

CROSS-BORDER EXCHANGE - WORKSHOPS

CROSS-BORDER EXCHANGE



© 72th TEH meeting – TNT Manufacture de chaussures – Bordeaux 2011

► SUMMARY

Cross-border exchanges enable us to share and enhance Europe's diverse cultural heritage through developing cross-border cooperation between cultural operators and institutions based on both sides of national borders. The local players involved decide, on their own initiative, to cooperate on a common topic or topics. The cooperative approaches are developed according to the partnerships and the aims, dealing with the complex process for application for European funds, as well as interculturality and the difficulty of communication.

► CONTEXT

This workshop of the TEH (Trans Europe Halles) network was held in the premises of TNT, Manufacture de Chaussures, Bordeaux, on 28 October 2011, attended by the following TEH members and guests: , H  l  ne M  talli   (La Grainerie, Balma, Toulouse, France) Dusica Parezanovic (REX, Serbia), Semolinika Tomic (Antic Teatre, Barcelona, Spain), Flavia (Off Limits, Madrid, Spain), Veronique/Nika Blazer (Antic Teatre, Barcelona, Spain), Lennart Siebert (Village Underground, Berlin, Germany), Diane (Mains d'Oeuvre, France) Malin Schiller (Kulturverkstan education, Gothenburg, Sweden), Geert van Itallie (Melkweg, Amsterdam, Holland),

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Aniko Racz (Artus Studio, Hungary),
Marie DePibrac (la Friche la Belle de Mai, Marseille, France),
Katrin Schumacher (Pekarna, Slovenia),
Alise Vetrova (NOASS, Riga, Latvia),
Tomas Nygren (Culturen, Sweden),
Guillaume Hillairet (PointBarre and La Fabrique, Bordeaux, France),
Violetta Curry (Voices for the Earth Transformation / Round Sound House, Barcelona, Spain),
Gorza/Malgorzata Chesinska-Glazik (Laznia Nowa Theatre, Krakov, Poland),
C  line Suel (Kulturfabrik, Luxembourg).

Guest projects/speakers:

La Grainerie (Balma, Toulouse) - H  l  ne M  talli  :

Kulturfabrik (Luxembourg) - C  line Suel

Facilitator: Dusica Parezanovic (chief programme coordinator, REX cultural centre, Belgrade – Serbia,

Rapporteur: Peter McCavana

► BRIEF SUMMARY

In a brief introduction, the facilitator Dusica Parezanovic summarized the issues involved in cross-border projects, to be discussed in the workshop (see Discussion below). Before discussing these questions, two case studies of concrete cross-border exchange projects were presented by guest speakers:

Case study 1: La Grainerie (Balma, Toulouse) – presented by H  l  ne M  talli  

La Grainerie is a circus and travelling arts factory based in Balma, outside Toulouse, France, dedicated to developing the circus industry and to assisting players involved in circus activities. It also acts as a social network, based on diversity and solidarity.

Its values: A community arts approach, based on diversity and the social economy

Its major areas of activities: Promotion of artistic development projects to spread circus arts and develop cultural and social actions.

La Grainerie has been recently involved in three EU-funded cross-border projects, including a 3-year project in 2008-2011 called "Cir que o!". This was a cross-

border cooperation project between Spain, France and Andorra, jointly funded by the EU Interreg programme and by Progtiva [sic??]. It involved a total of 40 private and public players, local programmers, creation centres and town councils, etc., on both sides of the Pyrenees, which shared its artistic, creative, cultural and economic aims. Its target recipients were mainly professional circus artists and agents, young artists, circus school students, amateur artists, etc. Actions included a network of social economy incubators that support circus arts or economic projects, and “Circus in transhumance”, a promotional travelling circus festival.

The three-year Cir que o! project has ended, but La Grainerie has presented a new project, and is waiting for the decision on its application.

Case study 2: Kulturfabrik (Luxembourg) – presented by Céline Suel

The Kulturfabrik centre is in southern Luxembourg, just five minutes away from France.

The greater cross-border region consists of five areas - the Lorraine area of France, German-speaking Saarland, Luxembourg, Rhineland-Palatinate, and French-speaking Belgium - covering four countries, with three languages (Luxembourgish, French and German) and a population of 11 million.

Kulturfabrik is a creative arts centre. It provides artists' residencies and is a pilot centre for sustainable development. 50% of the audiences come from cross-border countries, mainly from France. Its aims are to change mentalities, to promote artists, and to develop a survival strategy.

Kulturfabrik has at least two partners in each area, including many local artists and administration institutions. Its challenges include: the differences in administration structures between the State, Region, town, etc.; very strong intercultural differences and language barriers; and the imbalance between areas (there are many more arts organisations in Luxembourg and in the French Lorraine region than in the other areas).

Two concrete examples of Kulturfabrik's cross-border projects:

The first project concerned Tasma Nasrin, an exiled Bengali writer. World-famous for her feminist views and her criticism of religion, she campaigns for secular humanism, equality for women, and human rights, by publishing and lecturing. This project took place in May 2011, with the collaboration of over ten political and arts

organisations from two countries. The writer met students in Luxembourg and women from all social and political horizons, and took part in literary events, etc.

The second project, “Symphony for Flower Pots, Wine Glasses & Vuvuzelas”, also took place in May 2011. This collaboration project for children involved two French administration bodies, two French schools, an arts centre and a music ensemble from Luxembourg, and a German composer. The aim was to help children to discover other worlds of art, language and culture. After training for one week with two artists, they gave a final concert in front of parents, some of whom had never been to an arts venue.

The main long-term aim of this project was to change people's mentalities in Europe.

Discussion

A discussion addressed the questions raised by the facilitator's introduction and the case studies, as well as other issues raised by the participants, summarized below. (More details of the discussion are provided in the Long Summary below.)

Why do we get involved in a cross-border project?: To broaden our vision and our minds, and to change mentalities. To break down or jump over barriers. To learn from, about and with others. To develop new ideas and improve ways of doing things.

We must face the challenges of differences and complementarities: We must overcome differences and obstacles between partners in exchanges. Where possible, we can turn to advantage certain complementarities, such as cultural differences. We must find shared aims, common interests and joint methods with partners, while respecting the identify of each party. In working with other cultures, it is important to make a good choice of partners, to progress gradually in small steps, and to know our partners well. It is best to work with reliable partners whom we know and trust. We must build relationships with them to ensure that we work together towards the same goals with the same priorities.

Compromise is needed: We must accept, respect and reconcile our partners' different working practices and habits, etc. while being aware of the dangers of poor communication or misunderstandings between partners. A lot of collective discussion is needed. Modern tools can facilitate communication, but some may also cause or exacerbate communication problems.

Partners must participate equally, sharing the same attitudes, aims and interests, with a balance between their respective contributions to and benefits from the project.

The slow, complex process of applications: A lot of time is required for processing an application for funding. As part of one cross-border project, it may be better to submit several national applications for funding, rather than central EU funding.

Focus on the idea first, rather than on funding: We should devise a project first and then look for funding for it, rather than looking for available funding first and then devising a project to suit it. We should focus on the real quality of a project's content and the idea behind it. We must focus on what we want to do, and beware of being used to promote other ends.

To meet the needs, not only of our organisation, but of our audience, we must obtain feedback from the audience and/or recipients regarding their reactions to the project. Evaluation of projects is required by funding programmes. But we must not confuse feedback with evaluation.

What are the benefits of a cross-border project? After a cross-border project, you should ask yourself what you gained or learned through it. The benefits of a project may be entered in a "dictionary" of suggested key points (listed in the long summary below).

In the facilitator's concluding words, a cross-border project is beneficial because it promotes growth on all levels, and personal growth and development are the most important things.

Peter Mc Cavana

Text written on the basis of discussions in Bordeaux on 28/10/2011 during the workshop on "Crossborder exchange"

Coordination Trans Europe Halles and ARTfactories/Autre(s)pARTs

► LONG SUMMARY

Case studies

Before discussing the questions and issues raised by the facilitator's introduction, two case studies of concrete cross-border exchange projects were presented by guest speakers from two arts centres (chosen before the meeting) that have a lot of such experience. They presented the general background to their organisations, then accounts of their respective cross-border exchange projects and their successes, challenges, difficulties and failures. These presentations were followed by a discussion with all participants about these experiences and related issues.

Case study 1: La Grainerie (Balma, Toulouse, France) – presented by H el ene M etaili e

La Grainerie is a circus and travelling arts factory based in Balma, in the outskirts of Toulouse, France. It is dedicated to developing the circus industry and to assisting players involved in circus activities.

In 2010, La Grainerie entered its new building, a 3,200 square metre facility. It has resources for creative artists, technicians and administrators, with areas for training, rehearsal, etc. It also acts as a social network, based on diversity and solidarity.

Its values: A community arts approach, based on diversity and the social economy

Its major areas of activities: Promotion of artistic development projects to spread circus arts and develop cultural and social actions.

La Grainerie has been recently involved in three EU-funded cross-border projects:

Leading a partnership project, "Crossroads, another change thanks to circus", as part of the EU education programme, with partners in Italy, Brussels, and La Central del Circ (Barcelona).

Partner in a cultural programme called Transmission, a programme to support circus creation led by Espace Catastrophe (Brussels, Belgium), with a partner in Turin, Italy, and La Central del Circ (Barcelona).

The third and main project, a 3-year project (2008-2011), which is now ended, called "Cir que o!".

"Cir que o!" was a Spanish-French cross-border cooperation project for a three-year period (2008-2011), jointly funded by the EU Interreg programme and by Progtiva [sic??], an operational programme for cooperation between Spain, France and Andorra. One of

the specific features and challenges of this cross-border programme was that it had to overcome the natural physical barrier of the Pyrenees mountains.

The budget was €1,790,000, of which 65% was funded by the EU (the ERDF / European Regional Development Fund).

The purpose of "Cir que o!" was to build an internationally-renowned platform for circuses in the Pyrenees cross-border area, with three main aims:

- to promote integration of the circus sector in the border area
- to strengthen local and cross-border synergy between the operators
- to develop employment, the economy and artistic creation, by providing better assistance for project leaders and creative artists.

It involved a total of 40 private and public players, local programmers, creation centres and town councils, etc., on both sides of the Pyrenees, which shared its artistic, creative, cultural and economic aims, including Toulouse-Mirail University, an events organiser, Animahu, the Zaragoza Jugglers organisation and Jaca town council in Aragon.

The project's target recipients were mainly professional circus artists and agents, young artists, circus school students, and amateur artists. The cross-border programme requires that the recipients are based in the cross-border area, and not necessarily French or Spanish or even European. Many of the project's recipients are foreign, as the circus arts are nomadic and multicultural.

Actions included: a network of social economy incubators that support circus arts or economic projects, and collaboration with Pact/Studio (circus arts incubator, Toulouse), "Chemins de cr ations / Paths of creation" (network of centres to support creative productions and residencies), and "Chemins  mergeants / Emerging paths" (network of 25 events programmers in the Pyrenees to help short performances); and the "Circus in transhumance" promotional travelling circus festival in Barcelona, Zaragoza, Toulouse and Jaca.

The partners in Cir que o! had differences, but they tried to use their differences and complementarities as the project's strengths. La Grainerie devised the project and co-organized some actions together with all partners.

La Grainerie was the project leader, so French was the project's main official language, but Spanish and Catalan were also used. Most partners could understand at least Spanish and French, which reduced translation costs. (However, in some cases, some participants who spoke the same language didn't understand each other!) The three-year Cir que o! project has ended, but La Grainerie is now waiting for the go-ahead for similar projects with partners from the other side of the Pyrenees, in the French and Spanish Basque country and Navarre, like a continuation of Cir que o.

Case study 2: Kulturfabrik (Luxembourg) – presented by Céline Suel

The Kulturfabrik centre is in southern Luxembourg, just five minutes away from France.

The greater cross-border region consists of five areas - the Lorraine, Saarland (German-speaking), Luxembourg, Rhineland-Palatinate, and French-speaking Belgium - and covers four countries, with three languages and a population of 11 million. Kulturfabrik has at least two partners (local artists and institutions) in each area.

Luxembourg is a small country of 2,500 sq. km with a population of 500,000. Its national language is the Luxembourgish language, and French and German are also used.

Around 40% of workers are immigrants: there are 160,000 cross-border workers.

Kulturfabrik was originally a municipal slaughterhouse, then a self-run squat. Now it is a centre for artistic creation. It provides artists' residencies and is a pilot centre for sustainable development. 50% of the audiences come from cross-border countries. Cross-border projects are among the Kulturfabrik centre's main features and strengths.

What are the aims of Kulturfabrik?:

- To change mentalities. For example, people normally only cross the border to buy cigarettes and drink, and to work.
- To promote artists. The EU gives money for economic projects, but we want to develop in cultural areas.
- To develop a survival strategy. Competition is everywhere. This is the key.

The main point is to change mentalities.

Challenges include: the differences in administration structures between the State, Region, town, etc.; the fact

that there are six daily papers in the area; the very strong intercultural differences and language barriers; and the large size of the area served (400km East-West, 350km North-South, but with no mountains).

There are many more arts organisations in Luxembourg and in the French Lorraine region than in Saarland or the Rhineland Palatinate, and very few in the Belgian province of Luxembourg.

Two concrete examples of Kulturfabrik's cross-border projects:

The first project concerned Tasuma Nasrin, an exiled Bengali writer. World-famous for her feminist view and her criticism of Islam and of religion in general, she campaigns for freedom of thought, equality for women and human rights, by publishing and lecturing.

This project involved political and ideological challenges. It took place in May 2011, with the collaboration of more than ten political and arts organisations from two countries.

The writer met students in Luxembourg and women from all social and political horizons. She took part in a literary event in the Centre Pompidou in Metz, France, and in a debate after a dance performance about the Muslim veil.

Difficulties:

- finding the first partners over the border
- convincing institutions to believe in and to support the political and ideological topic
- persuading national and regional arts institutions to work with small organisations
- timing was complicated for bringing together all the partners involved
- different cultural expectations: what did French and Luxembourg people expect?

Failures:

- limited involvement of partners (in finding venues, translators, media support, etc.)
- limited support from media, who were not all convinced of the project's importance

The second project, "Symphony for Flower Pots, Wine Glasses & Vuvuzelas", also took place in May 2011. This collaborative project for children involved two French public administration bodies, two French schools, an arts centre and a music ensemble from Luxembourg, and a German composer. The aim was to help children to discover other worlds of art, language and culture.

Kulturfabrik organised several meetings between artists and workshops for children, introduced the children to new media and created graphics with them.

Training: Children trained for one week in their schools with two teachers (performance and music artists). On the final day, the children got on stage, they had sound checks etc., and were considered like “real artists”. At night, they gave a concert in front of parents, some of whom had never been to an arts venue or any cultural events.

Difficulties: There were no real difficulties, because all the partners were actively involved: institutional partners, children (who were partners, too) and schools.

Skills and qualities required for such a project: Motivation, knowledge of neighbours and of contracting and administration in cross-border projects. It is important to have one key person responsible for supervising the project on each side of the border.

Prospects: The main long-term aim of this cross-border project is to change people’s mentalities in Europe.

Céline Suel (communications / public relations officer, Kulturfabrik) commented:

“We looked for people who share our aim, for the first time, as a first step. At first, we looked just 50 km away, but we had bad experience. [...] For example, we have no contact with Belgium: they’re not interested. Belgium hasn’t many artists’ companies. They only want to go to Brussels and Liege. We have no contact with the Palatinate, either. Maybe this is a language problem? Our director is French.”

“We also did a similar project, with clowns instead of music, with children from two other schools.

In France, people in the countryside are poor. We brought culture into their schools. We analysed: What is the problem in poor areas? Do people stay? Why do people stay or not stay?

This is a short-term project. It is just one step for kids. Regions don’t have money for more. Next year will be difficult. We have to convince Luxembourg bodies to fund cross-border projects. Now, we have money from France.”

More detailed descriptions of these centres and their cross-border projects can be obtained from La Grainerie (<http://la-grainerie.net/>), the Cir que o! website: (www.circqueo.eu) and Kulturfabrik (<http://www.kulturfabrik.lu/>).

Discussion

A discussion followed, addressing the questions raised by the facilitator’s introduction and subjects raised directly by the case studies, as well as other issues raised by the participants, whose relevant remarks are quoted below.

Why get involved in a cross-border project?

To broaden one’s vision and one’s mind, and to change mentalities. To break down or jump over barriers. To learn from, about and with others. To develop new ideas and improve ways of doing things.

Workshop participants expressed their motives for getting involved in such projects:

“We can show that we can work together. It’s important to break barriers. Borders are in the mind. How Luxembourg people and French people reacted and cooperated is important. We realized that we could work together. It’s an artistic goal, but art shows that we can “jump” over the barrier”.

“Maybe, in a European project, just the culture is important in itself (such as music or theatre), but our goal is to break cultural barriers”.

“I work most of the time at home. The cross-border project makes my vision wider. We can learn about each other. In many ways, we are the same, but it’s very rewarding”.

“It’s maybe interesting to also work on projects that are cross-cultural, not just cross-border. It’s sometimes not different on the other side of borders”.

“You should take good new ideas in another environment, with another player / actor and see how they organise work or how they can be improved”.

“For our local stories and projects, it’s very important to work with other countries, other regions, other people, because it brings new, fresh ideas to your projects, also in a local context. You can then be taken very seriously if you have very stable partnerships from the other side of the border. Your central government or local government authorities will maybe look differently at you when they know that you have obtained co-funding from the other side and you involve other people”.

"If you stay within your country, you won't survive. If you present a show four times, nobody is going to pay you to play it again. There is no market within one country.

"Cross-border projects are a good opportunity for artists to get money for smaller projects".

Facing the challenges of differences and complementarities, overcoming difficulties that we find in our exchanges and collaborations

We must overcome differences and build on various complementarities. Where possible, we must benefit from them: we can turn to advantage certain complementarities, such as cultural differences, which may be highlighted positively to good effect for the benefit of all concerned.

We must overcome barriers and obstacles between partners (natural geographical barriers, physical communication barriers, language barriers, and other communication difficulties).

We must find shared aims, common interests and joint working methods with partners, while taking into account, respecting and reconciling different approaches to communication, different forms/structures of organisation, different habits and working practices, different working hours and different work schedules/routines, in order to conceive, devise, plan, coordinate and implement a joint project, while respecting and preserving the identity of each party involved.

"It is important to look for complementarities".

"One of the specific features and challenges of this cross-border programme is that it must overcome the natural physical barrier of the Pyrenees mountains".

"The project involved 40 private and public players, local programmers, creation centres and town councils, etc., on both sides of the Pyrenees, which shared its artistic, creative, cultural and economic aims".

"The cross-border programme requires that the recipients are based in the cross-border area, and not necessarily French or Spanish or even European. This point is important in our case, because a lot of our project's recipients are foreign, circus arts are nomadic and multicultural".

"In our region (formerly known as Yugoslavia), mobility is still a great problem. The costs of travel are high. Between some countries in the EU, there is no longer any border. But this is not the case in our region".

"[...] cross-border cooperation is often an economic issue".

How do we make a good choice of partners?
Gradual development in small steps and stages

It is very important to work with other countries, and to have very stable partnerships with other people or cultures. It is safer and surer to progress in small, gradual steps:

"How do we find really proper, suitable partners? It requires maybe two years of small steps and exchanges. Maybe we should start with artists' residencies, then, after taking small steps, we ask for backing. [...] We work a lot, but we don't find a partner easily. It's a long-term process".

Some participants expressed potential reservations as regards working with neighbours who are too close for comfort:

"Maybe it's easier to work with people who are further away? Close neighbours can be jealous and back-bite".

"Close people: you think you know them, but you don't really appreciate their qualities".

"It's wise to find good neighbours as partners".

We must know our partners well and build relationships with them

How can we find proper partners? How do we believe and trust each other?

It's better to work with reliable partners whom we can trust and count on. We must know our partners well to ensure that we work together in harmony towards the same goals with the same priorities. It is important to build relationships with other partners, depending on the context.

"Our project succeeded because [...] firstly, we knew each other before presenting the project. The French partners knew each other very well. With long preparation, we had numerous partner meetings to anticipate any possible problems due to differences in organisation and planning. Since we were well aware of these differences, we were able to organise the project".

“To overcome such problems, we must give importance to people, especially those in each partner team or organisation who design or devise the project, and we must overcome planning issues, scheduling problems and structural differences”.

“Human meeting is the first step”.

“It’s important to know your partners. We must meet each other and meet people who are “resources” for project leaders. They provide information about deadlines, the philosophy of a programme, etc., that is helpful for building and designing a project and technical information”.

“As we came to know each other well, we became friends and had informal meetings. We went to see shows and had a drink when we were at our partner’s place. Things like that help to build partnerships”.

According to Céline Suel (Kulturfabrik), you have to find a “big partner” who has major funds, and then they act like the “big partner”: you get the money, but you have to work for them to get the money. Backed by Semolinika (Antic Teatre, Barcelona, Spain), H  l  ne M  talli   (La Grainerie, Toulouse) disagreed: “We build projects together with other partners, and we make the project, but they are not working for us”. However, C  line Suel insisted that many associations have to do this, replying: “No, I mean institutions, government institutions, big partners, who are providing money”.

[Note on terminology: In this part of the discussion and possibly elsewhere, it appears that, in some speakers’ minds, “partners”, who are associated as peers working together in a project, may have been confused with “funding partners” (that is, funding bodies, financial backers who provide money), and vice versa. At the end of this last exchange above, Tomas Nygren (of Culturen, Sweden) asked C  line Suel: “Do you mean ‘funding partners’?”, to which she replied: “Yes”.]

The need for compromise: accepting, respecting and reconciling differences

We must accept, respect and reconcile our partners’ different working practices and habits, and differences in working times, schedules and routines.

We must take into account and accept different features of different organisations: ensuring cooperation between them, collectively devising a cooperative project together, making positive complementary advantages from their different features and different forms of organisation.

“It’s like any human relationship: you have to accept differences and compromise”.

“We had differences, but we tried to make these differences and complementarities the strengths of the project, in the same way that we also counted on a large partnership to make this project a real cooperation project. We had to design and devise the project together with all the partners”.

“You send e-mail to someone, asking them to work. Then you realize that it’s 40  C where they are, and they’re on the beach in the afternoon! You can’t force them to work in the afternoon. Different people are in different situations and have different working hours. Some artists get up late and work late at night. They have their own habits. You have to accept and respect this”. [...]

“They don’t have the same free days, and their working hours are different”.

“For example, we had jugglers and other performers who had their own ways of working. The project helped them to structure their organisation”.

Communication between partners: a vital necessity
Mutual sharing of means of communication

Communication must not be taken for granted. We must be aware of the dangers of poor communication and misunderstandings. A lot of collective preparation, discussion and negotiation is necessary between partners, for defining projects together.

Furthermore, pooling and sharing modern high-tech tools such as e-mail, Skype, Google Docs, Open Source Basecamp, etc., can facilitate communication, but some high-tech tools may also create or exacerbate communication problems between partners. For example, to avoid or resolve misunderstandings in communication via e-mail, it may often be necessary to see or to actually meet each other face to face.

“Many partners get EU money for big projects, but then they don’t agree on an issue, or one partner is weaker than the other, so they have to give the money back. It’s a long process. You spend a long time working on a partnership, then you have to give up. It’s very sad! Communication is very important in this respect”.

“One of the strengths of the project was that, as project leader, we wanted to prepare the project collectively and then gave strong leadership on this collective basis. All meetings of partners were collective. We had a lot of discussions and negotiations. Then, once a thing was decided, we had to do it. As project leader, this was our obligation”.

“It is difficult to lead a project like that. It is a challenge, reassuring all partners that the project belongs to them as well. Coordination and communication is a key issue. It’s really complicated but interesting”.

“We’re not really modern. We take the car when there are problems and misunderstandings with e-mails. E-mail isn’t really appropriate. Initially, we had a joint communication plan, but it failed because of the number of partners involved

“As regards misunderstanding (both when reading e-mails and when talking to people face-to-face): misunderstanding is part of the exchange. We need to know how to deal with it”.

“We had to travel a lot [to meet our partners across the border] when we had problems or misunderstandings”.

“We have a lot of regular Skype meetings etc., But it’s not enough, and, when we’re not doing production, we have to meet every three or four months, just to share ideas, learning about each other, for two years now”.

“In some cases, some of us spoke the same language, but we still didn’t understand each other!”

“We have a website in three languages [...] We use the website as a communication tool”.

How can we participate equally with our partners?
Equality and balance between partners are also vital necessities

It is necessary to have partners who share the same attitudes, motives, aims and interests regarding the project. There must also be equality of inputs and returns as much as possible: that is, a balance between the different partners’ respective contributions to and participations in the project, as well as a good, fair balance between what they each get respectively out of the project.

There are important issues of equal rights, special rights, fairness, equality and potential envy, jealousy or competition between partners.

“It’s important to work with people on the same wavelength. I believe that we should think of benefit first, before funding. Sometimes you have to find funding for other partners, because of a lack of people, etc.”.

“Humans are involved. It’s also a question of human understanding and problems that some participants may have. You may need to prepare a “plan B” in case a partner can’t continue”.

“... when we talk about cross-border projects, it’s very important to find similar energy from the other side, with partnerships that can last longer than a project, with someone who can believe in the same ideas, who can motivate and who, maybe on an advocacy level, can apply similar pressure to their government and their ministry of culture to support the project”.

“We must not have a partner who will not advocate the project in their own environment, who will separate their project and do only their part in their local environment, and who will not think about the benefits of the project for other partners”.

“It can really be a problem: some partners think they have more right to write or devise a project, or that they have better ideas or more right to decide than others”.

The slow, complex process of submitting applications for funding

Applications for funding can use up a lot of time and energy. You often have to wait a long time for processing of your application, which may be refused, and you have to be prepared for this. As two participants said:

“You apply for funding for a project, then, two years later, by the time you receive the decision or the money, you realize that it’s actually suitable for another project” [...] “Projects involve funds, and some people are in projects because they want funds. But to get the funds, sometimes, you almost need to be a lawyer.”

As part of one international / cross-border project, it may be useful to submit several applications for national funding, rather than EU funding. This is one way to collaborate cross-border and to avoid making big applications for money that limit our intentions and the implementation of our projects. Aniko Racz (Artus Studio, Hungary) explained that, while looking for funding for her international dance company, she learned about the different national attitudes to funding and how the different national arts funding schemes work. She realized that many people need to work on an international level if they want to survive, since there is not a large enough market within one country:

“I manage a small dance company. It’s truly international, with one Hungarian, one Slovakian, one Italian and two Spanish members. We didn’t try to obtain EU funding, as it’s too big for such a small-scale company. Two of the dancers are based in the UK, and I’m learning about how the different national funding schemes work. It’s very different from Hungary. In Hungary, I can apply for funding for international touring. In the UK, I can’t do that, because they’re not interested in taking their artists outside of the UK. But they import: that’s in their history or in their culture. But Hungary is a small country, and we are happy to present our work to the world, and this is supported by the mainstream.

In Hungary too, there is funding for operation, which is very good. I hear it’s not very common in Europe. So, for such a small company, you can ask for money for your general operating costs, which is a blessing, because that’s always a big problem. If you are just starting to do something, you can ask for specific “project money”, but you are not going to be able to live on that. In the UK, there is better money for production from the Arts Council. So we always balance what we are, where we are. I’m just learning about it all [...] You can make many funding applications. There are many other places to apply. But if you stay within your country, you won’t survive”.

Focussing on the idea first, rather than on funding

The discussion often returned to the issue of funding. We must recognize its importance, but, as many people such as Semolinika Tomic and the facilitator Dusica Parezanovic said, we should not put the cart before the horse. We should conceive and devise a project and then look for funding for it, rather than devise a project to obtain available funding. We should focus on the fundamental idea behind a project, rather than on how to do things or on issues such as funding, administration, etc. We should not decide the content or partners for a proposed project just to match some possible funding, but according to the benefits that they will bring.

“It’s the real quality of the content that counts”.

“Maybe there’s a lack of information on the kinds of funds that are available, so that you don’t have to design your project for the funds that are available, but you’ll have an idea, and you can look for the funding that fits your project, not the other way round”.

“Yes, I’ve seen so many that have been the other way round!”

“We should focus on the idea of a project rather than on what you want to gain from it.”

“You can seek funding for projects, rather than the other way round”.

“It’s like a chicken and egg thing: what comes first, the idea, or the funding?”

“I’m not an administrator, I’m from art. If I’m looking for partners, I want to know what is interesting about them, is their ideas, what they are doing, what is interesting for me in their place, where they are geographically, and their culture... I work in a scenic arts (performing arts) organisation. But I’m not only interested in finding people who just explore scenic arts. I’m interested in finding good, interesting people who deal with some ideas about something else.”.

“What’s most important is materializing the idea, seeing how it has happened. I have some ideas. I work with hundreds of artists in many disciplines. The question is how to get them to see how to do things together [...] I’m firstly an artist, and then an administrator. For any budget, I’m not thinking of financial aspects. If it happens, it will happen”.

“First of all, the idea is important. One good idea can go all round the world”.

“If the idea is good, we’ll get the money. I think it’s necessary to share...”

Focus on what you want to do, and beware of being used or instrumentalised

We must beware of being used to promote other ends. Tomas Nygren (Culturen, Sweden) and Semolinika Tomic (Antic Teatre, Barcelona) commented respectively:

“With all these funding applications, we are being instrumentalised, being used to serve other ends and strategies [...] It’s important to focus on what you want to do, and to avoid this trap. As part of the application process, you might adapt to an identity, which has some other purpose. It’s good to keep your identity away, culture-wise, from other political strategies. Nordic foundations tend to use culture as a means of creating an identity of Nordic countries. [...] Maybe just the culture (such as music or theatre) is important in itself, but our goal is to break cultural barriers. [...] We must not get trapped in an identity”.

“It’s like we are serving them [funding bodies, public agencies, etc.] but they should be serving us”.

How can we meet the needs, not only of our organisation, but of our audience?
Feedback and evaluation

We must obtain feedback from the audience and/or recipients and their reception/perception of or reaction to the project/activity, and we must determine an evaluation of the project. Evaluations and interim evaluations of projects are usually required by funding programmes. But we must not confuse feedback with evaluation:

“It’s difficult to conduct evaluation at the end of a project. At the beginning, we must set goals that we can measure. Evaluation is boring. If we want a learning process, it has to be attractive”.

“A budget line must include evaluation”.

“It’s important to see how partners are motivated”.

“We have figures. The ‘Progtiva’ [sic??] programme asked for interim evaluations”.

“People don’t want evaluation. They want to go ahead, straight on. It’s not just a question of time”.

“You obtain feedback if you take time to ask children if their attitude to music has been changed by the project. Feedback is not the same as evaluation (which is for public agencies/institutions)”.

“We don’t have time for self-evaluation. We must ask: Why were we satisfied? This is important: it’s not just a matter of personal feelings. We must think how we can evaluate correctly and objectively. We must force our partners to be really partners”.

“We ordered a social study of recipients. Two people questioned artists, schools, etc. We worked with an enterprise that helped economic organisations. We are working efficiently together only now, after two years”.

What are the benefits of a cross-border project?

In concluding the discussion, the facilitator advised: after a cross-border project, you should ask yourself what you gained or learned through it. Did you change anything in your habits? The benefits and advantages of a cross-border project may include the following, which may be entered in a “dictionary” of suggested key points, principles, ideas, concepts or factors that are important for cross-border projects:

Contacts.

Quality of partner(s).

A better long-term relationship rather than a “one-night stand”.

Benefits for staff, new skills.

Work with a wider audience.

We learn, and it’s good training for our staff.

Non-stop learning.

Capacity building.

Showing projects in small places,

Mobility,

Sharing aesthetic differences.

There was consensus by all participants on these points. In the facilitator's concluding words, a cross-border project is beneficial for all concerned because it promotes growth on all levels, and personal growth and development are the most important things.

Peter Mc Cavana

Text written on the basis of discussions in Bordeaux on 28/10/2011 during the workshop on "Crossborder exchange"

Coordination Trans Europe Halles and ARTfactories/AUtre(s)pARTs

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BOOKS :

Culture programme: a serious cultural investment from http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-programmes-and-actions/doc411_en.htm:

The EU's Culture programme (2007-2013) has a budget of €400 million for projects and initiatives to celebrate Europe's cultural diversity and enhance our shared cultural heritage through the development of cross-border co-operation between cultural operators and institutions.

Three objectives...

The Culture programme aims to achieve three main objectives: to promote cross-border mobility of those working in the cultural sector; to encourage the transnational circulation of cultural and artistic output; and to foster intercultural dialogue.

...and three strands

For the achievement of these objectives, the programme supports three strands of activities: cultural actions; European-level cultural bodies; and analysis and dissemination activities.

INTERNET RESSOURCES

Cross-border cultural cooperation:

http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.org/en/themes/theme_culture.html

Cross-border cultural projects:

www.artlinksnb.com/UserFiles/MOU_Phase2_English.pdf

... cross-border cultural projects and examining ways to capitalize on the lessons learned through previous cultural collaborations.

KEY WORDS:

cross-border arts exchange project, cross-border cultural exchange project, border, cross-border, international, cross-cultural, intercultural, project, exchange, cooperation, coordination, collaboration, sharing, partners, partnerships, neighbours, communication, understanding, misunderstanding, relationship,

differences, compromise, reconciliation, challenges, obstacles, difficulties, barrier, mobility, co-production, joint production, budget, funding, patronage, sponsorship, backing, support, recognition, institution, administration, public administration institution, public body, public agency, organisation, approach, working practices, habits, interests, audience, recipients, feedback, evaluation, benefit, mutual benefits