



**PLATFORM FOR
INTERCULTURAL EUROPE**

4th European Forum

5-6th June 2012

**Participation and Citizenship:
Can Cultural Institutions in Europe lead the way?
Should they?**

Report on the Annual Forum 2012

Espace Magh and Tour Madou
Brussels

Platform for Intercultural Europe

c/o Culture Action Europe - 10, rue de la Science – B-1000 Brussels – T +32 (0)2 534 40 02 – F +32 (0) 534 11 50
www.intercultural-europe.org - dialogue@intercultural-europe.org

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Resume

"Art is a way to imagine the world otherwise"

(Khaled Hourani: International Academy of Arts Palestine in Ramallah – Speaking in Oslo at Viewing Palestine 2011)

The Forum held in Brussels in June 2012 presented a clear challenge and a significant opportunity for the Platform for Intercultural Europe, its member organisations, and the cultural sector in general. Vladimír Šucha (Director for Culture & Education, European Commission) explicitly invited the Platform to capitalise on its position as a Structured Dialogue partner to bring art and creativity directly into the policy-making process:

"The future will be and should be as you design it".

In modern socio-political structures, cultural activity has tended to be marginalised, regarded as an expendable luxury to be added to a society once other needs, seen as more basic, have been satisfied. In the Forum, it was made clear that cultural needs in themselves are basic, and that there is now an opportunity to place them in the centre of the European debate.

In this context, the Forum allowed participants to experience examples of intercultural provision by a range of cultural organisations, the engagement and participation of diverse communities, and the raising of key policy issues through cultural forums. It provided an opportunity to discuss the broader implications of these initiatives in relation to the current socio-political context, and to formulate proposals with regard to policy making at a European level.

Introduction

The Platform for Intercultural Europe was initiated in 2006 by the European Cultural Foundation and Culture Action Europe as a response to the proposal for the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008, and formally established in 2009. The Platform brings together grass-root practitioners, organisations, public bodies and European institutions with the aim to strengthen intercultural dialogue in Europe. It currently has 47 members, ranging from arts organisations to policy-oriented bodies, within the cultural, education and integration fields. It is recognised by the European Commission as a 'Structured Dialogue Partner' – which offers the opportunity to influence cultural policy making in the EU.

In September 2008, based on consultations throughout the year, the Platform published a manifesto: *The Rainbow Paper – Intercultural Dialogue, From Practice to Policy and Back*. This paper described approaches and aspirations towards meeting the challenges of diversity and outlined a series of recommendations: educating; building capacity by organisations; monitoring for sustained policies; mobilising across boundaries; and resourcing of Intercultural Dialogue. Alongside this, the Platform has been campaigning for a continuation of the work begun in the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue.

From 5th to 6th June 2012 the fourth European Forum of the Platform was held in Brussels. The meeting was supported by the European Commission (EC) and brought together over 80 participants from various European countries. The first part of the Forum was held in Espace Magh¹, an arts centre in Brussels dedicated to the cultures of the Mediterranean region, and presenting a diverse programme of arts and cultural activities, together with education projects and training for social work. The second part of the Forum, on 6th June, was held at the European Commission's building Tour Madou, and brought together members of the Platform with officials of the Commission's Education and Culture DG.

The Forum took place at a particularly significant moment in EU history. The crisis in the Eurozone was accelerating, with significant bail-outs having been provided for Greece, Portugal, Ireland and (most recently) Spain. The austerity measures accompanying these financial injections had proved controversial, and there was the strong possibility of new elections leading to Greece refuting the

¹ <http://www.espacemagh.be/>

austerity policy and potentially leaving the single currency altogether. Elsewhere in Europe, there was further evidence of a backlash against austerity, most notably shown in the election of François Hollande to the French Presidency. In terms of culture, the European crisis has seen a fragmenting of structures and a general disengagement from political processes, which in turn suggests increased social alienation. Since the last Forum, the UK, for example, had seen a summer of rioting in major cities, sparked by the killing of a black man by the police, and expressing a much wider cultural malaise: the focus on looting of consumer goods seemed almost to caricature the predominance of the “free” market, and its accompanying extremes of inequality and injustice, over concerns for cultural vitality, social integration, environmental sustainability or well-being. All across Europe, young people have expressed a deep concern about these issues, as characterised by the Occupy movement, the popular assemblies in Athens, and many artistic and cultural initiatives at grass-roots level. These developments have also been reflected globally, for example in the Occupy movement’s roots in the USA, and, even more significantly, the ongoing effects of the Arab Spring.

The European crisis has had a negative impact on the Platform’s prime area of concern, interculturalism and diversity, with marked increases in support for extreme Right parties (for example the Golden Dawn in Greece, the Front National in France, and the Sweden Democrats) and in racist attacks and rhetoric, with Muslims and Roma being particularly affected. In April 2012, Amnesty International issued a report entitled *Choice and prejudice: discrimination against Muslims in Europe*, which highlighted ongoing and deep discrimination against Muslims, particularly in the areas of education and employment². As the Forum met, there was widespread concern that the imminent Euro 2012 football tournament would be characterised by racism against black players and inter-racial violence among spectators.

Intercultural dialogue and cross-cultural practice have never been more immediate concerns, or more challenging to achieve. It is difficult, in the present moment’s disturbing environment, to propose hope – to envision a different future for a distorted and disturbed humanity. But that is precisely what art is for, and the complexity of the task invites our embrace.

*

This report is based on contemporaneous notes, recording of the sessions, and an online evaluation questionnaire to which all delegates were invited to contribute. At the time of reporting, 24 responses had been received. To the question asking for an overall rating of the event, 21 respondents (87.50%) had answered as follows: Poor 1, Fair 2, Good 8, Very Good 7, Excellent 3. The average evaluation of the event therefore is in the ‘good to very good range’. One respondent commented that the Forum was “Very rich in content and positive atmosphere for sharing ideas”. Others felt that the time was too limited. One respondent voiced that “the contributions and discussions were rather theoretical and too far from our practical work.”

² <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/muslims-discriminated-against-demonstrating-their-faith-2012-04-23>



Session 1

Welcome & Introduction to the Day

Sabine Frank (Platform for Intercultural Europe)

The Secretary-General welcomed the delegates to the Forum, and introduced the key topic: *Participation and Citizenship – Can Cultural Institutions lead the way? Should they?*

She suggested that there were possible links between this topic and the larger crises in Europe, which speakers might wish to address. She also explained the reasons behind the choice of topic:

1. Institutional development for Intercultural Dialogue, and Capacity Building in this area are priorities for the Platform. The Practice Exchanges, conducted annually (most recently in Ljubljana during December 2011) are engaged with the development of institutions and the exchange of best practice.
2. The Open Method of Co-ordination is a comparatively new process of policy development within the EU, and this process is allowing a comparison of different national policies on culture and diversity, and particularly the conditions attached to public funding for cultural institutions within nation states. The Platform monitors and influences this process.
3. The European Commission has declared Audience Development to be a new focus for cultural policy, with a conference planned for the autumn of this year. The challenge is to diversify the audience, rather than simply increasing the consumption of culture by the same small core audience, and this necessity involves a diversification of participation in culture.
4. 2013 is to be the European Year of Citizenship, and the Platform is keen to bring cultural participation onto the agenda for this.

She also introduced the concept of "Super-diversity". The term had been originally coined by Social Anthropologist Prof. Steven Vertovec, director of the Max Planck Institute, with regard to Britain:

"Super-diversity is a notion intended to underline a level and a kind of complexity surpassing anything the country has previously experienced. Such a condition is distinguished by a dynamic interplay of variables, among an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, trans-nationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants."



Towards a City Museum as a Centre of Civic Dialogue



ENGAGING WITH CITIZENS: GOOD PRACTICE IN THE MUSEUM WORLD

Presentation: Jouetta van der Ploeg (Director of City Museum Zoetermeer, Netherlands³)

Zoetermeer is a New Town near The Hague, which has grown exponentially in the last 50 years. A village of 6,000 inhabitants was declared a New Town in 1962, and its population is now 122,000, of whom 28% are foreign nationals. As the director of the City Museum, Jouetta has to address questions of how to tell the special stories of the City, express its emerging character, and address the fact that the quarter immigrant population of the city was not amongst the visitors of the museum. In such a space, she suggested, a museum can no longer be based on objects and documentation but on participation and co-creation of exhibitions.

She discussed a project called *Between Heaven and Earth*, which began in 2004 and addressed the personal belief systems of Zoetermeer's diverse inhabitants. 53 people from a range of religious and cultural backgrounds were interviewed and photographed, their religious artefacts were displayed, and a mutual exchange of spaces⁴, images and food was initiated. The project took place against the background of an upsurge of street crime against Muslim youth, and a Muslim MP of Somali origin, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, being forced into hiding in response to death threats. This meant that the project attracted a great deal of media attention, being seen as a hopeful development.

On 2nd November 2004, the film-maker Theo van Gogh, who had collaborated with Ayaan Hirsi Ali on the film *Submission*, was assassinated by a militant Muslim. Muslim participants in the project recognised the danger of being held responsible for the crime committed by a Muslim – even if such a 'collective responsibility' assumption is questionable – and distanced themselves and their beliefs from this action. As a result the closing event in December saw the Mayor praising the project's contribution to intercultural dialogue in Zoetermeer.

Jouetta also outlined the project *Secret Cities*, on which the museum had worked with the UK artists Andrew Brooks (photographer) and Andy Brydon (curator). The artists explored the city with the help of local residents, documenting secret and hidden spaces, and developing photography with the participants, whose work was used in the exhibition. Jouetta noted how many young participants had initially claimed to dislike Zoetermeer, but as the project developed came to take a pride in the city.

In spite of the project's artistic success, Jouetta expressed concern that the attendance figures were poor, particularly in relation to minority groups. The bulk of those attending were participants and their families. She speculated that the approach may have been too 'western', based on

³ <http://www.stadsmuseumzoetermeer.nl/>

⁴ By people going into and experiencing one another's places of worship.

material witness statements. Non-western memory and identity is to do with song and ritual, not objects (even photographs), and perhaps the museum of the intercultural future needs to embrace these forms.

The project examples illustrated how profoundly challenged museums are as producers of culture and as institutions who have to serve the interest of the public.

The moderator, Niels Righolt (Danish Centre for Arts & Interculture, Copenhagen⁵), noted the democratic approach employed in Zoetermeer, and particularly the way in which the museum has eschewed its traditional role as a temple of culture, with the staff giving away their priestly power as curators. Jouetta noted that participatory work was much applauded, but not sustained through funding.



From the floor, Tarafa Baghajati (European Network Against Racism⁶) noted the similarity between the Zoetermeer examples and the Jewish Museum in Vienna, which had recently had an exhibition of Jewish life in the Ottoman period, linking to the current interfaith dialogue.

Chris Torch (Intercult, Sweden⁷) asked how a wider, more diverse audience could become culturally involved in such projects. Jouetta remarked on the importance of involving professional artists to maintain quality: the Museum should maintain its authoritative status, but do so in the medium of participatory projects, combining excellence with ethics. "What I would really like", she said, "is to unite people ... to create a community of citizens."

In the online survey, 95% of respondents rated this Session as Good to Excellent.

⁵ <http://www.dcai.dk/>

⁶ <http://www.enar-eu.org/>

⁷ <http://www.intercult.se/>



MEETING AND CREATING AUDIENCE EXPECTATIONS IN AN AGE OF SUPER-DIVERSITY: HOW FIT ARE PUBLIC CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS?

Panelists:

- Ivor Davies (artseurope50, bridges in European arts policy, Sheffield, UK)
- Rani Kasapi (Riksteatern, Sweden⁸)
- Pascal Nicolas (Nomadic Arts Centre Moussem, Belgium⁹)
- Jouetta van der Ploeg (Director of City Museum Zoetermeer, Netherlands)

This panel was added to the programme late, replacing a presentation by Peter Duelund, who was indisposed. The moderator, Niels Righolt (Danish Centre for Arts & Interculture, Copenhagen), introduced the debate as an opportunity to explore the issue of contemporary “super-diversity” in relation to the work being undertaken in cultural institutions. He emphasised that audience development is organisational development, and that in order to address diverse audiences, the institutions themselves have to change.

Ivor Davies started by outlining the challenge of making public policy for a super-diverse citizenry without relying on the labelling of identities. To date, institutions have tended to promote diversity by targeting specific groups, but people’s identities are best defined by themselves, so policies need to be built around broad common issues such as inequality or deprivation of human or cultural rights, and around shared opportunities such as cultural enrichment or the advancement of perspectives through knowledge sharing. Ivor outlined a ‘Progressive Intercultural Journey’ by which, he argued, public policy can transform society from prevalent discrimination to complex intercultural relationships motivated by participation and citizenship:

1. Discrimination against minority groups
2. Activism within the groups and supportive opinion leads to legislation
3. Public attitudes lag behind legislation, so there is ongoing indirect discrimination
4. Secondary legislation and institutional change challenges indirect discrimination
5. A shift in public attitudes leads to the reform of institutions
6. Young generations grow up with a new attitude to diversity
7. New participation and citizenship patterns are led by the young

Ivor argued that current UK policy, after 50 years of tackling diversity, had arrived at stages 5-7. Cultural policy had tended to follow broader public policy. Arts Council England has been launching a series of initiatives on diversity and engagement since 2005. The 2011 document on *The*

⁸ <http://riksteatern.se/>

⁹ <http://moussem.be>

*Creative Case for Diversity*¹⁰ defined diversity as a key element in creativity itself, raising the challenge as to whether national institutions were able to embrace this discourse.

Rani Kasapi presented her experience at the Riksteatern, where she leads the international department. Because of its membership structure, the Riksteatern is a people's theatre, which has "tried to take interculturalism for real". Her international work for the theatre builds on the links that local communities of foreign origins have in the world. Riksteatern's policy has been to engage diverse local audiences through international collaborations.

Rani argued that labels retained a value because of the need to measure the success in reaching audiences. They also allowed for a first outreach and engagement of minorities in cultural work. Subsequently and additionally, however, the more complex situation of second and third generation migrants needed to be recognised and efforts made to develop a mixed audience. With regard to public policies, Rani noted that demands for more intercultural work were not connected to the change cultural institutions have to undergo in order to deliver it: "Institutions lack tools and people to satisfy policy stipulations." There was also a dearth of impact assessment of intercultural work and too little interest from policy-makers in it. Riksteatern has had a particular interest in demonstrating that it enhances intercultural competence in society by "giving a place to other people."

Pascal Nicolas described his organisation's work of supporting European artists of Arab origin. He said that Moussem's activities in effect challenged the European cultural canon. A key strategy of Moussem is to collaborate with mainstream cultural institutions, such as Bozar in Brussels, in order to broaden their audience reach. Pascal outlined a number of projects, such as an exhibition in Antwerp with a Moroccan curator, working with young people of Moroccan origin, which had brought the community into the museum, organising their own cultural events around food, dance and literature. He expressed concern that most initiatives of this kind were not embedded into a sustained strategy. He further pointed to the challenges of supporting artists from migratory flows, including refugee artists, and to open up art schools to such people.



In the Q&A session, Rani emphasised the importance of collaborations between major institutions and smaller organisations with intercultural competence. There is a pressing need to combine resources and knowledge. She underlined the way in which diverse communities can feel alienated by national institutions suddenly approaching them after they have been in the country for a long time. This is one reason why the recruitment of diverse staff into institutions is essential, giving a knowledge of communities, languages, and channels of communication.

Ivor argued that the authoritative and controlling role of institutions is no longer valid within diverse societies. The institutional model needs to change.

From the floor, Koami Akutsa (NORIA Développements Partagés, France) emphasised the importance of individuals as well as communities. People are citizens of the place they inhabit, and

¹⁰ http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/pdf/What_is_the_Creative_Case_for_Diversity.pdf

should not be defined solely in terms of their origins. Chris Torch (Intercult, Sweden) argued that cultural institutions tended to date from the 19th century era of nation building, and that this is why the institution has to be reformed when dealing with new paradigms of active and diverse citizenship. Angela Christofidou (Cyprus Centre of International Theatre Institute) pointed to the importance of cultural education to create audience expectations in segments of the population, which have not been served by institutions. Rani reiterated the importance of staff recruitment for intercultural programming. She also underlined that for institutional transformation “collaborations are everything”. Jouetta chimed in by saying that the new role of institutions was to “be brokers of relationships” and that they needed to shift from a “top-down” to a “bottom-up” approach.

The moderator, Niels Righolt (Danish Centre for Arts & Interculture, Copenhagen) concluded that “we need to re-define and re-structure the institutions”, though this raised the question of who “we” might be in this context.

In the online survey, 90,5% of respondents rated this session as Good to Excellent.



The Forum adjourned for a Moroccan lunch.

Session 2

Multiple parallel roundtable presentations & discussions:

Platform members share their intercultural projects

A good part of the afternoon was dedicated to showcasing Platform members' work. Seven projects were presented twice to changing small groups. The aim was to share learning and solicit responses for further development. The following questions served as guidance for the presentations:

- What problem related to diversity are you aiming to solve?
- What intercultural change are you aiming to bring about?
- How/do you know your project achieves what you mean it to achieve?

Projects presented were:



- **Take Off. Cultural participation of young, unqualified, jobless people. Facilitation of socio-professional integration by the cultural sector / Banlieues d'Europe¹¹ (Charlotte Bohl)**

Charlotte first explained that Banlieues d'Europe promotes 'cultural democracy' as opposed to 'cultural democratisation'. The organisation is a champion of socially engaged art and not of art for arts' sake.

She then outlined their current project *Take-Off* in collaboration with the International Munich Art Lab (IMAL): a European integration project, which aims to develop the experience and skills of disadvantaged German youth through European mobility and through their participation in cultural projects and artistic creation, thereby increasing their chances to get enrolled in vocational training and to access employment. Under the guidance of artists and social workers, young people participate in a 3-month global programme where they benefit from language courses, intercultural training, job search assistance and advice, etc. As part of *Take Off*, Banlieues d'Europe welcomes twice a year for a month a group of 20 young people from Germany (who mostly have migrant origins) in Lyon. During their stay abroad they have the opportunity of a short-term internship (3 to 5 weeks) in local cultural organisations, and to participate in artistic workshops together with French students.

The two rounds of discussion revolved around the question how the achievements of such a

¹¹ <http://www.banlieues-europe.com/>

project can be measured. Many emphasized the limits of quantitative evaluation in assessing the acquisition of intercultural skills and self-development. At the same time, the development of indicators was considered very important so as to be able to gain the support of public authorities and funders. Several participants applauded the project for its trans-sector approach. Yet there was general agreement that there is a lack of recognition of non-formal and informal education, for example in the EU 'Erasmus for All' programme.



- **MUS-E / Voices for Tomorrow / Assembly of Cultures. Integration through art & cultural participation of minorities / International Yehudi Menuhin Foundation (IYMF)¹² (Marianne Poncelet & Pascale Charon)**

Marianne and Pascale presented several of their projects, with different emphases in the two rounds:

The MUS-E programme: socially and culturally integrates children through art at school. Implemented in 11 countries, with approximately 45.000 children, 700 artists, 3.500 teachers, 525 schools / 2.165 classes and 172 cities of Europe.

Voices for Tomorrow: Artist ambassadors (initially 20) transmit the values of Yehudi Menuhin by facilitating collective artistic creations of groups of vulnerable people with an artistic methodology involving organic decision-making and a freeing of creative abilities. Workshops, sharing moments and performances are key elements. The artist ambassadors train new artists from different cultures who in turn transmit the methodology to new audiences.

Assembly of Cultures of Europe: Creation of a platform, which encourages better cultural participation of minorities in public space.

The discussion concerned the evaluation of the practices, but also flagged up possibilities for collaborations. The presenters felt encouraged by the feedback they received to continue develop their work.

¹² <http://www.menuhin-foundation.com/>



- **Leadership for the Local Community. Impact of ethnically segregated schooling in Croatia on civic attitudes / Network of Education Policy Centers (NEPC)¹³ (Asja Korbar)**

Asja presented NEPC's project and enjoyed the 'detachment' this provided her from its administrative challenges she normally deals with:

The project is intended to influence the issue of separate schooling for national minorities (separate schools or separate class rooms per ethnic group across pre-school, elementary school and high school). The focus lies on this practice in the Vukovar-Sirmium county in Eastern Croatia (border area), which was heavily affected by the war between Croats and Serbs in the 1990s. 15 years after the conflict, the two ethnicities there still live in a completely segregated way.

NEPC's role in the project is to research the impact on students' civic attitudes of separate schooling (which is an integral part of the model of minority rights protection in Croatia). The schooling in Serbian of the Serbian minority in Croatia's Vukovar-Sirmium county will be compared with the schooling in Italian of the Italian minority in Croatia's county of Istria. The same model of minority schooling is applied in both regions, yet the impacts on the society and everyday reality are different.

The research involves desk research on minority schooling in Croatia, questionnaire research with focus groups (students, parents, teachers in both regions), and will result in reports as well as a policy briefing on minority education for Vukovar-Sirmium, which will also draw on the results of previous research in seven countries of Divided Education, Divided Citizenship? (NEPC, 2009)

Participants in the first discussion round were open to several perspectives on segregated schooling, including more positive ones (parents exercising choice, school quality through competition etc.) while the second round was generally critical of segregated schooling. Examples of school segregation from other countries (Spain and the Netherlands) were brought into the consideration. The idea emerged that a comparison could be undertaken between separate schooling for national minorities and (inadvertent) separate schooling for migrants, i.e. segregation by design and segregation by default.

¹³ <http://www.edupolicy.net/>



- **ART'n'GO. New routes to intercultural creativity / Roots & Routes International (Andreas Kern)**

Roots and Routes is an organisation based in the Netherlands, which since 2001 has worked in areas with a high percentage of migrants to involve these population groups in society through the use of arts and culture. Andreas showed two short videos and demonstrated the multilingual website.¹⁴ The project ART'n'GO involved young artists from diverse communities, chosen by a jury, who collaborated in workshops and performances. The project provided residencies in a range of countries across Europe, and generated a series of legacy projects led by the young artists themselves. The organisation offered mentoring for the artists in generating this new work¹⁵. The objective of ART'n'GO was to develop and sustain new multi-cultural relations and productions, which celebrate and explore a range of diverse influences, histories and cultures.



- **Crossroads East West (part of Engine Room Europe). Intercultural Dialogue in cultural and artistic productions / TransEuropeHalles/Cultural Center REX¹⁶ (Dusica Parezanovic)**

Dusica began by disclaiming the title of the project as representing an outmoded idea of culture clash in Europe! The project, based in Belgrade, is a three-year project articulated around three debates a year and an artist residency. Debates (which are recorded for webcast and have published essays in response) have included:

1. Interns in a major museum leading an enquiry into working conditions in the cultural sector

¹⁴ <http://www.rootsnroutes.eu>

¹⁵ I am grateful to Angela Christofidou (Cyprus Centre ITI) for reporting on this roundtable.

¹⁶ <http://www.rex.b92.net/>

2. Israeli artists working around food fermentation, with the premise that nutrition requires a mixture of ingredients and open, fresh air – a process akin to social change.
3. A debate following on from the work of artist Zoran Todorović whose piece *Cigani I psi* (*Gypsies and dogs*) showed videos from cameras around the necks of a Roma child and a stray dog, emphasising the similarities in the way each was treated by the public.

The central theme in each debate is the role of arts production and arts presentation in stimulating intercultural dialogue, whereby “intercultural” is very broadly defined, including diverse ideologies.

Dusica emphasised the value of European funds for this project: the Serbian government was obliged to fund controversial work, which it would not support without the European dimension.

Especially the second round of this roundtable discussion homed in on the role of the arts in creating space for the discussion of highly sensitive issues in society.



- ***Progressive Narrative on Equality and Diversity for All / European Network Against Racism (ENAR) (Julie Pascoët)***

Julie began with a reference to Martin Luther King’s famous “I have a dream” speech, suggesting that today’s dream is one of equality, solidarity and well-being for all in a heterogeneous Europe. By promoting a ‘Progressive Narrative on Equality and Diversity for All’¹⁷, ENAR is seeking to counter the growing popularity of far-right discourses, which undermine equality legislation, and result also in less public funding for NGOs engaged in anti-racism work. Although ENAR sees far-right discourses and resistance to immigration as fuelled by economic recession, its ‘positive narrative’ is partly about “depicting a vibrant multicultural economy and society”, said Julie. She emphasised the importance of employment for migrants, and pointed to the “heavy wealth bias against migrant groups” of the economic system – so this was the root of the problem of integration, not migration *per se*. Education and training therefore had a key role to play.

Work on the narrative includes a manifesto, a glossary, factsheets, a publication on ‘hidden talents’ amongst migrants, etc. The narrative has become the umbrella under which ENAR carries out its activities. ENAR seeks collaboration with cultural organisations in promoting the progressive narrative. An example of such a co-operation is the Mixtus photo exhibition in Brussels biggest market hall.¹⁸ Traders and other people in the market were asked to sum up their lives by means of a few objects in a box. One of the emerging questions was “Aren’t we all far more hybridised than we think?”

¹⁷ http://www.enar-eu.org/Page_Generale.asp?DocID=29577&langue=EN

¹⁸ <http://www.mixtus.info/Mixtus/home.html>



- ***Viewing Palestine 2011. Enhancing the position of the arts and literature of Palestinians in the world / Transnational Arts Production (TrAP)*¹⁹ (Eli Borchgrevink)**

TrAP was established in 1995 as an organisation working in all art forms, aiming to bring diverse artists into the mainstream. Because Norway has complex "systems", it is difficult for people from a different background to engage with the usual cultural career paths. The challenge is to change the systems. Eli emphasised the need for artists to be present within policy discussions, including at the Platform for Intercultural Europe. The passion and personal involvement of artists gives a different perspective.

TrAP has had some success in bringing diverse artists into national institutions like the opera house, the national theatre and the major galleries, although much of the media interest still seems to be around the exoticism of the artists, and not the art itself.

Viewing Palestine was an attempt to create a meeting point in Oslo for Palestinian artists. Eli highlighted the curatorial approach, which passed on the responsibility for selecting artists to the Palestinians themselves. The event was deliberately not constructed as a peace or solidarity project, but as an artists' exchange. The presence of the Palestinian Minister of Culture was a bonus in terms of attracting attention, although her involvement led the media to see the event in political more than artistic terms.

Thirty artists and thinkers were involved. The biggest challenge was the exit visa, with only one person able to come from Gaza (and he got out via Egypt at great risk), although many others were able to come from the West Bank. There were a number of exchanges and collaborations with local Norwegian artists, particularly around hip-hop. The audience was largely engaged people from the professional classes. Eli underlined the way in which the event enabled artists who could not meet in their own country to gather and exchange practice.

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In the online survey, 90% of respondents rated this Session of roundtables as Good to Excellent. 12 of 20 respondents chose to comment positively on the format of the session: "useful to engage with practice", "good to have smaller sessions like this, makes interaction easier", "discussions and exchanges in small groups were very inspiring", "interesting projects and good speakers", etc.

¹⁹ <http://www.trap.no/>



Session 3

RESPONDING TO IMMEDIATE DIVERSITY CHALLENGES: CAN CULTURE HELP?

Testing an idea: An intercultural deployment force

Presenter: Chris Torch (Intercult, Sweden)

Chris began his presentation with a contextual overview, highlighting the growing cultural and spiritual vacuum in an increasingly secular Western society. Belief in political systems had declined rapidly, with a resulting lack of participation both in elections and in cultural institutions. He pointed out the way in which public space is becoming colonised by economic interests ("The only place where I can meet my friends is a space where I can buy coffee"), and called for the development of spaces where society can develop its shared narratives. Artists, he suggested, have been increasingly marginalised, even by an increase in status, which puts their work into major institutions, and so divorces them from a broader social engagement.

His idea was to develop a way in which artists could work directly for the societal good, and particularly for security, which is otherwise the role of distant governments and force. He suggested that all conflict was essentially cultural in nature, and that a cultural response was therefore more appropriate than a legal or military one. His suggestion was that, rather than simply engaging in long-term cultural work with the aim of preventing future strife, artists should engage in conflict resolution, entering zones of tension to engage in arts activities with a view to allowing people to understand one another better and resolve their differences. Within Europe, the particular zone of tension he highlighted was around migrant populations in the suburbs.

From the floor, Michael Walling (Border Crossings, UK) mentioned the work of a number of artists in the field of conflict resolution in Asia and Africa, citing John Martin's presentation at the PIE Practice Exchange in London 2010. Many of these initiatives are funded directly by NGOs. He pointed out the application of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (in many ways a cultural initiative around storytelling in public space) to conflict resolution in Northern Ireland. Michael disagreed that social conflict is cultural, considering it to arise rather from economic divisions, but felt that the role of art in healing processes was established.

It was pointed out that any programme of cultural intervention would itself need to be intercultural in composition, as this would avoid the imposition of one culture's norms on another.



Hatto Fischer (Poiein kai Prattein – Greece²⁰) argued that the current crisis was leading to a reclaiming of public space from the bottom up. In Athens, there are currently 35 different popular assemblies, which are used for political and social discussion, and have organised childcare and free food.

Luca Bergamo (Culture Action Europe – Belgium²¹) spoke in support of Chris’s idea, suggesting that PIE could operate like Greenpeace had done with regard to the environment. He recommended that PIE reinforces its argument to policy-makers about the efficacy of cultural action.

In the online evaluation survey, this session was generally felt to be less valuable than many others, with a number of comments suggesting that this kind of direct intervention was not an appropriate role for the Platform to undertake. 31.6% rated the Session as Fair, although 42.1% rated it as Very Good and 10.5% as Excellent.



Chris Torch then proceeded to moderate a summary of the first day of the Forum, which he characterised as a particularly significant and fruitful day in the Platform’s work. He highlighted the discussion of power structures in relation to cultural institutions, and the need to share and indeed devolve power to a broad constituency. “We need to take the time to dream together”, he said; reminding the Forum not to allow “realism in Brussels” to destroy the reason we went into cultural work in the first place.

30 delegates attended an excellent dinner at Le Paon Royal, which allowed for the continuation of discussions in an informal environment.

²⁰ <http://poieinkaiprattein.org/>

²¹ <http://www.cultureactioneurope.org/>



Session 4

Welcome & Recap of Day One

Tarafa Baghajati (European Network Against Racism)

For the second day of the Forum, discussions were held in the European Commission's building Tour Madou, shifting the emphasis towards the Platform's political role as a Structured Dialogue Partner. The Forum was particularly fortunate to engage directly with the Director for Culture and Education.

Tarafa Baghajati began the day by thanking Sabine Frank, Myriam Gemers and the presenters. He reminded delegates that his country of origin is Syria, and said that, while it was a great privilege to discuss intercultural policy in Brussels, people were being massacred in a society which had itself been intercultural. He expressed his hopes for an end to the bloodshed and for Europe and Russia to take this seriously.

Tarafa highlighted key themes emerging from the first day of the Forum. He stressed the importance of youth and the need to embrace the multiple identities of second and third generation migrants. He also stressed the importance of international work engaged in dialogue with cultures outside Europe, showing how artists and societies can learn from one another.

THE STRUCTURED DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE PLATFORM FOR INTERCULTURAL EUROPE AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

Example: Recommendations to the EU Culture Council Expert Working Group on Accessible Culture and Intercultural Dialogue

Presenters: Niels Righolt (Danish Centre for Arts & Interculture, Copenhagen)
Rani Kasapi (Riksteatern, Sweden)
Chris Torch (Intercult, Sweden)

Respondent: Vladimír Šucha (Director for Culture & Education, European Commission)

Moderator: Sabine Frank (Platform for Intercultural Europe)



The Secretary General explained the Open Method of Co-ordination (see Session 1 above), and the role of the Platform in recommending that Member States use the OMC as a means to follow up on the achievements of the 2008 European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. The OMC group established in 2009 had dealt largely with access to culture: a new group would now be moving on to address diversity and intercultural dialogue. PIE would recommend that this work address the reform or transformation of cultural institutions. The panel was made up of members who take part in PIE's internal working group on the OMC. The work of this group and PIE's preliminary recommendations to the OMC expert group were supposed to be presented by Elisabeth Mayerhofer (IG Kultur Österreich), who had, however, fallen ill, and was unfortunately not able to present.

Rani Kasapi highlighted the importance of leadership in raising the intercultural competence of institutions: in a diverse society, leadership has to manage and allow diverse working practices. Leaders have to avoid simply recruiting staff who are like themselves, but must diversify the cultural workforce, allowing for other forms of art beyond the western bourgeois. Linguistic diversity must not be a barrier but a means for access. She said it was paramount that institutional change is backed up by public policies. Even where regulations on opening cultural institutions up to more diverse audiences are attached to their public grant agreements, there was no control of the implementation. She emphasised that knowledge about intercultural transformation of institutions was as important at ministerial levels as in cultural institutions themselves. She expressed the expectation that the OMC process address this issue.

Chris Torch questioned the extent to which cultural institutions could be relied upon to transform voluntarily or to what extent they needed to be pushed by building economic sanctions into public policies. He highlighted the work of Arts Council England to put diversity onto the funding agenda over a sustained period, and the genuine changes resulting from this. He contrasted this with a proposal in Sweden to cut funding on the basis of lack of engagement with diversity – a proposal which was resisted by cultural institutions and so never happened. He suggested that there should be an evaluating body to assess the degree to which cultural institutions had embraced diversity.

Chris also emphasised the importance of participation, particularly in relation to programming, engaging diverse target audiences in the selection of what cultural work should be presented within institutions. Citing Jouetta's success in Zoetermeer, he argued that working directly with the audience was the key to discovering the relevant narratives. Both excellence and ethics should be core values of cultural institutions.

Niels Righolt cited a recent Danish survey, which showed that, while the majority of the population supported a publicly-funded cultural sector²², 65% did not participate in cultural activity, even as audience. He argued that young artists and communities no longer organised themselves in the kind of structures provided in the national remit of many institutions. Artists related to community on a very local level, but also globally via the internet and other networks.



Invited to respond to these ideas, **Vladimir Šucha** (Director for Culture & Education, European Commission) said that he agreed with everything that had been said, noting that many of the questions raised by the panel underlay the design of the new Creative Europe Programme²³. He spoke of the "disease of Western civilisation", of which the current crisis in the currency was just one symptom. In the past, the artistic avant-garde had always led social change in Europe, while today's social shifts were being led by technology. Progressive cultural work was needed instead of the often purely conservative work of cultural institutions. Referring to the Slovak National Theatre in particular, he said that the content was "just catastrophic", not at all responding to modernity

Vladimir pointed out that audience development and capacity building for institutions are the key elements in the new EU cultural policy. He underlined that the Commission considered it crucial to have the Platform's co-operation; "We want your ideas, your participation, your pressure". It was necessary to raise awareness of key issues and best practice, and to push Member States along. Given the sovereignty of Member States on cultural policy, the European Commission could only encourage cooperation, and nurture civil society to play an instrumental role in policy-making. He asked whether the Platform might itself take on an evaluating role in terms of institutional response to diversity and said it would be welcome if the Platform were able to help develop indicators. He encouraged the Platform to work closely with the OMC, which was "bureaucratic, but the best tool we currently have". He closed by saying: "The future will be and should be as you design it".

²² A comparable survey in the UK has shown that support for public funding of the arts is now below 50% in that country.

²³ <http://ec.europa.eu/culture/creative-europe/>

See also http://ec.europa.eu/culture/creative-europe/video-interviews_en.htm for a discussion between Ann Branch and Chris Torch around the Creative Europe programme.



From the floor, Paolo Naldini (Cittadellarte-Fondazione Pistoletto – Italy) argued that the current moment was seeing an upsurge of grass-roots initiatives, often artistic, which needed financing, and which were addressing the broader audiences and participatory modes of democracy highlighted in the Forum. He cited the Occupy movement and the artistic activity associated with this. He pointed out that these initiatives were unable to raise funds locally or from national governments, precisely because they were challenging established structures of power, and said Europe needed to offer a means to circumvent the national structures. However, the majority of smaller organisations lacked the competencies to enter into dialogue with European institutions, which, no matter how positive their underlying political agenda, are notorious for their bureaucratic complexity.

Vladimir answered that there was a clear need for a training on accessing EU funding or umbrella organisation which could group smaller organisations and so permit them to bid for European funds, and that the cost of the training could be eligible for funding itself.

Angela Christofidou said she wished the Platform’s resources could be enhanced so that it could complement the OMC work at EU level with national coordination and advocacy.



Diane Dodd (International Federation of Arts Councils and Agencies, IFACCA) stressed the importance of asking arts councils about their diversity policies so as to keep the issue on the agenda.

Laura Cassio (EC DG Education and Culture, official in charge of the OMC group) invited the Platform to set the scene for the second phase of the OMC work in the autumn.

Vladimir ended on a personal note, as he will be leaving his current post in July. He thanked the Platform for its co-operation and interaction.

In the online survey, 94.1% of respondents rated this Session as Good to Excellent. One respondent commented: “Communication between PIE and EU is of high importance. Both sides are a natural alliance in overcoming national interests and obstacles to realise open, efficient societies that promote EU values. The EU has to enforce and support the networking between the different urban communities (cities) and regions that are facing concrete problems and lack knowledge and skills to deal with them.” There was some concern expressed at the challenge of continuing the plans and dialogue in the light of Vladimir’s departure from his position.



CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS: RESEARCHING AND BENCHMARKING COMMITMENTS

Outlook on a joint project of the Platform for Intercultural Europe and the Migration Policy Group

Presenter: Jan Niessen (Director, Migration Policy Group²⁴)

The final presentation was of a joint project of the Platform with the Migration Policy Group on developing benchmarks for diversity policies within cultural institutions – which followed on appropriately from Vladimir Šucha’s call for the Platform to get involved in the development of indicators.

Jan Niessen is Director of the Migration Policy Group, which is a Brussels-based independent think tank dealing with issues of mobility and migration. One aim of the organisation is to provide data and incentives for the implementation of diversity strategies across institutions, embracing boards, staff, customers / visitors and suppliers. This implies a need for the inclusion of diversity within the institution’s policies. Jan suggested the need for institutions to set targets on diversity, and to pursue positive outreach so that they achieve a diverse make-up reflecting that of society.

In working with an institution, the Migration Policy Group analyses the current position, formulates plans for organisational change, and benchmarks that against other institutions. This approach can be used to produce rankings. Jan was keen to emphasise that a ranking process was not to “name and shame” but should rather be regarded as a catalyst for change. In working with the Platform, this kind of work could be extended to cultural institutions across Europe. The project is in the planning stage and funding has yet to be secured.

In the online evaluation survey this Session was rated as Fair by 23.5% of respondents, Good by 47.1%, and Very Good to Excellent by 29.4%. One respondent commented: “Intellectual analyses and benchmarking can be some orientation for work, but on the other hand can be a misleading tool with the negative effects and consequences.”

²⁴ <http://www.migpolgroup.com/>

Recommendations and Routes Forward

The Forum suggested very powerfully that the current moment is of crucial significance in re-defining European culture, regenerating that culture through intercultural dialogue, and broadening dramatically the engagement and participation of more diverse communities in the cultural and democratic process. Our exchange with the Director of Education and Culture made manifest the political will to facilitate a new avant-garde that reflects, embraces and involves an ever more culturally diverse and complex social space. There is the possibility, and indeed the necessity, to dialogue with bottom-up movements in a broad range of manifestations, from the Athenian assemblies and the Occupy movement to youth groups and community centres. These creative encounters are the means to generate a vibrant and participatory cultural life, to move from a multicultural to an intercultural social model, and to rekindle our dwindling democracy.

Such dialogues cannot and will not take place within large cultural institutions in their current moribund form. The Forum identified the need not only for audience development but also for fundamental organisational development, with a particular stress on the need to bring smaller organisations, which have links to diverse communities and high levels of intercultural competence, into the mainstream. A diverse social space requires a comparable diversity within cultural provision. The monolithic structures of the nation-building era need to be broken down and re-imagined as free spaces for cultural interaction if they are to justify the continuation of public support and financial underpinning.

Democracy, ecology, peace and well-being – the pressing needs of the current moment – are not spectator sports. They are participatory activities, requiring the involvement on an active level of people from right across the social, economic and cultural spectrum if they are to be achieved. The current crisis, made manifest in the breakdown of the market-driven economic model and the single currency, is a symptom of this need for fundamental change. We can no longer be regarded as passive consumers, be that of culture, food, goods or services. We owe it to ourselves and to our futures to become active and engaged citizens.

In concrete terms, these conclusions lead to the following specific recommendations:

1. The Platform should ensure that it does not itself become a bureaucratic institution, but that it engages directly with artists and civil society. The presence of artists and cultural workers in debates will broaden the vision and passion of the organisation, and the presence of people from more diverse backgrounds will give it credibility and energy as the mouthpiece for intercultural dialogue and the generation of policy.
2. The Platform has a potential advisory and consultative role in overseeing and monitoring the level of engagement with diversity undertaken by cultural institutions in response to political initiatives. There is a clear role for the Platform in designing the indicators against which the performance of cultural institutions in the area of diversity can be measured.

Each of these recommendations has implications in terms of the resourcing of the Platform as it approaches its new funding scenario from 2013. Staffing levels and capacity would need to be addressed. However, it is clearly through the implementation of such specific strategic projects that new resources can be attracted to the Platform, as Vladimir Šucha made clear in his call to action. The new Cultural Strategy is designed to increase engagement and diversity, and it is likely that projects of this kind would be regarded favourably.

Echoes Down the Street

As I leave Espace Magh at the end of the first day, I turn down a narrow street on my way to the Metro. Nieuwland, it's called – the New Land. Not that it is all new. There are skips, building sites and concrete, graffiti art under bridges and rap blaring from car radios: there are also cobbles and rusty tramlines, gabled houses and painted lintels. New Land stands, like New Europe, in a curious

amalgam of tradition and modernity, anxious not to discard the established even as it embraces the new.

From the door of one of the gabled houses, a large group of men suddenly appears. Some are of Middle Eastern appearance, others are sub-Saharan African; some wear long *galabiyyas* and knitted *kufis*, while others sport woolly jumpers (it is cold for June – even in Northern Europe), corduroy jackets and trainers. Looking up, I realise that the house is in fact a mosque, and that they are leaving afternoon prayers.

As they move down the street, I am caught up in their flow – the sole white man and the sole non-Muslim in a river of chatter tinted by testosterone. Who is the foreigner here? That white man speaks no Flemish and only halting French, his sense of the city is mediated through maps and Google, his agenda is transitory. The men are in no hurry. Their obligation to Allah discharged, they wander slowly through the city, this capital of a nation that is no nation, this capital of a continent at once growing and fragmenting, this urban space where one in four now shares their faith and the most common name for babies is Mohammed. The lowering sun picks out the white hair of two old men strolling ahead of me, as, in a spontaneous affirmation of friendship, they take one another's hand.

Yes, I think. It is myself who is the foreigner here. They are at home.

Report written by Michael Walling, Artistic Director of Border Crossings (UK),
on behalf of Platform for Intercultural Europe

Editor: Sabine Frank
Photography and layout: Myriam Gemers

Border Crossings is an intercultural theatre company.
www.bordercrossings.org.uk

Border Crossings

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