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# Journal of Urban Culture Research

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Cover image under the theme of 'parks are important' taken at Japan's Nakajima Park in Sapporo was provided by Alan Kinear.

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# Editorial

# Building Partner- ships for Change – ASEAN and the Urban Challenge

Kjell Skyllstad<sup>+</sup> Editor in Chief

“Cities should be places where interaction and participation of citizens enable them to meet their own needs and aspirations, and those of the larger community and allowing future generations to meet theirs.” I was reminded of the ambitious aims for urban development set forth by the Brundtland Report “Our Common Future” more than a quarter of a century ago when I participated at a meeting at the Singapore National University arranged by the International Forum of Urbanism and the Centre for Sustainable Asian Cities. In the four years that have since passed, the expected effects of an unbridled urbanization in the South East Asian envisioned at that conference have become a reality in cities across the region.

A negative feature of urbanism worldwide has been the unimpeded growth of volatile mega-regions with increasing economic inequality and ethnic polarization fueling incidents of urban violence and leading to an obsession with security and surveillance, gated and guarded compounds ranging from administrative complexes in the city center to the “privatopias” of the western suburbs, shut out from the most glaring examples of social inequality – the favelas and urban slums.

On the eve of the implementation of the ASEAN union it seems imperative to

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ask: Is this an urban state of affairs that we will have to accept in the name of “development”? What will happen if the process is left to run its own course unbridled?

In December 1997 the leaders of the ASEAN nations met to charter a course for a stronger union with a vision for a “Partnership in Dynamic Development” and a “Community of Caring Societies” to be realized by the year 2020. At the later Bali Summit in 2003 (Concord II) this vision became the base for defining three pillars for the establishment of an ASEAN partnership: A political-security community, an economic community and a socio-cultural community. Finally at the 12th summit in 2007 agreement was reached (the Cebu Declaration) to hasten the integration process, with the aim of establishing the union by 2015. This paved the way for the signing of a legally binding ASEAN charter that entered into force on December 15, 2008.

However in none of these documents one will find a critical analysis of how the ASEAN Union will be prepared to meet the real challenges and problems of a developmental model based on values that benefit the private over the public sector and corporate profit over serving peoples’ actual needs. The history of recent global and regional economic and environmental crises including the ongoing crises of the EU shows that a system that is not based on promoting the general well-being of the population at large and, not least, ecological sustainability will not work.

There is time for a wake up call and such calls are already resounding throughout our planet. It is a call for building partnerships for change. Realizing the looming risks for the rapidly growing urban regions world wide urban culture researchers have risen to the occasion. New urban studies programs are initiated at academic institutions world wide. The Interuniversity Center of Dubrovnik serving 169 member universities and other academic institutions world wide has opened its doors to host annual conferences bringing together urban culture researchers and activists with the goal of exploring and acknowledging the problems. A multidisciplinary approach is needed to energize a collective response. Government and corporate leaders, armed with the information thus provided, are already leading out in a movement for change. It is our hope that the JUCR and the URP in years to come will continue to generate a free flow of information for the benefit and support of communities in the whole region and the urban world at large.

# Guest Author Performing Transformation in the Community University of the Rivers *(Part 2)*

Dan Baron Cohen<sup>+</sup>

## Abstract

In this two-part article, I seek to present our emerging Community University of the Rivers through the languages of storytelling (poetry, song, image and theatre) to bring to life the context and pedagogy of Transformance in action, in the Afro-Indigenous community of Cabelo Seco (Portuguese: Dry Hair), founding community of Marabá city, Pará, in the Brazilian Amazon. I use this strategy to ensure that you meet and might identify with my collaborators in our Community University of the Rivers, as living subjects. By privileging human narration, I do not mean to privilege action over reflection, as our dramatic performances and our actors are highly analytical. I am simply embedding theoretical concepts and analyses in our lived experience, valuing oratory, in the search for an aesthetics of transformation. This polyphonic, narrative-based (and less-logocentric) methodology is how all our projects develop, and might be more familiar to practitioners-theoreticians in the 'global south.'

**Keywords:** *Community, Cultural Literacy, Transformance, Art education, Amazon*

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### Section V

*Grandpa, I adore immersing myself in your stories  
I'm able to imagine  
the childhood of Marabá.  
But grandpa  
I hear so often  
that everything will change and I ask myself  
when my river  
becomes a highway  
how will I play?*

Kaline sits drawing in concentrated silence, in a circle of a dozen tiny girls and boys, all drawing cross-legged or leaning in different positions, around a sea of books of songs, short-stories and photos. Adriana, a brutally honest 12-year old with the *astucia* of someone ten times her age, coordinates her workshop within the outdoor community library *Folhas da Vida* (Leaves of Life). She offers words of support and glances of interest, while transforming the letters 'Culture and Art' into a sign which she has decided to peg to the clothesline that already carries many of the drawings that are being produced around her in response to Rafael's story-telling.

Rafael reads a story from books abandoned by and rescued from the Ministry of Culture's chaotic regional office, quizzing his larger circle of older children and young teenagers about its characters, themes, legends, narrative, new words and extraordinary phrases. He is alarmingly wiry for 15, effeminate in a fiercely homo-phobic culture, but respected. He walks in a circle as he reads aloud, followed by his assistant, Viviane, just ten, her darkly ringed eyes betraying a story of unspeakable violence towards her mother that she witnesses every night and promises never to tell. The two circle the drawing children, each in her world and the watching young teenagers, testing questions between them in dramatic whispers and then suddenly pausing to lance one unexpectedly at their alert audience.

It is a rapt universe. Everyone knows that at the end of an hour, there will be a literary lucky-dip for the most active, the most supportive, the one who scored the most correct answers. They are all so quick and have such a keen sense of injustice that with so many answers in the air, little Viviane struggles to keep a tally. But Rafael mediates with humor and he is fair. No-one looks away. Apart from the desire to return home with a book to build up their growing library, everyone wants to feel lucky.

I admire these three young coordinators building their community of 380 family libraries. But where do their participatory and dialogic coordination strategies and courage to constantly innovate come from? Are they African, Indigenous,

Amazonian reflexes, an intuitive intervention which draws on centuries of processed but unspoken experience?

At a discreet distance, Manoela, sits reading with another small group of slightly older girls, prepared at any moment to intervene to offer pedagogical support to the coordinators or to protect the outdoor library. The week before, she had explained to an American journalist who had suddenly entered from the river, camera to his eye, that the workshop was not to be photographed or filmed without prior permission from the project's organizing nucleus, and from the young people and their families. When he asserted his right, she had raised her hand to cover his lens: child and youth prostitution here in the region, friend, is the highest in Brazil. Few here have the confidence to say 'no'. Why not sit and talk to the children? When he grabbed Manoela's arm and pushed her to one side, all the children had stood up. Some asked him to leave. The man had retreated and the story went viral in the streets.

Surveying the entire scene, ex-colonel Stanislau Cordeiro, President of the Francisco Coelho Residents' Association, had glowered down from one of his mansion's balconies, furious that his American guest had been so abused. But he did not react. He is confident that his National Firemen's Training Program for At-Risk Youth will discipline the illiterate truants, and his wife's street parties, baskets of free food and folk-dancing project will sweep this community university from the pathway of history, so that he can get on with the planned transformation of this small territory into a spotless heritage park, sustained by prestigious hotels. The mining giant Vale has already pledged the funds. He has the Senate in his sights.

A few months earlier, the ex-colonel's wife, Maria Celia, had thrown nineteen black plastic bin-liners from one of her balconies, in protest against our open-air community cinema that was blocking the street. Évany, Camila, Rafael and Manoela opened them and sifting through the expensive garbage, found Cordeiro's credit-card receipts, his mason's conference tags and Maria-Celia's card-game accounts. By coincidence, the most able and courageous journalist in Marabá had been present, visiting the project. *Don't denounce them*, I insisted. *Our project needs to persuade Cordeiro and his family on the strength of its proposal, not through fear.*

Manoela handed copies of the tell-tale documents to the police for the record, and the project held its breath. Young considered teenagers like Luciel, Pablo and Carlinhos had understood the invitation. Zequinha chewed his upper lip. The teenagers did not break into the project's brightly painted cultural centre to torch its open-air library and to steal its equipment, or assassinate Manoela or me for 20 or 30 Brazilian Reais. That Cordeiro and Maria-Celia's children now insist in participating in Rafael's reading circle and *Cine Coruja*, also gives us hope.

Between Manoela's reading group and Adriana's clothesline exhibition, Luciel talks to Popopo, a mute adult with special needs, on the periphery of the workshop, looking through his collection of CDs. In his unpatronising, genuine and

smiling manner, motivated by empathetic reflexes of community care, Luciel is improvising a communication strategy which includes Popopo into this circle of readers. No adult has ever managed this.

Rafael notes the initiative, and gestures to me to include it into my filming. In this past year, he has already distinguished himself as a remarkable linguist in our dialogic English project. Now I perceive his peripheral awareness, linked to a sensitivity often found in gay intelligences. By example, Rafael is inspiring an entire community which sits at the back of the class, condemned as illiterate, to love literature, and to see books as a place where the imagination can be fed, nurtured and reclaimed. *Dan. I've just had an idea. Why don't we bring our literary lucky-dip into the cultural raffle at the end of each film, and integrate our library circles into the community caravan?*

I'm stunned by the quality of the proposal. Rafael has transformed *Folhas de Vida* into our first transversal project. He has grasped it is not enough to want to lose books rather than stamp them with return dates, and there is not enough time to visit every home in Cabelo Seco. He has seen the potential of the street and the community's little square as intimate spaces of public transformation.

When I show a video clip of *Folhas de Vida* to the Director of the National System of Public Libraries, during a national seminar in Belem, Rafael's idea becomes policy. Two crates of forgotten, mint publications arrive in Cabelo Seco, addressed to Rafael Varão, Community Librarian, Community University of the Rivers. It makes his day. It may have saved his life.

## Section VI

*In the first bike-ride, for peace  
I carried my assassinated brother  
and flying on the edge of the Tocantins  
we met Amazonian beauty.  
On the second, for life  
I carried my cousin in my lap  
and whistling together without fear  
we discovered the path to freedom.  
On this third, for the waters  
I will carry you, mum, to Amapá  
and creating our university of the rivers  
let's revive our Itacaiúnas.*

Shall we hold the frontline, together? I look into the eyes of Luciel, Pablo, Carlinhos and three other youths whose names I cannot remember, all riding bikes which they've built from abandoned and, probably, some stolen parts. They use their flip-flops as brakes. Some wear painted crash helmets and dark glasses; others t-shirts, ripped and painted for the occasion. Many ride with cousins and siblings cross-bar, in baskets and back-saddle. All one hundred and fifty-odd cyclists peddle with our simple bright orange strip of linen wrapped around their wrists,

ankles, necks, foreheads, handlebars, antennas of imaginary radios, and the accompanying police and firemen do too, attached to their motorbike antennas and mirrors. Proud tags of belonging and quest. *Will you help me?* I repeat.

I keep asking every few minutes, to keep the vital threshold between life and death at the front of their minds. These six have proven themselves in the first two bike-rides. They all love the rush of adrenalin, riding out of Cabelo Seco, a river of children, youth, some mothers and fewer grandparents, watched by hundreds of relatives and friends from windows, doorways and street corners. But these moments of centre-stage affirmation and recognition are the hardest. *Hold the line. Show them our leadership. Show them the beauty of our cooperation.* They smile, aware and visibly growing in stature in the gaze of their community. They tease the jealous few who could not find a bike on time, and throw out one-liners to the police officers who today see their restraint and care.



Figure 4. Bike-ride for freedom (2013).

I can see they are saving themselves. They are already imagining the freedom of the motorway, yelling without inhibition beneath the overpass bridges, and the triumphant chorus of song as they enter another invisible community. *Listen to that river of freedom guys, and hold the line. We have the lives of them all in our hands.* A din of whistles, home-made horns, small drums, euphoric cries and chants, accompanied by the CD played on the bike-radio:

*Sou da raça negra  
da raça africana  
gosto do reggae  
do reggae jamaicano*

*e no balanço do reggae eu vou  
 todo mundo me segue eu vou  
 eu dancei ontem danço hoje  
 e amanhã, reggae.*

We pass through the old city, hundreds of shoppers clapping, acknowledging, smiling with approval and admiration, contaminated by the joy, community and dream. Throughout this river of life, born out of the assassination of our bassist at the end of last year, every cyclist is chatting in pairs, helping someone to recover their balance or inflate a flat-tire, exchanging stories, passing on news, comparing and analysing the bike rides and waving at astonished school friends. All are exhilarated by their own power to transform decades of cruel prejudice towards Cabelo Seco into recognition and respect.

The small group of coordinators beside me resists the temptation to burst the banks of this river of dialogue. They call out to those who spill over the frontline by name with a well-aimed affirmation or explanation, urging the angriest and most self-destructive, or most compulsive and least integrated to keep the collective rhythm and stay behind their moving community threshold. *Take a look at our wheels, guys. It's like we have an invisible chord. Who would've imagined this beauty last ride. Where will we ride to next month?*

*Beauty was the last word I expected to hear on the bicicletada*, Carlinhos smiles as we arrive in the Liberdade community centre. He had composed one of our CD's most popular songs four years ago, and suddenly traded the pleasure and affirmation of the experimental music workshop and community stage for the endless nights of crack-cocaine. I look at his self-consumed youth, not yet 18, and recall his easy self-confidence as a dancer and percussionist. Has the emerging eco-pedagogy of the bicicletada resonated within his needs? The unexpected visceral mix of personal autonomy and collective responsibility, well-being and sustainable transport, cultural production and community solidarity, has drawn him close again for the first time.

Though his body has been ravaged, Carlinhos' charismatic smile and generosity inspire by example all around him to lift instruments, speakers, oranges and bananas, vats of *cajá* juice and our mobile library into the school playground. He places the chairs in concentric circles, reflexes from two years of creating a stage of inclusive human rights and ethical principle with the *Latinhas de Quintal*, and young observers gravitate towards him to lend a hand. Four younger children step into this new space to repair a bike, and with the same easy-going leadership, Carlinhos sits with them and creates a seven-minute workshop, showing them how to transform a coin into a screw-driver to repair jammed brakes. The bike is leaned against the wall as two of *Afro Mundi* dancers and the young *Latinhas* musicians take their positions, and within seconds two hundred young people from Liberdade community have formed an active audience, singing and moving to Cabelo Seco's afro-amazonian culture. Our self-styled journalist, singer and dancer, Carolayne takes the mic. *Welcome Liberdade to the Community University*

*of the Rivers! Let's begin with one of our first songs about solidarity in the car- boot of everyday life, written by Carlinhos at 12 years of age!* The lyricist smiles and blushes. He did not expect the recognition. Maybe he will come home, and live.

## Section VII

Évany sets up the projector while Carol, Pablo and Adriana organize 50 chairs into the intimate half-moon auditorium of Cine Coruja (Owl Cinema). Last night, the cinema was in the street, open to all, to view *The Whale Rider*, and everyone brought chairs, sat in doorways, leaned out of windows, and even bundled children on their laps. Tonight is youth night, restricted to those over 12, and takes place inside the cultural centre. We expect the cinema to pack out after weeks of African films, chosen by the young coordinators in consultation with their community friends, their teachers and their families.

Araguaia: a Conspiracy of Silence is a risk. The film is overtly political and even shows a scene of execution by young people who have chosen to defend the Amazon with arms. It is a far cry from *Avatar* and even *Beloved*, epic films that our audience watched transfixed, shivering under blankets when the temperature suddenly dipped, or came back to see to the end after torrential rains interrupted the film and threatened to turn the makeshift screen into a kite.

*It's worth a try*, Évany affirms as she connects the speaker to the computer to welcome the audience. *Have you brought the goiaba and caju juice, apples and bananas?* she asks Carol. In its first year, Cine Coruja began with a string of lights hung on the walls around the open garden of the Cultural Centre, and suspended between banana trees, facing the River Tocantins. Camila and Carolayne had hired an old popcorn van and served litres of *Guaraná*, dressed as usherettes. They had even mounted a photographic exhibition. But when a considered teenager sought refuge inside the audience turning it into his terrified shield, and the growing numbers of diabetes cases claimed the life of Manoel Gato, the coordinators had to rethink all dimensions of security. Now in its second year, the audience expects Amazonian fruits and juices. *Ready to let everyone in?* Pablo nods. He rarely speaks.

The short begins, a brilliant Bolivian animation, with just three people in the audience. A growing despair seeps into the collective confidence of the young coordinators. They have facebooked their networks, postered the bakery, fresh water well, local bars and schools, blogged and even sent a ludic jingle through the community's two roads, by bike-radio. Resistance to a program that dares to show films from outside Hollywood or London has long since melted, as children, youth and parents discovered Brazilian, Central and Latin American, African and Asian films. The indoor youth sessions are also now a place to be seen, to flirt by mobile in the dark, to steal furtive kisses, and to enjoy some relief from the tense, authoritarian and sometimes violent kitchens of so many fatherless homes. *Beloved* helped many to understand the accumulated, unvented violations in their lives. No, this absence is something else.

*Maybe it's a kind of self-censorship*, Évany speculates, messaging all the coordinators of the projects. *The word's out that it's about here. They don't want to face it.* The clarity

of her analysis, marginalized and hidden in her school classroom, convinces all of them. Perhaps this is new. They had faced the question of censorship with courage, mothers and teenagers alike, in their weekly planning circles, as they debated how and if they should close the door of a community cinema, to meet the specific needs of young people and of the adults' hunger for 'thinking films'. They had considered everything, from a kiss in the shadows to explicit sex in the car, anti-heroes in conflict at home, in school and in church, to the portrayal of gay love.

Their discussions were often inflamed by so many unresolved histories and threatened to erupt into open conflict. But they had learned to listen, to risk taking a stand, to question and to mediate their differences in struggle to reach a democratic decision. One debate was interrupted by the assassination of a son on a street-corner, another by the cries of hungry children in the street. The street always focused the debate, at once threatening to revoke any risky decision and to taunt any fearful step-back. Patience had been tested. *Cine Coruja* had not just faced the profound challenge of censorship inside a religious, terrified poor community. It had come to be defined by it. This evening it is something else.

*The film asks people to take a stand about the future of the Tocantins, explains Carol, and they know the Colonel's up there, watching all who enter and leave.* They sit scattered throughout the auditorium, children watching the cartoon like a council of elders debating the future of the Amazon, oblivious of their unusual maturity and analytical precision. The short ends and Évany proposes they postpone the snack and distribution of the cultural raffle tickets. They quickly agree. Two adults from outside Cabelo Seco, participating in the Community University and a young teenage couple expecting their first baby drift in. Évany starts the feature and all focus. Though they know they are in permanent formation and are offering films which respect the life-experience of their community, the young coordinators are still disappointed.

Fifteen minutes into the film and suddenly there is a rush of teenage guys. Then a few girls enter and Carol shows them to their regular seats. Everyone is wired. In seconds, the explanation has circulated. The Residents' Association has deliberately scheduled a party outside their headquarters to clash with the cinema program. Children and youth have been dancing brega above beer bottles, drinking beer and coke, devouring chocolate cake and crisps. But as soon as the free food has been consumed, all of the teenage cinephiles have raced over. A nervy energy of sugar-excess permeates the air, but the familiar streets and squares of Marabá on-screen have already excited interest and there's the hint of an emerging love-story which resonates with their needs. They are identifying. In the next 90 minutes, they watch the agony of a law student as he faces the slow death of a soldier he has executed to protect a local community, and the painful decision by people like them to implement a collective agreement, to send away a teenage guerrilla from the underground forest-camp, for becoming pregnant. All mobile phones are still. In a tiny riverside cinema, condemned youth are reflecting on their lives, history and choices. The ritual applause and Évany, Pablo and Carol walk to the front of the audience.

*Thanks for coming, Évany smiles. What did you think? An edgy silence, not of shyness, but of calculating risks: the risk of appearing too serious on a Saturday night, of appearing too forward in a culture that chides originality and the courage to question, of just appearing, above the long-grass. But no-one leaves. Many of us lived that story, says Zequinha from the back row. Akissiany, a large nineteen year old, balances in her chair. It's hard to believe that happened here in the Old City. Pablo looks at Zequinha. It's in your song, Alerta Amazônia. Simone speaks from the corner. This is the only community in Marabá that has the nerve to screen a film like that. We should make a film of what we're doing here tonight! Laughter of agreement. We need to install solar energy in Cabelo Seco, Pablo replies, to keep that dream alive.*

### Section VIII

A full year later, Camila hugs Marina da Silva, former Brazilian Minister of the Environment and candidate for vice-president of Brazil in this year's elections. Marina has opened an international conference of social movements, trade union leaders, policy advisers and NGO activists in Washington DC on the legacy of her close friend Chico Mendes, offering a reflexive celebratory portrait of the mythic assassinated rubber-tapper through a weave of stories, eco-social ideas and provocative new paradigm policy proposals. Camila will dance *Roots and Antennas* the following night, and has recognized her own experience and intelligence in Marina's voice. It is a remarkable hug, unimaginable seven years ago when Camila first danced beneath drying clothes in a Cabelo Seco backyard. *I am an afro-contemporary dancer and Amazonian arts educator, she tells Marina, in our community university of the rivers. I dance to research and transform memory of exclusion and hunger, to create imagined communities of choice.*

Marina's eyes well up with emotion. She recognizes herself in the dancer's struggle to arrange and articulate her thoughts, on her feet. Both value precision. They have suffered the power of words and silences. They know them as weapons, tools and bridges. Camila twice braved the prejudices of the American consulate in Brasilia to gain her visa, her tongue too swollen with the muscular reflexes of forbidden grammars and disappeared vocabularies to move elegantly inside a mouth crowded with teeth still being pushed forward by a lifetime of thumb-sucking. We have talked about how both dramatize a violated childhood she never had time to enjoy, and she knows braces will not conceal or heal the need. But right now, she is enjoying her momentum. In her interview for a travel visa, she convinced the consul, seated well below his gaze, that her life project would not allow her to become another young black prostitute on a Washington street-corner.

Marina reads Camila's moment with genuine admiration and equality, a new symbol of the long, epic struggle of the urban Amazon to know and voice itself, narrated in the calendar she is being offered. She asks Camila perceptive questions about two of the photo-portraits in this artistic-pedagogic publication, and the two women hug again, close their eyes and slowly ease apart in silent synchrony. Marina disappears into a crowd of impatient journalists and activists, and Camila checks the photo of her meeting with Marina that we will send to local newspapers in Washington and Marabá.

We return to our host's modest home, a gesture of solidarity from a complete stranger. The kitchen and living room are large enough to each contain Camila's grandmother's home. She notes the shower and toilet annexed to each bedroom. When we arrived a few hours earlier, Camila wandered from room to room, noting every detail. She did not need to explain that she washes in the river every day, and squats in an outdoor toilet with a makeshift door to protect her from lascivious drunken uncles and pubescent cousins. It is all said in the way she looks, pauses, moves. She had touched the walls painted in bold vibrant colours, catalogued the hanging fabrics and sculptures from every continent and everyday objects from different centuries, and laughed aloud at the eccentric-finds in a lifelong collection.

But now, after two days of traveling, Camila is too exhausted to notice anything. She climbs the stairs and falls into a coma, without removing her clothes. Tomorrow, we have two international roundtables on Chico's life and on human rights violations. I chat with our host to make sure we will have time to visit to the Potomac River before Camila's evening performance so that its roaring cascades and gushing whirling currents infuse her solo. I turn off her light. Camila is already asleep, thumb in mouth.

I go on the internet in my room and click on Mano's email. A gasp leaps from my throat too suddenly for me to conceal. I reread the detailed email as seven photos of Camila begin to scroll open. The first three to emerge show her honed dancer's body, naked from the waist up, a child smiling into a plush hotel mirror, presented by our embarrassed youth coordinators on their mobiles to Manoela, minutes after our send-off. I read on. They have already circulated the narrow streets of Cabelo Seco and its nearby schools and quadrilhas. Nausea and despair well up in me as two more selfies emerge. Camila is completely nude, the same smile, innocent, appealing for approval, her gaze angled down to the upturned mobile. I look away, trying to avoid complicity, recall Camila with Marina an hour earlier, and look back. In an instant, I can imagine the reactions of her grandmother Dona Tonica, her mother, her teachers, the parents of the children she is teaching. The photos are too naive to be seductive, but they will shock and provoke judgement. In one night, she has blurred her story.

I will tell her after her performance. No. After our workshop, the following morning. Three more photos unveil themselves. Camila in the mirror, looking up, breasts fuller, more womanly, photoshopped shadows insinuating availability. After the workshop, I will sit with her, alone. Ready to catch her when she falls.

I delete the photos and return to the email. Her elderly *cabocla* grandmother is passing from home to home in our street, insisting that each photo be deleted before her eyes. *It was an error of the heart*, she explains to the neighbours. *Don't we all have regrets?* A reflex of solidarity in a desert of despair. Our youth coordinators have met and reflected in their circle of decision-making. Numb with empathy, unable to meet each other's gaze, they will stand by her. They know they will not have the courage to ask friends to delete the photos.

Two years earlier, Manoela and I chatted easily with Camila about her coy self-portraits in bra and scant shorts she had posted on Facebook. *They'll cast shadows across your leadership and life-project, amiga.* We had felt a chasm of decades, centuries, but Camila replaced the portraits with powerful artistic narrative photos of her research into the memory of her skin. All her friends had continued posting selfies, but Camila had understood something. From within. *Our project has acquired a new frontier of knowledge and action,* we announced in our conference contributions and reports.



Figure 5. Camila transforms historical narratives (2014).

Following a brilliant solo performance and lucid workshop, we return to our host's home. I shut the lounge door and sit Camila down, and holding her hands, I tell her about the selfies. She falls. Hard. Her whole body cries. She lowers her eyes, for an entire night, ashamed, furious, vulnerable. The next morning, she cannot speak. We walk in silence in Washington's rain. Camila is desolate. She needs to be alone, but in open space. We find scant insight in the dark wooden carvings of indigenous leaders, imprisoned in the Museum of the American Peoples. The creative self-portraits of contemporary African artists fascinate and distract Camila, and in mute anger, she reads Lincoln's bold promise to all enslaved African-American peoples, written in stone in the vault of his tomb. *All my cousins,* Camila notes, beginning to glimpse the generations of dry tears in her swollen mouth. By good fortune, she is far from home. She retreats again into silence. On the plane, she chooses to watch *12 Years of Slavery*, her fork suspended between her plate and her open mouth until her food grows cold.

### Conclusion

Two months later, we sit reading these words together, in our studio in Cabelo Seco. *Are you happy for these stories to carry your real name?* I ask. *Mine can stay,* Camila states decisively. She has faced her vulnerability, in every gaze, on every stage that she enters and leaves in her life. She is stronger. I smile.

Camila stands. She gathers up her ample quadrilha costume into her arms. We have spent the week reinterpreting her solo performance of *Roots and Antennas*, working late into the night to transform her new harrowing insights into layers of performed memory and need, projecting film of riverside African life onto the surfaces of her body. But right now, this poetic experimentation has been left to dry in the sun, pegged onto the clothesline outside her home. The African textiles shimmer in the midday sun and explode with colour across the street. I show Camila but all she is thinking about is tonight's pre-performance in the main square of the old city. She has integrated afro-contemporary dance into the *quadrilha's* performance for this year's festa juninha. In the intensely competitive culture, only I have been allowed to know of this fiercely guarded secret. Camila reads my doubts and smiles. *I know it contradicts all we are doing, but it will enter the culture of the festa juninha. And it's my way of healing myself and regaining my community's trust. I want to take them with us.*

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# Urban Hum: Memory Theater of the City

Sandra Uskokovic<sup>+</sup> & Boris Bakal<sup>++</sup> (Croatia)

## Abstract

The *Urban Hum* platform consists of hybrid theatrical, anthropological, urban and social presentations of deliberately chosen urban, public spaces that are presented as a performative game-structure containing the elements of theatre, dance, musical, stand-up and lecture. *Urban Hum* emphasizes historically rooted continuities (or discontinuities) of specific locations, by creating a tool for artists, architects, urban planners, politicians and historians, in their rethinking and reconceptualization of the city as a vibrant, dynamic, and sustainable habitat, while aiming to serve the citizens in proposing and implementing their solutions. *Urban Hum* is looking for those type of creative solutions that will interlace historical significance of each space, that is the important “urboglyph” (hypertextual semantic of space) for the local community and contemporary and functional everyday experience. This platform is a continuation of Shadow Casters research in the urbanity, public patterns, dynamics and habits of coexistence, and presents innovative approach towards the urban dramaturgy/choreography, by finding creative solution to urban challenges and partnerships. Shadow Casters is an artistic project that unites various media and a diversity of methods in a specific creative exploration of different cities in the world.

**Keywords:** Urban Memory, Space, Hypertext, Urban Hum, Emotional Geographies, Urban Performing, Shadow Casters.

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## Introduction

The original social meanings of many of today's cities are diverted into mere sign-value. Capitalist consumer society involves a destruction of cities – they are less and less to be understood as organic entities, but as objects of calculation and circulation, which eventually implies that they consume themselves.

In our time, cities are threatened by two opposite processes; instrumentalisation and aesthetization. On the one hand, our secular, materialist and quasi-rational culture is turning buildings into mere instrumental structures, devoid of mental meaning, for the purposes of utility and economy. On the other hand, urban fabric is being increasingly turning into the fabrication of seductively aestheticized images without roots in our existential experience. Instead of being a lived and embodied existential metaphor, today's urban culture tends to project purely retinal images, as it were, for the seduction of the eye (Pallasmaa, 2011). Urban memory has unfortunately become self-mirroring as the city became constructed as a memorial itself, cutting out great areas to provide a memory theatre in its very heart. However, cities are living organic, conflictual entities that are constantly remade and recast in thousands of ways through everyday encounters. In different moments, new possibilities for radically different cities open up. The city is an unfinished, expansive and unbounded story. Thus urban research agenda should be not so much about what the city currently is or what it was, but more about what it could become, or what it has never been.

Societies in transition give a semblance of being completely homogenous and unified, with social divisions completely masked, and with the border between the state and civil society concealed, along with the difference between the public and private spheres. These societies are in fact characterized by an ontological uncertainty, i.e. kind of a liminal state between socialism (represented by welfare state policies in most of Europe and tendencies and dynamics in so-called Western societies) and a new political order where everything is open to question, uncertain and confusing. Post-socialism (e.g. in countries of East Europe) can be defined as a certain state that neutralizes the capital and excludes any notion of societal, collective change. (Esbenhade, 1995). However, the transition from socialism in Croatia (following or deconstructing particular economical politics of non-aligned Ex-Yugoslavia) was further more complicated, caused by the war. After the 1991-95 homeland war, Croatia has been managing its difficult, recent past not through recognition of it but through concealment, directing attention away from the pre-war legacy. As well as the other states created after the fall of socialist Yugoslavia, Croatia has deployed national symbols strategically to promote favorable images of its heritage abroad – “nation branding” and suppressed alternatives for other narrative performances. History was thus obliterated and has become a part of people's individual memory and personal mythology. Instead of being integrated, memory was uprooted, detached from life, packaged and sold. The war context makes the transition even more brutal in the whole region of the Western Balkans, compared to Eastern and Central Europe that took its toll not only in the form of destruction of human lives and material property but also in the destruction of heritage of previous era that affected all social, political and cultural life. This has

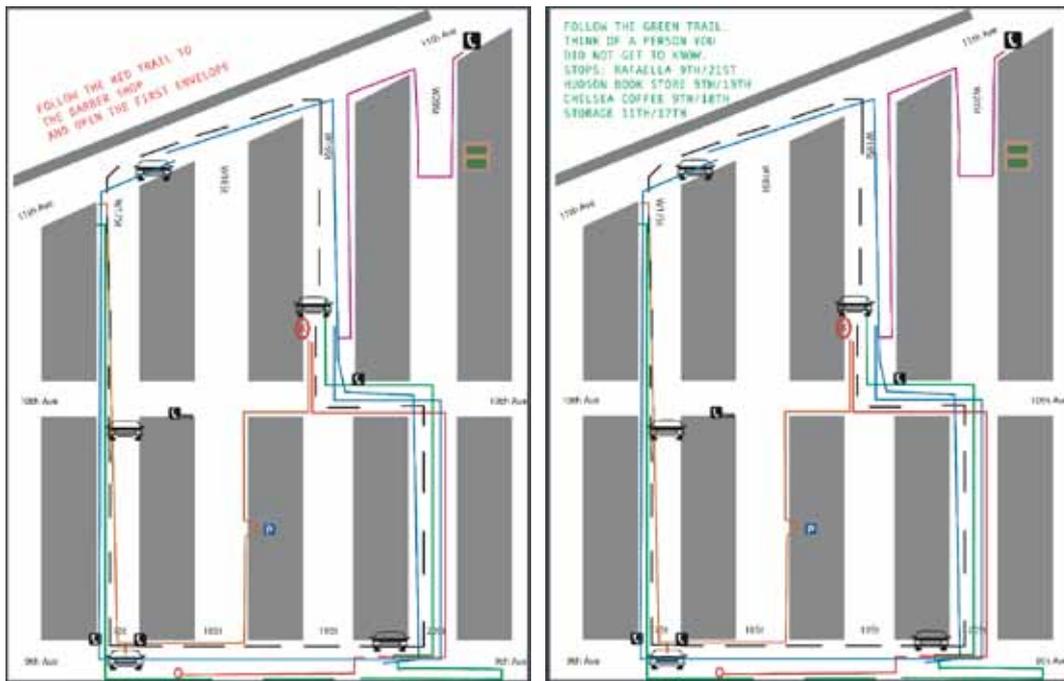
caused an overall production of discontinuity, which is one of the most devastating elements of influence when it comes to building the future. In such contexts of damaged memory and pervasive collective amnesia, the issue of cultural and urban memory (especially the one dealing with immaterial cultural heritage) and raising its awareness among public, appears as a necessary endeavor.

Walter Benjamin critiqued transnational society, as evolving from a pre-capitalist order into capitalist one, using the theme of “porosity” in order to define various aspects of the city and its urban life. The theme of “porosity” captures the fact that the structuring boundaries of modern capitalism within the city - between public and private, labor and leisure, personal and communal have been enlarged creating a un-bridged gap in social relationships (Gadanhó & Oliveira, 2013).

Place is essentially meant to provide a vehicle for hermeneutic understanding of situations from within i.e. people who are embedded in particular sets of social and spatial relationships since individuals and groups share experiences and express themselves, as part of the process of shaping their places (Madanipour, 2007). Space with its shape and structure has an indispensable and fruitful role in our understanding of the world. Spatial narratives which trace the surface of the city, from invisible connections between objects and images are incrementally constructing threads or patchworks of our urban experience (Gadanhó & Oliveira, 2013). Therefore, authentic experiential or mental elements of urban space are not visual units or geometric gestalt, but *confrontations, encounters and acts* which project and articulate specific embodied and existential meanings. The fact is that space must be encountered, not only viewed; it must be approached, confronted, entered, related to one’s body, moved about, and utilised as a context and condition for activities and thoughts. Most importantly, space articulates our relations with other people as well as with the “human institutions” (Pallasmaa, 2011).

The modern economic and social relations of capitalism are nowadays shakily erected, the culture is dominantly improvisatory, and spatial and temporal definitions are indeterminate. In today capitalist co-optation of culture, where urbanism has ceased to be social project and has become fetishist commodity, critically engaged art is the only remaining crucial element of society’ culture. Additionally, preservation of urban cultural memory is a vitally important issue for societies undergoing transition, in which cities are going through radical and dramatic changes that are often to the detriment of their immaterial cultural heritage. Shadow Casters, the artistic platform from Zagreb, have conceptualized modes of critique and artistic creations aimed to be transformative in this “new” post-socialist phase of global capital, by using artistic forms as tools to obtain fresh perspectives on the urban environment and therefore to generate a critique of it. Thus, they have started in 2001 with opening of communicative fluxes of the city in order to explore and research alternative, hybrid or combined modality of documenting places/spaces for their possible usage and betterment. They have been using their specific research approach and methodology that conceives the space and the city as a social innovation.





Figures 2 & 3. Red & green trail maps of Shadow Casters city voyages in New York (2003) - courtesy of Shadow Casters Archive.



Figures 4 & 5. City voyages - audience transport in Chelsea, New York (2003) - courtesy of Shadow Casters Archive.

While expressing particular philosophical and political view on today's world, this treasure hunt/city voyage guided audience through the city on their own choice and chance bases (each spectator must by herself/himself determine individual path consciously choosing between different options and by taking responsibility for her/his decisions). Spatial practices, space and narrative as practice, were thus forms by which they justified a discursive topography as a model for urban experience. This urban journey was about exploring identity problems, decision-making processes and links between society and responsibility, especially in the light of confronting different cultural backgrounds, experiences and habits of the project's participants while bringing a large number of diversified audiences to art and performance work, that has surpassed the usual limitation of audience to "art elite" and had offered the event to citizens from all strata. By introducing

new ways of storytelling and possible approaches to new media communication tools, such as narration in digital media and its possible use within the traditional performance frame, the city could have been read as hyper-space in time-spatial, historical, political, social, game-like and metaphysical sense. The Shadow Casters event in this way has become a new urban document in the city history, evidencing (underlying, illuminating, zooming-up, etc.) city' past stories and invoking his future (political and human) destiny.

Deep urban experiences are primarily relations and acts rather than physical objects, or mere visual entities (Pallasmaa, 2011). The same applies to urban fabric, i.e. architecture. As Frederic Jameson observes, buildings do not have any inherent meaning. They need to be “invested” with meaning and to be inscribed within an allegorical narrative that gives them their meaning. This meaning is simply “projected” on to them. Shadow Casters human-urban network *Man is Space: Vitic Dances* (2004-15) inscribed the meaning of the past, present and future in the microcosm of one of the Zagreb modernist skyscraper (built in 1962 in Laginjina 7-9) while initiating the process of social re-integration of the tenants by restoring commonly shared spaces (elevators, facades, roof terraces, staircases, etc.). The project of renovation of the elevators (completely financed by co-owners through the special share-holders scheme in 2006) and subsequently general renovation plan for the whole building block (consisting of three condominium buildings) won the Zagreb city renovation grant which will together with EU money from the Energetic Efficiency program result in 2015 with the largest public-private renovation project in Croatia ever (Figures 6-8).



Figure 6. iLinkt dance performance with the Vitic condominium block facade as the backdrop (2006) – photo by Barbara Blasin.

This interdisciplinary community art network reflected tangible and intangible heritage of this building as a resource of sustainable renovation, maintenance

and use. It was a complex endeavor that combined permanent artistic interventions and programs in and around the building, with consistent social engagement, while aiming to raise the public awareness of its tenants and local community, and to restore this iconic building. This project further explored the mechanisms of artistic creativity in order to re-discover, re-contextualize and re-create cultural and urban memory of this building, while underlying the role of the artist as an conduit between temporal and spatial changes that occur in contemporary regeneration of material and non-material aspects of urban life along with intensive civic interactions and participation. The artist Boris Bakal was situating the object and practice within wider sets of entanglements and relations, by questioning what combinations of people, things and meanings need to be “assembled” to make this architecture social. Such spatially engaged approach also incorporated a sense of emotional involvement with people and places. *Vitic Dances : Man is Space* was about exploring the potential of architecture to help secure new social formations while exposing architecture’s “silent complicity” with agendas of the powerful in capitalist political economy. Consequently, this project changed the lives and destinies of 256 inhabitants of this 10-story building. Emotional experiences of the shared community spaces were used as relational flows, fluxes and currents in-between people and places. Misunderstandings, funny events, unexpected encounters, performances, live concerts and oblique strategies have moved inhabitants from hate and mistrust, from despair and disfunctionality to a common vision and restoration of the community and the building itself. On the other hand, with its motley crew of different classes, generations, professions, interests and aspirations, the building itself is one of the unique urban narratives of the decline of the notion and practice of solidarity from the time of Socialism up to today’s life on the dreary lane of so-called Transition – a story that is crucial for understanding the dynamics of transformation of the Croatian and East European society.



Figures 7 & 8. Left the Vitic condominium block facade (2005) – photo by Barbara Blasin and right, a 1962 – photo courtesy of Toso Dabac archive.

Finally, this project evidences that material building is not an object or end in itself. It alters and conditions our experiences of reality: a building frames and structures, articulates and relates, separates and unites, prohibits and facilitates. A building can be a peculiar form of communication if it expresses something other than its parts, its materials, its construction process, its ideology, or the identity of its owner or inhabitants (Pallasmaa, 2011).

*Re-collecting City/Re-collecting Time* was the next Shadow Casters' project that started in 2006 and created a multimedia archive of urban events and used it as the tool for studying the hyper-textuality of space and intangible heritage. *Re-collecting the City/Recollecting the Time (RCRT)* re-created and socialized a commonly shared space by evoking the memory while underlying performative character of public spaces, with an emphasis towards the creative investigation of the broader context of artistic and political actions in public spaces. Personal memories and habit memories related to these places have been forgotten, and the meaning they had formed has been lost. The initial phase of the project was focused on detection, archiving, studying and exhibiting of the artworks and the project' documentation on artistic actions as well as political protests and public gatherings in Zagreb that occurred in public, non-typical performing spaces from 1945 to the present. The RCRT project strove to capture fragile and ephemeral aspects of past events by searching for memories of individuals – artists themselves, journalists, accidental passer-by's in various forms: from material ones (photographs, films, videos, written testimonies) to oral histories. The collected materials were mainly formed through two creative outputs of reflective and critical presentation: *Open Offices* and *Wall Newspapers* (Figures 9-12). Drawing on the notion of *lieux de memoire*, Shadow Casters recognized the need for archive as a specific *lieux de memoire* that would serve for the reconstruction of the past, and would be collectively used with respect to political and social context (Shadow Casters, 2015). However, RCRT' archive was based on oral history as it recollected oral, biographical and fragmentary evidences which did not intend to petrify them into fixed forms of historical abstraction, but was an attempt to primarily archive them as the important figures of memory. It is this possibility of the reconstruction of figures of memory that is the essential methodological basis of the social-constructivist archives in Shadow Casters. After all, the question of archiving is not about the past, it is about the future and our responsibility for the future but also about taking responsibility for the past.



Figures 9 & 10. Left a wall display of a RCRT archive of intangible urban heritage, Zagreb/Croatia, 2009 and right, a wall displays of RCRT archive of urban storytelling, Zagreb/Croatia, 2006 – photos courtesy of the Shadow Casters archives.



Figures 11 & 12. Left, presentation and workshop of RCRT project at Leiden University, 2006 and right, at the REX/B92 Center, Belgrade, Serbia, 2008 – photos are courtesy of the Shadow Casters archives.

However, we have to be careful that concern with cultural memory does not become a fear of forgetting – since forgetting is often a source of creativity: a chance to start again, to allow a genuinely new to appear. We are living in the contemporary culture of amnesia, anesthesia, or numbing, where the contemporary public obsession with memory clashes with an intense public panic of oblivion. The latter raises the question: “Is it fear of forgetting that triggers the desire to remember, or is it perhaps the other way around?” Therefore, history/memory debate is not only a disturbance of our notions of the past, but fundamental crisis in our imagination of alternative futures.

Another major problem of our cities today and its urban culture is that social life has been separated from locality, and the experience of living and working as a social relationship has been forgotten. On the other hand, social relations are lived through the emotions, but the emotional qualities of social life have rarely been made apparent within the lexicon of social research and public life. Our emotional links to places we inhabited shortly or in a long-term, are engraved in our cognitive maps of our identity. We identify ourselves with them and thus we temporarily occupy these sites. This is also a political gesture as our emotional memory is arbitrary and expresses only subjective point of view. By using these emotional links and connections of people to certain space we create extremely sensitive geography we call emotional. Emotional geographies differs from actual ones (to use Virilios’ term of naming types of reality) in flattened version of the site decontextualized from historic and everyday layers, or its dynamic. They are not space limited and the appropriation of larger space is evident in notion of homeland, fatherland, or even in the Crusades. However, there is a danger of flattening of the site as it is often being politically used for identity manipulations. On the other hand, emotional geographies make a powerful tool in re-establishing relation with space, site or territory as resource, which are common in general and shareable by definition. Finally, people are spatial beings (man is space) and human appropriation of space always intervenes in someone’ emotional geography, as well as our emotional relations and interactions weave through and help form the fabric of our unique personal geographies.

Within their many projects engaged with urbanity, Shadow Casters are also expressing common concern with spatiality and temporality of emotions, with the way they coalesce around and within certain places. Their approaches associated with being and doing, with participation and performance, with ways of knowing that depend on direct experience, offer encouragement for accessing the world as mediated by feeling. The project *Process City, part II: Ex-position* (2005) invites us to travel through the material space of memory of a city neighborhood that turns into a unique journey through one's own memory, feelings and sub-consciousness, thanks to the special sensorial conditions of the visitors. It is an attempt to understand emotion – conceptually and experientially – in terms of its socio-spatial-temporal meditation and articulation. After all, the most intimate and immediately felt emotional geography is the human body.

The *Ex-position* is a multilingual intermedia and sensorial one-to-one voyage into the city and its urban (oral and written) history. It is based on facts, fictional relations between them and is always relaying on shifting points of view of known and exploited narratives of Togetherness (eg. notion of citizenship). The location site is starting point for the exploration of possible stories that are choreographed and engraved on-site, using advantages and disadvantages of certain (chosen) urban location through the working methods of urban performing, inner/outer mapping, reality recycling, and story telling.



Figures 13, 14 & 15. *Ex-position* voyages in Sarajevo (2008) – photos by Amer Kuhinja.

The narratives are personal, linking performer with wider historical hypertext while involving the voyager as a protagonist of the story (stories), and sometimes shifting identities of different characters (and genders) by interlacing several story-lines. Such urban dramaturgy makes each of *Ex-position*' voyages to become a new urban legend of the chosen city, using the urban space as hypertext while

opening some of the questions for the participants such are: “How does a city settle in our inner world? What does the border between public and private mean and where is it located?” The multimedia performance *Ex-position* aims to map out the temporal dimensions of the design space by making explicit the time design choices, or the temporal implications of design choices, in a number of scenarios drawn from different application domains. This performance is about establishing the inner dramaturgy of the performer/actor, which guides his/her intuition when choosing, or rather, confirming the true reaction or action “here and now”. In all our actions we are exposed to the gaze of the others, and as such we are performers of our own lives. In his book “Representation of Self in Everyday Life,” Ervin Goffmann describes various examples of transition from non-/presentational to presentational in everyday life. If the duality of our experience of the world is reflected in language and if we are witnesses of this duality, then it is also reflected in our performative behaviour (i.e. in this case, the dramaturgical course of the choice of exposure) regardless of the extent of being conscious or unconscious.

These artistic forms show their readers/viewers/players the conflicting, intricate and manifold nature of human activities and products related to the urban realm: descriptions, uses, knowledge, conceptions and spatial *imaginaire*. Also, they are means to foresee implausible, possible and desirable spatial and urban futures, and ways of life, as reconfirmed by the enormous impact and relevance of artistic forms in contemporary culture.

Another Shadow Casters’ work that acts as searching supplement and oblique commentary for the co-optation of memory to urban thinking is the satirical city promenade/ performance around Dubrovnik – named Father Courage (a paraphrase of the title of Brecht’s famous classic). The reference to Brecht only evokes his themes of survival, courage and responsibility, and his loose, epic structures. Father Courage is about the question of survival, i.e. Father Courage is the city of Dubrovnik itself, who must make his own choices (Radosavljevic, 2013). The commentary on the city is oblique, but it also allows the city to make its own commentary, and allows a time to experience the relationship between city and performance, and to fit them together in different ways (Turner, 2013). Father Courage present a new entering into a discussion about Dubrovnik’s past and future, or just another way of entering the city. This large scale urban journey-performance of Shadow Casters (held in summer 2014 in the Old city of Dubrovnik) consisted of five parts (performances), each taking place simultaneously and passing through the same set of urban locations, meeting the same placekeepers, though not always in the same circumstances. As participants walked through the city, they were becoming aware of other walkers elsewhere, and other possible experiences. The project was driven by a desire to wake up and activate the audience in relation to its everyday urban reality. This urban-theatrical tour was consequently aimed predominantly at the locals, inviting them to participate in the creation of new urban myths.



Figure 16 & 17. Left, the Father Courage performance at the Buža city walls and a map of the five starting points – photos provided by the Dubrovnik Summer Festival, 2013.

All these projects form a methodological basis of *Urban Hum* regional platform (2015) that introduces the triadic view of urban space, an attitude towards perceived and conceived spaces, which associates them with a lived space of the future within the framework that brings together the fields of urban geography and visual culture. This platform is inspired by a deep desire to create new vocabularies, imaginations and strategies for action that could bring about a radically different city, that are often and largely absent in writings on the city. While debates about the ills, or not, of gentrification can help us to organise and sharpen our analysis on current directions and class alliances in the contemporary city, our view is that we need to develop a much wider political imaginary to intervene in the unfolding story of the city and engage in the building of an equalizing participatory democracy to realize radically different urban futures and values.

*Urban Hum* thus thoroughly investigates past and present lives of neuralgic urban locations and related topics of collective and individual memory, which constantly brings their performances to places and localities that are for the first time involved in contemporary artistic discourses. It is conceptualized as performative, educational, multimedia or socially engaged “time sculptures” that tackle entirely different creative approaches and often involve audience as co-creators and participants in process and production of their works. Within its research process and implementation, *Urban Hum* includes experts and professionals from various disciplines who are invited to rethink acute “problems” in real public spaces thus providing art research contribution to interdisciplinary urban studies. The international group of authors (actors/performers and urban researchers) are exploring different, interesting and historically burdened public spaces and contents, that are being executed (performed) in various galleries and theatre spaces in the city. They are “performing” one single public space with all its urban contents, its real and superimposed spatial and political relations, contextualized within historical

urban relevance of the same public space, that is further activated through documentary and fiction materials emerging from research process.

The integral part of the platform is post-dramatic performance in the form of ludic lecture. It deals with hypertextual reading of public, private, business and other shared urban spaces in cities where the performance is played (i.e. held). Thus, although for the most part, methodologically and dramaturgically fixed and determined, it is enriched in every chosen city by narratives of the local community which are gathered through a multi-disciplinary research. Playing/performing/lecturing actors from all the partner cities in the region also cooperate in this working process and execution. The lecture-performance is interactively involving audience in the show through specially designed social games by mutually evoking with them all historical, economic, political and personal dynamics, and the usage of the deliberately chosen urban area. Thus the content of this performance is a space as a resource but also its transformation through time. The show in that way features: the historical figures, present and past land and building owners, current users of these spaces, and citizens of the chosen area that have their own opinions or needs to use these spaces. In such a way, this lecture-performance triggers the net of (multi)personal choreographies by naming the contents and events of chosen spaces, that are linked or derived from them. Performers are playing all these characters, traveling with their help through time and space, linking the chosen place to some other place in other city in Croatia, or in the region. Each of these events is broadly contextualized with contemporary events in the world, either with scientific discoveries or events from literature (theory or fiction).

This performance event is also a sharing space of knowledge and applied methodologies among *Urban Hum* regional partners in order to create a working model for implementation of activist and political action. Performance as an artistic form is critical of today's policies of shared urban space usage, privatization and transformation, and through its discursivity offers the audience a possibility to present their problem solutions. *Urban Hum* combines such artistic creativity and political activism and transfer them into presence of interpretative systems that translate memories and urban traditions into meaningful contemporary forms what makes crucial passage from protest to project, and vice versa.

Finally, *Urban Hum* is piecing together the performative depictions of urban images and the performative translations of mute urban objects. The urban, then, whether experienced in a spatial or in a performative narrative, exists both as the real and as the imaginary, most often simultaneously. Shadow Casters are therefore inducing hypertextualization of urban spaces, which not only give an account of the city, but have urban experiences fundamentally embedded within them; they give "literary" form to the city and to urban life. Quoting the words of Octavio Paz (Paz, 2011): "No human work escapes language. The ultimate reality of language eludes us. It is indivisible and inseparable from man. It is a condition of our existence and not an object, an organism, or a conventional system of signs that we can accept or reject."

Cultural boundaries in urban culture are not rigid, especially in our era of telecommunications. Additionally, cultural boundaries should not be reduced simply to geography, nationality, ethnicity, or gender. Urban diversity should be considered in relation to fluid linguistic differences, embracing the call for a critical rethinking of the categories of politics. Architecture, embodied in the shattered tower of Babel, has operated since time immemorial at the limits of language. It inhabits the margins and constitutes a limiting zone for cultures, representing and enabling human action in specific ways that have changed throughout history. Therefore, urban culture is *ornamentum* of human action, always present, sometimes in focus and often becoming background (Perez Gomez, 2008).

To understand and project the lessons of our human heritage, we need memory, and memory is built from linguistic interpretation. *Urban Hum* investigates, re-interprets, performs and exploits the powerful appropriation of memories of certain space. Such interpretation enables *Urban Hum* to approach an ethical promise, contributing to the evolution of urban memory and not merely producing irrelevant novelties. Finally, we can understand heritage (historical art and architecture) because we have learned to translate through the time. It is only by scrupulously re-creating a given urban world that new practices can build on older practices to produce coherent work amid our global world in crisis. Retracing the growth of our urban consciousness can enable us to project new promises that account for the presence of Other and Togetherness, and frame a space for mutual understanding and sharing (Perez Gomez, 2008).

### Conclusion

Continuously insisting on the methodology of *devised artistic practice*, Shadow Casters are trying to tackle the rethinking of city/space as hypertextual narrative by means of dramaturgical techniques, performative excellence and simple, understandable messages/actions interacted with the audience. Our urban *quotidienne* evidences the general lack of engagement of citizens in shaping their immediate future as well of lacking broader vision of historical continuity of social ideas and togetherness. *Urban Hum* is designing the spaces of cultural learning by training our project participants to discover urban narratives that will consequently be transposed into witty, multi-layered performative urban presentations, and can easily be translated to other fields through its basic form of performance. Furthermore, by giving an opportunity to young authors from various disciplines to collaborate with the citizens through various levels and various roles, *Urban Hum* introduces a new, experimental concept and progressive model that can assist in the future for the implementation of the propositions for the advancement of the coexistence in public spaces, or their betterment.

*Urban Hum* exclusively focuses on process rather than product, events rather than lasting objects, and participatory experience rather than detached spectatorship. It is well known that governments across the world use participatory events as means to forge a sense of national identity and belonging. However, *Urban Hum* is creating the community under the banner of difference rather than identity. Furthermore, it is not so interested in tracing a history of the city, but in mapping

history of the city in a way that changes that history, and makes something new. Rather than trying to make that history visible as itself, *Urban Hum* creates a performance that enters into a relationship with that history or those historical performances to make something new.

“Knowing the city, let alone directing its forces, is a forlorn task; the artwork can only hope to beat the bounds, making new edges, picking up what it finds as it goes (Gadanhó & Oliveira, 2013).”

### Endnote

Shadow Casters was founded in 2001 by Bacaci Sjenki and is a multi award-winning and critically acclaimed international artistic and production platform for interdisciplinary collaboration, creativity and reflection on inter-media art from Zagreb. Shadow Casters work with public urban space through various art interventions and projects is one of the main areas on which their work is focused.

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# Protecting Cultural Space or Urban Re-colonization: *When Do Cultural Districts Cross the Line?*

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## Abstract

The formation of arts and cultural districts or clusters may be organic or planned (or a hybrid) but they often result in dislocation of those outside the district's dominant cultural group or those without escalating economic capacity. Some districts primarily serve real estate development interests; some propel local artists and creative enterprises; some protect space for community cultural expression and make life better for existing residents. Few can mix more than one of these purposes but for a short time. This paper reviews six cultural districts in the United States, each at a different stage of a development continuum. In some cases district formation stabilizes a community, others transform or de-stabilize a community. Winners and losers are generally evident. The mix of local conditions, leadership, and policy choices determine their trajectory. Whether they evolve in ways that foster civic engagement and accrue political capital among a wide range of stakeholders determines the winners and losers.

**Keywords:** *Cultural Districts, Gentrification, Urban Development, Arts Districts, Cultural Space, Civic Engagement*

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## Introduction

The growing phenomenon of cultural district formation has resulted in the emergence of interesting and culturally rich neighborhoods of all shapes and sizes in cities across the globe. As part of the cultural, social, economic, and physical development and re-generation of cities, cultural districts are receiving considerable attention from scholars, planners, policymakers, and others concerned with the future of cities. In spite of their many names, varieties and purposes, cultural districts are generally lumped into one category. Yet, each is as unique as the place and time in which it takes root as well as the conditions and players who bring them into being.

This paper takes a look at six cultural districts in the United States at different stages of development and in different relationships to the forces of city planning, private development, and grassroots activity. The key thrust of this paper is to explore characteristics of districts that accrue benefit to residents, artists, small local businesses, and vernacular cultures, and of the characteristics of districts that serve upscale or wealthy new residents and outside cultures as well as developers, franchise businesses, and/or large institutional interests.

### District Formation: Bottom-up, Top-down, or Other?

People who feel a sense of attachment to a neighborhood such as those who live, work, and operate small businesses there, are often active in and integral to the formation of cultural districts and to the identity the community adopts. These progenitors of a district sometimes benefit from its successes and become empowered stakeholders in the process. In other cases, private developers, and/or public sector planners drive the development and identity of a district. In these cases, long-term residents, artists, small business owners, and other stakeholders may find themselves displaced or excluded from the benefits. This well-known phenomenon of economic or cultural gentrification is not itself a simple or straightforward phenomenon.

In looking at district formation, Italian researchers Sacco and Tavano Blessi suggested that in many cases “the initial push comes from the bottom to be eventually taken over or supplemented by top-down initiative.”<sup>1</sup> These authors also cited the reverse where districts formed through top-down initiative are taken over or become part of the agenda of grassroots organizers. These and other researchers and planners have come to see that the process of district formation – the degree of local stakeholder involvement and investment, or the imposition of identity and development schemes from outsiders – plays a critical role in the economic and social outcomes the district generates and in the ability of culture bearers to remain part of the community.

Formation patterns of cultural districts are complex and not well understood. District formation takes place over decades and includes different actors at different times. Driving forces can shift from grassroots to city or institutional leadership and from small local business to major corporate developers. Some observers find each district unique, driven by the specific context of place and surrounding economic, social, and political conditions.<sup>23</sup>

### Assessing Impacts

Do residents, small businesses, property owners and nonprofits, along with artists, gain economically, socially or in regards to their general quality of life to a greater or lesser degree when a district evolves through a top-down or a bottom-up approach? There is scant research that has measured the impacts by different types of districts. In fact, there is no reliable typology or method for categorizing districts based on their origins or key drivers in their formation. What exactly is top-down or a bottom-up in district formation?

A study of 99 U.S. urban cultural districts by American scholar Douglas Noonan found that on average they have significant impacts. “Districts appear to boost property values, incomes, employment, and turnover in the vicinity,” he wrote.<sup>4</sup> However, Noonan found that positive impacts on poverty, education, and families with kids were not in evidence. And, he did find evidence of displacement of locals who tend to be poorer. However, Noonan’s research sample does not distinguish between types of districts – those formed through top-down or bottom-up processes, or those focused on cultural production (artist and creative enterprise districts) versus cultural consumption (theater, museum, and entertainment districts). Instead, he casts a wide net to find average trends.

Changes in people and economic fortunes of urban places are inevitable and ongoing. And, they move in both directions. Deterioration was the norm among post-industrial cities beginning in the 1950s, but the tide began to change in some cities as early as the 1980s, bringing an entirely new set of challenges. Concerns expressed by people sensitive to upward economic changes include: how fast is change occurring? Who is motivating it? Is change coming from within the community or as result of unwelcome city policy or actions of outside developers? Who is benefitting and who is left behind? Is the cultural identity of the community at stake? Are artists perpetrators of change or victims?

Below, six districts are examined within three formation types: 1) natural or bottom-up, 2) progressive or ad hoc, and 3) engineered or top-down. In the two examples for each type where varying conditions, different driving forces and different formation patterns suggest different results for artists and for communities. Each is categorized based on its present condition. For instance, a district that may have emerged through grassroots or bottom-up development two or three decades earlier, may now look or act like a top-down district driven by major developers, city policy or large institutions. Thus, it is categorized as top-down.

#### Bottom-Up Cultural Districts: From Nascent to Maturing

Stern and Seifert examined a variety of social impacts of the arts in Philadelphia over time. They used the term “natural” to distinguish bottom-up cultural districts, describing them as:

Networks of creators, consumers participants, and collaborators that exist within geographically-defined neighborhoods. They are self-organized, emerge through community-generated action, and are cultivated and

reinforced by a diverse range of participants and residents over time. They can serve as anchors for neighborhood-based economies, and also function as networks across areas, leveraging arts and culture within a regional economy.<sup>5</sup>

Researchers from Europe, Asia, North America, and other parts of the world found that districts driven by bottom-up processes have more equitably distributed benefits, greater sustainability, and other positive results for artists and long-term residents than those driven by top-down forces.<sup>6 7 8 9 10 11 12</sup>

Some planners and government agencies purposefully stayed out of the picture in nascent districts in their early stages while artists and neighbors self organize and while small-scale entrepreneurs and nonprofits generate a creative or cultural milieu that attracts new people and new investment. On the flip side, at pivotal early moments in district formation, some artists and nonprofits have tried to stay off the radar of city officials for fear of zoning or building violations, or because they fear that official recognition and public investment could bring about change or gentrification detrimental to their way of life and economic survival.

#### *a. Bottom-Up: Azalea Park, San Diego, CA*

Bottom-up cultural districts can require decades to emerge. One example of a nascent, grassroots-driven district is Azalea Park, a small area within San Diego's challenged City Heights neighborhood. A transition in population was well underway in this post-World War II sub-division by the 1980s and 90s as many residents from the original development passed away or moved to areas with larger homes or more amenities. Some moved because of growing crime and gang activity in the surrounding City Heights area which has an overall population of about 80,000.

Disinvestment and crime motivated residents to begin self-organizing in the early 1980s. They chose to form a community identity around creative expression, public art, and environmental sustainability. Named Lexington Park in 1949 by its developer, residents more recently renamed it for the city-owned Azalea Park in its midst, a name they felt sounded more aesthetically pleasing and inviting. Based on experience with other neighborhoods they considered successful, they built a strategy that included creating an artist- and gay-friendly area. Other gay-identified neighborhoods in San Diego and other cities were observed to be more active, more inclusive and see greater reinvestment in property. The neighborhood association employed the tagline: "what a difference a gay makes" and marched in the city's gay pride parade. They took prizes for their entries adding to the neighborhood's buzz.

According to resident and Azalea Park Neighborhood Association activist Felicia Shaw, one elderly woman, a long-time resident, was a key force. "It takes a leader who is consistent and persistent and who carries the history to keep others going," she said. Neighbors worked together to clean up, re-invest, and re-populate the small canyon neighborhood while attracting gays, lesbians, artists, and young families to its modest, affordable housing. Murals, mosaics, totems, painted

electrical boxes, parklets, and street furniture, along with distinctive street plantings continue as the focus of community activities. Participatory demonstration gardens with drought-resistant plants and other small-scale civic projects brought people together in what evolved into a strongly networked multi-ethnic community.

Since 2010 the neighborhood has successfully attracted working artists and creative enterprises to a largely vacant commercial corridor that residents unofficially declared the Azalea Park Arts District. In early 2014, they were in the process of considering a request to the city for formal designation but had not yet done so. San Diego had no formal cultural district program and neighbors were uncertain of the benefits or possible negative side effects that might bring. They observed that in some places too much attention to a district can bring development by outside investors that is too rapid and ultimately creates conditions that are too expensive for artists to maintain a viable livelihood.

For Azalea Park, the goal was to reverse the familiar cycle of abandonment through resident organizing to maintain an affordable working and middle class neighborhood, one threatened by drugs, crime, and a negative image. Fostering a creative milieu and attracting and retaining creative people was the central strategy. To date, results have included artists as active and stable members of the community valued for many contributions they bring and a low profile with City government.

*b. Bottom-Up: Northeast Minneapolis Arts District*



Figure 1. Northeast Minneapolis Arts District.

By the 1980s, the post-industrial, working-class area called Northeast became known within the robust and active artist community in Minneapolis as offering vacant factory and warehouse buildings as studios. What has become a thriving artist district gained traction through the combination of artists legally and illegally occupying a significant stock of old industrial buildings. Availability of inexpensive working class housing built during two waves of industrialization in the 1880s and 1920s served as an additional attraction as did many vacant corner storefronts beneath or attached to small homes already zoned as live/work spaces.

The downtown warehouse district was still the focal point for Minneapolis artists, galleries, and alternative art spaces until the early 1990s when construction of a major sports facility sent many more artists to Northeast. The City worked with the Minneapolis based, nonprofit developer Artspace to establish studios in part of a vacant city-owned historic brewery. As a prodigious national developer of artist live/work and studio spaces, Artspace had not developed properties in Minneapolis until that point. Their Grain Belt Studios development met only a fraction of the demand. And, while some artists in Northeast were already experiencing eviction by other developers who saw potential for higher-end tenants, two entrepreneurial owners of several large industrial buildings made special efforts to attract and retain artists. They became godparents for hundreds of artists leasing a total of almost one million square feet of studio space and championing the arts district. At the same time, these artist-friendly owners provided somewhat of a precarious foundation on which this now thriving arts district still rests.

By 1995, a critical mass of artists in Northeast got together to organize a highly successful annual multi-site open studio tour they named Art-a-Whirl. Far more successful than ever imagined, over 700 artists now participate with tens of thousands of visitors attending Art-a-Whirl during an extended weekend each May. Over the years monthly open studio and other events were added. In 2007, the nonprofit that grew from Art-a-Whirl, the Northeast Minneapolis Arts Association (NEMAA), raised funds to commission a district plan. Among other recommendations, this plan called for formal city designation as the Northeast Minneapolis Arts District – the city’s first designated cultural district.

While Northeast experienced decades of decline and a thinning of residents, it retained strong social fabric and political clout. Earlier waves of immigrants, mostly from Poland, Italy, the Ukraine, and other European countries were attracted to once abundant factory jobs in what became a well-organized labor city. They established many businesses, churches, social and civic organizations, and elected many city leaders. Aging residential areas are now seeing widespread small-scale investments in properties as the population grows and housing gradually turns over. Now many artists are among the homeowners and business entrepreneurs. They carry on the strong social fabric and political efficacy of the earlier generation. Commercial areas are filled again. Existing residents were at first less than enthusiastic about the influx – more for fear artists would harm property values. Now, “Old Northeast” welcomes them to what is widely seen as “New Northeast.”

Beyond assisting with the early Artspace studio development, there has been little active role for the city. For the first decade or more, the city helped by not aggressively enforcing codes and by helping launch Art-a-Whirl. And, while NEMMA is generally identified with the district, it assumes little coordinative or leadership responsibility beyond Art-a-Whirl and various other events and services to support its member artists. As of 2014, there was no entity providing management or planning for the district.

Threat to the relative stability of Northeast or significant change in real estate values is not imminent but may not be far off. Older (mostly white) residents largely embrace artists and the arts district as well as the re-investment in homes, local retail and restaurants and the reactivation of dormant industrial infrastructure as a new creative and entrepreneurial generation is now established in Northeast. Artists hold many leadership roles in neighborhood organizations and through business and property ownership.

#### **Progressive or Ad Hoc Network Models: Communities in Transition**

According to Italian scholars Ponzini, Gugu, and Oppio, planners, policymakers, and developers increasingly see the utility of cultural districts and find ways to connect “heritage preservation, creative production and consumption to a larger set of ongoing local economic and social policies through coordination and integration.”<sup>14</sup>

Through his research of Northern European cultural districts, Dutch scholar, Hans Mommaas, assembled a list of what he called public justifications for district development. He advocated bottom-up approaches in his work and asserted that cultural districts, when organized and managed through the most advantageous strategies, can: 1) strengthen the identity, attraction and market position of cities or their sub-districts; 2) stimulate a more entrepreneurial approach to arts and culture; 3) stimulate innovation and creativity; 4) provide new uses for old buildings and derelict sites; and 5) stimulate cultural diversity and cultural democracy.<sup>15</sup>

A nascent organic cluster like Azalea Park, or more established bottom-up districts like Northeast Minneapolis, may ultimately attract attention of planners and developers who see opportunities for larger transformation, new development or upward-moving real estate values. And, while this can be the kind of investment neighbors seek and it can provide the conditions for artists to thrive, too much development too fast can disrupt the social fabric and result in economic dislocation or gentrification. In cases where a district is planned and/or implemented by a city or a developer, the project may lose its luster and the developer may retreat. This allows artists and other residents who are organized to set the direction of growth or change. Alternately, residents, artists, and local stakeholders may organize in response to undesirable pressures of gentrification or cultural dislocation that is caused by too-rapid development or by an influx of new residents that feels overwhelming to the old.

a. *The Progressive Model: Leimert Park, Los Angeles, CA*



Figure 2. Leimert Park, Los Angeles, CA.

Leimert Park in South Los Angeles is an organically clustered mix of African American artists, cultural venues, and stable residential area that began to form its current identity in the 1960s. About 80% of the population is African American. Compared with Los Angeles in general, Leimert Park has not experienced rapid rises in real estate or gentrification. In fact, racial politics and marginalization kept it in a form of economic stasis while it grew as a hot bed of African American culture. Beginning in the late 1960s, galleries, nightclubs, music venues, restaurants, and regular drumming circles – along with shops selling African arts and clothing – grew to become the dominant features of Leimert Park. A multitude of performing arts and music venues, nonprofits, and retail shops including Los Angeles’ preeminent Black bookstore, make Leimert Park widely known across the city. It is home to half a dozen annual festivals and monthly Art Walks.

One of the earliest master planned communities in Los Angeles, Leimert Park was designed and built by developer Walter H. Leimert in the late 1920s and early 1930s. According to City of Los Angeles Community Planner Reuben Caldwell, “Leimert Park is an incredible example of an intact, complete community” with mixed-income housing, community services and a commercial hub or “village center” and a historic theater that directly faces a central park known as Leimert Plaza. Along with the city-owned but still largely shuttered Vision Theatre, this compact vernacular commercial village and the Plaza serve as the real and symbolic center of a larger residential neighborhood and for the African American community across the city.

In many ways Leimert Park is a model bottom-up or natural cultural district that has been led by artists, cultural entrepreneurs, and local small businesspeople for over 40 years. However, imminent changes resulting from public infrastructure development move it into a new game. Construction began in 2014 of a mostly underground light rail line, known as the Crenshaw Line, that will include a station at Leimert Plaza within clear sight of and easy walk to the Vision Theatre and commercial village center. Retired city planners, seasoned community activists, artists, residents, nonprofits, and Afro-centric businesses are among the neighborhood's leadership and they know full well what the light rail station means for the future of the neighborhood. In 2013 they launched an aggressive planning program known as Vision 2020, funded by the City and the local Business Improvement District. Social bonding, grassroots organizing, and protecting of cultural space and identity are high on the neighborhood's list.

The City of Los Angeles only recently took an active role with purchase and planned renovation of the neighborhood's iconic, art-deco Vision Theatre as well as adjacent property in the center of the commercial district now held for parking, festivals, and outdoor events. Sensitive City planning over the past couple decades reflects community wishes but there has been no major public or private investment in business or housing in Leimert Park since it was built. City planners, activists, artists, and local business owners alike assert that Leimert Park remains the most cohesive cultural center for African Americans in Southern California.

A strong sense of identity and many "horizontal" relationships – relationships across sectors and interests – formed in Leimert Park because of the active arts scene. These horizontal relationships fuel the neighborhood's capacity to quickly organize to address economic changes and development threats that are inevitable and in this case imminent.

Since the light rail station was announced in 2013, upward pressures on real estate began to put a squeeze on some artists and small businesses. At the same time, neighborhood planners hope the light rail brings better conditions for artists, galleries, performance venues, and local businesses through more robust commercial activity and cultural tourism.

***b. The Progressive Model: Roosevelt Row, Phoenix, AZ***

Phoenix may be best known for its vast automobile-oriented sprawl. However, some older downtown neighborhoods, abandoned decades ago for newer malls and strip centers, began a struggle for revitalization and recognition as early as the 1980s. Some older areas fell to the wrecking ball in the 1970s to make way for parking lots and future high-rise development sites. Historic structures and pockets of intact neighborhoods survived. Roosevelt Row is a once-lively commercial area with some surviving physical assets where artists and small local businesses took root. It connects five historic, mixed-use neighborhoods and active community associations with a central commercial corridor.

In the 1980s, under Mayor Terry Goddard, the city launched efforts to revitalize the area and began to invest in historic preservation. The 1985 General Plan for the city first designated the Roosevelt neighborhood a special planning district as part of an effort to reverse downtown decline. Then in 1986, Roosevelt Row was designated as Phoenix's first historic district. Artists seeking inexpensive working and living spaces moved into the area that slowly attracted vernacular businesses, cafes, and the like.

Meanwhile, other city investments in public transportation and public art, along with private housing and retail development downtown, began to attract new residents and jobs. By 2006, the city re-zoned the Roosevelt Row area as a mixed-use district to allow galleries, loft housing, artist workspaces, and retail, naming it an arts district. Plans were also put in place for streetscape improvements to narrow streets and create a more walkable district. This work took the city many years to realize although it began in 2014 with neighbors seeing wider sidewalks, new street lighting, and other pedestrian amenities.

At the turn of the century the Roosevelt Row Community Development Corporation (CDC) was formed "to further the unique cultural character and creative assets of the Roosevelt Row Arts District."<sup>16</sup> Under the CDC umbrella in 2011, the Roosevelt Row Merchants Association was created and quickly grew to more than 60 members. The CDC launched and managed a range of programs and events and hosts First Friday Artwalks. They were awarded grants from the National Endowment for the Arts' Our Town Program and from ArtPlace America, a national funder of creative placemaking projects that partnered the CDC and the city with nearby Arizona State University Art Museum and others. Through these projects they brought internationally acclaimed artists to "Feast on the Street" and other temporary public art events through a program they call Adaptive Reuse of Temporary Space (A.R.T.S). In 2012, the CDC boasted over 50,000 people passing their key intersection of Fifth Street and Roosevelt, claiming a record attendance for one of the largest free monthly art walks in the U.S.

A signature fundraising event of the CDC is an annual "Turning Brown Lots Green." The outdoor lot on which the event was held in 2011 included a view of a vacant lot next door. The 2012 event on the same lot, "was shaded by the new eight-story, 325-unit, \$52 million infill housing development Roosevelt Point."<sup>17</sup> In this case the double entendre of turning brown into green takes on a clear economic development dimension.

A February 2014 Arizona State University Working Group study on Roosevelt Row, written by Michelle Bickert, described the city's efforts to turn "abandoned warehouses into art galleries, historic homes into swanky bars and restaurants, and a crime-ridden neighborhood into a destination arts community." The report cites the influence of creative class strategies on Phoenix city plans. "The Roosevelt Row district is a prime example of a revitalization project that can give Phoenix a clear cultural identity to help bolster the city's competition in the knowledge economy," the ASU study reported.

Downtown land clearance and decay in the 1970s continues to be in evidence. According to the CDC report, more than 40 percent of the land in Evans Churchill, one of the residential neighborhoods comprising Roosevelt Row, remains vacant due to speculative owners holding it and due to zoning policies promoting high-rise structures. The “missing teeth” phenomenon still plagues Roosevelt Row while artists are employed to bring active uses and create vibrancy by temporarily activating vacant lots. Roosevelt Row cultural development, wrote Bickert in the ASU report, “was initially intended to lure artists with cheap gallery and loft space.” Instead, she pointed out, its eclectic character is “increasingly attracting young professionals and retirees who are willing to pay more for luxury apartments.”<sup>19</sup> Artists, galleries, and small local businesses remain part of Roosevelt Row but future development scenarios provide them limited opportunity.

### **Top-Down Cultural Districts: Large Forces at Work**

On what may represent the top end of the top-down spectrum, Chinese scholar Lily Kong extensively researched development of large-scale, government-driven cultural districts in Asian cities that include flagship cultural facilities. Kong argued they bring no benefit to local culture or ordinary working and middle class residents and certainly not to local artists.<sup>20</sup>

Among examples of similar flagship developments, American scholar Amanda Johnson cited Lincoln Center in New York City for its questionable achievements. It brought high-end housing and deeper-pocket culture consumers and tourists to a once down-trodden area of Manhattan. Using culture, economics, and architecture, Lincoln Center’s construction displaced low-income residents and small local retailers.<sup>21</sup> New York scholar, Sharon Zukin studied and wrote about New York’s SOHO District in the 1970s and remains a leading voice on gentrification and urban transformation.<sup>22</sup> Writing with Laura Braslow, they argue that the presence of Lincoln Center and its social milieu also send a message to poor people, people of color, and others outside the milieu of Western high art that they do not belong there.<sup>23</sup>

#### ***a. Top-Down: Baltimore’s Station North District***

For some cities, cultural districts are a last-resort solution for neighborhoods with intractable poverty and deterioration. Baltimore has struggled for over half a century with widespread poverty, racial division, and disinvestment. At the same time, its vacant housing and industrial structures attract artists, start-up creative enterprises, and fringe nonprofits.

Station North sits within a section of the city that spans historic African American neighborhoods of Charles North, Greenmount West, and Barclay and near a major transit hub known as Penn Station. This hub provides access to Amtrak and MARC commuter rail service as well as connections to city light rail. The area encompasses parts of the Maryland Institute College of Art, University of Baltimore and Johns Hopkins University. Other major cultural amenities are also near. These ingredients, along with a reported population of 385 artists in 2002, easily added up to a State of Maryland-designated Arts and Entertainment District branded as

Station North Arts and Entertainment District. The area boasts a long history of underground or fringe arts including African American clubs and music venues from the 1950s.

As the first district to be designated under a new state program, Station North was born as an arts-based revitalization strategy and announced amid a fanfare of hundred-million-dollar investment plans. Building on decades of under-recognized cultural activity, the nonprofit Station North Arts and Entertainment, Inc. formed in 2005 to coordinate players in the district. Its stated vision is to build the district's "reputation as a nationally recognized creative hub" and to "maintain its appeal to a diverse population of locals and visitors."<sup>24</sup> Its board is composed of institutional, business, political, and architectural/design firm representatives. In the Spring of 2014, USA Today listed Station North among the top 10 US Arts Districts signaling success with the first part of its vision.<sup>25</sup> One advocate claimed upwards of \$500 million in investment related to arts and culture since 2000, including Maryland Institute College of Art studio spaces, nonprofits, small business and increasing presence of loft and other residential development. The annual artist-run Artscape Festival as well as other street level arts activity create an active, although spotty, vibrancy.

Baltimore has celebrated an economic and image turn-around brought about by massive harbor front development begun in the 1980s. Many cities continue to look to such large-scale redevelopment to attract capital and new residents. The operative vision for Station North stemmed from key institutional partners and the city, notably the Maryland Institute College of Art. It built on grassroots creative assets in place but is now considered an archetypal top down development. Stern and Seifert reported that "some observe that district designation has actually stunted growth in Station North by triggering speculation" as developers buy and hold property waiting for the optimal conditions for large-scale development projects. Cultural designation, Stern and Seifert wrote, is about promoting "a real estate brand."<sup>26</sup>

A \$200,000 Art Place grant in 2013 financed a group of artists and designers from Europe to install work in Penn Station "to begin the transformation," wrote Sheena Lyonnais in BmoreMedia.com.<sup>27</sup> According to the city's arts promotion office, this effort will "connect Baltimore to arts on an international level."<sup>28</sup> Station North, however, continues to experience difficulty connecting with residents, local artists, and its long-time neighbors. According to Stern and Seifert, some artists working in the neighborhood have discovered "that many black-owned businesses and neighbors do not identify with the arts district designation."<sup>29</sup>

In spite of a continued abundance of substandard or vacant properties, Station North is concerned with losing artists and some long-term poor or what they term "legacy" residents. Calls of gentrification have been heard. The influx of young (mostly) white American artists, and businesses that cater to upscale culture have not been a comfortable fit for older African American neighborhoods.

Speaking at a national symposium exploring Arts/Cultural/Entertainment Districts in April, 2012, Baltimore artist and writer for the local City Paper, Michael Farley, dropped a bombshell. “Station North is dead,” he was quoted as saying. “People came in from the suburbs and brought their values.” He said, “[Station North] isn’t the neighborhood I fell in love with 10 years ago.”<sup>30</sup>

With economic recovery fueling large urban investments in the 2010s, multi-hundred-million dollar plans are taking shape around Penn Station designed to fan out and complement the Station North Arts and Entertainment District. Johns Hopkins and University of Baltimore look to expand as other significant housing and retail developments are in the works. “Speculators are swarming into the area unchallenged by city government.,” wrote one blogger.<sup>31</sup>

Another Baltimore blogger, Klaus Philpsen asked “Are artists in reality just the useful pawns who colonized a district to then get pushed out themselves while the district gentrifies?”<sup>32</sup> Warned Stern and Seifert, “If the real estate market in the district picks up again, there is likely to be serious competition between arts-based uses and residential development for a more upscale commuter market,” warned Stern and Seifert.<sup>33</sup>

In their assessment of urban cultural policy in Baltimore, Italian scholars Ponzini and Rossi acknowledged that an inclusive approach to culture-led regeneration can renew the image of long-deprived cities and neighborhoods, provide a strengthened sense of belonging, and improve the liveliness and attractiveness of places. In the Baltimore case, they found whether intended by key players or not, “a primary effect of these policies has been the sparking of the real estate sector”<sup>34</sup>

#### *b. Top-Down: DUMBO, Brooklyn, NY*



Figure 3. DUMBO, Brooklyn, NY.

Cities and neighborhoods evolve and grow as an ongoing process. The DUMBO section of Brooklyn, NY has often been cited as a developer-driven arts district in which artists and other low-income residents were dislocated over the course of a mere decade beginning in the mid-1990s. However, as early as the 1970s artists began moving in to its inexpensive industrial spaces a short trip from Manhattan. Some probably left SOHO as prices there escalated. The name, Down Under Manhattan Bridge Overpass (DUMBO), reportedly originated with artists who felt that such an unattractive moniker would deter developers and up-scale residents from gentrifying the area. However, that is exactly what did happen.

Sharanya Haridas writing in *BrooklynInk* reported the story of how real estate developer David Walentas met an artist in the 1970s at a social gathering who jokingly suggested the next SOHO would be DUMBO. Later, Walentas walked the neighborhood and saw its potential. He and his son Jed bought several large, key buildings beginning in 1981 and patiently waited 15 years leasing to artists at low rents and giving small arts organizations free space to create a buzz.<sup>35</sup>

Fearing rapid change, the DUMBO Neighborhood Association, made up largely of artists, mounted some resistance to the Walentas' plans in the 1980s and early 1990s that faded during the Guliani administration. Through their development company, Two Trees Management, the Walentas completed their first condo project in 1998. Many have followed. While they remain the dominant land-holder and developer, they are not the only developer at work in DUMBO.

As early as 2004, Jesse McKinley, writing in *The New York Times*, observed "a mass exodus of artists" from DUMBO. Luxury loft apartments between 1,500 and 3,000 square feet were selling for \$1,000 a foot. New York real estate is well known for quickly pricing out artists and other low income residents, but according to *The New York Times* reporter, "what shocked many in DUMBO is the extreme speed and calculation" with which the transition occurred.<sup>36</sup>

While artists began to inhabit DUMBO in the 1970s, invented the name, and created its artsy ambiance, artists are now all but absent when it comes to living or having working spaces there. Some frequent its bars and cafes or work at nonprofits. The performance space, St. Ann's Warehouse and the visual arts center Smack Mellon continue to benefit from low or no-cost space provided by the Walentas as they attract more deep-pocketed creative types to DUMBO. Meanwhile, up-scale shops catering to newborns, lovers of fine chocolate and spoiled pets attract residents and shoppers who remain fond of avant-garde cultural offerings. Added to panoramic views of the Manhattan skyline, dramatic presence of the massive Brooklyn and Manhattan Bridges overhead, film festivals, new city parks on the riverfront, and easy transit via subway, bus, ferry and car to Manhattan, DUMBO now has many assets to offer its new residents and visitors.

Two Trees Management followed a successful recipe in DUMBO to turn a district of hundred-year-old industrial buildings into a hip and high-priced neighborhood. They catered to artists who generated an identity for the area and then they

harvested their real estate gains. Artist Jack Warren quoted in *The New York Times*, described it as “the classic scenario of getting dummied into pioneering an area, building a community and having that community usurped into another sort of community that you can’t be part of.”<sup>37</sup>

### Conclusion

Places that began as bottom-up, organic, or natural cultural districts, such as Station North or DUMBO, evolved as forces of city planning, development and/or major institutional partners began to drive change. As seen in the six cultural districts profiled here, places do not stand still. Some situations enable communities to form and gain political traction and allow artists and locally generated cultural activity to remain in place and contribute to life conditions for a community at large. At early stages of growth and/or under conditions where upward real estate pressures were not driving development, artists and local art activity can remain relatively stable and thrive.

Lin and Hsing cited the value of community engagement that generates a desired sense of belonging among residents and supports traditional cultural practices, heritage conservation, and environmental improvement. They highlighted the *process* of local organizing that they called *community mobilisation* and argued that involvement in place-making decisions encourages “local inhabitants to reshape a distinctive regeneration project and to enhance active citizenship in the long term.”<sup>38</sup>

Community mobilization was evident to varying degrees in Azalea Park, Northeast, Leimert Park, and Roosevelt Row where a mix of residents, artists, nonprofits, and small business owners were part of the fabric of community organizing and planning, and important to the local economy. Whether artists and creative enterprises can remain part of these vibrant neighborhoods in the long term remains a question. In this analysis, Leimert Park and Roosevelt Row sit at or near a tipping point while Station North – and to a greater extent DUMBO – have tipped. Station North also reflected evidence of cultural dislocation where a new set of residents and businesses created such a different social milieu that older residents (including some artists) feel they no longer belong. This is a phenomenon organizers in Leimert Park are working to avoid.

A backdrop of well-developed systems of neighborhood-level organizing exists in Los Angeles and Minneapolis where numerous individual leaders demonstrated strong capacity to move between business, the arts, government, residents, and other stakeholders. A variety of people actively engage in a variety of associations, some of which are connected structurally to local government. Those individuals and organizations played key roles in linking and solidifying horizontal networks that enable greater efficacy of the entire district in protecting its identity, stability, and role within larger cultural and economic ecosystems.

Modernist land-use planning not only separates uses but people and interests. If planners, policy-makers, and community activists expect to bring about equi-

table, resilient communities, the capacity for organizing and building horizontal networks must be integrated into the practice. They must bring together people across sectors, ethnicities, professions, and stakeholder groups to identify shared interests, assets, and collective challenges to co-create and sustain a vision for their community.

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# Community Building Through Do-It-Yourself Practices & Values *in Bangkok's Rock 'n' roll Subculture*

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## Abstract

This article presents the practices and values among members of Bangkok's rock 'n' roll subculture. Understanding a particular manifestation of rock 'n' roll practices, in a specific scene and location, needs to begin with an analysis of both the similarities and differences it has with other, wider rock 'n' roll subcultural groupings. How do they relate and remain distinct from each other? In order to answer this question, four rock 'n' roll scenes cohabitating in Bangkok city are investigated, they are: metal, punk, hardcore/straightedge and rock. By analyzing the people behind these scenes it is possible to understand the ties and conflicts faced by the participants in these music scenes and their roles in the construction of a subcultural community evolving around independent music.

**Keywords:** *Bangkok, Youth, Subculture, Rock 'n' roll, DIY, Community*

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## Introduction

### Subcultural Studies Relevant to the Case of the Rock 'n' roll Subculture in Bangkok

The early subcultural research tended to present them as unitary entities with proper internal dynamics. This was a perception very distant from the messier reality of subcultural structure and dynamics. Furthermore, researchers tend to present the relationship between subculture and mainstream groups in dualistic terms. For example, Cohen (1955) theorized on the emergence of youth subcultures as a response to tensions in the wider culture. These tensions were perceived by young people as 'problems', which were mainly status-driven. Cohen saw the emergence of subcultures through understandings generated between groups of young people with a common understanding of their condition, which, in turn, is transformed into a set of practical solutions together with their own internal dynamics of norms and rules. It is worth quoting the author:

“The emergence of these ‘group standards’ of this shared frame of reference, is the emergence of a new subculture. It is cultural because each actor’s participation in this system or norms they go by in evaluating people. These criteria are an aspect of their cultural frames of reference. If we lack the characteristics, or capacities, which give status in terms of these criteria, we are beset by one of the most typical yet distressing of human problems of adjustment. One solution is for individuals who share such problems to gravitate towards one another and jointly to establish new norms, new criteria of status which define as meritorious the characteristics they do possess, the kinds of conduct of which they are capable.” (Cohen, 1955: 65-66, emphasis in original).

Trying to map out the practices and values of the rock 'n' roll scenes in Bangkok from this point of view is entirely convincing: disaffection with or a sense of exclusion from mainstream norms and values can lead people to find each other and jointly establish alternative norms, values and criteria of status which, as in the case of the rock 'n' roll subculture in Bangkok, are opposed to those of the mainstream. These differences between Bangkok's rock 'n' roll subculture and the mainstream will be explored in this article by studying the Do-it-yourself values and practices and the idea of authenticity as perceived by the participants in the subculture as well as by the study of inauthentic behavior. Yet, it is still necessary to fit in this definition the variability and mutability of rock 'n' roll practices and values. These practices and values are not the same from one scene to the other and do not remain invariant over time. It is this constant evolution of practices and values that make the idea of uniformity and coherence an illusion since inevitably some individuals and groups are set to claim their own practices and values as closer to what was originally set out in punk's creative emergence.

In 1977, the advent of punk as a new musical genre provided a vehicle for its participants in which previously unacceptable forms of behavior could be adopted and practiced while still being able to shock the rest of society. Cohen viewed subcultures as the providers of “a new status system sanctioning behavior

tabooed or frowned upon by the larger society”, however, “the acquisition of status within the new group is accompanied by a loss of status outside the group” (1955: 68). Despite being now largely neglected, Cohen’s work provided a credible argument from the analysis of youth subcultures in the mid-20th century. Nevertheless, his models ignored the processes of assimilation and relative acceptance of subcultures by the mainstream culture, as well as, how members of the subculture can, over time, turn themselves over to positions of respectability. His study also ignored the divisions and difficulties that occur within a particular subculture and how these can lead to the formation of newer subcultural groupings (scenes) that nonetheless, share similarities with their subcultural predecessors. Subcultural divisions might be the best place where to start mapping the differences between practices and values among the rock ‘n’ roll subculture in Bangkok. Later theorizations of scenes and subcultures still fall on divisions among scenes or between them and mainstream society so this study will include the analysis of inner divisions in particular rock ‘n’ roll scenes, specifically between the hardcore punk and the straightedge punk scenes from the wider punk scene. In order to do so, this study will use Kruse’s (2010) interpretation of scene as a localized music oriented community created as a response to mainstream or popular music. Their locality and their opposition to mainstream music make scenes important contributors to the formation of oppositional identities among their participants. For these participants the concept of authenticity is fundamental, authentic members of the subculture are admired and praised while inauthentic members are perceived as fake or show-offs. This follows the idea of authenticity proposed by Moore (2002) in which authenticity is seen as a matter of interpretation defined within a cultural position. It is a concept attributed to a performance thus labeling both the performer and its engaged audience. Thus, music scenes allow both the authentication of the performer and its audience. This is what creates the sense of community. Every person involved in the development of a music show is part of the scene. However, before we engulf in the exploration of the different practices and values among the punk scene it is necessary to study existing the literature regarding the problems of difference and conflict between subcultural groupings. Due to the voluminous amount of literature and research done on the topic, I will focus the discussion on two key texts in order to illustrate the argument: Firstly, I will present the work of Dick Hebdige (1979) who focuses his study on the political divisions in the punk scene in England by commenting on the internal inconsistencies between original and later members of the subculture. Finally, I will present the work of Stan Cohen (1980) who focuses on differences between the mod and rocker subcultures in England via their representation in the media.

For Hebdige the main differences between early adopters of the subculture chiefly took places around the idea of style. For him, “the style no doubt made sense for the first wave of self-conscious innovators at the level which remained inaccessible to those who became punks after the subculture had surfaced and been publicized. Punk is not unique in this: the distinction between originals and hanger-on is always a significant one in subculture. Indeed it is frequently verbalized (plastic punks or safety-pin people, burrhead rastas or

rasta band wagon, weekend hippies, etc versus the ‘authentic’ people)” (Hebdige, 1979:122). In Hebdige’s readings of subcultures, the aesthetics of style prevail over moral guidelines of conduct. However, it is my opinion that divisions and animosity within and between subcultures have deeper and broader causes and consequences than what a predominant attention to style can point out. A primary focus on style is unable to encompass them sufficiently, or to interpret them satisfactorily. However, style and morals are not the only cause of division among subcultures; the media can also play a part on it. The study of Stan Cohen (1980) focuses on the role of the media in amplifying divisions through their focus on the social deviance generated by the mod and rocker subcultures in England.

Cohen is mainly concerned with media reaction and the construction of conflict between subcultures via the discourse of social deviance. He notes that “the focus here is on how society labels rule-breakers as belonging to certain deviant groups and how, once the person is thus type cast, his acts are interpreted in terms of the status to which he has been assigned” (Cohen, 1980: 12). Cohen’s thesis argues that subcultural reaction to the portrayal of its deviance in the media produces an expansion in the deviant behavior of the subculture. Deviance amplification is useful to explain the early exploits of a subculture such as controversial appearances on the media and so on. As we can see, these three different studies by Cohen (1980) and Hebdige (1979) gloss over the divisions and present subcultures as unified entities and when differences appear they are interpreted as problems related to style (Hebdige, 1979). This study attempts to go beyond this vision of subcultures as unitary entities and will explore the practices and values among Bangkok’s rock ‘n’ roll subculture. It will focus on both differences within and between the multiple rock ‘n’ roll musical scenes coexisting in Bangkok. However, by listing the different practices and values that are important to the scenes, I do not want to create a model, or a “follow step-by-step list”, for participants to become authentic members of the scenes. There is not such a model and no true, absolute way. The fact that divisions and dualisms exist among musical scenes is a proof of this. Rock ‘n’ roll generates a reflexive conflict in the participants of the different scenes in regards to what it is, depending on how it is conducted and the perception of authenticity and authentic behavior. As we will see in the following sections, the DIY (Do-it-yourself) spirit inherited from the punk movement of the late 1970s in England plays an important role in the everyday practices and values of the participants of Bangkok’s rock ‘n’ roll scene and in the creation of subcultural capital via the generation of authentic behavior.

### **DIY: Generating Authenticity**

Gray articulates quite accurately the early punk spirit of Do-it-Yourself (DIY): ‘if you are bored, do something about it; if you don’t like the way things are done, act to change them, be creative, be positive, anyone can do it’ (Gray, 2001:53). In England at the end of the 70s there was a significant gap between pop music aesthetics and the everyday experience of the unemployed youth. It was impossible for the young kids part of the working class to resemble the pop stars of their time because they could not afford to purchase items related to them. The high prices of fashion and music at the time forced the English youth to create

all of this by themselves. This was registered in an extension of the previously existing DIY ideas of the British counterculture that fed into punk (McKay, 1988). In simple terms it has been manifested in terms of being and remaining authentic. The moral imperative of authenticity has directly influenced DIY values and practices, sometimes in quite divisive ways.

There is nothing worst than ‘selling out’, a term employed by participants in the underground rock scene to describe those bands or people that decide to join the mainstream in order to pursue financial gain instead of continuing contributing to the development of the scene. Once established in the ethos of DIY culture, those who sell out, ignore, transgress or just step over the marks are met with the moral discipline of those deemed (by themselves and/or by others) as authentic members of the scene. The common punishment for sell-outs is to be ridiculed, despised and even kicked out of the scene by the community as a whole. But what are the actions that qualify someone as authentic? Answering this question is a very complex task since the concept of authenticity can vary very quickly from musical subscene to musical subscene. However, bands and participants in the underground rock scene in Bangkok gain reputation as ‘authentic’ by having certain stands on the following topics: music, venues as well as concerts and promoters.

#### **Music: Production and Distribution**

In order to escape the tight control of the government and the big music corporations, underground music artists tend to either look to record with independent labels or, if they have the financial means to create their own label to allow themselves complete freedom at all levels of production and distribution music. The best example of this is the band Stylish Nonsense. Formed in the mid-90s while being enrolled in King’s Mongkut Institute of Technology in Ladkrabang by Yuttana “June” Kalambaheti and Wannarit “Pok” Pongprayoon, this band was among one of the first ones to start mixing live music with electronic music. In 1997 after gaining recognition among the underground scene and securing a deal with a label that allowed them artistic freedom, that closed down before they could record anything because of the economic crisis they decided to join forces with their university friend Somsiri ‘June’ Sangkaew from the band Bear Garden and create their own label: Panda Records.

Pok explains how it happened:

“We wrote our own songs and had the chance to send it to an indie label, Eastern Sky, and work with professional people to record but the label broke down due to the economic crisis. If you go to major label they are going to change everything about you and your music. My friends in the band and me didn’t want to do something like that so we decided to create our own label (Panda Records) and help each other. But we had no idea what we were doing.” (Wannarit ‘Pok’ Pongprayoon, March 2, 2014, Interview).



Figure 1. Wannarit 'Pok' Pongprayoon performing with Monomania at Monomania's CD release party at Play Yard [Photography courtesy of Dave Crimaldi].

By doing so, not only did they obtain complete freedom during the process of creating and distributing their music, they also achieved the crystallization of uncompromising DIY practices and values. After releasing their first album and following their momentum, Panda Records started helping other bands and musicians who faced the same problems Stylish Nonsense did when trying to deal with big label companies. When asked why they did it, Pok simply replied that it was because no one provided them a channel to express their music so they had to create their own infrastructure from scratch.

“We didn't have anyone paying attention to us. We couldn't get our music on radio or TV so we had to do something all by ourselves.” (Wannarit 'Pok' Pongprayoon, March 2, 2014, Interview)

Without being conscious about it at the time, Stylish Nonsense and Panda Records were to become the face of the rock 'n' roll subculture. In those years, the only other independent label publishing CDs and tapes of rock 'n' roll bands was BAMA or Bangkok Alien Music Alliance. BAMA closed down in 2003 but its legacy carried on. Today, Bangkok counts over twenty independent record companies specializing in many different music styles that go from reggae to death metal.

Panda Records is run as a non-profit organization, all its money comes from what is invested by its owners but also from what they get from the organization of concerts and/or festivals such as Stone Free which feature only local independent artists, the sale of records, compilations and merchandising with everything being

reinvested into the production of new musical material. The bands signed under Panda Records have the freedom to record, produce and master their music as well as design their artwork, a true Do-it-Yourself attitude from beginning to the end.

To this day, Panda Records is among the most influential and praised independent labels in Thailand. Independent labels not only apply DIY principles and values to their everyday activities but they also create a strong link between labels, artists and public that is built upon hope, trust and solidarity. By allowing the artists to remain authentic to their creative vision, independent labels set themselves apart from the mainstream and set clear and definite moral boundaries on how to treat and promote artists between 'them' (mainstream media) and 'us' (the independent). This approach creates a sense of community that includes the consumers of this 'authentic' music. It is widely accepted among Bangkok's rock 'n' roll scene that any band or artist that decides to live and maintain its artistic freedom by distributing its music in an independent label is an authentic member of the community.

### Venues

Besides music production, another important part of the DIY practices and values is to open and run a venue allowing independent bands to perform. Venues and concert organizations are key for bands and participants to be able to interact with each other and develop the scene. Among the few places that have tried to dedicate themselves to live original music, the majority have closed down.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the rock 'n' roll subculture in Bangkok was very divided and thus each scene had its own places. Metal music was the subcultural arena with more internal fights. Rock Pub, a venue located near Ratchathewi BTS Station, was among the first places to open and dedicate itself to rock music. To this day many foreign bands come and perform in this place but it seems internal fights for influence and power among the metal scene led part of it to seek refuge elsewhere and from that schism was born Immortal Bar in 2000. Immortal Bar is owned by Fah, the singer and lead guitar of metal band Carnivora. Fah originally opened the place for his friends and their bands to play. It was strategically located in Khaosan Road in the Bayon building, the center of the new backpacking area that was being developed in the neighborhood. It was a time where backpackers arrived to Bangkok and had the opportunity to share their experiences and lives with young Thais hanging out at the local bars. That is how Guru from the band Sin Tonic got involved in metal music: by watching bands play music at Immortal and by talking about music with the tourists. Fah was able to keep the place open for almost ten years until the landlord of the place decided to increase the rent almost four times the normal price without a notice. Matt Smith, the singer of the Standards and person behind concert organizer Popsceen, recalls that moment very clearly:

“At the beginning I was working with Immortal Bar who used to be in Khaosan road, I was doing a monthly event there and it was working really good. Always a good

turnout of people and Khun Fah was happy, I was happy and we decided to continue. But all of a sudden on a day before a big show Khun Fah calls me and tells me we have to cancel because the place was shut down and there was nothing we could do about it. That's when I realize how fast places opened and closed in this city." (Matt Smith, June 1, 2014, Interview).



Figure 2. The Bayon Building in Khaosan, Immortal bar used to be located in its first floor up until 2006.

Instead of being deterred by this event, Fah decided to move Immortal Bar to its current location near Victory Monument. It is still very popular among the local rock 'n' roll scene and hosts mainly metal and hardcore punk concerts that generally feature an international act supported by many local bands. Fah considers himself lucky to be able to make a living from his bar and from touring and playing with Carnivora. He has dedicated most of his life to music and is regarded as a successful person among the metal scene. He says that everything he earns he re-invests in the bar, purchasing light and sound material or replacing drums whenever needed.

Harmonica was a bar/concert venue that opened from 2011 to 2014. It was owned and managed by Put Suksriwan, from the bands Wednesday, Basement Tape, Plastic Section, and Cana. It was located on Sukhumvit Soi 38/1 in a neighborhood that had no other music venues around and was completely residential. Despite the weird location, Put explained his vision for the place:

'I wanted to open a place where people are not used to see live music. I know it might seem weird because it seems there is no market for a venue like this here but I think the response was great. Sometimes you could see people walking their dogs

pass in front of the bar when a band was playing and they would stay a bit and listen to the music before continuing with their stroll. A couple of them came back later to see what this place was all about' (Put Suksriwan, May 8, 2014, Interview)



Figure 3. Harmonica from the outside.



Figure 4. Put Suksriwan playing at Jam [Photography courtesy of Dave Crimaldi].

Very quickly Harmonica became a well-known venue across town. It had one of the best sound systems available and very good lightning as well. It was a place

that welcomed any kind of music and hosted a wide range of rock genres. One day it could be a Japanese hardcore festival featuring local heroes LowFat and their friends and the next one a folk rock concert. From time to time Harmonica hosted international bands such as Deerhoof. Harmonica was a place by musicians for the musicians; it catered to lots of bands such as Hariguem Zaboy, Abstraction XL, Aire, Degaruda and Plastic Section a place to play regularly with top of the line sound and light systems. For the three years it remained open, Harmonica allowed anyone interested in the rock 'n' roll subculture to enjoy bands playing live from Wednesday to Sunday. Put explained that his previous experience as a musician inspired him to open a place that could be dedicated entirely to host local bands shows:

“Back then I used to be in a band with a couple of friends in high school and we all had a gig with Van and Phil from Degaruda, who were playing in a small band called Ghost Story back then. We organized shows with those guys all the time and they [the venues] always gave us dead days like Tuesdays and Wednesdays in small restaurants in Thonglor where there were no customers. They would let us use the space but we had to bring everything for the show: drum kit, PA system, Bass amp... And we didn't have the money to rent it all the time so we used to call friends and ask them favors to lend us their gear for shows. We did that for years! There was no place where you could only go there with your guitar and bass and play a show and that is 5 years back, not even 10 or 20 years when it was even harder. I wanted to change that with Harmonica.” (Put Suksriwan, May 8, 2014, Interview)

Do-it-Yourself was the everyday life of musicians back then and, even today despite having more places dedicated to live music, Put thinks that it is only with self-reliance that the rock'n'roll scene can progress.

“The DIY mentality has allowed the scene right now to progress, ten years ago bands relied too much on the promotion brought by Fat Radio and now we have to do all by ourselves. I am much happier like this, it is a challenge. A lot of people are sad that Fat radio is over, there was a magazine called DDT that featured underground music and gigs but it is over, it is sad that they don't exist anymore but it is good that bands don't rely on them anymore and that they have to start doing stuff to promote themselves. Not just ask people to do it for them, or the people to invite them to play shows. Lots of people who complain that they don't have places to play are just ridiculous; it is just because they don't want to do it. As Wednesday I have already toured Bangkok twice! I organized myself shows around the city for ten shows in different locations in a month” (Put Suksriwan, May 8, 2014, Interview)

Many interviewees expressed their concerns by pointing out that a lot of the venues that started as places for the performance of rock'n'roll music either closed down because of their financial losses or because the landlord realized he could charge more money for the local once it had establish itself in the location.

Harmonica was seen as a 'second home' (Ben Edwards, March 5, 2014, Interview.) for many of the local bands, Plastic Section used to practice there when it was

closed and Low Fat used it as their place of predilection for their ‘and now you are here’ shows. Aire, Degaruda and Hariguem Zaboy released their albums by playing incredible shows with the place packed with people jumping around like madmen. Unfortunately for the scene, Put decided to close Harmonica because it took too much time and effort and he wanted to spend more time with his family since he was soon going to become a father. Many bands have wondered if another place will open that will allow them as much freedom and dedication as Harmonica did. Put is not only highly regarded among the rock’n’roll subculture as a musician but he is also seen as the one that dedicated his bar to music. Put says the closing down is temporary, a matter of a couple of years and once his kid is a bit older he would love to open it again although maybe in another location.



Figure 5. Degaruda performing during their CD release party at Harmonica.

### Concerts and Promoters

Musicians in the underground rock scene in Bangkok do not aspire to the top of the charts; however they do want to inspire other people in their community to start playing music. By not being in the constant search for remuneration, though a paid concert is always welcome, or at least some free drinks during the night, the primary concern of musicians participating in the underground rock scene in Bangkok is to share a meaningful moment with their audiences. Bands expect total freedom to decide which songs they will play and concert organizers will refuse any band imposition from the owner of the place. Very often the organizers will be members of bands that will look for a place where their band and their friends' bands can play. In order to attract a crowd as big as possible concerts are

usually free or with a minimum entrance fee that includes one drink. Popszene, one of the most important concert organizers in the city started like that. Matt Smith, freshly arrived from London, decided that the inactivity in the city and the music scene needed to change:

“I was freshly arrived from London where the scene is always active, I was in a pub or a club every single night catching bands or DJs and then I came here and it was a great place to be but there was nothing going on at nights music-wise. That’s when I met Paul. And we both had been in bands in England and we decided to give us a try together and it worked. Then I started Popszene purely to get regular shows and that kind of snowballed into what it is now. We went from organizing nights with DJs mixing 60s and 70s music to live concerts with Thai bands and now bringing indie bands from abroad to perform in Bangkok.” (Matt Smith, June 1, 2014, Interview).

The rock ‘n’ roll subculture in Bangkok tries to make the music as accessible as possible. Such accessibility is based on a non-profit moral principle given the fact that many of the participants in the scene are either students or young professionals that sometimes struggle to make ends meet. At concerts it is quite common to find merchandising and CDs from the artists performing and even these are sold at very accessible prices. The idea is not to make money out of these items but to recover the money invested in making them to be able to re-invest it in newer products later on. This non-profit commercialism attitude is a core part of the practices and values code in the rock ‘n’ roll subculture, not only it allows the scene to develop with a constant reinvestment of capital into the production of new material but it also expands the circle of influence of the participants by making all cultural products easily accessible to participants and potential participants to the scene that might be set off by the price of the CDs, merchandising and tickets for concerts organized by the mainstream music companies. The members of the subculture buy this kind of products because not only by doing so they assert their support to the bands or people that produce them but in order to gather knowledge and experience from the daily activities of the subculture. The rock ‘n’ roll community in Bangkok has managed to become sustainable and to develop itself by the implementation of a network of small businesses that cater to the needs of the subculture. When influential or key players of the subculture decide to open a company that will cater to the needs of the scene, the credibility and level of authenticity is transposed from the person to the business although this perceived level of authenticity can vary quickly depending on the actions of the new business man and its future implication with the scene.

Nonetheless, some in the music scene criticize this stand by claiming that aspects relative to fashion, style and identity consume the subculture rather than creating it. This is the case with the punk scene, which sees the rest of the underground rock scene in Bangkok as consumption driven and without any interest due to the lack of overt political agenda and thus are not perceived as ‘authentic’ by the punk community. As moral alternatives crystallize into daily scene practices, transgression becomes frowned upon. Of course this is a constant reminder of the

intra-group tensions that exist in the everlasting pursuit of authenticity and will be developed a bit longer farther ahead. Despite this kind of tension, it is quite normal to have some members of both scenes participate in DIY activities such as concert organization or even sharing the stage. Due to the size of the underground community in Bangkok, most of the time differences are put aside for the greater good of the community.

### DIY Practices and Values: The Never-ending Search for Authenticity

Despite a quite effective organization from the labels and the concert organizers, Bangkok's underground rock scene needs to promote itself via the use of media outlets. In order to keep building their credibility in the eyes of their public, the fact that the use of mainstream media is avoided as much as possible makes an analysis on the use of alternative media channels an interesting tool for generating and disseminating the idea of authenticity among the underground rock community.

### Alternative Media

In the 1980s, when underground music started to appear in Bangkok, one of the popular means of musical reproduction, alongside vinyl, was the use of tapes. Through such methods of mechanical reproduction, underground music could be inexpensively copied, traded and shared among participants in the scene. As it has been studied previously, tape trading has been central to the development of the underground music scene in Bangkok (Wong, 1990). Fanzines, cheaply printed magazines done by participants of the scene were sold at concerts and contained the latest news on records, concerts and places where to go and buy music by all the favorite local musicians. Fat Radio, a radio station that became famous for broadcasting underground music became part of the mainstream due to its own success and eventually was sold and stopped existing altogether. However, the advent of the Internet changed the relationship between the underground music scene and the media.

YouTube channels such as In The Living Room provide any internet user with a glimpse of what is happening in Bangkok music-wise through the production of entirely DIY videos of acoustic sessions of the myriad of artists and music genres that take place in the city and specialized YouTube channels such as ROCKWAY provide small *webisodes* (internet episodes) with interviews of the artists that played during the previous weekend.

Almost all of these new media outlets are produced and broadcasted by participants in the different music scenes that comprise the underground rock community of Bangkok with barely any budget but with lots of passion. The DIY morals drive these people to work on media products by themselves in order to show the rest of the society or scenes in other countries what is happening in their city. All these activities are being done by participants in their free time: continuity is rare. Many channels disappear as fast as others replace them but the feeling is there. This is a media done by the community for the community. No economical or marketing gain is sought. Artists are usually willing to participate

in such media projects because they are working with fans and friends. The footage is usually raw and made without all the production material used by big television studios, it is only a couple of microphones, a camera or two and a computer, the sound is not that clean but it has that 'authentic vibe' that only live music possesses.

By allowing these alternative media to produce and broadcast cultural products such as articles, videos or interviews, Bangkok's underground rock scene disassociates itself with the mainstream media, validates the participants involved in the production of those cultural artifacts as active members of the scene despite not being directly involved in the production of music and gains more validity as a DIY driven community that doesn't need to 'sell-out' to the mainstream media coverage to promote itself. So far I have attempted to map the moral code of the DIY movement but for the last part, I will focus on those differences that happen inside the scene. In regards to the production and consumption of merchandising, different groups of participants from the same genre can apply the DIY moral principle differently.

#### **Practices and Values in the Straightedge and the Hardcore Scenes**

Straightedge originated on the east coast of America in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The major sites of straightedge activity are the East Coast cities of Washington DC, New York, and Boston. Later the movement spread to the West Coast, Europe, Japan and Australia. Straightedge culture is now an established micro-cultural phenomenon present all around the world with strong networks that allow musicians to travel and perform almost anywhere and Thailand is not the exception. But why did straightedge develop? The main reason is a logical evolution around the idea of resistance. By taking the DIY ethics and the concepts of alienation and autonomy as given, the early Straightedge groups constructed a new sub-cultural movement under the idea of rebelling against the traditional forms of rebellion embodied by the punk movement. Traditional forms of punk rebellion are seen by the Straightedge culture as being undermined and controlled by the self-destructive ingestion of drugs and other substances. For the Straightedge movement, the dependency of the society on the consumption of harmful substances, be it drugs or alcohol, is a clear obstacle when rebelling against the system. True rebellion needs to be undertaken while having a clear, critical and positive mind.

The hardcore and punk scenes have always constituted and reconstituted themselves through occasional intra-scene antagonism and rivalry. For Straightedge, a clear, sober, alert, and positive mind was set against the nihilism of drunkenness and decadence, in a sort of puritanical form of dissent and non-conformism. One of the principal points of Punk and Hardcore music in Thailand in the early 2000s was Chiang Mai. The city had multiple punk bars with bands performing every day. It was common to see Thai youths wearing colored Mohawks and stapled-leather jackets around town and the scene was known as THHC, Thailand Hardcore. After some time, the scene moved to Bangkok and a schism occurred. While attending concerts at the Immortal Bar, some

of the participants in the Punk Hardcore scene met foreigners involved in the Straightedge movement and decided to follow its precepts and stopped drinking and using other mind altering substances. The THHC separated into two different movements, the SXT, Straightedge Thailand and the HDB, Hardcore Drinking Bangkok scene. Fights and animosities grew among the groups as each accused the other of not being 'authentic' to the punk concepts of rebellion. However both scenes worked in parallel and sometimes together in the organization of concerts and the establishment of international networks with other punk groups from abroad.

As will be illustrated in this example, the straightedge movement sees itself as a movement of rebellion against traditional forms of rebellion. The straightedge participants see these traditional forms of rebellion as being undermined by the destructive consequences of alcohol and drug ingestion, which dilute rebellion. One of the central arguments of the straightedge culture is that the majority of the society is dependent on the consumption of substances and this dependency works as an obstacle in the path of having a clear, critical and positive mind. For the straightedge drug, alcohol and substance culture is the result of, and reproduced by, peer pressure.

By applying moral principles according to their concept of rebellion, the Straightedge movement participants in Thailand positioned themselves in what they perceived to be a stronger and more effective way of rebellion than the Hardcore Drinking Bangkok group who was seen as weaker and badly organized because of their auto-destructive lifestyle. On the other hand, the HDB group perceived the Straightedge as a 'sell-out' conformist group that traded the original rebellion of punk for a socially better version of it. This demonstrates that moral divergence is present among the underground rock factions; however, these factions continue to apply the DIY concepts when producing, performing and disseminating their music. These differences are a proof that the Hardcore and Straightedge scenes have always constituted and reconstituted themselves through occasional intra-scene antagonism and rivalry however, both scenes being small they do have to collaborate in order to keep developing as scenes. Holding On Records publishes both Straightedge and Hardcore bands because as Gap, the owner of the label and the main booker of bands for the city, explains:

"Well the scenes [Hardcore and Straightedge] are small so it is difficult to have two scenes separated. Same music you know, just different opinions on alcohol, drugs and sex. If we make a concert and a hundred kids come up, maybe 20 will be straightedge. Sometimes there are fights between them (the two scenes) but nothing serious. We need each other." (Nutpongton 'Gap' Sittiboon, May 22, 2014, Interview).

## Conclusion

DIY practices and values exert, in the very effort to live by and maintain them, a continuous pressure to articulate their presence through the identification of the multiple ways to negate them, whether these involve temporary slippage, ambiguous action or wholesale betrayal. The never-ending fight to define

authenticity started since the inception of underground rock music and is still raging today among the various scenes, sub-scenes, genre groupings, factions and splinter formations that define and compose the big community that is the underground rock scene in Bangkok.

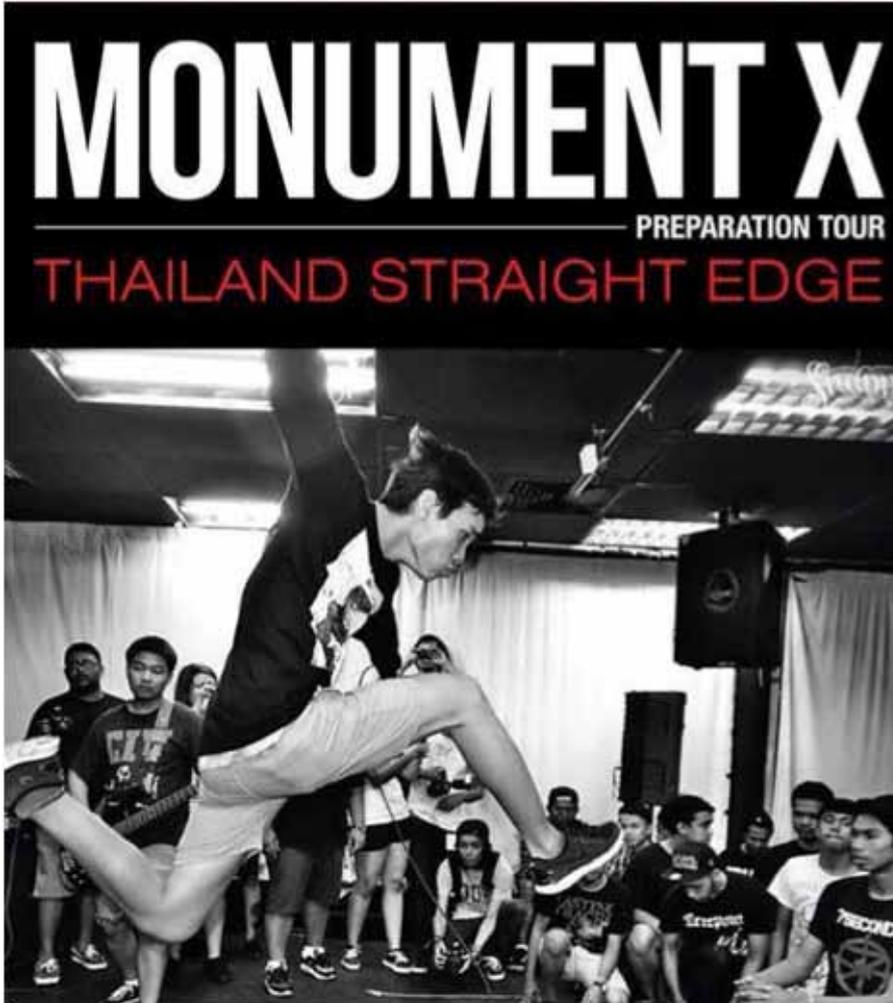


Figure 6. Flyer for Monument X's Preparation Tour.

Bangkok's rock 'n' roll community has organized itself into smaller groups of people that provide different services in order to allow the sustainability and development of the music scene. From creating music, organizing concerts, doing interviews, informing participants about events or the design and production of merchandising, all these activities follow, apply and repeat DIY principles into their daily routines. The actions of these individuals and the relatively small size of the rock'n'roll subculture in Bangkok city contribute to the development of a strong music community that allows the coexistence of different music scenes. These scenes might have different internal perceptions of authenticity however, their common fight against mainstream culture makes their participants to recognize each other as members of the same subculture separate just by a specific music genre. Nonetheless it is more and more common to see concerts

featuring bands from very different scenes which is a proof that Bangkok's rock'n'roll subculture is strong and open to new musical collaborations.

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# Creating a Contemporary Dance Based on Traditional Techniques and Spirituality –

*Fusing Elements from Lanna (Thailand), Indonesia and Japan*

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## Abstract

The challenge of traditional dance to survive in a globalized world depends on the efforts of individual artists, groups and organizations based in local institutions, villages, and local festivals, and on popular entertainers..From a background as a *Lanna* (Northern Thailand) dancer, I studied how traditional dance is being transmitted and modernized in Japan and Indonesia. I introduce four artists from Japan and Indonesia with backgrounds in traditional dance who are trying to make their traditions contemporarily relevant. I describe some of the many forms that dance is taking in locations such as Mangkunegaran Palace in Surakarta, Indonesia and in so-called “Downtown Kabuki” in Osaka, Japan. Finally, I discuss my collaborations with artists in Japan and Indonesia in which we attempted to compare, contrast, or fuse our traditions. The long term aim of this work is to try to identify ways for traditional art forms to survive in an era of globalization.

**Keywords:** *Contemporary Dance, Lanna, Thailand, Indonesia, Japan, Fusion, Traditional, Spirituality*

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## Introduction

This paper discusses the challenges of traditional dance in three parts:

- Artists
- Village, Palace, Street, Festivals
- Workshops and Collaborations

### Artists

This section highlights two artists from Japan and two artists from Indonesia to show a range of challenges and responses to globalization. In Kyoto, Japan, Tatsushige Uda is a young traditional *Noh* theater actor, subject to the strictest rules and restrictions. Also in Kyoto, Heidi Durning, a half-Japanese, half-Swiss woman dancer, exemplifies the challenges faced by a person from a multi-ethnic background in a traditional society.

In Indonesia, Rianto and Mugiyono are performers based in the city of Surakarta (widely called Solo) who practice contemporary dance. Rianto is from a village in Banyumas (between West and Central Java), while Mugiyono comes from a *dalang* (shadow-puppeteer) family in Central Java.

### Village, Palace, Street and Festivals

This section explores the wide range of traditional dances being presented by groups and institutions. From Japan, I introduce Awa Odori, a popular street festival held in mid-August each year in the town of Tokushima on the southern island of Shikoku. The festival attracts hundreds of thousands of people every year. I also explore Hayachine Kagura, an ancient form of masked shrine dance, believed to be the ancestor of *Noh* drama, which is being quietly preserved by villagers in the town of Tohno in Japan's far north. Finally, I discuss traveling troupes of so-called "downtown Kabuki" which play in small theaters in the poorer districts of Osaka and Tokyo. In contrast to the very traditional "Grand Kabuki," these troupes introduce informal elements such as pop music, the wearing of blond wigs and other innovations.

In Indonesia, Mangkunegaran Palace in Solo transmits classical Javanese techniques and spiritual values through the teaching of gamelan music and dance in the palace's historic *pendopo* performance halls. Ceremonies at Samwan Tiga, a Hindu temple in Bali, are also highly traditional, but are preserved by villagers. As an example of an international arts event of the sort that are greatly influencing contemporary dance around the region, I introduce "In the Arts Island 2011," a dance and music festival held in July 2011 in Bali and East Java.

### Workshops, Classes and Collaborations

This section describes workshops in which I learned from Japanese and Indonesian artists, as well as those in which I taught *Lanna* dance. Three collaborations with local artists are discussed. In "Tatsushige to Ronnarong" (Jan 2011, Kyoto), *Noh* artist Tatsushige and I contrasted *Noh* drama with *Lanna* dance. In "Rianto to Ronnarong" (June 2011, Solo), Rianto and I conducted a similar event comparing *Banyumas* (Javanese dance) with *Lanna* dance. In a performance titled *Kembang*

Kapas (July 2011, Solo) Javanese singer Peni Candra Rini and I combined music and contemporary dance.

### Artists

#### Tatsushige Udaka

Born in 1981, Tatsushige is the son of leading *Noh* actor Michishige Udaka of the Kongo School of *Noh* Theater in Kyoto. Kongo is one of five traditional schools descended from the actor Zeami of the 15th century. The Kongo School is led today by a hereditary *Iemoto* (grand master). At age 29, Tatsushige is a member of the young generation of *Noh* performers.

*Noh* is a form of masked theater that originated in shrine dances. Abstract, slow, and highly controlled down to very small details, it includes three elements: *mai* (dance), *hayashi* (drums and flute), and *utai* (chanting). I studied *mai* and *utai* with Tatsushige and learned to perform the dance section (*shimai*) of the play *Yuki* (Snow).

Tatsushige was first placed on a stage (where he says he promptly fell asleep) at the age of three. Today he is a professional actor, comfortable with the *Noh* tradition and ready to step forward into the world of globalization. He is an expert on wearing the kimono, the *hakama* (Japanese traditional pants) and the *obi* (sash) when he performs *Noh*, but he wears jeans and t-shirts otherwise. He engages with artists from many countries and has taught *Noh* workshops in France, the United States and Korea. With his open personality, he attends dance shows of all varieties, including Western and contemporary performances. He hopes to reach out to people in society and to provide easy access to the very specialized world of *Noh*.

However, as an actor of the Kongo School, Tatsushige needs to follow the guidelines of the *iemoto*. The strict rules of *iemoto* mean that *Noh* Theater has been passed on, almost unchanged, for centuries, making it one of the world's oldest forms of continually performed drama. On the other hand, this strength also means that it is difficult to break away from the rules.

Among Tatsushige's attempts to do this are collaborations with his wife, the contemporary dancer Haruna Udaka, and with artists from Slovenia in a performance piece called *Nohsono*. Tatsushige has said, "I want to go back to the origins of *Noh* (simple stage, lighting from the woods). It feels contemporary looked at from today." For Tatsushige, the road to globalization lies not in trying to bring in new forms, but in going deeper into the old forms and finding contemporary value in them.

#### Heidi S. Durning

Choreographer and dancer Heidi was born in 1957 of a Swiss father and Japanese mother. Based in Kyoto, she studied *Nihon Buyo* (traditional Japanese dance) in the leading Fujima School, where she received the professional stage name "Fujima Kanso-o." She also earned a master of fine arts from the University of Michigan.

*Nihon Buyo* dates back to Kabuki performances along the Kamo River in Kyoto in the early 1600s. More realistic and expressive than *Noh*, it developed within Kabuki Theater during the Edo period (1600-1868). It later multiplied into many styles, including geisha dance. *Nihon Buyo* features make-up rather than masks, elaborate stages and costumes, and flowing and dramatic gestures and rhythms.

In her contemporary choreography, Heidi mixes *Nihon Buyo* with contemporary dance. While freer than *Noh* Theater, *Nihon Buyo* is still quite strict, so when Heidi performs anything that is not traditional she uses her own name “Heidi S. Durning.” When she performs or teaches *Nihon Buyo* she uses her certified Fujima school name.

“Being half Swiss and Japanese, sometimes it seems I get away with being creative in this way, but I guess if I did something very embarrassing the school would not like it. I have not had too much trouble creating new things. I guess I am also sort of known as a fusion dancer within that world... I feel I have been lucky to travel through these worlds. Sometimes I feel like a foreigner in the traditional Japanese world... It would be nice to be more universally accepted in those ways sometimes.”

Heidi calls her work Fusion Dance. Heidi’s “fusion” is part of the centuries-long process of traditional dance adapting to outside influences. Being half Swiss and half Japanese has advantages and disadvantages. Most Japanese *Nihon Buyo* dancers are still focused on working within the *iemoto* system and are not ready to venture into contemporary forms. That gives Heidi certain possibilities and openings. On the other hand, many Japanese people feel that she is not a “true Japanese” and so it can be difficult for her to work in the traditional formats, at the deeper levels.

### **Rianto**

Born in 1981 in a village near Banyumas, a small city between central and west Java, Rianto began traditional Javanese dancing in high school and graduated with a degree in dance from the Institut Seni Indonesia at Surakarta (STSI) in 2004. From 2005 he also trained in Javanese court dance at Mangkunegaran Palace. Married to a Japanese dancer, he is the founder and director of the Dewandaru Dance Company in Tokyo. Rianto spends part of each year in Japan, and the rest in Indonesia and conducting performances in other countries.

Rianto believes that what we now see as “traditional dance” was the “contemporary dance” of its time. He develops his work by taking the techniques, choreography and ideas from traditional dance to create his own new work.

In Rianto’s vision, the difference today between traditional and contemporary dance is that while traditional dance evolved over the years, contemporary dance is more focused on “concept.” It takes ideas from the lives of people and the artists themselves to create something new. Rianto’s motto is “new creation, new idea.”

Rianto works with artists from different countries, for example, Pappatarahumara (a contemporary dance company in Tokyo), *Noh* actors, and Sen Hea Ha from Korea. He also takes dancers from Indonesia to perform in dance festivals around the world.

Rianto's challenge is that not many people know about contemporary dance in Indonesia. However, awareness is growing as a result of dance festivals such as the Indonesian Dance Festival in Jakarta, the Solo International Performing Arts event and the Lenyog Art Festival in Kalimantan.

### Mugiyono Kasido

Mugiyono, the most senior artist mentioned here, was born in 1967. Known as one of Indonesia's leading contemporary performers, he comes from a family of *dalang* (shadow puppet masters) in Central Java. He started dancing at the age of eight, and continued to study classical Javanese dance, graduating in 1993 from the Institut Seni Indonesia at Surakarta (STSI). Mugiyono highly values the masters he has studied under, such as R. Ng. Rono Suropto from the Mangkunegaran Palace, Suprpto Suryodarmo, and Sardono W. Kusumo. Starting in 1992, while still studying at STSI, Mugiyono began choreographing contemporary pieces. He wanted to do something new.

In addition to dance, he teaches and conducts workshops. However, he points out, "Anywhere in the world, it is hard to live as a dancer." In Solo it is acceptable to perform both traditional and contemporary dance, and Solo society is supportive. But there is not much support from the government.

"The concept of my contemporary work is 'nowadays'," says Mugiyono. In his vision, he tries to make the traditional and contemporary elements in his dance enhance and support each other. He tries to transmit old forms in a modern way. For example, in his performances, he uses old dance techniques and stories, but wears ordinary clothes and presents the stories in a contemporary way.

### Village, Palace, Street and Festivals

#### Awa Odori

*Awa Odori* is a type of dance performed in mid-August in Tokushima city in Japan's southern island Shikoku. Everywhere in Japan in mid-July or mid-August, people gather to dance in honor of the ancestors for *Obon* (Festival of the Dead). In most *Obon* festivals, people dance calmly in unison in a circle, with musicians seated in a tower in the center. However, in Tokushima, people dance in small separate groups that parade through the streets, accompanied by musicians playing *kane* (gongs), *taiko* (drums), *fue* (flutes) and *shamisen* (guitar). At times the dance can be very frenzied and acrobatic. Dancers and musicians, including women, men and children, make fun with spectators and invite them to join the dancing. The men, wearing *happi* (short tunics) and white shorts, dance more energetically than the women who are dressed in *yukata* (cotton summer kimonos) and straw hats. The women look like delicate white egrets stepping through a pond.

*Awa Odori* is very popular and draws hundreds of thousands of people from around Japan. Some participants practice all year just to dance in the event. Some groups are very traditional, wearing typical *yukata*; others adopt a more “pop” style, with costumes decorated with metallic silk-screen designs, and using poses from rock or rap bands. Some groups dance for show in front of an audience seated on viewing bleachers; others just dance for pleasure, wandering around at random in the back streets. The event provides traditional, informal fun for everyone, adults and children.

An important contribution to the success of *Awa Odori* is good management by the city authorities. For example the authorities invite dancers to come from all over Japan, provide bleachers for the audience to watch the parades, and close off large parts of the city to traffic so that groups can dance freely.

### Tohno

Tohno city is located in Iwate prefecture in northeastern Japan. Northern Japan is known as the country’s rice bowl, and is also known for its severe winters. Tohno became famous in Japan after ethnologist Kunio Yanagida published his book *Tohno Monogatari* (Tales of Tohno) in 1910, introducing the region’s colorful folk tales and ghost stories.

The region preserves several very old forms of folk dance. One is *Shishi-Odori*, a very energetic jumping dance. It’s a kind of “lion dance” using huge masks that are part-deer, part-lion, and that feature enormous manes made from shaved wood bark.

Another is *Hayachine Kagura*, an ancient masked dance performed at Hayachine Shinto Shrine in the mountains. *Kagura* is a type of dance performed at Shinto shrines. Experts think that *Hayachine Kagura* shows the original form of *Noh* Theater, before it reached the capital of Kyoto and was refined after the 14th century. It has been preserved for centuries by villagers who have their own groups of performers and even a local hereditary iemoto, Mr. Suzuki.

*Shishi-Odori* is still going strong, with groups of young farmers training and dancing at festivals. But the village of Hayachine is aging, and Mr. Suzuki has no heir. The tradition, which has lasted for so long, is in some danger. It was moving to watch Mr. Suzuki, who is very old and had recently had a stroke, put on the mask and dance for us. We could see a world of ancient art that might not survive the modern age.

### Downtown Kabuki

In centuries past there were many traveling Kabuki troupes in Tokyo and in the provinces, but in the early 20th century they were combined into the “Grand Kabuki” based in Tokyo. Grand Kabuki is performed by famous artists in big theaters. The level of art is very high, with large orchestras of traditional instruments, painted stages, brocade costumes, and beautifully made wigs and makeup. The manner of speaking is very stylized, as are many of the movements.

In fact, some of the small *Kabuki* troupes didn't disappear but went "underground" into small theaters in the old downtowns of poorer neighborhoods in Osaka and Tokyo. One of these theaters is the Naniwa Club in the Shinsekai area of Osaka. I went to see a troupe called Hisho.

Unlike at the Grand *Kabuki*, where people sit very quietly and clap politely at the end, the audience for Hisho was lively, eating and drinking, shouting their appreciation, and even tacking wads of ¥10,000 notes onto their favorite actor's kimonos. The Hisho troupe is basically one family, with set pieces performed by the grandfather, grandmother, aunt, father, and even young children. They wore blond wigs, had costumes made of day-glo synthetics, and danced to pop music while lit by strobe lights. It was *Kabuki* adapted to international pop culture.

At the time of its beginnings in the early 1600s, *Kabuki* was the art of the people; the pop culture of its day. Nowadays people think of it as "traditional art," but in Osaka one could see how it grew out of pop culture.

### **Mangkunegaran Palace**

The royal courts of Java preserve a rich tradition of dance, *gamelan* music, costume, textiles, ritual, and philosophical teaching. Their dance is similar to Japanese *Noh* Theater in that the pace is slow and stately, the mood contemplative and abstract. The courts themselves, led by hereditary Sultans, and prizing small but important differences between each other, are similar to Japan's *iemoto* (hereditary schools headed by grand masters).

Of these, Mangkunegaran Palace, a princely house in Solo dating from 1756, is one of the leading centers of traditional performance in Indonesia. Its *pendopo* (open-sided performance hall) is one of the oldest and largest in the country, and its ruling family places much emphasis on preserving old forms of dance and music, and teaching them to Indonesians and foreign students.

I studied in Solo from August 2006 until July 2008, and again from February to July 2011 on the API fellowship, and during those years spent much time viewing performances and studying at Mangkunegaran Palace.

Mangkunegaran's emphasis on tradition is actually an advantage in a globalized age. People around the world want to see the highest and best example of old art forms, and so they are drawn to Mangkunegaran because of its quality. It is proof that something that seems very traditional and local can have an international appeal.

However, it doesn't happen just by accident. Mangkunegaran Palace works hard on outreach to Indonesians and foreigners, including providing public performances on Wednesdays and by organizing the palace-sponsored Mangkunegaran Performing Arts festival.

Mangkunegaran's successful combination seems to be: Within the institution, or internally, it maintains a pride in tradition and an emphasis on high standards.

Externally, it is open to outsiders, eager to teach people from many backgrounds, and willing to experiment.

### **Samwan Tiga Hindu Temple**

*Samwan Tiga* is an ancient Hindu temple in the village of Bedulu, near Ubud in central Bali. Now a lesser-known local site, in the 10th century it was the state temple of the main kingdom of Bali.

Once a year, people from around 12 villages in the vicinity gather for a huge festival. Groups parade from all directions to the temple. Lines of women carry tall offerings of fruit and flowers on their heads, bands of musicians play cymbals and drums, and men carry palanquins with the images of various deities, including Hindu gods such as Shiva and Brahma, Buddhist deities and local spirits. Among the latter are the *barong* (guardian spirits), which can be in the shapes of lions, dragons, or even people, such as the black images of a 10th century Balinese king and his Chinese wife, revered as lords of black magic.

Men dressed in white run in circles through the temple complex, whipping each other with sacred leaves, as elderly women follow them while dancing a very archaic style of Balinese dance. Everywhere there are elaborate flower arrangements and fruit offerings. The thousands of participants are dressed in their best sarongs made from Balinese and Javanese textiles.

Bali is unusual in Indonesia because it resisted the Islamic wave in the 15th century and continues to this day to be a Hindu island. In the 20th century it used tourism to support and internationalize its arts, so that today Balinese dance is perhaps the best-known Indonesian dance worldwide. However, the festival at *Samwan Tiga* is interesting because it is based entirely on religious faith, and not on tourism (most tourists don't even know about it). Importantly, it shows that maintaining a culture is not so difficult; you don't need support from the government or help from outside organizations. Simple faith can preserve cultural traditions. This can be done without modification to fit into modern society or globalization.

### **“In The Arts Island 2011”**

Regional arts festivals are a powerful engine for the globalization of performing arts in Asia. Unlike many other dance events, they are not “tourist shows” with locals dressed up in picturesque costumes dancing traditional showpieces. They focus on creative artists, and try to facilitate cultural exchange between different countries. Arts festivals are venues for premieres of cutting-edge work by creative artists. At arts festivals many students get their first taste of the outside world. Some festivals tour regional towns and villages, so that even villagers are exposed. Meanwhile, the festivals provide visiting artists with a chance to learn about local traditions.

One of the smaller, but most exciting, Indonesian arts festivals is “In The Arts Island 2011,” founded by director Agung Gunawan from Yogyakarta. I joined this festival in July 2011 in its second year. The concept is to foster cooperation be-

tween contemporary dance artists from overseas and artists and artistic traditions of local areas in Indonesia. The festival moves around, presenting the same work in different places.

In 2011 the festival started in Bali and moved to four locations in East Java between 12-20 July. Participant artists came from Australia (Yumi Umiumare, Tony Yap, Ida Lawrence); Malaysia (Kuan Nam); Thailand (Ronnarong Khampha), and Indonesia (Agung Gunawan, Iwan Darmawan, Memet Chairul Slamet, Gita Purnama Kinanthi, I Nyoman Sura, Bagus Budiindarto and Agus Riyanto).

One interesting event was held on 19 July at Punden Mbah Agung/Pujon Malang in East Java. The festival started with the parade of the *bantengang* dance (bull trance dance) in which everyone, including many dance troupes, paraded from village to village from noon until midnight, ending at the tomb of the founder of the first village. Then the action shifted to contemporary work from Thailand, Australia, Malaysia and Indonesia, finishing with improvised dance by local artists, villagers and overseas artists. The event continued on into the night with the bull trance dance.

“In The Arts Island 2011” is a good example of a linking between contemporary artists from overseas and traditions of a particular area in Indonesia. Ranging from village to international – and back again – it was a truly globalized event.

### Workshops, Classes, and Collaborations

#### Workshops and Classes

I stayed for six months each in Japan and in Indonesia to become familiar with the traditional values and techniques of dance and other traditional arts in both countries. In Japan, I studied *Noh* Theater with Tatsushige Udaka of the Kongo School, and *Nihon Buyo* with Senrei Nishikawa of the Nishikawa School. In Indonesia, I attended dance practice at the Mangkunegaran Palace in Solo, and studied Balinese dance with Kadek Dewi Aryani at her studio in Ubud, Bali.

I also conducted workshops to introduce *Lanna* dance to local students. I taught a series of classes in *Lanna* dance at Kyoto Seika University, concluding with a performance in which students danced in costume before an audience. I also taught *Lanna* dance to students at the Institut Seni Indonesia ISI Surakarta in Solo.

Through workshops and classes such as these I had a chance to learn the dance techniques of Japan and Indonesia, and to pass on some of my traditional knowledge to students in both countries.

#### Collaborations

##### a. “Tatsushige to Ronnarong” (22 January 2011)

From August 2010 to January 2011, Tatsushige Udaka and I embarked on six months of study of *Noh*. Beginning with *aisatsu* (greetings), we worked on how to wear the kimono and *hakama* (lower garment), the forms of *Noh* dance, such as *kamae* (basic stance) and *ashi-hakobi* (moving the feet), culminating in the study of

two *shimai* (the dance part of *Noh* Theater) from the plays *Oimatsu* (Ancient Pine) and *Yuki* (Snow).

In *Yuki*, the *kata* (forms) used in the dance are very simple, which makes it suitable for *Noh* beginners. At the same time, the theme (the spirit of snow) makes it a demanding dance, since the actor must express a heart as pure as the spirit of white snow.

Once, in a practice session, I remarked that I finally felt freedom within the totally prescribed forms of *Noh* dance. Tatsushige responded by explaining the concept of “*shu ha ri*.” This was a moment of discovery for the two of us.

*Shu* means “obey;” *ha* means “break;” *ri* means “depart.” First you learn how to obey the rules, but there comes a point where you start to break them, and finally you depart from the rules altogether in order to reach a new level. It describes the process of development as an artist.

Tatsushige says, “*Shu ha ri* is a daily theme for me personally. After you pass through the *ri* of *shu ha ri*, you arrive back to *shu* again... Always changing, it’s a painful and difficult process, but I feel it points to something very deep, essential to art.”

Tatsushige’s *shu, ha, ri* is also a metaphor for the globalization of traditional dance. *Shu* is the traditional forms as they’ve been handed down, *ha* and *ri* are when you break through to contemporary forms. And then you go back to *shu* to get inspiration from the traditional once more.

On the night of 22 January 2011, we held a joint event in the main hall of the historic Honen-In Temple in Kyoto. First we demonstrated the similarities and differences between *Noh* and *Lanna*; and then we showed the audience something of *Noh* training. At the end, I performed the *shimai* (dance part) of *Yuki* four times: once properly, as taught; the second time, “breaking” by adding some *Lanna* feeling; the third time “departing” by making it mostly *Lanna* with some *Noh* feeling. And then a fourth time, I performed in complete *Noh* costume with a mask in front of the Buddha; back to *shu*, the original form again. It was a merging of two traditions that is only possible in our globalized world. But it wasn’t just “mix and match.” While sharing, we each preserved the essential core of our own traditions.

**b. “Rianto to Ronnarong,” 30 June 2011**

The aim of this performance was similar to that of “Tatsushige to Ronnarong.” This time it was collaboration between me and Rianto, the Javanese dancer from Banyumas, who I have known and worked with since 2006.

In this event, performed at the Tidak Sekedar Tari Program at TBS (Cultural Center of Central Java), Solo, we developed the *shu ha ri* concept in a different way. We began on opposite parts of the stage dancing in our traditional styles (*shu* – “obey”). When we became close to each other, we explained to the audience our styles and

how we use them to create contemporary dance (*ha* – “break”). We then danced together in contemporary style (*ri* – “depart”). At the end, we crossed to the opposite side of the stage to where we started, and danced our traditional styles again (back to *shu* again). The challenge was for us to show contemporary dance together and in the process to return to the origin of dance that transcends both genres.

An important part of the event was talking with the audience at the end of the program. In the strongly artistic society of Solo, criticism from the audience is useful for artists in order to develop their work. When the experience and knowledge of the individual artists are different, this can make for a conflict of ideas, but it is also a starting point of conversation and discussion.

Many audience members said that it was interesting to see the differences and similarities between Javanese and *Lanna* culture, and how we developed traditional forms into contemporary dance. However, some people said it didn’t feel so much like a dance “performance” as a “workshop” on stage.

The critics were probably right because contemporary experiments like ours are in a sense “workshops.” Artists are feeling their way, experimenting as they go. In this case, it was a combination of three cultures: a Japanese concept, *Lanna* dance, and Javanese dance.

### c. *Kembang Kapas*

I first met singer Peni Candra Rini at the APPEX (Asian Pacific Performing Exchange) program held in Bali in February 2010. Born in 1983 in Tulungagung in East Java, Peni is a composer and well-known *sindhen* (a female singer who sings with a *gamelan*). Peni has received awards for her work and participates in many festivals, collaborating with different artists from all over the world.

In February 2011 I had a conversation with Peni in which we said that we would like to create a collaboration piece featuring music and dance. We started to work on this project, with each of us working from our own traditional base. The performance was held at the Theater Kecil ISI Surakarta in Solo on 11 July 2011. The title *Kembang Kapas* meant “cotton flowers,” which are the flowers of life. It was inspired by a poem “*Kembang Kapas*” by Garin Nugroho, an Indonesian artist and movie director. Peni wrote and sang the music, which was traditional Javanese-modern fusion; I did the choreography, which was *Lanna*-contemporary fusion.

Peni said, “We’re all of the new generation that can enjoy Facebook and use Skype to talk with friends in other countries. But we are also very lucky that we know about traditional arts. I am a *sindhen* singer; I was famous for my voice and almost became a pop singer and a star in Jakarta. But I decided to be a teacher to teach students how to sing traditional music. It makes only small money, but I’m so happy that I can help to pass on our traditional music and at the same time I can work on creating new music based on that tradition I have within me. Amen!”

## Conclusion

In the 21st century, Asian dance traditions are at a turning point. Some traditions will probably be lost, such as the knowledge of the old *Hayachine Kagura* dancer Mr. Suzuki in the town of Tohno. But in the same area, the *Shishi-Odori* dance is healthy, and continues with the young generation. The key to survival is the ability to make dance attractive to, and taught to, young people, and not only the property of the old.

In Bali, the strong Hindu beliefs of the people ensure traditions are passed from generation to generation in local ceremonies such as the festival at Samwan Tiga temple.

In Osaka, “Downtown Kabuki” connects with audiences by bringing in “pop” elements. In Tokushima, good city management of the *Awa Odori* Festival helps to make the event fun and popular.

The “In The Arts Island 2011” festival in Bali and East Java has succeeded because of the open-mindedness of the local artists and audiences, including villagers. Performing arts in Mangkunegaran Palace thrive because the palace has pride in its tradition, promotes the arts, and teaches to local and international students.

For some artists the challenges are more difficult than for others. *Noh* Theater has elements that make it feel very modern and abstract, so it should be easy to use it in contemporary work. However, a young actor like Tatsushige Udaka under the control of the *Iemoto* system must be very careful. He cannot do anything too adventurous, too suddenly.

Other artists, such as half-Japanese, half-Swiss Heidi Durning in Kyoto, are relatively free to do what they want, but they find it difficult to be entirely accepted in local society.

Peni, Rianto, and Mugiyono represent different aspects of Indonesia’s very active performance world. Peni uses avant-garde composing and singing; Rianto travels between Japan and Solo; Mugiyono performs in arts festivals worldwide. All three are succeeding in bringing their traditional arts into the modern world and appealing to new audiences.

These are all examples of what I saw during my one year of research: how performers and institutions manage to continue traditional dance in interesting ways in order to survive in a borderless modern world.

For myself, I took up the challenge of fusion and modernization through collaborative performances with *Noh* actor Tatsushige in “Tatsushige to Ronnarong,” with Javanese dancer Rianto in “Rianto to Ronnarong,” and with Javanese singer and composer Peni Candra Rini in “Kembang Kapas.”

The benefit was not only in the performances that we created, but in the time we spent working together, exchanging our cultures through dance. Through these connections we are building a network in the Asian dance world, and we will continue this in our own countries through performances, by giving dance workshops, and by giving presentations around Asia and beyond.

This kind of collaboration is not a new thing. But in a time of globalization when traditional arts are under threat, it is important to show how we can develop traditional arts, and bring them alive in the contemporary world.

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# Case Studies

- Rural to Urban Culture Programs –  
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# Rural to Urban Culture Programs – *Implementation Insights*

Barbara Bauer<sup>+</sup> (Myanmar)

## **Abstract**

Partnership for Change (PfC) provides programs and assistance to both urban and rural Myanmar communities to improve the economic and social opportunities for local business and community leaders. The PfC support model builds skills that lead to new economic options, especially for young adults starting new social enterprise ventures. An important aspect of the PfC community engagement model is the recognition and support of the arts and culture of the community. In both rural and urban Myanmar, PfC programs for art, music, and cultural literacy and heritage surround the practical skill building efforts, and enhance the vitality of the community. Pilot programs in smaller towns provide learning opportunities to refine and improve programs before broader implementation in more expensive urban settings. PfC programs include specific music, art, literature, and cultural heritage programs, and the connections and integration between the programs demonstrate the positive benefits from the approach.

**Keywords:** *Culture, Economic Development, Urban, Rural, Myanmar*

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## Introduction

Myanmar is emerging from decades of repressive government. The country has a rich heritage of literature, dance, art and music, but many traditional forms of culture have not received support for decades. Partnership for Change (PfC) provides programs and assistance to both urban and rural communities in Myanmar to improve the economic opportunities. The PfC model for community support builds skills that lead to new options, especially for the young adults in the community through new social enterprise ventures. An important aspect of the PfC community engagement model is the recognition and support of the arts and culture of the community. In both rural and urban Myanmar, PfC programs for art, music, and cultural literacy and heritage surround the practical skill building efforts, and enhance the vitality of the community. Pilot programs in smaller towns provide learning opportunities to refine and improve programs before broader implementation in more expensive urban settings. PfC programs will include specific urban music, art, literature, and cultural heritage programs in both urban and rural, and the connections and integration between the programs demonstrate the positive benefits from the approach.

This paper describes culture programs that start as activities in non-urban settings and then the insights gained are applied to more expensive and complicated urban settings. These programs result from practical community driven requirements and requests, and are not research projects per se. Therefore the author asks for an understanding that this is a description of activities that seem to have benefit, and would perhaps have some interest in the more rigorous academic community.

## What is Partnership for Change?

Partnership for Change is a Norwegian organization that envisions a world of 9 billion people who can live within the limits of the planet. The mission of Partnership for Change (PfC) is to inspire and enable local change makers to achieve global change. PfC uses four approaches to achieve this global change:

- Programs to empower local communities
- Partnerships to extend and leverage local projects
- Access to knowledge and tools that work
- Participation in arenas to contribute and collaborate with others

Partnership for Change implements programs in several areas in Myanmar:

- Yangon – women’s entrepreneurship, community education and culture programs
- Inle Lake – entrepreneurship, environment, community education and culture programs
- Chin State – community education
- Kachin State – endangered species research and conservation

The typical population for PfC programs is the young adults of Myanmar seeking job skills, business opportunities, and willing to work toward preserving their heritage and their environment.

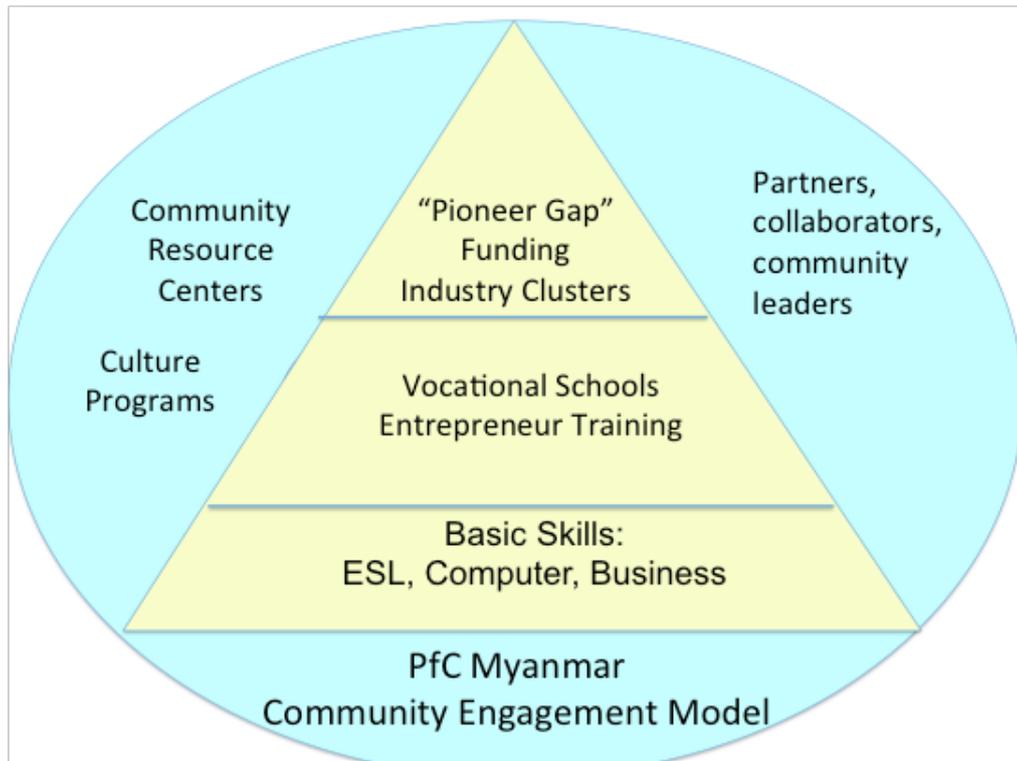


Figure 1. PFC Myanmar Community Engagement Model.

#### Rural or Non-Urban Culture Programs

PfC started in early 2013 in the southern Shan state in a beautiful lake area, rich in culture and ethnic diversity. The early programs were very practical, skill building programs that had great community support and were tailored to the community schedules and activities. For example, the first project was a hospitality vocational school situated on a beautiful area of the lake providing basic restaurant and hotel skills for 40 impoverished students each year. The school also includes a restaurant and a set of six bungalows, all up to international standards and with architecture and décor that represents the local traditions. This school provides cultural training in addition to the hospitality skills. Another early program is an immersion program for English as a Second Language. In addition to the expected program of grammar, vocabulary, and conversation, the students – as part of their skill building – produce an informal talent show with music and dance performances – traditional and contemporary.

In the Inle Lake area, PfC supports a unique project, “Inle Speaks”. This is a community resource center to help focus efforts to learn about the environment and to provide solutions for environmental and cultural heritage. This center hosts informal art and culture projects, including the following:

- The Scream from Nature with Solar Lamps – this project invited a Norwegian artist, Lise Wulff, the founder of the “Scream from Nature” art program in Norway, with a solar lamp manufacturer to work with more than 100 school children from the Mein Tauck Orphanage School to do a solar lamp project.

The children first collected trash from around the lake and formed it into a scream, then in the evening, they placed lamps into a “scream” shape and one by one picked up the lamps and carried them onto the lake.

- The Inle Speaks wall mural – two community art projects with children were used to create vibrant wall murals on the back wall of the Inle Speaks building to illustrate how the environment challenges impact the lake.
- Music instruments and uniforms – Ms. Ingrid Stange donated new music instruments and uniforms for the student marching band at the local Nyaung Shwe school.

In the coming 2015 year, Partnership for Change and Inle Speaks plan to support the new traditional Inle Music festival, collaborate on a Shan “Culture House” renovation project, and a “Green School” pilot for bamboo architecture.



Figure 2. Children painting an environmental art wall mural at Inle Speaks, Nyaung Shwe.



Figure 3. Participants from the Pa O tribe ready to perform a traditional dance at the summer ESL Immersion program.

### What Did We Learn From the “Non-urban” Projects?

- Finding the right community partners – relationships with local organizations take time to research and develop.
- Working with official organizations and shadow organizations – Myanmar has very complex official agencies and structures, and sometimes the decision and approval processes are very long and involve unanticipated groups or organizations.
- Estimating budgets – budgets need to include the activities involved in partnerships and collaborations, and the intense social nature of Myanmar partnerships.
- Sharing the joy and appreciation of art, literature and music builds community trust – one of the best ways to build relationships and trust in the community is to help performers and enjoy their art and performances
- Developing patience and persistence – be prepared for setbacks and other difficulties, keep a firm focus and be very polite and gracious, but very persistent.

### How Do We Plan to Use These Experiences to Implement Urban Art and Culture Programs?

2014 was a year of getting to know people active in the art and culture organizations in Yangon. The city has many resources; many skilled performers and many different organizations contribute to the rich and diverse cultural heritage of Myanmar. PFC is gradually meeting, contributing to small art exhibits and events, and learning about the communities of writers, artists, musicians, and performers. With small steps to help existing galleries and exhibits, PFC is building a reputation for “informed helping” and an interest in appreciating what already exists and already works.

During 2015, PFC will continue this relationship building and small-scale support activities. In addition, through collaboration with Hedda Foundation, PFC will support additional urban cultural events, including the rebuilding of the current Gitameit music school. PFC will partner with an urban art gallery to host one or more “urban scream” projects.

PfC is analyzing a request for help to start a “pop-up literary café” using inexpensive pick up trucks to explore whether a physical Literary Café is feasible in the downtown or University area. A very important focus for the PFC cultural support in 2015 is to learn about the “cultural economy” – how the writers, artists, musicians, and performers actually start and sustain business and revenue streams.

An example of a small culture project in 2014 was the PFC sponsorship of a Textile Exhibit at the downtown Yangon River Ayeyarwaddy Art gallery in December. The Founder of the gallery, Ma Phyu Ei Thein, was also a winner in the November Social Entrepreneurship competition at Myanmar Women’s Entrepreneurship Day, also sponsored by PFC.

Myanmar has a very strong literary tradition and writers, poets, dramatists and journalists are now active in Yangon, Mandalay and other cities. There are few

places for literary communities to gather and participate in readings and reviews of their work. A request under consideration is to support a “Pop-Up Literary Café”, that would host small street gatherings in central Yangon, using rented trucks, sound equipment and catered food and beverage service. These events will be started with one small pilot pop-up café to assess interest, followed by additional events in other areas of the city.

The Hedda Foundation, founded by Geir Johnson, plans to develop a literature café using a heritage building in a downtown area.



Figure 4. Ma Phyu Ei Thein at River Ayeyarwaddy Gallery.

#### Insights About How to Succeed?

From the non-urban small programs, and the small projects starting in Yangon, these are the insights about how to succeed with larger, more complex and expensive projects:

- Get to know the relevant “community” – in the urban Yangon area, this is a lengthy process, and for any specific project involves multiple organizations, and different leaders and decision processes.
- Mobilize people and resources – start with a small project that is a priority to the relevant “community”, build trust and expertise on resources, find allies and advocates – both public and private sector.
- Seed support from diverse, non-traditional partners
  - As an example, PfC programs for entrepreneurs led to relationships in the tech incubator space in Yangon; environmental art programs led to experts in film and music for other programs.
- Build trust among partners – always under promise and over deliver.
- Look at informal opportunities to build knowledge, skills and expertise.

### Conclusion

In complex and challenging situations such as the urban core of Myanmar, it is sensible to learn about the bureaucracy in less chaotic locales. Pfc has successfully done small projects in “non-urban” areas and is now ready to apply those learnings to the complex opportunities of Yangon.



Figure 5. The painter's table at Inle Speaks, Nyaung Shwe.

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# Contemporary Textiles for Urban Living –

*Patterns Derived from Thailand's  
Lanna Culture*

Jaipak Burapajatana<sup>+</sup> & Porsanong Wongsingthong<sup>++</sup> (Thailand)

## Abstract

This research project aimed to establish guidelines to develop traditional woven textiles in the *Tai Yuan* and *Tai Lue* style which is a renowned heritage art form from Thailand's *Lanna* region for incorporation into contemporary living spaces. First, the unique characteristics of *Tai Yuan* and *Tai Lue* weaving were determined by specialists. Their analysis revealed that the uniqueness of *Lanna* textiles were the result of the combination of weaving techniques, materials, colors and patterns. Secondly, a survey of preferences for culture-based textile products was conducted by consumer orientated questionnaires administered to elicit contemporary pattern preferences. This survey revealed that respondents preferred culture-based textile products made in a modern style with contemporary patterns. With these findings of consumer preferences and the study of the characteristics of *Lanna* textiles the author designed new patterns and applied them to a sample collection of decorative products for living rooms.

**Keywords:** *Textile Design, Lanna Weaving, Tai Yuan, Tai Lue, Pattern Development, Contemporary Textiles*

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## Introduction

*Lanna*, which literally means “a million rice fields,” refers to the region encompassing the *Golden Triangle* area of present day Thailand, Laos and Myanmar. There, the *Lanna* civilization and the Kingdom of *Lanna* flourished for hundreds of years until the early 20th century when it was annexed by the Kingdom of Siam (Siam is the historical name of Thailand). The *Lanna* region refers the region encompassing Thailand’s provinces of Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Lampoon, Lampang, Payao, Prae, Nan and Mae Hong Song.

Studies of *Lanna* textiles by Prangwatanakun and Cheesman (1987) revealed that *Tai Yuan* and *Tai Lue* refers to the major tribes in the *Lanna* area. Additionally, the research by Silpakorn University (2001) on “Local Woven Textiles: Research of the Maker and Development Project of Local Textiles” of all provinces in Northern Thailand concluded that the problem in enhancing development of local textiles came from the lack of market potential, new patterns and new products.

The author of “Developing the Woven Textiles of Northern Thailand into International products” by Boonthin Indaritt (2005) held that the uniqueness of Northern Thailand’s textiles could be developed into renowned products.

According to “The Incorporation of Thai Textiles Products Into Contemporary Designs” by Sarasarin Pitrapai (2002), The *Chok* pattern of weaving from the *Tai Yuan* community of the Rajburi province were derived using art theory techniques. The original patterns were re-sized and separated into small patterns or filled with different colors in order to achieve a more three-dimensional effect giving the original a more contemporary style based on their traditional patterns.

Figure. 1 illustrates the samples of *Lanna* woven textiles of conventional style and pattern that were fashioned into various products. It is their unique patterns that gives the traditional *Lanna* woven textiles a national heritage status.



Figure 1. Left, a wall painting in Ching Mai’s Viharn Lai Kham of the Phra Singh temple illustrating a *Tai Yuan* woman donning a horizontal-striped tube skirt and a shawl. (Thai Textiles: Threads of a Cultural Heritage, 1996: 52). Right, a wall painting in Nan’s Phu Min temple in the late 19th Century depicting *Lanna* people in their traditional clothing (Thai Textiles: Threads of a Cultural Heritage, 1996:62).



Figure 2. Left, traditional *Lanna* banners (Tung) at Lamphum's Phrat Hariphunchai temple (Exceptional Woven Beauty: Masterpieces from The Bank of Thailand Textiles Museum, 2010:53). Right, the Sali (futon) - folded, Pha lop (bedsheets) and pillows of *Tai Yuan* and *Tai Lue* woven textiles (*Lanna Textiles Yuan Lue Lao*, 1987:88).

According to a consumer survey on textile product preferences conducted by the author, there is an increase in preferences for cultural products and elements to be reflected in a modern or contemporary style. A study by the Kasikorn Research Center ([www.kasikornresearch.com](http://www.kasikornresearch.com)) reported that the changing of lifestyles and the escalating numbers of single-family homes and population growth in South-east Asian countries including Thailand) during the last 3-5 years has resulted in increasing demands for residential furnishings and home decorations.

From the aforementioned research, the author decided to extend the *Lanna* classical forms and unique textile patterns by creating modern and contemporary patterns and products for residential decors.

### Research Methodology

#### Part 1. Characteristics of *Lanna* Textiles

The unique character of *Lanna* textiles was analyzed from samples of woven textiles from the *Tai Yuan* and *Tai Lue* communities during the early 25th Buddhist Era (100 to 150 years ago). As no original ancient woven textiles of *Tai Yuan* and *Tai Lue* remain nowadays, samples of those original textiles which were taken into the analysis were obtained from available photograph images which appeared in reliable publications.

Seventy sample images of ancient woven textiles of *Tai Yuan* and *Tai Lue* origin were selected by the author utilizing the Purpose Quota Sampling technique (Krejcie, Robert V. and Morgan W. 1970). These samples were analyzed by three experts in *Tai Yuan* woven textiles and two expert weavers familiar with *Tai Lue* textiles.

The opinions and comments from the specialists were obtained by in-depth interviews and questionnaires. The images were analyzed by means of Index of Congruence (IOC) in order to obtain a conclusion on the uniqueness in these *Lanna* textiles.

The questions for the specialists were: (a) Which textile products has uniqueness?, (b) What was the unique technique used?, (c) What were the materials used?, (d) Which pattern(s) indicates the uniqueness of *Lanna* weaving?, (e) What location is the origin of those patterns?, (f) What are most frequently used colors?

## Part 2. Consumers' Preferences in Textile Products

Research was conducted through questionnaires given to 100 residents in the *Lanna* region and 100 residents in Bangkok. The questionnaires were structured as multiple choice questions. The responses were analyzed by means of the Descriptive Statistic method and the average percentage statistic in order to obtain the preferences of consumers in regard to *Lanna* textile residential products.

### Background Research

The unique characteristics of *Lanna* woven textiles are the result of the choices made in their weaving techniques, materials, colors and patterns as shown in Figure.2 and 3.



Figure 2. Top left, the various patterns of *Tai Yuan's* tube skirts (*Pha Sin Tin Chok*) are from the *Kom* pattern resulting from the *Chok* technique. (Thai Textiles: Threads of a Cultural Heritage, 1996:53).

Top right, *Tai Lue's* *Tungs* (temple banners) with imaginary patterns using the *Chok* and *Khit* techniques. (Cultural Heritage of *Tai Lue* Textiles, 2008:114).

Bottom left, a pattern from a *Tai Lue* tube skirt by created by the *Ko*, *Chok* techniques. (Cultural Heritage of *Tai Lue* Textiles, 2008:57).

Bottom right, patterns on a traditional *Tai Yuan* tube skirt made by *Chok* techniques. (Exceptional Woven Beauty: Masterpieces from The Bank of Thailand Textiles Museum, 2010:174).



Figure 3. Left, tube skirts and right pillows from *Tai Yuan* woven textiles from Mae Chaem district, Chiang Mai province.

The characteristics of *Lanna* textiles are as follows:

1. *Chok*, *Khit*, and *Ko* are names of some of the weaving methods. The *Chok* weaving method appears in fabric of traditional tube skirts known as *Pha Sin Tin Chok* in the *Tai Yuan* community. *Khit* and *Chok* weaving methods appears in the temple banners (*Tungs*) while the *Ko* and *Chok* weaving technique appears in tube skirts of the *Tai Lue* tribe.
2. In regard to materials, most *Lanna* textiles are primarily made of cotton and threads of silk silver, and gold are added during weaving for fabrics used during special occasions.
3. The standard colors of *Lanna* textiles are yellow, red and black, while in the *Tai Yuan* fabrics they are yellow, red and blue. Most *Tai Lue* patterns are comprised of red and black.
4. Colors and patterns of textiles in the *Lanna* region are typically connected to religious beliefs. Patterns of *Tai Yuan* textiles were derived from a combination of the *Kom* pattern with the *Kum*, *Hong Nok*, *Nam Ton* and *Hang Sa Pao* patterns. *Tai Yuan* patterns appeared on the *Pha Sin Tin Chok* (a traditional tube skirt). *Tai Lue* textiles include the appearance in geometrical motifs, mythical animals floral depictions.

### Consumer Research

The research findings on the preference of consumers aged between 28 and 44 whom expressed interest in textile products for living room decor revealed the following:

1. 73% of the respondents in Chiang Mai and 81% of those in Bangkok preferred textile products made with easy-care materials with a natural feel.
2. 71% of the respondents in Chiang Mai and 67% of those in Bangkok preferred textile products which have an affordable price.
3. 62% of the respondents in Chiang Mai and 70% of those in Bangkok preferred textile products containing vivid colors.

4. 69% of the respondents in Chiang Mai and 75% of those in Bangkok preferred modern styled patterns for textile products.
5. 76% of the respondents in Chiang Mai and 81% of those in Bangkok preferred contemporary *Lanna* textile products more than the original *Lanna* products.
6. 74% of the respondents in Chiang Mai and 79% of those in Bangkok preferred either the Mix & Match style, Contemporary Style or Retro Style in living room decor.

### Patterns Created for Living Room Products

From the research it was found that consumers in Bangkok and Chiang Mai, preferred contemporary styled products made from easy-to-care-for materials with a natural feel and sold at an affordable price.

Following the research on the uniqueness of *Lanna* textile patterns they were altered to be used in conjunction with contemporary styled items for modern interiors. The color pallets used in these designs followed those from the Thai Creativity & Design Center – TCDC’s ([www.tcdc.or.th](http://www.tcdc.or.th)) publication titled “Trends of Design Spring – Summer 2012” which was based on their own survey of consumer preferences.

The resulting patterns were applied to textile products intended for living rooms of families consisting of two to five members. These new textile patterns were utilized in living room wall decorations and furnishings such as sofas, arm chairs, cushions, lamps, and coffee tables. They were grouped into sample collections named following the TCDC publication mentioned above as follows:

- *Local Culture* – whose emphasis is on local handicrafts, simplicity and traditionalism.
- *Positive Thinking* – whose focus is on nature, simplicity, delicacy and fluidity.
- *New Definition of Normal* – whose focus is on simplification, naturalism and technology. (Thailand Creative & Design Center: TCDC. “Trends of Design Spring – Summer 2012).

The created patterns were digitally printed on commercially produced canvas and satin fabrics which provided a natural feel for the former and a soft feel for the latter. The digital outlines were extracted from the original *Lanna* patterns and were arranged into free form compositions by using various perspective and visual techniques such as overlap, warping, extension, dimensional shifts and optical illusion. Some utilized the original *Lanna* colors and others the ones from the 2012 TCDC publication as shown in figures 4 – 8.

The living room decor product collections were publicly exhibited in the Museum Hall of Chulalongkorn University from March 20th through and April 10th 2013 where visitor’s opinions were collected. In general, visitors viewed these modern derivative designs based on the *Lanna* weaving traditions in a positive light.



Figure 4. Wall decoration made from textiles from Mae Chaem district, Chiang Mai province.



Figure 5. *Tai Lue* woven tube skirts from Ban Sri Don Chai district, Chiang Rai province.



Figure 6. The original pattern was rearranged resulting in a flowing free form according to local cultural trends by overlapping and rotation, but still retains the traditional red, black and yellow colors.



Figure 7. Original colors were replaced with a vivid pallet following the *positive thinking* trend resulting in framed artwork decorations.

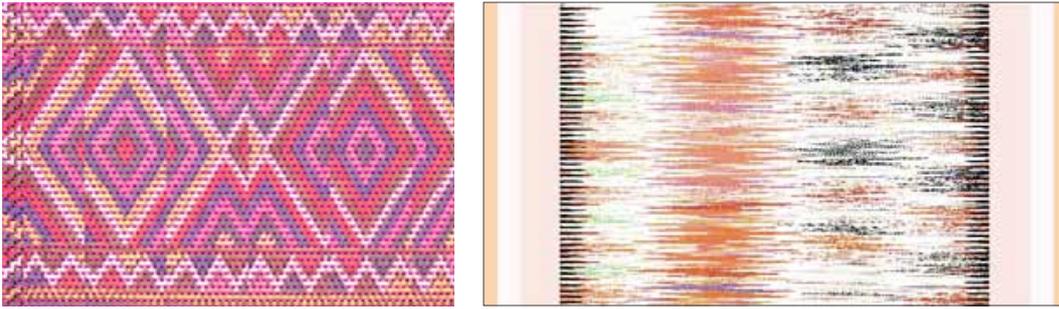


Figure 8. Left, details of the pattern were reduced and rearranged to make better visual sense of the textile with vivid colors following the *Positive Thinking* trend. Right, the original pattern was rearranged according to new definition following the *New Normal* trend.

### Design Collection

Following the textile patterns developed from the research as shown above, the below are sample living room collections following the trends from 2012 TCDC publication integrated with the respondent's preferences from the author's consumer survey questionnaire.



Figure 9. Collection Retro - *Lanna* Style, Concept of design: To bring graphic illusion patterns from Op Art into a Retro style while maintaining the traditional *Lanna* pallet.



Figure 10. Collection Contemporary - *Lanna* style, Concept of design: To create a contemporary style according to the *New Definition of Normal* whose focus is on simplification.



Figure 11. Collection Mix & Match – *Lanna* Style, Concept of design: Take the style of local decoration in combination with the *New Definition of Normal* to derive beauty handcraft origins with materials produced by modern technology for affordability.



Figure 12. Collection Mix & Match - *Lanna* Style, Concept of design: To combine gentle and simple from the *Positive Thinking* trend to create a warm and relaxing atmosphere by using light, transparent fabric (lamp shades) and a vivid color pallet.

### Conclusion

The research findings revealed that original woven patterns from *Lanna* traditional textiles could be successfully applied to contemporary furnishings and stylized for modern residential living by following 2012 product design trends. The unique patterns of the original weavings were extracted, digitized, rearranged and applied to a variety shapes while costs were contained through digital reproduction and printing on commercially available fabrics. Together these elements allowed the proposed furnishings to meet the preferences and budget of present-day consumers as the publicly displayed sample collections were met with a general level of approval in it migration of traditional *Lanna* pattern into contemporary homes.

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# Conference Reports

- Urban Cultures at the Crossroads –  
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Dubrovnik September 2015  
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- The Human Face of Radicalization –  
Fuuse Forum  
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Traditional Music – ICTM  
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Kjell Skyllstad Editor in Chief

# Urban Cultures at the Crossroads – *Interuniversity Center, Dubrovnik September 2015*

Kjell Skyllstad<sup>+</sup> Editor in Chief

Urban cultures are increasingly constituted at the crossroads of cultures, religions, and ideologies at the local, regional, national and global levels. Intensified global interconnectedness can potentially open up and enrich the diversification of urban cultures. However, researchers, activists and artists have increasingly observed how conflicting agendas of development, conservation and urban planning amongst different interest groups are contributing towards growing dissatisfaction of urban life and culture across the globe. This brings attention to the importance of broadening the understanding of the complex socio-cultural, political, economic and environmental interrelationships and challenges we are faced with today.

It was with special anticipation that a group of 30 researchers and activists met at the Dubrovnik Interuniversity Center on September 14, 2015 to rethink and develop more sustainable ways of planning our city spaces, necessitated by rapidly increasing urbanization worldwide. For those of us who had been following the activities at the IUC since the early days when the center functioned as an east-west meeting place for free and unfettered discussion it was with special pleasure to see this function of intercultural debates renewed and expanded to include urban cultural and social issues.

<sup>+</sup> Dr. Kjell Skyllstad, Professor Emeritus, University of Oslo, Department of Musicology, Norway.

Responding to the tendency of excluding democratic, grass-roots participation in urban planning and development, many recent case-studies indicate that citizenship groups and NGO's seeking common ground have succeeded in exploring and finding alternative and creative solutions to urban challenges. Some ideas and projects initiated at the grass-roots level have furthermore found resonance and support amongst city managers and have met the aspirations of the general public. In some research environments in cities like Bangkok, Osaka, Zagreb and Dubrovnik the cultural sectors of art and music have furthermore been able to contribute to such explorations in fruitful ways. Representing the arts sector were Amra Toska from the Academy of Music in Sarajevo, showing how the polyphonic traditions of rural singing serving regional identity and social cohesion differ from the urban lyrical monologues of the Sevdalinka love songs. Muhamed Tufekcic presented and demonstrated regional Balkan folk dances while Marie Ingand focused on how arabic philosophy, science and the arts in cities like Bagdad and Damascus prepared a fertile ground for the cultural flowering on European soil in the medieval city of Granada. Christina Kobb of the Norwegian Academy of Music referred to the rich instrumental culture of 19th century Vienna, ending with a few suggestions on how to bring classical music back to a broader audience.

There are many conceivable ways and media in which one can approach urban culture research and tangible and intangible spheres of intervention and cultural forms. In her talk on Norwegian theatrical art at the crossroads of the urban and the regional Hilde Kvam of the Norwegian University of Science and Technology described the process of cultural democratization that led to a flowering of theatre culture in her native Norway.

From a social sciences perspective topics explored included:

'To what extent and in which ways can urban grass-roots initiatives contribute towards a paradigmatic change away from the dominant neo-liberal, capitalistic logic which govern most urban habitats?'

'Where and how can individuals and groups find the spaces for adopting sustainable and alternative livelihoods and life-styles within contemporary urban contexts?'

Sandra Uskokovic (The University of Dubrovnik) and Boris Bakal (Shadow casters, Zagreb) presented their comprehensive research project Urban Hum (see separate report) while Celine Motzfeldt Loades (University of Oslo) presented Social change and Urban development in UNESCO-listed Dubrovnik pointing to the local challenges of urban depopulation, cultural commercialization, homogenization and 'museumification' of Dubrovnik's historic center. Other Balkan related themes were Socially engaged architectural practice in Montenegro ( Tatjana Rajic, Kotor Center for Sustainable Spatial development), Rethinking Prishtina (Eliza Hoxha Faculty of Architecture, Prishtina) Skopje 2014: Hegemonic and speculative urban narratives ( Ivana Sidzimovska, Faculty of Design, Bauhaus University, Weimar) Dalibor Prancevic, Department of Art History, University of Split reported on the

artistic activism of the Contemporary Art Association KVART and its close relationship with the local community while Filip Jovanski from the Faculty of Fine Arts in Skopje brought up the issue of erasing buildings and rebuilding in styles against public will.

Similar concerns were voiced by Agata Ruchliewicz - Dziańach, Academy of Fine Arts, Gdansk, Poland who asks Can urban interventions at the first stage be based on citizens interactions more than on costly operations and large-scale investments? Christian Frost of Birmingham City University investigating the relationship between architecture and ritual in late medieval Florence asks whether the near total eradication of civic ceremony in Europe today has contributed to the increasing isolation, segregation and violence often encountered in modern European cities. Michael Dring of Birmingham City University likewise noticing that postwar urban development often was driven by post-war reconstruction through acts of creative destruction showed how the material infrastructure is implicated in the sociality and identity of the city.

Michael Wimmer of the Vienna Institute for Cultural Policy and Management EDUCULT reminds us of the fact that more than 50 % of the pupils in primary schools in Vienna have a migrant background and that in fact Vienna for centuries has been a multi-ethnic city, which is easily forgotten in the debate about the interculturality of European capitals and insufficiently reflected in present cultural policy. This was supported by Najah Alwi of the University of Nottingham, England in her ethnographic exploration of social life in megacity Jakarta, asking for city administrators to always be responsive to the needs of the people through preserving and enlarging green spaces and providing a number of social benefits hitherto unrecognized. Morida Siagan from the University of Sumatera Utara, reporting on her research study on interethnic habitations in a district of Medan found that while some traditions gradually disappear, social relationships between the communities have successfully generated new social spaces that strengthen the vibrance of the city today.

Although there are a numerous other perspectives on how to accommodate for sustainable futures of urban life and cultures, there seems to be a large degree of consensus about what are the necessary goals. In order to address the pressing challenges of a rapidly globalizing world we need to reopen our cities as living, communicative spaces, bringing into our lives a sense of residing together in shared spaces. We need to re-envision the urban fabrics as constituting of living, thriving and sustainable communities. The UN Post-2015 Agenda calls for a new participatory and collaborative effort in studying and consequently making informed recommendations and decisions about our future course. Recognizing these pressing needs the organizers invite researchers, practitioners, politicians, students, activists and artists to collaborate in the quest for a sustainable urban future and by participating in our conferences. We encourage participants to meet again at the Interuniversity Center on September 19 - 23, 2016 for the conference on Cities at Risk- from Humiliation to Dignity and to contribute with their own fruitful research questions and perspectives on how to achieve sustainable

urban futures. Cooperating with the leadership of the Inter-university Centre in Dubrovnik, conferences focusing on urban culture studies are being planned as annual occurrences.

# The Human Face of Radicalization – *Fuuse Forum, Oslo September 2015*

Kjell Skyllstad<sup>+</sup> Editor in Chief

How can we defuse our urban time bombs in a time of increasing threats of urban violence and terrorism? Is stricter police and military surveillance and severe legislation our only protective weapons? How can we prevent our urban youth from falling prey to brainwashing extremists promising honor and fortune in the service of criminal regimes home and abroad?

In her new documentary *Jihad* the award winning Pakistani-Norwegian documentary filmmaker and founder of Fuuse – Deeyah Khan sought to seek out and engage with the threat of radicalization of young Muslims living in England and France.

“While filming Fuuse’s new documentary *Jihad*, I spent over two years working with men and women who had been part of extremist organizations and found their personal journeys into violent extremism were often triggered by vulnerabilities such as life crises, disengagement, disagreements with family, and unfulfilled ambitions. I found that just as cults and gangs provide a sense of purpose and camaraderie, so does the religious extremism address the psychological and emotional needs of our young people. We must ask why the personal and emotional needs of a minority have been unfulfilled in such a way as to leave them vulnerable to radicalization and extremism”

<sup>+</sup> Dr. Kjell Skyllstad, Professor Emeritus, University of Oslo, Department of Musicology, Norway.

Among the Forum speakers was Alyas Karmani, who left the world of reactionary Islam to become an Imam and Co-Director of STREET-UK, providing violence prevention counseling, tackling criminality gang involvement, sexual violence, social exclusion and violent extremism.

Among the woman speakers was Yasmin Mulbocus, a former recruit of a banned extremist group in the UK, who recently has worked her way back into society and assisting local governments in providing workshops and training to establish resilience against violent extremism. She now works at an organization which focuses on dissuading young people from joining extremist groups like IS.

Among the invited specialists and researchers there was a unanimous opinion about the social background for extremism and the way to counteract its disastrous effects. Brainwashing is often the result of cracks in the surrounding social and political system, making youth think of themselves as losers. Violent political movements move in, promising to lift youth up, exploiting young men's masculine idealization of bravery and both genders thirst for adventure. With superior psychological intuition IS moves in with its recruiters and social media messages addressing each individual personally, promising a way from humiliation to dignity. In the final end violence is seen as a matter of moral virtue, as a debt owed to society for taking care, and as a way to eternal glory.

This is the human face of radicalization. Do we have the vision, will and resources to form the partnerships needed to respond through humanizing our own society?

# Music and Ecology

*International Council for  
Traditional Music – ICTM  
Ljubljana August 2015*

Kjell Skyllstad<sup>+</sup> Editor in Chief

Societies in ecological balance attach great importance to the role of artistic activities in their effort to maintain their ecosystems. These activities also function to reinforce ethnic identity and social integration. Throughout the long history of human existence it is through this ongoing artistic activity that social, cultural and ecological value systems are being shaped and transmitted to ever new generations. In order to explore the role that music can and should play in our present struggle to save our environment, the University of Ljubljana in cooperation with ICTM on August 28 - 29, 2015 called a conference at their Faculty of Arts

The International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM) is an organization connected to UNESCO that for many years has supported efforts enacted in many parts of the world for re-culturization of both urban and rural habitats.

The city of Ljubljana, now housing the ICTM International Secretariat, has shown how a music community can lead the way to re-vitalize city life in general. One of these initiatives - the *Dance House Project* has already been reported on in a former JUCR volume. This year the ICTM board felt that time had come to call an international conference to discuss models of music interaction in a wider ecological perspective. The immediate background for calling a conference in Ljubljana

<sup>+</sup> Dr. Kjell Skyllstad, Professor Emeritus, University of Oslo, Department of Musicology, Norway.

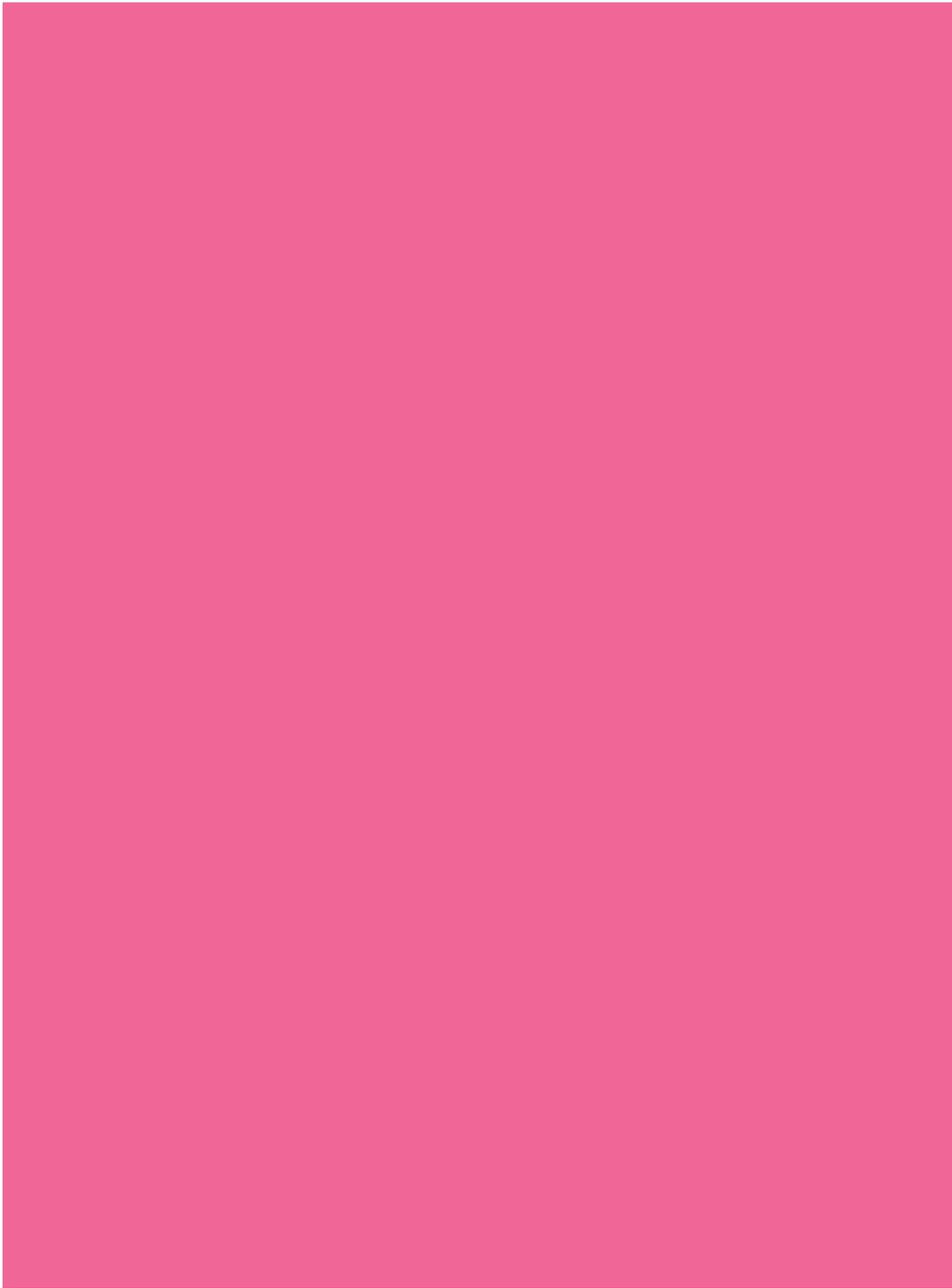
na, the Capital of Slovenia was the decision by the European Community to select Ljubljana as the European Green Capital 2016, as further explained at the opening of the conference by Natasa Jazbinsek Sersen, Head of the Department for Environmental Protection of the Municipality of Ljubljana and head of the European Green Capital 2016.

A very interesting project among many from the Balkan countries was one initiated by artists, architects and activists, supporting the revitalization of a whole city quarter (Savamala) of Belgrade, Serbia, as presented by Ivana Medic of the Institute of Musicology in Belgrade. The Urban Incubator: Belgrade, according to the concept “aims to improve the quality of life of local residents, arguing strongly in favor of a city on a human scale, and aims to encourage the residents of Savamala to take charge of their quarter.”

Huib Schippers of Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia a leading senior musicologist in a compelling keynote address noticed that musicians today not only are seen to contribute to the survival of urban traditions but increasingly have become aware of the responsibility to assure the survival and vibrancy of music practices and communities. A model for investigating ecosystems of music - *The Sustainable Futures Project*, including the study of music cultures of South East Asia, has been initiated with the aim of describing the impact of major forces upon music practices across the domains of learning and teaching, musicians and communities, media and the music industry.

Focusing again on the cultural losses sustained by the tribal communities of East Asia (Taiwan) and South East Asia (Malaysia) as a consequence of unsustainable development projects planned and forced on communities without a human and cultural dimension Wei-Fa Lin of the University of Music and Performing Arts of Vienna, Austria and the present reporter presented further evidence of cultural threats that the music communities no longer can neglect.

The JUCR is hoping to bring these and other presentations in full in future volumes.



# Reviews

- Urban People

Alan Kinear International Editor

# Book Review

# Urban People

Alan Kinear\* International Editor

Since 1999, *Urban People* has made a place for itself as a scholarly journal focused on anthropological studies and related social sciences and humanities. It is the only anthropological journal from the Czech Republic and is published three times a year (twice in Czech and an English issue in September) by the Faculty of Humanities at Charles University in Prague.

Back in 2012 *Urban People*'s thematic Issue titled *Theory and Methods in Urban Ethnomusicology* revisits and revived the field of urban ethnomusicology from its early mention in the 1982 article titled *Explorations in Urban Ethnomusicology: Hard Lessons from the Spectacularly Ordinary* by Adelaida Reyes Schramm published in the *Yearbook for Traditional Music*. Now in 2015, ethnomusicology is once again its theme, albeit with a wider focus of how music bridges "human interactions across geopolitical, social and cultural borders." *Music and Crossing Bridges* is its theme.

The field of ethnomusicology has changed greatly over time following the migration from rural and primarily agricultural-based economies through the industrial revolution and now the information age to collections of cultures housed in urban cities of millions. One can no longer simply categorize music by country or its sub-geographical region. Urban areas are complex collections and combinations of culture made up of individuals with ever-changing personal diversity intensified through global internet exposure and mass media. More recently there is also the recognition of applied ethnomusicology and the impact of social media which transforms research into practical action as indicated by the creation of specific study group on this topic by the International Council for Traditional Music and their subsequent symposiums. The reverberations from the six young Iranians arrested for recording their playful version of Pharrell Williams's "Happy" comes to mind.

\* Alan Kinear, International Editor, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand.

Zuzana Jurková as both an editor and author makes the distinction between actor-specific and environment-specific e.g. what is the cultural orientation of the performers and what are their social and economic motivations? Then spatially what comprises the Tokyo sound making up its uniqueness from Toronto for example? She states the connection between both of these are fundamental to understanding the characteristics of the urban musical environment.



Below is an excerpt from Zuzana's editorial describing this Urban Ethnomusicology volume:

In an attempt to come more deeply to the problematics of the theory of ethnomusicology, we organized a round table "Theory and Method in Urban Ethnomusicology" in June 2011 in Prague. We invited those who we knew were involved in urban problematics in ethnomusicology. The contributions of the round table are the main contents of this issue. The theoretical approaches and topics are very diverse.

I see the emphasis of the first three articles on theory (I read the text of Kay Kaufman Shelemay as an exemplum par excellence of the above-mentioned sociologically oriented direction) or on methodology (McMurray).

In the following block there are examples of research in Wrocław (following up on and reconsidering that spatial direction), Vienna, Prague and Singapore, differing in material through which the urbanness is investigated (to a great extent, they confirm the words of Adelaide Reyes: "the strong tendency to focus on parts..."). The Nestor of applied ethnomusicology, Kjell Skvillstad, describes in his theoretically rather unorthodox article a monumental Norwegian multicultural project, Resonant Community.

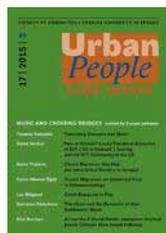
The article by Zita Skorepová Honzlová in the Students Work section originated in her thesis and is not only thematically connected to this issue, but is even more concretely related to the Viennese research presented here by Ursula Hemetek.

From its inception in 1999 Urban People, has continued to cover and expand upon contemporary topics in urban culture from a diverse range of authors. It is worthy of your readership in keeping abreast of the ever-changing sphere of urban culture.

Urban People

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website: <http://lidemesta.cz/pro-autory/instrukce-pro-autory.html>





# Journal Policies

## Journal Policies

### About JUCR

The Journal of Urban Culture Research is an international, online, peer-reviewed journal published biannually in June & December by the Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts of Thailand's Chulalongkorn University in conjunction with the Urban Research Plaza of Osaka City University, Japan. JUCR offers its readers two categories of content. One is a window into the latest international conferences and reviews of related sources – books etc. along with guest articles, special features and case studies. Secondly, its main core is a range of peer-reviewed articles from researchers in the international community.

### The Aims of JUCR

This journal on urban culture aims at establishing a broad interdisciplinary platform for studies of cultural creativity and the arts that brings together researchers and cultural practitioners to identify and share innovative and creative experiences in establishing sustainable and vibrant, livable communities while fostering cultural continuity. The journal embraces broad cultural discussions regarding communities of any size as it recognizes the urban community's rural roots. JUCR encourages researchers and the full range of artists in visual arts, creative arts, music, dance, theater together with those in urban studies and planning to seek cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural practices.

JUCR has the objective of stimulating research on both the theory and practice of fine and applied arts in response to social challenges and environmental issues as well as calling for solutions across the creative realms. Moreover, JUCR supports advocacy processes, improvements in practices, and encourages supportive public policy-making related to cultural resources. JUCR intends to offer readers relevant theoretical discussions and act as a catalyst for expanding the knowledge-base of creative expression related to urban culture.

### Review Process

1. JUCR promotes and encourages the exchange of knowledge in the field of fine and applied arts among scholars worldwide. Contributions may be research articles, reports of empirical studies, reviews of films, concerts, dances, and art exhibitions. Academic papers and book reviews are also acceptable. Articles are typically only considered for publication in JUCR with the mutual understanding that they have not been published in English elsewhere and are not currently under consideration by any other English language journal(s). Occasionally, noteworthy articles worthy of a broader audience that JUCR provides, will be reprinted. Main articles are assessed and peer reviewed by specialists in their relevant fields. Furthermore to be accepted for publication, they must also receive the approval of the editorial board.

2. To further encourage and be supportive of the large diverse pool of authors whose English is their second language, JUCR employs a 3-stage review process. The first is a double-blind review comprised of 2-3 international reviewers experi-

enced with non-native English writers. This is then followed by a non-blind review. Thirdly, a participative peer review will, if needed, be conducted to support the selection process.

3. All articles published in the journal will have been fully peer-reviewed by two, and in some cases, three reviewers. Submissions that are out of the scope of the journal or are of an unacceptably low standard of presentation will not be reviewed. Submitted articles will generally be reviewed by two experts with the aim of reaching an initial decision within a two-month time frame.

4. The reviewers are identified by their solid record of publication as recommended by members of the editorial board. This is to assure the contributors of fair treatment. Nominations of potential reviewers will also be considered. Reviewers determine the quality, coherence, and relevancy of the submissions for the Editorial Board who makes a decision based on its merits. High relevancy submissions may be given greater prominence in the journal. The submissions will be categorized as follows:

- Accepted for publication as is.
- Accepted for publication with minor changes, no additional reviews necessary.
- Potentially acceptable for publication after substantial revision and additional reviews.
- Article is rejected.
- A notice of acceptance will be sent to submitting authors in a timely manner.

5. In cases where there is disagreement between the authors and reviewers, advice will be sought from the Editorial Board. It is the policy of the JUCR to allow a maximum of three revisions of any one manuscript. In all cases, the ultimate decision lies with the Editor-in-Chief after a full board consultation.

6. JUCR's referee policy treats the contents of articles under review as privileged information and will not be disclosed to others before publication. It is expected that no one with access to articles under review will make any inappropriate use of its contents.

7. The comments of the anonymous reviewers will be forwarded to authors upon request and automatically for articles needing revision so that it can serve as a guide. Note that revisions must be completed and resubmitted within the time frame specified. Late revised works may be rejected.

8. In general, material, which has been previously copyrighted, published, or accepted for publication elsewhere will not be considered for publication in the main section of JUCR.

9. The review process shall ensure that all authors have an equal opportunity for publication. The acceptance and scheduling of submissions for publication in the journal shall not be impeded by additional criteria or amendments to the procedures beyond those listed above.

10. The views expressed in articles published are the sole responsibility of the authors and not necessarily shared by the JUCR editors or Chulalongkorn University.

### Submission Requirements

- Worthy contributions in the urban culture arena are welcome from researchers and practitioners at all stages in their careers. A suggested theme is announced prior to each issue.
- Manuscripts should generally not exceed 7,000 words including the abstract and references. Tables, figures, and illustrative material are accepted only when necessary for support.
- Manuscripts need to use our template for submission. Please download from our website's submission guidelines page. Details are described in the top half of the first page with sample text following. Documents not using the template will be returned for reformatting.
- All manuscripts are required to include a title, abstract, keywords, author's byline information, an introduction and conclusion section along with a Chicago formatted reference list. Manuscripts with existing footnotes and in-text references may retain them as a resource for readers, but are not required. Footnotes are to be relocated as non-standardized endnotes listed before references.
- Manuscripts should have all images, figures, and tables numbered consecutively. Reference lists need to conform to The Chicago Manual of Style ([www.chicagomanualofstyle.org](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org)) as detailed in our template. We recommend the free online formatter for standardizing ones references. See [www.bibme.org](http://www.bibme.org).
- Each author should send with their manuscript an abstract of 150 words or less together with a submission form providing their biographical data along with a maximum of six keywords.
- All manuscripts submitted for consideration need to be accompanied by a completed and signed Manuscript Submission form found on our website.
- Authors authorize the JUCR to publish their materials both in print and online while retaining their full individual copyright. The copyright of JUCR volumes is retained by Chulalongkorn University.
- Authors should strive for maximum clarity of expression. This point cannot be overstated. Additionally, authors need to bear in mind that the purpose of publication is the disclosure and discussion of artistic knowledge and innovations that expands the realm of human creativity and experience.

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## Criteria and Responsibilities for Editorial Board Membership

### Overview

The Editorial Board is comprised of members who have significant expertise and experience in their respective fields. Editorial Board Members are appointed by the Executive Director with the approval of at least 60% of the Editors and Editorial Board.

### Eligibility Criteria

The eligibility criteria for appointment shall include:

- Demonstrated scholarly expertise and ethical leadership in an area not over represented on the existing Editorial Board.
- Published three or more papers in scholarly publications.
- Demonstrated excellence in the review process, based on independent evaluations of the Editors and Associates.
- Stated commitment to contribute to issues affecting the management of JUCR.

### Responsibilities

Members of the Editorial Board are directly accountable to the Managing Editor.

Responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Provide input on editorial needs and review manuscripts as requested.
- Complete assigned reviews in a timely fashion. Offer mutually respectful and constructive review of manuscripts to assist in providing the highest quality of papers.
- Maintain confidentiality and objectivity with regard to manuscripts and the JUCR review process.
- Participate in the evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of JUCR so as to help sustain the highest level of excellence.
- Once appointed to the Editorial Board, members are encouraged to submit at least one paper during their tenure.

### Nomination Process

Nominations are submitted in writing (via email or post) and addressed to the Editor in Chief or any member of the Editorial staff. Candidates/applicants must submit a CV including a statement addressing her/his interests and suitability for Board membership. JUCR assumes the general readership would be able to identify the candidate by her/his reputation for scholarship in an established line of inquiry.

When a candidate is approved by majority vote of the current JUCR board members, she/he will be invited to serve by the Editor in Chief for a specified term of three years. The Dean of Chulalongkorn University's Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts in turn will finalize the appointment. Continued membership of the Editorial Board will be reviewed every three years by a member of the Editorial Board with a decision about candidates submitted annually. The number of Editorial Board members will not exceed 20 unless otherwise agreed upon.





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