

# Interchanges no.26

*a newsletter of the Centre for Creative Communities*

**February 2006**

## **News from CCC**

At the beginning of February, CCC's director, Jennifer Williams, was privileged to take part in the 7th plenary session of the International Futures Forum (IFF) in New Delhi, India. The group comprised 16 IFF members from 8 countries and a number of people from Delhi.

The week-long meeting was shaped around three learning journeys organised around the general theme of leadership in complexity. The idea is for the participants to immerse themselves in a local circumstance with no motivation other than to make sense of the experience for themselves. The role of the visitors is to learn through observation and listening and then, through the multiple perspectives gained, try to make sense of the shifts that are going on in the world and what practical notions can be gained for people's capacity to navigate those shifts more easily.

The invitation from the IFF's Indian hosts was to look at a culture that has always acted holistically and yet faces huge challenges as the Indian economy engages with global opportunities. The learning journeys involved visits to three very different entities: an artist, a government department and a social entrepreneurial project. They were organised with the knowledge that the recently enacted Right to Information act is having a huge effect on the way government programmes and the work of non-governmental organisations are being planned.

The learning journey Jennifer Williams joined comprised a visit to the studio of Shakti Maira; to the Office of the Secretary of the Information Technology Department of the Delhi Government; and to Alert Citizens Organisation (Satark Nagril Sangatha), a non-hierarchical advocacy group.

Shakti Maira argued for aesthetics and art as a force for social change and he read from his recent book, *Towards Ananda*. He told the story of a boy who went through the sad journey of losing the possibility of picking ripe mangoes off his father's trees, as he had been able to do throughout his life. For practical economic reasons, his father had sold the fruits of the orchard to an exporter. Not only were the trees fenced off, the fruit was picked green long before the sweetness has entered the soft fruit.

Prakash Kumar showed us through the process he is implementing in order to take full advantage of Information Technology both for the benefit of communication across the many departments of Delhi government and between the city government and the people.

His vision is to make the life of all citizens more comfortable. He described a number of processes connected to a recent Future of Delhi conference that involved citizens of all ages in looking at what they valued most in terms of change. The teenagers had recommended two campaigns: "No to Plastic" and "No to Fire Crackers" As a whole the conference put cleaning up the river at the top.

Alert Citizens Organisation (Satark Nagril Sangatha) started three years ago to teach people in the slums how to use the Right to Information act. People are often made to feel illegal simply because they do not know their rights. In meetings with slum dwellers, SNS discovered that the ration shopkeepers were not giving them their share of food grains and kerosene oil – in fact there were many shops, which had not distributed rations and kerosene oil for years.

The mandate of the group is to promote transparency and accountability in government functioning and to encourage active participation of citizens in governance. 18 women and two men who live in the nearby settlement that houses 7000 in a warren of tiny rooms spent more than an hour telling stories. They reported that together they had been able to conquer their fear of visiting government offices to apply for ration cards and other services due to them. They said before they were not even allowed to enter and now they are welcomed. The last time they went the housing officer on hearing their stories was herself in tears and wishing to help in any ways she could. [www.snsindia.org](http://www.snsindia.org)

Among the Indian participants in the IFF meeting were Rita and Umesh Anand, publishers of Civil Society magazine (for more information please contact [civil\\_society@rediffmail.com](mailto:civil_society@rediffmail.com)). The IFF meeting was extremely rich after having visited these fascinating and informative people. For more information about the IFF and its mission visit [www.internationalfuturesforum.com](http://www.internationalfuturesforum.com).

## **In progress**

### **Signs of the City – Metropolis Speaking**

Barcelona, London, Berlin

*Urban Research on Resemblance and Diversity in European Metropolis  
A Youth Art Project on European Identity  
By urban dialogues, Berlin*

The art organisation *urban dialogues*, based in Berlin is co-operating with partners in London and Barcelona to scrutinise the dramatically changing environment of the modern European city through an inventory of the signs of the city.

Professional artists, educationalists and urban researchers work together with young people to make a comprehensive synopsis and inventory of the urban environment of three European metropolises, archiving the signs of the city.

Based on collaborative insights, all participants immerse themselves in the metropolitan microcosm in a playfully designed urban expedition to discover the immediate world of signs from the new viewpoint of explorers. The project will ultimately aim to ascertain and portray the similarities as well as the differences of contemporary cultural urban signifiers.

The results of the research will be made widely available via a comprehensive web log, local and final exhibitions, while an academic study and evaluation will be the basis for further research on urban communication, art and regeneration work. The youth art project "Signs of the City – Metropolis Speaking" offers a methodical and goal-oriented introduction to hands-on work with new media. In addition, by producing a high profile artistic product the young adults gain considerable experience to assist their personal and professional growth.

The Centre for Urban and Community Research of Goldsmiths College, University of London, is patron and academic advisor to the entire project. The Institute of Contemporary Arts London, the Queens Park New Media Centre in London; ARTIBARRI of the Nou Barris district in Barcelona; the FEZ-Berlin and the House of World Cultures in Berlin are some of the main collaborators to date. The project is scheduled to launch early 2007 with the final presentation to take place at the ICA in autumn 2008.

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## **Books and Publications**

### **The Arts, Politics and Change; participative Cultural Policy-making in South East Europe**

*By Weeda, H. et al (eds.)*

*2005, ECF, Boekmanstudies, ECUMEST Association, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 246 pages, ISBN: 90-6650-081-6*

This new title argues that cultural institutions in South East Europe at the turn of the century operate in difficult circumstances and more often than not in a political vacuum. Yet, cultural managers are prepared to work to build up a flourishing independent cultural sector. In order to bridge this gap, the 'Policies for Culture programme was initiated by the European Cultural Foundation (Amsterdam) and the ECUMEST Association (Bucharest) in 2000; with the aim to make cultural policies more effective throughout SEE by encouraging a participative principle in their design, implementation and evaluation.

In this book, practitioners and experts on cultural policy describe the results so far of this programme, which it is hoped, can serve as an inspiration for the wider community, institutions or individual researchers who examine the role of culture in politically unstable societies.

## **Dreams, Dialogues and Desires; Building a community in Blackburn and Darwen**

By David McNulty

2005, NIACE, UK, 100 pages, ISBN: 1 86201 205

Available from NIACE, £9.95, Tel. +44 (0) 116 204 4216 email:

[orders@niace.org.uk](mailto:orders@niace.org.uk)

This title offers a stimulating account of the creative approach used by Blackburn with Darwen to establish a learning community. In a passionately and, at times, humourously written account of his time there, the author provides a valuable insight into how ideas develop and become reality; how to reach those learners previously disinterested or excluded; how to push limits and extend and question boundaries and in this particular case, dramatically increase participation in adult and community learning.

## **Making Exact Change; How US arts-based programs have made a significant and sustained impact on their communities.**

*A report from the Community Arts Network*

By William Cleveland

2005, API, USA, 140 pages

Available in print for \$14.00 from <http://www.lulu.com/can> or download

as a free PDF from <http://www.makingexactchange.org>

In 2005, arts in the Public Interest (API), selected ten US arts-based community programmes and commissioned William Cleveland, director of the Center for the Study of art & Community, to gather and interpret data on how they define and measure their own success. This report analyses their responses and presents findings about the best practices and obstacles in this work. It also makes strategic recommendations to service organisations and funders on how best to support and advance the field of community arts in the immediate future.

## **Magic Moments; Collaborations between artists and young people**

*Anna Harding (ed.)*

2005, Black Dog Publishing Ltd. London, UK, 270 pages, ISBN: 1 904772

28 5, £19.95

This new publication is a collection of texts and images reflecting opinions and insights of artists working on creative projects with young people. It examines their motives and working processes, evaluating the importance of art as an instrument of social change. The book spans projects from the late 1960s to the present day and demonstrates how work with young people has often been central for many artists and is becoming increasingly legitimate as a field of practice.

## **ONLINE**

[www.nestafuturelab.org](http://www.nestafuturelab.org)

NESTA Futurelab is helping to transform the way people learn by using new and emerging technologies to create rich learning resources that are involving, interactive and imaginative.

[www.plannersnetwork.org](http://www.plannersnetwork.org)

Planners Network is an association of professionals, activists, academics, and students involved in physical, social, economic, and environmental planning in urban and rural areas, who promote fundamental change in our political and economic systems.

<http://www.dea.org.uk/>

Development education aims to raise awareness and understanding of how global issues affect the everyday lives of individuals, communities and societies and how all of us can and do influence the global.

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