



Tuesday, 4 October 2011, 1:30 pm.

## **Roundtable 2: A Climate for Change?**

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### Speakers

**Vincensius 'venzha' Christianwan**, Artist, House of Natural Fiber, Indonesia

**Theo Anagnostopoulos**, founder, SciCo, Greece

**Alison Tickell**, Director, Julie's Bicycle, England

**Pooja Sood**, Director, KHOJ International Artists' Association, India

### Moderator

**Angharad Wynne-Jones**, Producer, Tipping Point Australia

### Rapporteur

**Anupama Sekhar**, Programme Officer, Asia-Europe Foundation

## **Description of the session**

This session focused on two main issues at the intersection of art and environment: one, the continued need, in some countries and contexts, for individual/civil society initiatives addressing environmental issues through the content of their work; and, the argument for the adoption of more environmentally sustainable practices within the arts sector.

**Theo Anagnostopoulos** focused on the need to raise awareness among school students on environmental issues through work of his NGO, SciCo, which addressed the issue of "bad science communication" at the school-level in Greece by "innovative means" such as theatre, festivals and documentaries.

**Vincensius 'venzha' Christianwan** spoke about the strong activist strain among Indonesian artists, who seek to address not only environmental issues but also larger social and human rights issues through their work.

**Pooja Sood** acknowledged that the priority in a country such as India still remains that of getting artists to engage with environmental issues, work with communities and gain access to public spaces for such interventions.

**Alison Tickell** cited the example of Julie's Bicycle and made a compelling case for the arts sector to take charge and impact policy by setting standards and adopting environmentally sustainable practices. '*The arts are not mere messengers (of environmental messages)*', she argued. Alison underlined the need for research and data gathering on the environmental impact of current practices in the arts sector, in order to be able to then translate them into priorities (e.g. the British Music industry is, on the basis of such research, moving from plastic jewel case CD covers to cardboard sleeves, thereby greatly reducing its negative environmental impact). To impact policy, the arts sector will need to recalibrate the metrics by which they are judged and should work with the governments on this (e.g. the British music industry is working with the UK government).

Key outcomes and results of the session explored the tension between competing priorities in different contexts surfaced in the interactive discussions following the presentation by speakers. Priorities differ in varied countries and contexts with regard to artists engaging with environmental issues; in some countries, education and awareness-raising are placed high on the agenda, while elsewhere focus is on ensuring policy frameworks that enable widespread adoption of environmentally sustainable practices in the arts sector.

Furthermore, while it was agreed that artists should, in general, be responsible for ensuring the environmental sustainability of their works, there were differing opinions on according this the highest priority in the larger discussions on art and environment. One presenter argued that policy cannot be impacted without a critical mass of individual projects, while another made a case for the arts sector to work simultaneously at multiple levels (policy, education, awareness).

## **Creative intersections discussed in the session**

- Strong emphasis on “place” given that the discussions centred on environmental issues.
- Places can shape the worldview of artists, Venzha argued citing the example of Indonesian artists whose activism goes beyond issues of environmental degradation to address larger questions of human rights and democratisation in the country.
- Places invariable shape projects, as Pooja Sood's examples illustrated. The *48 Degrees public art ecology* project not only sought to map the cities of old and new Delhi geographically, but sociologically and psychologically as well. *Negotiating Routes – Ecologies of the Byways* archived local knowledge of local ecologies, which, it was argued, could then be used to impact policy.
- The lack of public spaces wherein artists and other civil society stakeholders may articulate interventions was raised as a concern in the case of India. Such consciousness of a common, indeterminate public space is not a part of the civilisational consciousness of India and will possibly emerge along with environmental consciousness through changes to educational policies.

- Places are shaped by the communities that inhabit them; hence, the need for artists working on environmental issues to engage with communities was seen as crucial.
- The importance of collaboration and “symbiosis” between scientists, environmental technicians and creative industries/arts sector is important to make the sector environmentally sustainable in its practices

## Examples of good examples and practices

- Ygeia [www.ygeiaengnosei.gr](http://www.ygeiaengnosei.gr)
- Green Project [www.green-project.org](http://www.green-project.org)
- House of Natural Fiber [www.natural-fiber.com](http://www.natural-fiber.com)
- HONFablab Yogyakarta [www.honfablab.com](http://www.honfablab.com)
- Julie’s Bicycle [www.juliesbicycle.com](http://www.juliesbicycle.com)
- Dossier: *Arts. Environment. Sustainability: How can culture make a difference?* Published by the Asia-Europe Foundation; available at: <http://www.asef.org/index.php/projects/themes/arts-culture/1999-connect2culture-at-the-world-summit-on-arts-and-culture>

## Identified problems

- Lack of public spaces, in some contexts, for artistic intervention on environmental issues
- Gaps between policy and practice are too wide in some contexts and cannot be bridged immediately; only when a critical mass of individual initiatives is reached can we expect any tangible impact on policy
- Competing agendas of non-profits, development agencies and other stakeholders working on environmental issues, including the arts sector

## Recommendations for future actions

No specific recommendations were agreed upon by all.