



***“I showed her my work, and so she started to  
know me”***

***“Until you eat together ten times, you can’t work  
together”***

**An analysis of case studies of cultural collaboration in and with the  
countries of the Mediterranean  
IETM (Informal European Theatre Meeting) October 2003**

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## 1. Introduction

### **Background**

In June 2002, the European Cultural Foundation kindly invited IETM to take part in a steering group for an ECF project called “Enlargement of Minds”.

IETM is a well-established network for the contemporary performing arts, of over 400 committed, border-crossing contemporary cultural organisations including over 2000 active individual operators. It was one of the first European cultural networks, in 1989, to dynamically open itself to the countries ‘beyond the Wall’. Likewise, in 1994 IETM prioritised “the Mediterranean” region’s professionals on all shores. Our network today still has one of the highest percentages of member-organisations from both CEE and Med countries.

IETM prepared one of the papers for the resulting ECF conference, “Crossing perspectives” in May 2003. We made an analysis of case studies of SEE/WE cultural collaborations. Our paper differed from other, more academic or scientific studies in that it aimed to bring to the symposium a pragmatic, subjective snapshot of what was happening ‘on the ground’.

It was at that conference that the ECF invited us again to make a similar study, looking this time at international collaborations within and with the Med region. The timing, for us, was exceedingly difficult but despite known and unforeseen obstacles, we have selected 10 projects which seem to us to represent “real collaboration”, and formally interviewed 14 people about their experiences in these projects, as well as undertaking informal discussions with other experienced Med/Med culture professionals.

### **Starting Points**

Most of our respondents were independently working individuals or working for independent organisations (not public institutions). Obviously this bias affects the findings in this paper.

Our knowledge of the projects and the people gave us an insight which went beyond the interviews (but may have led to subjective readings...).

Geographical terminology once again tripped us up: North/ South? East/ West? North-shore/south shore? Arab + Turkey vs. European Med? We have awkwardly settled for “north-west/south-east” in an attempt to recognise that Italy is somehow different than Egypt and Turkey is again different...

It was difficult for the two of us who had been involved in the first study not to make comparisons. So we offer some:

- The ability to read codes seems far more important (in the Med) than the ability to see beyond the myths of the Balkans;
- Learning (about the other) seems to have an overwhelming importance – right alongside the artistic product itself;
- Due to the strong tradition of State arts provision in the ex-Soviet Bloc countries and to the great rush of Western consultants to the Balkans after

the war, we felt that the development of structures, expertise and management models was in a much more “advanced” state of development in the Balkans than in the south-shore Mediterranean countries. (Pre-supposing that West = advanced!)

- However, there was the same heartfelt plea, universally expressed, for support to continuity and long-term infrastructure-building projects.

### **Acknowledgements**

Thanks first of all to the European Culture Foundation and its staff. We owe a great debt to our robust band of interviewers and to the interviewees who provided us with hours of taped, translated (Arabic / French / English) and transcribed telephone interviews. We hope our agreement to cite words but not to attribute statements to names left the respondents the free space to be as honest as possible. Further documentation is available from the IETM office; space did not permit us to attach all appendices to the conference reader.

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### **Objectives**

To identify and analyse a set of 10 case studies of true collaboration between cultural operators in different Mediterranean countries (in the EU and outside of it) in order to suggest examples of good practice, success factors, obstacles and to propose recommendations to funders and policy stakeholders. These should be collaborative cultural projects between Mediterranean cultural operators (in both Europe and Arab countries): Med-Euro; Euro-Med, Med-Med.... and should include a range of different artistic disciplines.

Specifically, to highlight:

- Key cultural values and perspectives involved;
- The learning which has taken place by all parties;
- The 'legacies' left by the experience
- Obstacles
- Main 'relays' or channels of information and contacts for international collaboration projects;
- Unexpected good or unexpected bad elements;
- Good or bad practices
- What could be done better by any of the parties involved
- What policy changes could be made
- What new or improved programmes could be useful
- How to improve communication

## **Methodology**

Wishing to analyze the practical experience of operators rather than to conduct a scientific research, we decided to conduct case studies of a number of projects of artistic cooperation between and amongst operators in the Mediterranean. Using our networks and other contacts, we were searching for projects that met the following criteria:

- True projects of cooperation, where all the partners are involved on equal basis
- Involving partners from different Mediterranean countries or cultural operators from more than one country with at least one Mediterranean partner
- That are fundamentally artistic, but could also have educational, media, social or other impact
- Involving institutions and/or organizations with an independent way of working. We were interested in projects initiated by the operators themselves, rather than those issued from an official policy or by a governmental organization.
- Projects that are fundamentally artistic – with an artistic core, regardless the artistic discipline and other possible elements, such as social, educational, humanitarian, etc.
- Finally, we tried to focus on recently conducted projects, thus searching for recent developments in artistic cooperation in the region.

The methodology of the research was widely inspired by the one used in the previously conducted SEE/WE research, adapted to the Mediterranean region. Once the projects were chosen, we searched for interlocutors that could both give us more information on the project itself, but also that could present us their point of view on the cooperation in the region. The projects were, therefore, used both as an example to be analyzed and as an excuse to discuss greater issues.

Five people have worked together on the realization of this research – we were faced with the difficulty of working on distance one from another, using e-mail or telephone as the only way of communication and exchange of impressions and opinions. All the interviews were taped, translated to English (when necessary) and sent to all the co-authors. The interviews were carried out by telephone or face to face in English, French and Arabic. As in the previous research, we felt that the choice of language had an impact on the interviewees and the accuracy and sincerity of their answers.

The questionnaire that we used introduced the subject in a circular way, repeating the questions but going deeply in the subject each time, opening the interlocutor gradually.

Using a methodology similar to the one used in the SEE/WE research, has helped us identify similarities and differences, but also made us question our own perception, trying to understand all the subtleties of the cultures and countries involved. However awkward it may have felt sometimes to us or our interlocutors, it made us come to some very important observations.

## 2. Analysis of Selected Projects

<b>Project</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>Where?</b>	<b>When?</b>	<b>What?</b>	<b>What cooperation?</b>
Amman International Theatre Festival	Al-Fawanees theatre group Amman, El Warsha Theatre Group Egypt, Arab Centre for Theatrical Training and partnership with theatre groups from all over the world	Amman, Jordan	Every year since 1993 on the 27th March (except 2003 because of the War on Iraq)	An international theatre festival including several non-traditional workshops, symposiums and conferences	Jordan initiative and project-coordination International participation Funding partly by Municipality of Greater Amman but mostly by international foundations
An Arabic Midsummer Night's Dream	Backa Teater/Gothenburg City Theatre, The Dramatic Institute Stockholm, Cultural Association Sweden-Egypt, the Jesuit Cultural Centre in Alexandria and individual actors, musicians, assistants and technicians from the Arab World	Alexandria, Egypt	January-April 2003	A theatre production workshop for education, capacity building and cultural exchange in the Middle East-North Africa region	Swedish initiative based on previous contacts Mixed Arab-Swedish ensemble and staff Performances in Alexandria and Sweden Funding mainly from Sweden, but also from European and International foundations
Beirut Street Festival	Project was created by Mercedes Juliá, Spain and Moustapha Yamout, Lebanon	Beirut, Lebanon	First edition in 2002	Street arts festival	Spanish initiator Lebanese project-coordination International participation European funding
Bel Arabi Feel	Laurence Rondoni, French choreographer, and Mohammed Shafik, Egyptian choreographer	France and Egypt	Since one year	Artistic project of choreographic exchange, involving double residency and performances	French initiator French/Egypt co-developed and coordinated project Funding mostly from France

Comic strip workshop	Original concept, producer & organiser Ahmed El Attar Egypt/Paris in cooperation with French Comic Strip artist Golo	Cairo, Egypt	January 2002 - June 2003	Comic strip workshop for young Egyptian comic strip artists leading to the publication of a comic book, a modern adaptation of a 12th century Arab Epic	Egyptian/French initiator and project-coordinator Egyptian participants Funding mainly from European foundations or cultural institutes
DBM - DANSE Bassin Méditerranée	DBM - DANSE Bassin Méditerranée	Based in Paris, France	Organisation established in 1998	A network of cooperation, active in the development and the promotion of the cotemporary dance in the Mediterranean region.	Initiated by IETM and artists from the region European funding
European Textile Network Virtual Routes	European Textile Network	Based in Hanover, Germany	Ongoing project	Creation of virtual routes to sites and artefacts from the times of industrialisation in Europe, on the example of textile heritage	Initiated by the German-based network Partnership between North and South Europe as well as Eastern Europe
ICTUS Music training	ICTUS, Belgium	Israel and Palestine territories	Ongoing since October 2002	Music workshops in Israel and Palestinian music schools led by musicians from ICTUS ensemble	Belgian initiator and project coordinator Palestine/Israeli partners and workshop participants Funding mainly Belgian
Professional meeting about dance in Turkey	Project created by the independent researcher Zeynep Morali with support from Roberto Cimetta Fund, European Cultural Foundation, Danse Bassin Méditerranéen (DBM),	Istanbul, Turkey	13 <sup>th</sup> -15 <sup>th</sup> of June 2003	Professional meeting about contemporary dance in Turkey with the aim to evaluate needs and start off a dialogue between Turkish artists and local actors.	Initiated by independent researcher from France Turkish and European partners and participants Mainly European Funding

### 3. Interviews

#### Subtleties and Codes

*"There are codes that are specific to each culture and you need to understand the codes."*

If "myths" were significant in the previous study of South East/West Europe cultural collaboration, subtle cultural "codes" were key issues in this study. Such comments were repeatedly observed by the majority of the interviewees, particularly with relevance to European/non-European joint cultural ventures. Thorough understanding of these "codes" and "subtleties" was described as a fundamental component to the optimal attainment of true and genuine cultural exchanges between the partners. Codes run deep: it seems that one has to know codes necessary to even identify and understand the deeper societal codes. Hence a respect for people who recognised this: true attempts and evident desires of knowing the partner were praised while criticism was aimed at cases illustrating a disassociation from the other. Codes and subtleties are found in all aspects of cultural collaboration, in project building and project management.

#### - Cultural and Social Contexts

A high level of cultural and social sensitivity to the partner and the partner's society seems to serve as an essential tool for the achievement of a true form of cultural exchange and also is often used as a criterion for assessing a project's success both on the professional and personal levels. On the personal level, these "codes" were better understood in the cases through which artists were hosted in the houses of their counterparts, or when operators, prior to initiating the project, actually went to the partner's country and got to know the people and developed a sense of the place. In other instances, speaking the language of the partner has also proved to be a helpful element.

#### - Interpreting through the Art

*"It is important to note that the arts (in some Arab countries) express a lot of the contradictions of the society, in ways that differ from the direct western ways."*

On the professional level, the knowledge of the codes of the countries (organisations and societies) involved in the projects explained how arts in fact provide intuition on cultures and societies and how the development of the arts is often linked to the specific cultural and social realities of the country.

*"I showed her my work, and so she started to know me – to know me and my work"*

#### - Work ethics and Mechanisms

It is a fact that work ethics and work mechanisms vary across cultures. Again, the differences are more significant when comparing European to non-European countries. Although the students of a workshop were often late for class in the morning, the trainer (having lived much of his life in the host country) was able to adapt accordingly without jeopardizing the project. Thus, a real understanding by



a trainer, of the work ethic and mechanisms in the partner's counties, decreased chances of misunderstanding.

- Cultural management

Another example is the application of different forms of cultural management. Although both the South and North have strong traditions of culture and art, *"in Europe, they have a tradition of cultural and artistic management and this is something that we (Middle East) lack"*. The lack of long-standing traditions of cultural management in most southern countries often hinders the work within the cultural sector in the country and also with international partners. Flexibility here is seen as an absolutely positive attribute, and its lack (in north-western structures) as a detriment.

- Arts Education

Often the level and type of training artists have vary from one country to the other. Thus, artists and arts operators must show a high level of patience and endurance when working with artists from different countries in order to reach a common ground of communication.

- Level of Exposure

The level of international experience and exposure partners acquire throughout their work and personal interests and backgrounds seems to contribute to the attainment of a better understanding of the society's "codes", thus leading to a better implementation of the project. Partners with diverse international and cultural experiences are more apt at comprehending complex cultural, political and social scenarios and more adaptable and accustomed to using a participatory approach when developing a project.

- Political Contexts

Understanding the political turbulences that prevail in some countries is another important factor. Political disruptions alter the outsider's perception of the country of conflict. Cultural and artistic exchange ventures with the other countries become minimal thus contributing to the isolation of the specific country. Our interviews have shown that Gulf War of 2003 stopped the Amman International Festival from convening this year. The political unrest in Palestine has hindered the participation of Palestinian actors and actresses from joining the project of An Arabic Midsummer Night's Dream.

## **Looking at learning**

*"Let's see what our differences are and how we can work with them."*

Unanimously, interviewees highlighted the extreme importance that the learning process had in the realization of their projects. In some cases, the desire to learn, to get acquainted with another culture was the very essence of their motivation to start working on the project: *"It is only by speaking with the people there that we slowly defined the project as it has developed now"*. It is also perceived as one of the most important results of the projects – *"establishing knowledge of the other and allowing the other to know you"*.

- Personal experience

Although sometimes taken in a very practical sense, learning in the projects that were analysed was often perceived as a long and intimate process, changing not only the prejudices and misconceptions, but also the system of values, the perception of the world and the arts: *“many of the things learned linger in the subconscious and accumulate to one’s knowledge”; “you open your mind and you change your view of the world”; “...opened their eyes to a lot of things that weren’t connected to their art before”*

- Cultural experience

We perceived a strong general awareness of the differences between “cultural realities” of the operators involved in the project. The learning process could only take place with “respect” to the “codes” and the “sensitivities” of each side, “subtleties”, the unwritten rules of every culture - “listening”, “understanding”, “staying open” were some of the key words often repeated by the interviewees. Rather than looking for similarities, it is more important to learn to live with differences *“We never really understood each other...but this is the first step”*. It also affects managerial skills, whose codes are also understood differently depending on the culture “of reference”.

- Artistic experience

The experiences gave knowledge of “traditions” present in certain artistic fields, “different schools of acting” “different artistic approaches”, afterwards used in the carrying out of projects: “a real model of cultural exchange where the processes of learning and teaching are reciprocal”

- Breaking the preconceptions

The learning process had a strong impact for everyone on the breaking of myths about each other, about demystifying “exotic” perceptions. This applied equally whether between countries of the region “rarely working together”, by raising an interest on each other’s work, by “talking” or “exchanging information”. It also helped to fight prejudices against some countries or the region as a whole. *“There are people involved in the conflict and a lot of people like you and me who do not want this conflict, but they can’t necessarily do anything about it.”*

- Practical, managerial knowledge

Learning took place regarding the solving specific problems, carrying out a specific project, formal “training”, the importance of “team work”, working in specific “technical, political, social conditions”, “reaching different audiences”, negotiating, facing the problems of mobility, respecting each other’s “expertise”

Indeed, bearing in mind the heterogeneity and the complexity of “cultural realities” of the region, the learning process can hardly be one-sided – staying open to each other’s influence and trying to understand makes one question one’s own system of values, accept and respect, and that is a way to true cooperation: “human interaction, real exchange and knowledge of all different cultures”

### **Legacies**

Respondents were equally unanimous in affirming that such cross-cultural projects leave numerous legacies, especially human and cultural, but also developmental and

technical. This is especially true when partners are flexible and let the project evolve throughout its development.

Although projects mixing many different cultures are complicated at first, given sufficient time for partners to get to know and establish trust with one another, things get done. All respondents are committed to developing new cross-cultural projects – which is a legacy in itself.

From the interview material we cite the following legacies mentioned by respondents:

#### Concrete

- Emerging artists and creators who are able to produce and present their projects
- Meetings between artists of the same countries, development of regional cooperation: creation of a new mini-festival
- Workshops and training courses
- Tours of performances and exhibitions (national and international)
- Co-productions between southern/eastern and northern/western partners
- Music CDs, books created, published and diffused
- Commercially earned income targeted back into the project
- Invitations to take part to international artistic events
- New artistic groups which go on working together, creation of networks between the participants of projects
- Growth in the number of people engaging in professional arts training/careers
- Creation of a new theatre school (directly inspired by the project)
- Developing audiences in the Arab countries, developing immigrant community audiences in the northern countries, new visitors to museums which belong to network
- Discovery of new potential partners

#### Intellectual and cultural

- Increase of knowledge of the other, curiosity in the other's culture. Acceptance of differences, less prejudice
- Awareness of different social systems
- Faith in the necessity of developing such projects
- Increase of the autonomy of the artists and operators
- New awareness of the audience in front of new artistic work
- More trust in Mediterranean artists, more self confidence of the artists, more positive thinking about their work in an international level
- Tolerance, dialogue, respect: building of a civil Europe and Euro-Med region

#### Developmental

- New, more sensitive ways of working
- Motivation to develop more Euro-Med cross cultural projects
- Strengthening of Arab/ or Med/Med collaboration: numerous regional and international projects generated by initial projects, new will of local actors to work together
- Development of training techniques, more concern about education and specialization by artists and operators (although we do not know if this is matched by the institutions)
- More skills regarding coordination, administration, planning, access to information, teamwork and general management

### Artistic

- Innovative and hybrid character of artistic work
- Development of new artistic forms: Interdisciplinary approach, contemporary dance
- New artistic techniques and approaches, non-hierarchical teamwork and development of autonomy.

### **Critical Success Factors and Obstacles**

A critical success factor is the mirror image of an obstacle. However, it must be said that in this study, we did find many inequalities between the north/western situation and the south/eastern: these could be regarded as challenges and could serve as aspects of developmental plans for the future.

### ***Obstacles:***

#### Institutions vs Independents

Independents can often identify innovative ways to bridge gaps, to address issues, to create and produce art. Not being obliged to wait for longer institutional decision-making cycles, they are important sources of creativity in the cultural sector. Yet in most Med countries:

- Independent cultural operators are severely weaker economically than institutions
- Institutional partner organizations and structures in the North often cannot cope with the (necessity for) flexible and evaluative working processes in the South

#### Lack of Infrastructure

Whereas in the developed West, there are often complaints about too-strict infrastructures which stifle, here we find again and again the same regrets regarding:

- Lack of institutions
- Lack of arts education at all levels from school through to professional training,
- Lack of cultural policies
- Lack of financial support in the south countries (from all sources: public, private, commercial (market))

#### Sources of Revenue

South-shore operators don't always wish to depend on Western foundations and public institutions. Yet they have little choice. They themselves deplore:

- Lack of market in the Arab countries
- Lack of private sector support
- Funding is "the nightmare of the production team": one has to approach so many different sources with so many different interests and priorities. *"It takes so much time..."*

#### Funders

Whilst all respondents in receipt of funding said that the funders' priorities did NOT change the projects' main aims and objectives, there are aspects of funders' behaviours which do seem to constrain the work.

- Funders' requirements for plans which can't change, national institutions' rigidity
- EU as funder is always cited as "the worst danger to the actual work"

- Funders' perception of the countries as the same: funding programmes not specific to the countries
- The constant need to borrow money because funding is always late
- Lack of finance for Arab-Arab or south-south exchange (e.g. Egypt -Turkey)
- Indifference of national institutions to support multilateral/ supranational collaboration projects

### **Critical Success Factors:**

#### Time

Professionals in this type of work especially need TIME - for repeated travel, budget setting, communication, planning, repeated discussions, unforeseen obstacles...

- Importance of LONG-TERM partnerships (they can be open to new participants)
- Continuity of support to the same line of development
- Ability to let a project evolve through its own life and its follow-up and spin-offs

#### Deep Understanding

*"There are deep differences in the cultures, negotiating all realms, levels of perceptions, contradictions in the societies, codes"*

Deep understandings are needed in order to avoid subconscious misunderstandings, to learn how to negotiate local competition for the meagre resources, to understand behavioural codes: *"For Arabs, conflict is life. But the Europeans are intimidated by our blow-ups and arguments. We forget them afterwards..."*

- BEING THERE, going there
- LISTENING (reading, talking, looking)
- Being able to focus on the work, to see, exchange the artistic work and process ("administration is not the only law")
- Importance of working together as the best way to "get to know each other from inside"

#### Knowledge and negotiation of the Political, Social, Cultural Situations

- Depth of knowledge of the different political contexts
- Both Europeans and Arabs need to be aware of the vast differences between the Arab countries' cultures, education, perceptions, dialects...
- Having the time and contacts necessary to overcome difficulties in obtaining visas between the Arab countries and between Arab countries and Turkey

#### Knowledge of the Professional Situations (Human Resource Development)

- Differing levels of technical expertise
- Differences in vision and planning
- Necessity for artists and arts operators to have other full time jobs

Some exemplary projects address these differences by:

- Creating projects which address and improve the relative lack of trained managers, lack of experienced people who can work together in production teams and share tasks in the south-shore countries
- Creating projects which address and improve the relative lack of technicians; lack of development of other careers (métiers) in the south-shore countries

### Flexibility and adaptation

It bears repeating:

- Importance of being able to change the concept or objectives in order to meet local realities, interests and needs, and thus of letting the concept and objectives take shape only after REPEATED joint processes of discussion and dialogue, brainstorming
- South organizations are much more flexible; *“they are used to improvising”*
- Creating flexible management models which can adapt to evolving situations

### Neutral Catalysts, Conceptors and Sensitive Partners

In some projects, we noted the importance of bi-cultural “neutral catalysts” (whether individuals, organisations or events), with “knowledge of the subtleties; who know in both cultures which red lines can or can’t be crossed”. These “bi-cultural neutrals” can transcend the competition between local groups and help them produce something different and special.

- Need for sensitive and experienced partners
- Need for “conceptors”, conceivers who can see the gaps and identify the ways to address them
- TRUST
- *“Agreeing beforehand that it is not only an art project, but also an experience in cross-cultural collaboration and learning”* and building a good team spirit
- Knowing beforehand where both sides may have to compromise

### Reciprocity and exchange:

Again, it bears repeating that learning and teaching are crucial in both directions

### Institutions vs Independents

*“Avoiding public institutions is the only way of escaping the post-colonial trap!”* The importance of independents cannot be stressed enough. In addition:

- Importance of creating forums for meeting which are not “official”, not part of “official representation”
- Crucial Importance of the person who happens to be in charge of the (national) cultural centre: their interest, understanding and support can make or break a project, its development and its legacies...

### Funding Needs

- Importance of indirect funding and support (because there is so little direct funding available)
- Necessity for experienced operators who know their funders, and/ or for good research and knowledge of funders’ priorities so that the fund-seekers can target them correctly and not have to compromise their project’s objective; directing the demands to the institutions one KNOWS are interested
- Funding for travel and communication is, of course, fundamental!
- Being able to know how best to use the few resources (including the limited contact time available) that one has together.

#### 4. Recommendations

This study did not interview funders. Doubtless the findings would be different if it had. However, it may be useful for funders to hear what their clients say. These should not be taken as complaints: they are, instead, observations from committed, dynamic cultural operators on the ground, attempting to build a productive and creative environment and mutual understanding between peoples.

##### Long Term Infrastructure Development

*"You can't only do one project: you have to follow what you have done in order to really make the most of the learning"*

*"We need to start to look at the idea of support centres which can help train, advise, support the local cultural operators and artists"*

- Funders should invest in long-term infrastructure-building, not only projects
- There is an expressed need for education in the arts: technical, lighting, design...

##### Importance of the Art

Funders should be aware that learning also takes place in the artistic creation, not only the workshop; *"there is no better education than education linked to a professional work"*

- There is a need for more forums and platforms in the South where artists can come together. *"We only seem to be able to meet in Berlin, or Paris, or London or New York..."*
- A need for development of good, informed criticism and journalism

##### Development of Management Models

*"Cultural management training for this region needs to integrate political and social, as well as administrative and financial elements"*

- There is a need for "alternative administration" practices in order to deal with partners from many different countries
- "Horizontal" rather than "vertical" management gives all partners opportunities to participate

##### Nationalism and post-Colonialism

*"Real collaborative projects, hybrid and innovative, disturb funders because it is a change in their systems. A 'vitrine' for the national culture is the only thing they understand."*

*"Almost all funding is given to promote a national European culture (French play, English writer, etc). This is so old-fashioned. The Americans have learned that just having a very good collaboration with an American promotes American culture. Just having a great collaboration with a European will promote their culture just as much as using the work of one of their national artists."*

*"Projects should not be evaluated according to how best it represents a national culture, but also according to where it will be presented and to whom"*

##### Funders can LISTEN and LEARN too

As in the Balkan study, most respondents feel that a majority of funders are not necessarily able to learn from the experiences of the funded projects. Admitting the limited staff numbers in the funding institutions and foundations, admitting that these

comments are a mélange of experiences with national institutions, private foundations and the EU, also admitting that this could be a false perception on the part of “the funded”, isn’t there a way of addressing this?

*“Funders COULD have an interest in what you’re doing and try to understand what you’re after”*

*“The bottom line is, the funders should let us prepare the questions: see what we’ve done in the past and try to make our lives easier rather than complicate them”*

*“It’s good for funders to see the problems that you have”*

*“Funders should support initiatives which benefit local people in the ways they themselves want to benefit, not in the way the European funders want them to benefit”*

*“Funders should be more courageous”*

*“Funders want to see the word ‘innovation’ but in fact the forms and criteria rule out any innovation whatsoever”*

*“Funders should get rid of rigid criteria, be more aware of the problems and complexities of the projects and LISTEN to the operators who managed the projects!”*

Perhaps one way forward is:

*“Funders should communicate between themselves!”*

## **5. General Observations and Vision**

### Optimism

A strong sense of optimism has prevailed in the interviews. The projects studied were often described as a "fresh step" toward a true form of cultural exchange, an enriching and ongoing learning process. Furthermore, these projects have given birth to new other forms of collaborations between old and new partners. The forums provided by these unique gatherings have joined artists from different cultures and backgrounds, initiated dialogue among professional counterparts and further developed new projects that are to be implemented in the future.

### Development

Most of the projects started as small projects and then developed in size and scope. Some of the small projects are intended to be gradually implemented on the national level while the nature of others does not allow this. Large or small, national or regional most of these partnerships aim for further future development. However, some of projects particularly the ones implemented in the south come to the service of the society's "elite". Interviewees have stated that although "one has been seeing film



festivals and arts exhibits etc; it is not something that has completely entered the population. It has developed more in the last years, it is more evident".

Also, in the future artists must be encouraged not only to show their work outside their countries but also to "to develop the artists in their countries".

#### Five years from now - and five years before

When questioned on the effect of the precise period in time in which they are working, some pointed to the fact that the Barcelona Process had just begun, the interest for the region as very new – it may have been premature to implement some of these projects. There is a sense that public awareness for cultural exchange projects has increased in the last few years

#### Infrastructure

All respondents deplored the lack of supportive infrastructure. This was taken to mean anything from public institutions and cultural policies to education, professional training and a professional workforce, to actual cultural centres and buildings, to the resources necessary to make art accessible to the public. It includes the environments which would persuade gifted individuals to remain in their own countries rather than emigrate.

#### Recipient or Partner

When relations are "biased from the beginning because the North has the money even if the South has the vitality", it is difficult to convince "recipients" of projects that they are indeed offering something and are true partners. There is a perception that who funds the project "owns" it. Can this change without the possibility of funding support available in the countries of the "poorer" partners?

#### Nationalism and Colonialism

Several people mentioned that colonial, patronizing attitudes still prevail, although this seems to be more in relation to certain national cultural institutions and to the less experienced cultural organizations and individuals. Economic inequality is a barrier to fostering partnerships based on respect and equality of intellectual/artistic input. It is also an obstacle to shared ownership and responsibility.

#### New Cultural Management Models

We found relatively few instances of this but some interesting examples, although they are understandably more apparent when the partners have had several years of international collaborative experience, such as in Egypt and Jordan. Many of the interviewees highlighted the need for formalizing the management of the cultural sector in their countries as a long-term project in order to facilitate the management of local as well as international projects.

In this regard, future work must be done to provide independent artists and operators with official umbrellas of representation to assist them implement their work within a functional framework.

#### Reciprocity and Exchange

There were repeated pleas for real exchange (rather than "one-way" projects). This contrasts strikingly with the American and European cutting edge multicultural artists who want to see the end of these terms. It is most probably due to different interpretations: Western artists are against the bi-polar, post cold War concepts of

automatic, tit-for-tat State cultural exchanges and are interested in hybridity and mixage, affirming new multifaceted identities and art-forms. Our respondents pleaded for *“learning and teaching in both ways”*. Which is, in itself, a pre-requisite for any future hybrid mixes...

#### Political, Social or Artistic

In this study, the aims, “struggle”, purpose, *raison d’être* of the initiatives were more than usually linked to mutual understanding, to solidarity, to a belief in breaking the cultural barriers between peoples. There was a strong feeling that the West (North) does not understand the East (South) and that, indeed, the West is promoting distorted images of Arabs and Turks. *“Europe has big, big prejudices against us”*. Strikingly, one of the surprises mentioned was that *“there are Europeans who can who can listen and collaborate and not just sell”*. The same respondent felt that the Europeans were surprised by *“our energy and vitality”*. The fact that these are “surprising” should tell us how much work there is yet to do...

#### Emergence of south-south projects, networks and partnerships

The development of these is felt to be extremely important, but certainly not prevalent enough, partly because there is still very little political will or cultural funding to support it. Hence *“we have to meet in Berlin, New York...”* etc.

#### Importance of investing in people

...giving them the TIME, the TRAVEL SUPPORT and the CONTINUITY of support in order to maximize the use of their learning. We observed the importance of investing in “neutral catalysers”, be the people or projects or events, which can bring local people together, transcend existing competition, demonstrate openness and transparency and bring the best out of all partners. The great risk is to choose the right people who will provide a fresh spirit and experience, and not create yet more rifts and negative experiences. Another risk is to let the same NGO’s gather more and more experience and personal relationships with the funders, thus blocking the way for younger, newer players.

#### Relais, channels of information

Word of mouth, personal introductions, formal and information networks and networking: people trust people and in this situation the “catalysers” are those who also spread info, contacts and ideas; often demonstrating a networking and info-sharing mentality by their own behaviour.

## 6. List of Respondents and their Contact Details

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