



◎ WHO WE ARE?

Katelijan Verstraete

My intention to embark on this project stems from reflection on my 25 years practice in cultural relations. Many collaborations I was part of were set in complex international and intercultural contexts between Asia and Europe. They happened often too fast, with not enough room for reflection on privilege, positionality, power dynamics and not enough time to make collaborations truly mutually beneficial.

My fascination with other worldviews drove my interest to study sinology and engage in the arts. Via a detour in marketing management for a German multinational in China, I moved to the arts world to co-create an independent art space in Shanghai. I returned to Belgium to immerse myself in the arts sector in Europe when working at **KFDA** and **IETM**, understanding the power of cultural networks in Europe, the importance of mobility and building connections for IETM to Asia. Back in Asia (Singapore) in 2006, I experienced first hand the challenges in building more equal Asia-Europe cultural relations in **ASEF**. In my 8.5 years as Regional Director Arts for the **British Council** in East Asia where I managed the arts programme over 14 countries, I learned a lot about key values like equality, diversity and inclusion, but also about power dynamics in cultural relations. I left the British Council in March 2020 when very vibrant internal discussions were happening about decolonisation and anti-racism, which were open, often difficult but very important debates. Now as an independent cultural consultant based between Brussels and Singapore, I work on meaningful and pertinent projects, while simulatenously pursuing a degree at Melbourne University in programme evaluation.

Avril Joffe

I'm an economic sociologist and currently the Post Graduate Coordinator of the **Cultural Policy and Management Department** at the School of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, SA. I have been at Wits in this role for the past 8 years, previously I worked independently as a professional researcher & trainer with ILO, UNCTAD, governments in SA and across the African continent in fields from labour and skills development through to industry strategy. For the past 25 years I have worked in the intersection of academia and practice in realising a just and sustainable development in fields such as culture in urban life, culture and the cultural economy, fairness in international cultural cooperation and the rights and status of artists and cultural professionals. I am passionate about teaching and mentoring and continue to be inspired by our post graduate students to decolonise curricula and pedagogic practice. I'm an active member of

UNESCO's **Panel of Experts for Cultural Policy and Governance** - with an emerging speciality in small island states having conducted missions to Seychelles, Mauritius, Jamaica, and soon Granada, Cabo Verde and others. I'm also a member of the **International Advisory Council** for the UKs' NESTA's Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Council where I led a research programme on **informality in the cultural economy of the Global South**. My involvement in the **International Cultural Relations Research Alliance** (BC/IFA) has been a safe space to have robust debates about cultural relations. I am also a member of **CREATOURInternational**, a creative tourism advisory body. My creativity continues to be stimulated by my dance practice - I'm a second degree black belt Nia dance instructor and a Spanish dance enthusiast.

Sudebi Thakurata + D.epicentre

I am a narrative designer, creative facilitator, storyteller, writer, futurist, design educator and researcher. Through 16 years of my work across India, South and South-East Asia, UK, North America, and parts of Europe, I have been exploring socially, environmentally & culturally relevant issues to design inclusive, equitable, fair and regenerative possibilities. The inquiry driven, immersive, context-based, Pluriversal & transdisciplinary elements in my work deepened when I received a few fellowships after working at an anti-human trafficking organisation. I teach at **Srishti Manipal Institute of Art, Design & Technology** since 2010, and co-founded the transdisciplinary design-led systems innovation collective, D.epicentre, which is also the Design Partner for this project, under my creative direction.

My Masters from University of Northampton led me to explore the intersections of design, pedagogy and inclusion, something I extended into this project along with learnings from D.epicentre's work on inter-cultural collaborations, with University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Virginia Commonwealth University, Qatar, our work on dignity with Emily Carr and Thomas More University, my ongoing work on futures and foresight as the **Global Innovator of ITAC** and my work on **creative collaborations** from 3 years of facilitating and designing SEAD cultural leadership programme in S-E Asia and UK. I am fascinated about facilitating, fostering and engaging in various forms of creative collaborations, along with transformative and emergent forms of designing 'Futures': futures of people, places, perceptions, paradigms, processes and much more, and now the Future of Fairness. I am deeply interested in using non-traditional methods and creative approaches to decolonise research and find experiential perspectives and lived narratives, which I often publish and talk about.

We, at **D.epicentre** design experiences, engagement & environment, that allow people to think, have dialogue, make their thinking & interaction

visible & thus enable them to design their own solutions & narratives using different modes, media and forms. D.epicentre is a trans-disciplinary design-led systems innovation collective of narrative designers, strategic futurists and creative practitioners. Our work ranges from business/ service design to learning/ecosystem design, game and toolkit design to futures literacy, evaluation to instruction design, exhibition to publication design, creative facilitation to leadership, research to user-experience design, mentoring to socially-engaged arts initiatives.

Matina Magkou

I can't think of myself without being involved in cultural relations processes- it's something I have been doing for the last 20 years. The moment however I started questioning fairness in those collaborations was when I took the responsibility of evaluating a EuroArab cultural cooperation project. Was I knowledgeable enough of all realities? Did I have a specific (eurocentric) viewpoint on things? Was I fair to the project and its outcomes? This questioning also led to my PhD research on value and evaluation in cultural cooperation projects with a focus on the EuroArab region. After years in Greece, Spain, Belgium and Qatar working with and for cultural organisations and public institutions, I am currently based in France and employed as a post-doctoral researcher at **University of Côte d'Azur** investigating intermediary cultural spaces, digital transformation processes and the city. I continue working as a cultural manager and consultant because I enjoy it and I learn continuously. I am working with cultural networks and organisations evaluating projects, facilitating learning processes and managing complex projects. I am also an alumna of the Global Cultural Leadership Programme organised by the **Cultural Relations Platform**.

Finally, I am co-founder of **KOΛΛEKTIVA** for social innovation and culture that undertook the project management of this work. KOΛΛEKTIVA is non-profit organisation that works at the intersection of social innovation, culture and sustainable development to encourage positive transitions to more fair and viable futures.

Anna Steinkamp

It's all about cooperation - this has been my guiding principle when I started working in the field of international cultural cooperation - first for the **German Commission for UNESCO** and now as an independent consultant, based in Germany.

UNESCO provides a space for all nations sitting, exchanging and working together. This big challenge to work at eye-level has been a priority for me when managing collaboration projects in the field of cultural relations,

running international networks or advising cultural organisations in their strategic processes.

The permanent exchange with people from all world regions helped me to become more aware of my own biases and to better embrace diversity - especially through a transparent and empathic communication, including listening.

My Masters in Cultural studies and Public Policy provided the scientific and technical tool boxes for shaping governance processes, especially when it comes to networks, but also designing publicly funded projects for more lasting impact.

Since this year, I am part of the managing team of the German Association of the Independent Performing Arts.

Cristina Farinha

After I finished my Sociology degree, what got me into the cultural field was the realisation that a great deal of artists and cultural professionals missed an adequate social status. I did a Post-graduate in Labour Law, and engaged in a MA in search of mapping artists' social and working conditions in my country; followed by a PhD research on how international mobility could improve artist's work and what obstacles remained. Labour and mobility rights are directly linked with how I define fair relations and societies. As a cultural professional, I have been a freelancer for most of my career. I have been working from local and regional to international level in the conception, implementation and evaluation of diverse policies and programmes for various organisations, from the European Commission, to networks, cultural institutions and local authorities across Europe, the Caucasus, Middle East and Africa. I am interested in contributing to the strengthening of the role of culture and creativity in governance and development; the promotion of international cooperation and mobility; and the building of capacities within the cultural sector.