



IETM REPORT

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FIELDS OF VISION



*Other voices, rural places,
global stories*

Report from the IETM Satellite Meeting in Wales, 13 – 16 September 2018

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The world's population is increasingly living in cities, and this focus on urban centres is also reflected in the arts sector. But what's happening beyond the metropolis? What does it mean to be an artist in a rural context? What models of practice are there, working with existing culture, connecting communities and re-exploring traditions?

The IETM Satellite Meeting in Llandudno, North Wales, deepened some of the conversations, which happened during IETM's plenaries in [Brussels](#) and [Porto](#), around the theme of working outside of the big centres, including in rural areas.

During this encounter we explored the plurality of the concepts of rural, identity, territory, and culture, learned some of the case studies of inspiring projects, together with people from different perspectives: arts, heritage, conservation, research, economics.

Being a predominantly rural country, Wales provided a diverse canvas of what art in rural areas might be. For the short period of three days, along with the various projects from around the world, along with the artistic programme of [LLAWN Festival 2018](#), we have had the opportunity to experience the atmosphere of: [Llandudno](#), the old-fashioned and genteel seaside resort; forests and hills at [Snowdonia National Park](#) - eerie and foggy at that time of the year –or at any time of the year, it seemed; wet in the rain town of [Bethesda](#), its grey slate roofs and grim stories of three-year long strike back from 1900; and [Bangor](#), the smallest city in the UK and the second largest one in Wales, with its newly opened six-floor Pontio Arts Centre, as part of the local university. The mesmerising melody of Welsh language and songs, the thrilling stories of the countryside, as well as the opportunity to get acquainted with the daring art projects and art venues developed in Wales in recent years, were powerful inspiration for those of us from abroad. For Welsh professionals, it was an



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opportunity to showcase their work and engage in in-depth conversations with arts and culture professionals from around the world.

The meeting programme was consulted by Karine Décorne, Artistic director of Migrations, a Welsh artistic organisation that works internationally. All the sessions were moderated by Laura Drane, CEO at Theatre Bristol, producer and consultant.

The first session of the dense programme was held at [Mostyn Gallery](#), a prominent contemporary art gallery in a renovated Edwardian build in the town of Llandudno. Henk Keizer from Rural Forum Denmark recapped the previous discussions from IETM Brussels 2017 and IETM Porto 2018 meetings on art in rural areas:

“Don't assume anything. Assert the art of active listening. Don't try to bring culture to the rural areas, it is already there. Dig where you stand. Be collaborative and co-creating. Make a long-term commitment...” These

findings from the previous sessions were put to test and proved to be working by examples and stories shared throughout the sessions and in conversations during the next days of IETM Wales Satellite 2018: *Fields of Vision. Other voices, rural places, global stories.*

The programme of the second working day brought us to the towns of Bethesda and Bangor, through the harsh beauty of Snowdonia National Park. On our way, we passed by the famous slate quarry, the now closed centre of the slate industry, and we learned the story of the three years long strike in the beginning of the 20th century, [the Great Strike of Penrhyn Quarry](#) that clashed the interests of Lord George Penrhyn with the demands of the slate workers from the town of Bethesda and has marked with hostility and resentment their relations ever since.

Could the arts open up a space for new encounters when all connections seem to be cut off?

Creating meaningful collaborations with other sectors

How can the arts enable the uncovering of stories that don't just belong to the past but resonate with contemporary issues? Can they change perceptions, create empathy, and an environment for exchanges and change? Do these collaborations offer opportunities to engage with those who think the contemporary arts are not for them? - These questions were explored in the session at [Neuadd Ogwen](#), the arts community centre in Bethesda, through hearing from the perspective of artists and representatives from other sectors, with examples of collaboration between artists and heritage, environment or farming communities and organisations.

Art brings unheard voices to a heritage site

Lisa Heledd Jones, Welsh artist who works with personal narratives to create new sound experiences and stories, presented her collaboration with the National Trust during a three week [artist residency](#) at the [Penrhyn Castle](#) in 2015.

Lisa knew that, in commemoration of the [Great Strike of Penrhyn Quarry](#) in the 1900s, many people from the nearby communities, the descendants of the quarry workers, do not visit the castle, even though the National Trust took the ownership and the place is now open to public. Therefore, Lisa chose to centre her artistic exploration on the relationship between the castle and the community. Going through the detailed guides to the Penrhyn Castle site, Lisa learned a lot about the furniture, the valuable pieces of art, such as a Rembrandt painting, the famous guests the family entertained in the 300 rooms and the marvellous garden... but not a word about the slaves at sugar plantation in Jamaica or the slate workers from Bethesda, who were locked out for



Installation at Penrhyn Castle - from the presentation of Lisa Heledd Jones

Speakers:

Lisa Heledd Jones - [Storyworks](#), Wales, UK

Carolyn Robertson - [RSPB](#), Wales, UK

Henk Keizer - Rural Forum, Denmark

Moderator: Laura Drane - [Theatre Bristol](#), UK

three years, the longest dispute in British industrial history.

Lisa decided to bring those voices that were not heard in the castle. True to her artistic practice of listening, she collected stories and sounds: the sounds of the old slate quarries, of the lovely gardens surrounding the castle and the stories of the descendants of those men and women who suffered during the long strike...

The work Lisa presented in the premises of the castle consisted of light installations in fireplaces and the audio story, together with written materials, which the viewers can experience comfortably seated in one of the halls of the Penrhyn Castle. The sentence she chose to present in the light installations was the one she had most often heard in her interviews, in the language that was spoken to her, Welsh: "Migewch chi'ch crogi am ddwyn dafadoddi ar y mynydd. Ond am ddwynd y mynydd mi gewch chi'ch gwneud yn arglwydd." [If a man steals from the mountain, he will be hanged. But if he steals the whole mountain, he becomes a lord.]

If such a work was presented in the safe space of an art gallery, it would have hardly caused much of disturbance. In the case of Lisa's project, it was presented in a heritage place that is governed under strict regulations but moreover, it dealt with a disturbing topic of great importance to the local community. Unsurprisingly, many challenges had to be addressed in that artist-castle collaboration.

There was so much to learn about the national trust! Lisa admitted it took her some time to understand the complicated decision making hierarchy of the organisation and whom to address with all the logistical issues surrounding the placement of a light installation in an 19th century fireplace. A group of volunteers were assigned to take care of the audience, but some of them did not accept Lisa's work. She was faced with demands for translation of the text from the light installations into English, because 'Welsh is not the language of our audiences'. She was accused of being unbalanced and even wrong. She heard her work being diminished as 'just some art that will not be here long'. She also

received some accusations of 'artwashing', of justifying the wrong done to the people of Bethesda by presenting that piece in the castle...

On the other side, the National trust Penrhyn castle staff stood firmly behind her and kept the work as the artist devised it. But what Lisa valued even more was that the project gave voice to those unheard in the castle. As one of her interviewees, descendant of a quarry worker who took part in the strike, put it: "We own this place now!"

Lisa is now working on another commission from the National trust. She is preparing a radical guide book for the castle where the previously suppressed stories take the floor.

Arts bring nature close again

Carolyn Robertson, project manager at RSPB Cymru (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) spoke about how this established charity organisation benefits from collaboration with the arts: attracts new volunteers, members, and raises awareness and support for the wildlife across Wales.

RSPB faced the challenge to bring new audiences to their activities because they were regarded as an old-fashioned organisation mostly dedicated to

birdwatching, an entertainment "mostly for elderly eccentrics with little to do with modern life". Actually, that modern way of living caused a disconnection with nature both in children and adults. RSPB were reasonably concerned that in Wales, only one in eight children has connection with nature. According to them, this will bring even more estrangement in the future, which will aggravate the welfare of wildlife in Wales where one in 14 species facing extinction. So, the organisation sets goals to grow their impact through effective partnerships, increase moral support for nature, develop volunteers network, and increase income sources and volumes.

All of those objectives have been achieved through their work with [Migrations](#), artistic organisation aimed at bringing international contemporary arts to Wales. Their first collaborative project was in 2015 when Migrations brought [Numen for Use](#), an artistic collective from Croatia to build semi-transparent [web-like structure from packaging tape](#) in the trees of Bute Park, Cardiff. There were questions whether the installation was environmentally friendly, whether the trees are not being hurt. An important part of the artist's job in such situations, Karine from Migrations insisted, is to address such questions and reassure the community. In the case of *TAPE*, all the tape was recycled and the trees were kept safe from damage at all times.



TAPE project at Cardiff - from the presentation of Carolyn Robertson

Carolyn from RSPB Cymru stated that *TAPE* was a huge success, bringing both children and adults in the park, taking them closer to nature, as they have not been before.

Another collaborative project for RSPB and Migrations was *In the Eyes of the Animal* (2016), realised again in Bute Park, Cardiff. That was an attractive hi-tech opportunity to experience the world as an animal: to see the world as mosquito, dragonfly, frog or an owl sees it.

In 2017 RSPB Cymru and Migrations started their third joint project, *Boombbox Caerdydd* - 100 people dancing to their favourite music in their favourite city greenspace.

The outcomes of these collaborations were beyond all expectations, Carolyn insisted. Around 80% of those who engaged with the art pieces don't normally spend time with nature. Over 60% of participants don't normally engage with contemporary art either. For 96% it was a first time experience with RSPB initiative and 99% assessed it as an excellent or good experience. The media interest resulted in the coverage across arts, environment and mainstream outlets.

As a result, RSPB Cymru recorded a considerable increase in awareness and funding for nature. The art projects have engaged almost 80 000 people, predominantly in the Cardiff area. 25% were under the age of 25, which was an important target for RSPB, related to their aim to achieve a sustainable support for the wildlife in Wales for years ahead.

In their feedback, people shared that those art projects brought them fun, surprised them, and provoked new ways of thinking. Many people reported that their knowledge and understanding of nature and the issues RSPB is addressing increased. And quite a lot of respondents stated that their attitudes have changed – which was the ultimate objective for RSPB and Migrations collaboration.

RSPB Cymru gained new volunteers, mostly young people. Many members of the audience gave donations or became members of the organisation. And almost

everybody was surprised with what RSPB does for the wildlife of Wales: "I thought you were about birdwatching and stuff. But what you do is amazing!"

Carolyn was sure: "All that is due to our successful collaboration with Migrations."

Art listens to the rural life

While the first two presentations showed how art can impact communities and change attitudes, the examples of Henk Keizer, Rural Forum Network organiser and director, revealed how art can be impacted by other sectors and communities.

The act of active listening, so important to any art practice, but even more to art in rural areas, opens up the artist's perception of the topic, of the communities; which would affect the artwork as well. "When we started making works in rural areas, we shared a somewhat romantic idea of what was going on there: beautiful nature, harmonious life; a fairy tale. Getting to know the people, listening to their stories, learning about what is life in rural areas and farming nowadays changed our attitude and opened us to active listening.", Henk explained.

The focus of his work is organising Rural Forums, which he defined as a meeting between all those who live and work in European rural districts and all those who have an influence on life in the rural districts: citizens, politicians, refugees, consumers, farmers, bankers and artists. Rural forums connect all these people to speak about the future of rural areas. They invite scientists and experts, but also 'everyday experts', people with practical experience in a field who often know more than anyone else. Before such a Forum takes place, his organisation invites selected artists to create participative art works about the subjects, which are important for the host area. Those art works are part of the Rural Forum programme.

Rural Forums started upon the request of the Dutch Minister of Agriculture, and over time the Ministry and the arts field have become good partners, as each could contribute to the rural development cause.

Arts brought creativity, innovation, and some space for experiment and excitement, and the Ministry contributed with the invaluable data on various rural topics. This information helped Henk and other artists to make art that truly matters for the local communities.

Here are some of the examples Henk shared with the session participants:

- [PeerGroup's Straw castle](#) which they used for performances, exhibitions and meetings. The castle only could be built thanks to the cooperation with farmers, a scaffolding company, prisons in the neighbourhood, the Ministry of agriculture, the fire brigade and more. They all became proud "owners" of the castle and took part in the discussions and performances about agriculture. For the first time they sat together to talk about sustainable agriculture.

- Dutch artist Robbert van der Horst who originated from a house and ship building family, works in a village in Jutland, Denmark that is famous for their craftsmanship in building with wood. There were artisans who could build a whole house without a single nail in it. So the artist brought students to learn this traditional technique. He creates an art work together with the older craftsman, students and citizens. The art work is a sculpture, a kind of platform, which will be placed at the edge of a meadow with cows. During the Rural Forum people are invited to do a talk about the landscape, the plants and the animals in it. They start their talk with: "Dear cows". They stand there all alone. Their speeches were filmed and later presented to the audience. This project brings together craftsmen, students, farmers and the speakers / citizens.

- [Tina Andersen](#), theatre maker interested in food, creates an installation dedicated to soils. She questions how much we care for our soil. She collects samples from various sites: industrial farms, traditional farms, organic farms and so on. A study of the samples is carried at a university laboratory. She interviewed the 5 farmers about their relation with the soil and how they use it. From these interviews she created a text. The text has been recorded

by the farmers' wives, as soil – Tina says – is female. Finally, she formed five heaps of soil on a 'conference table'. Underneath each the soil heap – attached to the bottom of table – she placed a loudspeaker. The visitors of the project could hear farmers' stories and the results of the research done by the University. The project brings together farmers, scientists, artists and citizens from around the places where the soil samples were taken.

Through all these projects Henk witnessed how art can influence the life in rural areas, and how 'active listening' and 'digging where you stand' can have impact on artistic productions. The art projects were made possible only due to the fact that people from different sectors started collaborations that became meaningful through the arts.

Additionally, he noted that, as a positive effect of making projects in rural areas, artists can sometimes get money that usually are not given to their sector. "We have to look at a national and at the European level to find the ways of collaborating with other sectors effectively. How to dismantle the walls between those sectors? Maybe by creating first a small hole to talk through?"

Rhian Cahill, Experience manager at Penrhyn Castle, Karine Décorne, Artistic director of Migrations, and Tom Jones, a farmer and Vice-president of [WCVA](#) (Wales Council for Voluntary Action), the national membership organisation for the [third sector](#) in Wales, joined the panel to share their view on what makes the collaboration between art and other sectors meaningful and fruitful.

Tom Jones pointed out that when it comes to the arts, big cities are of the highest priority to Art Councils. So culture and arts can get exclusive towards rural areas and their topics, while in reality, artists and poets have been long getting inspired by the countryside: rural climate, landscape... But farmers are poets as well! They draw landscapes by ploughing and seeding crops,

they choreograph movements of their herds, and sing the songs of their land – conveyed a beautiful poem which John recited in Welsh.

A return to the rural has been noted in recent years in the UK. Air pollution, overpopulation, and increasing rents in cities are some of the factors that cause new generations to return to the countryside as a good place to live. "So now we have to transfer our values to these new people. What a better way than arts and culture?", Tom assumed.

Rhian Cahill, Experience manager at Penrhyn Castle and part of the National Trust team, gave an insight why the National Trust started to work with artists at their heritage sites.

The National Trust is a complex organisation that takes care of preservation of tangible assets across UK, both cultural heritage sites and natural parks. Yet simply conserving and exhibiting the heritage sites did not work much for audience engagement and for a remarkable experience. Furthermore, the historic discourse has changed. Postcolonial studies, black history, new industrial history ask for new approaches towards presenting heritage sites, and new stories to be told. People, in Wales especially, are eager to hear [their stories in their own language](#).

So, the National Trust established an artist-in-residence programme to address this attitude change and to open up space for risk and experiment. "Before, we had a castle and contemporary art; and they did not mix. Since 2014, when we established the residence programme, this started to change", Rhian explained. Great part of her job is to resolve tensions and issues that arise from having contemporary artists working in a historical building – like putting old clocks under quarantine before installing them in a 19th century room; or keeping a story that might not be liked by someone, as in the case with Lisa's project.

Karine Décorne, Migrations, shared her view on the collaboration between the arts and other sectors: "It is crucial that we share common values, be ready to risk and also, be ready to let go, to change our initial design." In Karine's experience, keeping a horizontal way of working which allows all the voices to be taken into consideration worked best for their collaborative projects with RSPB Cymru.

Engaging in an active dialogue is crucial for cross-sectorial art projects in rural areas, everyone on the panel agreed. In fact, 'diwylliant', the Welsh word for 'culture', has a double meaning: the ways we make art, but also, the ways we interact with each other – so it captures the dialogical nature of culture quite accurately.

Defining the rural

For the next session we travelled to Bangor, one of the smallest town in the UK. In terms of Wales, Bangor, being a university city, scores among the larger ones, with over 18 000 citizens, 10 000 students including. We were brought to Pontio, the arts centre at Bangor University, an ambitious modern multi-storied venue that would perfectly suit the needs of much larger cities than Bangor. So does Bangor belong to an urban or a rural area?

How do we define the rural? Obviously, it is a lot more complex than the romantic perception of idyllic farming and beautiful landscapes. A reality of post-industrial towns with little access to the arts provision, stricken by deprivation is part of a rural setting too. And speaking about art practices in rural areas, we should note that similar methods of work are applied to detached and segregated neighbourhoods... Rather than delving into theoretical typology of the rural, we looked at ways of working in a rural area and tried to distinguish different methods and aspects.

Elen AP Robert, Artistic Director, Pontio (Wales, UK), Heba elCheikh, Managing Director, Mahatat for contemporary art (Egypt), and Piotr Michalowski, Owner, Micro Art Center Piotr Michałowski (Poland), told the stories of their 'rural' art centres: stories of unexpected challenges, resilience, bold decisions, innovation, creativity, openness and inclusiveness towards the people whom they consider to be both the audience and co-creators. Based on those stories, certain common traits and methods of work could be outlined in what we call 'art in rural areas'.

Being innovative, flexible, resilient when making your (art) space in rural realms

And ambitious, Elen AP Robert, artistic director of Pontio art and innovation centre has added. Pontio, which means 'bridge'



Pontio, from the presentation of Elen AP Robert

Speakers:

Elen ap Robert - [Pontio](#), Wales, UK

Heba El Cheikh - [Mahatat For Contemporary Art](#), Egypt

Piotr Michalowski - [Gminny Ośrodek Kultury Oleśnica](#), Poland

Moderator: Laura Drane - [Theatre Bristol](#), UK

in Welsh, is the art centre as part of the University of Bangor, that bridges academia with community, old with new, Wales' art with the international art world. Pontio started with the institutional support from the University, but also, with the support of Art Council Wales which set a programme encouraging the creation of inspiring public spaces in Wales, was designed and developed as a bold, distinguishing and inspiring venue on five levels, with a cinema, theatre halls, learning and innovation areas, restaurant and café, and external performance area. The centre features equally ambitious artistic programme from stand-up comedy to chamber opera. It aims at offering opportunities for all ages and

tastes, and explores Welsh cultural identity in line with giving the audience experience in a broad spectrum of international art works. But most of all it is driven by the belief that every single person has a right to experience the arts.

Not everyone is that lucky to have the institutional support to settle their art organisation and start working. Heba elCheikh, Managing Director at Mahatat for contemporary art, told us what it took for an independent art company to develop its projects in Egypt. The independent art scene started to develop in the 1990s and is still concentrated in the big cities like Cairo, Alexandria, Mansoura and so on. Heba's art

organisation is also based in Cairo but they wanted to develop artistic projects outside the cities, in rural areas where they can make a difference. They decided to go to the governorate of Damietta, where they wanted to develop contemporary art forms, to offer learning and knowledge sharing opportunities to artists and practitioners based outside the big cities, and to make work that is accessible and inclusive to broader audience. The biggest challenge turned out to be finding the place to conduct their activities. Damietta's Culture Palace, a state cultural institution, refused to host them, as did all other cultural venues in the town. It was inappropriate to rent a private space because in Egypt, it would be unacceptable for women to go to private flats for a workshop. Instead of dropping the whole idea and returning to Cairo with its numerous independent venues, Heba and Mahatat found and adapted a wedding hall to suit their needs for the workshops and the performances.

Being brave and resilient does not always mean creating something new. Sometimes it is about using what is already there, as is the case with the network of Press and Book Clubs in Poland, which Piotr Michalowski from Micro Art Center Piotr Michałowski and Cultural House Community Culture Center of Oleśnica presented.

In between 1969-89, during the times of the communist regime in Poland, there had been around 5 000 so called Press and book clubs, mostly in the rural areas where, despite all the ideological load, people could learn to sing, act in theatrical performances or read newspapers, books and so on. As in many other East European countries, the fall of the totalitarian regime meant that all the old structures had to be swept away and that was the fate of many of those clubs. Unfortunately, not much new came to substitute them in the countryside. Even if the sphere of culture is infiltrated by ideology and political agenda, that does not denounce the value of making art, organising gatherings, and discussion clubs, Piotr argued, referring to the theoretical findings of Prof. Stanisław Pietraszko, the founder of Cultural Studies in Wrocław.

Piotr believed that systemic solutions as the Press and Book Clubs that worked in the



Colourful Busstops ©Archives of Community Culture Center of Oleśnica

field of culture should be kept and revived to meet the cultural and artistic needs, and to inspire the local communities. Cultural House Community Culture Center of Oleśnica comprises of 25 cultural facilities and offers the communities of Oleśnica, near Wrocław, opportunities to participate in the arts, culture, and sports activities.

Keep a close contact with and be attentive to communities you work with

When they decided to re-start the cultural centre, Piotr and his organisation asked people what they wanted to keep as activities from the centres' past, what they found most interesting. So now the cultural centre accommodates several amateur artistic groups, arts and crafts courses for children and adults, farmers clubs and more.

Even before Pontio was designed, Elen said, they organised a workshop with the

children of Bangor who draw their ideas about what the place should be like. When programming, they got the feedback that people of Bangor wanted something spectacular. That felt in line with Pontio's idea to present contemporary circus and aerial dance and spectacular 3D mappings...

Heba and Mahatat for contemporary art held a series of conversations with art practitioners, both in rural areas and the cities, what ideas they had about performing and exhibiting their work outside the big cities. Most of them were concerned that people in 'the province' might not understand their art and would not be interested in it at all. Mahatat took into consideration their concerns and desires when designing their workshops in drama, photography, public art, staying true to the mission to make contemporary art accessible and inclusive to the rural audiences.

Pushing the boundaries a bit further

It is a widespread belief that audiences in rural areas are less inclined to enjoy experimental work than urban audiences in the cities who are more accustomed to artistic innovation. Numerous art projects in rural areas proved that it is a misconception. If rural audiences feel included, if the work is relevant to them, they can be quite open to innovation.

As Mahatat knew that the citizens of Damietta had never been exposed to contemporary art, they decided to make works and workshops in public for everyone to see it. Artists were encouraged to ask people to hang art from their balconies. The workshop that employed creative wooden materials involved the carpenters of Damietta, famous for its furniture industry, thus engaging them with the arts

Pontio followed an ambitious plan to invite bold and experimental works and to make large-scale performances, at the same time relying on the active involvement of local people. For their opening ceremony in 2016 they staged a spectacular circus performance and aerial dance for a local child with learning disabilities elaborated the sound design. To celebrate the place they are working in, the creative team transformed the huge hall to resemble the slate quarries, and they invited children from primary school to take part, along with a choir from Bethesda... That involvement from the start, Elen assumed, should have contributed to the great enjoyment the Bangor audiences took in attending some of the most ambitious contemporary circus shows.

Having in mind the context of cultural centres across Eastern Europe and the general disposition towards traditional forms of taking part in arts and crafts, we should acknowledge the break-through that Piotr and the Community Culture Centre of Oleśnica had achieved with some of their activities. One such example is the [Bridging Generations project](#), which produced four films and a performance to celebrate the collective memories of the generations who lived around WWII. Both



© Heba elCheikh

youths and seniors, along with a team of professionals, participated in that journey through time. The project was recognised as one of the 12 best practices from Europe and beyond in the report called [Cultural Heritage Innovative Audience Development Practices](#), published by [Economia Creativa](#).

Traditional craft learning could be transformed in a more inclusive and creative way. Community Cultural Center Oleśnica introduced a mobile bread baking oven and a mobile ceramics oven in order to reach any of the multiple local assembly halls (some of them were part of the former Press and book clubs network) and give as many community members the opportunity to take part as possible.

Actively including the community

Active community involvement proved to be vital to all three organisations presented.

Community Cultural Center Oleśnica let the community members have a say about its programme and activities even on the level of strategic planning so that they feel

ownership of any project launched. Pontio made the connection with the local from the first piece they presented in line with their mission to bring international arts to Bangor and to show Wales to the world. Mahatat gave the creative practitioners involved in their workshops enough time to develop their work and to learn through making, instead of being forced in a pre-designed programme. "The length of the workshops allowed the participants to get involved in the process and to interact between each other.", Heba explained. As a result of their workshops, four creative hubs were established. Three participants became professional artists. And when Mahatat team returned to the town of Damietta, they met young people who were an audience to the shows or who took part in the workshops back then and remembered Mahatat well. Does this make any change?

Community involvement, so characteristic of art projects in rural areas, raises the question of how to foster and navigate participation, how to ensure fruitful communication, and furthermore, it addresses the big question of artists' responsibility for those people which lives

are affected by taking part in the art piece. These topics became the theme of the meeting's last day.

The discussion aimed at clarifying various questions of both practical and conceptual nature:

How do you reach and connect with the local people?

Elen assumed they were lucky by choosing contemporary circus to present at Pontio, because circus easily brings different kinds of people together and is an easy starter. There is evidence that circus audience is the most diverse one. Additionally, circus is not language-led which in the predominantly Welsh speaking area of Bangor is an advantage.

If you just make trendy things it will not work. People are complaining they are missing the concept. It is crucial not to transfer from one place to another but to do mapping of needs and potentials of people. That was the key to their successful Colourful Bus stops project which won European acclaim for innovation. People wanted to take part and enjoyed the colourful [transformation of the bus stops](#) across the region. "Communities would tell you and guide you. Your job is to find the best ways to implement their ideas in reality", Piotr explained.

How do you operate in the community? Is it important to make network not only of cultural centres but also of other agents and within the community?

Heba stated that her organisation starts their projects with a mapping of the neighbourhood to find partners. They try to attract the right partners. Making your intentions clear is important for building relationships.

The Pontio team thought a lot of how to attract new audiences to the place - people who felt the place is not for them. For example, people from a particular Bangor neighbourhood would not come to Pontio by themselves. So team reached out and went to them. They went to the local school, they identified the active persons in the group and with their help, started to ask those neighbourhood members what they would want Pontio to be like. They learned a lot about that community and still hold regular meetings.

What are the challenges for the artist in working in such projects?

Besides all the administrative or logistic issues an artist has to tackle in the unconventional environment of rural areas, there is the challenge to keep the focus on the project and on the people involved at the same time. Continuous reflective work is necessary. Additionally, the artist has to be prepared to work in a multidisciplinary way.

The role of the artist in rural context is more about setting a frame for people to create the culture they want to create. Therefore, the biggest challenge for artists is to step back and let the participants guide the artistic flow.

Common grounds

What a better place to remind us of each and every person's creativity than Ygsol Tudno, the elementary school of Llandudno where we spent time to appreciate children's creations and to discuss important aspects of participatory art practices.

The conversation started from three examples of participatory works.

We, Pig Country, performance by the Dutch Company New Heroes, was presented by Karine Décorne and Henk Keiser. The piece is based on the life and the problems of pig farmers. It was created based on real life documents and personal stories. Initially developed for the Province of West Flanders in 2012, it was staged in multiple farms and community halls in Belgium and the Netherlands, and has been translated in Danish. The piece received great audience response wherever it was presented. People who thought that theatre is not for them, said: "Finally, somebody hears us and tells our story!" (For English trailer of the show: [here](#))

Michelle Carwardine-Palmer, Managing Director at National Theatre Wales, presented their participatory project *We're Still Here*. It reveals the struggle of the people of Port Talbot, one of the last sites of heavy industry in Wales, against the closure of the steelworks. The work was scripted by Rachel Trezise but it was based on interviews with steelworkers, union representatives and the people of Port Talbot. *We're Still Here* was a site-specific performance, staged in the disused Byass Works. Steelworker performed on stage with professional actors, which reinforced the "Only we can speak for us" attitude of the performance.

The presentation by John McGrath, Artistic Director & CEO of Manchester International Festival (MIF) demonstrated that participatory works develop in similar fashion in big cities as they do in rural



A scene from *We are Still Here* - from the presentation of Michelle Carwardine-Palmer

Speakers:

Bas van Rijnsvoever - [Stichting Nieuwe Helden](#), the Netherlands

Michelle Carwardine-Palmer - [National Theatre Wales](#), UK

John McGrath - [Manchester International Festival](#), UK

Moderator: Laura Drane - [Theatre Bristol](#), UK

areas. The programme of MIF has always been about being bold. All the works are commissioned with the artists who are encouraged to make what they have always wanted to but haven't got the opportunity so far. When John joined MIF, he initiated a survey, which showed that the citizens wanted the boldness and the big scale of the international programme, but also, they wanted the festival to be more connected with the city and the people of Manchester. In response, MIF launched *Festival in my House*, encouraging Mancunians to create their own piece of art and explore their creative side with the support of the MIF staff. Regular meetings were kept. Thus a

year-round programme, which felt local yet spoke to the international one, was established.

Possibly, that helped a lot when in 2017, shortly after the [Manchester Arena bombing](#), MIF staged *What is the City but the People*: a massive participatory work, putting over 200 citizens on a runway stretching more than 100 metres through Piccadilly Gardens for the audience of a few thousands.

The panellists spoke openly about the different challenges they had to overcome, about the sensitivities they had to respect,

about the great responsibility that comes along when working with 'real life' people and their stories.

For any project that relies on people's involvement and participation, and especially, for art projects in small communities, it is crucial to be co-creative and take people in the heart of the project; and build trust.

John McGrath reminded that even the most traditional theatre performances are about bringing people together in a space. So, why wouldn't an artist want to explore what it means and put people in the centre of the artistic enquiry? Naturally, it can be a risky thing to do, so the artist has to always keep in mind that these are not professional actors, and that their reactions and behaviour are not always predictable. "The more you push, the more you lose", was John's observation, particularly with *What is the City but the People*, "but the gains can be extraordinary". With this risky participatory piece, MIF stayed true to its strive to commission bold works, as they managed to find the right people for the artist to work with (including a one-week newborn, a 100-year old person, a rape survivor, etc.). Even more, they succeeded in staging the work in the Piccadilly Gardens, right in the centre of Manchester, just a few weeks after the Manchester Arena bombing. That sent out a powerful message of being bold and resilient, of staying together strong in difficult times.

For Michelle, truth is the most important thing in a participatory piece like *We're Still Here*. One has to be clear about the intentions of doing a piece, and has to remain honest and genuine. Honesty is crucial: both in the artistic work and in communication.

Judging from his practice, Henk confirmed that "the best story is the truth". But then, interpretation is no less important. What stories are selected to be presented is the responsibility of the artist. Henk recalled a project done with the participation of prisoners and how the artists overcame revealing sensitive content by not asking them why they were convicted.

Laura Drane, the moderator of the session, highlighted that all the panellists mentioned the specific responsibility in that kind of projects and urged them to elaborate a bit more how to balance the responsibility for people, for artists, for the creative process.

What is the City but the People was developed against the background of the tension between two different artistic approaches to participation, those of the two artists behind them, Richard Gregory and Jeremy Deller. One of them believed everybody is an interesting person to take part, while the other wanted a list of specific types of people to be present. One wanted choreography, the other - did not. Finding the balance, meeting the expectations, communicating the artistic vision to the people was a big responsibility for MIF. "Something about not staying confined to your own best practice is making the work more inclusive, more comfortable. In return, this makes you reinvent your own practice", John concluded.

Michelle underlined that artists should be highly considerate when taking a community on the journey through co-creating a participatory work. There should be a commitment to the town and the people: "We had the responsibility to help that community with the change that our work brought." It is a long-term commitment. It has to be clear whose

responsibility it is to take care of that change and of the new relationships after the artistic intervention is closed, not to try and direct what happens, but help and carry on the established conversation. There are some simple and practical things that the Community collaboration team at the National Theatre Wales does in that direction: establishing a network to keep in touch and foster artistic creation within that community at Port Talbot.

There is also a responsibility for re-presentation: those voices, brought up by artistic creation, need to be heard and seen by the community. So there is the responsibility to make the participatory work accessible to its community audiences. Farmers feel the *We, Pig Country* tells their story, so they recommend it to others to go and see. It was them who demanded and found the money for translating it into Danish.

A piece like that makes the community visible to broader audiences as well. Industrial farmers, organic farmers, bankers, scientists, politicians saw the performance, and that opened up series of conversations about rural communities and farming. That brings a lot of responsibility to projects that reveal real-life stories and issues.



What is the City but the People - from the presentation of John McGrath

Participatory work is surrounded by assumptions like not being artistically strong enough or that artists' and critics' expectations have to be lowered. All the panellists deemed these assumptions to be false. "We decided to produce *What is the City but the People* because we thought it is already a bold and artistically ambitious work", John explained, "And it proved to be coherent and of high artistic value." As for 'quality', it varies no matter if it is a participatory project or a classical Shakespearean play due to so many factors.

Sometimes community participants can withstand and even surpass the expectations that are usually referred to professional actors. Michelle reminded that one of the performers on stage of *We're Still Here* was a steelworker, and there was no difference in the quality of the performance between him and the five professional actors performing along. The performance was genuine, true, and honest – which made it powerful and convincing.

On another project, *Mother Courage*, a woman from the community, involved in the production, continued to take part in other art projects and decided to take a university arts course at the age of 46.

The question about the responsibility of producers was raised as well. How to manage the key recourse of time in a sustainable way: the time of the professional team, which can spend a lot more unexpected hours developing a participatory piece, and the time of the community members. The people whose stories are being told are usually not getting paid. How can we manage and communicate honestly who gets paid for what?

The panellists agreed that it takes a lot of time and commitment to ensure that the community participants are being looked after, and that they feel engaged and supported. The directors need to understand the impact that participation has on that people. Working with community participants is way different from working with professionals and the directors have to keep that in mind. As for community participants, there is the immediate 'gain'

of their voice being heard. The power of representation, of sharing your stories and raising your issues most often contributes to personal empowerment as well. Some of those participants later become professional actors, join the governing boards of institutions or benefit otherwise from the spur of creativity. Taking part in a participatory work can be a life-changing experience; and so should it be to the professionals involved too.

The duty of care after the performance in case of criticism or certain discontent with the issues and their representation; or if the issues are too overwhelming – that duty is crucial for the community participants involved in the project. Of course, they cannot be expected to accept it professionally, but more importantly, it is their stories that were presented, so they might even feel personally attacked. Participatory theatre is not necessarily celebratory. More often than not, some serious issues of high concern for the community are being brought up. Henk remembered that a performance they made about suicide in farmer community was always backed up by a representative of the suicide support care who was there for anyone who needed to talk.

Objectivity in participatory work, how – and if – to strive achieving it was mentioned as one of the issues of that kind of projects. We all take stories the way we see the reality, so don't we only end up listening to one part of the story? Judging from their experience, the panellists claimed that it is more about adjusting the power balance and giving people who are usually unseen the opportunity to stand up with their stories. Honesty about why you are engaging in that piece – both from artists' and the participants' point of view – was pointed as more important than a thrive for disputable objectivity.

Identity and Territory, the responsibility of the artist

The last session of IETM Wales Satellite brought us to [Venue Cymru](#), an impressive arts, conference and events venue on the waterfront of Llandudno, where we could watch, along with the rest of the LLAWN 06 Festival audience, how Cragen, the legendary giant sea monster of Wales, recreated by [Small World Theatre](#) from plastic rubbish, floated Llandudno bay, threatening to return to people all the plastic they have thrown in the sea. This giant seafaring puppet is a frequent feature at the events of [Keep Wales Tidy](#), when local volunteers clean up the Welsh coastline. And also, a reminder how connected with the local and the territory art projects in rural areas could be.



The great monster arrives at Venue Cymru ©Small World Theatre

Interestingly, one of the projects, presented in that session, a project from Portugal celebrating identity through a combination of traditional dances and contemporary dance, had been staged at exactly the same place in front of Venue Cymru some years ago... As if to say that 'local' is not necessarily confined to a particular territory...

Speakers:

Elisabete Paiva - [Materiais Diversos](#), Portugal

Filipa Francisco - Researcher and independent choreographer, Portugal

Anna Lengyel - [PanoDrama](#), Hungary

Moderator: Laura Drane - [Theatre Bristol](#), UK

Learning from each other

Filipa Francisco, choreographer and performer originating from Portugal, shared her reflections on identity and territory in co-creation, based on the participatory project [The Journey \(A Viagem\)](#) 2011- 2020.

The starting point of the project was set in Ramallah, Palestine, in 2009 where Filipa took inspiration from working and touring with a traditional dance group. "Travelling with the group in Palestine, watching their performances in small villages, I became aware of the power of traditional dance. It addresses extremely relevant issues such

as identity, gender and liberty...", Filipa recalled.

Upon returning to Portugal, she started working with local folk dance groups. In 2011 Filipa and her team relocated to the village of Riachos and developed a piece with local folk dancers, who were proud of their historical accurate representation of dance, dress, and tradition. Those people had never experienced contemporary dance before, but the project created a territory for experimenting where both

traditional and contemporary dancers enriched their perception of dance and co-created something.

In 2012 *The Journey*, in cooperation with Migrations landed in Llandudno, featured two local folk dance groups and the dancers from Filipa's team.

Working with numerous folk groups, Filipa had noticed that people from all ages could be good dancers. These people learn together the elaborate steps of traditional

dances; they research the costumes, the tunes and thus, acquire deep knowledge of their own culture. Naturally, their group identity strengthens, they become close – like a family. Despite their dedication, many of them do not consider themselves worthy to perform on professional stage, in nice theatres and venues. “Working together with them is a way of giving those people a voice”, Filipa believed. Co-creation, opening space for improvisation is a way of saying ‘your imagination is important’. Working with contemporary dance is a way of bringing tradition to the present. But then, the professionals involved in the project have to share a deep respect for the folk dance. They have to be open to learning as well.

Each group in the project goes through several stages. The folk group and the professional team get to know each other, they research together local history and costumes, and they watch and speak about iconic contemporary dance pieces. People learn how to dance together, how to trust each other and how to foster mutual respect.

When asked what stayed with them after the project, people often shared with Filipa that they still do a warm-up before rehearsing like professional dancers do, that they have learned how to look at each other while dancing; they keep on with conversations about the project; they stay in touch with the other groups involved; they think how to attract young and new people.

All that is not built in a day. It takes time, Filipa explained. It takes time to get to know the people, to build relationships, to foster trust. You have to be present there. Ask questions, invite co-creation. It takes time to grow roots and give fruit.

Spending time together

Elisabete Paiva, the artistic director of Materiais Diversos, the Portuguese organisation that stood behind Filipa’s project, shared their vision about how to develop participatory projects in rural and detached communities, especially when the artist is an ‘outsider’ to the place.



The Journey © Andreia Salame

Materiais Diversos started in 2003 as a non-governmental organisation that aims to support artistic development and experimentation and to engage communities in contemporary performing arts, particularly dance. To fulfil this mission, the organisation produces and tours works of Portuguese choreographers, engages in audience development initiatives and strives to combine local, national and international dimensions.

In 2009, Festival Materiais Diversos was initiated in Minde, a small town one hour away from Lisbon, and then extended encompassing the near-by towns of Alcanena, Cartaxo, and Torres Novas. All these towns are of up to 30000 inhabitants; being peripheral to the capital Lisbon, they have mixed rural and industrial profile and they undergo progressive depopulation. Culturally, these towns stay between tradition and the loss of identity, between rooting and isolation, between resistance and self-initiative, Elisabete explained. Many of the festival performances were developed with the community by inviting amateur groups on stage in co-creation with professionals or assisted by volunteers of the festival organisation. An offer of workshops and talks, picnics and parties, as well as local hosting also allowed professionals and local inhabitants to meet and share.

Many positive outcomes for the local communities from engaging in this model of programming transpired: consolidation of cultural habits, risen qualification and empowerment, new opportunities for local youths; impulse for the local economy, media coverage and more visits to the town during the festival’s period. By 2013, the need of a continuous programme had grown, so Materiais Diversos developed additionally to the festival a small programme of performances and workshops to continue throughout the year, mostly dedicated to young audiences, but exclusively in Torres Novas.

In this frame, new questions emerged. Depending too much on state and municipality funding revealed to be a threat for the festival’s sustainability. The challenge of becoming too big, of attracting too many audiences would prevent the genuine communication typical for smaller scale festivals. Getting ‘tolerance’ instead of mutual empathy would undermine the co-creative process of developing artworks that the festival wanted to encourage.

So Materiais Diversos made the choice to scale down. The festival is now a biannual initiative and the focus has moved towards long-term work in and with the community. A regular programme involving audiences of all ages started to be developed in 2018

in all localities, including residences and performances, workshops, meetings, and local based research projects. The reason behind this decision was to facilitate access to contemporary art and to give local communities visibility through production and through practical work. But more importantly, the year-round programme gave both artists and communities time to spend together and to get to know each other.

Elisabete and her team started to visit the towns frequently. They took at least one day a week to work from there. They visited cafes, made friends with local people, asked more questions, sought help from the locals. They dedicated more time and listened more – in order to understand instead of relying on assumptions.

A special grant for artists based in the region was developed to foster creativity from within the community, as well as to help sustain these professionals that, working in a peripheral territory, have access to less opportunities of financial support. Young local producers are now hired to accompany the year programme.

Sometimes you have to step back in order to stay true and committed to the local community and to the ethos of your work...

Being true in your work

Keeping integrity seems to be the guiding principle in the work of Anna Lengyel and her company Panodrama. Panodrama works in the field of new drama by developing a verbatim theatre approach (a documentary type of word-for-word theatre). Since 2010, due to social and political changes in Hungary, like growing racism and discrimination towards Roma and Jewish ethnic minorities, gay people, migrants, Panodrama puts in the centre of their work daring projects on acute socio-political themes like violence against Roma community or prejudice surrounding cancer.

In 2011 Panodrama developed their first verbatim project: *Word for Word*. It told the horrific story of racist murders of Roma people at that time. In different villages nine



A performance with local communities - from the presentation of Elisabete Paiva

Roma houses were set on fire and families were shot at in their flee from the burning houses. Six people were dead, including a 5-year-old child. Four killers were caught and convicted with life sentences but according to the verdict, that was not a hate crime...

Obviously, appearing in a traumatised village where all the Roma community is shocked, asking questions, recording stories – that poses a big strain and responsibility on the artists, especially since in Panodrama they don't change a word, they might only make some cuts. Panodrama artists follow a strict code of conduct in order to deal with such complicated situations.

Tell people who you are, and who you are not. Anna and her team made it clear that they are not from TV, nor lawyers or representatives of a state body. They made it clear they will do a verbatim theatre piece. Make it clear that you will be present in the community only temporarily. Explain to people that their story may not make it to the final piece. Also, that they won't be paid for sharing their stories.

It is a great responsibility to use people's stories, so you should remain truthful and you should not allow manipulation. Panodrama usually sent out three

persons to make the interviews in order to counteract manipulation and misinterpretation. People do not lose ownership of their stories – they can have a veto on the material. For ten years of work, Anna said, they have received only three vetoes on stories.

It is important to make a clear statement that the stories are truthful, but they speak of the truth of the particular person who shared them.

Anna had often been asked why don't they put Roma actors or the people themselves on stage to tell the stories. On one hand, putting professional actors on stage would help avoiding voyeurism in case of tragedies, Anna claimed. Watching someone crying on stage or not; focusing on how many times they have said the particular words of their story: all this shifts the audience attention to peripheral issues. On the other hand, paradoxically, when we hear the story being told by someone quite different from the prototype, we kind of 'hear more'. That was the case of the story a Roma woman whose grandson had been taken away from her. That woman looked like the stereotypical Roma grandmother. Her story was told on stage by a fair good looking woman at her age, with a son at the age of the Roma woman's grandson and the implausibility of hearing these things from

a well-kept woman made a big impression to the audience.

Anna presented some more verbatim shows Panodrama had developed since like *The Great Debate* and the so-called *Cancer-project*, the latter incorporating “No nothing, no cry” - from 50 in-depth interviews with doctors, nurses, patients, loved ones; “*The Boogeyman called cancer*” - a series of public talks at the a prestigious state theatre in Budapest to get rid of the stigma, and “*Tis a pity It's Cancer*” - about the parallel journeys of two very close friends, one of whom has cancer, the other gets pregnant (only partly verbatim). “We started at a very far point from our own milieu and experience and are now as close as we can possibly get”, Anna acknowledged, being herself diagnosed and undergoing cancer treatment. “It gets more difficult when our milieu, our language, our sociolect, our views, our knowledge are also those of our audiences...”

From all the verbatim projects that Panodrama developed through the years, several questions remain open to Anna. Participatory work is important community work, but when does it become art? What makes it art? Who are our audiences, who do we perform for? Is it just preaching to the converted, how can we get more people involved? How do we take the stories back to the communities? When we give communities a voice, there is often an element of teaching. Is that necessarily wrong? Is it okay to presume that in some cases we may know more about certain aspects? Is it wrong if the initiative and the concept, as well as the final control, comes from us as long as we make sure to listen and integrate what we are learning from the community?

Moderator Laura Drane opened the discussion with asking the panellists to elaborate more on how they managed to bring new practices while respecting tradition and how they deal with the potential loss of identity that is noticeable in many rural places.

Arwel Gruffydd, artistic director of Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru (the Welsh language national theatre), who joined the panel for the discussion, explained that if staging works in Welsh language is a strong



Panodrama performance - from the presentation of Ana Lengyel

statement of defining identity, then staging new drama written in Welsh, by Welsh playwrights, is even stronger. “Sometimes language can become territory.” the theatre’s programme presents a mix of translated plays, the classic, new Welsh plays, a contemporary opera, biographical plays, site-specific productions, a verbatim play, and an ambitious participatory piece which included 50 community cast members and won the award for best Welsh Language Production at the Wales Theatre Awards 2016.

Elisabete from *Materiais Diversos* underlined the responsibility that goes with holding a big event in a small settlement. There is a danger of turning it from an artistic to a touristic event. Scaling down proved to be the remedy to encourage genuine communication. As for programming and curating, one should rather not look for easy works, but for those that can open a space to meet, learn, re-frame and refresh identity – both for the community and the artists.

The view of the outsider, the new view of the artist towards the community was distinguished as key in this process.

The notion of active listening illustrates how Anna and the Panodrama team interacted with the people whose stories they were taking. You can keep the distance of an outsider, yet you should acknowledge the community’s cultural codes. When you visit Roma homes, be prepared to drink strong coffee and shake hands with everybody. Let the story guide you instead of trying to impose a dramaturgical approach. Ask people’s help, let them introduce you to new people for interviews. Paradoxically, communication is easier when you are a cultural / social outsider to the community whose stories you collect.

Does seeing yourself in a new way bring people together? “The body doesn’t lie”, Filipa revealed. Dance allows people to connect in a profound way. Dance as an artistic form, could be fluid and allow a lot of transformation. Thus, it is open for communication. Filipa recalled a participatory dance project she did with convicts at a prison. She showed them a work of Pina Baush as a starting point of their projects. The convicts liked it but they decided to make a piece about their own

life in prison. One has to always look at the context when developing a participatory work.

Respect for people, respect for identity and tradition, and responsibility for representation were identified as crucial when developing participatory projects. In certain instances, co-creation is the sole path to engaging certain populations with our production, Arwel shared. Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru was facing a challenge to bring to the theatre people from deprived economic background. So they created a show engaging people from that community, by sharing their stories but also, by having them perform in that show. Naturally, they told their families and friends about the performance, and the centre it was played at recorded highest people visiting. That is how important it is to make sure people were represented.

Anna further elaborated that respect is something different from liking: "It is OK to dislike a Roma person, as long as you respect him or her. That is the moment you stop being condescending, stop patronising and treat them as equal."

Filipa said that her big quest in paying respect to people from communities she works with is to have the names of the participants in one line with hers, in recognition of their co-creation of the piece.

Elisabete also insisted on the importance of paying respect and not patronising when you offer a festival programme. "If

people are closed in their tradition, our responsibility would be to open small windows here and there for them to connect if they want."

Thinking of the context they work in, the panellists outlined the biggest challenges and opportunities they anticipated in the near future.

For Arwel, that was the growing immigration from England to Wales and the challenge to create positive conversation about this.

Elisabete's next task is to work on co-curating with communities and to establish a horizontal structure in decision making about the festival.

According to Filipa, the biggest challenge would be to continue working in Portugal where organisations and professionals have hard times to secure their sustainability.

Anna claimed that in Hungary it is still valid to make theatre on social and political issues. But is verbatim theatre still valid in times when you have everything shared on social media? So in terms of her practice, Anna felt split: should she continue making verbatim theatre or should she go and teach young people to counteract the threat of them being brainwashed with nationalism, intolerance, and fake news?

One of the outcomes of this IETM Satellite meeting was the common decision to continue the conversation within a more formalised sub-group formed by IETM members working on and interested in the topic of art in rural areas. The group will gather as part of IETM plenary meetings and will:

- Give a space to participants to share their most urgent matters and reflect on what they can contribute to develop an advocacy network to for artists working with rural communities.
- Allow for an exchange and deeper research on working methods in the rural areas and the position and responsibility of artists working with rural communities.
- Discuss the growing interest of populist politicians in rural culture, folklore and cultural heritage, and what this means for our practise. We will also address the gap between rural development programmes and the needs of artists working in rural areas and try to put together a strong case for our work.

The first meeting of the group is taking place during IETM Munich, 1-4 November 2018, and is open to all the plenary participants.