

SYNERGIZE!

Culture in Democratic Action

The Socio-Political Impact
of International Networks &
Cultural Relations

NOVEMBER 12, 2019

TANZHAUS NRW – DÜSSELDORF

**10 YEARS
International Visitors
Programme**

DOCUMENTATION

Over the last 10 years the International Visitors Programme (IVP) has welcomed over 1000 guests from all over the world.

Alumni of the programme have been invited to return to North Rhine-Westphalia to shape the SYNERGIZE! conference together with local partners and to contribute actively to the conference programme, e.g. as keynote speaker, workshop leaders or panel debaters.

This brochure documents the conference and its results and may inspire to reflect on international projects in political challenging times.

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Conference, 12th November 2019,
tanzhaus nrw, Düsseldorf

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CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

The conference was attended by nearly 130 participants from, among others, Brazil, Bulgaria, China, Croatia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Namibia, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, South Africa, Ukraine, United Kingdom and USA.

Representatives of the Goethe-Institut, the British Council Germany, the Ministry of Culture and Science of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia and the NRW State and Culture Offices (e.g. nrw landesbuero tanz, Landesbüro für bildende Kunst, Literaturbüro NRW), the Federal Association of Dance in Education and Society, the Polish Institute Düsseldorf as well as various universities (Kunsthochschule für Medien Köln, Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Folkwang Universität der Künste, Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf, University of Debrecen, Hungary), festivals (Urban Arts Ruhr, Performing Arts Festival Berlin, Impulse Festival, Festival Theater der Welt, Porto Alegre em Cena), local and international theatres, exhibition halls, companies, organisations and networks were presented.

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What is the impact of international cultural relations on a democratic coexistence? Within these relations, how important is the personal encounter? And how can we expand intercultural networks, making them possible for everyone?

In our times, global diversity is becoming more and more visible and accessible through the internet, digital technologies and expanding infrastructures. On the other hand, tendencies of exclusion, polarisation and censorship are radically increasing. It seems more important than ever for art and culture to reinforce pluriversality and to self-empower.

On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the International Visitors Programme, 22 alumni of the programme from all over the world and several cultural partners from North Rhine-Westphalia came together to share their experiences and perspectives within the one-day-conference through a keynote, a panel discussion, workshops, roundtables and the exchange beyond.

For those who were not able to attend the conference in person, we provided a live streaming and the opportunity to participate in the discussions through online commenting via sli.do.

www.synergize.nrw-kultur-international.de



Welcoming Speech

Commissioned by the Ministry of Culture and Science of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) the NRW KULTURsekretariat (NRWKS) has now been running the International Visitors Programme for ten years. As an association made up of the largest cities in North Rhine-Westphalia, the NRWKS is a proactive organisational network of artists, curators, cultural institutions and administrators that works on a regional level to support and develop projects that focus on theatre, dance, music, and the visual arts. Lead by a wealth of different skills matched with close communication and strategically funded cooperation, the programme is all about cultural action and artistic experimentation, in other words, it is about building up a picture of Germany's largest federal state of 18 million inhabitants, all of whom have helped shape its rich cultural landscape. The International Visitors Programme also goes further, fostering connections across borders.

As part of the International Visitors Programme (IVP) and working closely with key figures in the cities in NRW, both partners and non-partners of the NRWKS network, we invite more than one hundred guests from all over the world to North Rhine-Westphalia every year. As part of the programme "NRWho? NRWhere? NRWhat?" several trips to festivals, exhibitions and cultural offerings in NRW are realised throughout the year. The call for participants for these trips is expanding in partnership with the Goethe-Institut and their branches worldwide which is casting our net for participants even wider. By



carefully maintaining a long-lasting network of cooperation and exchange it is the culture scenes in cities in North Rhine-Westphalia that benefit first and foremost. The presence of specialist journalists on our trips raises the international profile of NRW and its rich cultural life. The International Visitors Programme has become famous far beyond NRW itself as a successful example of cultural work on an international level, bringing networks together and fostering new ones.

This is known as "glocal" culture – firmly rooted in the local scene and developed and instigated by experts and artists. Support is given to key cultural figures by drawing on a global pool of people and ideas, to strengthen and broaden the scope of their projects.

It is important to have both a connection to the international cultural scene and a local network of artists and institutions. Together they create intercommunal, intercultural and transnational cultural work that inspires, explores new approaches, and becomes stronger with funding and support.

It is vitally important that the personal connections and networks that the programme fosters are sustained and strengthened. Especially today in light of the distorted political climate where a rise in autocratic tendencies is limiting the freedom of art and culture. Artistic cooperation and cultural connections can help to develop a discourse, encourage reflection, and of course also make activities and initiatives possible.

So today we want to take the chance to celebrate a bit but, more importantly, reflect on what we have achieved while also looking to the future and how we move forward with our international cultural networks in the face of the political and ecological crisis, dwindling certainties and how we look at the ethos of “ever more, ever faster” of global growth that our financial and consumerist society is signed up to. We hope to confront seemingly immutable dogmas and provide a counter narrative. At the same time, we need to reflect on what it means to be acting within a transnational context whilst also discussing how a transnational and interconnected culture can move with the times. That is why at the ten-year anniversary of the International Visitors Programme we want to take the chance under the motto “Synergize!” to rethink it. We want to come to an understanding of how art can assert its own freedom and the freedom of political spaces. One thing is clear: in the face of the ecological crisis,

which is also a crisis of capitalism, we need to make changes and that includes the way we think and act.

Culture means questioning, examining and continual renewal – for every individual and the way they live, artistically and politically.

It is with this in mind that the NRWKS has invited 22 alumni of the International Visitors Programme from all around the world. They were asked to bring topics for discussion, to lead workshops together with cultural figures in NRW, to enter into dialogue with partners in the state, to discuss their competencies and ideas, while expanding their interpersonal networks as part of an accompanying programme that will run throughout the convention.

Our thanks go to the Ministry of Culture and Science of North Rhine-Westphalia, the tanzhaus nrw as our partner for this event, and also to the Goethe-Institut and our partners in NRW and around the world.

Let’s think and take action on where we are going and how much further we could go in the future! Synergize!

Dr Christian Esch

DIRECTOR, NRW KULTURSEKRETARIAT

Welcoming Speech

Dear Dr Esch, dear Dr Ruckteschell-Katte,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The International Visitors Programme of North Rhine-Westphalia, whose 10th anniversary we are celebrating today, is unique to NRW; no other German state has such an institution. We are a little proud of that!

Our anniversary event today is dedicated especially to our alumni. Since the programme was launched in 2009, they have been important international ambassadors for NRW.

Let me single out two of these alumni and welcome, on behalf of all the others as well, Mr Mike van Graan from Pretoria in South Africa, who will give the keynote address and Mr Fernando Zugno from Porto Alegre in Brazil, who will be a panel speaker.

International cultural exchange has been a matter close to our heart for many years. Three tools assist us in our efforts in this regard: the promotion of exports, the promotion of cooperation and scholarships abroad. During each round of funding we provide around 50 cultural institutions and individual artists with the opportunity to spend time abroad and to engage in international co-productions. We are spending roughly half a million euros on this every year and we are working on new strategies to increase the funding volume.

To give you an idea of why we want to expand international cooperation, I would like to point out some of the things that make our state so special. NRW not only has the largest concentration of museums and theatres in Germany, the biggest independent art scene and the widest variety of musical performers. We have retained a superb reputation as the cradle of the artistic avantgarde (sixties/seventies –

Beuys, Richter, Polke, Becher, Kraftwerk) and the Düsseldorf Art Academy is one of the most renowned in the world today.

At the same time, North Rhine-Westphalia possesses a few special features that make it just a bit more difficult to promote culture as a unique selling point. NRW has a large area with many population centres and a huge countryside. It is also a young state with no proper identity of its own prior to 1945. This sets it aside from other German states such as Berlin or Bavaria which enjoy a well-developed brand image and/or have clearly defined cultural centres.

In NRW, it is chiefly Cologne Cathedral and Beethoven that have great international appeal. We are eager to increase our efforts to show the world this cultural treasure trove and the pulsating scene of Germany's most populous state.

This is why we launched the International Visitors Programme 10 years ago and, with NRW KULTURsekretariat, found a competent partner to carry out the programme. Under the programme, international curators, artists, cultural managers and artistic directors of all disciplines as well as press correspondents are invited to come to North Rhine-Westphalia. We are earmarking 300,000 euros every year to support the Visitors Programme. It is money well spent. Since 2009, almost 1000 visitors have been welcomed during 180 sponsored visits.

Major partners include the Goethe-Institut's offices abroad. The head of the Goethe-Institut's Culture Department, Dr Joachim Bernauer recalls that "(...)Contacts established during Visitor Programme trips frequently led to intense working relationships and follow-up projects. (...)Against the backdrop of the current resurging nationalism in particular, the programme is more important than ever". I would therefore like to use this opportunity

to thank the Goethe-Institut very much for its excellent cooperation. I am particularly pleased that Dr Katharina von Ruckteschell-Katte, who is with Goethe-Institut in London, will be speaking to us today.

Let me use the year 2018 as an example to highlight the benefits these international networking efforts deliver to the culture scene here and also to our visitors.

In 2018, 15 visitor programmes with a total of 93 participants were carried out. The distribution across the continents was also notable: 7 guests came from Africa, 18 from Asia, 46 from Europe, 8 from North America, 3 from Oceania and 11 from South America. Nineteen NRW cities and 167 partner organisations and artists from NRW were involved.

The sheer figures, however, are outweighed by the response and feedback from our guests. They illustrate how profitable this international exchange is for everyone involved.

I am quoting from some of the feedback we received on the Visitors Programme 2018.

Gary van Zante, curator at MIT-Museum and visitor to the Düsseldorf PHOTO Festival praises the “excellent possibilities for exchange of ideas and collaborations”.

A visitor of the Tanzland NRW theme journey, Adedayo Liadi, director of a dance company from Lagos said that “without this kind of programme, we as art manager, curator or producer need to fight alone to link with different organisations”.

Sebastian Scotney, a journalist from Jazz News, London said after visiting the Jazzfest in Bonn that “the depth and breadth of the cultural offering in the region was the strongest

impression from the trip – that there is a massive amount going on, well linked into education and the broadcasting setups.”

I could – and of course would love to – read to you more e-mails and letters, but that would go beyond today’s scope.

Going forward, I can assure you that we wish to continue and expand the International Visitors Programme in the years ahead. On that note, I hope that today’s conference will provide many more impulses and suggestions.

Dr Hildegard Kaluza

HEAD OF CULTURAL DEPARTMENT,
MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND SCIENCE OF
THE STATE OF NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA





Good morning everybody, I am very happy to be here.

Dear Dr Kaluza, dear Dr Esch, dear Bettina Masuch, dear Mike van Graan, dear participants, dear guests,

I am actually delivering big congratulations in this small speech from our general secretary, Johannes Ebert. He would have loved to be here, but he could not make it due to another appointment. He asked me to tell you all – and especially the NRW KULTURsekretariat – how amazing this anniversary is. Ten years of the International Visitors Programme is ten years of a big success story. The Goethe-Institut is very happy and proud indeed to be one of the partners of the NRW KULTURsekretariat and of the International Visitors Programme.

It is, so to say, a jewel in the partner-landscape of the Goethe-Institut. I can say so myself as I have worked in many different Goethe-Institutes world-wide. It is always an absolute privilege to be able to suggest partners to participate

in this programme. We always had a fantastic feedback. It is a great possibility to have the chance to invite interesting partners and artists to travel to North Rhine-Westphalia. It has this absolutely impressive amount of various cultural scenes. In Germany there is not only Berlin as many people in the world assume. And it is really nice when they come back from their visit and say: “It is amazing what’s happening here.” So, congratulations and a great thank you for this collaboration. We do hope that this will last even longer than ten more years – ten times ten years, I hope!

Being here today, especially for the panel later on, I think that you chose a topic that cannot be more current than today: “Synergize” and – what I like – “culture” and “democratic action”. I think, we really have to act. We live in times where politics try to divide us, try to separate us. It is great that this programme and also our projects together are meant to bring people together, to build platforms, networks, where we counteract these tendencies, where we can fight for what is at stake, like democracy, like

freedom of expression, like mobility in the world. These are goals the Goethe-Institut shares with the NRW KULTURsekretariat. I do hope that not only today, but in the next months, years and decades, we can do a lot together to create a dissemination of these values we stand for.

I am really looking forward to being part of this conference today. Thank you again and congratulations!

Dr Katharina von Ruckteschell-Katte

DIRECTOR, GOETHE-INSTITUT LONDON
AND THE NORTHWESTERN EUROPE REGION

Keynote

International Cultural Relations: Beyond Useful Idiocy, Towards Being Agents of Real Change

Mike van Graan

ALUMNUS OF THE INTERNATIONAL VISITORS PROGRAMME,
PRESIDENT OF THE AFRICAN CULTURAL POLICY NETWORK



Mike van Graan interrogated in his keynote the nature of contemporary international cultural relations and the interests they serve in a global order that is fundamentally inequitable, and suggests ways in which cultural partnerships could contribute to real change.

Thirty years ago, we celebrated the fall of the Berlin Wall. Both in concrete terms and metaphorically, it represented a new beginning for the world. The Cold War had ended, and liberal democracy, the handmaiden of the free market, was set to usher in a new era of prosperity, human well-being and political stability.

1989 was also the moment at which the winds of change began to sweep through my home country, South Africa. Proscribed political organisations were unbanned, political prisoners released, and the dream of ‘the rainbow nation’, people of different hues separated by apartheid, now living together in harmony, was unleashed.

Yet, just three decades on, we live in a heavily polarised world, divided by two key faultlines: inequality and culture. Inequality with regard to who wields economic, political, military and cultural power, and culture: different value and belief systems, different traditions, different forms of individual and communal identity-making that texture and make more complex conflicts that are rooted in inequality.

According to a report in USA Today, at the end of World War II, there were 7 border walls around the world. By the time the Berlin Wall fell, there were more than 15. Today, there are at least 77 walls, including more than 1000km of fences in Europe, more than six times the length of the Berlin Wall, many of these built since the influx of refugees from wars in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Africa in 2015.

Like war, building walls is good business. A recent report by the Transnational Institute reveals that at least 900 million EUR have been spent on walls in Europe and a further 999 million on virtual walls (radar, IT equipment, drones and the like). “Perversely”, says the report, “three of the main beneficiaries of this expenditure, are European arms dealers that export weapons to the Middle East and North Africa, thereby contributing to the conflicts that cause migration and refugees in the first place.”

South Africa has become a metaphor for the world. Fundamental inequalities – rooted in the historical exploitation of the black majority by a white minority – have been exacerbated in a society in which the inherent dignity of everyone is now enshrined in the Constitution. And yet, we have become one of the most unequal societies in the world with just 10 % of us earning more than 60 % of the national income; poverty makes a mockery of the inherent dignity of most citizens. Little wonder then that social problems proliferate, with the ‘haves’ building higher walls, with electric fencing, linked to private security firms or live in gated communities.

And if the inequalities, their social consequences, and the threat to the privileged are not being sufficiently metaphorical, then South Africa also has a major problem with refugees and migrants, particularly from other parts of the African continent, whom they claim are responsible for crime and for stealing their jobs.

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, we’ve had the attacks now known as 9/11, the Israeli wall along the West Bank, the coming and going of the so-called Arab Spring, the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, the clash of civilisations as some would have it, or as Hungary’s Victor Orban bluntly put it “Muslim invaders who threaten Hungary’s and Europe’s Christian identity”.

This is the divided, polarised, us-them world in which we seek to do “international cultural relations”, to engage in “cultural diplomacy”, to promote “intercultural dialogue” ... to what end? Indeed, to what end?

Two weeks ago, I was part of a study tour to Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, formerly part of East Germany. The aim was to hear what the fall of the Berlin Wall meant for people living in that region. Across the spectrum, people felt alienated, their education and contributions were deemed of lesser value than West German citizens; on average, they earned 25 % less than their West German counterparts; few East Germans were represented in senior management of universities or of corporates.

This accounted for some of the disillusionment with the traditional, major political parties and the growth of parties like the right wing AfD and the left Linke parties.

Now, if 30 years later, there is this kind of alienation and feelings of marginalisation in a unified Germany, that is one of the wealthiest nations in the world, relatively homogenous, with a

Keynote

common language, just imagine the alienation and marginalisation felt by those on the under-side of contemporary history.

Two weeks ago, South Africa's national rugby team won the Rugby World Cup in Japan, beating England in the final. This led to an outpouring of national pride and happiness across the country, much like the winning of the Rugby World Cup in 1995 in South Africa, with Nelson Mandela donning the number six jersey of the white Afrikaner captain of the team, becoming the inspiration for the movie, *Invictus*, which some of you might have seen.

And yet, on social media, there has been deep divisions with some bemoaning the sight of black and white people celebrating together, as more 'rainbow nation' mythology that negates the deep disparities that exist within the country.

Which again raises the question of intercultural dialogue, cultural diplomacy and intercultural relations in the context of fundamental global and regional inequalities: to what end?

Is it to maintain the inequitable status quo? To defend privilege through co-option? To exert soft power, in order to retain the gains made through hard power? Or is it to seek real, fundamental change that may challenge our comfort in the short term, but which may ensure more sustainable peace in the longer term?

Some examples of inequality to frame our thoughts:

On Thursday, the United Nations General Assembly again voted overwhelmingly – for the 28th time – for the financial, economic and trade blockade by the USA of Cuba to end. 187 countries against the USA, Israel and Brazil,



with Colombia and Ukraine abstaining. But with five countries – including the USA – enjoying veto rights in the Security Council, the resolution will not carry because it is not in the interests of a so-called leading democracy to abide by a democratic decision.

Because of their superior military power, the USA and Britain were able to invade Iraq on the basis of fake intelligence and even though, in terms of the UN Charter, the war was illegal. The political leaders responsible for the war, for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people, and for the continuing instability in that country and the region, continue to walk freely, and have not been – and will not be – held to account.

Whose values and ideas dominate, whose way of life is valorised, which perspectives on world events carry the most influence?

And which victims of terror are humanised, in other words, whose culture assumes hegemony, depends on who has global or regional reach through news and media outlets, audiovisual products and distribution networks, and access to digital platforms. According to the UN Conference of Trade and Development Reports on the global creative economy, Africa's share of world trade in the creative industries is less than 1 %. This matters not only because of the gross imbalances in trade in creative goods and services, but also because embedded within creative goods such as movies, television programmes and gaming, are ideas, values, beliefs, perspectives on the world, so that Africans are largely consumers of these products emanating from elsewhere, imbibing their cultural content. Few African films, plays, books make it to European hearts and minds; those that do, would probably be due to European funding and selection.

With Euronews, Sky, BBC, French Television, Deutsche Welle, we are able to hear the stories

of victims of terror in Europe, to empathise with them and their families but there are no international media platforms from Africa, for example, that project – through an African lens – African stories, the narratives of more than a billion people who live on that continent. Accordingly, they, we are seen through the eyes of Europe – as illegal migrants or refugees, as the unwanted, wretched of the earth.

A 2018 UNESCO Report showed that – on average – Africans are able to travel to 75 countries without visas, about 40 % of the 180 countries that those with European passports may travel to without requiring a visa.

A colleague at the same university at which I am currently based, posted this on Twitter earlier this year:

“Getting through security and passport control at Frankfurt Airport is my worst experience at a European airport so far. It took nearly two hours and a million questions about my qualifications. The guy at Passport Control couldn't believe I was invited to an academic conference. Even after I showed him my invitation letter. He was like ‘why do they call you doctor? You're a doctor of what? So why are you going there?’ Same questions over and over again.”

Another friend cancelled a lecture she was due to give in London in September this year after her experience of going through the visa application process which she described as “humiliating, overpriced and unfair”. Notwithstanding numerous previous visits to the UK, she wrote on Facebook that “we are made to feel like criminals each time rather than collaborators and guests”.

These are examples of the deep, structural and fundamental inequalities that exist within the world in which we seek to pursue cultural relations. To what end?

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”, declares Article One of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. But in our lived experience, we know this not to be true. We are born into inequality, free to be treated with indignity and having our fundamental rights disrespected, precisely as a consequence of a world founded on perpetuating and increasing inequality.

Not that long ago, Africans were kidnapped violently to work as cheap slave labour to drive the economies of America and of European powers. Then, as they became more ‘civilised’, these white countries abolished slavery and replaced it with colonialism, with the Berlin Conference of 1884/5 arbitrarily dividing up Africa between 13 European countries. Africans were forced to learn European languages and were Christianised – so-called ‘civilised’ – while providing the cheap labour to extract the raw materials to drive the manufacturing economies of Europe in particular. Then came the end of the Second World War, and the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, but it was only a decade later that the decolonisation process began in Africa; universal human rights were initially the preserve of white nations. Now in a globalised, technology-linked world, it is possible to relocate factories to the Global South, to pay labour at rates and in working conditions far below what would be the standard or acceptable in the Global North, increasing profits and repatriating wealth to the countries where those companies are based, to support the much higher quality of life of their citizens.

Having been forced to serve as slaves, now that Africans would like to sell their labour voluntarily on the international market, they are not welcome, unless they are doctors, nurses or gifted footballers. Although, even gifted footballers are racially abused in civilised Europe, where the same racist impulses that drove slavery and colonialism continue to inform attitudes towards people of colour.

Thus has it always been: many lives are expendable, so that the privileged may live; many have their human rights denied, so that some may enjoy their fundamental freedoms; many have their dignity eroded, so that a few may feel secure.

If cultural democracy is about the equitable and free flow of ideas, values and perspectives that may compete for hegemony and for the hearts and minds of ordinary people, then a world characterised by huge structural inequalities, presents insurmountable obstacles to cultural democracy.

‘Culture in democratic action’ – but it is those with resources who are better able to exercise their democratic rights to freedom of expressions, freedom of association, freedom of movement, or determine how democracy unfolds and whose interests it serves.

Is a competitive ‘market of ideas and values’ what the advocates of cultural diplomacy, of international cultural relations really want, anyway?

In July 2017, the European Parliament passed a resolution on culture in European international relations, highlighting “the important role of culture in EU external policy as a soft power tool, a catalyst for peacekeeping, stability and reconciliation” but regretting that in “the EU Global Strategy (...) the intrinsic value of culture and art as restraints against radicalism and terrorism is not mentioned (...)”

While policies appear to emphasise “values” in international relations, in reality, it is interests that shape international policy. Values like human rights, gender equality and freedom of expression are affirmed until economic, geo-political and security interests dictate otherwise. The EU Resolution “regrets (...) that culture as restraints against radicalism and terrorism is not mentioned” but, rather than look to culture as a restraint against radicalisation, how about addressing inequality, or not



supporting repressive regimes, or terrorising innocent civilians with bombs, all of which lead to radicalisation?

The British government earns billions of pounds through sales of weapons to Saudi Arabia that leads the war on Yemen, and then it may send in the British Council to conduct international cultural relations in Yemen to restrain radicalism and terrorism that may arise as a result of this war. To engage in international cultural relations as a strategy to counter the symptoms of inequality and injustice, is to perpetuate the lie that what matters is values, rather than interests – whether we recognise these or not.

Which brings me to my deliberately provocative title “Beyond Useful Idiocy: Towards being agents of real change”. When we engage in cultural diplomacy or international cultural relations, we do so against the backdrop of historical injustices, of contemporary inequalities and in the service of particular interests.

The European Union is probably the most significant political, economic and cultural bloc globally and its influence is experienced in multiple ways through trade, its media platforms, development aid, cultural partnerships, etc.

The EU formulates a resolution on culture in international relations, as is its right without having to consult other countries, but countries in the Global South and elsewhere will feel the effect of these policies as they are projected through European media platforms and institutions like EUNIC, the French Institute, British Council and Goethe-Institut. Because it has the resources, the EU Commission is able to host a colloquium on ‘culture and the future’ as it did in June this year, and invite practitioners from Africa, the Arab region, Asia and Latin America and foist a Manifesto on them for adoption, and it would be accepted because of the fear of alienating the EU and potential resources, particularly when practitioners come from countries where there is little or no

public support for creative practice. This is an obvious point but those who have resources, wield superior power in international cultural relations.

And yet, if we are to find sustainable answers to our globe's challenges, we need to engage in robust, honest debate, to challenge our respective assumptions and ways of doing things, and the idea that those who are resourced know better, or should be privileged in finding and implementing solutions on their terms.

This is the background against which I've been involved in various networks – Arterial Network, the African Cultural Policy Network and the Global South Arts and Culture Initiative (GLOSACI) – representing attempts by Global South practitioners to have their voices heard where policy is made, to interrogate policies that are introduced to us by Europe to determine their relevance, if any, to our conditions, and to advocate around issues that directly affect us, as GLOSACI is doing in respect of the restricted mobility and undignified treatment of Global South creatives.

Ultimately though, we need to work together, north and south, to provide the vision, the leadership and the strategies that the world needs in order to change our current trajectory which is unsustainable.

My personal vision in this regard is for a Global Institute for Cultural Leadership and Change-making, with a cohort of 30–60 participants from all regions, meeting in five or six ten-day campuses, over a period of two years, with each campus being on a different continent – Beirut, Delhi, Bogota, Kigali, Vancouver, Berlin. Participants would learn about global issues, like climate change, about the region in which each campus takes place, about the cultural dimension of the challenges they face and how to mitigate these, and they would establish solidarity and mutual respect through

relationships that would be built through working, learning and having experiences together over a sustained period. It would not be resourced Europe or America inviting young leaders to learn its values or on its terms, it would be a global network of young leaders learning about the world, having not just intellectual engagement, but visceral, emotional experiences.

I have seen the value of these kinds of learning experiences through the Atelier for Young Festival Managers over the last two years, hosted in Africa, and in Europe, but with participants from every continent, and with mentors and facilitators from around the globe.

IT IS A COUNTER-INTUITIVE MODEL:

rather than Europe setting an agenda which has others coming to learn on Europe's terms, perhaps to be co-opted to perpetuate European privilege, it's about Europe helping to create and resource a learning environment in which diversity is encouraged, and the experiences of "the other" help to shape the programme, to find mutual solutions. And then it's about putting those relationships to work.

TOOLKIT:



<https://ietm.org/en/publications/beyond-curiosity-and-desire-towards-fairer-international-collaborations-in-the-art>

Thank you for the opportunity to share this provocation; I look forward to ongoing conversations. And to action. Not out of guilt, but understanding, empathy, and human solidarity. To change the world in our common and collective interests.

Audience Discussion

“How can culture influence politically?”

“Provoke and question ...”

“We live with a paradox that is also an opportunity: the pessimism of our intellect contrasts with the optimism of our will.”

“Personal encounters and relations encourage profound common experiences and the sustainable contact, the genuine confrontation with other cultures and a global solidarity.”

“What is the role of art per se within cultural international relations?”

“Making art together brings people together, it becomes the linchpin of intercultural exchange.”

“Art and culture have a fundamental quality of changing and revealing perspectives.”

“So we need art and culture for 1. human development, 2. social development, 3. economic development.”

“How can we reach all people in a world where cultural policy and creative industries only address the formerly so-called ‘first’ and ‘second’ world.”

Human Rights § 27–1
“Everyone has the right to participate freely in the cultural life of the community.”



“For most international visitors and cultural practitioners of the International Visitors Programme, Germany is like ‘another planet’ that you leave after a short visit, only to be confronted again with the challenges of your own country – what creates sustainable change?”

“To learn from the world, rather than teach it.”

“Sending more German cultural workers abroad.”

Panel Discussion

Internationalisation in Arts and Culture – Jet Set or Political Mission?

With **Stefan Hilterhaus**, Artistic Director PACT Zollverein, Essen; **Dr Katharina von Ruckteschell-Katte**, Director, Goethe-Institut London and the Northwestern Europe Region; **Brigitta Muntendorf**, Composer, Cologne; **Fernando Zugno**, Alumnus of the International Visitors Programme, Director, Porto Alegre em Cena, Brazil
Moderation: Prasanna Oommen

How sustainable and democratic is the internationalisation of the cultural sphere and what can we do to address the issues?



“Culture knows no borders, culture needs exchange, culture is global. Culture needs inspiration and inspiration comes from encountering ‘the other’. We need multi-perspectives.” *Dr Katharina von Ruckteschell-Katte, Goethe-Institut London*

Change of Perspective and Multi-Perspectives as Empowerment

“Bringing together many different perspectives to respond to the fragility of our system, not exclusively art establishments.”
Stefan Hilterhaus

“Understanding colonialisation processes and understanding culture from a different direction. What do the people who originally came from South America have to say?” *Fernando Zugno*

“Not to teach the world, but to learn from the world, with curiosity.”
Dr Katharina von Ruckteschell-Katte

Strengthen Organically Growing Networks

“If the network of international visitor programmes or similar institutions and their alumni continues to be sustainably supported, a very strong voice and movement can be created, which can ultimately also exert political influence.”
Dr Elke Ritt, British Council, Berlin

“Perhaps we can help to create platforms that are independent of the institution, but we must not forget that curatorships are curated as well. The decision on how people come together must be made more organically and not in the form of predetermined criteria, the network will then multiply itself naturally.”
Dr Katharina von Ruckteschell-Katte

“Often artistic approaches and political attitudes and discourses mingle – Afro-futurism, activism... there are new voices that are very reflective and come from all over the world – it is an empowerment in a desperate situation in which the world finds itself. To develop something together is empowerment.” *Stefan Hilterhaus*

Eye Level and Curiosity instead of Paternalism

“And how can we avoid paternalistic mechanisms? By an independent curatorial board? Many guidelines in the North Rhine-Westphalian funding system request that international partners will provide 50 % of the project budget... but very often it is unrealistic.”
Reinhard Krämer, Ministry of Culture and Science of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia

Decentralised Decision-Making Processes

“White people with European or international backgrounds make culture and take the decisions these days. As a curator of an international festival, you should distribute the responsibilities differently and more widely.” *Fernando Zugno*

“Different municipalities or city administrations should exchange and cooperate more and decentralise decision-making processes, e.g. by networking between the Goethe-Institut and the cultural office.”
Nadine Müseler, Cultural Department of the City of Cologne

Panel Discussion

Can culture influence world affairs at times of political tension? And when is international exchange a genuine exchange with political systems?



Does international also mean open-minded?
And how important are personal encounters?

Where is the journey towards internationalisation speeding ahead, and where is it stagnating? What does internationalisation mean in economic and ecological terms?



The Why of an International Cooperation is Essential

“There are several perspectives, at least the artistic and the political. The reason for an international cooperation should be an artistic and long-term idea and not a political one, otherwise all this will be of no use on a political level either. Artists are not ambassadors.”

Brigitta Muntendorf

“We travel and move around a lot – but why do we do it?”

Dr Uma Vangal

“Artists are not in charge of foreign policy. We have to get into a dialogue and think about the system, how we make non-hierarchical art together, and non-hierarchical art can never support a hierarchical system.” *Brigitta Muntendorf*

Emotional Internalisation instead of Internationalisation

“We must replace the term ‘internationalisation’ with ‘emotional internalisation’. We need time to observe and internalise new cultures and only then can we start thinking about cooperation.”

Dr Uma Vangal

Personal Encounters and CO₂ Emissions

“We need new ways of meeting each other on an equal level in culture, of really meeting each other, that includes travelling, and yet we have to keep the environment in mind. We should decide this according to the situation without losing sight of our interests, despite ecological debates.”

Dr Katharina von Ruckteschell-Katte



Time and Long-Term Perspective

“We need time. And we need to be better informed about each other’s activities in order to make decisions more consciously and sustainably.” *Stefan Hilterhaus*

“International relations begin at home.” *Stefan Hilterhaus*

Panel Discussion

Live Streaming and Live Commenting

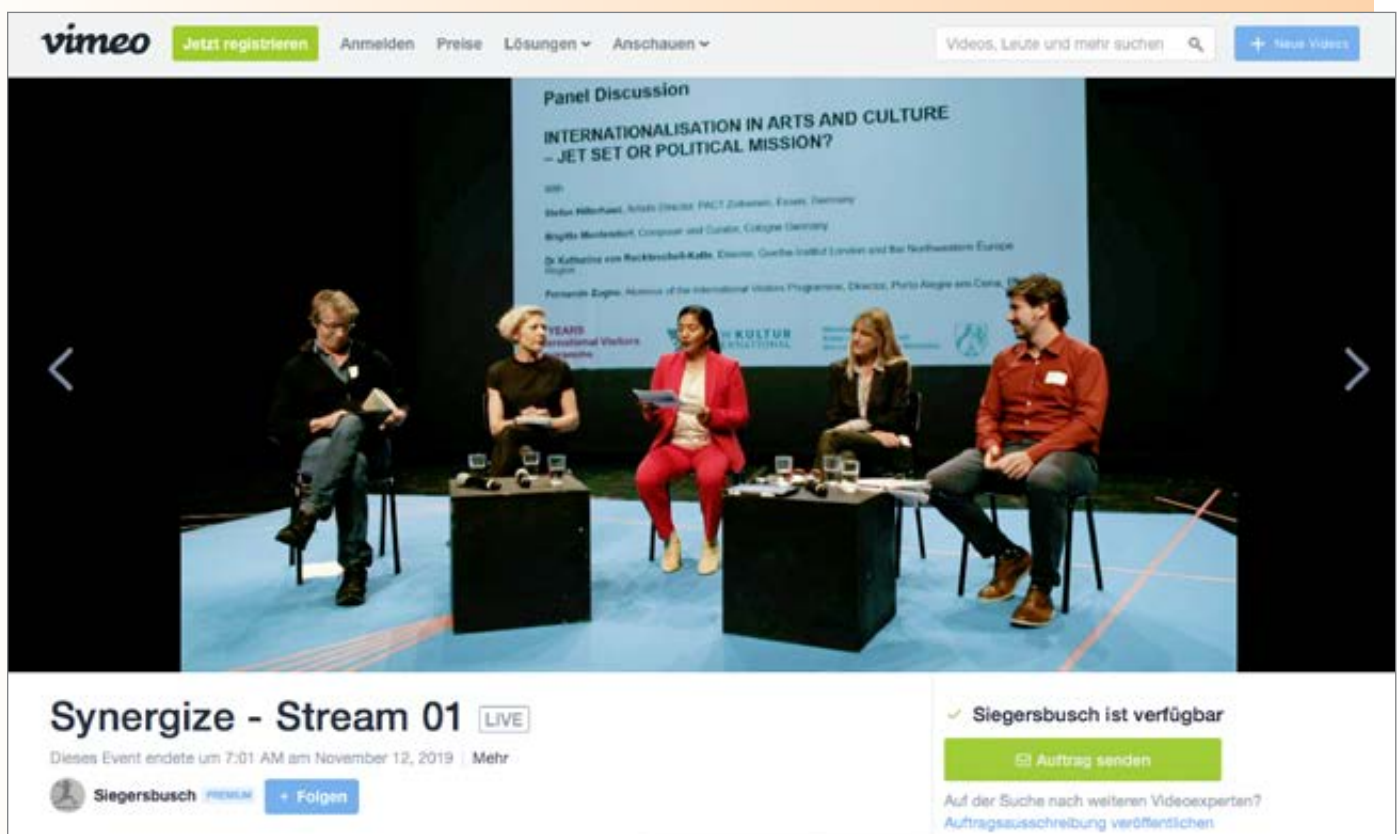
Through a live streaming of the conference and the final panel, the discussion was also accessible to those who were not present. The aim was to open the event to all interested parties and make it easily accessible.

The online tool slido also offered the opportunity to comment live and ask questions, anonymously if preferred. This opportunity was actively used during the keynote and during the panel.

The live streaming is available as video documentation on the conference webpage.



<https://synergize.nrw-kultur-international.de/live-streaming>



The screenshot shows a Vimeo live stream interface. At the top, the Vimeo logo is on the left, and navigation links like 'Jetzt registrieren', 'Anmelden', 'Preise', 'Lösungen', and 'Anschauen' are in the center. On the right, there is a search bar with the text 'Videos, Leute und mehr suchen' and a '+ Neue Videos' button. The main video player area shows a panel discussion with five participants seated on a stage. A large screen behind them displays the title 'Panel Discussion INTERNATIONALISATION IN ARTS AND CULTURE - JET SET OR POLITICAL MISSION?' and lists the names and titles of the participants: Stefan Hiltmann, Britta Mandelstam, Dr. Katharina von Richthofen-Kalle, and Fernando Espino. Below the video player, the title 'Synergize - Stream 01' is displayed with a 'LIVE' badge. To the right, a notification says 'Siegerebusch ist verfügbar' with an 'Auftrag senden' button. At the bottom left, there is a 'Folgen' button for the channel 'Siegerebusch'.

The screenshot shows a Slido interface with a dark blue background. On the left, there is a vertical sidebar with the text "Join at slido.com #Synergize". The main area displays four questions from anonymous users, each with a thumbs-up icon and a count. The questions are: "How access international exchange if there is no institutional support in your country?", "Municipal organizations have to be competent in first place and not raise the obstacles for initiatives. Without it's mere hypocrisy.", "I hope the DAAD is present at this best conference on internationalization!!", and "It is mostly understood as economic progress." The text "Latest question" is visible between the second and third questions.

COMMENTS & QUESTIONS THROUGH SLIDO

#Synergize

QUESTION THROUGH SLIDO:

“How access international exchange if there is no institutional support in your country?”

ANSWER FROM THE PANEL:

“Through the online search for international working institutions and subsidies.”

ANSWER FROM THE PANEL:

“Access to knowledge about funding for international projects must be facilitated.”

ANSWER FROM THE PANEL:

“Funding from Europe for intercultural projects should be distributed directly to economically weaker countries so that they can organise themselves with regard to international cooperation in culture.”

QUESTION THROUGH SLIDO:

“Would you say that personal contact between people not only from different countries, but as well from different professional fields is a key to change?”

ANSWER FROM THE PANEL:

“Yes, we need multi-perspectives for a deep understanding of each other.”

ANSWER FROM THE PANEL:

“And we need the face-to-face contact – when people meet and have relations with each other, some profound things happen.”

Workshop 1

What about the Body?

Viktor Ruban, Choreographer, Kiev/Ukraine

Ben J. Riepe, Choreographer, Düsseldorf/Germany

Two choreographers, two countries, two different experiences, working-structures, environments and one live-meeting on-stage: In “What about the Body?” Ukrainian choreographer Viktor Ruban and German choreographer Ben J. Riepe, who have only ever met in person once, but have been in contact ever since, thematically focused on how our perception is formed by digitalised communication and about the importance of personal physical encounter, especially in times of growing global networks.





TOPICS & STATEMENTS

“Only 20 % of interpersonal communication happens mentally and through verbal exchange. 80 % of the communication happens through the body and its energies.”

“How about starting discussions and conversations by letting the body speak first?”

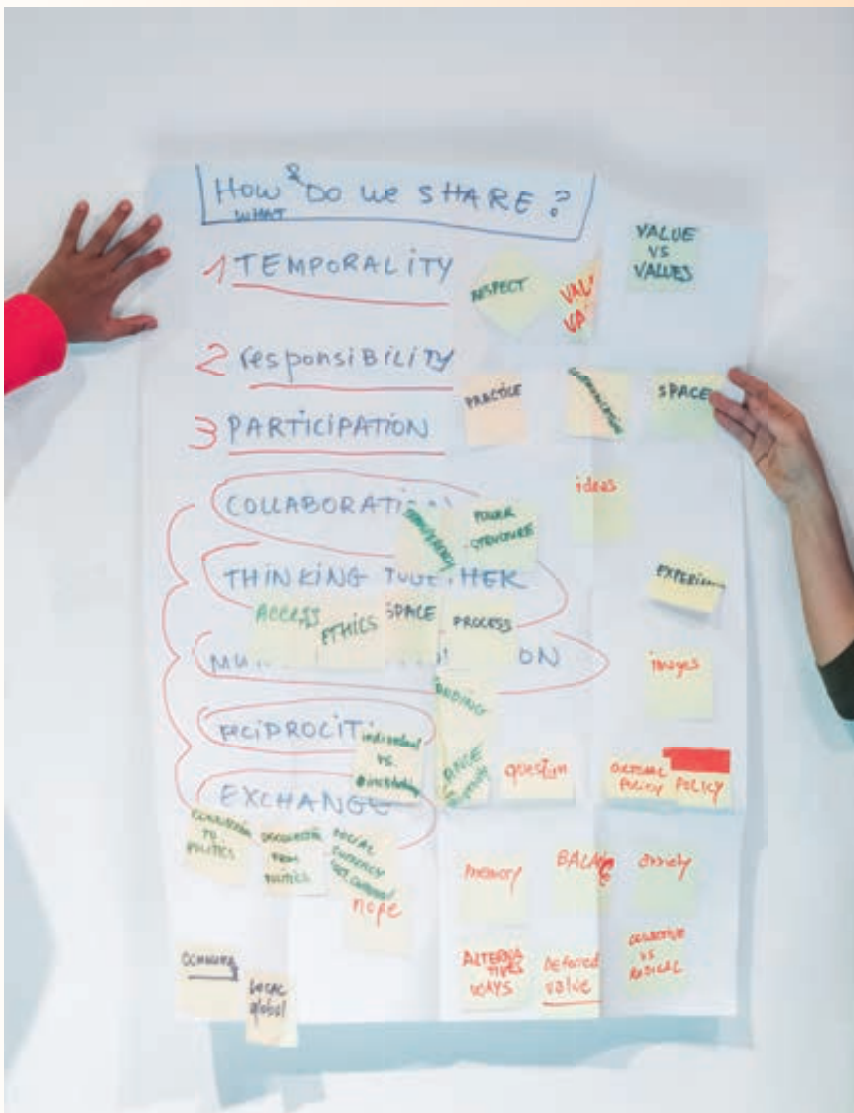
“I agree! The space for physical aspects within conferences and events is unfortunately very underestimated!”
(workshop participant moving through the room)

“The inclusion of the body in our daily communication should be incorporated into as many sectors and areas as possible. Especially in international exchange this can have a great added value.”

Workshop 2

How Do We Share in the Context of a Global Solidarity Economy?

Natalia Ivanova Mount, Curator, Oakland, US
Martina Angelotti, Curator, Milan, Italy



Through cooking together, the participants explored the act and process of sharing and collaborating. The workshop also included a visioning session, in which the participants were asked to imagine new ways of finding commonalities across cultures and borders, working together on the basis of abundance rather than scarcity, creating international networks that go beyond the constraints of funding and project-based content creation, and discussing the basis of reciprocal material and immaterial exchange in a global context.

TOPICS & STATEMENTS

“How do we connect and exchange beyond the ‘traditional’ channels in the arts market?”

“In joint actions we first get to know each other and can then start a dialogue.”

“Communality is the basis for an ongoing exchange – what connects us?”

“What does ‘reciprocity’ mean in international context and in the context of the neo-nomadic practice of the artist/curator?”

“In order to strengthen networks, it is necessary to meet again and again, in NRW but also in the corresponding partner countries.”

“How do we build a platform for continued international collaboration – how do we continue to exchange and connect long after the workshop and conference have ended?”



Workshop 3

The Gaze and the Global

Dr Uma Vangal, Filmmaker and Professor, Chennai, India

In the visual arts as well as other art forms, the 'gaze' is crucial in the way we see and perceive ideas and images of cultures and peoples. The idea of the workshop was to explore the possibility of a global gaze that is sensitive to cultural context and promotes better understanding. A series of visuals were screened, followed by group activities that included presentations and discussions on questions such as: How do we see and internalise images? How do images influence and represent the way we see the world? How are cultures perceived and informed by cultural contexts?





“We need space for pluralism.”

“Sometimes we generalise our own personality/identity when we talk about ourselves. Why?”

“There is no single cultural identity, each of us has a variety of cultural identities.”

“It is important to understand the culture of the other BEFORE starting a cooperation.”

TOPICS & STATEMENTS

“We should not forget that in international exchange we always meet individuals and not representatives of a culture.”

“When we encounter images of cultures, we should not simply accept them, but always put them into context – when was the image taken, where, with what intention, by whom?”

Workshop 4

Why Cooperate Internationally?

With **AlarmTheater** (Bielefeld, Germany) & **Cia. Arthur-Arnaldo** (São Paulo, Brazil)
Kulturforum Alte Post (Neuss, Germany) & **Helen Harris** (Windhoek, Namibia)
Videonale (Bonn, Germany) & **ArtVilnius** (Vilnius, Lithuania)
kainkollektiv (Bochum, Germany) & **Teatr Nowy** (Krakow, Poland)



For 10 years cultural players from all over the world have been meeting in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) through the International Visitors Programme, which focuses on the cultural interests of both the international guests and their partners from NRW. Many meetings have led to lasting networks, partnerships and cooperations. International and local partners introduced four of these alliances and talked about their experiences of international exchange, its possibilities and its obstacles.

These impulse presentations formed the starting point for group discussions to explore together some of the country and sector-specific challenges of international cultural work, finally returning to the question, 'Why cooperate internationally?'



AlarmTheater & Cia. Arthur-Arnaldo

BIELEFELD, GERMANY

SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL

The two-year project “Human Echoes/Human Shields” began in 2018, after Soledad Yunge, Artistic Director of the Cia. Arthur-Arnaldo visited AlarmTheater in 2017 as a guest of the International Visitors Programme. During her short visit, there was great interest in working together in educational and sociocultural contexts, and so with the support of the Goethe-Institut Munich, the project “Human Echoes/Human Shields” was born.

In June 2018 six artists from Cia. Arthur-Arnaldo came to AlarmTheater to work together for two weeks with their International Youth Ensemble on a project based on the play “Escudos Humanos” by Patricia Portela. This October it was AlarmTheater’s turn to visit Cia. Arthur-Arnaldo in São Paulo to perform “Human Shields” as well as to give workshops and continue their collaboration with young people from both countries.

TOPICS & STATEMENTS

“It would be helpful to have mentoring for international cooperation.”

“We must not forget the art that brings us together among the organisational challenges of international cooperation.”

“After a project has been completed, there is a need for joint reflection, evaluation and, if possible, a follow-up – this should be an integral part of cooperation.”

“We must allow ourselves more space and time to constructively deal with difficulties and crises in cooperation.”

“We also need more young voices in these discussions.”



Kulturforum Alte Post & Helen Harris

NEUSS, GERMANY

WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA



TOPICS & STATEMENTS

“An exchange occurs when you meet in both countries.”

“When cooperating with Namibian partners, one should not lose sight of questions of history and current political and social conditions.”

“Culture in Namibia is still in a phase of formation, in which cultural workers meet at eye level.”

“White or black is not the dominant theme in Namibia’s cultural scene.”

The ongoing relationship between Kulturforum Alte Post and the Namibian art scene began in 1999 with the art project ETANENO founded in the highlands of Namibia by Swiss artist Alfonso Hüppi and the farmer and architect Erwin Gebert. Their idea was to create a space for international artists to work in the secluded Namibian countryside. One of the latest artists to be invited was Klaus Richter in 2015. Hercules Viljoen, Director of the National Gallery of Namibia, invited Richter to come to Windhoek for half a year to teach his curatorial team. Instead, Richter suggested to invite a Namibian curator to North Rhine-Westphalia via the International Visitors Programme. The idea became a reality when curator Helen Harris came to North Rhine-Westphalia in April 2016, which led to an ongoing exchange.

Videonale & ArtVilnius

BONN, GERMANY

VILNIUS, LITHUANIA

In 2015, Videonale – Festival for Video and Time-Based Arts was invited to Vilnius for the first time to present a selection of video works at the contemporary art fair ArtVilnius. Although well-established within contemporary art, video art is underrepresented at art fairs worldwide. With this imbalance in mind, ArtVilnius ventured an even bigger step for its edition in 2017 and, together with Videonale, designed an exhibition space exclusively for the presentation of moving image-based artworks. This decision was prompted by the visit of ArtVilnius' artistic director to Videonale's 16th edition at Kunstmuseum Bonn, following a lively exchange of experiences and ideas about the differences and challenges one faces when exhibiting a fluid medium like video – especially in the context of an art fair.

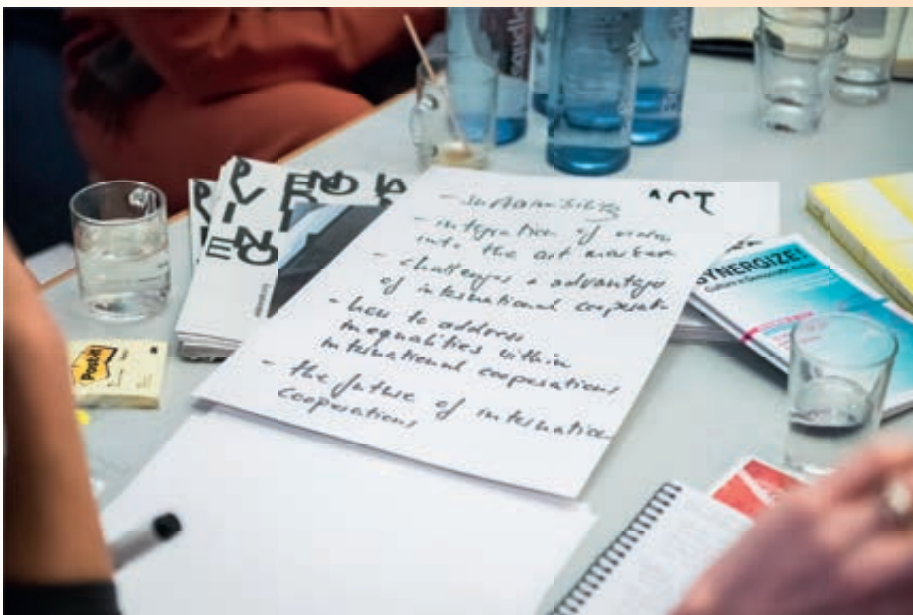
TOPICS & STATEMENTS

“We need external support and mediation for international projects in order to better compensate or specifically include cultural imponderables and imbalances.”

“More support and advice in project initiation with international partners would be good.”

“There still seems to be a lack of funding opportunities for international projects and cooperations.”

“We would like an international project exchange platform for partner search and matchmaking.”



kainkollektiv & Teatr Nowy

BOCHUM, GERMANY

KRAKOW, POLAND



“Cooperating also means making one’s own networks accessible, informing oneself about the daily political situation in the partner country.”

“It is important to formulate common goals and interests together in writing and to adapt them to the current process again and again.”

TOPICS & STATEMENTS

“Especially in countries where nationalism has taken hold, international cultural exchange seems to become all the more important.”

“It takes several years of working together and getting to know each other to build deep understanding and trust.”

“It is important to invest into existing international relations instead of constantly creating new ones.”

This summer the production “The Golden Age of Extremes” marked the third collaborative project in eight years between Teatr Nowy and kainkollektiv. Their first joint production in 2010/11, “Fasada ½”, was a work by Polish performers using text, movement and music to explore where and how to situate themselves within Krakow of the 21st Century. With “Kortländersaga” in 2012 they interrogated the presence of Polish heritage in the Ruhr region. In the almost ten-year dialogue between kainkollektiv and Teatr Nowy, the socio-political context in which they operate has changed dramatically.

Visions for the International Visitors Programme

Specific funding for IVP cooperations

International cooperations that are based on the IVP are preferably supported by the cooperation funding of the Ministry of Culture and Science of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia – the sustainability of the project and the equal status of the cooperation partners are among the prerequisites here and should continue to be a priority in the future.

ALUMNI WORK & SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainably foster existing contacts and cooperation ideas

Re-invitations or meetings of IVP alumni will enable them to build on existing contacts and ideas, which can be deepened.

MORE TIME & OPEN SPACE

Learning from the world

As a listener and learner from the world, the IVP provides even more time and work situations for international cultural workers to exchange ideas and present their work.

Provide a platform for mutual exchange

Within the framework of the IVP, the guests not only get to know cultural professionals from NRW, but also each other. The coming together of the most diverse persons from all over the world in NRW holds great potential for global sustainable networking.

Offer support for initiation and follow-up of international cooperations

It takes time and exchange to define one's own standpoints and wishes within an initial cooperation in advance and to reflect on the difficulties afterwards. The IVP could provide the framework for such workshops and discussions.

MENTORING & MODERATION



Alumni and team of the International Visitors Programme, 12th November 2019, tanzhaus nrw, Düsseldorf

NETWORKS & COVERAGE

Being part of a larger system of international exchange

The IVP is very valuable for the global networking of cultural professionals and could further develop its potential as part of a larger structure. The organisation of IVP within other networks is therefore very important.

Support global networks

The IVP can and should support global networks of cultural workers in all regions, including more distant ones.

Contributing to a democratic society

The IVP dedicates itself even more to socio-political issues and democratic principles within its cultural work and engagement.

Being an organic alumni-network and resource

Thanks to the IVP, there is a worldwide network of creative artists that many alumni and partners in North Rhine-Westphalia access and use to continue to network with each other after their visit. The goal is to further strengthen the alumni network as a global empowerment.

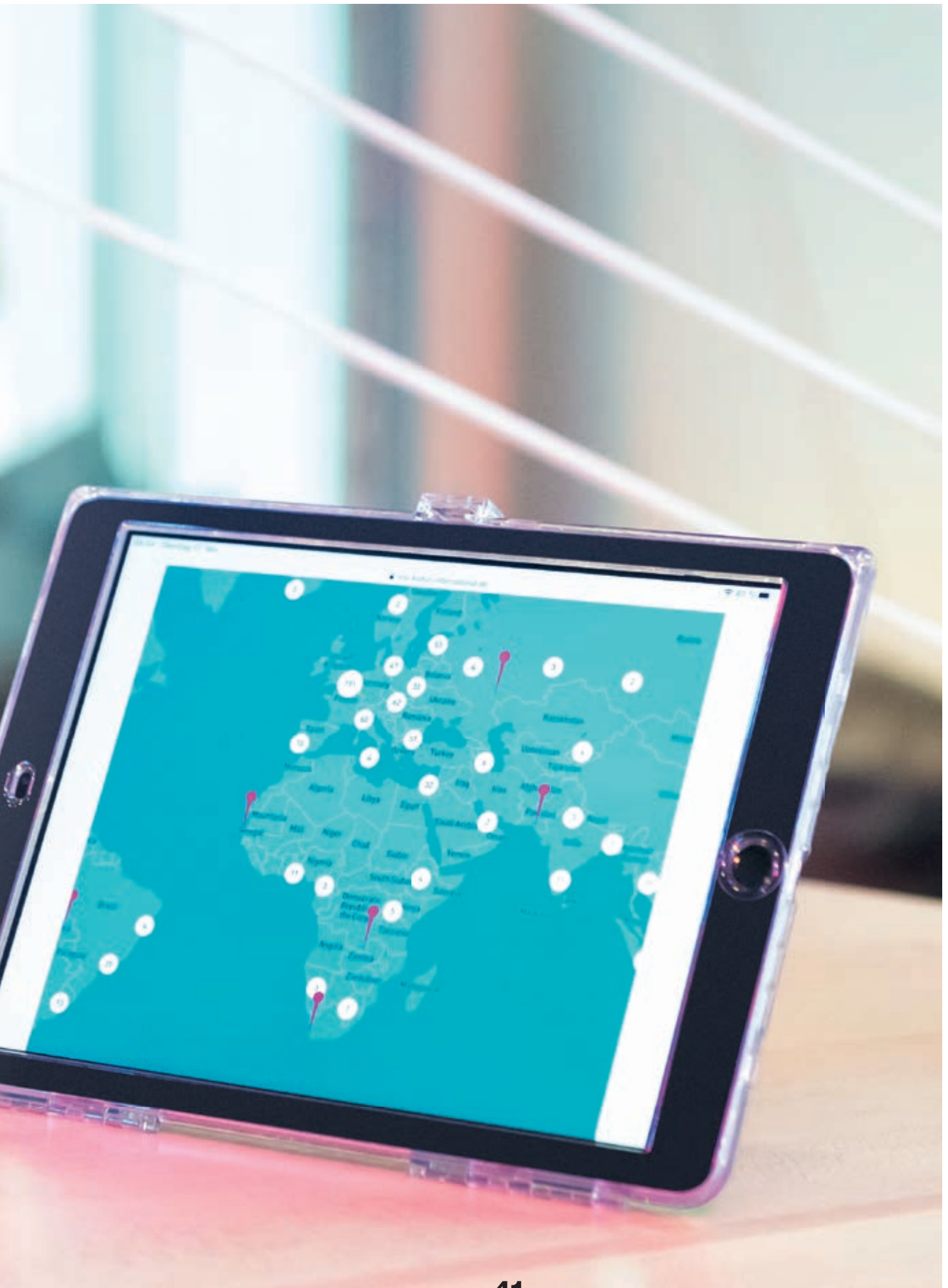
The Alumni-Network as Online-Archive

The broad alumni-network is publicly accessible as a constantly growing online-archive on the website of the International Visitors Programme. It is designed as a world map with currently about 900 links to alumni and associated institutions, festivals and cultural organisations and can function as an exchange and dispatching platform for international cooperations.

The International Visitors Programme can play the role of a mediating instance.



<https://synergize.nrw-kultur-international.de/network>



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