

# *Shifting Economic Power: New Horizons for Cultural Exchange in our Multi-Polar World*<sup>1</sup>

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## **Executive Summary**

**H**ow is the changing distribution of wealth among nations transforming the ways in which actors in the arts and culture sector engage with each other across the planet? To address the question, this paper first sketches out the variegated contours of the global shift in economic power from “the West” to “the Rest.” It then explores how the new wealth impacts on the cultural field, where a far more nuanced, if not uneven landscape has emerged. Economic power may well give greater voice and self-confidence to entire societies among “the Rest,” but there is little sign that it either reduces the asymmetries significantly or leads directly to more and better practices of trans-national cultural exchange. Increasing wealth has undoubtedly strengthened the capacity and desire of many cultural actors in these societies to step up their engagement with the rest of the world. But neither governments nor the corporate sector are providing means proportionate to the new horizons of aspiration. And while considerable energies are emerging from civil societies, these can compensate for the lack of resources only to a limited extent. In the face of such intractable obstacles to greater, less asymmetric and more dialogical cultural engagement, how can cultural actors—artists, operators, activists, scholars, and policy makers—organize themselves better? How can they act, concretely and to good effect, on the conviction that, as this paper will argue, cultural interactions are indispensable to the weaving of the complex cultural polyphony our interconnected and interdependent world so urgently requires?

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1 The paper as submitted for the seminar has been enriched here in the light of the discussions that took place in Salzburg.

## Introduction

**H**ow can we turn the redistribution of wealth across the world and the resulting geopolitical re-alignments to the advantage of meaningful multi-directional trans-national cultural exchange? This was one of the four key questions discussed at the seminar entitled “Public and Private Cultural Exchange-Based Diplomacy: New Models for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”, organized by the Salzburg Global Seminar and the Robert Sterling Clark Foundation on 28 April – 2 May, 2012.

Setting the stage for that conversation was the purpose of this paper, which had to be very succinct, hence synthetic in the extreme. What follows, therefore, is but a thumb-nail sketch of current situations and trends, followed by a few pointers for the way forward. Today, the imperatives and opportunities of a transformed global environment are driving economic and political actors in the hitherto dominant “West” to rethink the ways in which they engage with their counterparts in the now rising “Rest”,<sup>2</sup> and vice-versa. But what about cultural actors? How enabling for them is the new wealth of nations, in particular as regards creative engagement across boundaries?<sup>3</sup> And what can they do together to promote such engagement?

To ask such questions is to break new ground. The cultural implications of global economic change have so far been evoked mainly in terms of the broader “anthropological” understanding of culture—how people with different values and ways of life are now encountering, adopting, rejecting or adapting globalized ideas, values and practices. Little appears to have been thought or written about how artists and cultural operators,<sup>4</sup> for their part, contribute to this greater good, as they work across boundaries in a differently textured world to create new work(s), to reflect and learn together, or to carry out artistic research and experimentation.

So the challenge is to extrapolate down from culture understood as collective identity to culture in the arts- and heritage-specific sense. This means focusing on the creative individuals who are culture’s makers or on the cultural institutions that are its custodians and transmitters.<sup>5</sup> How can they together enrich the “global ecumene”, as billions of people are only just beginning to escape from existences that are “solitary, poor, nasty,

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2 This term – “the Rest” – was first coined by the Singaporean diplomat-scholar Kishore Mahbubani and used by Samuel Huntington in his “clash of civilizations” writings.

3 Yet increased material wealth is hardly the lone causal factor. It does not operate independently of other forces that are equal if not more powerful drivers of change, namely the blurring of the boundaries of agency, notably public-private; increasingly vocal claims to recognition and representation of cultural difference both between and within nations; and the huge transformations in the technologies that shape the ways in which cultural expressions are produced, distributed and consumed.

4 This term is a neologism coined by the European Commission. It appears barbaric at first sight, but is a useful overarching word to use for organizations or individuals other than practicing artists that produce, deliver, or perform custodianship in the arts and heritage.

5 Given the Seminar’s focus on non-commercial international arts engagement, we do not discuss commercially viable popular culture — Bollywood and Nollywood, or Bhangra, Rai and Mbalax are quintessential examples. The universe of this paper is subsidized or not-for-profit culture (whether publicly or privately financed). Nor do we discuss the “cultural industries,” which have become a buzzword in European cultural advocacy and for which interest has burgeoned elsewhere, particularly in East and Southeast Asia. Yet as investment support for the cultural industries remains scarce

brutish and short,” while others prosper and are already actively shaping the world system? What role can or should cultural operators play in finding increasingly complex and varied pathways of interaction with others? How can they help forge the truly cosmopolitan imagination that our increasingly interconnected and interdependent world requires?<sup>6</sup> What transformations are needed in their understandings of Self and Other as they do this? How can they build a new ethos of sharing and reciprocity, or contribute creatively to a productive global “fusion of horizons”? How are the global shifts of power and wealth advancing these causes?

## The New Multi-Polarity

**U.S.** public opinion was marked in 2008 by *The Post-American World*, a book in which the Indian-born American popular pundit Fareed Zakaria presciently advised his countrymen about the challenges of a world in which, as he put it, “for the first time ever, we are witnessing truly *global* economic growth that is creating an international system in which all parts of the world are no longer objects or observers but players in their own right.” Zakaria cited a list of the 25 companies likely to be the world’s next great multinationals. Among them were four each from Brazil, Mexico, South Korea and Taiwan; three from India; two from China; and one each from Argentina, Chile, Malaysia and South Africa. Many similar analyses have been penned since then. All recognize that we are living in an increasingly multi-polar or poly-lateral and inter-dependent world. In the coming decades, three of the world’s biggest economies will be non-Western (Japan, China and India).<sup>7</sup> Concomitantly, the ethnoscapes of the fourth and the fifth, the United States and the EU, will be increasingly shaped by growing non-European populations, just as Australia’s already has been.<sup>8</sup> The *McKinsey Quarterly* reported, in March 2011, that more than 20 of the world’s top 50 cities, ranked by GDP, will be located in Asia by the year 2025, up from 8 in 2007. During that same time period, more than half of Europe’s top-50 cities will drop off the list, as will 3 in North America. In this new landscape of

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everywhere, trans-national cooperation in and around the cultural industries is clearly an area with quite some potential for exchange, e.g. through the provision of micro-credit, the exchange of “know who” and know how for micro-projects. Witness UNESCO’s “Global Alliance for Cultural Diversity”.

6 See Gerard Delanty, *The Cosmopolitan Imagination: The Renewal of Critical Social Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

7 In 2012, as reported by *The Economist*, real GDP in most rich economies is still below its level at the end of 2007, whereas the output of the “emerging economies” has jumped by almost 20%. The latter accounted for 38% of world GDP (at market exchange rates) in 2010, twice its share in 1990. If GDP is instead measured at purchasing-power parity, emerging economies overtook the developed world in 2008 and are thought to have reached over 50% of world GDP in 2011. They now account for over half of the global consumption of most commodities, world exports, and inflows of foreign direct investment. Emerging economies also account for 46% of world retail sales, 52% of all purchases of motor vehicles and 82% of mobile phone subscriptions. Almost a quarter of the *Fortune* Global 500 firms come from emerging markets; in 1995 it was only 4%.

8 See Ien Ang, “Australia, China, and Asian Regionalism: Navigating Distant Proximity,” *Amerasia Journal*, 36:2 (2010).

urban economic power, Shanghai and Beijing will outrank Los Angeles and London, while Mumbai and Doha will surpass Munich and Denver.<sup>9</sup> While there is more than a kernel of truth in the binomial “the West and the Rest”, both terms are problematic. It has never been appropriate to speak of a monolithic and uniform “West”, but at least the idea used to correspond to a coherent geopolitical presence that once dominated the world completely. To speak in one breath of “the Rest”, however, is even more difficult. For this term embraces societies that until just a couple of decades ago were thought to be “developing” or “Third World,” or at least considerably behind the post-industrial societies, e.g. the former Soviet Union and its geopolitical bloc. Today, all these societies include millions whose consumption levels and disposable incomes are truly “First World.” But there are plenty of countries also that are still “Third” if not “Fourth”...

Moreover, the “rising Rest” discourse is based on GDP measures, hence it tends to focus on two Asian giants, China and India, at the expense of resource (mainly oil) rich nations with small populations (and thus GDPs that are not as high) that have high per capita incomes. These include the wealthy nations of the Persian Gulf, two of which at least, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (1 and 6 respectively in the IMF’s 2011 listing of per capita income at purchasing power parity—the USA comes 7th and Austria 11th), have created massive and sophisticated “Western” style cultural infrastructure in recent years, mainly for their “rest of the world” to come and visit...

What is more, cultural relationships to “the West” differ greatly across the BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India and China), the MIKTs (Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea and Turkey) and beyond. For example, in the creole societies of Latin America (Brazil in particular), sophisticated forms of western culture exist alongside pockets of instability and marginal cultural production. Although much of the region’s cultural autonomy has been lost to the North, the continent abounds in innovative cultural expression.

Modern South Asian societies are also products of the colonial encounter, resistance to which has generated a high level of cultural pride and awareness. These peoples have so far managed to keep a broad array of indigenous cultural forms alive, and they have long also been active in the business of cultural exchange. Many citizens from the privileged westernized strata of these societies have integrated themselves smoothly into the global intellectual and cultural elite.

East Asian economic expansion, by contrast, has been marked by a more recent rediscovery of cultural identities and, in certain countries, a form of political stagnation leading to discourses of “Asian values” that have attempted to reconcile global capitalism with local distinctiveness.

Many other variants exist. It is difficult to generalize.<sup>10</sup> How does the global shift impact on cultural action?

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9 See: [http://www.mckinseyquarterly.com/Urban\\_economic\\_clout\\_moves\\_east\\_2776](http://www.mckinseyquarterly.com/Urban_economic_clout_moves_east_2776).

10 Countries also diverge considerably in how they fund the arts and the ways in which they find uses for the arts as resources, often for reasons divorced from intrinsic cultural value. “Cultural diplomacy” in the original sense of the word is among these uses. We could develop a typology of national stances regarding cultural diplomacy that would have a bearing on the extent and nature of cultural exchange that gets promoted. But doing so is beyond the scope of this paper.

Yet there is one common thread: the ability of actors in all these societies to transcend the previously prevalent *inequality of position*. Today, they can engage with the “the West” far more self-confidently. They can be secure in the knowledge that they are being courted now for their cash, their markets, their workforce, their geopolitical clout...and their cultures. This gives all of them a greater degree of agency in determining the nature and perhaps just as importantly, the *directions* of their cultural engagement with the rest of the world as a whole.

For the “West/Rest” axis is not the only relevant one. Artists and cultural operators everywhere have in fact always yearned to interact and cooperate in a universe of omnidirectional flows—from Seoul to São Paulo or from Lagos to La Paz. Yet the pathways of exchange have remained largely pre-ordained, the zones of interaction fixed mainly on the North/South axis. There are very few alternative routes or structures of representation. Indeed, “crossroads” have often been superseded by the “inroads” of institutionalized inter-culturalism, in which South-South relationships are mediated by the North. While these mediations are well-meaning and not necessarily harmful per se, they have constrained and impoverished cultural exchange.<sup>11</sup> Countries in all regions, for example, are beginning to look towards and open cultural offices and centers in cities other than the former “metropolitan” ones. In 2011, for example, South Korea opened cultural centers in Australia, Hungary, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Spain and Turkey. It recently opened one in Mexico City hoping “it will serve as a bridge between the two cultures.”<sup>12</sup> More bridges of these kinds are needed more than ever before.

Cultural operators in the West, for their part, have come to recognize that the cultural world they once dominated is moving into increasingly uncharted directions, that its inner resources are increasingly escaping their exclusive control, drawing on other narratives, dreams and memories, and that they will increasingly have to take on board references and constructs which their own cultures have played no part in making, and which, like their own, will be given universal relevance by people from other shores. The Cuban art writer and curator Gerardo Mosquera reminds us that there is now a “South-East” axis (now that the “East” is beginning to leave the “South”) and that...

... the flux of culture cannot always remain circulating in the same “North-South” direction, as dictated by the power structure, its circuits of diffusion, and accommodations to them. It does not matter how plausible the appropriating and transcultural strategies are; they imply a rebound effect that reproduces the same hegemonic structure, even if contesting it. The current should also be reversed, not just to establish a “repetition in rupture”, as Spivak would say, but to pluralize and enrich international cultural circulation. The point is to accomplish plurality as international agency by a diversity of cultural subjects who, enacting their own agendas, can diversify cultural dynamics productively, for all.<sup>13</sup>

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11 See Rustom Bharucha, *The Politics of Cultural Practice: Thinking Through Theatre in an Age of Globalization*. London, Athlone Press, 2000.

12 See <http://www.koreaherald.com/national/Detail.jsp?newsMLId=20120314000340>, accessed 25 March, 2012.

13 Gerardo Mosquera, “Walking with the Devil: Art, Culture and Internationalization” in Helmut K. Anheier and Yudhishthir Raj Isar (eds.) *Cultural Expression, Creativity and Innovation, The Cultures and Globalization Series*, 3. London: SAGE Publications, 2010.

In myriad ways, then, as Mosquera also points out, new cultural subjects, energies and information are “bursting forth from all sides.” Increasingly “horizontal” networks are subverting the earlier “vertical” radial scheme based on the “centre” and “periphery” model. Thus it is no longer possible for a curator to work purely within the New York—London—Germany axis (as she could not so long ago), and to look down condescendingly from there. “Today curators have to move around and to open their eyes, ears and minds,” says Mosquera—and that applies to cultural operators of all kinds, as they go about appropriating and “re-functioning” the once imposed international culture, transforming it for their own needs, “deploying their own imaginaries and perspectives on a planetary scale.”<sup>14</sup>

It is not just a question of new directions of flow and sources of cultural production but also of new *kinds* of culture and cultural practice, many of them hybrid forms across the entire range of artistic fields. These are emerging today from Bahia, Beijing or Bombay just as easily as they once did from New York, London or Paris. Latin-America is a particularly fertile terrain; as Néstor García Canclini observes, the new forms are

...happy marriages between pre-Columbian iconography and contemporary geometrism, between elite, folk, and media industries’ visual and musical cultures. This is evident in much Mexican, Peruvian, and Guatemalan folk art which combine their own myths with transnational images, in the rock music that enlivens local festivals and is nourished with ethnic melodies which may later achieve international dissemination. Many works have taken the dialogue between the elite, the popular, and the mass as their test-bed: from Octavio Paz and Jorge Luis Borges to Astor Piazzola and Caetano Veloso, these testify to the fertility of liminal creations and rituals that are concerned less with the preservation of purity than with the productivity of the admixture.<sup>15</sup>

Music is a domain particularly rich in such liminalities. Mandarin pop, for example, a Cantonese and Pacific American combination of styles, has become “part of the soundscape of the Pacific Chinese diaspora,” as the anthropologist Jan Nederveen Pieterse writes, “its audience ranges from youngsters in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan to prosperous second-generation Chinese immigrants in the United States. One of its original inspirations is Hong Kong crooners doing Mandarin cover versions of Japanese popular ballads” (themselves already a mixture of Japanese and American styles).<sup>16</sup> Western cultural operators are now taking a keen interest in these sorts of new cultural elaborations, without of course abandoning their fascination with the “traditional” or “authentic” cultural forms. But whatever kind of culture is involved, accompanying or underpinning the interest is the prospect of leveraging more cordial political relationships, or accessing

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14 Premonitions of this came as early as Goethe’s vision of the dawning age of Weltliteratur, in which writers and poets should become the first citizens of a worldwide “Republic of Letters.”

15 Néstor García Canclini, “Hybrid Cultures and Communicative Strategies,” website of World Association for Christian Communication (WACC), accessed 21 March, 2012. <http://www.waccglobal.org/en/19971-cultural-boundaries-identity-and-communication-in-latin-america/940-Hybrid-Cultures-and-Communicative-Strategies.html>

16 See Jan Nederveen Pieterse, “Hybridity, so What? The Anti-Hybridity Backlash and the Riddles of Recognition,” in *Theory, Culture Society*, 2001.

vast consumer markets or obtaining lucrative contracts. Hence a readiness on the part of many Western institutions, notably museums, to commit considerable resources to collaborations with counterparts in the non-West. Yet this enthusiasm for a changing kind of “Otherness” faces the discouraging realities of the economic recession.

Cultural funding is down in all the post-industrial societies, in the US to be sure, but also across Europe.<sup>17</sup> This bad news has become public knowledge. One recent media account evokes the 25 percent cuts in public funding for the arts in the Netherlands, whereas taxes on tickets to cultural events have been raised to 19 per cent from 6 per cent, in a policy climate “in which institutions must justify what they do economically and compete for limited funds. In practical terms, that has meant that smaller companies, especially those engaged in experimental and avant-garde efforts, bear the brunt of the projected cuts.”<sup>18</sup> As do international tours of productions and performances, leading to a situation in which “the cutbacks are hitting so hard that some of the cultural institutes in New York that have been intermediaries for arts companies in their home countries have experienced reductions of staff or salary, or both.” Even in France, which accords such high priority to culture and cultural exchange, ours is a time of crisis. “The political and economic realities of austerity are beginning to intrude,” wrote Alison Smale in an article reporting on the French National Assembly’s wish to drastically reduce the government’s cultural budget.<sup>19</sup> But, more importantly perhaps for our purposes, how much and how does the new wealth in the “rising Rest” increase or intensify, or improve the operating conditions for, cultural exchange?

The quantitative question is difficult to answer, not just because facts and figures are hard to get, but also because support for cultural exchange is dependent ultimately on funding for the arts and culture sector as a whole by governments as well as societies at large. It is also risky to generalize across all the different art forms that are real or potential vectors of intercultural contact and exchange. Yet we can say that the lot of the performing arts, like others affected by cost disease, has not been significantly improved. Today, it is hardly any easier, for example, to raise the funds needed to take a musical ensemble or dance troupe from Africa or Asia (even, as we have just seen, from Europe) to the United States today than it was two decades ago. In addition, as a leading Indian dancer observes, there is a clear tendency for Western performance and event

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17 The CultureWatchEurope platform of the Council of Europe summarized the results of a 2009 survey covering 21 countries as follows: “13... countries envisage an overall reduction of budgets for culture and heritage as a possible short or medium term consequence of the financial crisis, and one country partial reductions. 52 % (11 countries) envisage cuts in budgets of major cultural institutions, and nine mention reductions to subsidies of independent art and cultural organizations. Twelve countries envisage cuts to cultural infrastructure projects. On the other side, 8 countries could imagine additional finance for infrastructure projects to stimulate employment, whilst only 5 countries could see an increase in the investment in creative industries to help generate employment.” (Source: “The Financial Crisis and its Effects on Public Arts Funding”, observations by Andreas Joh. Wiesand posted July 2011 on the website of the Compendium on Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe. See: <http://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/compendium-topics.php?aid=174>

18 Larry Rohter, “In Europe, Where Art is Life, Ax Falls on Public Financing.” *The New York Times* Global Edition, March 24 2012. [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/25/world/europe/the-euro-crisis-is-hurting-cultural-groups.html?pagewanted=2&\\_r=1&ref=global-home](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/25/world/europe/the-euro-crisis-is-hurting-cultural-groups.html?pagewanted=2&_r=1&ref=global-home)

19 Alison Smale, “Investing in Culture in Time of Crisis.” *International Herald Tribune*, March 3-4, 2012.

organizers to make scarce resources go further through recourse to sources of “otherness” closer at hand, in other words performers in the diasporas, who do not have to be flown in from distant places.<sup>20</sup> The visual arts, on the other hand, via their relationships with big spenders in the global marketplace, present quite a different picture. Apart from the well-known European venues, there are prestigious art biennials in São Paulo, Gwangju, Sydney, Dakar, Istanbul and Sharjah, to name but a few. The January 2012 India Art Fair held in New Delhi brought together 91 galleries from around the world, 48 from India and 43 from 20 different countries in Asia, Europe, Americas, Middle East, Africa and Australia. By attracting “almost 150,000 visitors,” writes Sushma Bahl, “including 26 groups from international museums including the Tate, the Guggenheim, MoMA and Singapore Art Museum besides 400 members of Indian and International press as well as collectors, experts, artists and art students, the India Art Fair has moved into the league of the world’s most attended art fairs.”<sup>21</sup> At the 2012 edition of Art Basel that opened on June 14, two galleries from the Gulf region were among the nearly 300 showing there, showing a slowly but surely growing presence of the contemporary art scene in the Middle East.<sup>22</sup> This being said, what are the general trends?

First, what can be said as regards the general dispositions of entire *societies*? Western actors, whether in government or the business sector (although the US may still be the exception here) are probably devoting more attention to cultural exchanges with the “emerging market” countries, if only by reason of the economic and political externalities referred to earlier.

On the other side of the fence this is also the case, but the drivers are different. The emergent and substantial moneyed or “middle” classes in these societies are keen to buy into global cultural flows and processes in the arts. They no longer have to brandish their cultures rhetorically, as if it were their true—if only—wealth, a compensation for their material backwardness. Today, when they are up there in the global economy, their cultures too are drawn into a wider political economy of prestige.<sup>23</sup> This may well give these societies as a whole a potential for greater agency in terms of cultural exchange, but as we shall see, this potential is not matched by adequate levels of public or private funding.

Special mention should be made here of the cultural exchange potential of the diasporas or trans-national communities (already referred to above, but in a different context), within which increasing affluence appears to be both promoting and facilitating stronger reciprocal relationships with their “homelands”. Culturally, new wealth has generated increased demand for flows of cultural expression to/from those homelands, including different hybrid adaptations, particularly in genres such as popular music and film, e.g. Bollywood and Nollywood.

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20 We are grateful to Anita Ratnam for this insight.

21 Sushma Bahl, *The New Avatar – India Art Fair*, NuktaArt, contemporary art magazine of Pakistan. <http://www.nuktaartmag.com/Nukta/>

22 Anna Chloe Esposito, “Basel Fair Salutes the Rising Influence of Middle East Art Scene”. *International Herald Tribune*, June 12, 2012.

23 The reverse of the medal is the headlong rush on the part of these newly rich classes to adapt their tastes and behaviors to global consumerist models (still mostly exported from North America). The attrition and loss of existing cultural forms, accelerated by galloping urbanization, are the tragic result. This is the dark side, culturally speaking, of the compact made with global market capitalism.



*Governments* are not generally devoting increased percentages of their spending to culture (worldwide, the trend in public spending for the arts is down), but as governmental budgets increase so too may the proportion spent on the latter (but not necessarily). In many countries, culture is seen much as the environment was thirty years ago—"a subject to which wider political and economic circles offer rhetorical support but treat as a fringe issue - either a benign but peripheral matter of leisure time activity, or (just as frequently but paradoxically) as a key source of national prestige yet for which there is much passion but few resources."<sup>24</sup> It is no surprise, therefore, that only a tiny proportion of public funds goes to the arts and culture. In India's budget for 2012-13, the culture ministry's budget has gone up, but it is still pegged at a mere fraction (0.01%, to be specific) of total government expenditure—and that's with over 30 percent of the funding going to the Archaeological Survey of India, the federal government's custodian of all protected monuments and sites in the country.<sup>25</sup> Vietnam's public funding total for culture is rather higher, at 0.55 per cent, but the figure includes spending on the information sector.<sup>26</sup> Hong Kong on the other hand, according to Wikipedia, allocates to the arts about 1 per cent of its total government spending each year.<sup>27</sup> Brazil is in many ways a special case. Currently, the country spends only around 0.50 per cent on cultural projects. Yet this figure already marks a considerable increase when compared with earlier percentages.<sup>28</sup> Recently, a constitutional amendment was proposed to the nation's Congress with a view to earmarking 2 percent of federal expenditures for culture, as well as 1.5 per cent at the state level and 1 per cent at the municipal level.<sup>29</sup> It now appears, however, that the proposal has been sidelined. Yet the country can also boast of an exceptional parastatal yet autonomous institution called SESC (*Serviço Social do Comércio*), created in 1946, which can spend as much as 600 million dollars a year in all the domains of the arts. Its funding base is provided through a 1.5 percent payroll tax on Brazilian commercial and service industries.

A recent *New York Times* article reports *inter alia* on how some of this "bounty" is being spent on international exchange: a jazz festival co-sponsored with the New York record label Nublu; partnership with *the Latino Theater Festival of New York*; or the presentation of works by people such as David Byrne, the salsa drummer Bobby Sanabria and the stage director Robert Wilson. The SESC's "emergence as a global force has not gone unnoticed," the article observes, "either by artists or the people who pay for their

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24 Simon Mundy, "Rapporteur's Report" on a Brainstorming Meeting on the establishment of a "Global Forum on Cultural Enterprise Development," Ford Foundation, June 2000.

25 Source: <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/news-by-industry/et-cetera/union-budget-2012-13-culture-ministry-gets-rs-67-crore/articleshow/12292630.cms>

26 From the UNESCO Secretariat's "Culture for Development Indicator Suite," a methodology in progress, hence the figures are therefore only preliminary and need to be validated.

27 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hong\\_Kong\\_cultural\\_policy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hong_Kong_cultural_policy)

28 See [http://www.brasil.gov.br/sobre/culture/projects-and-programs/budget-management-1/br\\_model1?set\\_language=en](http://www.brasil.gov.br/sobre/culture/projects-and-programs/budget-management-1/br_model1?set_language=en) (accessed 21 March 2012).

29 Noted by Maria Carolina Vasconcelos-Oliveira in her chapter "São Paulo: Rich Culture, Poor Access" in Helmut K. Anheier and Yudhishtir Raj Isar (eds.) *Cities, Cultural Policy and Governance. The Cultures and Globalization Series*, 5. London: SAGE Publications, March 2012.

work” in other countries, who see it as a model for the imaginative state-sponsored leverage of funds.<sup>30</sup> The article cites a former foreign minister making the case that the “cultural dynamism, the monetary stability, the process of social inclusion—all of that makes Brazilian culture a very valid pathway for the exercise of soft power, a way to make our society better known and better understood by others.”

Now, that last statement reveals the governmental hand unambiguously. Indeed the rising economic powers *are* stepping up the cultural component in their public diplomacy, using it as one of the ways to climb the global league tables.<sup>31</sup> So there is a place for more arts and culture funding here. There has also been a marked turn towards forging alliances with civil society—read for our purposes, arts producing and delivery organizations—in order to engage with much larger publics in the countries targeted by these strategies of influence. But government involvement comes with an important caveat. State agencies tend to set the agenda instrumentally, not necessarily (or often) in the most valid artistic terms.

Some may do so with imagination and restraint, like the Indian External Affairs Ministry’s public diplomacy cell, created in 2006. Yet genuine dialogue with the arts community rarely drives official schemes. The paradigm of government-directed cultural diplomacy these days is, of course, China. In October 2011, China’s official party newspaper *People’s Daily* declared on its front page, “A nation cannot stand among great powers without its people’s spiritual affluence and the nation’s full expression of its creativity.” The country has indeed placed vast resources at the service of its network of Confucius Institutes and the like, as a major yet secondary component in an ambitious overall strategy of influence.<sup>32</sup> “Yet,” said one local scholar commenting on a recent case of art censorship, “the government is overconfident about controlling art. They think as long as they provide money... and a value orientation, there can be good art produced. This is not surprising at all, because they have never experienced the process of free expression.” The understanding that artistic work, like scientific research, rests on processes that “push the boundaries of creativity, no matter whom it offends”, is not one that comes easily in this society.<sup>33</sup> Yet, as Vishakha Desai pointed out in Salzburg, Chinese society has always understood the “power of culture”, whether in service of statecraft or as resistance to the state.

Even in societies that are less state-centric than China’s, however, conformism tends to reign in their media and cultural establishments. It is also difficult for most governmental actors to recognize that people in the creative sectors do not work across boundaries to promote a national image, but for their own artistic purposes: mutual learning;

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30 Larry Rohter, “Brazil’s Unique Culture Group Stays Busy sharing the Wealth,” *The New York Times*, March 27, 2012, accessed March 29, 2012.

31 See Jan Melissen, “Public Diplomacy Revisited,” in Pauline Kerr & Geoffrey Wiseman (eds.), *Diplomacy in a Globalizing World: Theories and Practices*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2012.

32 More details can be found, in the context of the opening of the world’s largest museum in Beijing in: András Szántó, “China’s New Age of Enlightenment,” *The Art Newspaper*, April 4, 2011.

33 Michael Wines, “China Tries to Add Clout to Economic Muscle,” *The New York Times*, November 7, 2011. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/08/world/asia/china-seeks-cultural-influence-to-match-economic-muscle.html?pagewanted=all>, accessed January 15, 2012.

joint reflection, debate, research and experimentation; pooling of resources and “in its most complex forms, cooperation in the creative processes, the creation of new artistic works.”<sup>34</sup> Hence most cultural operators are careful to distinguish between artist-led cultural exchange and government-led cultural diplomacy. And many wish to maintain a safe distance from the latter.

And what about the *private sector*? While in the West private support for the specific purpose of cultural exchange appears to be a growth area, elsewhere (Brazil is the exception) the private sector has hardly been more constructive than government.<sup>35</sup> By and large, the business community too views arts support as a promotional strategy and therefore prioritizes the visible, influential, safe and respectable. Drawing on their advertising budgets, companies make ad hoc, one-off and short-term commitments mainly in support of artistic products and presentations. The observations made by the head of India’s only independent foundation that funds artistic endeavors on a significant scale, no doubt apply elsewhere: “even when the goals of corporate patronage and product promotion are aligned, support tends to go out to art that needs it the least ... the arts are defined for corporate leaders and marketing executives by the elite social circles in which they move. As long as product promotion remains their principal justification for supporting the arts, business houses will continue to give no attention to creative processes, constraints and innovation.”<sup>36</sup> An Indian exception is the work of the Mahindra Group, a major multinational company with a long-standing commitment to the arts and humanities. The Mahindra Excellence in Theatre Awards were created to encourage both emerging and established theatre and celebrated its Sixth Anniversary in 2011. In January 2012, Sundance Institute and Mahindra announced the winners of the 2012 Sundance Institute/Mahindra Global Filmmaking Award, in recognition and support of emerging independent filmmakers from around the world. The collaboration also includes the establishment of the Mumbai Mantra/Sundance Institute Screenwriters Lab in India—an opportunity for eight screenwriters from India to develop their feature scripts under the guidance of accomplished international screenwriters and filmmakers.<sup>37</sup> The annual Mahindra Blues Festival held in Mumbai in February 2012 was the largest festival of its kind in Asia, showcasing the best international Blues artists and providing a common platform for emerging Indian Blues bands.

The picture as regards individual philanthropy, e.g. that of the Cisneros or Marinho families in Venezuela and Brazil, respectively, has to be more nuanced. It has not been possible, however, to determine the extent to which cross-cultural exchange rather than purely national projects are among their priorities...

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34 Klaic, Dragan. *Mobility of Imagination*. Budapest: Center for Arts and Culture, Central European University, 2007, p.46.

35 In our view, attempts to apply the American model of private support to the arts in other countries is illusory. The US model has been generated by specific American values and social practices. It is not simply an outcome of tax reductions – when introduced in countries such as France tax reductions have not affected the societal assumption that arts funding is primarily the responsibility of the State.

36 Anmol Vellani, “The Case for Independent Arts Philanthropy, website of the India Foundation for the Arts, accessed 10 March, 2012. [http://www.indiaifa.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=20&Itemid=17](http://www.indiaifa.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=20&Itemid=17)

37 See <http://reviewfix.com/2012/01/sundance-institute-mahindra-global-filmmaking-award-to-be-presented-at-2012-sundance-film-festival/>

The encouragement of public-private partnerships, however, is a growing trend, both in the West and elsewhere, but cultural exchange does not appear to be one of the priorities when governmental players seek to spread the weight of the funding burden in this way.

The expansion of the middle classes, as discussed above, has without doubt reinforced *civil society* activism. This sector may not be raising or spending large amounts of cash, but it is bringing into the arena commitment, social energy, and new horizons of aspiration, primarily in favor of cultural rights and democracy. New social and cultural movements are focusing on the recognition, preservation, and protection of the ways of life of many groups—notably at the sub-national and local levels—and on connecting these rights claims to other domains of social and political life. They play an increasingly crucial role in facilitating both the production and dissemination of a variety of cultural forms. They are among the most active explorers of cultural practice in which old traditions meld with the new, the inherited with the invented. These sorts of connections with “grassroots development” have long occupied the attention of Western cultural activists.

The 2011 Arab Spring has thus stimulated cultural actors in the European Union to consider how they might work trans-culturally to support the inchoate democratization processes that are on the move there. In that context, the present writer was asked to set forth some new challenges for cultural exchange in a theme paper presented at a recent cultural forum. He concluded his essay as follows: “artists need to have the freedom to express their views and be encouraged to do so, to be aided in finding their individual and collective voices that reflect the contexts in which they work, and to bring their insights to bear through their creative work that will then be distributed on the continent and internationally. European arts organizations could help give them international exposure.”<sup>38</sup> It is against the backdrop of all the processes described above that more than three quarters of those who responded to a survey done by the seminar organizers said that they were “optimistic about the long-term prospects for international cultural engagement”. Yet over sixty per cent of the same respondents also thought that current conditions, particularly in the world economy, impede its expansion. The optimism needs to be concretized in ways that tackle the realities of our current moment.

## What is to be done?

**C**ultural exchange can only be carried out on the scale of our shared expectations if more funding and other forms of support are made available for it. This applies, of course, to the entire cultural sector. And it is a case that the sector has been making for over four decades! The cause is still far from won.

So what is to be done? For a start, we would argue, the cultural sector must put its own house in order. It can do so by renewing or re-articulating its commitment to meeting needs that have long been identified, often vigorously advocated, but so far

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38 See Y.R. Isar, “Civil Society Empowerment in Third Countries: Are Culture Actors Providing Powerful Voices in Support of Democratization Processes?” theme paper prepared for the European Culture Forum 2011. <http://www.eenc.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Panel-4-Issue-Paper-Civil-society-third-countries-European-Culture-Forum-2011.pdf>

inadequately addressed. These needs apply generically, regardless of the extent or direction of the current shifts of wealth. They include more substantial funding bases, better operating infrastructures, heightened professional skills, and more focused streams of expert knowledge.

Meeting such needs would involve working together to address challenges such as the following:

- *Funding*: In a difficult financial environment, it is more necessary than it has ever been, given the growing demand for trans-national artistic engagement, to both increase the amount of financial resources made available for this purpose and diversify the sources thereof.
- *Organization*: Enabling cultural operators, together with their organizations and networks, to collaborate trans-nationally in the crucially important area of strengthening professional skills and organizational infrastructures in the arts and culture sector.
- *Dialogic Partnerships and Horizontal Circuits*: Developing cultural relationships based on a spirit of dialogic partnership and mutual learning for a plurality of cultural agendas. We must all learn to recognize the existence of multiple centers and criteria that are being deployed across a wide range of “horizontal circuits”.
- *Cross-sector alliances*: In forging these new pathways of cultural exchange we must be ever mindful of the need to build stronger alliances with other sectors of public policy.

But there is one more overarching challenge: *making a persuasive political case for trans-national cultural discourse and exchange.*

The case needs to be made across societies and across all levels and sectors of society. Here in the concluding lines that follow, we will not explore the *how*, but the *what*.

In recent decades the case has increasingly rested—in the West at least—on a series of economic benefit arguments, of which the most recent is the “cultural/creative industries” paradigm. But the claims of the latter are easily trumped by the more robust impact potential of many other sectors. Economic arguments are not to be scorned, far from it. Yet I would argue that in the vocabulary of advocacy we adopt they ought to be supplanted by other kinds of considerations. Our arguments need to foreground other benefits, such as the contribution of the cultural and the artistic to the free, creative and liberal flourishing of all societies. As Benjamin Barber once put it, “a society that supports the arts generously is not engaging in philanthropic activity but assuring the conditions of its own flourishing. This is perhaps the most important single argument in favor of a democratic government playing some role in the arts: not in the name of the needs of the arts, but in the name of the needs of democracy.”<sup>39</sup>

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39 Benjamin Barber, “Serving Democracy by Serving the Arts and the Humanities,” essay prepared in 1997 for the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, p. 1. Unpublished typescript.

Barber's is a very American voice, but his conviction speaks to us all. Surely we must champion the idea of enabling cultural actors—each in their own way and in their own terms—to deploy the creative imagination as they establish and defend their renewed senses of place within the uneven and shifting terrain of globalization; to strengthen lateral, technologically-enabled networks for creative collaboration and community building; and to nurture “the eruption of intensively, self-consciously hybrid cultural forms, grounded in aesthetic and social codes that traverse imaginatively the frontiers of tradition and cosmopolitanism.”<sup>40</sup> Theirs can be an essential contribution to the flourishing of the global civilization that is in the making. Their many talents and voices will be vital in the processes of “cultural translation” that weave the complex patterning and re-patterning our interdependent—and decidedly post-Western—world so urgently requires.<sup>41</sup>

40 Chris Waterman, “Closing Reflections,” in Helmut K. Anheier and Yudhishtir Raj Isar (eds.) *Cultural Expression, Creativity and Innovation, The Cultures and Globalization Series*, 3. London: SAGE Publications, 2010.

41 Ien Ang, “Cultural Translation in a Globalised World,” in N. Papastergiadis (ed.), *Complex Entanglements. Art, Globalisation and Cultural Difference*. London, Sydney, Chicago: Rivers Oram Press, 2003.

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