

## MORNING SESSION

### Inside-Out: Realities and Expressions found from Fieldworks around the World

Hiroko Inoue

Since 1992, I have been active in producing and presenting works of contemporary art. In 1998, I received a special award in sculpture in the Osaka Triennale, and with assistance from the Goethe-Institut went to Germany in 1999 to produce and present my works. Currently, I continue to work as an artist, dividing my time between Japan and Germany.

In 1995, a huge earthquake shook Hyogo prefecture, in the center of mainland Japan. This was the Kobe Earthquake that instantly took the precious lives of about 5,000 people, and I saw its devastating consequences. I saw the deep emotional scars left unhealed and the isolation of people dying alone in temporary housing, and took an interest in the social systems governing the aftermath of the earthquake. I have since worked on projects touching on these social issues, using motifs such as inside and outside views in mental hospitals and juvenile reformatories, German concentration camps, and children I met in various countries around the world.

Though I have never set foot in actual war zones, I have been to remote regions in Asia, Europe, North America, and Arab nations. Though the world is supposedly becoming more globalized, there are no differences in the social issues that arise in every part of the globe, be it in modern cities or the remotest of regions. In the following, I would like to tell you the details of my stays abroad, my feelings as an artist, and how my experiences came to fruition as works of art.



1992 First one-man exhibition, started out as a textile artist at the time.

1995 The Kobe Earthquake

Though the city was reconstructed, the shock of the incident traumatized many people, and its effects were particularly damaging to children. This realization made me turn to taking photographs from both inside and outside the windows of mental hospitals. For the 13 past years, I have been producing works using the windows of isolated facilities in various parts of the globe as motifs. By portraying the gaps in people's views when looking outside from the inside of a window as opposed to looking inside from the outside, I want to question what position the viewer takes in terms of the boundary created by this single window, and how we can connect with others.

1997 Art Forum Yanaka / Exhibition in Tokyo

Works using windows in mental hospitals (Light box)



1999 One-man exhibition in Düsseldorf, Germany  
 Works on windows of mental hospitals (Light Box)  
 → Print photographs on fabric, which are then placed on canvasses and incorporated into the light boxes.

Since 1999 I have owned a studio in Germany, and I also started visiting former sites of concentration camps the same year. This is a view from a window found in the Czech Republic concentration camp in Theresienstadt. It was a hot summer day when I pointed my camera at this particular window, with a vast blue sky stretching beyond the window frame. The people who had once lived here were never able to leave. I felt that countless people had once stood at the place where I was standing, and that they were connected to the person I am now. The terrible reality did not only belong to the past, it continues to be an issue now.

2000 Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Art <Memories of Souls> A Memorial for the people who died in isolation



As of July 25<sup>th</sup>, 1998, there have been 220 deaths in isolation of people who may have had jobs, families, and homes had the earthquake not stripped them of everything. I produced this work because I wanted to say to those who became addicted to alcohol, lost all contact with the outside world, and ended up dying alone, that they will never be forgotten.

2002 I took a plane to Nome, Alaska, a city facing the Bering Sea that is two and a half hours northwest of Anchorage, USA to visit the Inuits. The time was late summer, and the winds blew all day. In this vast land, harsh climate, and with little work available, the young escape to alcohol in desperation. During my one-month stay, there were two murders among drunken young people.

The most frequent crime in this remote city was domestic violence, and I was shocked to learn how the socially vulnerable people, including children, were being sacrificed. All the issues faced by modern society today were being imposed on the children, the elderly, and other socially disadvantaged people. The situation is the same for Japan, where many young people are isolating themselves from society or struggling with depression. It was during my stay here that I thought for the first time that I would like to use children as motifs for my work. By portraying a child with his eyes closed, I am asking the viewer: what do we as a human race want? Where do we want to go? And what are you going to do in this chaotic situation?

- 2003 Goethe-Institut Tokyo / Tokyo <WHAT WILT THOU-MEDITATION>
- 2003 Chukyo University C Square / Nagoya <WHAT WILT THOU-MEDITATION>
- 2003 Kunstmuseum Alten Post, Mülheim an der Ruhr <WHAT WILT THOU-MEDITATION>
- 2003 Mseum Kunst Palast / Düsseldorf, Germany <WHAT WILT THOU - MEDITATION>

2003 I stayed for one month in Yemen, located at the southwestern tip of the Arabian Peninsula

In Yemen, civil war waged between the northern and southern parts of the country over a decade ago, and people were still overshadowed by this war at the time of my visit. I stayed in a city called Ma'rib, roughly 300km southeast of the capital, Sana'a, where conflicts among tribes remain to this day. Trading once flourished here during the era of the Queen of Sheba, with huge temples, vast green fields, and flowing rivers, but has now turned entirely into desert. The devastating scene with the remains of temples and cemeteries in ruins, scattered with bones and trash, made me fear that this scene may overlap with the future of Tokyo.

2005 I stayed for one year in Austria as Special Advisor for Cultural Exchange for the Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan. During this time, I held an exhibition at the Jugendstiltheater in the Otto Wagner Spital, which is located in the suburbs of Vienna. This hospital is where approximately 470 Austrian or Roma children with physical disabilities fell victim to human experimentation during the World War II. I attempted to juxtapose the present with the past in this place by placing portrait photographs of 18 Austrian and Japanese high school students with their eyes closed in a circle with a diameter of 7 meters. I also presented a light box on the floor, made from color photographs of various windows in this old mental hospital, which dates back to 1902. <Where are you going from here?>



2007 I was invited to stay for one month at Clemson University in South Carolina, USA, for a project to create sculptures using organic materials within campus with students of sculpture and spatial design. The site of the university had formerly been used as a plantation farm, close to Charleston Bay, where black people arrived after being shipped from Africa. After thoroughly researching the area's history with students and holding numerous meetings, it was decided that a place for <meditation> would be created, where various ethnic groups can come together. About 1,000 wild bamboo stems growing on campus were cut down, and a sculpture roughly 17 meters in length was completed. It is located in a quiet area where you can observe the shadows of the bamboo parts moving in synch with the rising and setting of the sun.

2009 I stayed in Montana, USA, from beginning to end of April: more specifically, in a

town called Libby, located in northwest Montana. The entire population of the town suffered from asbestos pollution; about 300 of its residents had died from cancer, and roughly 1,000 still suffer from this disease. Since the soil is polluted, locals cannot grow plants and children cannot swim in the nearby rivers.



I was able to see the current reality faced by the earth by staying in various remote regions, as well as overall social structures and issues and the lives of people. I believe that what is happening now in remote regions is also happening in other parts of the globe. On the other hand, in Japan, where it is difficult to feel the joy of life and which is in a time of instability and uncertainty about the future, many are fighting against despair and futility. This, I think, is also a form of conflict.

I believe that art has the power to express dreams and despairs, extract the reality of the world, and convey messages. My aim is to create art that looks into how people commit to memory the chaotic modern society today, how they overcome these times, and what they are trying to pass on to future generations.

I hope that my works will serve to trigger in viewers the question of why <we are here now.>”

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## **Cultural Development in Afghanistan: International Documentary & Short Film Festival Kabul and National Theatre Festival**

Rita Sachse-Toussaint

President Ogoura,  
Excellencies,  
Secretary General Mr. Knopp,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I presume that most of you have never been to Afghanistan before and might not have the opportunity to do so in the future.

So, I would like to show you some pictures of Afghanistan, mainly from Kabul. There will be no comment on the pictures.

After that I will present two examples of cultural development that aim towards the rebuilding of a civil society.

(Pictures)

Following these impressions from Afghanistan let us first examine the framework conditions underlying our cultural work in Afghanistan. Next we shall examine cultural activities of the Goethe Institute in Kabul. Then I will point out the tasks ahead for Afghanistan and the supporting countries to enable the country to master the immense challenges. Finally we focus on the development of the international film festival and the national theatre festival.

Let us start with the framework conditions:

- Afghanistan has a high potential of young interested and motivated people. The Goethe -Institut Kabul supports young artists, university teachers, school teachers and students.
- We find more participation and interest in social issues such as the Sharia law and more individual initiatives like the establishment of a company or a small shop.
- You all know the disastrous economic situation in Afghanistan, characterized by unemployment that leads to corruption and a severe increase of criminality.
- Public order is still not established.
- As to the security situation, I already mentioned the increase of criminality. In addition, politically motivated crime has risen. As a consequence the reaction of Afghan police and international military has become unpredictable.
- The elite have left the country.
- Society faces a conflict between tradition and modernity and a strict hierarchic social structure.
- Most women have either no access or restricted access to public life.

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· After all, the political situation is not stable.

In 2003, the Goethe-Institut Kabul celebrated its reopening. Since then we have had to face these conditions.

In the first year we identified the areas for our cultural initiatives as film, theatre, photography and literature. We provided technical support to the Faculty of Fine Arts at University Kabul, to the National Theatre and to other partners. Furthermore, we organized workshops for artists and students at the Faculty of Fine Arts.

It is important to take into account the individual situation of an artist and to pay appropriate attention to him or her so that we are able to support the artist according to his or her needs, e.g. an actress who has been threatened with murder for being an actress.

Our cultural activities such as the film festival provide the artists with a national and international platform for exchange.

We still are in the process of developing a festival structure. The focus in our projects is on quality management and sustainability.

It would be too early to transfer some of our programs to Afghan ownership, e.g. the film festival. This transfer depends on a sufficient qualification of artists and cultural managers. Once this step completed the Goethe Institute in Kabul will reorient its cultural work.

Our activities contribute to rebuilding the cultural area, an area as important for Afghan society as every other social area. In other words, hospitals, schools, road construction, employment and so forth are not more important than the rebuilding of the cultural field.

Only then Afghanistan will be capable to face its challenges

- redefinition of society
- definition of values
- national identity
- building up a stable civil society

Let us focus now on two of our activities, the International Documentary and Short Film Festival and the National Theatre Festival.

We decided to promote the development of short and documentary films for two reasons.

1. this media is appropriate to reflect history as well as the actual situation,
2. documentary films can be realized with relatively modest means.

Our aims are to offer filmmakers a platform for national and international exchange, to

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provide them access to international festivals, to increase step-by-step the quality of film productions, and to establish a festival structure.

In 2006, there were three participating countries: Afghanistan, Germany, and France. The Goethe-Institut and the French Cultural Centre were supporters and the main organizers. Our cooperating partners were ARTE, Afghan Film, and the Ministry of Information and Culture. We began to establish public relations. We had to set up an organisation structure and to define the regulations and criteria for participation and selection.

The Goethe-Institut organized workshops during the festival with experts from abroad. Sustainability is one of the most important criteria for our activities. Therefore we organize additional workshops for young filmmakers throughout the year, in particular workshops with our French partners and Atelier Varan in Paris. The recent production “Children of Kabul” had been admitted to this years film festival in Cannes.

In 2009 there are three supporters – the Goethe-Institut, the French Cultural Centre, and the British Council – and nine participating countries. The quality of Afghan film productions is increasing from year to year. Also, the organisational structure has improved.

Does the film festival in Kabul need a red carpet? - Yes, it does and there should be no doubt. We are more active in sponsoring, and we obtained more transparency for criteria and regulations. Accordingly, the festival has become more professional.

The development of the national theatre festival with theatre groups from the provinces is similar to that of the film festival. Let me point out only a few additional aspects:

- It offers actors and directors a national platform, the only opportunity for exchange,
- The quality of productions increases through intercultural exchange, e.g. in 2007 the Goethe Institute invited Helena Waldmann for a guest performance,
- In 2009 we offer four workshops in Kabul and three in the provinces before the festival,
- We also support guest programs in Germany for directors and actors, e.g. in 2009 a puppet theatre player had the opportunity to attend a workshop at the Ernst Busch Drama School in Berlin. In September 2009 he is invited to study for a year in Berlin.

As a result of these initiatives five young puppet theatre players established Afghanistan’s first puppet theatre ensemble, *Parwaz*.


I could not find a better example to demonstrate the importance of cultural initiatives to provide a perspective to young talented people and to encourage them to contribute to the rebuilding of their society.

Thank you for your attention.

 GOETHE-INSTITUT

**GOETHE-INSTITUT**  
**Kabul**  
**Examples of Cultural Development:**  
**Documentary & Short Film Festival Kabul /**  
**National Theatre Festival**  
 Fostering Peace through Cultural Initiatives  
 Tokyo, May 14-15, 2009  
 Rita Sachse-Toussaint

1-1

 GOETHE-INSTITUT

**Focus**

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Framework conditions

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Cultural activities of GI Kabul

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Tasks for AFG and supporting countries

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Challenges for AFG

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Examples of cultural development: filmfestival, theatre festival

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 GOETHE-INSTITUT


**Framework conditions**

- high potential of young people: interested, motivated
- more participation in social processes, individual initiative
- disastrous economic situation – unemployment
  - corruption, criminality
- insufficient public order
- absence of sense of right and wrong
- security situation – politically motivated attacks
  - unpredictability of Afghan police + international military
- no access to education for parts of population
- insufficient educational situation
- elite in foreign countries
- conflict between tradition and modernity
- hierarchic social structure
- restricted access for women to public life
- unstable political situation

Cultural development in AFG

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**Cultural activities of GI Kabul since 2003**

- evaluation of the situation + identification of areas for cultural initiatives (film / theatre / photography / literature)
- technical support + reconstruction / production means
- qualification of artists
- appreciation / attention for artists + support for their activities
- platform of exchange for artists (e.g. festivals)
- intercultural exchange (e.g. festivals, workshops, experts)
- development of festival structure (cultural management)
- quality management
- sustainability
- autonomy
- Afghan ownership
- new steps

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
**Tasks for AFG and supporting countries**

**Necessity of building up all social areas**

policy - economy - culture - social policy - environment

5

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**Challenges for AFG**

- definition of society
- definition of values
- national identity
- building up a civil society
- stability

Teil der Präsentation (angepasst über Anwerbskopf- und Fußzeilen)

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
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**Examples of Cultural Development**  
**International Documentary Filmfestival**

- Why short & documentary film?
- targets: establish a festival structure / platform for exchange / access to international festivals / quality of productions
- festival structure 2006
  - participating countries: AFG/ GER / F
  - 2 supporters: GI, French Cultural Center
  - cooperation with partners: Ministry of Culture, Afghan Film, ARTE
  - public relations
  - organisation structure: organ. committee/selection committee/jury
  - definition of rules (Call for Entry, selection criteria, criteria for jury)
  - workshops during the festival (ARTE, experts from abroad)
  - guest programs for Afghan filmmakers during the year
  - workshops in cooperation with Ateliers Varan Paris

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 GOETHE-INSTITUT

**2009**

- 3 supporters: GI, CCF, British Council
- 10 participating countries
- increased quality of productions
- improved organisation structure:
  - festival director
  - event manager
  - improved public relations
  - sponsoring
  - more transparency for rules/criteria
  - more professionalism

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DREIHE-INSTITUT

**National Theatre Festival  
theatre groups from Kabul and provinces**

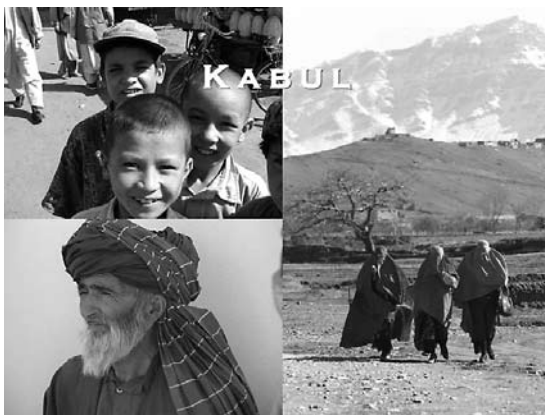
**Additional aspects:**

- national platform
- increase of quality of productions:
  - intercultural exchange (guest performance H. Waldmann 2006)
  - workshops during the festival (e.g. Helena Waldmann)
  - workshops between festivals (Fac of Fine Arts)
  - workshops in provinces (2009)
- guest programs in Germany for actors, directors
  - (e.g. puppet theatre actor at Ernst-Busch-drama school Berlin, foundation of Puppet Theatre Group „Parwaz“ in 2009)

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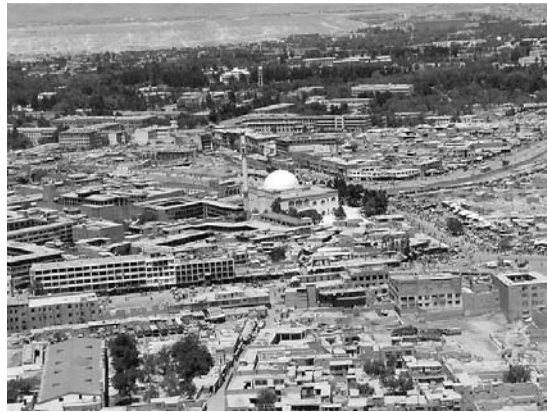
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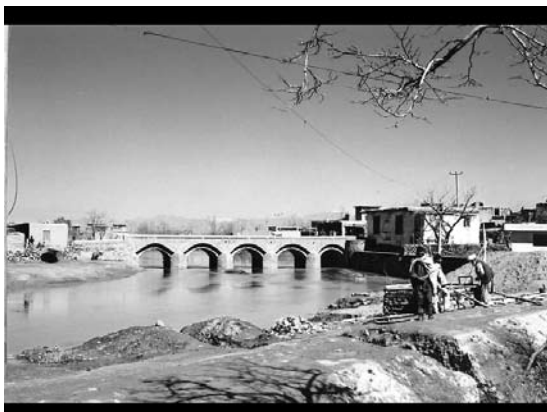
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## Burka Bondage

Helena Waldmann

Ladies and Gentleman,

First I would like to thank the Japan Foundation and the Goethe-Institut for this kind invitation and for the interest in my theater work. Since 1990, after finishing my theater studies at university and working with famous authors like Heiner Müller and directors like George Tabori, I was inspired to question the matter of “reality” on an already “real” stage. Today, working as a freelance theater director and choreographer, I have been living in Berlin since 2000 but most of the time I am directing in an international context:



✎ such as in Salvador de Bahia/Brazil were I produced a piece called “Headhunters”, which won the UNESCO prize;

with the Dramatic Art Center in Tehran/Iran were I produced a piece called “Letters from Tentland”; ✎



✎ and, in 2005, with Mr. Majari, who is among us today, who ran the Goethe- Institut in Palestine at the time.



We worked with a dance company based in Ramallah and a theater company based in Gaza creating a dance movie called “Emotional Rescue”. The subject of all these theater works, which were enormously supported by the Goethe-Institut, stuck closely to the realities of the people we met. Although, it was never my intention to question all these big words like the suppression of human rights, or the oppression of women.

It always became a REALITY on stage. My concerns were not really into those political debates, who are gaining for lobbies or trying to evaluate arguments, which are, at least, obvious: You shall not kill. You shall not oppress.

All that stuff is happening - and I am not a lawyer, but a director. As a director, I like to ask, how all circumstances of REALITY are to be represented on a stage, which is a REALITY in itself.

First of all, European concerns are: I am exotic, since I am interested in people, who are living not only, in Berlin, but also in Tokyo, Kabul, Tehran, Ramallah, Salvador de Bahia. For Europeans: it's “elsewhere”. For me: it's reality. The story I would like to tell you today is perhaps much more common for you than for European people. It's a story I found in

two countries, which cannot be more different. Japan and Afghanistan.

In Afghanistan in 2001 the nearly 2000 years-old Buddhas of Bamiyan were destroyed by the Taliban. 🖱



🖱 These Buddhas were, at 55 and 38 meters, the tallest standing Buddha statues in the world. In the Ancient World the region of the Buddhas, called Gandhara, located on the Silk Road, used to be a melting pot of cultures, connecting Asia and Europe, East and

West. This historical landscape in today's Afghanistan gave rise to a very remarkable mix of cultures. The history of the exceptional adventure of this mix is a story of liberation,



adaptation, transformation and change. The burst of the Buddhas was the beginning of an almost global war against the Taliban, who were actually, only finishing a process which had started with the beginning of the Muslim control over that region and had lasted for more than 400 years.

Already by the sixteenth century the Buddha's faces and hands were destroyed; 🖱



🖱 300 years ago the Buddhas lost their feet and any signs of sexual organs.

From the point of view of the Taliban, namely Omar Mullah, who destroyed the Buddhas within three days using several tons of dynamite, he achieved what his ancestors had tried over generations: the destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan. 🖱



Fanatic Afghans tried to eliminate a sign of history, they considered it was not their history. The world was stunned, shocked and even amazed, when these Buddhas were destroyed. Amazed, since the video artist, Acci Baba from Japan told me a German research team found a very old scroll in the remains of the Buddhas indicating the words: “Nothing is eternal”. “Nothing is eternal” tells us those generations building the Buddhas in the caves were pretty much aware of the finite nature of their doing. It doesn't mean they believed in

an end of their religion, but in an end to the material equivalent of all their physical efforts. They believed, their hard labor would be in vain one day. The day has been marked through three tons of dynamite and in consequence, through thousands of victims, especially from Afghanistan. The finite nature of the physical efforts - nothing better could express the work of dancers, nothing better could express the work of soldiers alike. The finite nature of the nature of dance - means a belief in movement, which is finite from its first step on. Nothing is eternal.



✎ My first touchdown in Kabul, was during the 4th National Theatre Festival in summer 2007.

In only four years, the Taliban had lost ground and power. I was invited to the festival with the follow-up



production of “Letters from Tentland.” ✎



“Letters from Tentland” was a grand collaboration between the Goethe Institute Munich and the Dramatic Art Center in Tehran/Iran. Back in 2004, I was invited to give a workshop in Tehran with Iranian actresses only, in order to create a piece of dancing tents, a so called 'dance under cover'. ✎

“Letters from Tentland” became a strong and international touring dance production from a country, Iran, where dance is forbidden and censorship is most common. “Letters from Tentland” was a piece, which offered famous actresses from Iran to talk and dance hidden behind tents.



The word for tent also symbolizes the “Tschador”, the Persian veil.

A year later, when the piece became recognised as too critical against the Iranian state, and had been



forbidden, I called in some Iranian actresses, who are living in exile, to continue the touring. We called their answer, to the forbidden forerunner: “Return to sender” ✎

Women in exile answered in their own “Letters” to the Iranian actresses who were no longer allowed to act in the piece and who were strongly warned to stop any further contact with me.

I tell you these past activities, because they triggered off the invitation to Kabul to show “Return to sender” to an Afghan audience. Here again, with the support of the Goethe Institut in Kabul, 🖱



🖱 a workshop showed how touched the Afghans were, and how eager to talk freely about their situation on the most effective platform of free speech, which is, to Afghan people, the stage. These mere facts made me curious to learn more about Afghanistan. I returned to Kabul to work with young actresses, who taught me, they would consider themselves “The Generation Rain” What does it mean? “Generation Rain” It is a generation stuck in the mud of a history, very much tight to fundamentalism, although the Taliban are not ruling at the moment.

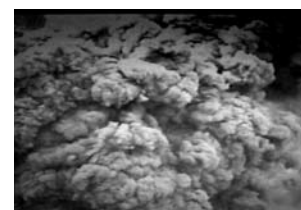


It is an Islamic country and freedom inside the boundaries of this religion can be seen alike the crucial definitions by the Taliban, but also alike the more liberal definitions in Pakistan. Which is, by irony, a hide-away for most of the Taliban. The “Generation Rain”, in one word, has -therefore - lost orientation. In the same year, in 2008, I was invited by the Association of Japanese Theatre Directors and the Goethe-Institut, to present workshops and symposia in Osaka and Tokyo, where I was able to meet some of the great masters of contemporary criticism in Japan, amongst them Mr. Hiroshi Tsutsumi. Here I heard for the first time the word “Generation Lost” describing young Japanese Artists who do not consider to have a future, but to express - maybe a coincidence - the behavior of a generation after the destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan. Maybe it is only a coincidence, but suddenly I felt a neighboring sharing of experiences between the “Generation Rain” in Afghanistan and the “Generation Lost” in Japan.

Both desperate, both eagerly looking for another future, both resistant to their findings in the present, both looking for something, you may call a: RESET BUTTON.



You may judge, if I am wrong or not, but the longer the discussion became between my Japanese friends Yui Kawaguchi and Acci Baba, and the longer I discussed with Afghan women, able to use the internet as a communication tool, I suggested, that



both sides, Japanese and Afghans, may chat on the internet without any visibility to censors, commentators or critics to see, how many differences and similarities they share. A starting point for the talks was the blowing up, that is to say, the vanishing of the Buddhas of Bamiyan.







To both sides, Japanese and Afghans, the empty niches, which were left after the blasting, looked like frames of something which is not allowed to exist. Both asked: Do we have to blast the frame or to blast what's inside the frame? Both sides saw themselves mirrored in the forced invisibility, in the vanishing of their body. Both sides saw themselves in the whirling dust. Both talked about an immense pressure in their society, which they can not withstand. Both talked about the boundaries to tradition, moral codes and senses of honor. Both sides talked about the blasting of themselves. Both sides talked about a huge longing for free Heaven. And, furthermore, both shared a legend of a bird, which seems to have a common heritage. In Afghanistan, the bird of REBIRTH and RESET is called Simurgh, in Japan it's called Hou-hu.

More was offered in the role of freedom. Related by Japanese dancers who thought of Shibari in comparison to the Afghan\_ladies'\_quest 📖

for the role of the Burka, which became the title for the upcoming German-Afghan-Japanese collaboration, called: "BurkaBondage"



which will be premiered in Berlin, in October 2009. To end my speech here, I personally think, the most fruitful and most supportive role of all the cultural organizations, I could work with so far, also including the Dramatic Art Centre in Tehran, has always been the confidence in the experimental confrontation between two cultures, who hardly do know anything from each other.



📖 Afghans have hardly any idea about Japan, and neither do Japanese people about Afghanistan, 📖

not to mention Germans, who gain hardly any knowledge from Afghanistan other than some military aspects of the role of German troops in Kundus, in the North of Afghanistan. The most prominent role, I experienced from cultural organizations, is to undermine cultural prejudices



as they are produced by the media and being never shy to strengthen the role of young artists, who actually do not represent the national ideas of the "big arts". But we should listen carefully to the echos from a generation, which is considered to be contemporary and our future. On the poster is written: Your way is eternal. Hey, it's a scream at the top of the future's voice. (Dein Weg ist ewig. Hey, das ist ein grosser Schrei aus dem Hals der Geschichte.)

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I hope, my contribution can be fruitful to our forthcoming discussion.

Thank you for listening to me.



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## Meeting with Istalif and Our Future

Yasuhiko Shirakata

Thank you for including Istalif pottery in today's program. And thank you for giving me, a mere potter of Tobe ware, the opportunity to participate in this Japan Foundation project and experience Istalif pottery. But perhaps Istalif pottery was luckier than I am. Now allow me to tell you a little about this craft.

Despite a history of 300 years, the craft has had little interaction with the outside world. A 90-year-old elder of the village, Noor Ahmad s/o Abdul Samad (Photo 1), welcomed me, saying that I was the first potter to visit them since a French ceramic artist came more than 40 years ago. This was how my experience with Istalif pottery began.

The village where the kilns are located is spread over the steep side of a mountain. Few roads allow cars to enter and the lack of infrastructure seemed to weigh on people's daily lives.

(Photo 2) This is a photo taken in 2003 of Ando-san and the main street where the bazaar is held. In a 2006 photo (Photo 3) provided by the Japanese embassy in Afghanistan, I was surprised to see telegraph poles. Although the people now have access to electricity, its supply reportedly often stops. Life in Afghanistan is still harsh but it is important that the Japan Foundation is supporting Istalif pottery just when life there is about to change significantly.

Now I will move on to the production process of low-fired Istalif pottery.

This is a site where clay is dug and sieved (Photo 4) located about 1 km from the village. The clay is put in bags and carried to the village. The task is reportedly exhausting, so I suggested they adopt a division of labor since pottery may not suit everyone born in Istalif. I heard that they are following my advice now.

Since the wedging of the clay involves stamping it with their feet and turning it once in a while with a spade, people complained that their heels split and bleed causing severe pain. Last December I sent pairs of "tabi" socks we use for rice planting in Japan. The villagers were very happy and I feel like sending many more of those socks to them.

This is a potter's kick-wheel (Photo 5). This is Noor Ahmad s/o Abdul Samad (Photo 6). They are skilled in the potter's wheel and when I told them about the "tombo", a tool we often use in Japan to measure the opening and depth of a piece of ceramic at the same time, they surprised me by saying that they don't need such a tool because they use their hands to measure.

Since this kick wheel is an important traditional technique of Istalif, I strongly recommended that they keep it and do not install electric wheels.

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It is not easy to prepare the glaze. Although they buy the ingredients at a specialized store in Kabul, the procedures that follow require hard work as they have to break the stone up by hand using millstones and holes made in the stones. This procedure needs to be mechanized quickly. Another problem is the lead that comes from burnt glaze. Regulations against lead are tightening globally and it might become harder to sell Istalif pottery as tableware. Although the glaze is a big problem, we are unable to help them in this respect at the moment.

The kiln is wood-fired and angular on the outside and round inside (Photo 7). The ceramics are stacked in the kiln (Photos 8 and 9). Since this is a really efficient way of stacking, I told them to keep the method even if they switch to gas-fired kilns.

These are tripod stilts that are essential when stacking the ceramics inside the kiln. Since about 1,000 pieces of ceramics go into a kiln at the same time, the same number of these tools is needed. The tips of the legs break easily and the stilts are hard to make. It also leaves marks on each piece. Since this mark is like a trademark of Istalif pottery, it should remain on the pieces.

Yet improvements must be made. When potters from Istalif trained in Japan in 2005, I asked them to take home 1,700 porcelain-clay “tochi” boards to place on the three legs of the stilts. The boards can be used repeatedly and they make the marks smaller. Although it is a small tool, I think its introduction was an epoch-making event during the 300 year-history of Istalif pottery. But 1,000 or 2,000 are simply not enough. I want to send them 100 kg of clay from Tobe.

Istalif has a facility that is like a vocational training center for women (Photo 10). The British have installed a small gas-fired kiln there and they would be able to make “tochi” boards if only they had the clay. But is not possible just yet.

Afghanistan is a large nation and there may be clay more resistant to heat somewhere. Unfortunately, it is not possible to look for it now.

Here (Photo 11) Mr. Mohammad Farouq Asefi is firing the ceramics in the kiln. He watches the color of the fire from a small hole above the entrance of the kiln and decides when to extinguish the fire based on experience and hunch. Although the results are somewhat uneven, he is proud to be able to see the colors of the flame.

It seems that the soaring price of firewood is making the firing of the ceramics difficult. Istalif ware is soft ceramic that is fired at about 900 degrees Celsius. Its fire-resistant temperature is about 1,100 degrees Celsius so that when they are fired at more than 1,250 degrees Celsius like the Tobe ware, they melt and lose form. But if they are fired at 1,100 degrees Celsius, the problem of the harmful effects of lead will be solved and they will increase in strength.

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Therefore, the villagers strongly wish to install gas-fired kilns. Unfortunately, they probably have to wait a while for this to happen.

Making ceramics is difficult in many aspects but selling them is even harder. Yet Istalif has a strong advantage in terms of name recognition and long-established sales channels. The potters also have a flair for business. It made us laugh when we found out that a bowl, which we bought at the village for two dollars, was being sold for 75 cents in Kabul.

In 2005, 13 potters from Istalif received training in Japan. Hopefully it was a valuable experience for them. Since I have a list of episodes but cannot introduce them today, please look at a report by Mohammad Farouq Asefi.

Also please take a look at the materials distributed for the training offered to Abdul Mtin s/o Abdul Salam and Noor Ahmad s/o Abdul Samad who were able to visit Japan again in December 2008.

In Istalif, there is a custom of making small hand-formed ware. I wanted to show them how to make larger pieces so they can create new specialties such as sculptures and ornaments based on their own aesthetics. So with the cooperation of the Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural Park, the two trainees experienced the joy of making large pieces (Photo 12, 13). They were also able to make plaster casts that are useful when making the same pieces. I hope their experience will slowly take root in Istalif.

Making ceramic is a job that makes sense when pursued for a lifetime. Please give them time. I think their future is bright. I would like to finish my speech by wishing that peace will prevail in Afghanistan soon. Thank you.

-イスタリフ焼との出会いと今後-

白瀧八洲彦

国際会議「平和のための文化イニシアティブの役割  
～日独からの提言～」

“Meeting with Istalif and Our Future”

Yasuhiko Shirakata

Presentation at “Fostering Peace through Cultural Initiatives  
-Perspectives from Japan & Germany-”  
May 14 & 15, 2009



photo 1



photo 2



photo 3



photo 4



photo 5



photo 6



photo 7



photo 8



photo 9



photo 10

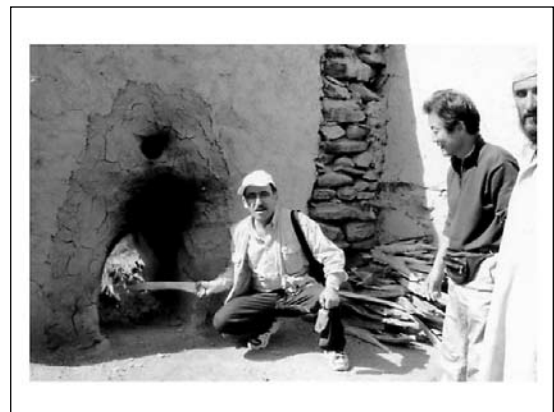


photo 11



photo 12



photo 13

## Guiding Istalif from Traditional Wood-fired Kiln to Gas-fired Kiln

Yasunori Nagaoka

My name is Yasunori Nagaoka and I make ceramics in Gifu Prefecture in central Japan. I have heard that after they returned home from their first training in Japan the craftsmen of Istalif in Afghanistan began producing a gas kiln experimentally. Until then, they had used traditional wood-fired kilns, which are not environment-friendly since they require a large quantity of wood. Although the gas-fired kiln is commonly used in Japan, it is more complicated than it looks. Therefore, I feared the villagers would have a hard time producing it experimentally. For this reason, I asked the Japan Foundation to organize a training program to help them. Last December, the plan became a reality and two young craftsmen arrived in Japan and began training at my workshop. Although it was early winter and cold, they completed a gas kiln under the guidance of a professional kiln builder and through the help of an interpreter. They asked questions and made sketches. The two craftsmen said they wanted to build a communal kiln when they returned to Istalif. Since Istalif ware will be fired at a higher temperature than before when they were fired in wood-fired kilns, the craftsmen will face the same problems as their counterparts in Japan, such as how to improve the clay and glaze to withstand higher temperatures, and maintain the gas-fired kiln. Therefore I think advice from experts in kiln building, clays and glazing will be important.



Receiving Gift



Practicing



Training in Shigaraki



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## German Film Cooperation Crossing Borders in Korea

Eberhard Junkersdorf

First of all I would like to apologize that I was unable to come personally to today's conference due to a health problem which is not severe, but strong enough to make my trip to Tokyo impossible. I am very grateful to the Goethe-Institut Japan in Tokyo and the Japan Foundation for having invited me.

Peace in my understanding is not the result of governmental command or victory of a mighty person or country against a weaker one. Peace very rarely has a final target line or a reliable final result. Peace is always an ongoing process and the result of many single decisions. Every situation requires the proper decision so as not to interrupt the peace-making process.

It is of course culture that can and has to play an important role in a peace-fostering process. This applies for Europe as well, where in nearly all countries the fundamental base of a modern constitutional state is implemented and accepted. As a mediator for German culture, Goethe-Instituts worldwide are playing an important part in the peace-fostering process. This role is especially valid for regions and countries where a normal process of enhancing dialogue and mutual understanding has yet to be developed.

In the heyday of the Cold War, it was mainly culture and its representatives who were able to penetrate at least occasionally the iron curtain to make inter-human connections possible. These connections brought people closer together by way of a learning process that resulted in a better understanding of each other and reduced prejudice.

In a divided Germany, appearances by West German artists in the former GDR have always been something like a sensation for the population of East Germany. The West German rock singer Udo Lindenberg for example became a kind of pathfinder with his concert tour "There is a special train going to Pankow." He soon became a symbol for a young generation of East Germans, who later dared to listen to music from the western hemisphere. Western music was officially called decadent and was for East German rock singers a kind of guarantee to perform their music without being afraid of repression.

When I went to South Korea and North Korea for the first time in my life on the invitation of the Goethe-Institut in Seoul, I thought that as a Berliner who had experienced in 1961 the construction and in 1989 the fall of the Berlin wall, I would be very well mentally prepared for the encounter with this divided country. I was tense and curious when I started the trip. I had a few of my films in my personal luggage, which I wanted to show in both the South and the North. First, I went to Seoul, a rather Americanised city full of vitality and activities. The people on the streets and in the shops and markets conveyed immediately an impression of diligence and efficiency. In the discussions I had with students and their teachers in film schools, I was surprised about the precise knowledge they had of German films and

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their filmmakers. Their huge interest and their extensive knowledge of the international film culture were really impressive. They admired the German governmental system of film subsidies and thought it would help the South Korean film industry a lot if they could have similar conditions. I visited a theatre in Seoul that had sold out tickets every evening for a long time. I was shown the German musical "Line Number One" by Volker Ludwig from GRIPS-Theater in Berlin, of which I had produced a very successful film directed by Reinhard Hauff. I was very surprised to learn that this typical German musical had been shown there for more than 3000 times already and that it was so well transformed to another cultural hemisphere and another language. When I later talked to the actors, I understood that there were similar problems young people in every country were confronted with and that was the reason why this stage piece was so successful in Korea.

Talks became more complicated when I carefully asked about their assessment of the possibility of reunification of the two Koreas. There were answers like, "We are afraid of the political leadership, which has been claimed by the North Koreans," and "The reunification will wreck the good economical situation of the South if we were to reconstruct the missing infrastructure in North Korea." These answers gave me the impression that the time for reunification was not yet mature, but hopefully is still to come.

With a lot of impressions from South Korea, I was very eager to go to Pyongyang to see the North Korean capital and to meet the people there. The journey from the South to the North was more complicated, as one would have imagined, because there is no easy transition from one part to the other. One has to fly from Seoul to Beijing and then take an airplane, which flies almost the same way back in order to bring you to Pyongyang. This flight showed me the actual status of the development of relations between the North and the South. The welcome at the airport in Pyongyang, with its intensive passport and customs control, corresponded to the familiar proceedings on arrival to former communist countries. My first impressions of the country were - in contrast to my expectations - surprisingly positive. Wide freeways leading from the airport to the city, though more used by pedestrians than cars, brought me into a busy and clean city of people transporting all kinds of goods on very simple handcarts and bikes. There were no traffic lights, but the traffic was regulated by very charming and good-looking young female police officers who did their job with great efficiency.

The difference between Seoul and Pyongyang was for me a kind of a clash of different civilisations, and it was not easy to imagine that one could come into a dialogue concerning cultural aspects. But shortly after the first meetings with the responsible people, I was sure that we would rather quickly come to an understanding about cultural exchange. This understanding would have to become an important element in order to establish a base of confidence. Personal contacts there were very important and had a vital role, because at that time, there were very few chances of communicating with foreigners.

The days in Pyongyang were particularly planned to find out what kind of possibilities might

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exist for co-operation and/or services for the production of animation films. The responsible governmental institution gave me all kind of opportunities to visit the state run SEK animation studios. At these studios, I had the chance to meet and to talk to animators and other artists and studio executives, all of whom gave me the impression of being seriously interested in cooperating with Germany.

The artists were all perfectly well-trained, especially the animators and background painters. The difficulty was the lack of English, as most of them only speak Korean. Furthermore, they lacked the bases of computer animation, such as up-to-date high-tech equipment and reliable electrical infrastructure.

I was very surprised by the many possibilities the government is submitting in order to educate kids in different kinds of culture. Governmental institutions develop musically talented children. These children, most of whom were not older than ten years old, performed very proudly and showed how they could already play their instruments with virtuosity. A professional education is given to painters, artists, singers, writers, acrobats, and actors. These individuals are trained in special schools that offer an excellent chance to become first-class educated artists.

A masterpiece of cultural diplomacy had been realised by the Goethe-Institut in establishing a so-called reading room. I could take a look at this room even though it was still under construction. Opened in 2004, this information center received strong and positive recognition worldwide. It was, until today, the only foreign cultural facility in a country where so far the consumption of foreign media, especially from Western countries, is prohibited for most of the people.

I left Pyongyang with the certainty that my visit had helped the parties involved to approach each other and to build up confidence and trust. To start this process, I offered three talented Korean film technicians six-month scholarships in Munich to learn the language and learn about technical equipment used in German films. This cooperation was arranged with the world-famous Arri-Company in Munich and the Bavarian Radio and TV station Bayerischer Rundfunk for the production of a televised animation series for children. In return, the Koreans invited me to take over the presidency of the jury in their next International Film Festival in Pyongyang. I considered that to be a great honor and a gesture of rapprochement and trust-building .

In September 2006, I accepted this invitation. I was looking forward to seeing old friends I had met during their 2004 visit to the Berlin Film Festival. At that festival, these friends had cooperated with the Goethe-Institut in Seoul to premiere some of their films to a very critical international audience. Yes, the film cooperation between Germany, South Korea, and North Korea seemed to work.

The motto of the festival, "Independence, peace, and friendship," was rather surprising for a

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country that is hardly demonstrating any one of these terms. Not very much less surprising to me was the selection of German films in competition. All these films were recommended by the Goethe Institut and were accepted by the festival. The films dealt exclusively with issues of freedom, dictatorships, and conflict.

Already present in 2004, films such as “Rosa Luxemburg” were accusations of abuse of power. “The lost honour of Katharina Blum” showed how violence comes into being and where it can lead to. The contest-winning film, “The Promise” by Margarete von Trotta shows the escape of four young people from a repressed East Germany to a free West Germany. Three refugees succeed, but one boy is caught and arrested so that his girlfriend can make it to West Berlin. The relationship between the two is destroyed for years. “The Promise” was awarded with the Grand Prix at the festival in Pyongyang. The film makes a clear analogy to the situation in North Korea.

The festival jury consisted of a Chinese film academic, a Russian filmmaker, an Italian festival director, a North Korean official delegated by the Ministry of culture, and myself, to whom the chairmanship was entrusted. The atmosphere and the climate within the jury were extremely good from the first day to the last even though most of them communicated exclusively through interpreters.

The daily travel from the hotel to the house of culture where the films in competition were shown to the jury always provided moments of discovering situations on the streets. I saw for example how the traffic police, most of them very good-looking young women, handled the modest traffic. I did appreciate that the German films in the competition had Korean subtitles, which had been controlled and supervised by the Goethe Institute. These subtitles allowed Korean audiences to follow the original dialogue. Nearly each performance of the 73 films shown during the festival drew the attention of the audience. Every screening was sold out, and more than twelve thousand spectators came every day to see the films. I never found out if they paid or if they had been allowed to see the films without paying, but this was not important to me. More important to me was the fact that they could see critical films dealing with repression, violation of humanity, censorship, the lack of freedom of speech, and military dictatorship. I am sure that these intelligent audiences saw situations analogous to those in their own country.

My motivation was to have the challenging task of going to a country where what we take as normal and for granted does not exist, including the possibility of freedom of speech or democratic life, and to be in a position of jury president to talk to people in a more open way than I could as an ordinary tourist. It was a great experience to discover the audience's interest and acceptance - and sometimes even enthusiastic reaction - while watching the films.

The main prize of the festival went to the film “Napola,” which tells the story of one of Adolf Hitler's notorious “Elite” colleges. The director told the story from the point of view of a 16

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year-old pupil who is first misled by the regime, but then slowly starts doubting. A special prize went to the films “The wonder of Bern” and “The life of Sophie Scholl.” Some critics in Germany complained that there would have been better films that could have been honored. Others were moaning that participation in that festival was only an act of appeasement.

I do agree that there would have been other films to give a prize to, but I am sure that the awarded films fulfilled a task that the others would not have done. I do not agree with the moaners - of course no one expects that when you go to a festival in difficult areas, you could change the system of the country only by participating. Participation in such areas is nothing more than putting up candlelight in order to bring about enlightenment. However, any small amount of candlelight can perhaps lead to mental illumination.

Culture and cultural activities are able to overcome borders and obstacles. Cultural cooperation helps to foster the initiative of peacemaking. In dealing with politically difficult systems, it is definitely better to get engaged than to stay absent and remain inactive. I say this because mutual engagement leads to dialogue and rapprochement, absence and refuse to standstill.

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## Comrades in Dream -The First Film Coproduction among Germany, South- and North-Korea, its Development and International Reception

Uli Gaulke

To shoot a film in North Korea means to be confronted with images and realities of an artificial society and to run the danger of perceiving this as reality. My method to deal with this was to find a protagonist who was so touching that she instantly compelled audiences to follow her story. The inconsistency of her appearance and the openness of her presence turned out to be a nightmare for the officials. Her way of talking about her private life was a reason for constant disputes throughout the shoot. I was expected to deliver the image of a North Korean woman as being inconspicuous, exchangeable, and streamlined. That was where my film started from. As a filmmaker I could not accept that they reserved the right to decide how people act in front of my camera. My aim was to create a space where the personality of the protagonist could be self-fulfilled. Many of the absurdities and dangers of the surrounding reality were revealed that way. The project was under permanent threat of collapse. Only the patronage of the Goethe Institute set the stakes for a possible failure, which would have meant a loss of face for the Korean authorities. Slowly but surely both sides were forced to move towards each other and try to understand the different points of view. The film was presented at more than 50 festivals worldwide. During my trips with the film I encountered people who were curious about a country afraid to open up because of the fear of hurt pride. To understand and get an interest in other people and cultures is to confront this fear. This way understanding becomes possible. That is what I hope my film can contribute.



# LUNCHEON SPEECH

## Three Rationales of Germany Cultural Foreign Engagement: Experiences and Reflections of ifa

Ronald Grätz

Ladies and Gentlemen, distinguished guests and colleagues, I am delighted to have the opportunity to be here and to share with you some of our experiences at the Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations (ifa) in addressing issues of culture and conflict. By way of introduction my name is Roland Grätz and my role is that of the Secretary General at ifa. I will begin, if you don't mind, by paraphrasing our Foreign Minister - Frank-Walter Steinmeier: "Culture and cultural exchange is not a peace treaty, but is a crucial instrument in any serious effort to reach a sustainable and durable peace."

Conflict when dealt with through constructive peaceful means such as dialogue and cultural actions will lead us towards liberty, rule-of-law, justice and a respect of individual human rights. The role of building healthy relationships between states as well as engaging and promoting grassroots confidence and dialogue in conflict areas is frequently one of the most inspiring means of learning, development and change.

However, as we all know, there is also a more onerous side. Often difference and change is managed through physical violence. This is compounded through cultural violence: social exclusion; polarization e.g. in media; a distortion of historical facts portraying ethnic purity e.g. in school textbooks; single language policy as a means of marginalization and an attack on the very identity and values of groups and individuals.

Given these two sides of the coin, what can we do? - I cannot provide any recipe for success, that does not exist, but I can contribute some of our experiences and recent reflections.

Germany's foreign cultural policy can best be understood when looked at from three distinct rationales: first, presenting and positioning itself within the international community; second, promoting dialogue and building confidence between itself and other actors as a means of hindering the outbreak of violence; and, finally, as a third party intervening in crisis regions. Hence, cultural diplomacy works in international relations, in crisis prevention and in conflict transformation and peace-building.

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me structure my contribution along these three rationales and emphasize ifa's crisis prevention and conflict transformation experiences. Before closing, I would like to share with you some reflections from our work by highlighting some challenges and dilemmas as well as some considerations that guide as much as inspire our work.

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## **Three Rationales of German Cultural Diplomacy**

### **1. Presenting and Positioning Germany within the International Arena**

Concerning the first rationale, presenting and positioning Germany within the international arena, we have two main policy issues before us: national identity and international cooperation. It is about addressing and redressing the past as a perpetrator and, second, it is about working to build durable relationships to prevent crisis in the future.

Germany's approach in dealing with the past has changed dramatically over the years. In the immediate post-war years, there was a 'deadened silence' derived from both extreme guilt and untouchable shame. The mostly unquestioned German cultural tradition was used on both sides of the Berlin wall as an ice-breaker in international relations. It can be illustrated by the establishment and naming of the Goethe-Institut on one side and the Herder Institute on the other. It was only until the children of that war generation grew up that learning, and even a culture of dialogue, could begin. Especially noteworthy is the realization of the German-French Youth Exchange Scheme where parents would let their children visit the former enemy.

This, in conjunction with the end of the Cold War later in the century, has marked a significant change in cultural policy options. For example, the intensive work in nurturing German-Polish relations. This can be illustrated through more than 600 German-Polish town-twinning arrangements, and partnerships between districts and municipalities as well as schools, universities and scientific societies. Additionally marking this progress in cultural relations is the establishment of a German-Polish Bi-national school in Warsaw which was the result of the signing of the Agreement between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Poland in 2005. A distinct policy of remembrance including cultural actions like film, literature, theatre, memorial places and even dance has paved Germany's return to the international community. It is, nowadays, regarded as a model for reconciliation processes in some post-conflict countries.

However, further work is needed in preparing ourselves for the future. All actors, including Germany, will have to tackle the issue of scarce resources and adjust to the shifting economical and political power centres within the international arena. In a recent study by the statistical service of the European Commission, it is estimated that the population of many western European countries will be 'shrinking' with seismic, long-term consequences on education and the social services. The exception to this shrinkage is United Kingdom where it is speculated that immigration is the main key. Our planning and strategizing must be far sighted and full of cross-cultural cooperation.

### **2. Engaging in Crisis Prevention, Confidence Building and Dialogue Promotion**

The second rationale is 'crisis prevention' or alternatively 'peace promotion'. How are we going about building relationships between Germany and other actors to promote peace and



tolerance?

The kaleidoscope of activities is wide. Let me highlight two areas which I believe are of particular relevance in this day and age: European-Islamic dialogue; and education and training. Especially in the light of recent years, where extremists are given more space than the moderates in media reporting, we have continued both quietly and modestly to promote dialogue between Europe and Islamic countries.

The European-Islamic cultural dialogue programme promotes mutual understanding through school partnerships and the exchange of students, teachers and academics. This is supported through efforts such as the internet dialogue portal QANTARA and the exchange programme Cross Culture Internships. The former, pioneered by ifa in partnership with the Goethe Institute, acts as an interface between the Islamic World and Western world; the latter, offers young professionals and volunteers internships with a view to develop their professional and intercultural competencies.

Further, in terms of education and training, Germany has supported initiatives that promote the development of unbiased education materials such as text books. The Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, together with partners from various countries including Egypt and Jordan, continues its long-term project that works to analyze representations of the 'self' and of the "others" in Arabic and European educational media.

The second training example that I would like to share with you is the Euro-Med Youth Parliament. This was established during the German-EU Presidency in 2007 and involved the training of 100 youth. The goal is to continue the promotion of cultural dialogue in the Mediterranean region and provide further training in intercultural communication skills and understanding of political decision-making.

### **3. Engaging in Conflict Transformation & Peacebuilding (specifically as third party)**

The third and final rationale underlying cultural work concerns Germany as an external actor, specifically in crisis regions: namely, in conflict transformation and peace-building work. I will illustrate this with some of the regional efforts in South-East Europe and Afghanistan and our engagement with a core group of civil society, namely, youth.

Lying at the intersection between policy and NGO implementation is ifa's 'zivik' programme for civil conflict resolution. It acts as an intermediary and advisor for both non-governmental organisations and the German Federal Foreign Office. It financially supports peace projects carried out by local peace constituencies. Its work further involves conducting evaluations and analysis, as well as identifying and documenting good practices and lessons learned - including cultural efforts.

In South-East Europe, ifa's work within the framework of the Stability Pact has focused on

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the development of free media. The Stability Pact for South-East Europe serves as a good example of German engagement in cultural and educational projects to re-build democratic structures, enforce human rights and strengthen civil society.

Concerning the development and promotion of free media, ifa has developed an extensive programme in the successor states of the former Yugoslavia and in Albania, Bulgaria, Moldova and Romania. For example, in Moldova, Media-ImPact was set up in 2003 as a direct response to the limitation of the then current media institutions focusing on the change process. Specifically, it aims to support the orientation of media institutions, public opinion and the intellectual community towards the values of an open society and democracy. Media-ImPact additionally provided training and support to enhance the quality of media production.

Similarly, the Stability Pact for Afghanistan has an equally broad outreach with a clearly stated objective, amongst others, to “shape identity through cultural activities and establish independent media.” [i][i] This includes the promotion of schools, higher education partnerships and scholarships. Further measures cover the concerns of women and gender.

Concerning the development of the rule-of-law and good governance, the Max Planck Institute for Comparative International Private Law has worked to publish textbooks on Afghan family law. This was as a direct response to the wide-spread distrust in the state institutions arising from the coexistence of codified law, unwritten Islamic law and local customary law and the subsequent legal uncertainty. Another example is the Heinrich Böll Foundation which has been involved with dialogue promotion with traditional tribal structures. The foundation’s work is of particular significance in the reforms of Afghanistan’s civil and criminal law, providing further important incentives for broader debates on issues such as the enforced marriage of girls.

Following on from this, let me highlight a little about our engagement with that core group of civil society -youth. As many of you know, youth are increasingly becoming a vulnerable target group for mobilisation and recruitment for war or into spoiler groups. International experiences have shown that youth can play not only a valuable but also a necessary role in peaceful social change for democracy. In terms of German efforts, this has been acknowledged on the implementation level and can be seen in the creation of institutional sectors for youth such as within the GTZ, the German Development Agency. We at ifa continue to applaud and support this trend.

Apart from this, there are two specific youth programmes within the framework of foreign cultural policy that I will raise: D@Dalos and the mobile.culture.container programme.

The UNESCO Education Server D@Dalos for Human Rights and Democracy focuses on South-East Europe and provides teaching and training materials on political education. It is available in ten languages. Additionally, it works to establish international school

partnerships and school projects. The success can be seen by the 100,000 visitors per month using the server.

Under the auspices of the OSCE Representative on Media, the mobile culture container project was initiated in 2001. The project revolves around the concept of 16 mobile containers which provide the space for exchange on youth policy, access to the media and holds music, drama and film events. The driving force is to create a safe space for young people to meet and discuss their future.

### **Challenges & Guiding Notions**

In the final part of my contribution, I would like to put forward some of the challenges, dilemmas and open questions that face our work as well as to share with you some notions that continue to guide and inspire our work. The main four challenges are:

**the ambivalence of culture:** culture, per se, causes neither peace nor conflict. To repeat my introductory words of Steinmeier “cultural exchange is not a peace treaty”. It is a vehicle or a catalyst. Unfortunately, it too can be used as a vehicle for polarization and violence. Any intervention in culture must acknowledge and, at all costs, be fully aware of this dual role in conflict settings and how that intervention can exacerbate as much as assist change.

**the intertwining of culture, identity and memory:** from our own experiences in Germany, we have realized in dealing with the past that our national identity is linked to our culture. Especially in reconciliation work it is necessary to understand that it is not possible to work on one without affecting the other two.

**measuring impact, success and effectiveness:** especially in our field where culture is by definition frequently intangible, we have still a long way to go in knowing and assessing what good we do. While sterling progress has been made in conflict studies over the past ten years in moving toward evaluating our work, especially under the various methodologies that lie under the term Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment such as Do No Harm, further work must be invested into both analysis and assessment. Based on studies from the field, in assessing the effects of conflict interventions such as mediation, peace education and dialogue processes, we are as far as an “educated guess”; in assessing the conflict impact of cultural actions, we are, unfortunately, still in the realm of “hope”.

The final challenge concerns **the need to position cultural work or diplomacy within a broader framework.** We know that conflict as well as peace involves all aspects of society, affects all dimensions of life and no one is excluded from the consequences. Issues are connected to one another often in painful dilemmas: peace processes versus the rule-of-law; no development no peace - no peace no development; and the argument for principled negotiations versus the practical realities of continued small scale hostilities and breaks in security during a cease-fire. We do not have the luxury of not looking at how our small

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endeavors fit within the broader picture. We must find the balance between practical, micro projects and academic theories. The Reflecting on Peace Practice project by the Collaborative for Development Action (CDA) has made some in-roads into examining how this fits together under the term “Peace Writ Large”.

Let me now close on some of the notions that guide our efforts. Some are as old as the field. However, we feel that we must continually return and remind ourselves of them in our everyday work.

**Long-term engagement:** social change takes time - in many cases of suffering and social healing of traumatic experiences, often longer than a generation. Any effort at dialogue and confidence building must recognize the long-term perspective as well as maintaining a certain sense of patience.

**Limits of External Actors in Cultural Work:** In extremely polarized societies, frequently, the most constructive role can simply be the creation of forums in which people from different camps can learn and move towards mutual understanding. Sometimes the best that we can do is simply to moderate and provide a safe space ensuring mutual respect.

**The uniqueness of the local context:** especially in cultural work, forms of engagement must be determined by the local context. What is more, evaluation reports and impact assessments within the last few years have indicated that the effectiveness of a project, quite often, is how closely it is tied to the this context in terms of target groups and timing. There are no golden or universal solutions but only golden mistakes. Without local ownership of a process, there can be no sustainable peace.

**Increasing strategic partnerships and the policy-grassroots linkage:** especially work that addresses societal memory requires a close exchange between artists, cultural workers, peace and conflict researchers and actors from all sectors and disciplines. A durable and stable cultural memory can only be integrated into politics and society if there is support by government institutions, parliament and civil society alike.

I would like to end on one final notion. While I have highlighted various successful efforts through out my contribution, I believe that the most important issue to keep in mind, whether in terms of international relations, cultural actions, crisis prevention and peace promotion or conflict transformation and peacebuilding is a sense of proportionality. Our efforts can only play a part in a concerted effort and a degree of modesty must be maintained. On this note, let me finish on a question raised by a German playwright, Bertolt Brecht,

“Who built the pyramids? The history books are full of the names of kings; but where did the stonemasons, the brick layers, go? ”

Ladies and Gentlemen, distinguished guest and colleagues, I would like to thank you for your

patience and time and would like to wish you sincerely all the best and much encouragement for your future efforts.

[i][i] “German involvement in Afghanistan - stability and reconstruction”, German Federal Foreign Office, 15.02.2006 at <http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/diplo/en/Aussenpolitik/RegionaleSchwerpunkte/AfghanistanZentralasien/EngagementDeutschlands,navCtx=3D265692.html#t18> (Accessed 020509).

# AFTERNOON SESSION

## Missions and Roles of Cultural Initiatives for Fostering Peace

Dr. Hans-Georg Knopp

Thank goodness, between Germany and Japan no cultural initiatives are required in order to create a state of peace. There is peace between our countries – even in the expanded sense of the word that underlies the concept of this conference. As is stated in the programme, peace is more than the absence of war. And that is certainly true. It is good that we can agree that this state undoubtedly exists between our two countries. In this situation it is possible to set off on the search – as we have done today, and will continue to do - for the “something extra” which distinguishes the state of peace, when the guns are silent - often it is culture that fulfils this role.

This “something extra” requires confidence. This confidence exists between Japan and Germany. Even if today and tomorrow, we want above all to talk together about the role of cultural initiatives in dealing with international conflicts and crisis situations, it is perhaps not inappropriate to note at the beginning of my remarks: even in a state of peace, such initiatives are in no way superfluous. They are an important part of that “something extra” that distinguishes peace.

The relationship between our two countries shows that in a satisfactory way. The ongoing cultural initiatives between our two countries can – firstly - be a simple expression of mutual peaceable cultural interests. Secondly – they can serve to still further strengthen the relationships between our two countries. And – thirdly - cultural initiatives can serve to allow experiences to be exchanged. This particularly refers to historical experiences in both our countries on how we cope with the difficult legacies of the 20th century.

But it also deals with experience on how to handle the present day, including naturally above all, dealing with the issue of the world’s globalisation. I am absolutely convinced that both sides can greatly benefit from such an exchange.

Kazuo Ogoura, your country is demonstrating an interest in such an exchange by making it possible to hold this conference here in Tokyo. In my country, Germany, there is also much interest in such an exchange. The diverse, and as seen from my standpoint, extraordinarily fruitful co-operation between the Japan Foundation and the Goethe-Institut is the living result of this interest. From our side, it does not only exist because we want as a result to learn something about Japanese culture. But also because such an exchange of experience always provides us with the opportunity to understand our own German culture better. I am firmly convinced that cultural exchange always provides the opportunity to learn something more about ourselves. There is the opportunity to analyse things that have previously been regarded as self-evident. For this often not very straightforward but in the modern world, necessary process, that “something extra” is required, which is what distinguishes peace.

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I actually believe that such a process of analysis of one's own views and self-identification is of great importance in a world which is becoming increasingly complex and bewildering. It is a pre-requisite for the high level of empathy, which must be contributed to the bringing together of cultures and of states, i.e. the ability to think oneself into initially unfamiliar points of view and into global perspectives.

Without this ability it will be very difficult to get on top of the cultural challenges of the 21st century.

To a certain extent, this conference already forms part of the various cultural initiatives shared by our two countries, which make such an exchange of experience, and therefore of empathy possible. Please allow me now, in my capacity as General Secretary of the Goethe Institute to express my sincere thanks for your co-operation in the conception and the organisation of this conference. In fact, for my organisation, the question of how, using cultural initiatives, peaceable relationships between different societies can be constructed and supported is very important. And I greatly value the opportunity to come to the Japan Foundation here for a general exchange of experience - and also the varied, and as I see it, successful work which our organisations continually undertake in practice.

But there is something else that I would like to say at the start: please permit me to express my personal thanks for the opportunity to talk to you here. Personal discussions, direct exchanges are in my opinion of great importance in the process of intercultural dialogue. It is impossible to replace person-to-person exchanges with anything else. To some extent, one could say: to make that possible, or to be more precise, to make it possible between equals is the essence of our work. Exchanges between people where they can look each other in the eye forms part of that "something extra" which characterises peace. I am delighted that I can be certain that you, as our host, see it exactly the same way. And also: the opportunity to be able to speak here is a great personal honour to me. I would like to thank you very much for that.

In fact by no means all the international and intercultural relationships operate so satisfactorily as those between Germany and Japan: sadly, quite the contrary. If we look around the world, we must note that in many areas, we are only now engaged in actually setting up the foundations for a fruitful intercultural exchange. Much building work still has to be done. And in some regions of the world, there are grounds for concern that the work will not be at all easy to do. Occasionally, there is even the impression that great efforts are required to prevent existing contacts from being totally destroyed. A certain amount of caution in setting objectives is therefore required. Far from being a question of working on cultural conflicts, let alone solving them, sometimes it is more a question of just initiating first cultural contacts. Or, to put it another way: there is occasionally talk of the form of a network, when cultural initiatives in support of peace are being discussed. In some areas of the world, the objective is to identify as a first requirement bases or fixed points which can underpin

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the network that is to be constructed. Even that is sometimes regarded as quite difficult. I am thinking here of regions such as the Middle East and North Korea. What then stands in the way of friendly cultural exchanges? What are the challenges facing cultural relations between different societies in the 21st century? What prevents us from sometimes searching for the “something extra” which should really characterise peace?

My initial point is: we must all recognise that the legacies of the extremely violent 20<sup>th</sup> century will be a major long-term issue. Conflict researchers believe that wars such as the Second World War have huge after-effects on the thought processes of society for at least three generations. That represents 100 years, of which just 64 have passed. Many psychological consequences of the war, such as traumatisation only show themselves after a certain amount of time has passed. That can be demonstrated in Germany by considering the fate of the many refugees. And expulsions, with all the misery that they bring for people, also took place in the theatres of war where the Japanese fought in the last century. Such legacies form an important framework for the work on intercultural dialogue and cultural initiatives. We immediately think of the hugely difficult issues when we consider these legacies. The battlefields, the concentration camps. The wrongs inflicted on the Jews by the Germans.

How deeply the 20<sup>th</sup> century is stuck in our bones, how it continues to form part of the general consciousness of societies can be seen from examples, which might at first sight seem rather improbable. I was recently stopped in my tracks by a very personal essay by the German arts journalist, Nils Minkmar, in which he writes about his French grandfather. Nils Minkmar’s mother had a French father, i.e. the French grandfather. When he visited his German grandson, he never ceased to express surprise at how the Germans liked to eat grilled sausages. His attitude to this simple dish was not just coloured by the marked preference of a French person for sophisticated cuisine. The whole idea made him feel uncomfortable for a completely different reason. As a young man, he grew up hearing the propaganda that the Germans economised on their food in order to finance the armed forces and to equip them for war. The grilled sausages kept reminding him of this.

Obviously this man was fully aware that war between Germany and France is a complete impossibility. But in the deeper recesses of his mind, there was still great scepticism, an uncomfortable feeling. If you look at it from his point of view, that is hardly surprising. In the course of a century, Germany fought three major wars against France. In 1870/71, 1914 to 1918 and finally in the Second World War, 1939 to 1945. During the time of the German Empire, France was regarded as Germany’s traditional enemy. And it is true that Germany did economise on what people ate, in order to be able to finance armaments production. That is a fact that German society may have now largely forgotten, but which can certainly live on in the memories of people who were members of the community in the countries then at war with Germany. Historical memories have long, very long lives.

This small example demonstrates two things: firstly within people’s normal experience of daily life, it is necessary to take into account traditions and attitudes which reach back far



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into the past.

That even applies with societies such as Germany and France, where there have been numerous efforts over many decades to achieve reconciliation. There are over 2000 town-twinning agreements between German and French towns. Without even thinking of French cuisine or French fashion - French literature, French films fascinate very many people in Germany. On the other hand, French philosophers were often inspired by German thinkers. There is now an international history book, which is used for teaching purposes in both German and French schools - it is by the way a project which is to be very warmly welcomed. I have also heard that interesting events relating to it have been held here at the Goethe -Institut in Tokyo. There has also I understand been very fruitful German-Japanese co-operation in relation to the issue of how old wartime enemies can be reconciled.

Here it is necessary to recognize: even where the situation is as satisfactory as it currently is between Germany and France, despite so many varied cultural initiatives, memories from wartime show themselves to be astonishingly long-lived; the past is still present today. This does not in any way mean that cultural initiatives have had no effect. Quite the contrary, it only demonstrates that it is possible to create in the memory a common awareness that nothing like that should ever happen again. And it also demonstrates that people cannot get enough of such cultural initiatives. If that is the case between Germany and France, where peaceable neighbourly relations have existed for more than sixty years - how much more validity must this thought have in areas of the world where the memories of war are much more recent!

Or in colonial situations where European armies actually arrived with their aggressive superiority complex!

Colonialism in particular has left behind deep and as yet still unhealed wounds, because it represented not only an imperial world order, but also one in which Western culture was represented as of higher value than all others, and therefore provided the cultural justification for imperialism.

This resulted in mental attitudes which still today remain, even if unintentionally, virulent and their consequences still in many parts of the world determine the relationship between Europe and ex-colonial territories. There are still cultures which have no voice in the concert of cultures, they are not seen, not heard and not noticed. Particularly in the relationship between economically powerful and less powerful countries, a responsible attitude is called for as far as external cultural policy is concerned, but not only in that respect. A musician such as Barenboim has for instance clearly recognized this and converted the resulting responsibility into a project with his East-Western Divan Orchestra.

External cultural policy would be particularly well-advised also to take on this responsibility and not to want to fall back again into using hectoring tones. Tensions of crisis proportions

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would be pre-programmed in people's hearts and minds.

Secondly the small example of the French grandfather shows that the sensitive points of contact between various historical or cultural traditions often arise in totally unexpected places. To stay with the example from ordinary life: please believe me – there are few things that Germans would regard as more everyday or more harmless than their grilled sausages. That they remind people of war arouses in German minds feelings of simple blank astonishment. But that is the way it is, and it has its historical justification.

General conclusions can be drawn from this situation. Many emotive issues between societies and cultures are known in theoretical terms. In the current world situation, they concern the realization of human rights, the position of women in society and dealing with religious traditions. But at which points in practice and on which actual occasions, conflicts will in fact arise cannot be predicted.

Even if only because of the long life-span of cultural conflicts, it is sensible to plan cultural initiatives to preserve peace on a very long-term basis. But also because of the complexity and unpredictability of cultural conflicts, it is necessary to draw conclusions – and both the Japan Foundation and the Goethe-Institut are already doing that. Cultural initiatives should be transparently planned with a high degree of willingness to take into account the relevant partner's point of view. And it is always necessary to be ready for surprises. Anything else would simply be counter-productive. With short-termism, a demand for fast results, it is impossible to build up the confidence which is required in order to be able to handle judiciously unavoidable surprises arising from cultural exchanges.

Whether therefore such projects which provide the rationale for national years or weeks of culture, are consistent with the approach described here must quite rightly be questioned.

Quoting words from Sarat Maharaj: cultural exchange is comparable to a research process where the partners in their research look for appropriate ways of expressing the results. That is particularly of immense importance with cultural initiatives for creating peace. They can in the end take on a similarity to overland exploration where the way forwards through unknown territory is trod with great caution. In English-speaking countries, there is a useful expression for this: we agree to disagree. It probably needs to be used frequently. The ability to take on board the position of another party without giving up one's own position is a basic requirement for intercultural communication: with cultural initiatives in problem areas it can develop into a necessary art-form. Instead of looking for a consensus, dissent in the link-function should be expected. If you are successful, you are richly rewarded. It is especially through differences that people learn better how to understand and express themselves. That also belongs to the "something extra" which distinguishes peace.

That brings me to my second major point in the search for what has to be overcome if a strong network of cultural initiatives is to be preserved. Initially I spoke about the long-lasting

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character of cultural processes. Secondly I believe that we must build a realistic picture of the status of the processes, which we like to gather together under the concept of globalisation. We are still occasionally surprised how far these processes have already gone.

Two recent events which caused alarm to people throughout the world demonstrated how much the world has become integrated. The first is the financial crisis. There is not a country in the world that can avoid it. And no country in the world can solve it alone. The second is swine-flu which originated in Mexico. As a result, it is necessary to note how quickly today a local event can spread throughout the world – two, three days were easily enough.

From Mexico to Germany and also to Japan, it is just a few hours by plane.

The current status of globalisation has had an effect on the encounters between different cultures. They develop a major dynamic of their own – particularly in a situation where two large societies, China and India, lay claim to being global players in the 21st century. And among the Arab countries, powers are emerging that will provide a challenge for both centre-left governments and for cultural movements, and indeed both in Western countries and in those parts of the world subject to Islamic influence.

The German journalist, Mark Siemons recently observed that as a result of the current status of globalisation, the Western industrialised countries – i.e. North America, Europe and Japan – no longer simply stand separate from other cultures. Instead they are directly involved in the “history, battles and traumas” of the remainder. Such a situation of direct involvement only used to apply between immediate neighbours, and as the German-French example showed, with complicated consequences. Now this situation applies in principle throughout the world.

The attacks of September 11, 2001 on the World Trade Center in New York confirm the importance and the urgency of this analysis. These acts of terror actually represent symbolically a situation in which the peaceful meeting together of cultures failed. As I see it, since then the concept of intercultural communication has once again received a new stimulus. Unlike the battle between cultures, it is considered to be something that maps out the way forward from the dilemma affecting a world society in which the blocs defined in cultural terms face each other in a state of enmity.

Megaphone diplomacy as a national marketing tool is not the solution with blocs, where relationships are of hostility. In such situations, one culture is ranked against others and as a result tensions of crisis proportions are actually deliberately built up.

This is also true. The rule of thumb obviously applies: the more that societies communicate together and the more complex the communication channels, the less likely it is that a state of war between them will arise. But it must also be recognized that intercultural dialogue always requires efforts and that is not something that only starts when the guns fall silent.

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And it must also be recognised that this dialogue cannot always be without friction. The multicultural global society of the 21st century will in no way be so romantic or so pleasant as that which the poets and thinkers of the German classical era used to describe. Perhaps Japanese thinkers allowed themselves fewer illusions from the outset in this respect.

But the concept of the battle of the cultures is in itself inappropriate because it is too crude to reflect the real challenge. In the final analysis, it is certainly not cultures that communicate, but rather individual people, one with another. Intercultural communication stands for the idea that individuals can make creative exchanges in a situation where the cultural backgrounds that have moulded them differ widely. What is required for that purpose is constructive contacts with cultural diversity and with different value systems. People should not feel threatened by experiencing the unfamiliar, but be creatively challenged by it.

How is a constructive contact of this type to be achieved? That is for me the key question in the conception of cultural initiatives for preserving peace. What is interesting is that obviously the better they succeed, the less they are associated with clear intentions. Openness between cultures cannot be created by command, and it also cannot be simulated.

How then is it to be done? It is important to realize that cultures are not in any way firmly defined blocs. Their inter-relationships and connections and their pervasiveness were extensive before the period which we call globalisation. Today they have proliferated and accelerated in a previously unimaginable way, so that we can no longer think of cultures as unchanging and unadulterated in a sort of container. My experience is that as soon as you actually become practically involved with them, you find points of contact, from which communication in dialogue form can be initiated.

For instance in 2004 I had the opportunity to fly to Kabul for a drama festival, in which Helena Wildmann's production of "Return to Sender" was performed. I am very pleased that Helena Wildmann is attending this conference, and equally that Rita Sachse-Toussaint, Director of the Goethe-Institut in Kabul is here. With a certain amount of satisfaction, I was able to draw some conclusions from this drama festival in Afghanistan: that it was a good example of intercultural communication. It was an invaluable opportunity for exchange, since at each performance an audience of around 600 Afghan people watched a play by German dramatist Bertold Brecht. It was also a good example of communication within Afghan society. The need of the audience within the protected environment of such a performance to express its feelings and its opinions was remarkable. And it was possible to get a good impression of the differences within Afghan society, for instance the generational conflict among the younger and the older members of the audience.

In my experience every culture has such gaps and openings, they offer tie-ins for intercultural communication processes. This conference has been shown a whole series of successful examples. With all of them, the pre-requirement is that protected spaces are provided where the people's need to express themselves can freely unfold. Therefore for me, such

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cultural initiatives represent two things: having sufficient self-confidence to react positively to the unfamiliar and also to always accept the differences, but equally to take on board the opportunities that every unfamiliar culture offers for a dialogue. The objective is to expand these opportunities, and to cultivate them on a sustained basis.

Any kind of bouncing your attention from one current crisis region to the next can even turn out to be counter-productive.

It is absolutely correct within all this to recognize the limits to cultural involvement. Peace initiatives require above all the political will to see them through; without a political framework they will run into the sand. And allowing for the way that the modern world is currently organized, economic relationships are often automatically driven forward more than cultural ones. That is the main interest of many politicians. That is the way it is. But there is also reason to demonstrate in a controlled way the special importance of cultural initiatives and what it is that only they can create.

The framework of culture enables people to come together without political issues or economic issues being paramount. Within the cultural framework it is possible to create something which is independent of the ups and downs of political developments. It is about creating an atmosphere of confidence. An atmosphere in which critical questions are possible. And one in which the natural horizon represented by a person's own cultural traditions can be left behind, at least on an experimental basis.

That is in fact what the arts can do. But what, when looked at in the cold light of day, is the art of a country? It manifests the key issues in a society. One learns from it about the perspectives people use in looking at their immediate environment, but also about their internal make-up as a whole. This is particularly demonstrated by the varied cultural encounters between Germany and Japan. We come together not just as representatives of German or Japanese culture. When we meet, we do so as individuals with a full range of thought processes, perceptions and feelings. In order to provide space for this aspect, we need the arts. In them is expressed what we will continually encounter. And that enables us to experience clearly in which ways we differ and in which ways we are similar. Both the search for differences and also the search for points in common are in my view important tasks for cultural exchange. I know no area more suitable for doing this than the arts.

Admittedly, as a result the conception of cultural initiatives itself turns into something like an art-form, or if this idea is regarded as too ambitious, then it can become a painstaking form of craftwork. People need cultural sensitivity to know which artists in which cultures should be able to provide something like an initial spark. It is necessary to have a feeling for those discussions in another country which really have something to contribute. That cannot be planned. And it is absolutely certain that there is no universal formula which will work equally well in all the countries in the world.

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Finding ways of using this kind of craftwork is the task of such cultural facilitating institutions as the Japan Foundation and the Goethe Institute. In my experience: know-how which takes a long time to develop is required, if cultural initiatives are to be successful. Experienced staff are needed. And a network of influential contacts and connections. For the task of getting cultural initiatives off the ground, it is also important that everything that has to be done is put forward as necessary in the home country.

I am coming to the end of my remarks. Long-term cultural traditions and the complexity of the cultural situation at the present state of globalisation form the challenges which cultural exchange has to react to. What is achieved when these challenges are faced, takes two forms. Firstly it creates a sort of early warning system, which indicates in good time when in relationships between societies any stress-points are emerging. This is because they are visible in the area of cultural activities long before they break out into society as a whole. An early warning system of this type is therefore necessary because it is often impossible to know in advance what a problem area will comprise.

Secondly, there are many opportunities for encounters and discussions in order to exchange experiences. That is very important. I believe that in these encounters lies the essence of that “something more” which has to be found and is needed if peace is really to be created.

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## Globalization, Peacebuilding and Cultural Exchange

Kazuo Ogoura

### I. Preface

- (1) Globalization is a process of increasing interdependence and political involvement. This process leaves, in its wake, the destruction, distortion, reconstruction or redefinition of regional, national, local and other group identities.
- (2) The pattern of international disputes and conflicts witnessed over the past 20 years or so after the end of the East-West confrontation are in part the consequences of globalization as well as the causes of some aspects of globalization.
- (3) If one combines the above two theses as the starting point for reflecting upon the peace-building process and the role of cultural exchanges therein, one may be able to advance at least three different (but not necessarily mutually contradicting) approaches.

### II. The First Approach (Socio-Psychological Approach)

The first approach is to view the peacebuilding process as creating or re-establishing or redefining the group identity. Through disputes and conflicts, national or group identities are sometimes shattered and destroyed or artificially reinforced and distorted. The peace-building process is, therefore, a process of redefining and reconstructing one's own identity.

In Africa, for instance, where tribal or ethnic or local disputes are widespread, peace-building as associated with the sound, sustainable nation building, is a process of harmonizing the rich diversity of African identities with economic and social development on the national level. In order to promote such a process, one should first of all, attempt to convert the mindset or paradigm with which we discuss African problems.

One such attempt is the Japan-Africa Journalists Conference held in Cameroon in 2009, where journalists discussed the role of the mass media in creating or reinforcing the distorted international paradigm for approaching African problems. Redefining the African identity in the international community should or could be the first process of peace-building in Africa, where the rich cultural tradition of diversified identities clash with the artificially created "national" identity imposed upon Africa by colonial powers.

In the Middle East, ethnic and religious identity has been at the forefront of socio-political problems as the waves of economic interdependence and political democratization are spread. Under these circumstances, it is very important to provide chances for the people in the Middle East to express their identities in the international community not in the form of confronting the "West" but in a more peaceful manner. In other words, we have to create a "protected or shielded intellectual or cultural space" where the people in the Middle East can express themselves without being persecuted or politically abused. To invite to Japan Muslim female journalists of different countries to discuss the gender problems of the Muslim world is one example of such an effort to create "shielded space" because Muslim

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female journalists can be freed from the intellectual framework of Western feminism as well as from the conventional Muslim concept of the Middle Eastern ladies in order to redefine their female identity.

Another example of redefining national or ethnic identity through cultural exchanges can be found in the American attempt to open a one month course of cultural dialogue in Hanoi between American students and Vietnamese counterparts. Through this process, both Americans and Vietnamese reconstruct the former enemy's image - very much distorted due to the Vietnam (or American) War - thereby indirectly redefining their own identity as a member of the international community.

It is, on the other hand, sometimes necessary to carry out cultural activities in order to mobilize ethnic or national energy for socio-economic development. The conservation and restoration efforts of the cultural heritage of some old African kingdoms can be said to belong to such a category of activity as they help restore and redefine African identity destroyed by Western colonialism.

All these arguments imply that cultural exchanges or activities can be a good tool or occasion for correcting group identity destroyed or distorted as the result of military conflicts. They are at the same time, helpful in restoring, redefining or reinforcing group identities which again may be useful for realizing national or group unity and stability.

### **III. The Second Approach (Security-Related Approach)**

The second approach is a more traditional or conventional one: one can divide the peacebuilding process into four stages. Somewhat similar to the process or cycle of disaster prevention and restoration, the peacebuilding process can be divided into four phases: prevention of disputes, prevention of escalation of conflicts, restoration or rehabilitation and preservation of memories or remedy measures for the future.

The promotion of mutual recognition and understanding among the people in the areas of disputes is generally associated with the first phase of peacebuilding; the process of observing objectively oneself or one's group can sometimes help prevent disputes from further escalation.

The peace kids soccer programme under which high school students from Israel and the Palestine were invited to the Hiroshima A-bomb Memorial can be cited as an example of indirectly encouraging the process of observing the opponents more objectively.

With regard to the last phase of peacebuilding, that is, the conservation of memories of the disasters of war, one has to take note of the important role of cultural activities in soliciting victims of the war to express their painful experiences. One of the significant effects of the drama workshop for children in East Timor was the willingness of the reluctant children



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to start speaking on their trauma in the process of drama making, which helped the people record and conserve the psychological wounds inflicted upon the young people and the way in which they could be healed gradually.

#### **IV. The Third Approach (Human Security Approach)**

Peace can be defined not simply as an absence of conflicts but as an environment for human life where a good, natural and human environment is assured. In this case, cultural activities can be viewed in a borderless space and cultural activities can be mobilized to enhance social welfare or to protect natural environment. National and international dimensions of human security can thus be merged into one, such as in the case of the efforts for disaster prevention.

Educational drama activities to raise public consciousness among mountain tribes in the Philippines for the need to preserve natural environment can have a “borderless” significance. A Mongolian musician’s activities to perform, with a traditional Mongolian musical instrument, music composed by herself and inspired by her chagrin as she witnessed the desertification of her country’s green plains, have also both national and international political significance.

#### **V. Some General Remarks**

(1) All these different approaches for peacebuilding as seen from the relations with cultural activities can be analyzed from the standpoint of their functional or operational implications, particularly in relation to the activities of organizations such as the Japan Foundation.

One point which we should keep in mind is the recent change of the relationship between culture and society. Nowadays, many cultural activities, particularly those cultural and intellectual activities where public finance or public service is involved, are required to be associated with other social, more pragmatic activities such as welfare, environment or industrial technological development. How to take this factor into consideration in carrying out international exchange programmes is a task to be tackled perhaps with a new perspective.

(2) Another point which we have to reflect upon and which is related to the first point is the accountability of our activities. Socio-political utility of cultural activities is increasingly demanded for the public sector as part of the reaction to the spread of commercialized entertainment activities. Under these circumstances, how to assess the effect of our activities for peace-building has become an important question to be addressed in the future.

(3) The third point is the risk taking. Some activities related to peacebuilding in areas of conflict run the risk of actually being involved in the physical conflicts. In this connection, how to encourage or discourage voluntary activities related to peace-building and carried out

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by citizen's groups is also a point to be considered both at the national and international level.

In this respect, we have to think about the relations between conflicts and culture. Although cultural activities cannot be called potential sources of conflicts, they are prone to be utilized or mobilized to serve a particular political purpose. How to prevent cultural activities from being utilized for a political purpose so that at the end, they may worsen, instead of mitigate hostilities among peoples, is also a question to be addressed.

Another problem related to the fundamental relationship between peacebuilding and culture is the so-called peace movement activities. If, as in the case of many peace movements, we start from the assumption that war itself is an evil and peace can be reached only when no one tries to glorify the cause of war, then, cultural activities such as the drama performance abroad by Japanese university students on anti-war and anti-nuclear weapon causes should, under such an assumption, be more encouraged. This brings to focus a more general question as to whether the peacebuilding process itself should be freed from the promotional campaign for political ideologies, as the difference of ideologies has traditionally been one of the major causes of war.

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## On the Roles of Cultural Exchange Activities in the Peacebuilding Process

Kenichiro Hirano

This expert meeting and symposium are particularly concerned with the development of tension and conflict in various regions around the world, an issue that threatens human peace and security. The process from tension short of confrontation to confrontation, to fighting and back to peace building can be fundamentally seen as a concern of the two parties involved in the conflict. A third party may intervene from outside to try and help the two parties resolve the problem and bring about peace. This role is usually taken by NGOs, governments, public and private organizations from individual nations and international bodies. Various “cultural initiatives” are employed during such intervention. This meeting is interested in finding out what kind of cultural initiatives are needed to settle disputes and bring about peace. Let me just add that I use the term “intervention” with no negative implications in my speech. I do not think I need remind you that since the end of the Cold War, intervention has become a tool in the resolution of domestic disputes in international relations.

The process of conflict begins with confrontation and ends with peace building. Here I will divide this process into a number of stages, which are hopefully applicable in general as well, and examine what kind of cultural initiatives the intervening third party should take at each stage, as well as the characteristics of those initiatives.

In its interim report, “The role of cultural initiatives for peace,” a joint study group of Aoyama Gakuin University Joint Research Institute for International Peace and Culture says that the peace building process consists of four stages - (1) conflict prevention, (2) during conflict, (3) after conflict and (4) post-conflict reconstruction. I would like to change this slightly. With knowledgeable assistance from Ms. Hiroko Inoue, who is a postgraduate student at Waseda University’s Graduate School of Political Science, and studying the conflict in East Timor and the international intervention employed there, I propose that we shall look at the peace building process in four stages – (1) pre-conflict (confrontation), (2) during conflict, (3) end of conflict, and (4) post-conflict reconstruction.

As you see, I have slightly changed the way I refer to the four stages. I do so, because I want to look again at the concept of conflict prevention from a broader and longer perspective. It is said that cultural exchange, international exchange and international cooperation are projects that take 50 to 100 years to succeed. Some might say that one cannot talk about culture or conduct cultural activities in absence of security. This claim might be right. However, long-term prevention of conflict is the true potential of culture. This idea remains true today. Those who want to apply culture to the resolution of conflicts and participate in peace building should be reminded of this. Although “cultural initiatives” work effectively in the short term conflict resolution and peace building, we should not give it too much attention, for we may end up forgetting the importance of cultural exchange and international cooperation, which are effective in long-term conflict prevention.

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Now, before the start of conflict (stage 1), the aim of the parties involved in the conflict and outside parties concerned with it is to eliminate confrontation or at least to make it harmless. “Cultural initiatives” are necessary to achieve this aim, but what are the features of such initiatives? From a cultural perspective, confrontation is understood as “cultural confrontation” based on differences in cultures. One cause of confrontation between two ethnic groups that are supposed to be one nation is difficulty in accepting each other’s culture. It takes a long time to build “culture” as one nation, and it also requires people themselves to engage in it. If a third intervening party forces its own culture upon the conflicting parties, the situation will only worsen.

Once the two parties have begun to notice cultural differences between themselves, and politicians use it to their advantage, it is already too difficult to eliminate their confrontation and bring them back to their original condition. All we can do here is to make the situation less dangerous. And to that end, the third party can help them understand each other’s culture. This encourages them to deepen their understanding of culture in general. For that purpose, the introduction of another culture may be an effective “cultural initiative.” This will enable everyone involved to understand not only themselves but also others and, although both sides still have difficulty in uniting, this will encourage them to do their best to co-exist and live together in peace.

At the stage where two parties have already started to fight (stage 2), the third party in the first place must find ways to alleviate the shocks caused by conflicts on the people. We have the reports of attempts at “cultural initiatives” by which to heal psychological trauma. It is also said that sufferers’ knowing that outside parties are worried and concerned about their situation can have healing effects.

The world should not ignore this situation. Measures should be taken immediately not to let the conflict go on for a long time and a third party must intervene to find ways to stop fighting. What kind of cultural initiatives should be applied here? It is important to let the concerned parties realize that they once had cultures that were effective in eliminating and settling disputes, rather than a culture of conflict, and the third party can help them understand this. It is also important for the third party to present the vision of a new culture for the future once the conflict is over.

At the end of the conflict (stage 3), all-out efforts should be made to settle the disputes and prevent the recurrence of conflict. It is at this stage that it is necessary to build trust between the two parties. And it is possible, if they work together as they once did, to build a new society for themselves. At this point, the third party can let them know through various cultural activities that it is possible to recover their rich cultures with some hard work. We should try our best to help children laugh again and enjoy life.

During the recovery period (stage 4), culture is no doubt very important to restore a safe and peaceful society. There must be programs and plans to overcome cultural disagreements

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between the parties concerned, and the third party can join them by carrying out its own cultural activities. Many examples of such actions can be referred to. Here, I would like to contemplate on what such actions should be based.

Logically speaking, there are two routes to restoration in conflict-torn areas - to return to the original state and to build a new society. Areas that have experienced strong hostilities and fierce fighting are unable to return to the way they used to be. So, the issue becomes what kind of society they will be able to build and how. Nonetheless, recovery to the original state should still be a better option if people want to rebuild their safe society based on their own culture. I would like to come back to this point later in my presentation.

To overcome cultural confrontation, the process from confrontation to conflict first needs to be reexamined and reflected upon from a cultural perspective. In other words, at this stage the parties involved still need to try to understand each other's culture. It may also be necessary to conduct a socio-engineering type analysis to determine which cultural elements should be excluded and which ones should be encouraged to grow for the future. I believe that the third party can be of assistance in such endeavors.

Now, generally speaking, forms a new society can take in recovery will be amalgamation, integration, isolation, separation and division of the two parties that composed the original society. Amalgamation, being the original state completely restored, is not only impossible, but would be a step backward in conflict resolution. The same would be true if a third party were to intervene and try to create a new society based on its own model. On the other hand, division is the end result of all efforts failing at conflict resolution, yet it is a possible form the post-conflict society can take. Needless to say, restoration efforts must also be made for each of the divided societies in the way that is being examined here.

I cannot clearly explain the difference between isolation and separation. Perhaps, separation is a structure in which the two sides are completely separated by political and geographical lines, while isolation is partial separation. There may be some cases in which it becomes necessary to take measures for isolation in cultural aspects.

As far as a new society's cohesion is concerned, integration is the most preferable form. However, if it is done too quickly with too much leaning to one of the conflicting parties, a politically one-sided situation will result and trigger a return to violence, rendering efforts useless. If the third party dominates the procedure and forces integration based on its own new model, the result will be the same. In this case, there will be even stronger opposition and resistance. Cultural integration, if done forcefully, could bring about the same result. Thus, we should not force any culture upon the parties involved because they will most certainly resist and go back to violence. This is what we should be most careful in our cultural approach and this is what I most want to emphasize in this panel discussion.

I should say that a society on the recovery phase is perhaps most likely structured in

a combination of integration and isolation. Integration and isolation are two opposing structures. How we can effectively combine these two forms is the final question. We can think of two ways of combining them; one is a spatial combination of isolating confronting elements in some areas, while integrating others in other areas, and the other is a temporal combination of gradually moving from isolation to integration. And, as you know, culture is most dexterous at these two combinations.

It is their own familiar culture that assures people’s security and identity. It is true that culture often includes negative elements that ignited confrontation and disputes and “evil” elements that should be removed to build a new society. But, since people’s long-cherished cultures exist in many parts of society closer to them, those cultures should be isolated for some time and then brought forward to be effectively utilized. In this way, the society can be partly restored to its original state. If people can respect each other’s culture and live together in a multicultural environment, then they can be sure that their restored society will keep on.

However, this is not all that there is to social restoration at the end of a conflict. Efforts must be made toward integration on all levels in the new society. While democratization and elections are institutions essential to social integration, they can provide a newly integrated culture that gives people something more to live for. By working together, people create such new culture, and by mixing themselves with different cultures and collaborating, they can produce a completely new (third) culture. The combination of spatial and temporal isolation with integration is achieved by people living together, working together and creating together. By providing appropriate outside assistance and support for such activities, third parties can fulfill their responsibility to intervene “correctly” in conflict zones for peacebuilding.

The peacebuilding process and the role of culture exchange (comparative table)

【Peacebuilding Process】	① Pre-war (confrontation)	② During war	③ War end	④ Recovery
【Aim of intervention】	- Resolve/eliminate confrontation	- Ease the impacts of war	- Reconciliation	- Reconstruct the area: return it to its original state or build a new society
【Role of cultural intervention】	- Eliminate cultural confrontation - Promote cultural understanding	- Mend psychological wounds - Convey global concerns - Show the vision of a new post-war culture	- Build trust - Revive original rich culture	- Verify the war process → Understand each other’s culture - Integration and isolation: Spatial/Temporal combination
【Cultural relationship form】	- Living together →		- Working together →	
				-Multicultural Coexistence -Working together -Creating together

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## Thoughts on “Fostering Peace through Cultural Initiatives”

Megumi Nishikawa

Globalization is increasing the significance of art and culture. By nature, they transcend national boundaries and function as a common language. During the Cold War, however, they did not fulfill that role since the world was divided politically and economically, and national borders were virtually impossible to break down. The end of the Cold War has led to the dissolution of those borders, and the increasing role of art and culture as a sort of lingua franca.

Nowadays various citizens' groups including NGOs are engaged in support activities in unstable areas, utilizing art and culture as a medium. Political and economic aid generally helps restore order, improve living environments and support the lives of local people materially. Cultural and artistic activities provide mental and psychological support, build up trust and offer a beacon of hope. The former could be considered an external or physical approach, and the latter, internal or psychological.

During Cold War regional conflicts, it was thought that when order was restored and proper living environments provided, people would regain hope and be willing to work toward reconstruction. And indeed, citizens concentrated efforts on external elements such as restoring order and developing infrastructures. Nevertheless, observations on post-Cold War regional conflicts in Cambodia, Yugoslavia, Rwanda, East Timor, and Afghanistan have revealed that even if the minimum living standard is ensured and immediate dangers are removed, true stability cannot be obtained as long as people's hearts remain empty.

Ethnic conflicts and civil wars leave deep scars in peoples' hearts, and they cannot be healed easily. Those people might appear to be leading normal lives on the surface; yet, they are tormented by negative emotions like bitterness, regret, desire for revenge, emptiness, and a sense of stagnation. Such feelings create an attitude of living only for the moment, a lack of public spirit and indifference to society, which in turn has a negative impact on reconstruction of local communities. No political or economic measure will bear fruit if people are unable to keep a positive frame of mind. In this context, we can say that the post-Cold War era is the time to bring peace to people's hearts.

Cultural and artistic activities are believed to heal emotional scars, establish trust among community members and give hope because those activities appeal to our feelings and emotions. Through such activities, a sense of global unity is fostered. Those striving to support others through this type of activity and the beneficiaries find a common cause.

This being so, what should be taken into consideration when considering cultural and artistic approaches in unstable regions? I believe it is important to be there for people in need, and think and speak from their perspective. People in disputed or unstable areas are left with

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complicated feelings. Intrusively telling such people what to do could have an adverse impact on their minds.

Last year I went to northern Thailand along the borders of Myanmar and Laos to examine a rural development program. Dubbed the Doitong Project, this long-running program has since 1987 been encouraging the minority hilltribe people who had been growing opium to change crops, and has eradicated opium cultivation. Mr. Kun Chai, the director of the Meifalung Foundation running the project, also carried out opium eradication campaigns in Myanmar, Afghanistan and Indonesia in 2002 in an attempt to “share the success of Doitong with other countries”. He has been invited to opium eradication conferences held by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime many times to introduce his endeavors.

I asked him in detail how he went about dealing with the hilltribe people. He said, “The purpose of the project was rural development. But what we actually had to work on was not infrastructure but psychology, in other words how to bond with the local people.” The way he built trust with people who had viewed the central government with distrust, will be relevant to the cultural and artistic approach we are going to take, so let me discuss it here. His approach consists of three pillars: “prioritize local communities;” “local procurement” and “flexibility”.

The first principle means to follow the customs and traditions of a given country or region and listen to what people are really hoping for. We have to listen to the other party rather than insisting on our own views. Furthermore, it is important to respect their religious devotion and local customs even if they appear backward to outsiders. We must avoid forcing existing support packages or our ideas on local people and grasp their needs and feelings so that we can build up support together.

The second principle means to make efforts to effectively use local resources and create added value. It is necessary to procure local resources, devise a way of using them effectively, utilize them, give advice on resource utilization and create something new. This enables people in the region to supply their own needs when engaged in cultural and artistic activities in the future. Otherwise, our efforts will come to nothing since they will not be able to do anything without outside support.

The third principle is flexibility. When we are on site, things may not go as we have planned in advance. In such a situation, we should not cling to the original plan. We must have courage to flexibly respond to a variety of circumstances. These three principles led Mr. Kun Chai’s Doitong Project to success.

In a way, taking cultural and artistic initiatives in unstable regions can be seen as cross-cultural communication which involves integrating our own thoughts, methods and cultural approaches into a local culture and winning people’s sympathies. It will be a great opportunity to compare our own culture with others and have another look at it from a



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broader perspective. A cultural and artistic initiative is not a dichotomy between a giver and a beneficiary. Rather, it is a win-win approach that also benefits the giver. I hope that Japanese people will be more enthusiastic about taking part in these types of activities and that the Japan Foundation will facilitate them.

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## Raising Three Fundamental Issues

Yasushi Watanabe

As a cultural anthropologist, I am inspired by two words: “peace” and “culture.” However, these very same words put me on my guard.

### 1. On “Peace”

“Yanomami – Life in the Depths of the Primitive Amazon Forest” is a special program aired by NHK last month. To produce it, NHK negotiated tenaciously with the Brazilian government and tribe elders for nearly ten years and was finally allowed to be the first television station to stay with the tribe for 150 days. The program started with a shocking scene: A newborn baby is buried in a termite nest and burned while being devoured by termites because his or her fourteen-year-old mother decided to send the baby back to heaven as a holy spirit instead of raising him or her as a human being. The tribe is constantly in a state of war due to intense internal conflicts, so subjection of women is still prevalent. Yanomami means “human being.” It is striking that the Yanomami people refer to the TV crew as non-yanomami, or subhuman.

What does “peace” denote to the Yanomami people? To what extent can we accept their concept of peace as what we deem peaceful? We value human rights, freedom and democracy, but we should note that political philosopher Isaiah Berlin warned against adverse effects of hastily pursuing the ideal in a lecture titled “The Pursuit of the Ideal” in 1987. How far can we push our relativism and universalism?

**Issue 1:** When are we allowed to exercise our right and responsibility to foster peace through cultural initiatives? What is the basis of the legitimacy of our action? How should we select and prioritize whom to give a helping hand?

### 2. On “Culture”

Favorable outcomes of globalization are the ubiquity of industrial markets and information, compression of time and space, and relativity of nation-states. Nationalistic expressions such as “Made in Germany” and “Made in Japan” do not reflect today’s transnational, hybrid production processes. Probably, we have finally come to be able to talk about mankind for the first time. Such circumstances should be appreciated, and culture can be an important medium to this end.

In doing so, we must well consider to what extent mankind is universal – namely, whether the concept includes an idea that “yanomami” means “human beings.”

Furthermore, people tend to react to this kind of rapid change in circumstances by trying to

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protect and conserve certain cultures like nationalism and fundamentalism as the essential or the primordial. Conflicts and wars do not arise from cultural differences. Rather, in many cases, cultural differences are simplified and rooted in society through failure of a government or an industrial market and used as an excuse for war. Culture may be abused as a barrier to peace rather than properly used as a medium for peace.

**Issue 2:** The role of Fostering Peace through Cultural Initiatives is to make people aware that various social issues we face, such as conflicts and poverty, should not be attributed to cultural differences – in other words, to guide people not to use culture as a scapegoat. To be more precise, our goal is to reduce hostility and recover self-esteem in society. To eradicate social problems, overcoming failure of a government or an industrial market is a must, and one should not place too much hope in cultural initiatives.

### **3. The Role of Cultural Organizations.**

The benefit of Fostering Peace through Cultural Initiatives is limited to a certain nation or group of people as a matter of course. We need to develop measures to raise awareness explained in Issue 2 among the public, especially policy makers, opinion leaders and gatekeepers. We must keep firmly in mind that right judgments and policies cannot be made from wrong understanding.

It is an obligation of government-affiliated cultural organizations to consider and pursue national interest. As a result of the recent globalization, a nation's benefit overlaps with other public interests for which we should strive such as those of civil society, community coalition and international society, and thus national interest and international interest are often inseparable. That is, international interest is included in national interest. If culture is manipulated in the narrow-minded and hasty pursuit of national interest, it will likely serve as a barrier to peace rather than a medium. Issue 1 was raised to avoid such a situation.

Generally speaking, Japan's cultural programs appear to focus on extensively improving policy environment and interaction environment, and are not seen as direct links to diplomatic strategies. Therefore, discourses to convey the unique characteristics of Japanese mentality, traditions and culture come first, which I think is very Japanese. I have heard that the Goethe Institute clearly distinguished "presenting culture from Germany" and "presenting German culture" and that the former was adopted as a guideline to accommodate cultural diversification (transnationalization or heterogeneity). I would like to support this stance.

It will be necessary to seek ways to deter and alleviate the negative impact of Fostering Peace through Cultural Initiatives on regions where our project activities are carried out. We should collect a wide variety of regional examples including areas where cultural heterogeneity through migration and international marriage is frequent, where nation building, such as establishing a common language and promoting education, is a pressing need, where freedom of religion and speech is not ensured, where poverty is rampant and

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economic foundation is sacrificed for culture, and where cultural conservatism is profound. Furthermore, it is essential to examine real situations of such regions and possible impacts of Fostering Peace through Cultural Initiatives.

**Issue 3:** How can we gain understanding and support from citizens and political leaders for our program “Fostering Peace through Cultural Initiatives”?

## Speech on May 15th

Dr. Hans-Georg Knopp

We are all agreed that to support peace processes in the world, and if necessary even to initiate them by using cultural initiatives is a good, necessary and important thing to do. But it is also absolutely appropriate always to remain realistic and to keep in view the limitations with all cultural involvements. Without an appropriate political framework, peace initiatives can run into the sand. And allowing for the way that the modern world is currently organised, economic relationships are often automatically driven forward more than cultural ones. That is the way it is. But there are also reasons for confidently pointing out the special importance of cultural initiatives and what they alone can create.

The cultural framework allows people to come together without political issues or economic interests being paramount. Within the cultural framework, it is possible to create something which is independent of the ups and downs of political developments. It is about creating an atmosphere of confidence. An atmosphere in which critical questions are possible. And one in which the natural horizon represented by a person's own cultural traditions can be left behind, at least on an experimental basis.

This last point is especially important. I am absolutely convinced that cultural exchange always provides an opportunity to learn more about ourselves. There is the opportunity to analyse things that have previously been regarded as self-evident.

That is sometimes a process which is not entirely straightforward, but it is still a necessary one, and essential for the self-identification of a society in a world which is becoming increasingly complex and bewildering.

It is a pre-requisite for the high level of empathy, which must be contributed to the bringing together of cultures and of states, i.e. the ability to think oneself into initially unfamiliar points of view and into global perspectives. Without this ability it would be very difficult to master the cultural challenges of the 21st century.

To acquire empathy is in my opinion a vital objective of cultural initiatives. The interesting thing is that obviously the better they succeed, the less they are associated with clear intentions. Openness between cultures cannot be created by command and also it cannot be simulated.

How is it to be done? I believe that can only be answered in the abstract with difficulty. It is necessary to examine quite objectively individual examples. In doing so, it is important to note that cultures are not in any way firmly fixed in defined blocks. My experience is that as soon as you actually become involved with cultures, you find points of contact, from which communication in dialogue form can be initiated.

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Within the framework of this conference, as I see it, a whole series of remarkably successful examples have been presented.

For instance in 2004 I had the opportunity to fly to Kabul for a drama festival, in which Helena Wildmann's production of "Return to Sender" was performed.

I am very pleased that Helena Wildmann is attending this conference, and equally that Rita Sachse-Toussaint, Director of the Goethe-Institut in Kabul is here. With a certain amount of satisfaction, I was able to draw some conclusions from this drama festival in Afghanistan: that it was a good example of intercultural communication. It was an invaluable opportunity for exchanges, since at each performance an audience of around 600 Afghan people watched a play by German dramatist Bertold Brecht. It was also a good example of communication within Afghan society. The need of the audience within the protected environment of such a performance to express its feelings and its opinions was remarkable. And it was possible to gain a good impression of the differences within Afghan society, for instance the generational conflict among the younger and the older members of the audience.

In my experience every culture has gaps and openings, they also offer tie-ins for intercultural communication processes. With all of them the pre-condition is that protected spaces are provided where people's need to express themselves can freely unfold. Therefore for me such cultural initiatives represent two things: they include having sufficient self-confidence to react positively to the unfamiliar; and also to be able to take on board the differences, but equally to accept the opportunities that every unfamiliar culture offers for dialogue.

The objective is to expand these opportunities, and then to cultivate them on a sustained basis. Any kind of bouncing your attention from one current crisis region to the next can even turn out to be counter-productive.

I have been impressed by the great interest that has been devoted in Japan to the German attempts to achieve reconciliation with its former enemies from the wars of the 20th century. There have been in the Goethe Institute in Tokyo a wide variety of gratifyingly well-attended events, many held in co-operation with the Japan Foundation. At this point, I would like to express my gratitude for that.

Historical memories have long, very long lives, above all the historical memories of old wartime enemies, of what were indeed terrible, for many people, traumatic events. Dealing with such memories is an important objective for cultural initiatives. Between my country, Germany and our immediate neighbour, France there are many such cultural initiatives – and perhaps something can be learned from them.

There are over 2000 town-twinning agreements between German and French towns. Without even thinking of French cuisine or French fashion - French literature, French films fascinate very many people in Germany. On the other hand, French philosophers were often inspired

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by German thinkers. There is now an international history book which is used for teaching purposes in both German and French schools – it is by the way a project which is to be warmly welcomed and that has led to interesting events being held here in the Goethe Institute in Tokyo.

Even when the situation is as satisfactory as it currently is between Germany and France, despite so many varied cultural initiatives, memories from wartime show themselves to be astonishingly long-lived; the past is still present today. This does not in any way mean that cultural initiatives have had no effect. Quite the contrary, it only demonstrates that it is possible to create in the memory a common awareness that nothing like that should ever happen again. And it also demonstrates that people cannot get enough of such cultural initiatives. If that is the case between Germany and France, where a state of peace has existed between the neighbouring states for more than sixty years - how much more validity then must this thought have in areas of the world where the memories of war are much more recent!

Or in colonial situations where European armies arrived with their aggressive superiority complex!

For me, the example of Germany and France demonstrates: even if only because of the long life-span of cultural conflicts, it is sensible to plan cultural initiatives designed to preserve peace on a very long-term basis. But because of the complexity and unpredictability of cultural conflicts, it is necessary to draw conclusions – and both the Japan Foundation and the Goethe Institute are already doing that. Cultural initiatives should be planned transparently with a high degree of willingness to take into account the relevant partner's point of view. And it is necessary always to be ready for surprises.

With short-termism, a demand for fast results, it is impossible to build up the confidence which is required in order to be able to handle in a judicious way unavoidable surprises from cultural exchanges.

The work that has been described at this conference shows: what is needed is a sensitivity to know which artists in which cultures should be able to provide something like an initial spark.

It is necessary to have a feeling for those discussions in another country which really have something to contribute. That cannot be planned. And it is absolutely certain that there is no universal formula which will work equally well in all the countries of the world. To a certain extent it is possible to say that it is not only those things that are realised as a result of cultural initiatives which are art or culture. Even the conception of cultural initiatives is itself something like an art-form, or if this idea is regarded as too ambitious, then it can become a painstaking form of craftwork.

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Finding ways of using this kind of craftwork is the task of such cultural facilitating institutions as the Japan Foundation and the Goethe-Institut. My experience is: know-how which takes a long time to develop is required, if cultural initiatives are to be successful. Experienced staff are needed. And a network of influential contacts and connections is needed. For the task of getting cultural initiatives off the ground, it is also important that everything that has to be arranged is put forward as necessary in the home country.

Such facilitation should not be regarded as too easy. Expectations should not be aroused that peace can be very quickly achieved through cultural initiatives. It is a feature of these initiatives that they are sometimes rather complicated and that the results are not immediately apparent.

Cultural exchange is comparable to a research process where the partners in the research look for appropriate ways of expressing the results. That is particularly of immense importance with cultural initiatives for creating peace.

They can in the end take on a similarity to overland exploration where the way forwards through unknown territory is trod with great caution. In English-speaking countries, there is a useful expression for this: we agree to disagree. It probably needs to be used frequently. The ability to take on board the positions of another party without giving up one's own position is one of the basic requirements for intercultural communication: with cultural initiatives in problem areas it can develop into a necessary art-form. Instead of looking for a consensus, dissent in the link-function should be expected. If you are successful, you are richly rewarded. It is especially through differences that people learn how to understand and express themselves better.

And there is something else that it is essential not to be silent about when communicating the importance of cultural initiatives. Cultural exchange costs money. Many powerful people in my country therefore regard it as a delightful luxury – something that you do if some money is left over.

And something that goes as a nice adjunct with the economic and political relationships between two countries, but does not take on anything like the same degree of urgency or importance as apply to the economy or to politics.

I would like to look at it rather differently. For me, cultural exchange is in its own right one of the pillars on which relationships between countries rest. It is not a secondary programme. It is rather an independent form of communication between societies, which makes processes possible which would barely exist, if at all, should there not be the possibility to invest in cultural exchange.

As things stand, there is plenty of need for such investment. By no means all of the international and intercultural relationships operate so satisfactorily as those between



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Germany and Japan: sadly, quite the contrary. If we look around the world, we must note that in many areas, we are only now engaged in actually setting up the foundations for a fruitful intercultural exchange. Much building work still has to be done. And in some regions of the world, there are grounds for concern that the work will not be at all easy. Occasionally, there is the impression that great efforts are required to prevent existing contacts from being totally destroyed.

It is still too early to draw a conclusion from this conference. But it is already clear to me now how important it is to exchange views on all these matters. In fact, for my organisation, the question of how, using cultural initiatives, peaceable relationships between different societies can be constructed and supported is very important.

And I greatly value the opportunity to be able to visit the Japan Foundation here for a general exchange of experience - and also the varied, and as I see it, successful work which our organisations undertake on a regular basis. Discussions between people, direct exchange, is I believe very important in the process of intercultural dialogue. It is impossible to replace person-to-person exchanges with anything else. To some extent, one could say: to make them possible between equals is the essence of our work.

The frequently referred to concept of the battle of the cultures is inappropriate because it is too crude to reflect the real challenge.

In the final analysis, it is certainly not cultures that communicate, but rather individual people, one with another. Intercultural communication stands for the idea that individuals can make creative exchanges in a situation where the cultural backgrounds that have moulded them differ widely. What is required for that purpose is constructive contacts with cultural diversity and with different value systems.

Please allow me to observe: I can already say from my standpoint that this conference is a good example of creative exchange. It is not only in crisis-ridden regions, but also where there is a state of peace – as between our two countries – that such an exchange is important. For this reason, I would like to express my sincere thanks to you for having us here as your guests in Tokyo. It is a great honour for us and very encouraging to have such an important partner in the developing of cultural initiatives, which can advance peace a little in this world.

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## When Everything Else Fails - Possible Roles of the Arts in Conflict Resolution in the Middle East

Fareed C. Majari

So far, Western diplomacy in the Middle East has proven incapable of providing a viable solution to the conflict between Israel and its neighbors. In response to this failure, players in the field of international cultural cooperation have found themselves confronted with rising expectations in regards to their potential to bring about dialogue and détente between the entrenched parties. In this personal account, I will illustrate the Goethe-Institut's experience in trying to fill this new role.

In order to travel from Jordan to the Palestinian Territories, one has to cross the Allenby Bridge, a border crossing manned by both the Jordanian and Israeli Authorities. The bridge is located in the desert not far from the northern shore of the Dead Sea. It is a forlorn place. Here, the Jordan River is a pitiful trickle, the desert is sizzling hot and the whole place is infested with swarms of flies reminiscent of those that beset the Pharaoh. What is worse, the border crossing is notorious for the unequal treatment received by foreigners and Palestinians, for whom there is a special terminal. In May 2008, by invitation of the Goethe-Institut, German choreographer Henrietta Horn and her dance company toured the Middle East. After performances in Beirut, Damascus and Amman, the dancers planned to continue on to Ramallah. I met Henrietta and her dancers at the bridge in order to bring them to Ramallah. When I arrived, it turned out that something had gone wrong. One of the dancers, a Korean, had been replaced by her Taiwanese colleague. Unfortunately, somewhere along the lines of communication, this piece of information had been lost. Taiwanese citizens need a visa in order to enter Israel. The chances that the following night's performance would take place as planned were slim. The Israeli Army and military police that staff the border crossing do not have a reputation for making the life of those wishing to visit Palestine any easier. In the middle of the terminal, under the eyes of travelers and soldiers alike, Hsuan Cheng who, to cap it all, was one of the lead dancers, began to teach another dancer how to dance her part. At this point, we were all utterly convinced that she would be sent straight back to Jordan. However, to everyone's surprise, after ten hours of waiting and rehearsal on our side and intensive communication with their superiors on the Israeli side, a young Israeli lieutenant broke the news that we all could pass and wished us a pleasant stay.

In the summer of 2003, I invited German conceptual artist Thomas Kilpper to conduct a sculpture workshop in the West Bank city of Jenin. The situation was very tense then. It was shortly after the second Intifada and the Israeli "Operation Defensive Shield" of April 2002, during which the Jenin refugee camp was completely razed. The number of casualties is disputed; for their part, Palestinians speak of a massacre.

When Thomas Kilpper arrived in Jenin, Israeli tanks were raiding the city almost every night. Together with youths from the city and the refugee camp, Thomas built a larger-

than-life scrap-metal horse. The raw material for this sculpture was taken from the rubble of homes, wrecked cars and the twisted ruins of the local muqata'a (headquarter of the local government). The idea was to breathe new life into the destroyed material. Furthermore, the horse is a symbol of mobility and strength in Arab culture.

On one side of the horse's body, there is a piece of white sheet metal with the word 'as'af (ambulance). This sheet had been salvaged from an ambulance of the Red Crescent in which a local emergency doctor had died after it had been hit by an Israeli rocket grenade. When completed, the horse was towed through the streets of Jenin. The young artists proudly paraded their



Thomas Kilpper: The Jenin Horse, 2003

work, accompanied by an ambulance and riders on Arabian thoroughbreds. For the final part of his project, Kilpper toured The Jenin Horse through the West Bank, to Ramallah and back again to Jenin. The workshop participants insisted on joining the artist on this tour. For them, Ramallah emanated the spirit of a cosmopolitan town. The five-meter high sculpture was towed through the West Bank by a farmer's tractor. The 90 km tour took a total of 11 hours because the horse's progress was delayed many times by numerous Israeli checkpoints and roadblocks. Eventually, the young Israeli conscript soldiers let the troupe pass freely, dismissing any fears it might be a "Trojan horse." To this day, the horse stands tall in a square in Jenin.<sup>1</sup> Ironically, the sculpture got its first gunshot holes not from the Israeli army but from the leader of the Al-Aqsa brigades in Jenin whose stronghold the camp is and who mistook it for one of the many "peace projects." Nobody was hurt and the commander later apologized to the artist.

What can we "learn" from these two stories? Does art bring out the human side in us? Can art help to foster dialogue and détente between entrenched foes? Doesn't it sound too good to be true?

I would like to return to yesterday's debate and particularly to Ambassador Ogoura's remark that at least in foreign cultural politics, we ought to bid l'art pour l'art farewell. In my view, we must be careful not to use the arts as political or diplomatic tools. Some artists who intend to help the peace process run this risk. Artists have always taken a political stance and "engaging art" has always existed. Many if not most works of art of lasting significance take sides and show the suffering that results from injustice and occupation or condemn the horrors of war.



Francisco de Goya: El 3 de Mayo de 1808 en Madrid

Fortunately, art has not become less political in recent years. Artistic reflections and concepts aim more and more to enlarge their influence in society. Research based art now has taken over terrains that had previously been the sole domain of journalism, social science and political practice. An example is German artist Lucas Einsele's project "The Many Moments of an M85 - Zenon's Arrow Retraced". This work in

progress traces an imaginative trajectory of the Israeli cluster bomb M 85 which was used in the 2006 Lebanon war. The in the core of the project are photographs of people whose lives were touched by the bomb: The farmer, the surgeon, the demining expert, the engineer, the factory worker, the politician and the soldier. "They all do their best, from their perspective. War is not the result of obvious evil but of personal, commercial, political, societal interests. It is not only the result of general interests, but of individual interests. The artist intends to change our conception, our actions, and, at least symbolically the (seemingly) inevitable detonation of M85. By zooming into the parts and dimensions of the trajectory, by looking at it, in every detail, we might find - and see, and feel - the moments when Zenon's arrow stands still on its long way, when it becomes visible as that what it is: Another cruel and futile product of man." <sup>2</sup>

It was Tina Clausmeyer, who was an intern at the Goethe-Institut in Ramallah and whose master thesis is a case study of the Goethe-Institut in the Palestinian Territories, who drew my attention to the work of Nicolas Bourriaud. This art critic and curator defines relational art as "an art that takes as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context, rather than the assertion of an independent and private symbolic space" and which "points to a radical upheaval of the aesthetic, cultural and political goals introduced by modern art." <sup>3</sup> This kind of art produces relationships through personal encounters with symbols, forms, actions, and objects by which meaning is elaborated collectively rather than in the privatized space of individual consumption.<sup>4</sup> Our horse project in Jenin clearly matches Bourriaud's definition. It helped to strengthen social cohesion in a community that is troubled by tensions between the town of Jenin and the nearby refugee camp. The Goethe-Institut and its local partners acted as a "matchmaker and mediator" and administered the project in a bottom-up approach.<sup>5</sup> The summer with the German artist offered the participants activities in an economically and culturally deprived city. We hope that they encountered hitherto unknown ways of social interaction, alternative role models and perspectives rather than the ideal of dying as a martyr, a very prominent ideal at this time. But the effect of cultural programs is almost impossible to gauge.

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Art has always dealt with conflicts. But how can art be conducive to conflict resolution and reconciliation? You will find abundant literature on art and conflict resolution related to social work (e.g., projects with young delinquents or for violence-ridden neighborhoods), but not much on the resolution of conflicts between peoples or states. Art projects may work well to foster reconciliation after a conflict has been resolved politically or militarily. However, would anyone seriously consider art as a remedy to war or civil war? Was William Kelly, a community art practitioner from Australia, exaggerating when he claimed that “a painting can never stop a bullet but [...] a painting, a piece of writing, a piece of theatre can stop one from being fired”?<sup>6</sup>

The Goethe Institutes in the Palestinian Territories and Israel (and sometimes Lebanon and Syria) are frequently approached by artists or activists who propose trilateral (German - Israeli - Palestinian) art projects that bring artists from both sides together in order to overcome prejudices and thus contribute to mutual understanding and peace. These people find themselves in a predicament. On the one hand, they intend to bridge fault lines and divides, to reconcile and combat adversary images. On the other, what is needed in this geographical and political context is not rapprochement and convergence, but disengagement and separation. Even if one favors a one state solution (one state for Israelis and Palestinians, for Jews, Muslims and Christians), as do many artists and intellectuals on both sides, one has to accept that this is a long-term objective, which can only be accomplished through disengagement and a transitory, probably prolonged step in which two separate states exist side-by-side. A better understanding of the nature of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and about the respective other is undeniably a desideratum. Political change inside Israel is crucial for a revival of the stalled peace negotiations, but this political change will not happen as long as ignorance and indifference prevails in the Israeli electorate.

Trilateral cultural initiatives look good from afar but are difficult to implement “on the ground”. They often come across as condescending to our Palestinian partners, who point out that the conflict is not primarily about getting to know each other better but about occupation. I was once asked, “Would you invite a burglar who just broke into your home and who is pointing a gun at you while he steals your belongings to sing a song with you?” Our Palestinian partners also question the Germans' legitimacy to act as arbitrators, vis-à-vis Germany's soft stance on Israel that has again been underscored by Chancellor Merkel's visit to Israel. Her unconditional support for Israel has been lambasted by Palestinians and critical Israelis alike. “It looks to me as if the Chancellor defines friendship as not intervening,” says Yossi Beilin, the leader of Israel's liberal Meretz Party and one of the architects of the Oslo accord. “That's not friendship. A real friend gets involved in the peace process.”<sup>7</sup> Last but not least, direct contact between Palestinians and Israelis is technically and legally impossible. With the exception of those with Israeli or Jerusalem I.D. papers, Palestinians cannot travel to Israel or East Jerusalem. Israeli citizens are not legally allowed to visit the West Bank or Gaza and Palestinian institutions, such as universities are restricted from cooperating with Israeli institutions by a legally binding boycott on Israel. Contact between Israeli citizens and citizens of Arab countries like Lebanon or Syria is also prohibited by the

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laws of these countries.

Despite all the obstacles, the “West-Eastern Divan” is a youth orchestra in which musicians from several countries of the Middle East play together. This cooperation has been made possible by diplomatic passports provided by the Spanish government. Egyptians, Israelis, Jordanians, Lebanese, Palestinians and Syrians all play in this remarkable orchestra. The orchestra was founded in Weimar in 1999 by the Argentine-Israeli conductor and pianist Daniel Barenboim and the late Palestinian-American academic Edward Said. The ensemble was named after an anthology of poems by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Barenboim was awarded the Goethe Medal in 2007 for fostering an understanding between the Israelis and Palestinians. “The Divan is not a love story, and it is not a peace story,” Barenboim said, “It has very flatteringly been described as a project for peace. It isn't. It's not going to bring peace, whether you play well or not so well. The Divan was conceived as a project against ignorance; [...] it is absolutely essential for people to get to know the other, to understand what the other thinks and feels, without necessarily agreeing with it. I'm not trying to convert the Arab members of the Divan to the Israeli point of view, and I'm not trying to convince the Israelis to the Arab point of view.”<sup>8</sup> Because of his artistic reputation the “maestro,” as he is respectfully called in Ramallah, gets away with something for what others would be called to order. It must also be noted that there are voices in Palestine that demand a boycott of his concerts and accuse his Palestinian partners of collaboration and appeasement. Likewise, he was harshly criticized in Israel, firstly for defying an unwritten ban and conducting works of Richard Wagner with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, and secondly for his work with the Divan Orchestra and his criticism of the occupation.

We have already slipped into politics, and a very brief description of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is warranted at this point. Primarily, this is a conflict about land and the scarce water resources, which come mostly from aquifers located under the West Bank. As is often the case, material interests are blended in with ideologies and religion. For Israel, security of its citizens is a major issue. Currently, the Israeli government under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who took office in March 2009, pursues a policy of rolling back all previous accords and a policy of settlement expansions in the West Bank and East-Jerusalem. The future of Jerusalem (Al-Quds) is a touchstone for the sustainability of any peace plan and the policy of “Judaisation” of this city leaves one fearing for the worst. This hawkish approach is also underscored by the tough measures against those who were involved in the preparation of the 2009 edition of the Arab Capital of Culture Program, which declared Jerusalem the Arab cultural capital and which is organized by UNESCO and the Arab League and is designed to promote and celebrate Arab culture and encourage cooperation in the Arab world.

In my view, the Palestinian Authority has fulfilled all its obligations without getting anything in return. There has been a lull in armed attacks from the West Bank on Israel for a couple of years now. Palestinian politicians have made painful concessions while at the same time risking their own political survival. Strongholds of armed resistance, such as Jenin, are

now peaceful and controlled by a European trained police force that is widely lauded for its enforcement of the law.

Gaza, however, is a different story. The Gaza war, which resulted in a large number of civilian casualties, could have been avoided. While I believe HAMAS deliberately provoked a war, the consequences of which it clearly anticipated, and moreover took the civilian population hostage in pursuit of its irresponsible politics, Israel's response to randomly and inaccurately fired Qassam missiles was completely out of proportion. As Gideon Levy of the Israeli newspaper Haaretz commented, Operation Cast Lead was a “war deluxe” [in which a] large, broad army fought against a helpless population and a weak and ragged organization that fled the conflict zone and barely put up a fight.<sup>9</sup>

While HAMAS's role in provoking an armed Israeli response should be condemned, it requires some nerve to suggest that the rocket fire from Gaza can serve as a justification for further annexation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Since June 2002, a wall - or a border fence - has been under construction along the line dividing the heartland of Israel and the Palestinian Territories in the West Bank. This wall is even higher and more monstrous than the Berlin Wall. In Israeli politics, this construction has been justified as a means to prevent assassins from infiltrating into Israel. Israelis most commonly refer to the barrier as the “separation fence”, “security fence” or “anti-terrorist fence”. Palestinians most commonly call it “the barrier” in Arabic جدار (jidar = wall) or invoke the English “Apartheid Wall”. In a 2004 ruling, the International Court of Justice declared the construction of the wall “contrary to international law”. Critics of this border installation claim that it was purposefully designed to incorporate Israeli settlements into Israel, with the resulting de facto annexation of parts of the West Bank. For the Palestinian population, this boundary has painful consequences; families are separated, workers lose access to jobs in Israel and hence their livelihood, and children can no longer reach their schools. The border fence seems to be a part of a broader strategy aimed at establishing facts, which deprive any future Palestinian state of viability. A Palestinian state, yet to be established, would no longer have any outer boundaries nor be connected to the Gaza Strip.

In terms of public relations, the wall has not been a success. It has estranged many people, and it has inspired artists from all over the world. There is even a web site where one could order graffiti sprayed on the wall on one's behalf. In the last couple of years, the Goethe-Institut has been inundated with project proposals dealing with the wall.

In his User's Guide to Photographing the Separation-Barrier-Wall, Professor Meir Wigoder from the University of Tel Aviv describes the dilemma of such art works: “For many decades, artists and photographers have been exploring ways to subvert the picture-plane. They have chosen tactics of erasure to point out the allusive character



of the image.” In our example, numerous attempts have been made to de-materialize the Separation-Barrier-Wall: window frame perspectives have been drawn on it to show the view on the other side, which the wall has been hiding; hanging domestic wallpaper changed a section of the wall from a cold exterior to a warm interior; white paint has been coated on it to create a minimalist purified ground, which counters the opaqueness of the wall's concrete surface;



写真 Steve Sabella

graffiti attest to the dynamic gestures of brush strokes whose liveliness counters the deadly implications of the cold stone; artists have gathered beside the wall to hang their images of protest, thus turning it into an art gallery; films have been projected on it, attempting to turn the wall into a transparent cinema screen that transports the audience to the imaginary realms of other illusory spaces; and video activists have placed cameras on top of it, pointing the lenses in opposite directions and screening the views on both sides of the wall in order to render it transparent. All the creative attempts to de-materialize the wall, nonetheless, only reinforce its existence. The wall's surface is stronger than all the creative political gestures of defiance. The graffiti on the wall, reading “This Wall will Fall”, cannot exist without the surface-support of the wall.<sup>10</sup>

The art project “Challenging Walls” was launched along the separation wall and was manifested through a large-scale 60-meter photo installation and an international conference in July 2007. As the brainchild of Israeli and West-German born artist-photographers Ruthe Zuntz and Michael Reitz, “Challenging Walls” presented artistic statements by artists who have lived in many wall-divided environments, namely Germany, Cyprus, Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine. The project was funded by institutions such as the European Commission, the Institute for Foreign Affairs (IFA) and the European Cultural Foundation. Partners in Israel were the Van Leer Institute, the Jerusalem Film Festival, and the Jerusalem Cinematheque. Despite the Palestinian embargo against Israel, Al Quds University supported the project and Palestinian photographer Steve Sabella contributed to it.

The photographs were projected on the wall that divides Jerusalem and the Palestinian town of Abu Dees. The event was carried out in coordination with the Israeli Border Police, so



participants were allowed to enter the security strip which is normally off-limits. A coach hired by the Goethe-Institut to bring visitors from Ramallah however was half empty. Many Palestinians I talked to were reluctant to join. They felt that their dignity was compromised by a project that pretended normality and



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relied on third-party intervention (the international organizers) to secure Palestinians some hours of freedom of movement in their own land.

To commemorate the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Goethe-Institut is currently sending plastic bricks to countries with a similar past or present situation: China, Cyprus, Israel, Korea, Mexico, the Palestinian Territories and Yemen. In these places, the bricks serve as a canvas for artists, intellectuals and young people to tackle the phenomenon of walls and fences. The symbolic “Journey of the Wall” will be part of a planned domino effect at the “Festival of Freedom” on November 9, 2009 at the Brandenburg Gate.<sup>11</sup> Students from the Faculty of Arts at Birzeit University near Ramallah will take part in this project. I have both reservations and afterthoughts regarding our project because it predetermines both form (the plastic bricks) and content (the wall phenomenon), thus giving the participating artists relatively little leeway for their own art. It reminds me of an art class at school in which students are given material to paint on. The project is symbolic and the plastic bricks represent the wall and the vision of a future without barriers. Political art tends to use symbols, and in Palestine images of the (often uprooted) olive tree, the *kūfiyyah* (traditional headdress typically worn by Arab men), and the wall are so abundant that I doubt anything artistically interesting can come out of using them. I cannot help suspecting that this project does nothing but give us a warm and fuzzy feeling and politicians the opportunity to celebrate their alleged role in tearing down the Berlin wall. Ironically, these are the same politicians who have always turned a blind eye on the prolonged occupation of Palestine (and the fence that separates Mexico and the USA where dozens of would-be immigrants perish every year). Walls and fences infringe upon human rights and should artistically be dealt with accordingly. Plastic walls never live up to the concrete walls they pretend to represent. An alternative to tumbling plastic bricks could have been the erection of an exact replica (made from real concrete and real steel) of the separation barrier and other still existing walls and fences exactly where the Berlin wall once stood. It would remind us that the responsibility for peace and human rights is universal and international and that politicians ought to demand they are torn down just as they did with the Berlin wall.

Which of the cultural initiatives I have mentioned have helped to foster peace? Obviously none, I would say, looking at the dire political situation in the Middle East. I am aware that the question is naïve because the impact of the arts in social and political processes is not measurable. Thomas Kilpper's *Al Hissan - The Jenin Horse*, which I mentioned at the beginning, addressed only Palestinian individuals, groups and stakeholders and did not attempt to include Israelis. We hope that it contributed to a civil society and strengthened forces that favor negotiations rather than armed struggle. The “wall projects” included artists and audiences from both sides of the wall but were criticized as patronizing. The most successful project so far clearly is the “West-Eastern Divan Orchestra”.<sup>12</sup>

I would argue that the only promising way cultural institutions can pull their weight is by fostering a liberal climate in their respective host countries. A society in which the arts flourish and are a vital part of public discourse is much less likely to adopt belligerent and

aggressive policies.

However, cultural initiatives cannot end injustice and occupation. They cannot relieve politicians of their duties. Particularly in the Middle East, Western governments must overcome their tendency to put their own *raison d'etat* in the foreground and to apply double standards. They must, if need be, call a spade a spade.

### **Fareed C. Majari**

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- 1 For more information and pictures: <http://www.kilpper-projects.net/the-jenin-horse/gb/description.htm>
- 2 Lucas Einsele: "The Many Moments of an M85 - Zenon's Arrow Retraced", concept note, 2009
- 3 Bourriaud, Nicolas (2002) *Relational Aesthetics*, Dijon: Les presses du réel: p. 14
- 4 *ibid.*: 107ff.
- 5 Tina Clausmeyer: *Engaged Art' - How Can Artists Become Mediators in Conflict?* (unpublished)
- 6 William Kelly, "Acknowledgements", *Violence to Non-Violence: Individual Perspectives, Communal Voices*, An Anthology compiled by William Kelly with prints from The Peace Project, Harwood Academic Publishers, Craftsman House, Sydney, 1994, p.xvi.
- 7 Der Spiegel Online, Friday, November 20, 2009, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,541892,00.html> (retrieved 03/04/2009)
- 8 Ed Vulliamy: "Bridging the Gap, Part Two", *The Guardian*, 13 July 2008 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2008/jul/13/classicalmusicandopera.culture> (retrieved 03/04/2009)
- 9 Gideon Levy, *Haaretz*, 15 January 2009 (English edition)
- 10 Meir Wigoder: *A User's Guide to Photographing the Separation-Barrier-Wall* (lecture given in July 2007 at the conference "Challenging Walls" at the Van Leer Institute in Jerusalem)
- 11 <http://www.goethe.de/ges/prj/mar/lae/enindex.htm>
- 12 It should be noted that after this paper was presented and before it was printed a visit by Daniel Barenboim and his orchestra to Ramallah had to be cancelled because of criticism of his alleged support of Israel's war against Gaza.