

Arts. Environment. Sustainability.

A Collection of Visions



Image credit (front page): Artwork by artist Atul Bhalla entitled "Chabeel" for 48 Degrees Celsius, 2008 (India). Image courtesy of the Khoj International Artists Association.

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Arts. Environment. Sustainability. A Collection of Visions

Inspiring Debate in Arts and Environment

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Inspiring Debate in Arts and Environment

“ *The first role of arts is...to use its creative capacity to help break the current pattern, and deconstruct current values, in order to change towards sustainability.* ”

(Marco Kusumawijaya)

In the vision papers presented in this document, one can see many possible directions towards a more sustainable future in which the arts and culture play a significant role. Written by experts in the field of arts and culture, who have an active involvement in environmental sustainability in one way or another, these papers perceive a wide range of solutions to today's challenges.

As part of the *Arts, Culture and Sustainability workshop: Building Synergies between Asia and Europe* – an ASEF supported workshop held alongside COP15 in Copenhagen in 2009 and as part of the *Connect2Culture* programme – the 16 participating experts were requested to write a vision for the future. For this three main questions were asked:

- Does the arts and culture sector see itself as an active player in society?
- How does the arts and culture sector engage with issues of sustainability?
- What are the similarities or differences between Asian and European responses?

The participating experts then wrote their papers around these guiding questions.

At the workshop the experts then elaborated on their initial ideas, discussing in depth the issues highlighted in their visions papers, connecting it to their personal practices. To conclude the workshop, a set of recommendations were drafted for creating a better future.

In the words of one of the experts, “Art is able to excite our curiosity. That is its primary function. Curiosity leads to debate, and debate leads communities to engage themselves.” (Rosina Gomez-Baeza)

By presenting 14 out of the 16 papers in full as they were written by the experts, ASEF hopes to do just this: excite curiosity and stimulate dialogue on the future of arts in the environment and sustainability debate.

This project was an initiative of the four-year *Connect2Culture* programme, run by ASEF, in which the main objective was to investigate the role of arts and culture in society by bringing together professionals from different sectors to address pertinent issues from their perspectives in Asia and Europe. The programme fostered cross-disciplinary networks through supporting artistic projects, workshops and policy meetings.



Trevor Davies

“Culture and The Ecological Age: a climate of change rather than climate change”

(In lieu of a vision text, Trevor Davies submitted the following speech.)

The direct agenda for this conference is climate change. One could also say that what is needed for the ecological age is “the climate of change” and perhaps this pre-requisite is something in which arts and culture could play an important role.

As an arts practitioner I must admit that most of us in the arts sector probably know very little about “climate change”. Yes yes yes – less CO2, the tipping point, sustainable structures... on the other hand I think I can say that most of us know quite a lot about the climate of change, That is, is after all, our remit – creating the conditions for changing perspectives on issues which are at the core of our lives – individually and collectively. And without this new climate of change there will be no climate change.

Indeed, had we thought that we would be here discussing the theme of art / culture in relation to climate and sustainability just one year ago, none of us would have thought so and in fact, for many of us the agenda of sustainability has not even figured highly on our agendas. However, we are daily concerned with survival and we are used to recycling, maximising the use of resources and the maximisation of output.

One thing is a given, that this is a unique opportunity to contribute to a change of consciousness which is required and this initiative deserves to be furthered.

The relationship between art to culture and culture to society is dynamic and it is the constant realignment and refocusing which is both natural and challenging. Indeed every new era demands a renewing of these relationships and a new pact and this realignment for the ecological age is just starting

Yesterday evening there was a debate on the Danish Radio about the phenomena “climate art” given the massive programme of installations, actions, concerts, happenings and exhibitions taking place in Copenhagen over the next fortnight as part of COP15.

Some of the points debated were:

- the absolutely accepted strength of the arts as an engaging, communicative eye opener to enhance the attention of the media and the general public
- the opportunism of artists and arts institution to play along with the latest politically correct theme
- the independent position of the artist to stand back, reflect and to even disrupt and disturb
- the question of artists not to be engaged or invited but rather engage themselves
- the question of potential instrumentalisation of the arts and artists
- the curation of niche markets for climate art as a new – limited - style
- the role of the public arts institutions who have a moral commitment to engage in relevant issues in society

All well-known and often debated themes but given a clear sense of urgency and relevance here in Copenhagen.

So, this overriding theme of climate change and sustainability gives however artists, the cultural sector and indeed our cultural context the opportunity or the challenge to redefine ourselves in a world which increasingly demands creative solutions and in this way, the theme also questions the current “cultural deficit” in society in general – where the arts have become more marginalised as a formative force in society. The title of one of the exhibitions at this State Museum of Art is “nature strikes back”. Perhaps we should copy this with a “art strikes back”.

I was responsible for chairing an ad hoc government appointed committee this year which had the remit to invest some public funding into cultural NGO activities for COP 15 and I was honestly overwhelmed at the serious, committed proposals from the arts worlds. So let us not start from the sceptical “sitting on the fence” point of view.

Another immediate reflection is the realisation that the physical “zoning” of COP 15 in the city creates a defined arena for the arts separated from the defined arena for the politics, the defined arena for the business and industrial world and the defined area for the political activists (who are relegated to the streets!) is a reflection of the disjointed and oppositional environment often created- and this is supposed to generate “real change and dialogue” but leading often to (self) regulation on the part of the arts and culture sector to add colour and personality whilst being side-tracked.

Better we are here than not at all naturally, but the dilemma is clear.

We are in a seldom era of “converging interests” which does make a potential for a radical change of mind set and practice.

Converging interests can of course result in conflicting interests. Indeed the arts can create a positive forum and context for this – a kind of reality theatre as a large scale Augusto Boal workshop perhaps.



We sorely need new arenas where converging interests, converging codes and languages can interact in more fluid, more creative and more sustainable ways and it is the realisation of converging interest overlapping spheres, complex problems and situations which invites and almost demands a new positioning of the arts and the cultural sector. Re-sourced, re-sponsive and re-sponsible organisations and meeting places are prerequisites.

And here we have the first opportunity and challenge – the role of our public arts and cultural institutions.

Indeed this need to redefine, realigned and restructure both on macro and micro levels the processes of negotiations and engagement and is perhaps the essence of the first decade of this new millennium.

The threat of “confrontation” with a sliding and possible colliding globe and our discussions in Copenhagen also reflect these questions and these must surely be addressed after a series of confrontations which indeed question our value systems, our evaluating systems, our evolution systems and even our own evading systems.

As a decade where a series of real, constructed and imaged conflicts have dominated the landscape and demanded a new terminology rather than existing demagoguery. After the post-modern, the post-industrial and the post-information era has played itself out unable to find suitable and meaningful connect but happily content to create an overload of negativity and an overload of untamed possibilities. Played itself out in a decreasing spiral of and leaving us with its fragmented debris on the beaches of the world. Religious polarisation, shallow consumerism, political cowardliness, searching and wandering souls, battered inner cities, drying tundras and deforested equatorial regions.

In this context, the role of the artist, the definition of art work, the role of cultural organisers curators and the cultural infrastructure and networks, is not only relevant for its own sake and rightly question its own practice, its own sustainability, its own values but these roles are also relevant for society as such and indeed ought to be far more relevant.

Unfortunately, in the cultural domain itself, this “crisis” of climate as with other “crises” of social, religious, racial, economic, urban estrangement and segregation and ensuing conflicts are all issues which need “confronting” but are seen primary as belonging to the domain of the technical, the financial, and political spheres. We are per se never part of the problem or the solution.

In fact these “crises” are all in fact culturally defined and contextualised “crises” and as we all know, one has to define the problem first in order to find the right answer. The arts as conveyors of meanings, traditions and

identities as well as methods, innovation and creativity and the arts are seen as an open source field of encounter where diversity is not alone a question of typological representation but a dynamic and organic interactive mass and where integration is not just a question of sublimation or acceptance but a mind-set where oppositional information can be processed in an open, humanistic and supportive environment. Questions of cultural infrastructure are foremost and they must prepares us all to be creative.

There are no creative solutions without creative processes. The formative artistic processes is one in which the arts constantly research and test with solid information, as well as inner intuition. The arts can provide methodology which is not bound by interests nor stakeholders.

The cultural sector itself however has stepped outside the all-embracing cultural sphere or perhaps it has just retreated to the edge of the sphere. This is our pressing challenge and we do have resources which can play a key role.

Signs of repositioning art, artists and arts institutions are everywhere and signs of re-engagement are everywhere. From implicit, individual reflections moving to larger scale, networked and structured movements are visible and flourishing.

With over 200 arts based events during COP15, the massive Nordic project, the new wave of engagement of the visual and performance arts in the UK with Arts Admin and LIFT as examples, hundreds of urban re-inventors and urban gardeners in Germany who are making us look at the forgotten landscapes of our inner cities and who recycle both materials and stories and indeed “are some of the obvious signs”.

After launching a new biennale Metropolis Copenhagen in 2007 I have never experienced such a deluge of international requests to participate from artists, designers, architects and media creators to become engaged in a project which is questioning our constructed urban reality and also trying to find solutions in cities which have for too many decades been forced to translate pressures of profit, standard architecture where citizens are reduced to being holders of life style magazines and carrier bags. Sign of a wave of creative interest to address agendas of urban unsustainability and artistic unadventurousness.

Indeed, the task of “visioning the ecological age” is an issue which must take its point of departure in the cultural complexity of locally and defined cultures, sub cultures in which “future” is neither linear, complete nor uniform. The ecological age must be culturally “translated” into life styles, places and mind sets.

Artists have long given up the sense of the “perfect” understanding that we are all in a transitory and conflict



filled environment and the key to “sustainability” is to live in constant dialogue with sensory, material and knowledge environment and to be able to navigate in these situations.

In this way cultural complexity and diversity is akin to geographic and natural complexity and diversity where systems of interdependency is a key aspect.

Artists of the future are drawn from social anthropologists, architects, constructionists, mediators, visual arts, performers and designers – often working together and from differing backgrounds. Intercultural in the true sense of the word is where inspiration, information and implementation from differing global contexts must be relinked to find solutions.

They create in fact mobile learning labs which are able to construct arenas for changing processes which are themselves artistic. Not everyone can be a Bilbao – even if they wanted to. Indeed the title of the major exhibition in Copenhagen is entitled “re-think” and in particular the re-linking is our re-linking past with future, technology and nature, spirit and practice, the collective and the individual, juxtapositions the arts are already engaged in.

At the same time there is no doubt that arts are becoming more “public”, art is itself becoming more professional, more environmentally aware, more site and time specific, more interactive. A look at the 12 top biennale in the world gives us a clear picture of how art looks at the world and how artists want the world to look at itself.

Venice’s hugely successful “Architecture Beyond Buildings” biennale was a major step into appreciating that the future of cities are definitely not just about buildings.

The 10th Biennale de Lyon is under the watchful eye of its Chinese-born curator. In Hou Hanru’s view, everyday life is very often forgotten about, despite being an area from which many artists have drawn inspiration. *“To sum up, the core notion of the project is that with the Biennale now twenty years old, we’ve reached a point where we really have to rethink the relationship between artists, art and people; so that the linkage between society and the world of creativity can continue to function. The Biennale is an attempt to get back to the close ties between artistic creativity and people’s lives - a biennial devoted to daily life*

With the wonderful little “The Beauty of Distance - Songs of Survival in a Precarious Age”, David Elliott in Sydney states “We celebrate the distance and the imminent relationship between art and society – but art is not good or beautiful! – explores the affirmative power of art in the face of unprecedented threats: conflict, famine, inequity, environmental despoliation and global warming.”

And from the Berlin Biennale “Bringing back Brecht is an attempt to think about the role of artistic endeavour in the conditions of contemporary capitalism, to re-evaluate

our everyday practices, our value systems and modes of operation.

With the theme ‘What Keeps the Mankind Alive?’ Istanbul Biennale combines “art in the city” and “city in the world” attitude and will question the potential of a mainstream cultural institution to both impose and contest dominant social frameworks. What are the questions that can still be opened up through an exhibition of such a visibility, and what is the knowledge that can be generated by it?

With the title “The Spectacle of the Everyday” Thierry Raspei “art is becoming the act of living, shifting terrain on which people come up with all kinds of ways of resisting the implacable logic of consumption as embodied in the spectacle.

The Liverpool Biennial presented Urbanism 09, five days of exhibition, exploration, discussion and celebration along the Leeds-Liverpool Canal, stretching through South Sefton and North Liverpool; a vital green/blue lung in what many mistakenly perceive as an urban wasteland.

San Paolo Biennale is a space for social interaction in the present—seeking to create energy to air the building, and consolidate the show as a temporary social space generating creative potential capable of permeating the artists as well as the audience gathered in its events.

The curatorial team has thus invited artists working on the borderline between reality and fiction, between the creation of documents and instituted truths, between personal memory and collective history.

From artwork to art that works and reflects the search for new open, platforms where artists confront reality, confront citizens and where deconstruction and reconstruction is often played out.

Where art is a piece of work or a process or a situation or indeed a state of mind. This re-engagement of the arts in society over the past decade is parallel to these major seismic cultural shocks which have been a moral tsunami – this has instigated or at least compounded an implicit shift and change of mind-set which are engaging thousands of younger “creators”. There is nothing unexpected in this, but we fail to use the potential and we fail to see the significance and we are slow to adapt our funding institutions and institutions to this new wave.

In a world where there is no need for more entertainment, no need for more information, no need for more beliefs, no need for more political ideologies, there is a huge need to connect and reconnect, to revise and rethink and here one sees the role of the artist and the role of the cultural sector as a forum – a democratic frame of concern.

Artists are re-engaging as perhaps never before. After two decades of disengagement in the 80s and 90s artists are again re-engaging with their environments and thus with the environment. The fascination with individual freedom,



individual identity and individual morals is clearly giving way to a concern with what not makes us different but that which is common – universal perhaps rather than global.

The public sphere and the public domain has or will become tomorrow's cultural centres. After decades of overinvestment in infrastructure and structure where artists have been packaged by stereotyped curators, for stereotypes audiences and stereotyped markets, the urge to reengage and to face the dilemmas of "freedom" is overriding. Remnants of political activism of the 60s and the 70s the *arte povera* movement, the situationists, this new wave of artists needs to be supported, encouraged platformed and brought in centre stage.

In the psychological level, art and artists are not interested in maintaining the status quo, abhor documentation and mathematical averages, look blindly at predictability and prefer not to make do with the logical.

They gravitate personally, bodily collectively and psychologically, to the borders look for the unknown, testing the impossible and questing the certain.

Since the beginning of the turn of the 19th. to the 20th. century artists have turned their collective backs on nature, on the rural and as much as everyone else. They have turned their attention to the cities.

The rural and urban became synonymous with the past the future, the certain and the uncertain, the known and the unknown, the reality and dream, the static and dynamic. Contemporary art thrives in dynamic, conflict areas, impossibility, broken dreams and suspect promises.

It is only when "nature and the rural" becomes the future, the conditions are created to attract the attention of artists.

Long ago, art aligned itself with the perfect, and reflected its culture, but now searches for the imperfect and attacks its culture. This love hate relationship is fundamental. The explicit imperfection of our world has been massively documented and experienced by us all in the past decade and the field of artistic focus gravitates where unhappiness, frustration and anxiety levels are maximised. Art can relieve angst.

Artists are no longer artists. The divisions between mediasts, artists, activists, social anthropologists, constructivists is more and more blurred. There are 62 million art works in the world – 14 are created every second.

Artists of the ecological age don't just want to make art works but to make art that works. Aesthetics in our time are perhaps no longer valid without ethics. Architecture only creates space whilst "artitecture" communicates and

creates situations of people and connects minds. Social media is not broadcasting but communication.

The dominant trend in the artistic field from artists themselves is exactly the results of decades of intuitive searching for new models of what I have always termed cultural acupuncture.

Where a heightened sense of often intuitive understanding the whole interconnected and complex systems, the ability to pinpoint specific points or nodes within and the sensitivity to encapture the essence. Application of this symbiotic sensitivity and real intercultural, complex process way of working has lead among other things to the concept of cultural planning, championed by people such as Charles Landry and increasingly practiced in the UK, Australia, Canada, Holland and where networks of cities - often dubbed "creative city networks"

In this sense, tomorrow's agenda of the idea of "creating cities" rather than building cities" and the renewed understanding of the relationship between space - place - environment – community is key and the user design process and social innovation process based on engaging the consumer, the citizen and the public are all aspects of how artistically inspired and informed creative processes can be positioned centre stage to structure the right decision making environment and mind set for our ecological age.

In this sense the art of "city planning" overlaps with the art of "re-staging the city", "curating the city" and perhaps so avoiding the simplistic linear, and logical framework analysis which makes only for mainstream standard solutions we are all terrorised by and which builds on sectors and silos of traditional domains which prevent change cross the board. Here again, a cultural perspective with artists involved and with their creative tools pave the way for creating a change experience.

The term experience has become central to our way of thinking. Dorthe Scott Hansens revised cultural policy framework attempts to put come a new policy structure:

She looks at cultural policy as having to act in the context of the 4 es: Elightenment (education/ information) Empowerment (engagement, participation and subcultural mainifestation), Entertainment (events, recreation) and Economic impact (tourism, location drivers, investment and regeneration).

Hansen analyses that if cultural policy is to manage this, the central thrust must be to start with the notion of experience - as a multi-layered and complex process and where the immediate "experience" opens up for these four aspects.

The subjective, the objective, and the cognitive must be linked in both regards to the cultural policies we advocate and the ways we create individual change of awareness. From doctrines, open universities and to



individual experiences in a managed experience. The staging of experiences will be the starting point of engaging. This is not using artists, marginalising artists nor controlling. This is the creation of a new framework which puts the artistic creation at the centre of the process of social change.

“Experience in the sense of Erfahrung is a continuous interactive process ... that provides meaning to the individual in several contexts of his life...a meaningful experiences gives the individual a different outlook on the world and/or on himself.” as Boswijk states.

Well “Can art save the world” is an often quoted questioning mantra. If we want to we could rhetorically answer. But only its nature prevents it.

However, looking at the arts and cultural sector one is both overjoyed and dismayed as to the state of the arts in the light of the term ecological age:

Putting the artistic experience/meeting at the centre of a transformational process is the responsibility of curators, producers, managers, directors of our arts and cultural institutions and the credo is for them to see their institutions more as platforms of imagination – as laboratories of changing experiences and as nodes in networks of creative thinking.

These 19th and perhaps early 20th century factories of art, state radio and TV stations have gone far beyond their need for independence and have created their own reality – arts works are processed and presented for public consumption ad nauseam but which have all too seldom manage to open doors, open minds, open self-criticism, and have become bastions of tradition and as such unsustainable - not only using huge quantities of resources, fascinated by the most advanced technical systems, often over managed and under-performing – a legacy to the industrial and the post-modernist age and completely out of touch with the ideas, consequences – and perhaps also irrelevant and counter-productive to belief our ecological age.

Can this wonderful Statens Museum of Kunst redefine itself for the ecological age – perhaps, with a new director, with a new appreciation of working together with others and linking to socially relevant themes. But the reality of securing a new mind set in the hundreds of employees, outreach programmes in the real sense of the phrase and not to attract new audiences, global connections and taking on a truly “public” responsibility will take a generation or two.

The role of the so called intelligent user of energy/materials/sound and lighting/publishing/ is vital and an important aspect of the cycle of development – whether for product development or for testing new innovation.

Perhaps one could start locally by engaging institutions and practitioners who could sign up indeed to this process of long term evolution.

On the other hand, the work of small scale artists collectives and individual independent artists working often in marginal contexts, working and linking with researchers, grass roots, activists, communities and with new media has always existing,

The cultural sector is based on networks, based on exchange and based on experimenting and testing, engaging, and communicating in a learning environment. All key competences for the ecological age.

The society of tomorrow will be structured on multiple and interlinked processes where these artistic processes could be a key methodology – playful, creative, educative, social, cross cultural processes where the notion of work, workshop, weaning and weightwatching are not kept apart, Artists will be super users of the ecological age and take on the role of trainers.

Artists are able to transcend borders. Environments and are completely knowledgeable, responsible about the use and misuse of resources – in fact the arts lives in a schizophrenic world of resource and finance where the context still maintain a healthy and the world of finance rests with mainstream public models of and structures which are authoritarian, power based and, The time need new models to allow artists and producers and the public to meet in new arenas where roles and relationship can be tried and tested.

Again, the call is to make our institutions once again truly public and not just private institutions which are publicly funded.

Arms-length has gone overboard – it has generated a culture of disassociation, disregard and disengagement – we have separated art from power to protect (art or power) and we have succeeded to annex the arts from society and throw art in to the hands go the market, the megalomaniacs and he boulevard press.

Yes we need arms-length but we also need hands on - in practice. We need to find a new format based on respecting competences but also respecting the necessity of conflict – rather conflicts in managed cultural environments that conflicts which are uncontrollable. The ecological age requires conflict management and will only come about if we do not shy from conflicts bit play them out and the cultural arenas we create and can create are in fact de ecological ages democratic for a.

We need to both free are institutions for overt control mechanisms but also re-engage with them on intellectual, social and artistic and environmental terms. But good practice models are fortunately many: The World Museum in Gothenburg, The Scottish National Theatre, the Biennale of Istanbul etc.



Art can Save the World could be asked again. The question is it is art more interested in saving up and saving its own skin though.

My thesis is that this gradual reclusion of art form society has been the implicit and inadvertent strategy of the institutions and the market who have needed to create distance. Perhaps my own conspiracy theory. Everybody needs ton now and again. Now, both the market and institutions have all but run out of coal driven steam, new fuelling models are timely.

I have just facilitated more than 25 SWOT workshops with more than 750 invited people in Jutland as part of a mapping process for Aarhus which hopes to become European Capital of Culture in 2017. These were heritage, urban space creativity, music, youth, new technology, diversity and so on, There were three key issues at stake: clash of civilisations (Huntingdon has apparently won), clash of the environment (the judges are out on that one), the city itself (the only think we have left which is common).

Actually the same agenda as described by the directors of the worlds leading biennale Actually the same agenda we are speaking about today, a time of converging agendas.

Culture in the ecological age will be the encompassing min set and the all-pervading framework of understanding, arts institutions (the ones that survive) will be experience labs, artists will be explorers of uncertainty and involved in every part of public life. The term universal will replace global. The extraordinary will become ordinary and the ordinary will becomes extraordinary – magical and perhaps even mythic. The ecological age is an age of reconnecting

The artists are worth nothing fi they are not original, authentic and genuine. Restructuring the Islandic banks after Ireland which was perhaps the hardest hit economy in Europe and which was the catalyst for a soul searching reflection on all levels, it made way that the banks were in future to have independent citizens voted in by the public. They voted in artists. The credibility of artist and their ability to face extreme situations and to “be true” is a key competence in.

But inviting artists to take this central role is also a risk – but a risk which is certainly not putting the world at risk. Perhaps a good starting point for the next 2-3 days discussions.

Thank you for your attention

Trevor Davies



Nik Gaffney

1. Very briefly describe your own practice

FoAM (<http://fo.am>) is a distributed laboratory, designed to expand through the interstices between arts and sciences, physical and digital worlds, traditional crafts and new technologies, guided by the motto "grow your own worlds".

FoAM is committed to encouraging the development, adoption and understanding of resilient social structures and cultural practices through a programme of research, creation, professional development, presentation and communication activities. FoAM is interested in forecasting and experimenting with possible futures based on the rich cultural heritage of the European peninsula. We focus on culture that is locally dynamic & diverse and globally resilient & stable.

2. State your own main interest in the interaction of art/culture and sustainability

People with access to any form of mass media are well aware of the acceleration of environmental and social instabilities - these discussions have finally penetrated the mainstream and currently even considered 'fashionable' - engaging not only environmentalists, but also policy makers, business leaders, concerned celebrities and community groups. However, understanding and the willingness to do something about these issues are still far from ubiquitous. Apathy and paralysis among the general public and expert communities has as much to do with the way the issues are presented and communicated, as the lack of clear and readily available alternatives. What we all need is inspired action supported by critical reflection, visible results and fertile initiatives, on every scale and through all fields of human activity. No one can consider themselves too small, or too conservative, or too isolated.

Similar to William McDonough, we were "tired of working hard to be less bad" - we wanted to talk about the possibility of doing good, while living an abundant life and being surrounded by generous people. So Luminous Green became an event about creative thinkers, doers and makers, deploying their imagination and ingenuity to shape a brighter future, disentangling from the unsustainable and unnatural. People who have the vision, determination and commitment to grow beautiful worlds and tread along greener paths to engage with them - top-down, bottom-up, from the centre and from the periphery.

3. Describe why your practice leads you to be interested in sustainability

Bringing the creative sector together with experts from other fields is essential to advance the current environmental debates. Our sector has the ability to shape human experiences and surroundings, thereby influencing people's daily lives on an emotional, as well as rational level. We create public spaces and events, design materials, processes, systems and situations, collaborate with educators and industry.

The creative sector is used to tackling complex issues that are difficult to measure and quantify - cultural values, creative processes, or human experience. Such issues cannot be reduced to statistics, nor easily mapped to equations in a carbon calculator. However, they are values that must be addressed in order to incite the necessary change in human behaviour.

With the series of events "Luminous Green" we aim to reveal the opportunities for cultural workers (artists, designers, writers and others), to position ecology and ethics in the core of their practice. We want to encourage people to combine existing efforts, share knowledge and bundle resources. Their networks should involve the people operating on the outskirts of the creative sector, as well as those who have forgotten that we exist - we should aim to integrate rather than separate, clarify rather than reduce, working towards a shared abundance, rather than scarcity.

Interdisciplinary, multicultural, trans-local - we believe that the alliances and networks that will be best equipped to deal with the current global instabilities are unexpected couplings of people with divergent interests, who can work as equal partners, able to respect and learn from each other, regardless of their specific cultural, professional or social backgrounds. Luminous Green is one of the places in which we hope such alliances can be formed.

To research and create resilient, holistic cultural models, an emerging breed of creative people is needed. People who specialise in connecting disparate fields & cultures, who are curious to learn, tinker and challenge the unsustainable elements of contemporary life. By connecting performing arts, engineering, gardening, design, biology and philosophy (for example) these people become contemporary 'homo universalis', working towards synthesising previously separated skills & knowledge guilds into a coherent whole. In other words - cultural creatives, generalists, or whole systems designers. These people operate in the gaps between disciplines.

A trans-disciplinary programme is required, traversing a seemingly unwieldy set of topics - from social entrepreneurship to biomimicry, cooking to textile design,



storytelling to electronics. For a generalist, the more disparate the topics, the more inspiring the process becomes. The unusual, unexpected connections can lead to fresh insights and new perspectives on contemporary culture. For example, how can a kinetic installation produce its own energy and water the plants while telling a compelling story; can we create a new imaginary of technology, based on the poetics & aesthetics of life, rather than control of the military-industrial machine?

We believe that designing (for) the future involves embracing forward-thinking elements of the present, while being grounded in the traditions of the past. To design a more resilient post-industrial culture, we can look at the diversity of pre-industrial & early industrial traditions in Europe and Asia, including arts & crafts, science & philosophy, hosting & storytelling, gardening & cooking while embracing cutting-edge developments in science & technology.

Our present era is technologically driven and thus we will need to address cultural, political and environmental issues through a technological lens. However, technology itself is not enough. It is a blunt object, an undirected automata without human will, desire or interest. Any technological lens needs to be focused by 'enlightened' intention, and that intention illuminated by an understanding that humanity is an integral part of the natural world we inhabit. Futuristic, technological progress alone can not save us from natural disasters, nor lead towards a sustainable future.

If there were simple technological or market 'solutions' to these various crises, we would, no doubt, have instigated them already. However, the political and social systems that are struggling to confront long-term, systemic, life threatening problems appear as unconcerned as the metaphorical frog, not noticing itself boiling to death. Any 'solutions' still left available to us collectively, are going to be complex (but not necessarily complicated) and messy. We may not have the luxury to make incremental changes any longer, but that should not paralyse us. There are many, many small reciprocally connected changes that can work in synergy (in the Fuller sense) to form larger, longer term systemic and cultural shifts. What distinguishes such changes from individual incremental 'fixes' is an illuminated understanding of connectedness and interdependence between them. Developing an ecology of imperfect, complimentary solutions, rather than striving to perfect a single one which might work in some indefinite future. Thereby we not only spread the risk, but open up possibilities to unexpected and previously unimagined outcomes.

The Luminous Green philosophy is grounded in the belief that the world as a whole and all its parts can become more luminous – illuminated, electrified and imaginative, while nourishing a lush, fertile, green environment. We refute the nihilistic and fatalistic view of deep ecology, or that of religious rapture preaching passivity because it's

all out of our hands anyway. We disagree with the 'hairshirt' green polar opposition of consumerism that legitimises suffering, denial and sacrifice, yet neither accept the short sighted capitalist approach of continuing 'business as usual'. Such business as usual will create a future for those who can afford it, while continuing the relentless consumption of natural resources for disposable, wasteful lifestyles. However, Luminous Green can find interesting seeds in all of these approaches, so rather than siding with one or another dogma, it seeks to form 'unholy alliances' between the elements that are most vibrant and potentially life-giving. We believe that the communities best equipped to deal with current instabilities will be founded through unexpected couplings of people with divergent interests (that may have temporarily converged), able to work as equal partners, regardless of their specific cultural, professional or social backgrounds. Luminous Green is one of the places in which we hope such connections can be formed. At previous gatherings, an environmental activist and a liberal economist found new perspectives on disparate issues, while chatting about their common passion for mountain climbing; an artist and an engineer exchanged approaches to child rearing; a scientist and a farmer compared notes on tissue culturing. Each of these people took their new insights away with them, to foster and share further.

We would argue that it is not possible to tackle any one of the currently critical issues in isolation - they all form part of the same larger problem - that we have created an existentially unstable, fragile system. This problem can be tackled more effectively if we approach it from multiple perspectives, simultaneously and systematically, using integrated, holistic approaches. To paraphrase Einstein, we cannot solve a problem using the same kind of thinking that caused it. What we need are not individual remedies for only the most urgent issues, but fundamental behavioural and cultural changes, across the board - through all social structures and economic strata. On a daily basis, there are many issues that require our immediate attention, such as providing conditions for a dignified life for everyone in a global society; the distribution of food, fuel and other natural resources; ensuring a physical, social and psychological well-being of our communities; restoring and maintaining an ecological balance, and so on. These challenges cannot be solved using analytical methods alone. They require creative leaps, heuristic trial and error (along with other methods used in design research), as well as solid public experiments to ensure the feasibility and durability of the proposals. All these techniques form part of the creative process and are practised by artists, designers, architects and others on a daily basis.



Guy Gypens

Art & Climate Change

The Copenhagen Summit brings together the world's leading voices on climate change and on what should and could be done about it. I guess the question is: what can art add to those voices? Are there artistic strategies that can add something valuable to the political, economic, social, technological and scientific strategies?

Yes, no doubt! All complex forms of human cooperation contain an aesthetic and affective dimension which decisively orients how people's everyday life unfolds. The fundamental transition to a more sustainable society which is necessary to stop global warming and to stop it in a socially just way, needs artists and arts institutions to play an active role. As a contribution to the discussion about how art can play this role I want to share with you "The Affectivist Manifesto" written and published by Brian Holmes in the beginning of this year (see below). Holmes' manifesto is certainly not the only possible strategy but it is one that focuses on real systemic change and it is therefore radical.

In my own institution, a Brussels based art centre called Kaaaitheater, I have been trying to 'act' on three different levels since I started working there two years ago:

- Investigating different artistic strategies to tackle the socio-ecological crisis and trying to inspire a young generation of artists via a laboratory festival, called Burning Ice, working along four thematic frames:
 - Re-routing mobility
 - Re-imagining the landscape
 - The art of waste
 - Re-writing the future
- Engaging in 'Platform Kanal', a local social and civil platform to connect our artistic practice with social movements, urban planning organizations, transition town projects, etcetera, in the Brussels' 'Canal Area', a highly cultural diverse area with huge social problems.
- Engaging a wide range of colleague art institutions via conferences and a regional think tank on "re-thinking the performing arts practice to reduce its carbon footprint".

It's too early for thorough conclusions but I can formulate a few intermediate reflections:

It was relatively easy to engage art institutions in a process of reducing their carbon footprint as long as it remained in the realm of sustainable buildings, reducing material use, more efficient production, etcetera. When

we touched more systemic changes like mobility, global markets, innovation & growth it became much more difficult. If the arts world wants to contribute to the general systemic transition of our society it will have to look into its own systemic reality first. The think tank that we installed will have to be enlarged with other 'players' from outside the arts world to provoke more in depth questioning.

The most positive result in the past two years was no doubt the interest of young artists. The first Burning Ice project had an immediate result in terms of artistic projects and proposals. With those proposals came also the questions about mentoring and dramaturgical assistance. In other words there were a lot of good intentions but also a lot doubts about the right artistic approach.

It is certainly not easy to 'infect' an institution like Kaaaitheater with a desire for real change. What I see happening though is a creation of positive tension and struggle through relations with the outside. Connecting Kaaaitheater with a range of civil society partners, social movements and smaller more activist art organizations has challenged our normalised and channelled structures already.

Guy Gypens,

Brussels, 1 December 2009

THE AFFECTIVIST MANIFESTO

Brian Holmes, 2009

In the twentieth century, art was judged with respect to the existing state of the medium. What mattered was the kind of rupture it made, the unexpected formal elements it brought into play, the way it displaced the conventions of the genre or the tradition. The prize at the end of the evaluative process was a different sense of what art could be, a new realm of possibility for the aesthetic. Today all that has changed, definitively.

The backdrop against which art now stands out is a particular state of society. What an installation, a performance, a concept or a mediated image can do is to mark a possible or real shift with respect to the laws, the customs, the measures, the mores, the technical and organizational devices that define how we must behave and how we may relate to each other at a given time and in a given place. What we look for in art is a different way to live, a fresh chance at coexistence.

How does that chance come to be? Expression unleashes affect, and affect is what touches. Presence, gesture and speech transform the quality of contact between people, they create both breaks and junctions; and the expressive techniques of art are able to multiply those immediate changes along a thousand pathways of the mind and the senses. An artistic event does not need an objective



judge. You know it has happened when you can bring something else into existence in its wake. Artistic activism is affectivism, it opens up expanding territories. These territories are occupied by the sharing of a double difference: a split from the private self in which each person was formerly enclosed, and from the social order which imposed that particular type of privacy or privation.

When a territory of possibility emerges it changes the social map, like a landslide, a flood or a volcano do in nature. The easiest way for society to protect its existing form is simple denial, pretending the change never happened: and that actually works in the landscape of mentalities. An affective territory disappears if it isn't elaborated, constructed, modulated, differentiated, prolonged by new breakthroughs and conjunctions. There is no use defending such territories, and even believing in them is only the barest beginning. What they urgently need is to be developed, with forms, rhythms, inventions, discourses, practices, styles, technologies – in short, with cultural codes. An emergent territory is only as good as the codes that sustain it. Every social movement, every shift in the geography of the heart and revolution in the balance of the senses needs its aesthetics, its grammar, its science and its legalisms. Which means that every new territory needs artists, technicians, intellectuals, universities. But the problem is, the expert bodies that already exist are fortresses defending themselves against other fortresses.

Activism has to confront real obstacles: war, poverty, class and racial oppression, creeping fascism, venomous neoliberalism. But what we face is not so much soldiers with guns as cognitive capital: the knowledge society, an excruciatingly complex order. The striking thing from the affective point of view is the zombie-like character of this society, its fallback to automatic pilot, its cybernetic governance. Neoliberal society is densely regulated, heavily overcoded. Since the control systems are all made by disciplines with strictly calibrated access to other disciplines, the origin of any struggle in the fields of knowledge has to be extradisciplinary. It starts outside the hierarchy of disciplines and moves through them transversally, gaining style, content, competence and discursive force along the way. Extradisciplinary critique is the process whereby affectively charged ideas – or conceptual arts – become essential to social change. But it's vital to maintain the link between the infinitely communicable idea and the singularly embodied performance.

World society is the theatre of affectivist art, the stage on which it appears and the circuit in which it produces transformations. But how can we define this society in existential terms? First, it is clear that a global society now exists, with global communications, transport networks, benchmarked educational systems, standardized technologies, franchised consumption facilities, global finance, commercial law and media

fashion. That layer of experience is extensive, but it is thin; it can only claim part of the lifeworld. To engage with affectivist art, to critique it and recreate it, you have to know not only where new territories of sensibility emerge – in which locale, in which historical geography – but also at which scale. Existence in world society is experienced, or becomes aesthetic, as an interplay of scales.

In addition to the global, there is a regional or continental scale, based on the aggregation of populations into economic blocs. You can see it clearly in Europe, but also in North and South America, in the Middle East and in the East Asian network. Make no mistake, there are already affects at this scale, and social movements, and new ways of using both gesture and language, with much more to come in the future. Then there is the national scale, seemingly familiar, the scale with the richest sets of institutions and the deepest historical legacies, where the theatres of mass representation are overwhelmingly established and sunk into phantasmatic inertia. But the national scale in the twenty-first century is also in a febrile state of continuous red alert, hotwired to excess and sometimes even capable of resonating with the radically new. After this comes the territorial scale, long considered the most human: the scale of daily mobilities, the city, the rural landscape, which are the archetypal dimensions of sensibility. This is the abode of popular expression, of the traditional plastic arts, of public space and of nature as a presence coequal with humanity: the scale where subjectivity first expands to meet the unknown.

And so finally we reach the scale of intimacy, of skin, of shared heartbeats and feelings, the scale that goes from families and lovers to people together on a street corner, in a sauna, a living room or a cafe. It would seem that intimacy is irretrievably weighted down in our time, burdened with data and surveillance and seduction, crushed with the determining influence of all the other scales. But intimacy is still an unpredictable force, a space of gestation and therefore a wellspring of gesture, the biological spring from which affect drinks. Only we can traverse all the scales, becoming other along the way. From the lovers' bed to the wild embrace of the crowd to the alien touch of networks, it may be that intimacy and its artistic expressions are what will astonish the twenty-first century.



Yusaku Imamura

“Towards New Commons”

“Cow milk is for cow.”

Voice of old man was heard from the radio broadcasted by National Public Radio, in New York in 2002. I was at the studio of Arakawa-Gins, working on conceptual art questioning human condition and definition. We were trying hard to create new apparatus garden to create environment for human to revitalize our original conscience while I was visiting scholar at Columbia University, graduate school of architecture. Voice was of Dr. Spoc, famous medical doctor, used to have big influence to having and nurturing baby through his book. He strongly recommended cow milk for feeding. Same in Japan, Japanese has moved to cow milk from breast feeding after world war second strongly recommended by US government. Of course, in these days, people started to be more conscience about breast feeding instead of feeding cow milk to their babies but still cow milk is most popular for feeding. It was astonishing event and regretful confess by the famous influential doctor. I recognized deeply “our life is limited by visions of its period”. Creativity is a key to imagine out of the frame.

“On site Lab” agenda based workshop for creators focusing on contemporary issues

Commitment and era of collaboration

TWS has started “On Site Lab” workshop since 2006 as soon as we opened residency program. We thought we should work beyond systematic and structural cultural exchange. TWS is since we started our role is place for experimentation and result will be input to cultural policy of Tokyo. We thought we should start working on engaging more on social issues and engaging to this world. In Japan, art and creation seems tended to be self guided steam mainly and very trendy and fashionable project. We convince art is art is message to human being and society itself. Therefore art is political and also beyond political. Agenda in our contemporary society is based on question of identity. I suppose even environmental issue is not limited about scientific number and facts. It is question about “the human condition” as Hannah Arendt pointed out. Also it is a question of individual and communal existence. Our “self” exist in-between individual and communal. It could be called inter-subjectivity. It is issue about human being and environment. It is fundamental issue of our existence. Arts and culture always questions the way of being.

We need to explore these questions especially after conscious of environmental crisis. Tokyo Wonder Site has focused on agenda of our contemporary society, cultural

diversity and environmental issue. These projects aimed for finding procedure of commitment and process sharing. All projects were done through dialogue. Stakeholders have gathered on to the platform of dialogue. Creative experimentation could be effective platform of dialogue. Through these efforts, we could create and share the vision of our society. New art institution, post-museum should play this role, facilitating these attempts.

We have started this workshop annually from “commitment of hand -after post-industrial era”.

It is issue about how we commit our man-made object not only through commercial products. From second year we started working with University of the Arts London, Tokyo Metropolitan Government and United Nations University to discuss with broader creators, researchers and stakeholders.

Working with Vik Muniz

TWS had a world premier exhibition in 2008 of “beautiful Earth” by Vik Muniz. Muniz has been working on visual images focusing on how human create images in-between object and perception. Main project shown here is his recent provocative project at biggest garbage dumping are in South America in Brazil. He made portrait of the local people who working in the garbage working field. Their life is based on collecting selling garbage. He found human dignity in their life even in their life in garbage field. He made portrait by the garbage from the area and place them in the big storage house and shoot them from high above the ceiling. He sold them at the auction in UK and he donated all the money he got to NGO who support them. We feel great honour to be exhibit all of the work as world premier.

We also sent him to the primary school in Tokyo to have workshop. He gave lecture how “to be creative” is important and encouraged them to imagine over the frame. Our vision is quite limited by history, social behaviour, education in the society and superstition. They created world map from the garbage pupil brought from their home.

Touching “real”

I am also working with many young artists. It is key mission of TWS. When I am working with them, I have big concern to their perception of our world and how they feel difficult to commit to our society. Generation who has second world beside this real world seems to struggle to get sense of “real”. It concerns to the issue of identity and environment. Life is packed with fake and like Disneyland events. They tell me that most of all the scene they face seems to be like through monitors. This is not simply can call “alienation”. Young artists try to touch



their own real but everything is escaping from their hands and struggle to make their own process to grab their “real”. In this sense, how can be environmental issue and sustainability could be real? It is a question of our vision of our society. They cannot make any image of our society. This is reason they cannot commit to this society.

How human can engage this world and find identity? Where does “self” or “I” exist? Where is “real”? These questions are not separate from issue of environment.



Singh Intrachooto

Designers' Roles in achieving Global Sustainability

My practice:

I teach architecture and head Building Innovation and Technology program at Kasetsart University (Thailand). I design buildings. I research technological innovation processes in design and construction. I co-founded an eco-design venture "Osisu," a company that turns scraps into products for the global market. In brief, my overall practice centres on the design industry but focuses specifically on environmental responsible practice in related fields to design.

Main interest:

My main interest in the interaction of art/culture and sustainability is the intricacy in collaboration among designers, technicians, craftsman, local community and governing bodies who work toward mitigating environmental problems. Nonetheless, when it comes to environmental problems, the society calls on scientists, chemists, botanists, biologists or engineers for help, but not designers. As a result, I began focusing my interest in ameliorating the overflowing wastes through art and design practice. Art & design can also offer solutions. I am convinced that artists and designers be an active player in demonstrating environmentally responsible practices in the society. In fact, it is the role that designers need to assume. Who would be closer to the general publics than designers? Why haven't art & design been at the forefront of environmental solution?

Why my practice led me to the issue of sustainability:

As a design instructor and practicing architect, I recognize that building will remain a foreign object in nature. To construct a facility, tremendous amount of materials, chemicals, systems and energy are required. Currently, teaching new designers to produce environmentally responsible architecture by focusing on energy efficiency seems inadequate. The building industry is the largest consumer of material produced on earth. Yet, 30-40% of urban landfills around the world comprised of construction debris. This is shameful. I started reclaiming construction wastes and off-cuts and explore ways to re-design and reuse them, turning these so-called scraps away from incinerators or landfills—creating values using design. I have searched for examples of European designers, Japanese designers, American designers for inspiration and I realized that there are still too few of us scattered around the globe. Such an art & design network is vital to the global movement on sustainability.

relevancy to the theme arts and culture in engaging with sustainability issues, particular the similarities/differences among current approaches

I have several questions in mind. Should the world of art remain focused on emotional levels and adhere strictly to being a medium of expression?

Should art be provocative and intellectual, yet aloof from tangible solutions?

Can art provide, not questions, but answers to physical needs (as opposed to emotional prerequisite)?

What if art provide mental outlet but blind-eye to resource conservations or, worse yet, poison the natural environment. Can art ever balance between exploration of the mind as well as protecting natural resources?

These questions need to be further explored by both Asian and European. What is the "art of tomorrow"? I have noticed trademarks among global societies. Generally, Asian focuses on the notion of "sufficiency" while the more developed society focuses more on technologies and cultural critique. Works of art in Asian tend to be handicraft developed from devices (traditional tools, containers, etc.) while the European counterpart may be more diverse in the expression of their art. I envision the art & design community network to be the foundation of "Creative Economy," the direction we are heading. This network is global and closely knitted. It is a network of value creation venture that recognizes environmental deteriorating conditions.



Sacha Kagan

Aesthetics of Sustainability for the Ecological Age: Towards a Literacy of Complexity

The challenge of achieving sustainability, in the face of a **complex crisis of civilization** combining ecological, social, cultural and economic dimensions, demands integrated understandings and responses, challenging the way our thinking has been organized for half-a-millennium by the tradition of Modernity. As the famous Einstein-attributed quote goes: “The significant problems we have cannot be solved at the same level of thinking with which we created them.” The developments of systems sciences, climate sciences and of the science of ecology on the one hand, and of ecological art and social sculpture on the other hand, all point at a new **paradigm of complexity**.

The engineer's response, as illustrated by Peter Head's text “Entering the ecological age”, may contribute some element of response to the crisis of unsustainability, most especially thanks to the principles of biomimicry and to “cradle to cradle” eco-design (cf. Mc.Donnough and Braungart 2002). However, technology-based visions alone cannot engage us far enough into the necessary paradigm shift. On the contrary, the belief in salvation through technological development (which can be traced back to Francis Bacon) is constituting one of the most problematic symptoms of the unsustainable development path of industrial and post-industrial societies (Cf. Ellul 1977).

The **literacy of Modernity**, acquired from Descartes and Bacon and fully blossoming in the scientific disciplines of the 19th century and in the techno-science of the 20th century, is based on disjunctive thinking, simplification by reductionism and atomization of knowledge and experience. It has allowed the economic and technological developments of the past century, but it has also engendered the global crisis of unsustainability and fails to address its level of complexity. Such complexity cannot be addressed with use of existing disciplinary knowledge, even if combined in so-called “multi-disciplinary” packages: “There is one thing such knowledge cannot tell us, and that is how a number of different things act together when exposed to a number of different influences at the same time. And almost everything we encounter around us contains a large number of different things and is exposed to a number of different influences” (Laszlo 1996, p. 3). The search process for sustainability requires a reform of thought, which allows to move beyond these limitations and acquire a better understanding of complexity.

To overcome the state of **cultivated autism** that our societies have reached in relation to their environments, a new literacy is warranted, which should be both an

ecological literacy, and at a more advanced level, a literacy of complexity.

The new type of literacy which is required, for a movement towards sustainability, is first of all an **ecological literacy**, or eco-literacy as coined by Fritjof Capra (Cf. Capra 1996, 2002), which encompasses the development of an understanding and sensibility for:

- the link between resilience and diversity (both cultural and biodiversity, and their inter-relations)
- the dynamic balance at work in nature and society (meaning that ecosystems and societies be perceived as flexible, ever-fluctuating networks) and its relative vulnerabilities
- the creativity and open interdependence of webs of life (based on an understanding of emergence as the source of creativity and evolution).

Historical societies in general, and modern (industrial and post-industrial) societies in particular, have numbed and suffocated a whole dimension of the human sensibility, which was and is still vibrant among some indigenous peoples (Cf. Abram 1996): the sensibility to the intelligence of the non-human (and the capacity to bridge perceptions with the non-human). We need to re-discover this lost reflexive sensibility. To lay the foundations for a literacy of complexity, the arts and culture may play a fundamental role in **awakening an aesthetics of sustainability** based on an **'autoecopoietic' sensibility** to the environment's complex and dynamic webs of life. In Gregory Bateson's words and building upon John Dewey's understanding of “art as experience”, the priority of a cultural strategy for sustainability should be to nurture a “sensibility to patterns that connect”.

However, such a sensibility should not merely be a holistic sensibility, over-emphasizing the unity and integration of the biosphere or universe (as e.g. Laszlo tends to do), replacing the simplistic paradigm of modernity with a simplistic 'New Age' paradigm, but rather should be attentive to complexity, i.e. combining and contrasting unity, complementarity, competition, and antagonism. Or in Edgar Morin's words: “The systems sensibility will be like that of the musical ear which perceives the competitions, symbioses, interferences, overlaps of themes in one same symphonic stream, where the brutal mind will only recognize one single theme surrounded by noise” (Morin 1977, p. 140-141).

For a **literacy of complexity** will also be a **literacy of ambiguity**. Artistic reflexivity has the potential to nurture the necessary transdisciplinary reflexivity. In action-research oriented collaborations with sciences and civil society, the arts can co-develop the “dia-logic” which will allow us to think complexity. Complex relations institute, no longer a linear logic, but a complex **dia-logic**: “dia-logic signifies the symbiotic unity of two logics, which, all at the same time, feed each other, compete with each other,



parasite each other, oppose each other and fight each other to death” (Morin 1977, p. 80).

The deep and qualitative complexity of the world does not fit with the clear, coherent, uni-dimensional logic of theories and world views we have learned to design. We have to engage in an unprecedented creative leap towards complexity, which will require giant transdisciplinary advances in all cultural sectors (and especially in arts education and education through art&science: cf. Kagan 2009, 2010) or we will miss the 2050 mark for an “ecological age”.

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Marco Kusumawijaya

Arts and Transition towards Sustainability of Cities

My interest in both arts and environment stems from the source of my curiosity: cities. I started studying cities from architectural discipline, and ending up looking at architecture from the city's perspective. The issue on sustainability of cities is appealing not only because of its urgency with regards to climate change, but also because it offers an opportunity to think of, and search for, new ways to live wholly sustainably by also taking care of other problems pre-existing in cities. This opportunity challenges societies to be humane again, to take care of other ecological and non-ecological problems that have been outstanding in cities, such as poverty, social justice, and migrant workers. Confronted with the predominant, yet ineffective, urban planning approach that failed to make our cities a better place for all, I have for the last ten years turned to arts and other disciplines to search for alternative ways to engage urban societies.

A dynamic definition of culture and an expanded definition of urban sustainability.

As more than half of humanity now live in urban conditions, and urbanisation seems to be irreversible and intensifying, much works needed to actualise that opportunity are in the cities.

Sustainability of cities concerns not only ecological, but also social-cultural and economical dimensions. It is impossible to imagine a city as sustainable only ecologically without its population having social justice, cultural freedom and minimum equitable welfare. However, no society can exist without a sustainable physical environment. Environment is a *resource without which* any social and economical entity cannot exist. There can be no trade-off between environment and others, because it is simply the existential basis for the latter.

To be sustainable, a city needs to be whole in its relationship to the environment and its intercultural society. The principles of *cradle-to-cradle*¹ and Japanese *mottanai* treat waste from a process as a resource for the next processes. Diversity should be encouraged for its intrinsic goodness, and to counter globalized standardisation and homogenisation. Citizens should be actively engaged in decision-making process through participatory democracy. A city should grow together with its local resources and context, so that it would be rooted in its environment, and become a place with identity. The city needs build a future based on renewable energy. An endogenous development, with

growth based on maximal use of local knowledge and resources, is possible when a city is embedded in its region.²

To achieve such a sustainable city, changes will have to take place at different levels, at practical behavioural pattern as well as at values, and at everything else in between them, including our systemic supports such as urban infrastructure, industrial complex, and democratic institutions. We need to recreate appropriate values, consensus and trust, as well as re-invent our daily life. There is a whole set of nitty-gritty works that needs our creative capacity and personal commitment to change individually and collectively.

Opportunely the world has come to understand culture as something active: a way of life, and a way of living together in a dialogical coexistence, creatively adjusting to changes and encouraging them.³

Such a view makes it possible to see that arts could help us to change, to engage in the transition towards sustainability of cities.

The required changes.

We can see the required changes as broadly distinct at the supply and demand side. At the supply side we are concerned about energy source and production system. At the demand side we are particularly concerned with changes in consumption pattern. Although theoretically it is possible in the future to have unlimited sources of renewable energy, change in consumption pattern is required immediately. Moreover, climate change is not the only ecological problems. Bio-diversity, for example, is decreasing due to both over-consumption and neglect of certain species because of standardisation and homogenisation in our industrialised consumption. Even if the age of "free and clean energy" would be achieved completely sometime in the future, changes towards sustainable consumption are a necessity. This concerns values and daily decision-making process. *Even if the sun is free and available all daytime, one still have to decide to sunbathe in the morning or the whole day.*

Both our political and economic spaces have not been always successful. We must continuously and diligently feed values and will to direct both the state and the market. We cannot just relinquish too much power to both and become passive afterwards. We have to keep on working as civil society to reclaim the state to be more responsive and the economy to be more substantive, to

¹ William McDonough and Michael Braungart, *Craddle to Cradle*, North Point Press, New York 2002.

² John Friedmann, *The Wealth of Cities: Towards an Assets-based Development of Newly Urbanizing Regions*, This paper was given in 2006 as the First UN-HABITAT Award lecture at the Third World Urban Forum in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

³ UNU-IAS and IICRC, 2002. "Kanazawa Resolutions on culture in sustainability of cities, in Report of the International Congerence on Culture in Sustainability of Cities II, Kanazawa: IICRC, p.98. As quoted in M. Nadrajh an Ann Tomoko Yamamoto ed., *Urban Crisis, Culture and the Sustainability of Cities*, p. 37.



primarily fulfil our needs, not to make maximum profits of any resource.⁴

Position and role of arts in civil society.

Arts could position itself to help build a humane society that actively and continuously think and take care of the welfare of the whole humanity, not just the majority of it, and that which perceives the problems of a few as collective problems of the whole humankind. Consequently we need a “responsible society” that actively takes into their hands the nitty-gritty of works that need to be done for that purpose, a society that has the necessary capacity to continuously respond to outstanding and emerging problems, both in direct actions and advocacy to reclaim state policies and market directions, a reinvigorated civil society that coordinate its actions in dialogue in public space, to work on both practical level and continuous recreation of values to guide state’s policies and market’s directions.

Given the inevitable frequent market failures and often inert political stalemates vested with power webs, the third sector, civil society, both as public space and as associations of active, self-organised individual citizens or groups, will have to take up those challenges. In rapidly densifying cities with diversifying diversity, those challenges could be either easier or more difficult, depending on how well civil society is re-organising, vis-à-vis the political and economic spaces.

Aspiration for sustainability of cities may make politics more complex, but also potentially more focused with a sense of urgency. It re-asserts the very basic of democratic processes, transparency and accountability, in almost scientific sense. With recent progress in technology and collaborative institutions, humankind is actually well equipped to face the challenge successfully. We can undo global warming while develop new ways of living better. However it requires that the challenge be responded actively, by changing the current unsustainable patterns.

The first role of arts is therefore to use its creative capacity to help breaking the current pattern, and deconstructing current values, in order to change towards sustainability.

Values offered in public space have their origins in private space of individuals or communities. Public space depends on private spaces for feedings into its content. Arts critically process values in private space, then feed

them into the public space of civil society, and through it into the political and economic spheres. Arts are at the core of civil society. It strengthens civil society at its base, the values creation that is fundamental to its capacity in owning the state and the market.

In doing that, arts fulfil human needs that are not necessarily instrumental, but somehow fulfill human needs: mimetical communication with nature, with bodies, aspiration to live in solidarity with others, and a will to experience non-pragmatic communications with others.

In our changing societies there are always values to be reproduced. There are always gaps between values and their realisation through our modern institutions. Arts and artists do develop strong sensitivity towards values and gaps because to produce successful creative works, artists must satisfy the conditions of authenticity and originality.

The role of arts is to help build a responsive civil society to feel the gaps, to beyond the instrumental use of arts to promote “awareness”, beyond arts as mere communication “technique”, or arts as the “cute” way to understand the urgency and the order of things.

A society in need of urgent change towards urban sustainability should not just use arts as its reflection and force it into straightforward instrumentality, but gives arts a chance to be its dialectical anti-thesis to promote genuine humane progress while at the same time fulfil human’s need for non-pragmatic relationships with others, including the nature. The recent increasing infusion of arts into design (of daily products and architecture), for example, show how arts are not only reflecting on, but are offering critical forms as anti-thesis to available forms of daily life. Artistic projects are both personal and offering open alternatives that are generously left to be questioned and deliberated in public spaces.

Arts, by its quest for authenticity and originality, could also help society to change in genuine way with commitment at personal level.

I would argue that civil society should take advantage of arts in the above capacity, and reproduce that capacity into public space. And I would recommend that we create more spaces for artists to interact in concrete ways with civil society and our common problems, and encourage their free, creative investigations into them, and facilitate their creative works to enter into much more interactive public spaces.

⁴ Karl Polanyi’s substantive economy: people acquiring material means by having an impact on the natural environment and/or through relationships of mutual interdependence in order to satisfy their various needs that arise as they engage in their day-to-day lives; and economy in formal sense: the process of obtaining the maximum effect by making the best use of a scarce means, in Makoto Maruyama, *Sustainable Economy and Urban Sustainability*, in Hidenori Tamagawa, ed., *Sustainable Cities*, United Nations University Press, 2006, p. 771-72.



Tea Mäkipää

Some remarks and experiences about art, environment and humanzees

1.

Artist produce pollution, too.

In general art is uneven, ineffective and a marginal field of industry, when it comes to the use of material. Most of the artworks produced have a long life span and can also be recycled.

Artists have many different tasks and many of these are local and immaterial. The biggest share of pollution caused by artists in their profession is caused by flying to participate in international events.

Flying produces a bigger carbon footprint than any other activity by an individual person.

Nevertheless, as long as there is more audience than artists, it is better that artists move to the audience, not the other way around.

2.

In 2005 I produced a text-based work "10 Commandments for the 21st Century". It is a collection of moral imperatives that define good and bad behaviour from the viewpoint of survival of the mankind in a long run.

The rules refer to current technical solutions, instead of some better ideas and practices of the future.

Instead of reducing ones' actions and desires, it is more popular to hand the responsibility to higher entities, such as "technology". This is seen almost as a great magic fairy, who will swing her magic wand and allow us to consume more and more.

3.

In 2007, I was invited to participate the 8th Sharjah Biennial STILL LIFE ART, ECOLOGY AND THE POLITICS OF CHANGE to show my 10 Commandments.

My problem was, how to get there without flying, as the country is surrounded by countries in war or otherwise unfriendly to female travellers. My husband decided to accompany me, and we travelled from Weimar, Germany by train, bus, boat, bicycle and feet through Serbia, Turkey, Iran and over the Persian Gulf to the United Arab Emirates. After the exhibition opening, we took the freight ship from Dubai around Saudi Arabia, over the troubled waters of Somalia and through the Suez channel to the Mediterranean sea. From Italy, there was only a short train trip home. The whole art crusade took 2 months.

During the journey, I was confessing on a website www.10commandments.nu, how I managed to follow the commandments myself. Also I described my various experiences from landscapes to people to waste management.

4.

On my journey I learned a lot. In the United Arab Emirates, there was the first ever company starting to arrange recycling. Their first step was to communicate to people what the whole idea means and why it should be done.

I was handing out my little 10 commandments -postcards in English, Arabic and Urdu language. In UAE, Turkey and Iran, that are all very densely populated countries, I discussed with many people who had never come to think about the limits of nature resources. Also the idea that these should or could be used sparingly and be saved for the future human generations, was responded with mixed feelings, some people were even provoked.

I was confronted by arguments that were completely new for me. The earth, nature resources and environment are Gods' own matter and people should just continue consuming and filling the earth. The god will clean up after. When the world is brim full of people and the nature resources are empty, God was expected to give a new announcement to the mankind what to do. If there will be no announcement given and we all must die, this is Gods' will. I did not know what to say.

5.

Other species than man have not been noticed to follow religious motivations. Equally, the features of very high intelligence and exponential development of technology are brought to their ultimate expressions by human humans.

These qualities are the same that have brought us as a species to destroy our own living environment in a very fast pace. Other animal populations are regulated by the limitations of their environment, but we are able to change our surroundings as we like until a certain point.

Every generation inherits the technology as given and adds its own input to it. The vision, knowledge and wisdom of how to use the powerful machinery, starts always from zero and grows always slowly to each individuals personal view. Mankind is like child, driving a military tank that grow bigger and stronger by each generation.



6.

Effectuated by the climate change, hundreds of millions of people are expected to become refugees; to escape from homelessness, hunger and wars. One of the biggest problems in connection to the rising sea level, may be the salty water that will occupy the fertile low lands as rivers and canal water currents reverse from sea to the fields.

Maybe the solution could be found by reversing the evolution of the mankind, towards a more simple and technically limited human being.

As the symbol of hope, I would like to introduce my teenage son Link. He is a half-chimpanzee. Link has many same qualities as other people, but he is more size-effective, more sturdy and has shorter life-expectancy. So far we live on a small island in Finland, but I believe he is soon ready to live independently and head towards new adventures.

Teä Maikipää's 10 Commandments for the 21st Century

1. Do not fly
2. Recycle
3. Use bicycle or public transportation instead of a car
4. Avoid any products with plastic packages
5. Avoid heating and air conditioning if possible
6. Avoid any products that come from far away
7. If you are not really sure you need it, don't buy it
8. Do not produce more than 2 children
9. Do not cultivate, build on or otherwise consume virgin land or water
10. Make all these steps easy and cheap for yourself and others to achieve



Ong Keng Sen

Nomadic conversations with the local: labs of transformation, tradition and reenactment

I believe in artistic processes as a means to engage the world. Admittedly this is not the interests of all artists but it has been a guiding light in my own choices of work and of priorities. I want to continue to see artists playing vital roles in key issues of the world and of course, increasingly we have to engage with sustainability. However, towards environmental sustainability there has been considerable stasis from the artistic community. I can't say why, for all artists but for myself climate change is still a fairly abstract notion. It is about carbon emission, ozone depletion, deforestation... I know when I fly for a conference like this I am increasing my carbon footprint and I can reduce it by contributing funds for planting trees. But this is the epitome of abstraction. What does all this actually mean? How can we affect others if this still remains abstract for us? We need to refocus socially engaged artistic practice to reflect on the human dimension, the passion, the emotional stakes and not simply to reduce the discussion to issues, ideology or politics.

But before this, who are we talking to? I am interested in the larger public, the audience; this would include politicians, cultural workers, sociologists, economists and other professionals who are directly impacted by any discussion on environment. This interests on the general public is rather ironic for me as all my work has been focused on maintaining the sustainability of artists rather than audience per se. Also there are many audiences as we all know. I would also like to state categorically that I am not interested in art as a pedagogical tool for environmental sustainability. Our roles as artists are not just to bring theatre-in-education and outreach projects to schools. The arts can play a part in making each and every individual personally responsible for his or her actions through inspiring dialogue, through negotiating conversation, through enhancing the human dimension, through igniting the imagination. It is important to look at environmental sustainability as a nexus of interconnected issues rather than one theme, one concern. Let's break it down to the human dimension, is it about floods, is it about danger, is it about survival, is it about extinction? There is no doubt that any artistic process about environmental sustainability will first and foremost need to be interdisciplinary as the themes are diverse and ramifying.

Ultimately I would like to engage with artistry, imagination, personal choice. I would like to bring about intimate conversations rather than large mass conferences, I would like sensitivity to be a major concern in bringing about these processes with small

groups of targeted public. Intimacy and sensitivity to specific contexts.

For me personally, I reject climate change or environmental sustainability as a playing field for curators, as a fashionable arena for topical shows. In London right now at the royal academy of arts there is a show called EARTH: ART OF A CHANGING WORLD. I find it painful that many works were originally conceived as non-environmentally related but has now they have been curated or appropriated for the show. I find it insulting that artists are co-opted in this way. I believe that we are not endorsers of climate change like endorsers of detergents and deodorants. I find it problematic that 'brand name' artists are asked to make works singularly and randomly commenting on climate change. For instance, Sophie Calle (whose work I love) took her mother's necklace and diamond ring with her on a visit to Greenland, along with a portrait and buried them in a glacier. In a text on a porcelain plaque, Calle wonders if the climate changes will carry her mother to the sea to be taken north by the West Greenland current or retreat up the valley towards the ice cap? I can only see this as a tongue-in-cheek response by the provocative artist in an impossible show. Similarly I find it suspect when artists compose music about the arctic/Antarctic with sound of glaciers melting. I just don't find this kind of work relevant to environmental sustainability nor engaging the issue at hand, for an audience.

For I believe that artists are transporters who can be involved in the transformation of society. We can transport our audiences to human dimensions of trauma, of loss, of migration, of assimilation. My first thoughts with the tsunamis and earthquakes in south east Asia have been disaster and flight. How can we communicate to an audience that the issues of climate change and environmental sustainability concern them, that they are not abstract discussions involving scientists and politicians. One of my processes about artists and society, the Flying Circus has attempted to connect cultural and artistic sustainability with context, site, memory and reconciliation, ie social sustainability. Beyond conversations, the sustainability has necessitated the creation of alternative universities, knowledge production by artists/cultural workers. This work is ongoing right now in Cambodia with the trials of the Khmer Rouge; and young Cambodians, born after the war, who do not see these trials as being related to them. Only with knowledge and understanding derived through personal experience by both artist and audience, can we begin to transcend the international with the context of the local, sustaining a conversation between the international artist, the local environment - a reflection of what's at stake. It is also important to note that there is also no stability in the local context, different generations have different relationships with nature, with consumption, with economy.



Let's take a trip along a river like the Mekong river flowing through Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Burma, described earlier by Francois Garnier, a controversial French explorer. Let us build a number of interphases along the way; conversations with the local; a nomadic expedition of international artists, scientists, sociologists; looking at how life along the river has transformed and changed; the coexistence of human life and the major source of life, trade, culture: the river. Perhaps it is not first about the issues, but about the humanity that intrigues us, the geopolitics that provokes us - they should speak to the artist viscerally or else it will be simply be another exercise of form and virtuosity, another splendid spectacular. We have to locate the will of the artists to work in this arena or else their participation will only be another workshop for the record.



Rosina Gómez-Baeza Tinturé

A Massai proverb says “we do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children”.

Climate change is a global problem, but as individuals, we all have the necessary capacity to make an influence. Even little changes in our everyday behaviour and what seem like little actions can help to cut gas emissions with greenhouse effect, slowdown global warming and the deterioration of our quality of life.

Just two months ago, LABoral Centro de Arte y Creación Industrial, the centre I direct, hosted World Wide Views on Global Warming in Spain. One hundred Spaniards who were chosen as representatives of public opinion in my country, expressed their positions on the issues that are now the subject of negotiation at the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen.

This is not an isolated fact or a coincidence. One of LABoral's founding mandates, the guidelines for all our actions, is the “perception of territory, ecology and sustainability”.

Taking the region of Asturias as our point of reference, LABoral explores the processes of territories that share a similar socioeconomic history with our region, with the goal of increasing knowledge in order to participate in the issues that concern society. The perception of the territory also involves a study of the relationship between society-technology-sustainability, in collaboration with existing social networks. Our goal is to promote a collective reflection and to create public awareness aimed at looking for formulas for respectful coexistence with our natural surroundings and with the ideas of a sustainable society and world.

Since opening our art centre two and a half years ago, these concerns have been addressed in programmes aimed at all publics and in all the exhibitions we have produced. I will just mention three examples:

- Huerta Guerrilla, a weekend activity geared towards children and families, putting them in contact with various ecological agricultural technologies, urban and guerrilla gardening.
- In January we will be opening En barbecho, an exhibition of the winning project in an annual competition run by LABoral and the Department of Culture of the Principality of Asturias to support, produce and diffuse work created by artists from Asturias. On this occasion, the winning artist, Alicia Jiménez, creates an independent ecosystem that spatially reconstructs a universe of values attributed to productivity and “nonproductive” rest time, based on a comparison of mechanisms of material production and processes of

psychological creation-production. Her project posits a fusion of concepts such as the domestication of the natural world (by agriculture and science); the visual culture of our time, addressed from the imaginary of our system of production, and the mise en scène of the attributes that make up our value system based on contemporary mechanisms of production, work, sustainability and utility.

- Also this year, the Mexican artist Gilberto Esparza (Mexico, 1975) will be presenting Plantas Nómadas, a project which is a metaphor of the alienated human condition and the impact its activity has on nature. Esparza wishes to incite critical reflections on the ambiguity of the forces sustaining technology: as a tool of power, or its potential to transform the world order for the better.

Innovation is critical in order to effectively respond to the challenges of globalisation and to the opportunities it brings with it. The capacity for innovation is closely tied in with creativity, as a personal attribute based on cultural and interpersonal skills and values. And in order to make the most of it, it must be diffused among the wider population.

Art and culture play a key role in the social consolidation of technological advances and social change. The vitality of artistic creation today, the incorporation of new spaces of diverse kinds, the irruption of new technological tools used widely by artists, the notion of “process,” a new concept of time, multi- trans- and inter-disciplinary work, the variety of projects that attract young audiences to this new and complex reality: all this forces us to wonder whether we are facing a new definition of art and the function of the artist in society, a mutation that allows us to discern aesthetic, social and even ethical motivations different from those of just one decade ago. It is here that LABoral's research is centred.

The art of our times must be explained not only under an ideological prism, but also as a mesh of historical-cultural events. It should no longer be understood as an isolated phenomenon, given that it transversally cuts across all the most everyday events of our lives. Artists are the fruit of society and their work, beyond any ornamental or aesthetic function, requires new spaces for experimentation and exchange; it needs to contribute creativity and reflection, transgression and rebellion. Today artists are looking for new media, other discourses, different spaces where to act in order to bring about social transformation.

Jules Verne wrote *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* long before the first submarine was “invented”. Culture and art foreshadow the future. Art today, more than a yearning for beauty, is understood as a commitment with those who have no voice. Sounding the



alarm about the risks the future holds in store for us if we continue as we are; raising awareness; making the most of opportunities offered by a world in crisis in order to respond with new imaginative ideas; and, in short, engaging in a “war” against the complacency and indifference of the powers-that-be, are some of the contributions that culture and, more specifically, art can make towards stopping climate change.

The mission of artists is to inspire, educate and engage themselves with society. Creativity is the capacity of produce things that are new and of value; it is the capacity to reach new conclusions and come up with original solutions to problems. Art is able to excite our curiosity. That is its primary function. Curiosity leads to debate, and debate leads communities to engage themselves.

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

- Incite reflection and replace indifference with awareness. Something can be done.
- Capture the interest of the public opinion, speaking to their emotions and mind, through works of art.
- Make the most of the credibility of cultural agents and artists in order to publicise and raise awareness about the problems climate change brings with it and to encourage a true rethinking about what we can do to stop it.
- Encourage common reflection, an understanding of the importance of landscape and territory, by promoting a search for imaginative solutions for a better future, in harmony with the environment.
- Involve the population creatively in this reflection on the conservation of outstanding natural environments of our planet.
- National and transnational cooperation between public powers and a greater effort for the integration and the transfer of power from different countries in favour of establishing common measures.
- Increase public spending in education and culture and set down guidelines for the development of attitudes, behaviours and forms of thinking respectful with the environment.
- Raise society’s awareness and sensibilisation to the reality of climate change and the urgent need to act to stop it.
- Recovery and promotion of areas of special natural-cultural interest.

I wish to conclude by paraphrasing the British naturalist Sir David Attenborough, recent winner of the Prince of Asturias Award for Social Sciences, in a conference he gave just a few days ago at LABoral Centro de Arte: the

only way to change the current tendency of the climate is through politicians. They are the ones who must implement the necessary measures to avoid the changes we are suffering. Combined and decisive international politic action is needed if we are to avoid global disaster. Whatever we do, we cannot stop climate change, but we must prevent its disasters. It is the obligation of educators and cultural agents to help people hold an opinion that allows them to decide on questions that directly affect them, or influence the decisions of their governments on problems of an international reach.



Bernard Scherer

1. My own practice

As artistic director of the Haus der Kulturen der Welt my interest in the issue of sustainability has three main reasons:

- We are a globally acting cultural and art institution and the problems and issues raised by the theme of sustainability are of global nature.
- The theme of sustainability is a deeply cultural theme.
- We are at the moment developing a big project concerning sustainability which will be held in the next years.

2. Why is sustainability a cultural theme?

On the one hand sustainability has become an important theme because of misguided developments which are based on western cultural categories:

- Relationship man – nature. The understanding of technology and sciences of western modernity separated nature as an object from man and as a consequence made an exploitable resource out of it. The fact that man is a part of nature was lost sight of.
- The freedom of the individual was more and more interpreted as detached from the social context so that the balance between relationships with others and individual freedom was lost. Furthermore since the second half of the last century freedom was increasingly considered and lived as freedom to consume which resulted virtually in an “eating-up“ of the planet.
- Scientific theory construction and the development of technology based on it have more and more detached themselves from the individual’s sensuous experience in society, thus creating a life of its own which was no longer connected to society.
- Our relationship with time has undergone a radical change. On the one hand the power of sciences and technology development has resulted in fundamental changes in our environment including consequences that will not show themselves before centuries. On the other hand new communication forms and financial markets lead to an ever faster decision-making.

3. What role should art play?

Art cannot and should not simply be considered as a translator of these themes and neither be functionalized in this way. Otherwise it would abandon itself and become trivial. Only by claiming an autonomous status in the truest sense of the word it can reveal the complexity of these developments instead of forwarding superficial information. On the other hand art has always had a political dimension. It is produced by highly sensitive people who are referring to their environment.

It is the task of curators, art institutions etc. to point out these political aspects of artistic works by appropriate contextualization and to connect them to scientific but also other social activities.

Furthermore it should be a goal to create the possibility for artists, scientists and activists to cooperate over a period of several years thus bringing together again groups of society who have been separated for a long time and enabling a holistic approach for future development.

Cooperation Asia – Europe

In the last years Europe and Asia have surely been main actors in a global development which has led to problems concerning sustainability. As a consequence they also have a special responsibility.

Asia as well as Europe have traditions which open up alternative views of the world and of the status of men in the world. It would be interesting to jointly develop concepts of the future which tie in with such traditions.



Shiv Visvanathan

Welcome to Sustainability

I am an anthropologist concerned with human rights and the politics of knowledge. I am interested in sustainable democracies. One loves the idea of consensus but one reads the covering documents and the format suggested by the foundation, one senses the need to go beyond political correctness. The languages of the question itself, is symptomatic of the state of the art, if I might be allowed the pun. Words like “lack”, “lag” and “deficit” present the substrate of a world of development. Culture is seen as a fragment, a piece in a jig-saw puzzle. A department of culture is, in my eyes, an oxy-moron. Years ago during the national movement Anand Kentish Coomaraswami defined a proletarian as a man without a culture, a person disembedded from his/her culture, not a person dislocated from the means of production, was a proletarian.

My essay is based on my professional background as an anthropologist of knowledge and my studies of Indian nationalism to reflect on the idea of sustainability.

Gandhi was once asked “What do you think of western civilization?” and he replied, “it would be a good idea.” The same could be applied to the idea of sustainability. What one suggests is that despite Brundtland and the host of debates on climate change, sustainability still belongs to the dismal science of economics and it does not anchor the axioms of a democratic imagination. Years ago Coomaraswami said, “If God would have returned today and ask civilized western men where the Aztecs and the Australian aborigines were, would he take him to the museum?” He added that we belong to a science that preserves the folk song as it destroys the folk singer. Sustainability has to be dislocated from its roots in museumization. The artist, as Coomaraswami said, is not a special kind of man pursuing his special kind of vocation but any man becomes a special kind of artist in the pursuit of his vocation. Viewed in this way, the western idea of sustainability still lurks between remorse and guilt. Justice is only a pendulum like swing between guilt and compensation. Sustainability is not a protestant act of repression. Seeded in guilt, it fails to be playful. Located in remorse, it becomes absent minded and reactive. What should be a festival of reciprocities between north and south becomes either a confessional or a bazaar where carbon-credits are hawked with piety. Art has no place in such a dialogue.

This essay claims sustainability is an externality of any theory of economics. If you wish to create sustainability with some sense of art, one needs a different language. The classifications endemic to the notes sent by the Asia-Europe Foundation are based on western classifications rooted in the distinctions between art, craft and fine-arts.

It is also based on a classification of knowledge which is hierarchized. Modern western science acquires pride of place in this classification. Such a view allows for an idea of progress which museumizes culture and speaks the language of obsolescence. The current language of innocence and obsolescence either forces us to accept westernization or disappear. Sustainability needs a theory of memory and of story-telling that allows for diversity. There is little place for memory in the language of sustainability. Sustainability speaks the language of renewal and recycling but these are very different from the idea of memory as remembrance.

Without the sense of art and craft, without the rhythms of the body that art and craft create, aesthetics will always remain separate from ecology. The systems view of ecology is very different from the holism that art sees. One is not seeking a trade union role for art. One is merely arguing that sustainability is merely a theory of culture or it is not. If one thinks environmental science, education, development and geo-politics are going to create sustainability in their specialized ways, we are being idiotic. These subjects in the fragmentariness create a whole which is less than the sum of the parts. Either art or the alternative theories of knowledge bring back a sense of the re-enchantment of nature and the role of the sacred back to science or sustainability remains a term located in the arid secularism of science which still appeals to its sub-conscious Christianity.

Let us consider a simple term, the idea of waste. Waste is seen as a scientific problem. It needs to be recycled. The first thing any artist would realize about waste is that it is treated so officially. Waste is a multi-verse word which includes junk, dirt, erosion, dust, obsolescence, garbage, muck, pollution and rubbish. It also includes ways of life which are no longer seen as relevant. Zygmund Bauman, in his book on waste, suggests that the idea of waste extends to wasted lives, that is, ways of life that don't fit the current economy. This would include most of the demography of the globe including the migrant, the displaced, the nomad, the refugee, the obsolescent, the defeated, the marginal, the eccentric. Sustainability, as it exists today, has no theory of waste in this broader sense. As a result of ignoring the citizenship of waste, it is an incomplete democracy. As a chemist, C.V. Seshadri, said waste is the only resource of wasted people. A sustainability based on efficiency has no theory of the art and craft of waste. Official sustainability is ignorant about the marginal, informal and nomadic economy. It only seeks to develop them. The options are clear. Within such a model you can only develop it or force them into museumization. If museumization in development eludes you, you can waste them. The new word for waste, at the lower octave, is displacement. As the crescendo rises, one reaches genocide. A sustainability that is silent about violence of modern technology and development is too illiterate to be considered as a part of the vocabulary of new global imagination. Maybe arts need to create the



new Guernicas of waste by the Picassos of the informal sector for the UN and the World Bank to understand the real meaning of the term.

The preliminary document seems to think that being eco-friendly is a part of some extra-curricular activity which involves sustainable festivals and green conferences. Such an idea of pedagogy has no sense of the battle to political justice being fought by marginal, nomadic, peasant and craft-groups in the Third world. Let us be clear that sustainability, as it currently exists, is a state of mind that remains an off-shoot of the UNESCO imagination. Such a model lacks the theory of evil, the ideas of violence, genocide, the exploitation of bonded labor and the Africanization of poverty. If art can teach development organizations anything, it is that Boy Scout strategies save neither the forest nor the dreams of childhood. Sustainability has to be not a theory of political correctness but a part of the new imagination of eccentricity, dissent and justice. Submitting it to the idiocy of questionnaires which smack off the official liberal imagination, anchored on the iatrogeny of expertise have little to tell us. It is like a theory of table manners without a theory of the political economy and the conscience of food and also the ethics of fasting. One needs the sense of rituals of reciprocity, the idea of the gift to understand this.

This conversation cannot begin with the western discourse on art. I am not generalizing, but the questions suggested here could do well to re-look at the paintings of Marcel Duchamp or fly down to Chandigarh to look at the rock gardens of Nekchand built to waste.

So if you were to ask what theater, painting, craft, writing and story-telling can bring to sustainability, it is the celebration of language, diversity and time. Time is fundamental to the imagination of art and what sustainability needs is the language of the multiplicity of the time. I am not referring only to the language of history, which reduces justice to compensation and ignores what scars mean as memories. Art is the gift of time to the official textbooks of sustainability. But time without diversity would be tragic. I remember a scientist telling me, India has 50,000 varieties of rice that is the 50,000 varieties of dreaming, cooking, myth-making, memory making and story-telling. A sustainability in uniform has no understanding of diversity. If sustainability is commoditized then diversity becomes an instrumentality. It cannot then say a seed is, therefore I am.

Art creates a sense of diversity of color, of craft and of imaginations. It is a multiplicity of languages which cannot be standardized but merely translated. Sustainability is too official a language in its current form. It is OK for the EU or the UNDP or the World Bank. But why inflict it on the cultures of the world? Why not take sustainability and rescue it from policy? Why not let societies take it over and find out how life, life worlds,

life cycles, livelihoods can be coded in terms of new myths, old cosmologies and new contracts which can rework constitutions. Not in terms of contracts alone but in terms of new commons of responsibility.

Anand Coomaraswami, once cited the case of a washing machine. A housewife refused to accept it exclaiming what will happen to my washer man? What he was trying to emphasize is that sustainability coded in the grammar of economics is too narrow a language. One needs to understand the new global commons. One needs to understand the dialects of the gift, the ethics of fasting, the sense of the sacred, our responsibilities to ancestors and our sense of the future. Policy documents based on the official language cannot do this. One can have small dainty events and quaint conferences that talk of convergence and equality. But art is not about such official terms. Art is subversive, demanding and cantankerous. The only thing you can do for the officialdom of the European universe is to subvert it or secede from it. In fact, given the current state of the conference, secession is the only aesthetic, ethical, cognitive alternative available. The third world beyond the nation-state is not asking for compensation. Keep your green credits and your Boy Scout justice. We are merely reminding you of what Marcel Duchamp, Pablo Picasso, Manley Hopkins, Simon Weil, Patrick Geddes, Barry Commoner and Levi Strauss have already taught you.

Finally, one must thank you for the generosity of the invitation and the openness of the questions. To break bread is to share ideas but if ideas belong to different worlds because they belong to different ways of life, one must seek a new language of translation which holds both our truths together in the full life blood of meaning. One cannot reduce it to the dullness of sustainability. It is a prosaic term that hides the poetics of survival.



Ada Wong

Arts, Culture and Sustainability

I am a lawyer by profession and describe myself as a culture, education and sustainability advocate. I have been an elected politician at the local level for over 13 years but have not stood for re-election since 2008, to spend more time in civil society and implementing reforms in the school I founded.

My advocacy works and projects in the last five years include:

1. Formulated a sustainable development blueprint for the district of Wan Chai using the principles laid down in Local agenda 21. This was a bottom up civic engagement process involving all stakeholders and was a response to the government's top down and piecemeal planning procedures. The community blueprint saw an overwhelming desire not to overbuild and to protect heritage and the environment in the course of development.
2. Led the Wan Chai District Council in the formulation of a paper on a more sustainable urban renewal policy, having regard to the environment, local economy and culture and heritage. This was a response to government's bulldozing of old streets and buildings under urban regeneration schemes, replacing them with high rises and destroying the history, social network and natural habitat of the place.
3. Promoted sustainable living and reduction of food miles by setting up a farmers' market in the Wan Chai district (an urban area), inviting local farmers to sell their organic vegetables and produce on Sundays.
4. Founded a school of creativity (HKICC Lee Shau Kee School of Creativity www.creativehk.edu.hk) where green and sustainability are core values. The school is now bidding for the use of an adjacent site to start an "eco-living centre", where local designers and students will try to use recycled material to make new products.
5. On-going advocacy of participatory planning with sustainable principles for Hong Kong's mega West Kowloon Cultural District (which will cost HK\$21.6 billion to build).
6. On-going ideas spreading as daily column writer for Oriental Daily News and as bi-weekly co-host of an interactive radio chat show at Radio Television Hong Kong.

Sustainability is most relevant to my advocacy work. Whether as elected politician or head of a school, I

believe we must all respond to climate change and try to embrace a sustainable low carbon lifestyle. However, climate change has caught the attention globally but not locally. I believe arts, cultural and educational institutions and individuals can lead the necessary paradigm shift. When politicians find it hard to appeal to his constituents for change, the arts and cultural sector should be able to inspire, provoke reflections and facilitate mind-set change.

Hong Kong is by any means a developed and wealthy city and our carbon footprint is 6.6 tons per person (2007 figures), much higher than that of mainland China. Air pollution (caused by electricity companies and transport sector) has been one of the biggest concerns in Hong Kong. Yet, our government's willingness to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and readiness for clean energy investments has been weak as we are safe from criticisms under the big wings of China. Government has been slow to respond and while businesses around the world are managing their transition to a low carbon economy, most Hong Kong businesses have by and large been unresponsive.

To achieve significant reduction in CO2 emissions require the efforts and change of mind-set from government, business to the community. While the environmental lobby targets and criticizes governments and vested interests, the arts and cultural sector can work with the people and start, bottom up, from the community.

Arts and Culture as active player in society

The cultural sector is a natural change agent, instigator and provocateur in paradigm shifts and mind-set changes. Here in Hong Kong artists and social activists have worked together successfully to highlight the importance of heritage conservation in this city where the bulldozer reigns. Their joint efforts have facilitated reflections and change especially in young people, and have brought about changes in our land policy.

Sustainable living starts from personal commitment and practice. Artists, adept in communication and production of strong and powerful images, should appeal to the people to make this commitment as their top priority. The question "why should the sector get involved" should not arise. Rather, the question is: how can the arts and cultural sector lead effectively?

The cultural and arts sector can naturally and easily align with educators, environmentalists and social innovators at the community level and work with stakeholders to find innovative solutions to sustainability issues. Most often, the community will come up with creative ideas for reduction of energy use, change of transport mode, and understanding of recycling and up-cycling (turning waste into usable products). My personal experience as a local politician is that, given the right inspiration and intervention, many people are willing to change.



The whole sustainability movement has many advocates and lobby groups, but it needs more images of people, of ordinary people and communities affected by climate change. We need hard facts and research, but we need the emotional side to appeal. Artists and cultural workers can bring about a more humanistic approach. After all, this is not a competition between countries to slash green-house gas emission targets. Ultimately it is about humanity, and extending humanity.

Asian and European responses

In Hong Kong, development and sustainability are still seen as opposing concepts that cannot co-exist. However, if governments endorse the concept of sustainable development, the infrastructural building and development spree in Asia could be done on greener and more ecological principles. In this sense, Asia has a lot to learn from Europe and cultural practitioners, with their multicultural sensitivities, can bridge these gaps of understanding and facilitate creative channels of exchange between communities and cities in Asia and Europe. Cultural practitioners of course include urban planners, architects, designers, academics, school teachers and community organizers.

In Europe, many cities have made impressive strides towards eco-friendliness and enabled their people to live greener lives. In Malmö, Sweden's third largest city set its goal to become an "eco-city" and neighborhoods have been transformed using innovative design to become more environmentally responsive. In London, the mayor has set stiff taxes on personal transportation to limit congestion in the city centre, and will switch 25% of its power to locally generated and more efficient sources. In Asia, apart from initiatives in Bangkok, I do not see other Asian cities being hailed as green.

Rather, prosperity is still measured in terms of height of buildings and various city governments in Asia are obsessed with outdoing others by building the tallest icon. As Asia develops, one also sees a wealth gap that is much wider than that in Europe. The four Northern European countries have the lowest Gini coefficient while Hong Kong has the highest, according to a recent study. With the wealth gap comes exclusion from poverty, the digital divide and other social injustices which are core issues locally. The challenge for the sustainability debate rests on the ability to weave and integrate core local issues and concerns with that of sustainability. Could an eco-friendly city narrow the wealth gap and provide new alternatives and new job opportunities too?

In all these issues, we need the arts and cultural sector to be the creative critic and help us think laterally. I therefore echo my colleague Danny Yung's suggestions that there must be multi-sector discussions. Cultural practitioners from Europe and Asia can facilitate cross-continent dialogues and bring creativity and innovation to

the organization of multi-sector researches, critiques, advocacies and actions.

Finally, as a specific recommendation to move forward, I hope Asian and European artists and cultural workers have the chance to get together in various cities of Asia to express, through creative works, their vision of arts and sustainability for the next generation. Whether countries can indeed fulfill their promises to reduce CO2 emission in the next decades depends on whether the next generation heeds the call to action. Artists have been able to inspire the young to see and interpret the world differently, to show them what is meant by sustainability and to empower them to be the change.



Maria Rosalie Zerrudo

Connect2Culture... A Vision for Positive Change!

A complete workshop (as artist and cultural worker)

My being an artist is a rediscovery of my own cultural resource. Art as only one facet of culture, opened my eyes to see a bigger landscape of cultural awareness. From a micro-community, I found my sense of place with a renewed perspective. Mindanao gave me a taste of culture and a new sense of personal adventure in rediscovering my purpose, and my relationship with my community.

The sense of community came as a personal process of finding my own cultural roots as the basis of a lost identity redefined. Art as a powerful cultural distinction in every society seen in the living spaces, architectural styles, traditions and costumes, and the many textures of the Filipino ingenuity rekindled my cultural pride.

In the Kapwa book foreword, David quoted Pyotr Chaadaev, “our memories reach back no further than yesterday; we are, as it were, strangers to ourselves... that is but a natural consequence of a culture that consists entirely of imports and imitations... We absorb all our ideas ready-made, and therefore the indelible trace left in the mind by a progressive movement of ideas, which gives it strength, does not shape our intellect... We are like the children who have no been taught to think for themselves; when they become adults, they have nothing of their own—all their knowledge is on the surface of their being, their soul is not within them.” (David 2005).

Growing up in a colonized country, what is left of us is a culture of pure imitation. But later, this notion I realized is just an icing of the cake. I realize my cultural roots is as powerful as any other ancient civilization with a very high level of sense of dignity and nobility. It is owning it that became a process for my own self-definition.

A living breed of culture-bearers as living narratives in the Kapwa book (De Guia 2005) were discussed revolving around the Filipino humanity, spirituality, morality, and wisdom. In the lives of these culture-bearers I found strength as a Filipino which has transformed its multiple roles as cultural worker and community artist educator. Later I call this journey a complete workshop. Being born in this country is a multi-dimensional experience of people and multiversity in culture which naturally loosens up interpersonal relationship. In this book K’sulhay, one of the culture bearer said: “The family memories are the past. We dream of the future. But we encounter the beauty in the moment to moment. A new day is coming. We are still here....”

In this gathering of the minds, here and now, weaving our visions together is the greatest power of man. As we discuss about culture, we retrace “Culture as the heritage

of the quality of the world (Voices of Silence. Malreaux, 1956). I realized that I share the same virtues and values with many other cultural workers in my country. “Cultural homogeneity amid diversity, a unique “national character” (Aguilar 2009).

In her book for cultural workers (Sta. Maria 2001) she teaches how to value the everyday and reminds us that there is great potential in the human spirit to excel and therefore people can improve the future. I believe in people, but first I must believe in myself.

Life changing stop-overs

The people I met who became my best of friends, mentors and students are among the great minds of this country. This life-changing encounters are my greatest classroom. In the course of recapturing memories and embracing the moment, I felt there is a need to experience the different textures of our communities that transported me in different cultural textures and reawakening in my travel and meeting the right people.

In an ecotourism destination island Camiguin, I found my niche. My brain child, “Biodiversity Art Education through Popular Media” (in partnership with the Department of Education and Camiguin Polytechnic State College) created public spaces for discourses and interaction through seminars, foras, contemporary theater road show, earth camps, short film and slides production, biodiversity concerts, functional recycling installation art.

Being born a Filipino is a complete workshop. I learned through the years through my pains and chaos to bring out a dancing star.

“I am the change I want to see happen in my universe.”

I am active participant in cultural development education in my community, with particular concern on preservation of natural and cultural heritage.

“Cultural development has the power to mould attitudes for collective action. Without an appreciation for culture, people constrain their potential for self-achievement and self-fulfilment.” (Sta. Maria 2001) In her essays in The first Cultural Worker’s Manual, Sta. Maria explained the cultural responsibilities of Leadership as such needs recognizing cultural characteristics. Looking at the culture as the root for capability for excellence, and heritage of the nobility of our people. Responsibility in leadership stresses maximizing on the local resource of people, talents, skills, artisanship, knowledge to create excellent cultural products. Linking the past and the present with a sense of history is culture’s strength that prevents the cultural losses such as brain drain and exodus of skilled workers. Leadership espouses also multi-cultural tolerance. The author stressed that Cultural Education is important and leaders should protect culture. This book inspired me as it contained a treasure



of cultural values for reawakening our love for our own people. The writer's brilliance watered the cultural thirst in the struggle to find a sense of connectedness in our multi-culture society.

Arts and Culture as an Active Player in Society

We have to nurture each other, build a strong circle of cultural educators among our local communities through experience and participation.

According to Sta. Maria (2001) cultural workers can use art to: (1) strengthen community identity; (2) sublimity and directly habitualize discipline and the need for goals of equality; and most importantly (3) encourage the imagination and the creativity needed to make a community innovative and daring enough to see potentials product development and upgrade surrounding based in community needs and available materials.

I think this is a very sensitive observation of our society as we have accorded ourselves with so much imported ideologies and influences and we forgot our own "culture of excellence". We need to nurture this sense of well-being with culture as a human right to be accorded due respect and to be allowed to flourish. Nurturing Filipino national culture as independent, equitable, dynamic, humanistic, evolved and developed by peoples themselves as stipulated in the Republic Act 7356.

In my community, I organized through the local college with my students public exhibitions and forums, cultural road mapping, cultural research, culture and arts festivals which links our people to their sense of identity and cultural roots.

The heritage and ancestral houses in my community as living cultural landmarks that I thought can give us a sense of story of the place stand silent, insignificant and forgotten. The spectacular embellishes are not seen nor recognized. Until I met a scholar and fellow-cultural worker who helped me "retraced the lights through our windows with "okkil" art when I looked at the houses again in a different eye." An example of my contention in the preservation and reconnecting with the past is part of this excerpt below.

Cultural Barrage in Public Spaces

Kabilin (a visayan word) which means cultural heritage echoes a past forgotten. The quest for the real identity of Camiguin and cultural roots led us to search for the intangible treasures in the community including the houses with exemplary architecture.

We celebrate the ordinary with the works of everyday lives... We give honor to our artisans who make our houses... They are the visual historians of our tangible heritage... They make our story visible for hundreds of

years... They are our living cultural treasures... Finding our roots, is knowing who these people are... Our artists... Artisans... Mat weavers... Wood carvers... Bamboo craftsman/woman... Boat makers... Carpenters... They all have a story to tell. Cultural heritage is about people and the things they produce to continue our existence. This day we celebrate their stories and work of art... The heritage houses serves is a living cultural road map.

Cultural Banking

As artist we naturally engage ourselves in the creative documentation out our stories as a community. We make people think about how we interpret art through paintings, films, theaters and many other forms of expressions. We need to strengthen cultural development as part of total human development. In her book Sta. Maria described this process as "increasing levels of knowledge, abilities of discernment, and skills of expression. We invest on people as we invest on something tangible and intangible. "Its methods and philosophies is a reminder, that cultural development affects a society's fundamental identity and self-respect, that cultural development can change what a people think, feel, prioritize, and negate."

We need to establish as strong deliberate support system for our cultural projects in the local communities as we try to develop excellent cultural products. Artists are powerful resource as protectors of public cultural wealth and community assets which needs support in both spiritual and financial sustainability. Artists are the cultural resource who understands the responsibility of keeping the tradition alive.

Culture engaging with Environmental Issues: Is there a "cultural deficit" in the concept of sustainability?

Tourism as a generic self-destruction

As prime ecotourism destination we have many considerations to attract more visitors. However, sadly enough, there is not a culture and art sector to manage this kind of activities which I consider as one of the cultural deficits in my island community. As part of development plans, the building of roads across the forests which has destroyed our local habitat and landscape are given priorities as infrastructure project. Poor governance reflects projects mostly focused on "urbanizing" and "building more structures" rather than focusing on human infrastructures. The intangible community assets are often discounted.

Cultural apathy of anime age

The rice fields are endangered with alarming depopulation happening in rural areas, not many young farmers choose to continue the tradition with strong



influence of rapid urbanization. The young people do not want to become farmers, so the local communities have to depend on imported products.

These dysfunctions are somehow the cultural deficits which stems from the disintegrated values of the community. The sense of place is lost. The end of the story is somehow to find a way to reintegrate the relationship of man with nature and culture. Maybe we can rekindle this pride in our history if we start to tell our own stories so we make it convincingly visual then we could feel familiar and congenial to our roots. It is a life giving philosophy of taking responsibility and accountability with one's actions as individual for a collective gain.

In her book *Sta. Maria* (2001) mentioned the major questions of cultural development which may seem to remain as cultural deficits to sustainability such as:

- Expanded access to cultural institutions and tolls that increase literacy and lifelong learning;
- Enthusiasm for creativity, imagination, curiosity and the desire for quality in order to use them in socio-economic applications;
- Decisions made favorable to the total environment (both cultural and natural);
- Protection and transmittal of the national, regional and international identities of a people;
- A positive attitude towards pluralism or multiculturalism or cultural diversity
- Protection of peace as a pre-requisite for progress;
- Self-assessment, self-expression and self-reform
- The handling of change with human compassion, holistic understanding, political maturity and an openness to both nationalism and globalism

What we need is continuity... historic preservation is not sentimentality, but a psychological necessity." (Huxtable in *Lessons in Healing the City's Scars*). We need to educate the community.

In my community, most decisions made are not necessarily reflective of the culture or favorable to the environment, thus re-educating the public is a serious strategy.

Hipocrates said, "Where there are no flowers, there can be no sadness." Our life is linked in one way or the other to our environment. The concept of beauty is not a curriculum in school but an innate pedagogy that follows a spiritual understanding of the aesthetics. The concern for our environment in the ancient practices is a very basic relationship. Everything relates with the spirits of the plants and there is a sense of deep reverence to the creation. In the Philippines, our wealth is mostly

attributed to our natural wonders and the richness of soil in the tropical environment where everything one throws to the ground grows.

Living in the tropical environment is a gift and treasure to be in the center of biodiversity of worlds resources. But the gift comes with a serious responsibility in the use of resources, but most importantly in conserving, repairing, reviving the land and its natural resources. We are not ordinary people, for we live is the epicenter of the world's biodiversity. We have in our hands the responsibility to protect the world's species not even known to man for not even half of the world's resources has been studied. What we do to our environment is or life span. We can only live as long as there is clean water and something to eat.

Community story telling

The paradigm shift brought by climate change calls for a change of lifestyle, mental sets and learning pathways. Enigmata Creative Circle for the past years, engaged in community art education developed multi-media materials which have been shown to different schools and communities in Camiguin. These materials were output of the on-going biodiversity art education project being conducted in the island. The children of the schools are direct beneficiaries and co-creators in the project. This project gathered the voices of children about environment and the statements they made.

"The lack of knowledge of the country's biological wealth and condition is probably the main reason of the public's apathy regarding the current status and problems of our environment", (Rawang, (2007). The most important relationship of man and nature is broken. Excessive lifestyle has brought us to a crisis, which is left for the people of the world to solve.

In the schools of living tradition in the indigenous tribes, children are taught how to respect nature and the spirits. In the oral traditions of our ancestors, powerful stories such as the Talaandig tribe's struggle for the land has echoed the voices of the mountains.


Re-education is necessary for young children, not to repeat the same failure in managing the resources of the world. An ambitious project on environmental education in an island community made children investigate on other intrinsic learning process of story-telling with the use of multi-media. We need to open the eyes of children with hope in our stories.




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ASEF's contribution is with the
financial support of the European Union