vein, Arne Naes, the Norwegian founder of the Deep Ecology Movement wrote:

"The essence of deep ecology is to ask deeper questions. This is the essence of a paradigm shift. We need to be prepared to question every single aspect of the old paradigm."¹²

Naes continues:

"It questions this entire paradigm from an ecological perspective: from the perspective of our relationships to one another, to future generations, and to the web of life of which we are a part."¹³

Above all, questions promote more questions and these act as creative feedback loops for expansive knowledge, resonating with the idea of rta mentioned earlier.

Reflection:

How do creativity and activism meet in your life and work?

This question-based approach is also the point at which creativity and activism meet. The renowned physicist, feminist, social and environmental activist, Vandana Shiva writes in her book, Biopiracy: the Plunder of Nature and Knowledge¹⁴:

"Recognition of diverse traditions of creativity is an essential component of keeping diverse knowledge systems alive. This is particularly important in this period of rampant ecological destruction, in which the smallest source of ecological knowledge and insight can become a vital link to the future of humanity on this planet."

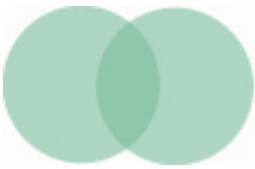
¹⁰ HALEY, D [2008] The Limits of Sustainability: The Art of Ecology in Kagan, S. and Kirchberg, V. (eds.) Sustainability: a new frontier for the arts and cultures. VAS-Verlag, Frankfurt, Germany.

¹¹ CAPRA, F. (1999) Eco Literacy: The Challenge for Education in the Next Century. Liverpool Schumacher lectures 20 March 1999. Centre for Ecoliteracy, Berkeley, California.

¹² CAPRA, F. (1996) The Web of Life: A New Synthesis of Mind and Matter. HarperCollins, London. Pp 7

¹³ CAPRA, F. (1996) *ibid*. Pp 8

¹⁴ SHIVA, V (1997). Biopiracy: The Plunder of Nature and Knowledge. Soyn End Press, Boston Massachusetts. Pp. 8-9



Knowledge may then be thought of as a semi-closed system which permits outside influences to enter and pass through, but without losing its form, or pattern of entity. Knowledge may also be created as a whole system from the relationship of many parts, and the parts may be shared by multiple disciplines; thus knowledge itself can be considered plastic, dynamic and ecological. Then we may move from Modernist, solution-driven, reductionist, problem-based learning (that seeks certainty), to the dialectic of Postmodernism and beyond, to an expansive, question-based learning that accepts uncertainty; then to an indeterminate 'Next Generation' of narratives and then on to the emergence of diverse and complex, whole systems, operating in 'dynamic equilibrium' – grace in evolution, becoming, or 'ecopoiesis'.¹⁵

¹⁵ HALEY, D. (2001) 'Oh brave new world': A Change in the Weather'. I created the word 'ecopoiesis' as an extension of Maturana and Varela's term, autopoiesis, that denoted the self-making, or self-organisation of living cells. Ecopoiesis, therefore, takes 'eco' from the Greek *oikos* meaning household or dwelling and now has relational attachments, and adds *poiesis*, another Greek work that means to make or create and from which we get the word poetry. Co-joined, they refer to ecological evolution. The association with poetics is intentional.



3. The Art of Opportunity

Living in a changed world will shift our context of 'normal'. Indeed, what we currently consider to be 'extreme environments' will become our normal condition. If we list some of the interconnected/interdependent crises and consider them as potential challenges, then we may go some way to working with them:

- Global warming
- Climate change
- Water and food security
- Conflict and terrorism
- Mineral resources
- Economics
- Species extinction

Then we may consider the 'drivers' of these crises, over which we may have some control:

- Human population
- Human activity

However, a further issue is the way in which much media conflates these many challenges as it tries to make news simple. 'Global warming' and 'climate change' become the same thing and include all the other crises, with economics as the highest value and the language for understanding the rest. This 'mono-culture' presents a problem, because it restricts our visions of the future and reduces our options for survival. It is the opposite of a 'whole systems' approach that sees the rich complexity of relationships between all the challenges as a joined-up entity requiring many diverse ways of thinking and inventing. Here the arts make an essential contribution, to 'keep the discourse plastic'¹⁶. Art has the ability to exceed or shift expectations, to maintain a flexible mind, and make new questions.

Reflection:

What qualities/values do you value in artists? How do you think these could be valuable in addressing environmental challenges?

This approach requires skills and capabilities often attributed to artists of many forms – lateral thinking, envisioning, improvising, intuiting, seeing paradoxes and making metaphors. Of course, many people in other

¹⁶ MAYER HARRISON, H. & HARRISON, N (2007) Greenhouse Britain Tour Lecture – unpublished.

disciplines have these creative capabilities as well and not every artist necessarily possesses these qualities. However, in terms of understanding learning styles and 'knowledge transfer', these generalisations may be useful.

Pioneers of the eco-art movement, artists Helen Mayer Harrison and Newton Harrison were among the first artists to understand and warn of the potential scale of climate change caused by global warming. For their work *The Lagoon Cycle* (1985), the artists spent seven years working with and being ecological scientists, learning and applying their knowledge and creativity to imagine the scale of the problems we are only beginning to comprehend. Their exhibition and catalogue conclude:

“And in this new beginning
this continuously rebeginning
you will feed me when my lands no longer
produce
and I will house you
when your lands are covered with water
and together
we will withdraw
as the waters rise”¹⁷

Twenty years and many artworks later, David Haley invited the Harrisons to create the work, *Greenhouse Britain: Losing Ground, Gaining Wisdom* (2008)¹⁸ that considered the effects of sea level rise caused by global warming and how to shift “...the face of disaster to the face of opportunity”¹⁹. As artists, the Harrisons led a team of climate and ecological scientists, architects and landscape architects in the design of new forms of housing 'settlement' to address mass migration, carbon sequestering, food production, freshwater generation and to promote biodiversity. Indeed, this project connected to their other projects at continental and global scale (*Peninsula Europe* - 2005, *Greenhouse Europe* - 2008, *The Force Majeure* - 2009) as well as on-going research, at the community landscape scale, to consider the economics and carrying capacity of a landscape (*A Stability Domain for Devon* 2008-present).

Other groups also provide an on-going critique of the existing discourse on global warming and climate change. One example of Platform's (UK) many long-term works, *Unravelling the Carbon Web*²⁰ (on-going) aims to reduce the environmental and social impacts of oil corporations,

¹⁷ MAYER HARRISON, H. & HARRISON, N. (1985) *The Lagoon Cycle*. Ithaca, New York.

¹⁸ MAYER HARRISON, H., HARRISON, N., HALEY, D., FREMANTLE, C. & HARRISON, G. (2008) *Greenhouse Britain: Losing Ground, Gaining Wisdom*. URL: <http://greenhousebritain.greenmuseum.org>

¹⁹ MAYER HARRISON, H. & HARRISON, N (2007) *Greenhouse Britain Tour Lecture* – unpublished.

²⁰ More about Platform, London at <http://www.platformlondon.org/carbonweb/showitem.asp?article=67>

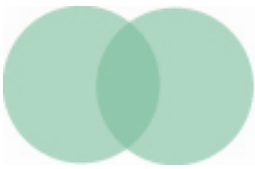


to help citizens gain a say in decisions that affect them, and to support the transition to a more sustainable energy economy. Beehive Collective (USA) use an innovative, arts-based education strategy to benefit communities, schools and organisations 'by provoking discussion, raising hard questions and offering a hopeful story in an era of too much bad news'²¹.

Special mention must be made of the most comprehensive resource for social, environmental and ecological arts practice and education resources, greenmuseum (USA)²². This web portal contains information on more than 140 artists and arts organisations of this genre. It is now totally run on the 'volunteer economy' and was conceived as an empowering creative act in its own right by its director and founder, Sam Bower.

²¹ More about Beehive Collective at <http://www.beehivecollective.org/english/falltourshoutout2009.htm>

²² More on greenmuseum at <http://www.greenmuseum.org/>



4. The Art of Artfulness

While the sciences search for immutable laws based on irrefutable evidence, the knowledge that art makes is dynamic, shifting, interpreting, responding and contributing to culture. These tacit forms of knowledge may be difficult to pin down, as they are sometimes understood as flows of energy rather than works etched in stone. So, as the Dutch Professor in Art and Sustainability and Environmental Education at Universidad Automa de la Ciudad de Mexico, Hans Dieleman, writes, we need both forms of knowledge to meet the present challenges as a whole:

“Sciences allowed us to make the kind of societies we have today, and their influence has been enormously powerful. But sciences do have their limitations and especially when dealing with sustainability, these limitations are becoming more and more manifest. That is why art and artful ways of exploring sustainability are needed to understand the problems related to sustainability in better ways.”²³

This shift in the way we think takes us from ‘sustainable development’ to ‘sustainable living’, as mentioned above; that is from maintaining the economic status quo to the promotion of life values. It, then, takes us from ‘sustainable living’ to ‘capable futures’; that is from the promotion of life values to diverse practical means of achieving these goals. So, the notion of techno-fix solutions may give way to a culture of proactive empowerment. If society is to find new meanings, it needs to shift its language as a continuing act of creativity, of inventing and re-inventing. This is another role available to art: flipping the metaphors to gain new attention, new connections and above all, to change ‘the story’. As the Belgian Nobel Laureate in Chemistry Ilya Prigogine, writes: “The inclusion of irreversibility changes our view of nature. The future is no longer given. Our world is a world of continuous ‘construction’ ruled by probabilistic laws and no longer a kind of automaton.”

“We are led from a world of ‘being’ to a world of ‘becoming’.”

Charlene Spretnak - named one of the “100 Eco-Heroes of All Time” by the British Government’s Environment Department - talks about “the imperceptible but strong change in the world view”, “the reassertion of the powers of the body, nature and place to be infused with a rekindled spiritual awareness...our apprehension of the real is being revised on a far larger scale by the knowing body, the creative cosmos and complex sense of space.”²⁴ Therefore, a function of art might be for artists

and creative people to create the capability to envision many possibilities for many futures.

Reflection:

How do you envisage our common futures? (respect for cultural diversity? social justice for all? democracy? absence of war?) How do these relate to your vision of an environmentally sustainable world?

There is an anecdotal truism that artists resemble explorers - both are permanently lost. ‘Lost’ here is not to be confused with being misplaced or going astray. This state of deliberate ‘lostness’ or the practice of ‘mindfulness/awareness’²⁵ is concerned, instead, with a realisation of standing at the abyss of now, gazing to the future. This may be unnerving for some people (such as clients, collaborators, stakeholders, funders, designers, engineers – typically, they like a clear brief that delivers predetermined criteria); but this state of being lost, this uncertainty, this realisation of indeterminacy comes with the territory of seeing to the future and breaking new ground.

We may, then, consider the guiding question: how will we make our futures? ‘Futures’, not future, because we need to include many diverse options. In fact, a diversity of futures should contribute to ecological resilience, because no one knows for sure which strategies will work.

Richard Slaughter, President of the World Futures Studies Federation and Director of the Australian Foresight Institute, enforces this imperative:

“Rather, it lies in escaping from – or rather, transcending – the ‘flatland’ imposed on us by three-hundred years of reductionism and epistemological narrowness. It lies in acts of recovery in each and every domain: the recovery of a deeper sense of self, of higher transcendent ways of knowing, of states of social being that go beyond the merely rational and so on. In Wilber’s words: “we cannot build tomorrow on the bruises of yesterday... This means a new form of society will have to evolve that integrates consciousness, culture and nature, and thus finds room for art, morals, and science – for personal values, for collective wisdom, and for technical know-how.”²⁶

²³ DIELEMAN, H. (2007) Science and Art, the Hammer and the Chisel. Cultura 21 Magazin URL:

http://www.cultura21.de/magazin/paradigmen/wis_200708_dieleman01.html

²⁴ SPRETNAK, C. (1997) The Resurgence of the Real: Body, Nature, and Place in a Hypermodern World. Basic Books.

²⁵ VARELA, F., THOMPSON, E. & ROSCH, E. (1993) The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience. The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Pp 23

²⁶ SLAUGHTER, R. (2004) quoting WILBER, K. (1996) Futures Beyond Dystopia: Creating Social Foresight. RoutledgeFalmer, London. Pp 28

5. The Art of Grounded Practice

The Indian poet and saint Kabir (circa. 1440-1518) earned his living at the loom, weaving together his outer life (as a householder and a craftsman) with his inner life of adoration to the Beloved. 'At once a child of Allah and Ram', he merged into the mystical unity of all faiths. Out of this grounded ecstasy sprang Kabir's songs, spontaneous revelations of his inner experience. In his poems, greatest insights regarding equity, ecological sustainability and inner harmony reveal their interrelated aspects. In one of his songs, Jhini (below), he likens the fabric he is weaving to his own self and to the earth and hopes to return it in its pristine form, as was given to him.

Weaving reveals deeper truths, responds to deeper queries and creates harmony in body and mind. Working with hands helps unravel layers of being as lived experience. The insistence on charkha, the spinning wheel by Gandhi has a similar relevance and importance.



A Company-style miniature painting of Kabir as a weaver (c.1825), from Central Museum in Jaipur, India

Jhini by Kabir

Original (below) written in Braj Basha dialect of Hindi, followed by the English translation

jhini re jhini re jhini chadariya, jhini re jhini re jhini chadariya

ke ram naam ras bhini chadariya, jhini re jhini re jhini chadariya

ashta kamal dal charkha doley, panch tatva, gun tini chadariya

saiin ko siyat mas dus lagey, thokey-thokey ke bini chadariya

so chadar sur nar muni odi, odi ke maili kini chadariya

das kabir jatan so odi, jyon ki tyon dhar deen chadariya

It is fine and delicate like gossamer, this cloth (the self, earth).

Fragile and diaphanous, this cloth.

Shaded, coloured and flavoured by the name of the lord Ram.

A spinning wheel spins like a lotus with eight petals (pointing to all the directions, yet centered here),

And the cloth is spun out of five elements (ether, air, fire, water and earth)

and three qualities (satva , rajas and tamas-dynamic calm, action and change, inertia).

The lord embroidered it in (ten months in the womb) or with (the annual cycle of nature) ten months of moon.

He wrapped the weft tight, knotted and twisted in diverse forms.

This cloth everyone uses, gods and sages and ordinary mortals, and soil with use,

Kabir says, I have covered my self with this cloth with great care,

And eventually will leave it like it was.

Watch the legendary Indian classical vocalist Kumar Gandharva singing Jhini: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cNI_pKQu9-k

There might be some meaning in healing and bridging the art and craft divide - a colonial legacy for much of Asia - as artisans were relegated to a lower status and high art meant a pure non-utilitarian pursuit. The world we live in is thus compartmentalised: head people vs. hand people; work vs. play; life vs. art - all separate and in different boxes. The art we refer to here may itself help transcend this division of labour and re-establish the interconnections, thus, softening the boundaries to bring energy and cheer.

Reflection:

*How often do you work with your hands to create something, be it gardening, pottery, writing or cooking?
What does creating with your hands mean to you?*

As a species, we do seem to need some healthy cheer and space to breathe. As oncologist and author O. Carl Simonton (who introduced the concept that one's state of mind could influence the ability to survive serious illness such as cancer) writes:

"When you're depressed, the whole body is depressed, and it translates to the cellular level. The first objective is to get your energy up, and you can do it through play. It is one of the most powerful ways of breaking up



Singing is integral to the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sanghatan's Right to Information campaign in India

hopelessness and bringing energy into the situation."

This may have something to do with our relationship with art, where we have become passive consumers rather than active creators and contributors. Participation in art is often perceived as a safe space to enter, intervene and bring about change. It is in some ways less threatening yet it may also have deep impact.

Indian political and social activist, Aruna Roy along with her team, led by Shankar Singh, spear headed the Right to Information movement in India and ensured it

becoming parliamentary Bill by using a considerable number of theatre, puppet and music performances. Using folk songs and local stories during mass gatherings and long marches, the team gathered support at the grass roots and simultaneously rallied with the power centre. The songs and slogans of Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sanghatan - established in 1990 and among the well-known Indian social movements - are part of every household in much of the western Indian state of Rajasthan, where her campaign began. The impact was phenomenal because of the way it connected diverse forms of art and revealed the interconnectedness of various issues. Women participating in the campaigns observed that it was not that they were singing for freedom - but that the very act of singing was freedom.

The 'artist as leader'²⁷ and the 'artist as an alternative producer of knowledge' are important ideas and integral to this whole document. It is worth considering some of the 'tools and techniques' that may support them in being the leader, the activist, the producer of new knowledge and the shifter of ways we thinking. Of course, as the German artist and co-founder of the Green Party, Joseph Beuys²⁸ proclaimed, we are all potentially artists, capable of creativity.

In Germany, *zivilcourage* is a project by Domino that uses Theatre of the Oppressed techniques to fight racism and exclusion. Translated as "civil courage" or "courage of the citizen", *zivilcourage* is used in German to denote the courage to act publicly against oppression. It is about daily-life solidarity with those whose rights are not being respected. Using a completely different art form, Clowns Without Borders, are a federation of performers from nine countries performing nearly sixty destinations of conflict and need. It '... aims to improve the condition of life for children and communities living in crises, through laughter and humour.'²⁹ Between 1968 and 2006, the pioneering UK 'celebratory arts' company, Welfare State International, performed rites of passage at the domestic scale, generated urban renewal at the community scale, and created amazing spectacle at the scale of cities.³⁰

Indian activist, visual artist and film maker, Amar Kanwar raises many questions about sustainability and justice in his work, *Sovereign Forest*³¹. And following the tradition of art that raises such questions, we may consider works by the German artist, Hans Haake - *Rhinewater Purification Plant* (1972)³², American artists, Mierle Laderman Ukeles - *The Social Mirror* (1983)³³, and Agnes Denes - *Wheatfield, Battery Park City: A Confrontation*,

²⁷ DOUGLAS, A & FREMANTLE, C (2009) The Artist as Leader: Research Report. URL: www.ontheedgegeresearch.org

²⁸ MATILSKY, B. (1992) *Fragile Ecologies: Contemporary Artists' Interpretations and Solutions*. Rizzoli, New York.

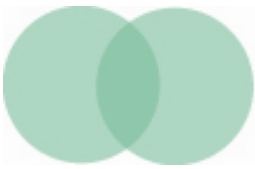
²⁹ More about Clowns Without Borders at <http://www.clownswithoutborders.net/>

³⁰ More about Welfare State International at <http://www.welfare-state.org/>

³¹ More about Sovereign Forest at <http://www.48c.org/amar.html>

³² MATILSKY, B. (1992) *ibid.*

³³ MATILSKY, B. (1992) *ibid.*



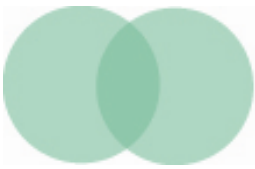
The Act (1982)³⁴, UK artist Shelley Sachs – *Exchange Values* (2002)³⁵ and others.

Compare these with the many civic ‘public art’ projects wherein people talk about having to ‘design-in the art’ and ‘design-in the ecology or biodiversity’. From a whole systems approach, the issue is that these elements already exist and that they have been ‘designed-out’ by our society. The denial of complexity from a situation is to impose a mono-cultural policy. However, shifting the metaphor of a situation can sometimes release the ‘cultural constraints’ to permit creativity to flow. For instance, the Water-as-War and Bacteria-as-Enemy metaphors generate very negative language – ‘defence’, ‘attack’, ‘threat’, ‘retreat’, ‘win/lose the battle’, ‘hold the line’, ‘germs’, ‘disease’. By shifting the metaphor new ways of thinking about a situation may occur. So Water-as-Life and Bacteria-as-Natural offer new connotations – ‘thirst-quenching’, ‘refreshing’, ‘revitalising’, ‘symbiotic’, ‘interactive’, ‘ecological’.

In this way positive metaphors open up possibilities, rather than closing them down. However, it is essential to ground the process in the physical, permitting the dialogue to oscillate between the tangible and conceptual – each feeding back into the other. This is not about ‘design by committee’, but generating the capacity for creativity through dialogical processes and reflective, transformative practice. Here, audience becomes community, viewers become participants, listeners become voice and readers become activists. Then, perhaps, art has the ability to exceed all expectations and make new questions possible?

³⁴ MATILSKY, B. (1992) *ibid.*

³⁵ <http://greenmuseum.org/c/enterchange/artists/sacks/>



6. The Art of Making Our Futures – Together Creatively

Together with independent scientist, environmentalist, and futurist Sir James Lovelock and others, the evolutionary microbiologist, Lynn Margulis was one of the main collaborators on the Gaia hypothesis, which postulates that the Earth functions as a kind of superorganism. In her book, *The Symbiotic Planet: A New Look At Evolution*, Margulis reminds us of our place on earth:

“Life is a planetary-level phenomenon and the Earth has been alive for at least 3,000 million years. To me, the human move to take responsibility for the living Earth is laughable – the rhetoric of the powerless. The planet takes care of us, not we of it. Our self-inflated moral imperative to guide a wayward Earth or heal our sick planet is evidence of our immense capacity for self-delusion. Rather, we need to protect us from ourselves.”³⁶

Margulis’ main contribution, however, is her theory that understands the process of ‘symbiosis’ (close association of different species / mutually beneficial relationship) to be the driving process of evolution of all complex cellular beings, of everything after the existence of non-nucleated cells. She develops the explanation of one of her students:

“Gaia is just symbiosis as seen from space: all organisms are touching because all are bathed in the same air and the same flowing water.”

There are many artists and creative people of the past and present who are dedicated to making our futures better. When they are effective, they not only take ideas from observing ecological systems, they actually join with or enhance those systems. US artist Betsy Damon worked in Sichuan Province, China over many years on her project, *The Living Water Garden* (1998)³⁷ to purify river water.

As we wrote above, we hope this ‘position paper’ will act as a creative catalyst for others to respond to and develop as a dialogue. A dialogue is not so much about generating new knowledge, as it is about changing the way we think. We hope such dialogue will advance sustainable living. And in time become the art of sustainable living.

We are the landscape

Embodied evolution

Of our making

Preserving cultures

In extreme environments

Draw breath, mark time

Water, sand, time

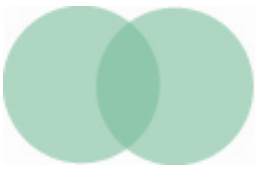
Life drawn in the mingling

Mud, mist and scum.

(David Haley, 2005)

³⁶ MARGULIS, L (1998). *The Symbiotic Planet: A New Look At Evolution*. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London. Pp. 115

³⁷ http://www.greenmuseum.org/content/artist_index/artist_id-62.html



About the authors

Dr David Haley

Ecological artist, David Haley believes our ability to survive Climate Change is the enactment of an evolutionary narrative. As the dance of creation and destruction, also demands new opportunities and meanings for the other side of collapse, his inquiries into the nature of water, whole systems ecology and integral critical futures thinking inform his arts practice, education and community developments. As a Senior Research Fellow in MIRIAD at Manchester Metropolitan University, David is Director of the Ecology In Practice A&E [art&ecology] research group unit and leads the award winning MA Art As Environment programme.

David Haley's recent projects in the UK, China, Taiwan, Germany and the USA include: *The Writing On The Wall*, performed poetic artworks to question societies' response to global warming; *River Life 3000: Like There's No Tomorrow*, sculptural installation; *Rivers from the Future*, a critique of the ethics and aesthetics that value the 'new suburbia' over freshwater; *A Walk On The Wild Side*, eco-urban art-walks and films that consider Manchester as a living organism; *Greenhouse Britain: Losing Ground, Gaining Wisdom*, with Helen Mayer Harrison and Newton Harrison to determine how we might 'withdraw with grace' as sea levels rise; *A Dialogue with Oysters: the Art of Facilitation*, a new creation myth between the sea, the mountains, the oysters and the people based on the interface between freshwater and rising sea levels; and *Trees of Grace: the Destiny of Species*, a thousand-year long project that proposes an analogue forest for the Mersey Basin, with ginkgo biloba as the 'keystone' species of tree.

Jaya Iyer

Jaya Iyer has been working in the field of development theatre and social education. Trained in participatory theatre skills, she has designed programmes and trained field workers, teachers, activists and young people in India and abroad. Focus areas include peace and conflict issues, mobilisation and community building, ecological integrity especially farming and conservation using theatre and other participatory techniques.

Jaya has evolved and directed over 300 street plays and 7 proscenium productions. She was awarded UNESCO Aschberg bursary to study theatre of the oppressed in Brazil. She was also awarded the Scholar of Peace Fellowship of Women in Security Conflict Management and Peace (WISCOMP), New Delhi. She has been associated with Pravah, a New Delhi-based non-profit working with young people for a decade and was its CEO for 3 years. Currently, Jaya works independently as a freelance consultant and is involved with Nehru Memorial, New Delhi in setting up a national children's centre. She is a visiting faculty at Delhi University.

Jaya is also deeply connected with Vividhara, a community based group and Beej Bachao Andolan, a farmer's movement, both in Uttaranchal in northern India. She is also an active member of KLOD.B, a network for sensitising about Delhi's natural and cultural heritage; Jamghat, a group of street and working children; and, Mandala-The Magic Circle, a creative collective connecting ecological issues with art and education. Jaya is a dancer and trekker.



Connect2Culture Resources

A list of additional resources from the Connect2Culture programme

Arts. Environment. Sustainability.

A Collection of Visions

In the vision papers presented in this document, one can see many possible directions towards a more sustainable future where the arts and culture play a significant role. Written by experts in the field of arts and culture, who have an active involvement in environmental sustainability in one way or another, the papers perceive a wide range of solutions to today's challenges.

Arts. Environment. Sustainability.

An Overview of ASEF Projects

Connect2Culture is a four-year programme initiated by ASEF to connect culture with other fields, and the first edition explored connections between the arts, culture and global environmental issues. This document outlines all ASEF's art and environment projects conducted from 2008 to 2011.

Arts. Environment. Sustainability.

A Directory of Cultural Professionals

The alumni from ASEF's Connect2Culture programme range from cultural practitioners, to scientists, to practicing artists, to academics to policy-makers. To conclude the first edition of the Connect2Culture programme, ASEF has put together a directory of all those involved in its art and environment projects from 2008 to 2011.

Arts. Environment. Sustainability.

An Overview of ASEF Partners

ASEF works in partnership with civil society actors and other public institutions to ensure its work is broad-based and balanced among the partner countries. This document outlines the organisational partners who played a key role in ASEF's Connect2Culture art and environment projects.



The Connect2Culture Team at ASEF

Katelijan Verstraete (Belgium)

Katelijan Verstraete is deputy director of the Cultural Exchange Department at the Asia-Europe Foundation. In the last 15 years Katelijan has built up an extensive experience and network in the field of cultural management, international cultural cooperation between Asia and Europe, cultural policy dialogue, cultural portals and cross-cultural communication/mediation.

She conceived the Connect2Culture programme in 2008 in a response to the need to give culture a more prominent role in cross-sectorial platforms and the urgency to connect culture to global challenges of sustainability. She has since been a part of many of the projects that were carried out as part of the programme.

Prior to ASEF, Katelijan worked in the business and cultural sector in China and in Europe. She holds a Master's degrees in Sinology and in Marketing Management.

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Anupama Sekhar (India)

Anupama Sekhar is Project Manager for Cultural Exchange at the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF). She works on ASEF projects promoting artistic exchanges and cultural policy dialogue between Asia and Europe, as well as on cross-sectorial interventions exploring connections between the arts, health, education and environment.

Anupama is the editor of "Mapping Cultural Diversity – Good Practices from Around the Globe" (published by ASEF and the German Commission for UNESCO, 2010). Presently, she is a Fellow of the U-40 programme for "Cultural Diversity 2030", a recognition accorded by the German Commission for UNESCO to young cultural policy experts under 40 years of age. As an artist, Anupama primarily works with poetry. She is also a trained dancer in the Indian classical style of Bharatnatyam.

Before joining ASEF, Anupama worked in the independent arts sector in India and with the United Nations. She holds Master's degrees in International Studies and English Literature.

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Sasiwimon Wongjarin (Thailand)

Sasiwimon Wongjarin, Project Officer for Cultural Exchange at the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), worked on the Connect2Culture Programme in 2009. She was mainly responsible for the follow-up projects conducted throughout 2009 and 2010. In addition Sasiwimon works

on projects in the areas of Platforms and Networks and Artistic Exchanges. These include the Asia-Europe Museum Network, the ASEF University Heritage, the Asia-Europe Cultural Partnerships Initiative: Performing Arts, Health on Stage: Promoting Public Health through Forum Theatre, and Lingua Comica, an Asia-Europe comics and graphic novels project.

Before joining ASEF, Sasiwimon was based in Chiang Mai, Thailand, and worked as a Manager for The Land Foundation. She was also with the Chiang Mai University Contemporary Art Museum while doing her thesis project on recommendations for museum development. In 2007, she was selected to take part in the Independent Creative Art Spaces Leadership Training, which was organised by the ASEF in Paris, France.

Sasiwimon received her Bachelor's degree in Fine Art in Education from the School of the Arts, Amsterdam (The Netherlands) and obtained her Master's in Museology from the Reinwardt Academy, Amsterdam (The Netherlands).

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Jerneja Rebernak (Slovenia)

Jerneja Rebernak is currently based in Maribor, Slovenia where she is associated with Maribor 2012 – European Capital of Culture. In late 2010, she was involved in the project Istanbul Express: Exploring Multilingualism Across Europe, organized by NISI MASA as the co ordinator of the Turin train. The project involved 45 young European filmmakers in 3 trains travelling to 23 cities in Europe over three weeks before arriving in Istanbul.

From 2008 to 2010 Jerneja worked at the Cultural Exchange department as Project Officer. She was in charge of the Photography, New Media and Artist Networks programmes. She holds a MA research degree in Media studies, University of Amsterdam (2007) and a BA in Communication Science, University of Ljubljana (2004). While conducting research on media education, grassroots communication and new media she assisted several independent media&arts projects. In 2007 she completed her internship at the European Cultural Foundation for the Youth and Media programme where she coordinated the Oneminutesjr online video platform and festival. Before joining ASEF, she has also contributed as a web editor for the European Cultural Foundation.

Claire Wilson (Australia)

Claire Wilson, Project Officer for Cultural Exchange at the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), was responsible for editing this publication (along with its related supporting documents). Claire principally works on projects in the area of Platforms and Networks. Before joining ASEF in



2010, Claire worked with arts organisations and arts projects in Australia, including Experimenta Media Arts, Multicultural Arts Victoria, the RMIT Design Archives and Melbourne International Fine Art gallery. Claire has also had experience working on the Thai-Burma border as part of the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development programme, under the auspices of the International Organisation for Migration, where she worked on their Cultural Orientation programme.

Claire holds a Bachelor of Arts (Honours in Spanish) degree from La Trobe University in Melbourne. She obtained her Master's in Arts Management with Distinction from RMIT University.


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