

IETM MAPPING

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# CREATION AND DISPLACEMENT

*Developing new narratives  
around migration*



Picture from the '[Reisegruppe heim-weh!](#)' project

Authors: Yasmin Fedda, Daniel Gorman, Tory Davidson



in collaboration with

**culture  
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Agenda 21 for culture  
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**Creation and Displacement. Developing New Narratives Around Migration**

***IETM Mapping***

by Yasmin Fedda, Daniel Gorman, Tory Davidson

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Culture Action Europe

Culture Action Europe is an advocacy organisation uniting cultural stakeholders, networks and organisations throughout Europe and beyond which hold the firm conviction that culture must be put at the heart of public debate and decision-making at every level – local, national and European. It constitutes an essential component for sustainable societies based upon respect for universal human rights and to the benefit of present and future generations.

As co-initiator of the former Platform for Intercultural Dialogue, Culture Action Europe has worked at developing and promoting both its members' and wider community's expertise, and participated in a number of projects in this field, for example the MCP Broker project, which examined migrants' participation in cultural organisations, funded by the European Integration Fund of the European Commission DG Home Affairs. In March 2016, via its Intercultural focus group, it launched an extensive call to members and contacts to collect examples of good practices uniting projects for newly arrived migrants, refugees and on-going intercultural expertise/activities, examples of which were contributed this publication.

For more information: [www.cultureactioneurope.org](http://www.cultureactioneurope.org) or by mail to [contact@cultureactioneurope.org](mailto:contact@cultureactioneurope.org)



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United Cities and Local Governments - UCLG

The Committee on Culture of UCLG, also known by its founding document, the Agenda 21 for culture, is the global platform of cities, organisations and networks to learn, cooperate and launch policies and programmes on the role of culture in sustainable development. The Committee has addressed issues related to migration and diversity over the years, and in November 2015 it published a briefing entitled 'Cities, Refugees and Culture', which invited local governments and civil society actors to share projects and ideas. Some of the contributions received in that context have contributed to this publication.

UCLG is the global network of cities, local and regional governments, which represents and defends their interest on the world stage. UCLG's mission is to be the united voice and world advocate of democratic local self-government, promoting its values, objectives and interests, through cooperation between local governments, and within the wider international community.

UCLG supports international cooperation and learning between cities and their associations, and facilitates programmes, networks and partnerships to build the capacities of local governments. UCLG is also a partner to ICMPD and UN Habitat in the 'Mediterranean City-to-City Migration Profiles and Dialogue' project (C2C project), which aims to enable 10 cities (5 European and 5 in the South Mediterranean) learning on their strategies to improve the inclusion and integration of migrants at city level in the Mediterranean region, including through access to human rights and to services. UCLG members formed a task force for disaster risk responses that seeks to pilot and promote new mechanisms of humanitarian response and planning of cities in crises. In 2015, the UCLG World Council has adopted a Motion on local and regional government's solidarity and preparedness in the context of the humanitarian crisis.

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), UCLG's European section, has also adopted a Declaration calling for a real, common European asylum policy.

# Foreword

Everywhere across Europe and beyond, contemporary performing artists are showing their role as an immediate reaction task-force to help in humanitarian crises, and use their skills to help bring relief or even heal wounds and help newcomers integrate into society. Deeply convinced of the special role of artists in these challenging times, we undertook a quick scan of the field – realizing that many more initiatives didn't reach us.

What you're looking at is a mapping which, in spite of its natural limitations due to time, resources and language constraints, has the ambition to serve multiple purposes. Artists and cultural professionals engaging, or willing to engage, in work with and for refugees and migrants can find here useful food for thought, practical suggestions and contacts to enlarge their collaborations and develop their own practices in the most professional and successful manner - where success is not based on financial results, but in improving the dialogue between different 'communities' living on the same territory. Arts and culture professionals with a refugee or migrant background can find contacts with organisations who can ease or strengthen their connections with the artistic community in their new country.

Arts funders and policy-makers at different levels can find interesting initiatives proving the role and engagement of artists in working with refugees and migrants, as well as good arguments to (continue to) support this kind of initiatives.

We'd like to take these challenging times as an opportunity to stress once again the importance of collaborations and exchange, locally and internationally, within the arts sector and with other actors. The time is ripe for such collaborations - actually, there's no time to lose. We consider it vital to keep the discussion open: you're welcome to join our [members' forum](#) or to contact us at any time at [ietm@ietm.org](mailto:ietm@ietm.org) to share your experiences and thoughts. We're looking forward to continuing the conversation...

*Note: this publication is completed by an Annex listing additional projects on the same topic. You can check the updated Annex on [IETM website](#).*

# About the Authors

**Yasmin Fedda** is an award-winning documentary filmmaker whose films have focused on themes from Edinburgh bakeries to Syrian monasteries. Her films have been BAFTA-nominated and screened at numerous international festivals including Sundance and Edinburgh International Film Festival and has also made broadcast films for the BBC and Al Jazeera. Her most recent film, 'Queens of Syria', won the Black Pearl award at the Abu Dhabi Film Festival in 2014. She has a PhD in Transdisciplinary Documentary Film and is co-founder and programmer of [Highlight Arts](#), an organisation that works with artists in times of conflict.

**Daniel Gorman** is an arts consultant, researcher and producer whose work focuses on increasing dialogue, communication and collaboration, while promoting social justice and equality through the arts. He holds an MSc in Middle East Politics from the University of London, is festival director of [Shubbak: A Window on Contemporary Arab Culture](#) and is a co-founder of [Highlight Arts](#), an organisation which works in collaboration with artists in areas in times of conflict.

For IETM, Daniel has already authored the Fresh Perspectives '[The Art of Disobedience](#)', on arts and politics.

**Tory Davidson** is a theatre artist who has spent the past ten months on the ground exploring theatre and arts initiatives made by and with refugee, asylum-seeking, and displaced communities and individuals. She has researched theatre productions and workshops in Greece, France, England, Germany, and Jordan, spending weeks with initiatives such as We Are London, Good Chance Calais, Station Athens, and Love Boat. For the past five years, she has been an advocate for the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers, specifically focusing on Burmese refugees located in Thailand. She is a current Thomas J. Watson Fellow with a BA in Theatre.

As the media narrative around refugee and migrant issues in Europe and internationally grows ever more toxic, this mapping aims to showcase some of the incredible projects taking place in Europe and internationally with a focus on support, solidarity and engagement with those who are recently displaced. It is tempting to get depressed when we see the back-room deals taking place in Europe to repress those on its fringes, but as the projects included here show, art has the ability to combat marginalization, to foster community, and to platform stories that louder narratives often ignore. The case studies in this report are very much the tip of the iceberg, we encourage you to keep digging and develop work in collaboration with projects in your local area, across Europe and beyond.

# 01.

## CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

### 1.1. Who are we talking about?

Before starting to discuss artistic practices around issues of refugees and migrants in Europe, we need to mention 'labelling'. The label 'refugee' or 'asylum seeker' are legal markers, used to denote what is (in theory at least) a temporary legal status of an individual. Whilst the legal rights of an individual may take many years to be resolved or transformed into 'resident' or 'citizen', resulting in individuals living in a legal limbo for a long time, as a general point we wish to highlight that the concept of 'refugeeness', or a 'refugee community' must be approached with caution, as this can give rise to a notion of 'otherness', a concept that there is one homogenous community of refugees who all think and act the same and have had the same general experiences.

We would also argue that trying to draw a strict delineation between 'migrants' and 'refugees' is not a useful exercise. Many 'migrants' have fled times of extreme economic hardship and scarcity, and have had many similar experiences to those faced by 'refugees' during their displacement and journey. The issue of migration is clearly one which is defined on economic and political sensibilities. In the European case this can be seen in the case of 'legal migrants' who happen to live within European borders,

and 'illegal migrants', who are outside of them. And of course, no migrants are illegal if they can provide funds for the state (at the time of writing an 'investor' visa for the UK required a deposit of £2million).

Therefore we suggest it is useful to recognise the intersectionality of 'refugee' and 'migrant' with every other label we may encounter on a daily basis. Whilst this report focuses on artistic responses to refugee movements, many of the case studies highlighted work with individuals from many different backgrounds, in support of creating the 'encounter' with new arrivals.

And finally – the term 'crisis'. A number of projects we discuss have highlighted that whilst there is a crisis taking part, it can be seen more as a crisis of the nation state, and

a crisis of the breakdown of politics leading to armed conflict, rather than a 'refugee crisis'. Therefore for this report we have avoided using the term.

### 1.2. A problem for Europe or a problem from Europe? Some context

Currently an estimated 60 million of us around the world are 'forcibly displaced people', a perfectly Orwellian term for the losing of your home, your safety and your sanctuary. Of these 60 million, approximately one third are classed as 'refugees', those who have been provided with this legal status as they have had to leave their home country due to violence or threats of violence. This current level is the highest level of forced displacement since World War II. This is a terrible, violent situation on an international scale. On a European level around 1 million people tried to cross the Mediterranean in 2015; UNHCR records show that these were primarily Syrians, Iraqis and Afghans. Thousands have died making the crossing. Between January and May 2016 over 1,357 people had died. Increasingly, a state of dispossession is becoming the new normal.



picture from 'We are the Persians!' by Station Athens (copyright: Elina Giounanli)

Refugees have a legal right to claim asylum in Europe under the terms of the [1951 UN Refugee convention](#) and the relevant 1967 Protocol. These documents include 'The right not to be punished for illegal entry into the territory of a contracting State' (Article 31) and 'The right to freedom of movement within the territory' (Article 26). It is worth bearing this in mind when watching the responses of European governments to refugee populations. Every state in Europe signed up to this convention and protocol.

Whilst some viewed the creation of borderless Europe and the Schengen-zone as a new dawn in freedom of movement, to those outside this area the construction of 'Fortress Europe', patrolled by Frontex since 2004, has seen ever greater challenges to refugees attempting to enter the European Union, with those trying to cross the seas dying in ever greater numbers, particularly since the suspension of search and rescue in 2014.

This Catch 22 situation, where people are being forced to break laws and put their lives at risk to claim their legal rights, is one which is being played out on a daily basis. Many of these refugees have been forced to leave countries across the Middle East. This is largely due to the counter-revolution and violent backlash which has sought to destroy the utopianist movements, uprisings which spread across the Middle East from Tunisia in December 2010 through Egypt, Yemen and Bahrain and on to Syria by March 2011. Refugees from this region began arriving in significant numbers from mid-2011 onwards. In Syria for example the uprising and resultant governmental repression has lasted for over 5 years, with over 400,000 people believed killed<sup>1</sup> (estimate by [Syrian centre for Policy Research](#), the UN stopped counting in 2014) and over 4 million refugees and 7 ½ million internally displaced people [within Syria](#).

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/11/report-on-syria-conflict-finds-115-of-population-killed-or-injured#img-1>



picture from Pan Intercultural Arts

The refugee population is primarily located in the neighbouring countries: Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon. Many moved first to Lebanon, Jordan or Turkey (with a smaller number moving to Iraq). Those who arrived in 2011 and 2012 found some room to manoeuvre, and a level of welcome, but by the end of 2012 the mood was shifting, and it was becoming clear that for many remaining in these countries was not a viable option. Extreme restrictions on employment existed [for those in Lebanon](#), and for those in Turkey and Jordan the main government policy was one of encampment, leading to Jordan having the second biggest refugee camp in the world, Za'atari, and at the same time around 40,000 Syrian refugees held in the no man's land between the Jordanian and Syrian borders.

Of course not all those coming to Europe originate in Syria or Iraq. Many also arrive from sub-Saharan Africa. Those coming from Eritrea cite the indefinite National Service, a type of slave labour utilised by the government, along with the incredible repression of media and political opposition as [key reasons they leave](#).

Whilst there have long been initiatives working to support these new arrivals in Europe, on 3 September 2015 a photograph of a little boy who had drowned in the Mediterranean was published by news agencies, and everything changed. This heartbreaking photo of the toddler Aylan Kurdi managed to suddenly [get through to people](#).

We witnessed mass movements and demonstrations in support of refugees, and the lauding of 'Wilkommenskultur' in Germany. In an about-face, Angela Merkel changed overnight from saying 'if... you all can come, we cannot manage that' (and making children cry in the process) to saying it was her '[damned duty](#)' to welcome refugees. And then by December 2015 the attacks in Paris, the assaults in Munich and the attacks in Brussels in 2016 have left tragedy in their wake, with refugees paying a heavy price. The notion of a 'collectively guilty refugee body'<sup>2</sup> has been reinforced through

<sup>2</sup> J. P. J. Pottier. *Re-Imagining Rwanda: Conflict, Survival and Disinformation in the late 20th Century*. Cambridge University Press: 2002

the mixing of the labels 'refugee' and 'perpetrator'. Once again refugees have become political footballs, subject to media scrutiny due to perceived shifts in public opinion. However, many individuals and organisations have been doing incredible work of solidarity and support, inside Europe and around the world. Taxi drivers from the UK who have gone to help new arrivals on Lesbos, Second generation Syrian migrants to the US who have set up clinics in Jordan, community fundraisers for humanitarian aid to urban refugees in Lebanon. Artists too have engaged and responded.

### 1.3. Arts and refugee support – some background

Artistic responses in support of refugees have been going on for a long time. In 1995 an Austrian arts collective called *Wochenklausur* started a project called '*Immigrant Labour Issues*'<sup>1</sup>, which reframed 'refugees' as 'artists' to help them get around immigration and the need for work permits, as 'artists' (unlike refugees) didn't require work permits. The international support group 'Kein Mesch ist Illegal' (no-one is illegal) was founded at the Documenta Biennial in 1997. Those who hold the depressing record of bearing the longest refugee status are of course the Palestinians, whose cause has seen a huge number of artistic output. To even summarise this would take many documents. In 2000, Belgian theatre company Groupov, organised '*Rwanda 94*'; a seven hour play telling the stories of the Rwandan genocide. In 2004 Ros Horin and Racing Pulse Productions in Australia produced '*Through the Wire*', a piece of verbatim theatre focusing on tensions in Australia around migration, and the lived experience of refugees in Australian detention, following the large-scale mobilizations against the Woomera camp there. In 2003 France based company Théâtre du Soleil

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.wochenklausur.at/projekt.php?lang=en&id=6>

produced '*Le Dernier Caravanseraï*', a six hour, two part musical journey incorporating refugee experiences, and provided audiences with materials to learn more about the issues depicted onstage.

More recently initiatives such as Refugee Week (in the UK) have taken the UN Refugee Day and made it an exciting and diverse moment to showcase new work by and focusing on the concept of 'refugeedom'. The *Platforma Festival* which began in 2012 'brings together groups and artists / performers of any background or political status (e.g. refugees and non-refugees), whose work examines the varied experiences of refugees both before and after they arrived and settled in their host country'. Focusing on an area of first arrival for many, projects like Thomas Klipper's '*Lighthouse for Lampedusa*'<sup>2</sup> aimed to highlight the dangers for those navigating the Mediterranean, and the incredible *Museum of Migrations* on Lampedusa.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.klipper-projects.net/blog/?p=195>



picture from Ad Dar

Culture should not be seen as some sort of panacea, healing the injuries of all who interact with it. This is highlighted in an excellent briefing by *United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)* on '*Cities, Refugees and Culture*' where they state: 'Cultural participation and interaction can play an important role in alleviating this, but, above all, holistic and transversal policy approaches, involving public authorities and civil society and being sensitive to the needs of all, should be promoted'. This highlights that in order to be successful in supporting refugee and migrant individuals, artistic projects need to be incorporated into, work in partnership with, and provoke when required, civil society and local government.

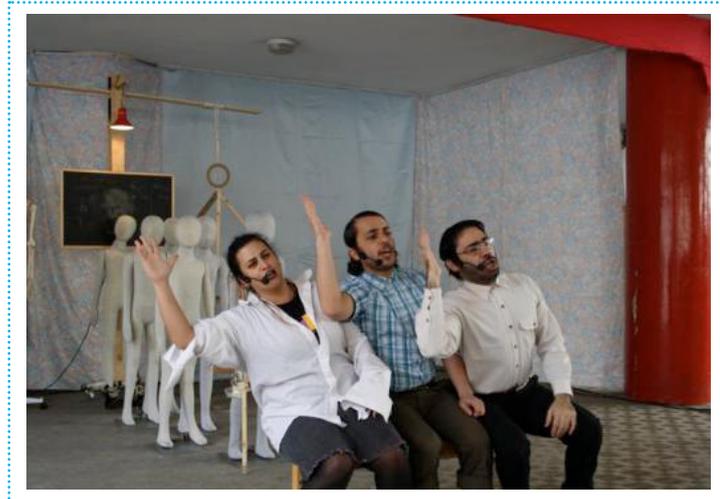
This is just a tiny fraction of initiatives which have been carried out to highlight and challenge the political narratives which lead to one becoming a refugee. It is from this backdrop that the initiatives in this report emerge.

#### 1.4. Methodology

The information in this report is by no means an exhaustive list of organisations or projects working with or on the topic of refugees and displaced populations. Rather, this report highlights a sample of projects that reflect practices of artistic works being produced across Europe and neighbouring countries that specifically deal with a variety of issues around migration.

The examples presented in the text were gathered mostly via a call spread by IETM in autumn 2015 - at a time when many other European cultural organisations invited their constituencies to share experiences and practices. IETM received over 100 contributions, and about 80 more were sent by IETM members in spring 2016 following a second call. The selection of cases was further enriched by contributions provided by CAE (who independently launched a call on the interaction between refugee activities and long-term intercultural actions in March 2016) and UCLG and by the authors, thanks to their experience and direct involvement in some projects dealing with refugees and migrants. It should be noted that the initial aim of the above-mentioned calls was not to build a thorough mapping, but to first have an idea of what was happening on the ground.

Since the calls issued by IETM and CAE were only published in English and French, responses could be collected only from a limited number of countries and operators. The briefing on Cities, Refugees and Culture published by the Committee on Culture of UCLG in November 2015 was available in English, French and Spanish but, while it encouraged reactions, it had a global scope and was not aimed at collecting an extensive collection of examples in Europe. On the other hand, valuable projects which happen as a fast reaction to an urgent issue generally have small human and time resources available, and thus limited dissemination/visibility online. It is also important to note that the information used in this publication highlights only



picture from Zoukak

certain aspects of these works. Evaluation of 'impact', for example, is difficult without detailed analysis of audience and participant engagement; information that was difficult to attain in most cases. However, bearing in mind these limitations, this publication aims to provide an introduction to some of the current discussions and artistic projects taking place with a focus on refugee and migrant engagement and support.

Finally, it should be noted that this publication is completed by an [Annex](#) listing around 80 more projects and initiatives aiming to foster social integration through the arts. These were collected through an additional call circulated solely amongst IETM members in April 2016 (in order to collect input for the brainstorming meeting '[Voices of Culture](#)' to be held in Brussels in June, to which IETM was invited). The response from IETM members was impressive: over 100 replies in a few days allowed to collect arguments in favour of arts and culture as ways to enhance social inclusion, as well as a number of projects across Europe working with migrants and refugees. While time and resources didn't allow for in-depth analysis with these additional cases, the

list of projects and initiatives collected in the Annex aims to facilitate you to connect with other initiatives in your country, and possibly develop fruitful collaborations and exchanges.

# 02.

## CASE STUDIES

The artistic practices and organisations highlighted in this report use a variety of approaches and art forms. Some are theatre based, some are networks, and others run arts workshops. We have identified four major categories:

1. Creative engagement with displaced communities
2. Work made by artists who identify as refugees, asylum-seekers, newcomers, or migrants
3. Non-refugee artists making work about refugee and asylum-seeking communities primarily for non-displaced audiences
4. Networks and platforms for art made by those with refugee or migrant backgrounds

These categories should only be viewed as a guide, and many projects have aims and approaches that overlap. As such, our categories are not mutually exclusive. For example, many drama workshops with refugee communities (often facilitated by non-refugee identifying artists) create theatrical productions that clearly fall under the categorization of 'work made by artists who identify as refugees, asylum-seekers, newcomers, or migrants'. We have chosen these categories only as a starting point to open up discussion.

From these categories and projects we can pull out some thought provoking artistic practices, and critical questions of how such projects are approached. Firstly it is important to ask, who is this art for and by? In what ways does the work challenge or reify the positive or negative media narratives and perceptions of 'refugees', 'asylum seekers' or 'migrants'? Is the work sustainable? Does it reflect the experiences of real people? Does the work give participants a sense of engagement? A number of organisations have been approached to expand on these issues as explained in the next pages.



picture from 'I was a child somewhere else' by The Paper Project



picture from Zoukak

## 2.1. Creative engagement with displaced communities

Many of the projects highlighted in this report fall into the category of 'creative engagement with displaced communities'. This reflects a desire and commitment from artists who are not necessarily from a refugee background to work with those either self-identifying as refugees or migrants, or those whose legal status renders them as such. Many projects within this category aim to create artistic content through workshops with refugees and asylum seekers. In some cases this creation of art is a way through which to help participants integrate or socialise within a new context, and in others the aim is the creation content in and of itself. In all cases, we suggest it is important to approach such works and outcomes as artistic output first and foremost.

Some of these organisations, such as **Counterpoints Arts** (UK), **We are London** (UK), **Pan Intercultural Arts** (UK), **Station Athens** (GR), **SIRKHANE Social Circus School** (TR) and **Speaking of Yesterday and Tomorrow (Theater an der Ruhr)** (DE) are projects that have longer term existence as part of their mission. They are not only reacting to the here and now and work either with refugees and migrants whether as part of network or through creating new works. All have different aims and projects, such as creating a network of refugee and migrant artists (Counterpoints Arts) or providing artistic education for displaced young people and refugees as a means to help them express themselves and to facilitate navigating Greek society (Station Athens).

Of course, sustainability is a key element of the feasibility of longer term projects, where funding can determine the lifespan of a project. However, it is important to point out that longer term projects offer the possibility of deeper commitments through the building of strong networks. At the same time, it can be useful for longer-term projects to ensure a regular media presence from which to keep the voices

and experiences of migrants and refugees at the forefront and challenging negative stories, such as through gaining reviews of artistic productions.

Other projects within this group include projects that are either devised as shorter term in their genesis, those which have sprung up in reaction to a perceived need, or are a coming together of a group of people to respond to a particular situation or issue. Some of these initiatives have created positive and important work, or generated much media attention to the stories of those displaced or caught in the legal migratory restrictions of Europe. For example, **Reisegruppe heim-weh!** (DE) which runs an interactive sightseeing tour where asylum seekers are the tour guides to the city. **Good Chance Calais** (UK/FR) is a theatre space set up temporarily in the infamously known informal camp of the 'Jungle', was a creative space set up for camp residents to create workshops or performances within the camp. They have had the support of many high profile theatres in the UK, such as The National Theatre, a network which has assisted them to gain much media attention and to invite established theatremakers into their space to run workshops, such as **Zoukak**, a Beirut-based company that has made work with marginalized communities for the last decade, and **Clowns Without Borders**, an international

organisation of volunteer clowns that aims to bring laughter to those living in harsh circumstances. A key challenge in working in these frontline spaces is a lack of predictability, and when much of the 'Jungle' was evicted Good Chance Theatre has had to re-adjust its presence and activities. This idea of setting up in the spaces occupied by refugees has also been utilised successfully by organisations across Europe, such as **Cinemaximiliaan** (BE), a Brussels based daily pop-up cinema that started at the beginning of September 2015 in the refugee camp of the Maximiliaanpark and moved to the Maximiliaan Hal in Brussels, and is now beginning to go to asylum centres across Belgium.

Some initiatives provide respite, education, opportunities for expression and therapy or psychological support such as **Art Refuge** (UK/FR), **Ad Dar** (TR), **Pan Intercultural Arts** (UK), **Their Voice Project** (GR/TR). These initiatives recognise the need for safe spaces and psychological support when one is in a period of displacement or recovering from trauma, and they utilise the arts and theatre practices for this. The aims of such projects may not be media visibility or changing the narratives around refugees and displaced people, however, ensuring that their work is recognised on a wider level is valuable to ensure the continuation and support of such important work.



picture from *We are London*

- **Counterpoints Arts and Platforma (UK)**

Counterpoints Arts was founded in 2012 to create a UK-wide network of artists from refugee and migrant backgrounds. Almir Koldzic and Áine O'Brien, the co-directors and co-founders, created Counterpoints Arts to enable artistic initiatives, connect artists, and facilitate learning. The network's staff includes artists and organizers identifying as refugees and migrants. One of their key projects, and the UK's largest annual celebration of refugee artists, is Refugee Week, which Counterpoints Arts organized and manages. Every June during the week of World Refugee Day, Counterpoints promotes events across the UK and encourages communities to create their own celebrations. In London, the Southbank Centre will launch this year's Refugee Week on June 19th by hosting musical and dance performances, as well as offering free activities all day. The theme of Refugee Week 2016 is 'Welcome,' and 350 events are expected to take place throughout the UK, with additional performances and community events organized in Australia, South Korea, France, Belgium, and Germany.

Counterpoints Arts also fosters community by bringing together artists, practitioners, advocates, and academics to share, discuss, and interrogate their work. In 2011, 2013, and 2015, Counterpoints Arts produced the Platforma Festival, which served as a meeting place for all involved in this work. Last year's Platforma Festival, produced by Tom Green, spanned six days and offered a unique mix of performances, discussions, lectures, and networking opportunities. In this setting, those focused on participatory arts were able to discuss best practice methods and learn from the experiences of others, while artists identifying as migrants, refugees, or ex-refugees spoke about work that was particularly important to them. Over 170 people attended the



picture from Refugee Week 2013 by Counterpoints Arts

conference's twenty-two workshops, and nearly 3,000 people attended at least one aspect of the festival, including two film screenings, and eleven live performances of music, theatre, and performance art.

Moving forward, Counterpoints Arts hopes to expand their international network and formally create the infrastructure for global dialogue and exposure to art made by and about refugees and migrants.

- **We Are London and The Paper Project (UK)**

We Are London is a youth theatre initiative at [Ovalhouse](#), a theatre located in South London, which is focused on fostering community and providing high quality arts training. Since its creation in 2005, young native Londoners and teenagers new to the UK, many of whom are unaccompanied refugees, undocumented minors, and trafficked young people, have come together to create theatre that is interesting and exciting to them. They meet once per week for two-hour workshops of theatre training, devising, and discussion, all described as

'value-led' and 'participant-centred.' After those two hours, they relax around the theatre's lobby for snacks and chatting. The consistency of this initiative combats the isolation and marginalization many teenagers new to London experience, and works to build their confidence. Some teenagers show up to their first workshops speaking very little English. They are welcomed into the group by the other participants and helped along the way when language is difficult. Pastoral support is available during every meeting to help ensure the wellbeing of all participants. Participants refer to their peers as their 'We Are London family'. They create two shows per year and rarely use text that they themselves haven't written. All participants perform in the shows, but many also contribute their talents in film, writing, music, and costume design to these performances.

The Paper Project is a theatre company that grew out of We Are London in 2013. Its seven artists have made three pieces, including their most recent, 'Safina Al-Hayat' (which translates to Life Boat), which premiered at the Southbank Centre in June of 2015 during Refugee Week.

'Safina Al-Hayat' was made in solidarity with the thousands of people crossing the Mediterranean. Identifying as migrants and refugees themselves, these artists create pieces about their experiences as newcomers to London. 'I was a child somewhere else', their second devised work, was performed across London, including in the Victoria & Albert Museum and the Southbank Centre, and brings to light how they interact with their memories of childhood now that they live in a new place.

The Paper Project frequently visits the current We Are London group and further creates community and mentorship at Ovalhouse. Additionally, MasiMas, the restaurant and cafe in the lobby of Ovalhouse, is run by women who are refugees in the UK.

- **Station Athens (GR)**

Station Athens is a weekly theatre workshop in Greece's capital with participants from refugee backgrounds. It runs at SYNERGY-O, a space created in 2009 where vulnerable groups have access to the arts through free artistic workshops. Based on art therapy methods, activities are especially designed for young refugees as a means to help them express themselves and to facilitate navigating Greek society. The latter is achieved by gradually developing a small community in the Station Athens group, some participants having been in the group for five years, and allowing those new to Athens a space to improve their Greek and express themselves creatively. Workshops include physical and vocal warmups, exploring found material, creating scenes based on source work, improving acting skills, taking direction, and analyzing texts. Artists from many disciplines are involved in facilitating these workshops, which allows participants to use a variety of skills and to explore different art forms. Through these workshops in theatre, film, photography, and visual arts, they devise performance pieces that stem from source material interesting



picture from 'We are the Persians!' by Station Athens (copyright: Elina Giounanli)

to the workshop participants. They performed 'We are the Persians!', their latest devised piece, at last summer's Athens and Epidaurus Festival. This documentary theatre piece allowed personal narratives and Aeschylus' Persians to interact. Regarding other impacts, actors from the Station Athens group have been connected to other productions outside of the workshops, thereby showing that the workshops have built their skills as artists and provided them with a theatre network to utilize.

- **Exoduses (IT)**

Exoduses is an international and intercultural project by Teatro dell'Argine that involves 50 participants coming from 20 different countries: Ivory Coast, Chad, Bangladesh, Italy, Peru, Senegal, Guinea, Mali, Bulgaria, Tunisia, Gambia, Pakistan, Albania, Afghanistan, Cameroon, Morocco, Iran, Romania, Nigeria, and China. Started in 2015 in Italy, it offers a programme of workshops and performances undertaken by Teatro dell'Argine and Tunisian artists, in collaboration with the international project Tandem Shaml.

In addition to intensive workshops and performances, the backbone of Exoduses is a weekly two-hour workshop that is free of charge and welcomes all skill levels and experiences in theatre. The workshop is run in at least three language (English, French, and Italian) and works to improve skills in body, vocal, and spatial awareness, as well as choral work and improvisation. There is an emphasis on non-European music, dance, and movement. Most workshop participants are between fifteen and twenty-five years old, with several members as old as sixty. The project's goal is to use theatre as a universal language to break barriers between cultures and generations. Exoduses has become, in its pilot edition, an inexhaustible source of encounters and suggestions, not only regarding cultural diversity, but also intergenerational dialogue and interdisciplinary exchange.

- **Sirkhane Social Circus School (TU)**

The Sirkhane Social Circus School is an artistic and educational space created for Syrian, Iraqi, and local Turkish teenagers and children. Since 2012, Sirkhane has run on the principle that circus, art, and music are important for refugee children who have faced war and potential trauma. This work seeks to relieve their pent-up energy, which is especially prevalent in children living in camps where they have a restricted geographical area and irregular access to school. Working primarily in the Mardin region of Turkey, Sirkhane has projects both inside and outside of camps. Their projects focus on growth; they want children to improve at circus, acrobatics, and arts by working towards attainable goals. These goals include learning new skills, mastering these skills, teaching other children, and continuing to improve. Through circus and artistic tools, students share their personal experiences and knowledge. This safe space enables them to collaborate, to learn how to coexist peacefully, and to get a glimpse into the diversity of their community. They also stress that physical activities such as circus promote the health and wellbeing of children living in camp environments.

Offering free circus classes five days per week all year long, more than 150 children take classes with Sirkhane and learn skills in juggling, hula hoop, stilts, poi, human pyramids, diabolo, riding a monocycle, slackline, ropewalk, hand standing, and gymnastics. The circus classes are run by volunteers, and students who have been a part of the program for long enough can teach other children new to the program their circus skills. For example, thirty-five children in refugee camps were taught circus arts over a series of workshops, and these thirty-five have gone on to expose over 1,000 of their peers to these skills. Art Anywhere Association, which includes Sirkhane's initiatives, organizes an International Music Festival every April



picture from Sirkhane



picture from Refugee Week 2013 by Counterpoints Arts

and an International Circus Festival every September, where over 10,000 children watched performances. During these festivals, any youths who want to participate are able to create circus and theatre work together and learn from

international guest artists. The 2014 International Social Circus Festival had over 80 guest artists from 20 different countries.

- **'Speaking of Yesterday and Tomorrow' (DE)**

In Germany's Ruhr Valley, Theater an der Ruhr has made refugees its mission and the theatre company Ruhrorter has made this space its home. The aim of the collective is to create sustainable, long-term artistic encounters and collaborations between refugees, local authorities and theatre institutions. Since 2013, the Ruhrorter collective has made site-specific theatre and art projects with refugees in the Ruhr Valley. They make their pieces by collecting source materials, such as interviews, objects, texts, and personal stories, and creating improvisations inspired by these materials. Through the improvisations, larger pieces are developed and made. For the past three years, Ruhrorter has been working on a trilogy, with the last piece in the series to open in June 2016. Titled 'Speaking of Yesterday and Tomorrow', this play tackles the legal rights of refugees and focuses of the issues of housing that refugees may face in the urban reality. It is a piece devised from interviews with refugees, and all actors in the play identify as refugees themselves.

Previous work includes 'Zwei Himmel', the trilogy's second piece, which was set near the theatre in a post-industrial building complex that once housed an asylum centre for 400 people. 'Zwei Himmel' focused on what life might have been like in this now-abandoned asylum centre based on stories gleaned from the building and the experiences of the company's actors. For example, the piece spoke about deportations that allow refugees only minutes to collect their belongings before being flown back to their home country. During the play's seven month rehearsal process, three actors were sent out of the country.



picture from 'Reisegruppe heim-weh!'

- **'Reisegruppe heim-weh! ' Tours (DE)**

'Reisegruppe heim-weh!' was a performative sightseeing tour by coach, which traced the daily routines and perceptions of refugees in Leipzig. Asylum-seekers became tour guides, and citizens of Leipzig became tourists in their own city. With the stories told by the performers and events along the route, participants took a trip to the 'unknown' and were confronted with their own prejudices and given a new perspective on familiar streets.

The project was developed over several months. There had been debate about new accommodation for asylum-seekers in Leipzig since 2012. The project creators first looked at the prejudices refugees face in Leipzig by interviewing citizens, politicians, and welcome initiatives. Refugees were also interviewed in order to understand how they feel about living in Leipzig. Thirty-eight viewers saw each performance with six actors leading the two-hour tour in a coach bus around the city.

Tour guides spoke in several languages and audience members were given headphones to listen to translations and to music when appropriate. Actors told stories of their memories from home when passing places in Leipzig that reminded them of the country they left. Audience members also watched scenes common to asylum-seekers take place outside of the bus, such as tired German bureaucrats endlessly stamping papers and people loitering outside of the accommodation where many asylum-seekers are placed. In addition to its informative aspects, this interactive performance allowed asylum-seekers and Leipzig natives to get to know each other. During the show's 'intermission,' which took place at a community park, family members of actors setup food and drink to foster conversations between performers and audience members.

Due to its popularity, the performance extended its run and an exhibition was made to document its process. The project developers are considering taking the initiative to other cities.

- **Good Chance Calais** (GB/FR)

Good Chance Calais is a self-declared 'Theatre of Hope' in France's largest refugee camp, infamously known as the Jungle. When Good Chance first set-up its white geodesic dome as a creative space open to all nationalities, languages, and ages, most of the camp's eight thousand residents were living in camping tents, forced to endure freezing temperatures and waterlogged mud. As the camp has changed over the past eight months, including evictions by the French government, the theatre has adjusted, catering its programs to what is wanted and needed by camp residents.

Good Chance explodes the definition of theatre, including music, dance, painting, writing, clay-modeling, karate, yoga, cinema, and kite-making in their weekly schedule. On a daily basis, the workshops and activities inside the theatre are led by camp residents and guest artists alike. Theatre companies such as Kneehigh, a British storytelling group, and Zoukak, Lebanese theatremakers with a history of working with refugee communities, have facilitated workshops of theatre games, puppetry, writing, and devising. Performances from elsewhere, like the Globe's touring Hamlet and the Yehudi Menuhin School's orchestra, have been brought to the Jungle through Good Chance. These performances give camp residents the opportunity to enjoy art without always needing to get involved in a workshop process. The theatre, before its temporary closure due to camp evictions in March, hosted activities eight hours per day, six days per week.

Impact in the Jungle is difficult to quantify. Although there is no means of keeping track of the number of people who have visited Good Chance throughout its tenure, individual events in the theatre, such as live concerts and performances, have seen over three hundred attendees. Additionally, several asylum-seekers who crossed the Channel and reached the



picture from Zoukak

UK claimed that the theatre 'was the only thing that kept them going' during their time in the Jungle. Other individuals have claimed this performance space is important due to the community it fosters and its ability to 'recharge their spirits'. The Index on Censorship nominated Good Chance for their Freedom of Expression Award, which is granted to an individual or organisation promoting human rights within dangerous or difficult circumstances.

Good Chance Calais will produce an encampment late this summer to place the work made in the Jungle and by refugees in the UK centre stage.

- **Zoukak Theatre Company** (LE)

Zoukak Theatre Company and Cultural Association was created in Beirut in 2006. Founded on a steadfast belief in collaboration, Zoukak emphasizes the process of making a piece of theatre as equal to (if not more important than) the product. Openly political and believing that each production is a collected work made by diverse individuals, their

most recent productions have reached diverse audiences, touring internationally to Norway, Rwanda, India, Germany, and France for 'Death Comes Through the Eyes', a play that grapples with how we deal with death as it is portrayed by the media. They describe their work as 'experimental', as many productions do not have linear narratives, and they do not focus on language in an effort to make productions accessible to as many audience members as possible.

In addition to their professional productions, they have created many psycho-social theatre interventions over the past decade. These interventions have focused on people marginalized by society: those displaced and otherwise affected by war, incarcerated youth, survivors of domestic violence, and children with multiple disabilities. With the displacement of 2 million Lebanese in the south of the country in 2006 as a result of the Israeli war, and further displacement in 2007, Zoukak created social approaches to drama therapy to work with these populations.

By creating workshops with people across Lebanon in villages, schools, and refugee camps, Zoukak makes art accessible to communities outside of the country's cultural capital. They have created performances that coincide with awareness campaigns to move beyond discourse and create practical action in communities. Additionally, Zoukak offers trainings for artists interested in this work and fosters discussions around its practice.

Zoukak offers a studio space in Beirut for artists to develop work.

- **Clowns Without Borders (GR/FR)**

Clowns Without Borders (CWB) is an international organisation of volunteer acrobats and clowns whose goal is to bring smiles to those in difficult situations. There are branches of CWB in twelve countries, and each branch conducts tours to lead theatre workshops and perform comedic shows. These tours can last several days to several weeks and require much energy and adaptability on the performer's part. Recently, clowns from the US and Ireland have traveled to camps in Lesbos and Calais, respectively, to perform for children and adults-alike.

CWB USA toured Lesbos twice, once in the fall of 2015 and once in the winter of 2016. They had a very successful first tour, clowning on the Greek island to more than 7,000 people. During the winter, they were not granted access to Moria camp, as security had heightened during their months away. However, they remained adaptable and clowning to groups of all sizes. They encouraged audience members to dance with them, used life preservers as clowning props, and performed their silly routine to children and adults alike.

In the words of Luz Gaxiola, a clown from the US who performed with CWB in Lesbos, 'As clowns with bright costumes

and big open faces, we are approachable. We are open with people, so people are open with us. People immediately sense we are there to have fun with them. They are free to play and do silly dance moves without people thinking they are idiots, because we clowns are bigger idiots than they'll ever be'.

In Calais, the clowns led acrobatic and circus workshops in the Good Chance theatre (mentioned above) for all ages and genders. They also performed a comedy show to packed houses. According to the clowns that visited Calais, their typical audience in previous locations had been mostly children and their parents, while the audiences in the Jungle were mostly teenage boys and adult males. However, they commented that these audiences were more generous with their laughter than they are used to.

After each day on their tours, the CWB team publishes a blog post regarding what they saw, learned, and did. These posts offer a different and more humane perspective on the conditions and people living in Lesbos and Calais than what is commonly reported in the media.



*Clowns Without Borders performing in Lesbos*

- **Cinemaximiliaan (BE)**

Cinemaximiliaan is a pop-up cinema that started at the beginning of September 2015 in the refugee camp of the Maximiliaanpark and moved to the Maximiliaan Hal in Brussels. The cinema runs everyday and it is well-utilized by camp residents. It is a place where people gather, talk, and charge their mobiles; it offers something fun and community-oriented during the evenings. In addition, Cinemaximiliaan has started to visit asylum centres spread over Belgium. The project is completely based on volunteers and most of them are Brussels-based artists.

- **ArtRefuge UK (UK/FR)**

In addition to their work in Nepal, ArtRefuge UK has been working in the Jungle since September 2015. Working with the psychological support team in Calais with Médecins du Monde France and Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), ArtRefuge has been providing materials and practitioners for art therapy work with camp residents who want these resources. In

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addition to traditional materials, they also use natural materials found in the camp, such as sand and tree branches, to make art. They also perform outreach work to let camp residents know about their services. They are present in Calais two days per week, and they have both newcomers and returners at every session.

The team are UK registered art psychotherapists but also visual artists, bringing a confidence and creativity in working with a range of media, and in particular a commitment to being led by the residents of the camps, using personal, socio-cultural traditions and skills from across the resident members of the group, as well as the found objects and natural materials in their immediate context, which encourage an important discourse in people's personal, sometimes shared experiences.

- **Ad Dar (TU)**

Ad Dar is a community centre in Istanbul bursting with activities for all ages, genders, and interests. Its name translates to 'the home,' and the centre acts as just that for Syrian and Palestinian-Syrian refugees. Everyday it offers at least five hours of activities and classes including yoga, salsa dancing, Arabic, creative writing, academic writing in English, and beginner's Turkish as well as film nights, time for teenagers to hang out, children's workshops, classes specifically for women, literature circles, storytelling workshops, concerts, poetry readings, photography workshops, theatre workshops, and play productions. The schedule changes slightly every week, so there are surprises and exciting activities to join in addition to more regular classes. Half of these courses and activities are taught and led by Syrian volunteers. Ad Dar also supports refugee children to enrol in Turkish schools.



picture from Cinemaximiliaan



picture from ArtRefuge UK

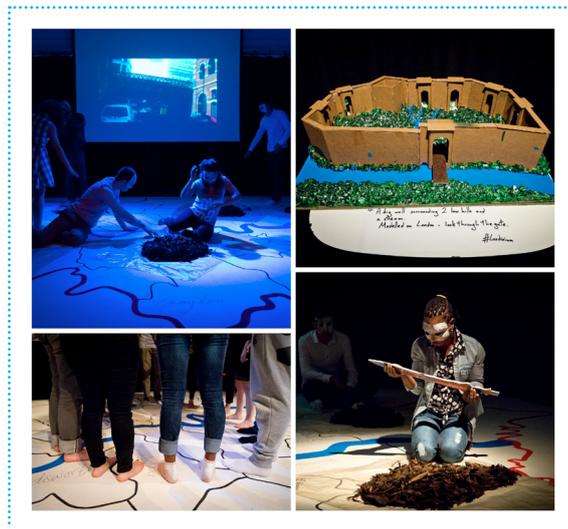
- **Pan Intercultural Arts (UK)**

Located in London, Pan Intercultural Arts offers weekly theatre and arts workshops for young people aged fifteen to twenty-five from refugee backgrounds. They offer a young refugee group, called Fortune, for seventeen to twenty-five year olds as well as a group for unaccompanied minors (younger than eighteen years), called Future, who are referred to them through the Refugee Council and other large organisations, such as Freedom from Torture, Red Cross, and social services. These workshops are between two and three hours in length (plus a group meal at the end) and strive to tackle the isolation felt by many young refugees in London. Unlike in other settings, the participants in Fortune and Future have a shared experience and therefore do not need to explain their backgrounds to their peers. Instead, they can focus on rediscovering creativity and playfulness through theatre exercises, games, song, movement, and outside stimuli. The workshops tend to have repetition, which allows participants to have a sense of improvement at games that were once difficult and to find comfort in known actions. The cohesion and community of the group is also very important; as a result of this, Fortune and Future participants refer to their groups as the 'Pan Family.'

When creating work, the groups take trips to museums, rewrite songs, and create stories out of exhibitions. Out of these explorations, they have made site-specific pieces in shipping containers ('Asylum Road', which looked at the history of asylum) and church crypts ('The Colour of Love'), as well as productions that have been featured during Refugee Week at the Southbank Centre. Most recently, 'Taste of Memory', a promenade performance revolving around memories of food from around the world, was performed at the Horniman Museum and Chats Palace in London, and at last year's Refugee Week, 'Invisible



picture from Ad Dar



picture from Pan Intercultural Arts

Londons' was performed to explore the layers of London's history seen from the perspective of the newly arrived at the Southbank Centre.

Pan Intercultural Arts will expand its work and by creating a new group to start in Oxford in September. They hope to use some Fortune and Future participants as facilitators for new groups.

- **Their Voice Project (GR/TU)**

Their Voice Project is a series of workshops for unaccompanied refugee minors residing in Greek shelters. Started in 2014 by The Institute of the Child Health and run in association with the NGO PRAKSIS, these workshops combine social theatre, interactive drama and a psychotherapy in an effort to inform refugee minors about their rights and the possible dangers to which they are exposed. It encourages them to develop skills in self-protection. This intervention also enables unaccompanied minors to express their needs and concerns and approach issues they consider important for their lives. The workshops have run in centres throughout Greece, including in Athens, Thessaloniki, and Volos.

- **Jiwar Creation and Society (ES)**

Located in Barcelona, Jiwar Creation and Society is an international residency for artists and researchers focused on or inspired by urban space. Within their 'Making Neighbourhood' program, two projects arose addressing the challenges faced by artists from asylum-seeking and undocumented backgrounds.

One project in this program, titled 'Performing Home: Social and Affective Challenges of At-Risk Artists,' explores the obstacles artists who are displaced have in Barcelona, specifically regarding making new work and the challenges in finding a semblance of their homeland in their new city. Two of the artists included in this project were Bâsse-Al Nabris, a

Palestinian poet, and Maria Conchita Pineda, a Venezuelan graphic designer. The work culminated in an exhibition in February of 2016.

The second project, titled 'Enacting Citizenship: A Queer Diasporic Topography of Barcelona', was a researched-based piece conducted in 2013 by Thomas Strickland that explored the day-to-day lives of undocumented residents of the city with non-normative sexualities including LGBT. Strickland's aim was to expose the global scale of dangers facing LGBT individuals, causing many to seek safety in less homophobic and gender-oppressive countries. In this project, Strickland deconstructed citizenship and public space through photographing participants' hands on their passports in various areas of Barcelona, arguing that 'citizenship is a relationship with the city that exceeds official documentation.' Photographs were presented at exhibitions in 2013 and 2014 in Barcelona.

## 2.2. Work made by artists who identify as refugees, asylum-seekers, newcomers, or migrants

Some projects listed here create work that is specifically made and presented by people who explicitly identify as refugees or asylum seekers, using their current status as a means through which to explore and share artistic work and experiences. **The Paper Project** (UK- already mentioned above) and **Refugee Club Impulse** (DE) are both theatre groups that are made up partially or entirely by people who identify as refugees or asylum seekers or have refugee backgrounds, to create theatre pieces. For the teenagers involved in The Paper Project in London, they create theatre that can reflect their experiences in ways that are interesting to them. In the case of Refugee Club Impulse, theatre is used as a tool to fight for the rights of refugees within German society.

There is also a trend of theatre performances made by directors who identify as refugees or have refugee backgrounds, and which have received critical acclaim such as **'In-Cite?'** (GR), an interdisciplinary performance created in 2014 by UNGUARDED in collaboration with Mohammed Mirzay, an Afghan refugee, human rights advocate, and member of the Afghani community in Athens. This performance raises public awareness of the personal and legal challenges particular to the Afghan refugee community in Athens. **'Samedi Détente'** (FR) is a piece by Dorothee Munyaneza, a refugee from the Rwandan genocide who fled her home country more than twenty years ago and more recently made a theatre piece to reflect on the Rwandan genocide, reflecting on the layers and different stages of history of migration to Europe from earlier conflicts around the world. **'Love Boat'** (JO) is a play written and directed by Syrian artist Nawar Bulbul and performed by six displaced Syrians in the country's capital that uses comedy and classic texts to provide a different narrative of Syrian culture and to critique society taboos.

Such works, made by those who explicitly identify as refugees or asylum seekers, or whose background was once that of a refugee or asylum seeker, can provide an important contribution to the rhetoric and narratives on issues of migration and asylum. By giving the voice directly to those in that situation such works have the opportunity to share experiences, challenge prejudice, and ensure that a variety of different narratives around migration are heard within the media, and social and political landscape, an important contribution, especially during times of negative portrayals of migrants.

- **Refugee Club Impulse (DE)**

Refugee Club Impulse is a company of theatre artists from displaced backgrounds. Founded in Berlin in 2013 one of the city's camps for newly arrived asylum-seekers, the company's motto is 'Nobody gives us a voice. We take it!' They use theatre as a tool to fight for the rights of refugees and analyse life in Germany from the perspective they have experienced. They seek the dignity they deserve and fight the isolation they feel in German society by using their art against racism and in service of solidarity

instead of pity. They all come to the company as artists and exchange their experiences by teaching each other skills in theatre, dance, film, and visual arts. Their most recent event was held on March 20th, 2016 and called Carnival Al Laji'in (refugees) as a part of the My Right is Your Right campaign launched with other human rights groups. They created a street-length play in the form of a pageant to give visibility to the stories of people who have moved to Germany. They created dance steps to protest slogans, built parade floats, dressed in costumes, and organized performances of bands, beatboxers, musicians, dancers, and their own work.

Previously, Refugee Club Impulse has made and performed shows and offered workshops to young creative people in reception centres. 'Do Butterflies Have Borders' was a thirty-minute dance piece made in 2013 that expressed the suffering and lack of freedom found by refugees in Germany. It was performed at the camp in which it was made as well as outside of the camp. It also created a community among the people who participated in the creation of this performance; it allowed friendships to develop



picture from the Carnival by Refugee Club Impulse

and gave some routine and productivity to a life of perpetual waiting. 'I see theatre as the only way to show German and European people what life [is like as] a foreigner here; it's about suffering', said Ibrahima Belde, one of the participants who had never experimented with theatre before this project.

In 2014, 'Letters Home' was shown at Maxim Gorki Theatre in Berlin. This production was based on letters written home to family members about their new lives in German reception centres and their journeys to Germany.

- **'In-Cite?' (GR)**

'In-Cite?' is an interdisciplinary performance created in 2014 by Unguarded in collaboration with Mohammed Mirzay, an Afghan refugee, human rights advocate, and member of the Afghani community in Athens. This site-specific performance raises public awareness of the personal and legal challenges particular to the Afghan refugee community in Athens, who live without any protection or care from the state. It aims to reflect the human condition in this portrayed crisis to international audiences and focuses on the importance of finding the ability to communicate and of empowering one's own voice. A piece about solidarity, it has been described as a 'visual, narrative, and performance memoir that pays tribute to the heroic lives of refugees, children and families in movement to the safeguard of southern European borders'.

- **'Samedi Détente' (FR)**

Created in 2014, 'Samedi Détente' (Saturday Relief) is a piece by Dorothee Munyaneza, a refugee from the Rwandan genocide who fled her home country more than twenty years ago. Munyaneza felt that little had been said about the genocide, and two decades later, she felt the need to say something. She was twelve years old when the genocide started; with her own story and the

stories of her family still living in Rwanda acquired through several return trips, she tells this tale through music, movement, and word. Her work seeks to speak through the eyes of those who witnessed the genocide, to mirror her personal experience of escaping the horrors of war, and to give a voice to those who

stayed behind. Critics have called this work 'an intimate reverse shot to history textbooks' (Libération) and have said that the power of Munyaneza's performance 'dances on the rhythm of joy to better tell about pain' (La Croix). The piece is still in performance.



picture from 'In-Cite?' by Unguarded



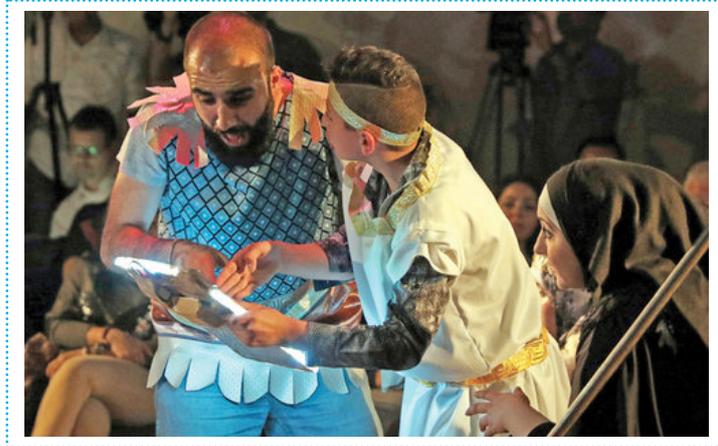
picture from 'Samedi Détente' by Dorothee Munyaneza (copyright: Laura Fouqueré)

- **'Love Boat' (JO)**

'Love Boat' is a play performed by six Syrians who have fled the conflict and who portray a Syrian theatre company journeying across the Mediterranean Sea. It opened in Amman after three months of rehearsal under the direction of Nawar Bulbul, a Syrian actor, writer, and director. This is the latest work by Bulbul, who is also known for creating Shakespeare in Za'atari, which was an adaptation of 'Hamlet' and 'King Lear' performed by children living in Jordan's largest refugee camp, and a production of Romeo and Juliet performed simultaneously in Amman and Homs by children connected via Skype.

'Love Boat's characters first sail to Greece, then Italy, followed by Spain, France, and Germany. The show is often a play-within-a-play, as these seafaring actors put on scenes well-known from the literature of each of the countries they visit, such as Don Quixote fighting a windmill and Tartuffe seducing Orgon's wife, Elmire, around a table. These scenes, however, often are interrupted by 'true stories' coming from 'the performers'. For example, after minutes of circling Elmire in a state of lust, Tartuffe finally touches her hand, which causes the actress playing Elmire to let out a terrible scream. Her character then tells the others aboard of her time in prison under Assad and the endless sexual assault she survived. When the other characters tell her to stop talking, she continues to say that even after she was released from prison, society and their prejudice against survivors of assault raped her one thousand times over. This emotional moment received great applause every evening of its April 2016 run in Amman.

Bulbul, the writer and director of this piece, has quite purposefully adapted comedic scenes to fight the troupes of victimization and exploitation. Laughter and energy fills the stage because, as he says, people are risking their lives



picture from 'Love Boat' (source: AFP)

crossing the sea 'because they love life'. References to politics and religion are rampant, while taboos of Arab society are smugly criticized.

Crowdfunding and grants from Shubbak, a UK-based organisation focused on contemporary Arab culture, have allowed the actors, which include children and adults, to receive a stipend for their time. This production hopes to tour internationally.

- **'The Last Month of the Fifth Year' (TU)**

Yasser Abu Shaqra is a Syrian-Palestinian playwright residing in Turkey. His play 'The Last Month of the Fifth Year' is about the journey of a man under Abu Shaqra's same circumstances, and it explores questions of identity, love, and revolution that have risen from crossing into a new culture. As many Syrians have fled to Turkey, the two communities have been forced to think about themselves and the other—the neighbour—differently than before. Abu Shaqra seeks to interrogate these changing attitudes. This

work is supported by the Syrian Artists Support Program through Laboratory of Arts, an initiative launched by Ettijahat that offers ten grants of \$5,000 to artists from Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Egypt, and Jordan.

### 2.3. Non-refugee artists making work about refugee and asylum-seeking communities primarily for non-displaced audience

Several theatre initiatives have sprung up to reflect on the issues of refugees or asylum whether for general audiences or those within a refugee context. Again, these are artists and organisations which, whilst they may come from a refugee or migrant background, do not explicitly frame themselves as such. Some of these may be projects developed as part of an established theatre or theatrical group, whilst others are new ventures in reaction to a new context or situation in a particular place. Such works either reflect on the realities of those that have newly arrived to a particular place or who are grappling with the social or political questions and issues that have emerged from a perceived influx of migration. For example, **'Rule'** (NL) and **'Kazohinia'** (HU) are both interactive game/plays made to create scenarios for the audience from which to create understanding, notions of hospitality and solidarity in their respective countries. Interestingly, some projects are not theatre projects per se, but could fit within this category as an arts project, such as **'Refugee Republic'** - an interactive online map rendering of the Domiz Syrian refugee camp in Northern Iraq - made with research with camp residents to facilitate a wider world audience to get an insight into the challenges of living within a designated refugee camp. Its innovative approach has ensured it has received much international media attention and awards.

It is important to note that such works need to be approached sensitively, and that perceived assumptions of who 'refugees' or 'asylum seekers' are should not be taken for granted nor assumed to be a uniform 'community'. Therefore, such work is best utilised when, as in the cases above, much thought has been given to who the audience is, or attempts to include refugees in the discussion of the development of the project have been taken on board.

- **'Rule'** (NL)

'Rule' is an interactive dramatic game about hospitality created by Emke Idema. Developed in 2013, this game asks the audience to be the performers and gives them scenarios with choices to make. This award-winning piece was created in the Netherlands to promote discussion and engagement with the audience, on the intersection of personal ethics and policy making. A host (Emke Idema) asks the participants questions such as 'When do you allow a stranger in your house? How do you act when your guests change your rules? And how do you act as a translator at the Immigration Department?', and the play is determined by how the group responds to each of these dilemmas. Some groups, as Idema says, will embrace the 'game' element and bring high energy and a want for fun to the room. Other groups think more critically about the piece and attempt to work out what it is the host is intending with each choice. The game itself, as its name implies, has rules that some groups follow strictly and others try to work around. The game then functions as an analogy for the state.

This piece presents a space where change can take place, referred to as 'a playground,' and although it is not the same as the society seen outside of the performance, 'Rule's' goal is to encourage individual participants to investigate their own thought processes and engage with society differently.

- **'Kazohinia'** (HU)

By mixing social game and drama, Lifeboat Unit is developing a theatrical board game called 'Kazohinia', based on the 1940's Hungarian novel of the same name. The source text revolves around the question of how to integrate yourself into a completely different society. Lifeboat Unit's goal is to enable the participants to put themselves in the shoes of refugees and to question the receptive and rejecting attitudes towards migrants. Players make their way to a fictional island and are asked questions surrounding their emotional and practical wellbeing along their journey. The goal is to give Hungarian citizens a glimpse into what it might be like to move to a completely new place.

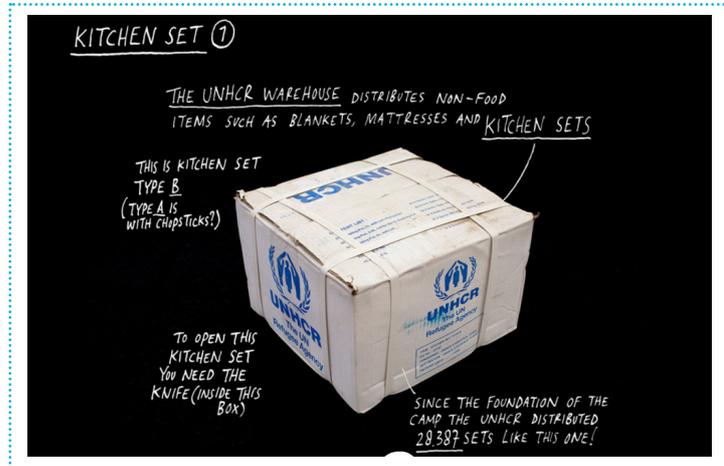


picture from 'Rule' (copyright: Thomas Lenden)

In every production made by Lifeboat Unit, the focus is on solidarity and understanding, all politics aside. As they are particularly interested in building tolerance and empathy in youth populations, this piece is meant to generate thoughtful conversation among the players and to confront the current reality of global movement in a productive way.

- **'Refugee Republic' (IR)**

'Refugee Republic' is an interactive map that depicts Domiz Refugee Camp, a Kurdish camp in Iraq established in 2012 by Submarine Channel. Different planned routes allow viewers to experience aspects of the camp including the 'life route', 'money route', and 'construction route'. Through video, animation, photographs, interviews, recorded sounds, and 'handwritten' notes, viewers see the camp from the point of view of a visitor, but of a visitor who has become acquainted with the camp's residents, structure, facts, politics, and ironies. For example, the description of housing projects in Domiz is particularly interesting, as it has evolved during the camp's lifetime. Originally UNHCR-branded tents with a six-month life expectancy, Refugee Republic's map offers timeline illustrating the establishment of contracting businesses by camp residents, which diversified housing options. Cement porches, doors, padlocks, metal roofs, and large water tanks now exist in the camp alongside canvas tents and a myriad of other building styles.



picture from 'Refugee Republic'



picture from 'Refugee Republic'

## 2.4. Networks and platforms for art made by those with refugee backgrounds

Networks and platforms for refugee or migrant artists are an important development that recognises the need to establish, promote, support or commission the work of artists that have become displaced or moved to new countries. It recognises the skills and desires of new arrivals and utilises their skills and works within a new context. This both gives presence to the artists themselves and makes it explicit in the context or country they are in that they have talent and are present.

**Counterpoints Arts** (UK) is an organisation based in the UK that enables artistic initiatives, connects artists and facilitates learning around issues of refugees and migration through workshops, platforms and festivals. They coordinate the annual UK wide refugee week as well as manage the Platforma Network and festival which showcases performances, discussions, lectures and networking opportunities for organisations working with refugees and migrants across the country. These platforms also provide opportunities to discuss best practices and experiences from others.

A different type of network is **Dox Box** (SY/DE). While this network does not explicitly state it is a refugee or migrant network per se, we felt it was important to mention it here as it is an interesting professional development of a project that started in one country and matured into a new version when its organisers had to leave their home. What was once a documentary film festival in Syria is now a network for Arab filmmakers based out of Germany, and engages filmmakers from the Arab region, wherever they are based, within a network of support for professional development as one of its core aims. Such organisations, such as Counterpoints Arts and Dox Box, build on the professional expertise and output of a stated group of artists and help them

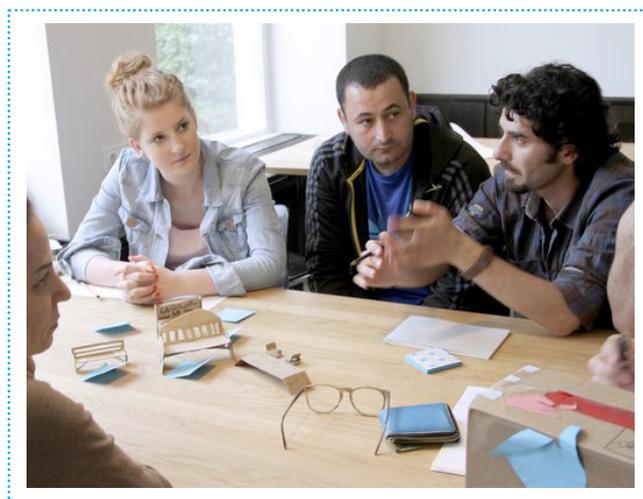
develop and foster their skills and distribution opportunities.

Additionally, more physical networking spaces have been established, such as exhibits and communal spaces for collaboration and learning. Examples include **We Refugees** (DE), an exhibit in Germany with a whole program of events for artists, academics, and the public, and a web platform and community garden for those new to Berlin started by **Kommen und Bleiben** (DE), a collective of art students excited to make new artistic friends and offer advice for applying to university to continue their studies.

Working with the professional capacities of artists is an important contribution to refugees or asylum seekers that are in new countries and have skills that they would like to develop, or through which they can build new networks from in their new context, to enable them to flourish in their talents. Building on the artistic and professional experiences they bring with them is a key, and such organisations recognize these individuals as professional artists first and foremost.

- **Dox Box (SY/DE)**

Dox Box has established an online network for documentary filmmakers from the Arab World. The Dox Box International Film Festival was hosted annually starting in March 2008 in Damascus, but was forced to stop after the festival in 2011. Since the time of the festival discontinuation, Dox Box was founded in Berlin as a nonprofit to foster community and support artists in this field. Serving as a reference for Arab documentaries, they print an annual report describing the year's films and have created a multilingual online library for documentary materials. Their online platform is meant to allow networking between artists and the sharing of tools, skills, and discussions. Regarding their goal of providing support, Dox Box gives residencies to filmmakers making work from archival footage, as well as providing emergency funding to filmmakers working in dangerous situations. In order to be apart of the Dox Box network, artists must be making films around social and humane causes; membership is free of charge.



picture from *Kommen Und Bleiben*

- **We Refugees (DE)**

Open from the 22nd of April until the 12th of June 2016, this Karlsruhe-based exhibit and series of events is hosted by Badischer Kunstverein and inspired by Hannah Arendt's 1943 essay 'We Refugees'. Arendt's essay analyses her background as a Jewish woman fleeing the Holocaust and assimilating in America, while also looking towards the future. Her essay's first line reads, 'In the first place, we don't like to be called 'refugees.'"

Inspired by another statement from Arendt - 'You have to be an optimist if you want to build a new life' -, Thomas Rustemeyer designed 'The Room of Optimism' for the We Refugees exhibit. This space is open to appropriation and simultaneously a meeting place, an archive, a display, a discussion forum, and a space for activities in the exhibition's program of events.

Included in this program are documentaries, short films, performances, photography exhibits, and installations, as well as lectures, workshops, and seminars. One such initiative that will be present is the foundation Class at Weißensee Kunsthochschule Berlin, a class for students new to Berlin hoping to study at a German arts school. Over the course of two semesters, students prepare their artistic portfolios and to take admissions tests. Artists, theorists, were activists alike are welcomed to share their work. The exhibition is admission-free.

- **Kommen Und Bleiben (DE)**

Started by art and design students in Berlin, Kommen Und Bleiben was founded to provide a web platform that fosters collaboration between established Berliners and newcomers. Their 'Guide for a Newberliner' is a smartphone app that provides insights into finding your way around Berlin, key steps in the asylum process, and how

to seek support. Kommen Und Bleiben also welcomes newcomers to any events, lectures, and exhibitions at the Kunsthochschule Berlin-Weißensee in the hopes that new ideas and opportunities will arise. One such idea was 'Pieces From Exile,' an exhibition that presented the work of Syrian artists and musicians in Berlin. LP albums were made and screen printed at the School of Art, with all proceeds from their sales donated to the White Helmets, Syrian voluntary rescue workers that has saved over 50,000 lives and provide services helping 7 million people. Additionally, in April 2015, newcomers and art students started Bermuda Garten, a community garden that provides a place for celebration, socialization, and the exchange of skills.

## 03.

CONCLUSIONS AND  
RECOMMENDATIONS

It is hard to write 'conclusions' about a set of projects and initiatives like those included in this publication, since all of them are still in the making. Moreover, only time will tell us if European societies have actually become more inclusive and tolerant, and the actual role of the arts in the process will probably dilute and leave soft traces difficult to measure with scientific precision.

However it is a belief underpinning this publication that just because we are in the middle of a process, it is crucial to ensure that different actors agree on collaborating together - and acting each in their own sphere of influence - on the basis of some shared principles. Artists, cultural operators, the civil society, local governments, national and European institutions shall all agree on some concepts that need to be translated into concrete policies and practices. In the following pages, some guiding principles are sketched from the perspective of Culture Action Europe, the Culture Committee of UCLG - United Cities and Local Governments, and IETM through the voice of the authors of this publication.

## 3.1. The bigger picture

*Ideas from Culture Action Europe*

- It is essential not to lose track of the broader picture, and place the current refugee 'crisis' into the context of global developments, notably political instability in many regions of the world, increasing social inequalities and man-made environmental change/ecological challenges. With this in mind, migratory flows must be considered as structural components of our realities, and not as temporary challenges. We must therefore not handle a 'crisis', but build upon increasingly mobile populations in ever more intercultural societies. New models of participation, democracy and cohesion must be experimented in order to take our changing environment into account.
- Many challenges we are currently facing in our societies are not a result of new migrants and refugees, but stem from a deeper unease caused amongst others by a decreasing sense of mastery of one's environment,

a loss of social cohesion and sense of belonging. Fear and a search for stability and self-righteousness are causing citizens to project negative attributes and simplified or erroneous causal relationships onto the migrant populations. These challenges need to be tackled, all the while reinforcing our legal framework of rights, and overall participation increase - in projects for and with migrants and refugees as well as in general. It is therefore mandatory that autochthonous/resident population must be integrated in actions furthering cultural cohesion.

- While this publication highlights a multitude of fascinating good practice examples that bear witness to the creativity and good will of the culture sector, we wish to warn against '(re-) activism'. The sector of culture and the arts has been running intercultural dialogue projects with success for many years, despite often marginal funding. This knowledge and know-how should be recognised, integrated and built upon when now focusing on newly arrived refugees and migrants.



picture from 'Reisegruppe heim-weh!'

### 3.2. The local perspective: conclusions and recommendations for local governments and other local actors

#### *Ideas from the Committee on Culture of UCLG*

Across Europe, local governments play a significant role in the design and implementation of a wide range of public policies which are essential for the welcoming and integration of asylum-seekers and refugees, including housing and culture, as well as, very often, education and social inclusion. Indeed the projects presented in the report generally involve work at local level – in community and arts centres, asylum centres, schools, streets and squares, etc. From the experiences mentioned in this publication and from further work on the issue, the [Committee on Culture of UCLG – United Cities and Local Governments](#) suggests a number of practical steps to take to enhance the role of arts and culture for social inclusion of refugees and migrants:

- The intrinsically local dimension of the resettlement, welcoming and integration of asylum-seekers and refugees should be further acknowledged, and resources and approaches fostering local partnerships should be increasingly recognised and supported:
  - a) Artists, culture professionals and arts organisations have a substantial role to play, which should be recognised and supported by local governments.
  - b) The specific knowledge and capacities of refugees themselves, becoming agents in the process, should also be recognised.
  - c) Likewise, artists and arts organisations should be open to and foster collaboration with other local actors, including local governments (and their departments in the field of culture, social integration, education, etc.) and other local civil society actors.
- Work with migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers is an important pillar of cultural policies recognising the value of diversity and the need for everyone to exercise their cultural rights, including the right to take part in cultural life and the right not to suffer discrimination. Initiatives involving awareness-raising, peer-learning and innovation in policy design around these core concepts should be promoted.
- Cultural policies and programmes involving work with refugees and asylum-seekers should be integrated in broader resettlement, welcoming and integration programmes devised at national and local level. This may include the provision of funding for cultural projects involving asylum-seekers and refugees, the integration of cultural agents in mentoring and welcoming schemes addressing the newly-arrived, the design of specific projects by local cultural facilities, the facilitation of access to cultural resources for refugees and asylum-seekers, etc.
- One of the main challenges of settlement, welcoming and integration of asylum-seekers and refugees at local level is to change the narratives of migration, communicate with the citizens, involve them and explain that priority should be on humans and not on financial calculations. Cities need to create a new way to communicate on migration, explain why solidarity is important, host refugees and promote an intercultural society as a vector of peace and prosperity:
  - a) Local governments should coordinate with the relevant local stakeholders to develop communication strategies that enhance new narratives on migration and refuge.
  - b) Artists, culture professionals and arts organisations should be involved and contribute to develop and implement the new narrative and to reach the city population together with local governments and other relevant stakeholders.
  - c) Refugees, through their active involvement in local cultural agenda and activities, and in the local scene in general, should become agents in these new narratives.
- The experiences presented in this report, coming mainly from Europe and the Middle East, are part of a broader challenge, which involves people on the move at global level. Whilst work at local and national level is essential, international collaboration should also be part of any effective responses:
  - a) European cities and cultural actors can learn from experiences in the integration of asylum-seekers, refugees and internally-displaced people in other world regions (Africa, Asia, Latin America, etc.).
  - b) Exchanges among European cities and cultural actors, including on the techniques used and good practices implemented, should be promoted.
  - c) Ultimately, international advocacy to call for better refugee policies, including the fulfilment by the EU and its member states of the commitments on asylum and refuge established in international law, should be promoted.
- Needs experienced by cities in dealing with the arrival of migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers are not always properly acknowledged by European and national frameworks. A more suitable distribution of competences and resources, enabling local public, private and non-profit actors to implement welcoming and integration packages in all relevant policy areas, including culture, is essential to address the needs experienced in the current context.

### 3.3. Recommendations for artists and cultural professionals

Through reflection on the wide variety of case studies utilised by this research a number of key recommendations, and cautionary notes, emerged. Whilst not all-encompassing these points aim to provide some initial guidance for those aiming to work with refugees and displaced individuals.

#### What not to do

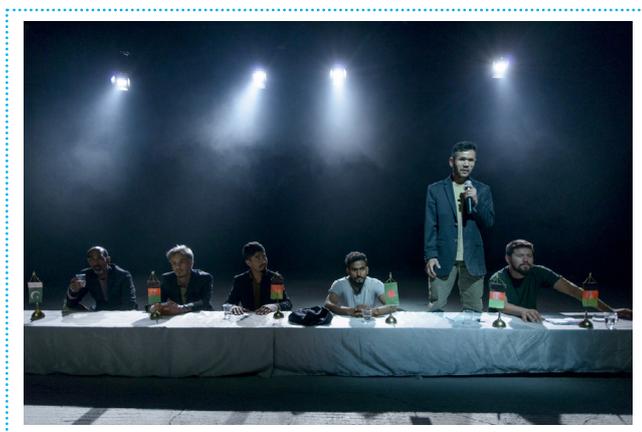
- The 'Artist Fantasy' – If you come from a non-refugee background and are conceiving a project which will work with those in vulnerable circumstances, it is incredibly important to work **with** these individuals, and not to project a 'director's concept' **on** to them. As a general rule (unless they have a background in theatre) – Refugees and migrants are not your actors, they can act in a performance, but as such need to be involved in every aspect of project and script development.
- Addiction to storytelling – We need to watch out for the assumption that providing the stage for someone to 'tell their story' is inherently a helpful action from us as arts practitioners. As James Thompson has noted<sup>1</sup>, the act of storytelling can transform a story which has taken place against a context of direct political engagement (including from the state/country in which the story is being told) into a de-politicized act of relief and healing. As he puts it, theatre 'can be reduced to a testifier and witness model that reduces the multitude of forms of encounter that may be generated'. We instead need to work directly with those undergoing the refugee process to see how (and if) they would like to have their voices present in a production.

<sup>1</sup> James Thompson, 'Digging up Stories: An Archaeology of Theatre in War'. *TDR/The Drama Review*, 2004, Vol. 48, No. 3, Page 150

- Speaking for the 'other' - if your performance is 'about refugees', think about how you are going to speak 'on their behalf'. Think about why you are doing this performance, and why the refugees themselves are not present. It may be that in the context you are working, or the topic you are working on, refugees are too vulnerable to be able to represent themselves. In this case work very closely with refugees and refugee support organisations to ensure the piece you create doesn't work to reinforce existing stereotypes. We would also highly recommend the [10 point list](#) compiled by RISE Network for artists looking to work with refugees and asylum seekers.
- Language/labelling - what we say is important and has repercussions. If using the labels of 'refugee', think about why you are doing it. In choosing what imagery to use, take care and don't fall victim to stereotyping (women in hijabs, men with weapons and/or the poor huddled masses). Remember to speak about persons, not groups.

#### What to do

- Use existing skills – As noted by definition 'refugees' are not just 'refugees'. It is up to us to work with newly arrived populations and the artists and producers therein, supporting and collaborating from a position of equality. If the aim of the project is to work with individuals with less experience, source directors and producers from a refugee background can help formulate the project.
- Use your privilege – If you are working in a European context, use your privilege to support new arrivals to develop new partnerships with cultural institutions in the town, city, country or continent they have moved to. At the same time artists, particularly those associated with institutions or organisations, can find out where refugees are housed and create initiatives to combat boredom, idleness, and loneliness. Many times asylum-seekers will be placed in small towns far from a city – which only contributes to their isolation, especially since their options to travel (financially and legally) are often very limited.



picture from 'Station Athens'

Newcomers are eager to get involved in anything productive and to make friends with native Europeans. Art offers an incredible means to do this, and the opportunity for cultural exchange.

- Collaborations and partnership – As arts focused organisations who want to collaborate with or work in solidarity with refugees, we need to collaborate. Both with other arts organisations (particularly those who have a history of working on socially engaged productions) but also with civil society organisations working with refugees and newly arrived individuals, for example refugee support networks. This mapping should take time – discuss your ideas and listen carefully to these potential partners before you start a project so as not to do more harm than good. A successful project should also have wider community engagement at its heart, working to provide routes for discussion and friendship. A number of the initiatives we highlight in this report also work in partnership with transnational networks, councils and local government for maximum impact.
- Challenging media narratives – whilst we are not able to decide how our projects are reported on, it is vital to ensure that all press releases, advertising and media briefings are not framed in a way which could reinforce dominant media narratives about ‘the refugee’ and ‘the other’. This is vital to remember. Even if your aim is to be ironic and subversive, when the debate is as toxic as it is in 2016, we would advise you not to.
- Measuring impact – One vital aspect which is often overlooked, is to consider the desired impact of your project. Who do you aim to reach, why do you aim to reach them, and how will your project do this. It’s vital to keep track of this throughout the project,

in order to share with peers and build a knowledge bank. Whilst long-term impact is impossible to measure, there are specific markers of short-term impact which can be focused on, such as numbers attending rehearsals, variety of media coverage etc.

- Use existing Resources - For example we would recommend [UCLG’s briefing](#) which includes a very good list of examples of good practice on a city-wide scale; and following the work of the [Culture Action Europe](#) network which has a focus on culture impacting and changing policy on a European level.
- Think long-term - Truly meaningful work should be carried out on a long-term basis, not just through one-off events or activities. The principles to respect when developing artistic practices with and for refugees should be mainstreamed in all cultural and artistic activities, to unleash the full potential of the arts to enhance individual well-being and social cohesion among the different communities living on the same territory. This should not of course become an additional burden for artists and cultural operators but rather being ensured by responsible, forward-looking policies and funding strategies.

## 04. TO BE CONTINUED

Arts, and in particular contemporary performing arts, are there to raise questions and introduce ambiguity, not to provide solutions – especially not political solutions. The arts can challenge the dominant narratives, propose alternative scenarios and make contradictions visible – and there are many contradictions in the current political discourses around migration. At the same time, we witness that the contemporary performing artists are an immediate reaction task-force when it comes to help in humanitarian crises and use their special skills to help to heal and integrate.

The creation of open, tolerant and inclusive societies is a long-term process that takes a few generations, and it is therefore challenging to evaluate the impact of projects dealing with the integration of refugees and migrants today. Yet there’s plenty of evidence that we need to rethink the models adopted so far in Europe for the inclusion of migrants, also from older generations. Civil society actors, including artists and cultural professionals, should not be put under pressure to achieve – quickly – what years of mismanagement and focus on economic impacts have failed to achieve. However, mainstreaming culture in all the other policy agendas, including education, integration, life-long learning, economic development would possibly provide better results than those achieved so far.

As stated in the foreword, we’d like to take these challenging times as an opportunity to stress once again the importance of collaborations and exchange, locally and internationally, within the arts sector and with other actors. The time is ripe for such collaborations – actually, there’s no time to lose. We consider it vital to keep the discussion open: you’re welcome to join our [members’ forum](#) or to contact us at any time at [ietm@ietm.org](mailto:ietm@ietm.org) to share your experiences and thoughts.

## A REFUGEE IN THE PARADISE THAT IS EUROPE

You escape death.  
They hit you on the border.  
They insult you in the racist newspapers.  
They analyse your child's dead body on television.  
They get together and discuss your past and your future.  
In their pictures they draw you drowning.  
They put you in their museums and applaud.  
They decide to stop hitting you and set up a military unit to confront you.  
Academics get new grant money to research your body and your soul.  
Politicians drink red wine after an emergency meeting to discuss your fate.  
They consult history in search of an answer for your daughter, who's freezing in the forest cold.  
The neo-Nazis insult you and burn down your house.  
The neo-fascists climb their way into parliament on your shoulders.  
You are the nightmare of people old and new.  
They weep crocodile tears over your pain.  
They come out in demonstrations against you and build walls.  
Green activists put up pictures of you in the street.  
Others sit on their sofas, comment wearily on your picture on Facebook, and go to sleep.  
They strip away your humanity in debates that are clever and sharp as knives.  
They write you down today and, with selfishness as their eraser, make you disappear the next morning.  
They expect to come across their own humanity through your tragedy.  
They take you into their paradise, then flog you night and day with their horror at your eyes, which radiate fear and hope.  
The past goes to sleep, and wakes up inside you.  
The present engulfs you.  
You produce children for their paradise and grow old.  
You die.

***Hassan Blasim***

***translated by Jonathan Wright***