

A support scheme
for emerging creators of contemporary circus in Europe



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General of On the Move

Marie Le Sourd

Marie Le Sourd holds a diploma of Political sciences from the University of Grenoble (including one year at the University of Leipzig, Germany) as well as a Master's degree in Law on International cultural cooperation and relations from the University of Lyon. From 1999 to 2006 she was in charge of the Cultural exchange Department of the Asia-Europe Foundation based in Singapore (ASEF), particularly in the fields of young artists' exchanges, development of cultural policies and networks. In September 2006, she joined the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, working as the director of the French Cultural Centre in Yogyakarta (Indonesia). Since January 2012, Marie Le Sourd is the Secretary General of On the Move, ensuring the daily management of the organisation and the implementation of its strategic plan.



Good morning. I will speak in English, obviously I'm French, you can guess with my accent but when I talk about artist's mobility I am usually used to do it in English so it's easier in a way. And since it's an European conference I think it's also good for European guests not always to have the headsets, and for the French ones anyway with my accent you can understand everything!

So, my presentation will be as Agathe mentioned, more in relation with this question of artist mobility, the question of circulation, the notion of distance, of frontiers, be they real, or imaginary or sometime virtual. My output will be more global. I will not focus only on the circus sector because On the Move covers all types of disciplines and I think sometime it's also good to think out of the box, out of the sector. And it will be also much more an international and not only an European type of focus. I will refer to many networks and resources and information so if you are interested at the end of the Powerpoint there will be my email address if you need more information about this organisation, and I will also give the links to our colleagues at Jeunes Talents Cirque Europe.

Basically, compared to the proposal I send one month ago to Agathe and to Cecile, I changed a little bit the content or at least the resources I'm using because I participated or co-organized 3 events recently in relation to artist mobility, and I think some of the ideas shared during these events can be food for thought for the next discussion and exchange, because it's also like ideas that were exchanged by artists, cultural operators which are really living, experiencing, and reflecting on artists mobility issues.

So the first event I participated in was a seminar called « Ici ou Là ». The mobility of artists and cultural professionals was approached from the perspective of this network called « Réseau d'art contemporain 50° Nord », a network of contemporary art linking France and Belgium. The meeting was in Charleroi, in Brussels at the end of April. So the mobility of artists and cultural professionals was really much discuss, not only as a one-way type of direction, to go from somewhere to somewhere, but of course as a two-way type of exchange, meaning that the kind of knowledge that you can gain on an artistic or professional level, can of course very much benefit also after, when you are back to your country, back to your local organisation, and be useful to the people and the artists you are working with as well. It was also mentioned that there is various format of mobility, for touring, for residency, for production, for a training or to participate in a meeting, and that this mobility can be based on an individual basis or more in a group, because sometimes you are mobile alone, and sometimes you are more part of a group or a company.

Of course, this kind of mobility can have various type of impact on a short or a longer term. To illustrate this question of mobility, we can use a metaphor like the fact to go from the point A to the point B. You can multiply the points B, and go to a place for a kind of project and then to another venue for another project. There is a multiplicity of the type of experiences you can have through a mobility process, and what was interesting as well is that your point A, your point of origin can be multiple as well, meaning that increasingly artists and cultural professionals are living in between different cities, or in between different venues. It's very common now to see artists living in between Paris and Berlin, Paris and Bayreuth for example. Of course this kind of situation has also some kind of negative administrative aspects from time to time. One of the artists who was there, was in between France and Belgium, so in two neighbouring countries, speaking at least one of the same language and he said something very true: « It's easy to become illegal ». Because sometime you are in between countries and you don't know the kind of administrative system you are falling into and of course here we are talking only at the level of the Schengen space, or at the level of the European Union. But this kind of sentence is very true for artists coming from other part of the world to develop a project in Europe. As you may guess the international political context doesn't make it easier for citizen in general and of course artist and cultural professionals to develop a project coming outside of the Schengen space.

Another event I participated in was the IETM meeting in Bucharest, International network for contemporary performing arts. There was a session on mobility. For me it was really one of the most interesting sessions I intended for quite some time on mobility-related issues. The session was moderated by Yohan Floch, the founder and coordinator of the network «FACE - Fresh Art Coalition Europe » which is more focusing on hybrid type of performances. What was refreshing on this session was that the participants were not coming from the EU for most of them. One was from Malaysia, one for Nigeria, one from Kazakhstan, one from Moldova. So their view on mobility was very refreshing for us, because they were not focusing so much on the challenges you can face when you are mobile as an artist or a company but more on the key issues that somehow are implied with this mobility process. Basically the discussion started with some key point on the reason why artists and cultural professional want to be mobile. So basically it can be of course, to create, to co-create, to export, or to tour your work and in that case it can be seen more like for financial reason because you know internally in your country you don't find the resources to sell your work or to develop it, so you definitely need this kind of internal opening to do it. It can be also for another type of reason related to some form of prestige or recognition or legitimacy. For some people they express that the fact to be recognized internationally help them back in their country to be better recognized and better supported, particularly when you speak of a sector that is not so much recognized. There were also other reasons given. Like people are also interested to go abroad for more exotic reasons or for holiday reasons. What was interesting as well is that mobility was also seen as this kind of distance that you can take, not only this question of distance as the number of kilometers, but also the distance to refresh, to recharge your battery with new energy, new artistic drive for your work and new inspiration, professional and artistic, to meet other ways to run a company for instance, learn some new "recipes" for your own organisation.

There are four issues that were shared during this session there was for instance the issue of identity. How to relate this question of identity and artistic mobility? It was one of the key point that was addressed to this meeting and I think again it was because and thanks to the diversity of country represented during this meeting. For instance in Indonesia, the feeling that was expressed by one of the production manager was: "who do you represent when you receive support from the government?". Indonesia is such a rich and diverse country in term of culture and language. There were also younger nation like Kazakhstan where the government is trying to emphasize a specific type of culture and identity when they support a specific form of art as well. And after there were discussions on this question of identity and cultural representation abroad with more conservative or right-winged government, like the case of Romania and Bulgaria. How do we stand at the level of mobility in relation to this issue?

In this context of identity there were also some questions raised by artists, one UK-based artist specifically, from UK but from south Asian origin, and he was like: "am I legitimate to represent south Asian dance in a foreign country knowing that I am from UK ?".

On another level of identity and maybe some of you felt it in your own practices there was this example of Mateo Lafranchi from Italy, he took part in a residency programme in Sri Lanka, through the "In situ" network, a network for creation in public space. The projects are usually held within Europe but this particular project was held outside. So Mateo said it was one of the first time he felt what was really an European identity in a different context and a different culture. Somehow he expressed also the feeling that he felt a bit bad in this kind of context, because he had the feeling he gained so much compared to what he could bring to the local people he worked with.

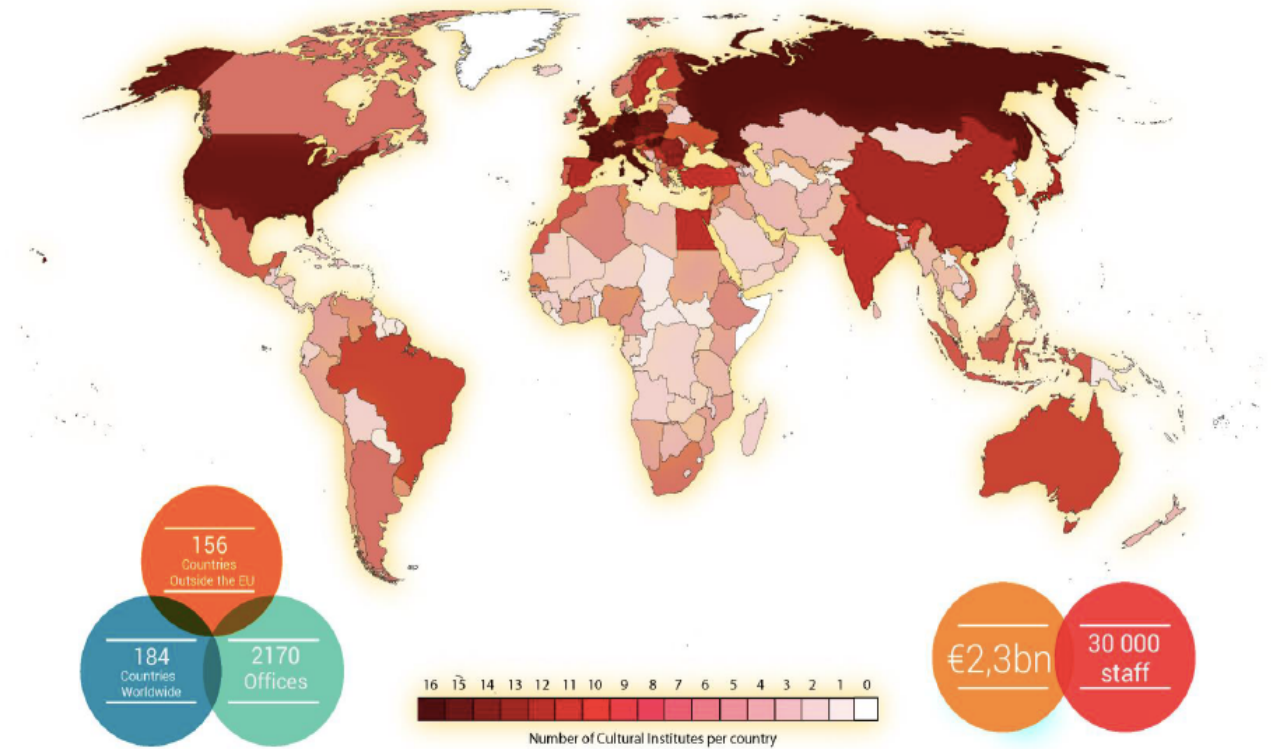
Another issue was raised and this I see more and more discussed in meeting like this one. When we talk about artist mobility and the funding, behind is the question of prejudice. As you may know if you are referring to a particular EU funded project or national project you have some focus country. You can invite certain country of the world because it is related to a certain EU funding. And more and more there are voices that are raised, like the one of an artist that took part of the session in Bucharest, she is from a theater in Moldova, and a few years ago she was invited for a meeting in Paris and after a while she asked herself: "am I invited only for my work and for what I do, or am I invited because there is a pot of money related to the eastern partnership country?". And this particular sentence, I hear it a lot.

Last time I heard it was during the Fresh Circus event organized last year by Circostrada here. And it was from the manager of the Colokolo collective in Morocco, and he said the same. He said: "sometimes I have the feeling that I am more invited because I am from a particular region and less because of the artistic practice I want to defend". I think this is something to keep in mind, in the world we are living in, and this kind of focus on certain part of the world covered or not by our respective governments, or by the EU or other type of funders in relation with cultural diplomacy.

I want to show you a map of the discrepancy of the funding in the world. This map is the map where you have the location of the European national cultural institutes in the world, like British Councils, Instituts Français, Alliances françaises, Goethe Institutes etc.. This map has some drawbacks but you can see that the whiter the map is the less institutes you have, so that means in a way the less funding you have. As you know in continent like Sub-America or Africa, the role of such institutes are really important. So I think this question of prejudice is also important to keep in mind.

Distribution of European cultural institutes worldwide

DISTRIBUTION OF EUROPEAN CULTURAL INSTITUTES WORLDWIDE



Another point which was raised and is directly linked to this question of prejudice, is the question of expectations: how also artists mobility is driven by economic reason, because you do not find in your country the economic support you need to develop your work and sell it. It was mentioned also in Bucharest that some artists sometimes have to switch their artistic proposal in order to fit better an European audience or the taste of a European programmer. In the contrary as well, programmer or curator do not have sometime the time to really dive into another context of another country to really identify all the type of voices, all the type of artists, and sometime they rely only on recommendations made to them. This question of expectations, and the challenges both at the level of artists, programmers and producer is also one of the key point that was raised.

Last but not least the question of perception was at stake in the conversation and question of isolation as well, in that sense was raised. It's not by chance that the IETM meeting in Bucharest attracted a lot of UK artists and cultural professional. Because of the Brexit there is really this willingness to remain connected and engage even more. It is also how mobility can also help to tackle this question of isolation.

I guess what I wanted to show with extracting some of the key ideas of this session is that very often we see that mobility is the way to tackle positively the challenges some artists can encounter in their home country, but if it is also not treated in a careful way, mobility can also accentuate the kind of inequalities that this artists and cultural professionals can feel. And here I was giving a international perspective about it but I think within the European Union artists and cultural professionals are also facing that kind of situations.

So, the idea is also to see that in that sense, we often consider that mobility is part of the DNA of artists and the cultural professionals, but after of course the DNA you have is very much related to the country you are in, and the context you live in, so I really think it's important to keep that in mind, and also that festival and producer should know that also, in order for mobility to be treated in a more fair way and to have like fairer ways to engage into collaboration and cooperation.

Now, this question was raised in the last event I wanted to talk to you about. This question of fairer international collaboration through artist mobility process was also one of the point discussed during the "Producer academy", an event organized by On the move and other partners like Seaface – the international center for training for the performing art sector. This question was very much dealt with the 22 producers working in the performing art sector coming from Europe and other countries, like Indonesia, Mexico, Belorussia, and South Africa. Here again we had this international discussion related to artist mobility.

We had the director of the Kunstenfestival in Brussels, Christophe Slagmuylder, he came to our networking session between our participants and I really like what he said about how the international starts at your doorstep and this question on how also, through our work and through artist mobility we can try to tackle local challenges, in order to link them to some form of global solution or interpretation and this question of artist mobility was mention at the level of various country in the world. One of the key point was also that for several artists working in Africa for example it's easier to meet in Europe, or New-York for instance than within their own continent, for funding reason, for visa reasons..

So, I guess I have about 6-7 minutes left. I really wanted to share some of this key points. Maybe some of them echo your practices, your context or the context of people you are working with, here I will have to finalize this presentation in a more practical way to look at this question. I would like to look at artist mobility through information that we share on On the move website and On the Move network, and also some of the questions that I will share will echo some of the key issues I raised in the first part of my presentation.

This is the kind of mobility opportunity that we share on On the Move website, and here I would like to focus on key trends. In term of these trends, there are increasingly more opportunities, related to cross-disciplinary form of practices. It's very rare now that I put a call, which is only related to paintings, or dance, it is much more this cross-disciplinarily which is emphasize. And increasingly as well this cross-sectorality, meaning that, like this call here, linking in fact artistic practices and other sectors like social engagement, political engagement. For instance this call is for young circus artists in particular, but also musician to work on the question of racism. So very often you have this kind of double type of opportunities.

Link to that I think there is also an interesting tendency, or trend, in term of the eligibility criteria for artist and cultural professionals. It echoes one of the comments I made before. More often I find that there are call, which are related to artist based in a particular country or base in a particular city or region. So we have less this nationality criterion, which is quite interesting when we are talking about mobile artist, cultural professional or people living in different cities and countries.

Another trend that we see, is that there is more and more calls coming not only from a public type of organisation but calls coming from organisation at a city or regional level also if you see the example of the European Capital of Culture I guess you know the system, every year there is 2 or 3 capitals in Europe, you have also more and more calls for different type of projects, coproduction or artists residency, and you have also more calls which originate from private foundations. For instance the Hermes foundation launched a call and they have this call, which can be quite interesting, because they support multidisciplinary type of work.

Another trend that I can highlight for you, is that there are more calls which are related to the international, for instance the Goethe Institute for coproduction fund, it's a new fund, more relevant for people living in eastern or center part of Europe but it is quite new to have this call. And I put also the Awaji art circus festival. It show that increasingly, you have opportunities and festival that did not exist a few years ago.

As far as Japan is concerned, so far most of the costs are covered, including the travel costs, which is good when you have to fly to Japan.

Another trend that I see and I think it's also interesting in the way we could also envisage the future of CircusNext, it's one of the question of this session, there are more and more project and call and opportunities related to capacity building programs, social innovation programmes, and I notice for the circus projects related to the Erasmus + program, that there are many projects which are related to social engagement, or inclusivity of local communities in the project, so I think that kind of opportunities can be also very interesting for your project and be imbedded in the future the CircusNext.

Key challenges and potential solution.

I talked a little bit of the problem of the administrative aspect of artist mobility. They are not to be underestimated and unfortunately here is the list for the visa issue. Depending on where you are born and where your passport is from you may have more difficulties to access visa facilitation. There are organisations also that can help you for all theses questions in different part of the world.

Two last things. I talked about this question of discrepancies of funding for the sector depending on where you are located in the world, however recently, there has been, more mobility grants and programmes to connect better Europe and also within Europe. I guess you know the "Step Travel grant" from the European Cultural foundation? What is very interesting is that this grant usually before was more connecting artists and cultural professionals from Europe to neighbouring countries and now you can also apply within the European union, so that means if you are from Greece you can apply for this grant to go to Sweden. And I think it is interesting because discrepancies do not only exists at the level of the world, they exist also within the European union so I think its an interesting move from the European cultural foundation. The other one is a new mobility fund between Asia and Europe: the Asia-Europe foundation.

So yes, they are discrepancies in term of access to information, in term of access to funding, in European union, and internationally, but there are also like some organisations, which try to tackle this question with new mobility fund.

Last but not least also, what I tried to do in this presentation is to pin-point some key challenges related to artist mobility, key issues, like identity, expectations, the one of prejudice for instance, which can be maybe food for thoughts in the next discussion, the question of access to funding, the question to access to information. What I would like to end with is that, as far the circus sector is concern, and as far as the art and cultural sector is concern, I really think that we should connect more the narrative that we are building trough our different projects. I mean I read in the introduction of this session that the circus sector is funded trough European project and I really think that the circus sector is really underfunded, within Europe.

If you look at the guide that we updated for Circostrada last year, as far as creative Europe is concern, circus is really low, and it is because we added art in public space that it increased a bit. You have more circus projects in Erasmus program but hence I think also that in order to build argumentation for the sector you need also to build more argumentation base on the different projects that are articulated around circus and street art in particular.

There is a sentence in the introduction of this session that caught my attention: « where could a project like CircusNext break the lines and build a basis for the legitimacy of contemporary circus in Europe? And i think there is really an added value to connect this experience to other experiences at an European level, to cross resources, to cross narratives, bring more visibility for the circus sector and also I hope you got the point, to link that more internationally as well. I think it is one of the areas where your sector could be definitely add more value.

Thank you very much!

Questions & Answers

S. Kann: My name is Seb Kann, I'm a researcher, a circus artist and I'm also one of the people benefiting from good DNA for the art scene, having an American and an European citizenship. I see around me for example, other Americans that would have really like to be there and can't so, I'm really appreciative of the work that you are doing also for looking at the sort of disparities opportunity, but i couldn't help thinking during the presentation and its not a critic at all because the work you are doing is great, but I was wondering, because there was two sociologists that gave us a presentation on the first day about reasons why circus artists tend to drop out of the field and one of them was the pressure of a nomadic lifestyle and a difficulty in maintaining a social community and then also difficulty in maintaining long term collaboration because of the sort of imperative to always be travelling and I wonder within your project if there is things being done to also deal with this issue. I mean, its a classy burden to have but also the burden of always being on the move.

M. Le Sourd: In fact it was one of the question that was raised in the latest project I took part in the producer academy. One of the question is that of course people can get extremely tired with this constant mobility and also because its not the same to be mobile in a group than to be mobile alone, so both sides have their drawbacks and advantages but there were two comments a bit in the same line as yours saying: « why do we need to be so much mobile, when so much can already be done at a local level ? » It is not to be conservative to say that because it could look like you don't want to go internationally, and encounter more culture, but no. Another question was raised; the question of this constant need to move somehow makes people extremely tired. Again, with this question of DNA it was of course more tiring for our colleagues from South Africa or Belorussia to come and to participate in a three and a half days meeting. We, On the move, cannot focus on the particular issue that you mentioned but there are initiative as well, in Belgium, in

Flanders, which are dealing with this question, at the level of precarity of the artists. It is linked to that because usually you have to be mobile, because otherwise you cannot coproduce, you cannot tour, you cannot earn money, it is a way to earn funding as well. So they are dealing with this question like indirectly because of course, this kind of constant movement makes the situation of artist more precarious. And of course, there are also more discussion, at the artists residency level, about how to combine private and professional life, and in term of accessibility there are more organisation dealing with this kind of issues as well. But hence also the need, complementary to that, to advocate better for the sector, because yes, mobility can be one or part of the solution but also if at the level on the country they could give more support for your sector it could balance things. Very good question thank you!

R. Müller: Roman Müller from Switzerland, somehow artist, and sometimes I'm wondering a bit with all this structures and systems and institutions also, how much time do we spend as artists to fit into theses systems and at the end how much does it really help somehow. And it takes you a bit away from the core of your work. And for me coming maybe from Switzerland also with that background I'm not use to this point of view. The culture is organized in a different way. It is not from up to down its more from the bottom to up « do your things and you'll find your way ». But it is also a point of view of being in Europe so with the possibility to move without borders.

M. Le Sourd: There are different questions in your question. Very interesting as well. The first point that you raised I think is also in relation with the question of expectations. You know sometimes how some artists and cultural professional try to fit with a certain taste of European audience or try to squeeze their project to comply with some funding guideline. I think this is something that we definitely need to be aware of, and know the limit of, because if you have to squeeze so much your project at the end you take away the very nature of you project.

It is a matter of choice as well and at that level it is always difficult because, you know on On the Move website I didn't go so much into the detail but we have two type of funding – we are not funders, we provide information on where to find the funding – so either it is what we call a one-off call (a call that happens only one year) , or regular funding scheme. If you take the example of Switzerland it can be at the level of the region or Pro Helvetia etc...

Usually the hard work starts when you have a project and you don't have an immediate solution for it and sometime also you see a call and you think this project could fit very well but I don't have time because there is also a problem of time frame, you know like, all the dead line we put.

Also, public and private funders should be more aware of the needs of the sector that is for sure, for instance this need to work more cross sectorial or to work more cross-disciplinary. There are more and more calls like that, but if you look at the level of public funders we are still in this kind of silo type categorisation where your project does not fit.

I forgot the last part of your question...

Ah yes the bottom-up approach, what do you mean by that? I mean, as far as funding is concerned.

R. Müller: It is how it is organized in the culture compare to France. In Switzerland the decision regarding culture are not taken by the Ministry. It grows from local scale. The weakness of it is that the decisions take a long time to be made. But with the thing of being around and away for 20 years, I feel also how much I'm connected still to that way of thinking, to do the things like you should do them without having to much information or systems where you could go, and I think sometimes we lose also a bit with all theses information and system we have access to.

M. Le Sourd: You mean you miss them or you feel it is too much?

R. Müller: For me I have the feeling it can be also too much.

M. Le Sourd: I guess it really depends. On some context it is never too much so that is why I always come back to the same issue but I think it is important to have that in mind also when you work with people from different contexts, from different regions, and countries. At our small level what we try to do is to try to identify where people can go. The "raison d'être" of On the Move was created 12 years ago, at the beginning by IETM, as really to say funding is lacking on the sector but access to opportunity and information is also key because sometime the opportunity are there, and people are not aware about them. Or it is always the same kind of people that are aware of them. So this is also a way to encourage the diversity of opportunities and after it's a matter of choice, maybe you will decide that you'll only concentrate on this kind of partnership and not multiply different funding applications, because they require time, and the time you write application is less time you can concentrate on your artistic practices.



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for emerging creators of contemporary circus in Europe

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