



IT STARTS WITH A CONVERSATION

... question your knowledge by sharing ...

A guide for artists who wish to work collaboratively

PRODUCED BY ICE HOT NORDIC DANCE PLATFORM

WRITTEN BY **ÁSA RICHARDSDÓTTIR** AND **LENE BANG HENNINGSEN**



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¹The partners of Ice Hot Nordic Dance Platform are: Dansehallerne, Copenhagen, Denmark, Dansens Hus, Oslo Norway, Dansens Hus, Stockholm, Sweden, Dance Info Finland, Helsinki, Finland and Performing Arts Iceland, Reykjavik, Iceland

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Ice Hot Nordic Dance Platform gave us the opportunity to write a guide for those wanting to collaborate and work internationally in contemporary dance. We embraced this task and the work we now share, is for you to read, consider and share.

This guide has been developed in a conversation between two colleagues. We are not presenting the “right way,” but we hope the content will help you formulate the right way for your development in a global and international community.

April 2017

Ása Richardsdóttir and Lene Bang Henningsen

INTRODUCTION

This guide is written by an Icelander and a Dane. We met 15 years ago, became friends and have shared good and bad moments ever since. We have always relied on each other for the conversations needed at any given moment. We met while working on a European project which had some challenges to it. We realized then how important it is to be able to talk to someone in confidence who you can trust and understands what you are going through. We became that person, to each other.

Our understanding of “the conversation” is a broad and holistic one. We are addressing the many, versatile conversations and exchanges we all need to have in our professional life. Think about the versatile group of people you are - on a continuous basis - in communication with. Your fellow artists, producers and staff, as well as programmers, curators, co-producers, staff of funding institutions, audiences, press and politicians. We are talking about the conversations you have with these people. And we claim, any good development which happens to us, will always, in one way or the other, start with a conversation.

It matters what sort of conversation we have. A conversation can be as meaningless as it can be valuable. We believe a good conversation should be based on four principles:

- **Curiosity**
- **Openness**
- **Willingness to share**
- **Ability to listen**

By following the above principles we believe you can gain knowledge from each process you engage in. Knowledge you must then exercise and question, by sharing. In the coming pages we offer simple steps we call STOP AND THINK, for you to use in your daily work. These STOP and THINKs can be helpful for you to strengthen your values and goals, your focus in your professional development and your skills in working collaboratively in an international environment.

While using the STOP and THINKs, we encourage you to make a notebook, saving your valuable reflections and written answers.

Be clear to yourself
and others about
your intentions



POINT OF VIEW

POINT OF VIEW

There are many tools out there you can use to support and measure your development and planning. We write about just a few of them - Tools for preparing, delivering and evaluating. These tools have proven useful for us in the projects we lead, for the companies we work for and in our own on-going professional development.²

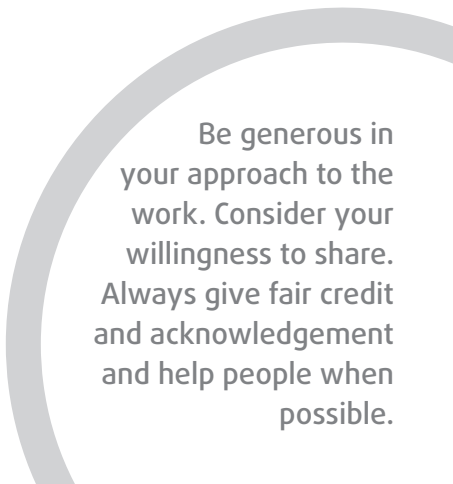
In the process of writing this guide, we have both been fighting “the advice monster”. We tend to be such monsters, as it is often expected of us. We tend to take on that role in projects we work on. The author Michael Bungay Stanier calls this the “advice-giver/expert/answer-it/solve-it/fix-it mode”.³ And yes, there is a place for giving advice, and we will advise. But we have tried our best to rather offer a reflective conversation, based on clear questions to you and your artistry. We feel asking you questions will serve you better in the long run.

This guide is written from a Nordic point of view. In a region of 26 million people it makes sense to work together and reach beyond national borders. Although our focus is on artists who wish to work collaboratively and internationally, we believe that the same tools and approaches apply when working locally within our own city and national borders or on a Nordic regional level. Our region is built on a tradition of working together. This has created trust and openness that has trickled down through generations and organizations. This feeling of trust and openness is fundamental to our joint Nordic existence. It is a strength; if we use it wisely and with respect.

Finally, this text is written from the point of view that collaboration is the essential way to secure valuable results. “It starts with a conversation” aims at making you more aware of your own processes, so you can affect your community and yourself through the art you create and produce. It aims at making you empowered, by letting go of the unnecessary.

² You can read more about us at the back of the guide.

³ Michael Bungay Stanier, **The Coaching Habit Say Less, Ask More & Change the Way You Lead Forever**, Box of Crayons Press 2016.



Be generous in your approach to the work. Consider your willingness to share. Always give fair credit and acknowledgement and help people when possible.



INSPIRATIONS

INSPIRATIONS

We draw upon a series of works by others; books and publications we have read, speeches we have heard, conversations we have had and material available online. We both have been lucky in our professional life and met key individuals who have inspired us, mentored us and remain close to us. The sincerest advice we can give to you is:

**Find your mentors, nurture them and give of yourself
– it will all come back to you!**

We offer a list of references and recommendations for further reading at the back of the guide. Below, we mention four sources that inspired us in this process of writing:

Making your life as an artist

While researching for this guide, we came across the work of Andrew Simonet. Andrew is an US based choreographer, writer and founder of **Artists U**, a grassroots planning and professional development program for artists. Andrew has written a book, **Making your life as an artist** which, along with a workbook, can be downloaded.⁴ Andrew offers a series of interesting tools, webinars and workshops. His approach is simple yet profound and to the point. He analyses the role of the artist in society and offers down to earth strong advice on planning an artistic life, dream making, money making, mission building and more. We will quote Andrew's work further on, and leave you here with this citation:

**“Make the dream bigger,
and the steps to get there smaller.”**

IETM publications

IETM – www.ietm.org is a leading international network in the contemporary performing arts. Each year, they publish various themed texts for our sector. We have found that we tend to refer to two of these publications, on a regular basis. **How networking works – IETM study on the effects of networking**, was written in 2001 by a

⁴ A link to Andrew's work is in our resources at the back of the guide. There you can download his books but you can also contribute and get a hardcopy of the two books for merely \$18 + shipping.

research group commissioned by IETM, Fondazione Fitzcarraldo and Arts council of Finland. Although 15 years old, and could be updated, we still find it a useful reference in our work. It offers an analysis of the individual pathways to use networks and the effect of networks and the interaction which happens. The other IETM reference we want to mention is the **International Co-production manual** written in 2011 by Sophie Travers, Judith Staines and MJ Chung, for IETM. The manual explores and attempts to demystify the processes of international co-productions and is a very worthwhile read for anyone intending to co-produce.⁵

Keõja – Sustainability Think Tank

The Nordic – Baltic dance network Keõja has, since it was founded in 2008, published various documents, case studies, books and reports. The most useful one of all is the **Keõja Sustainability Think Tank Report: Recommendations for a Sustainable Nordic and Baltic Dance Field**.⁶ The Think Tank, led by Dance Info Finland, offers 26 clear recommendations on how to make our sector more sustainable. We feel many of the suggestions can be applied to other art forms in our region and colleagues around the world have told us they have similar challenges and dialogues in their regions. We find the Think Tank work very useful and would encourage you to study it.

Box of Crayons

We found the above company, led by Michael Bungay Stanier, during our working process and found their advice and approach refreshing, simple and to the point. Their website shares various useful tools, such as excerpts from their handbooks, webinars and examples of project making.⁷

⁵ Links to both publications are found at the back of the guide.

⁶ A link to the report is in Resources at the back of the guide.

⁷ A link to the Box of Crayons website is in Resources at the back of the guide.



TOOLS

TOOLS

Working internationally and collaboratively is not rocket science. It requires hard work, interest and long hours. It is sometimes infuriating, often puzzling, but also rewarding. We have chosen to work collaboratively and internationally because we are curious and strongly believe larger networks can lead to new possibilities for individual artists and enable development of their artistry. Co-produced, co-funded, co-created productions strengthen the art community by bringing new work opportunities, parameters and models. It widens the horizon of everyone involved. This we say with confidence after 15-20 years in the business. Leading to not only successful and complicated but also failed projects, on our roster.

Know this; looking at all the dazzling ideas and plentiful projects, you should truly consider if you are up for international collaboration. Ask yourself, on which terms? You should honestly consider which resources you can invest to reach an international goal. We encourage you to break it down into small steps, to secure sustainability in your artistic practice.⁸

We acknowledge that most artists start this journey alone, without a defined team surrounding them and without the possibility to hire agents, producers or administrators. We know this period of a career can be vulnerable and we also acknowledge that some artists are amazing producers. Hence, we encourage you to trust your natural skill and instinct. You simply need to build a foundation fitting your needs and the stories you wish to share with your audiences.

Making connections and having conversations is a vital part of your development as a sole artist, company and/or organization. It enables you to establish a financial base for your artistic work. Your meetings are a tool to secure common ground for the idea. To secure investments, agreement and share knowledge to verify your project. Networking and working in networks is about sharing knowledge, being clear about your capacities and aspirations and securing successful matches with collaborative partners.

When we started attending larger network meetings we recall how overwhelming it was at first. To be in a crowd of unfamiliar faces, trying to connect these faces with names - from a long and alienating participant list. We also recall how it was standing "alone" in this crowd of professionals listening to colleagues namedropping endlessly, while we tried to make sense of it all!⁹

⁸ In the Sustainability Think Tank Report are many useful tips and recommendations for artists, companies and other arts organizations on how to work in a sustainable way. Again, we recommend this report.

⁹ Based on such experiences we share "Tips for networking at events" at the back of the guide. We share these tips so you can prepare your approach before attending your next meeting. We encourage you to make your own strategy.

Our mantra is “research, meet and follow up”

The different events we take part in and the networking we do, are tools and platforms for progress. In this respect, Ice Hot Nordic Dance Platform is a tool for you. It's a place where people are open to meet. Where you can connect directly and have needed conversations with peers, to discuss new collaborations, touring possibilities and be updated on current productions.

The jungle of mayor markets, fairs, forums, congresses and platforms can feel consuming at first. PAMS, CINARS, TANZMESSE, APAP, APAM, TPAM, ICE HOT, HOT POT, Spring Forward, IETM, ISPA¹⁰ and many more perplexing abbreviations. However, all these events are about the arts and building relationships, contacts and network, and making business. You should attend certain festivals or visit venues with which you share aesthetic values and where you can slowly but surely build relationships and develop your research.

Many artist-driven festivals and events can be important hubs for your international development. An artist or a producer your own age can become a lifelong collaborator, as you move in the same circles. So, we advise you to start meaningful conversations now rather than later.

You should always question and analyse whether some, all, or none of the above-mentioned forums support your specific development. Investigate the history and flux of every event. They all respond to a specific need. Is it also your need? Be critical in your selection and make the most of it when you raise the funds and choose to attend.

These different forums certainly can be useful and have been so for us and many of our artistic collaborators. However, they can be alienating places, so we suggest, make sure to prepare and clear with yourself and your team what to expect. And in case you are coming for the first time – come with a friend!

Furthermore, know the most important networking can happen when you are touring or working in a residency. So, make sure you book the relevant meetings you need.

¹⁰ See more info on the events at the back in our Extra Material



BE PREPARED

BE PREPARED

No matter whether you are a well-known artist or have just entered the contemporary field, we acknowledge that creating relationships outside your immediate margins is the same challenge for all, even if, due to your experience and personality, your comfort zone might be different. Consider carefully in which settings you are most likely to succeed. Explore where you can reach out and establish a good and meaningful exchange. Consider the small and practical steps you need to take before this conversation happens. Be ready to engage and follow up.

Do this to be aligned and in tune with your team, reach out and have conversations with collaborators, the media, funders and politicians, all demanding your attention.

Establish for yourself what it means to you to have a “good conversation”.

When you look at the time you need to invest in a “good conversation”, consider using 40% on preparation, 20% on the actual meeting and 40% on the very important follow up and evaluation.¹¹

PREPARE
40%
20%
DELIVER
40%
EVALUATE

¹¹ Look up “Meeting Together” by Graessle and Gawlinski



PREPARE

PREPARE

What do you want?

We have been part of Nordic collaborative projects like Keđja, Nordics Combined and Ice Hot Nordic Dance Platform. We have experienced that these projects have an effect, spread the word about Nordic dance internationally and create a brand. We know the different, versatile festivals, venues, dance houses, centres and platforms that have offered dialogues and international meeting points, have been important for our Nordic dance communities. We know individual artists, producers and agents as well as small, medium and large companies have for decades been building up an international network which has benefitted them and many more.

Our perception is that today Nordic dance professionals have rather easy access to Nordic, European and International “conversations”. But, our perception is also that not many artists, producers and/or companies have taken the time (or enough time) to analyse what they want, what they have to offer on the international arena and in cross border collaborations. Our advice is this. Give yourself the space and time for this important analysis. The very first step is analysing your own artistic practice and what you stand for.

In your career, you will enter a large number of collaborations and teams, as well as teams with a flux of members. Therefore, you need to practice your values and navigation skills, so you bring the best to each project.

A new project is likely to have unclear and unformulated rules of conduct. It is more likely that such rules will appear as an informal milieu, revealing itself over time through a sharing of practice and steps of development or moments of crisis.

We encourage you to keep track of yourself in these different settings/teams over time. Understand where you can develop and progress and stay true to yourself.

Get the conversation out of your head

Although the arts offer various informal settings, understand that you are in a professional context. To build a sustainable and long vital context for your development we advise you to distinguish between private, personal and professional conversations. And no matter what, please remember - we are all just people!

There are so many methods available to get the conversation of what you stand for and where you want to go, out of your head and on to the next level. Foremost, you need to speak your mind and heart. We encourage you to raise your voice and let people understand what you offer, look for and desire.

We often use a “reflective approach” to figure out what is best, right, strongest and strategic for us to do, in any give situation. Because as you know, the essence of any strategy is choosing what NOT to do.

On the following pages of the guide, we ask you to engage with the text by working on the exercises described as STOP AND THINK #1 to #13. We ask you to create your own notebook with your reflections and written answers.





STOP AND THINK #1

Michael from Box of Crayons¹² offers seven key questions to help individuals, teams and companies to have more meaningful conversations and figure out their own and/or joint paths. Michael's first question is "What is on your mind?" He calls it the Kickstart Question and as you see on the next page, we found another reference to it. It is a brilliant question. It cuts through the chase and makes you get to the heart of the matter, in a good conversation.

Below you find our version of questions which might help you figure out what is most important to you, at the moment.

The questions are:

- 1) What 's on your mind?
- 2) Is there something unsaid?
- 3) If so what?
- 4) What are you choosing to do?
- 5) If you are saying YES to this, what are you saying NO to?¹³
- 6) Are you OK with that?
- 7) What is going to be your first step?

Once you have answered the questions, keep them in your notebook as chapter A and use them to practice your statements and wording your values. We also encourage you to return to chapter A and the questions after a few weeks to stop and think again. Have your answers become more defined second time around? Are there specific words you return to and identify with?

Clearly identifying your values will help you navigate smoothly in your own development. And to know your values, will help you identify the right opportunities when they appear.

¹² Michael's seven questions are in his book **The Coaching Habit: Say Less, Ask More& Change the Way You Lead Forever**. We encourage you to get a hold of the book. However, as a nice gesture, you can download a sample of the first three chapters of the book here: <http://thecoachinghabit.com>

¹³ This is another of Michael's questions. We like it a lot!

The first question is the "facebook question"!

The facebook question?

The question that faces us whenever we pour our heart out on facebook

Mmh ...
Aah that question!

The "facebook question" differs quite a lot from one language to the other

In which way?

In Icelandic and Danish the question involves the **heart** (Hvað liggur þér á **hjarta**? = Icelandic, Hvad har du på **hjerte**? = Danish), which directly translated is "**What is on your heart?**"...

... whereas in Swedish it states "Hvad gör du just **nu**?" – which means "**What are you doing now**" ...

... and in Finnish and Norwegian it involves the **mind**, as in English (Mitä **mietit**? = Finnish / Hva **tenker** du på? = Norwegian) which translates "**What are you thinking of**"?

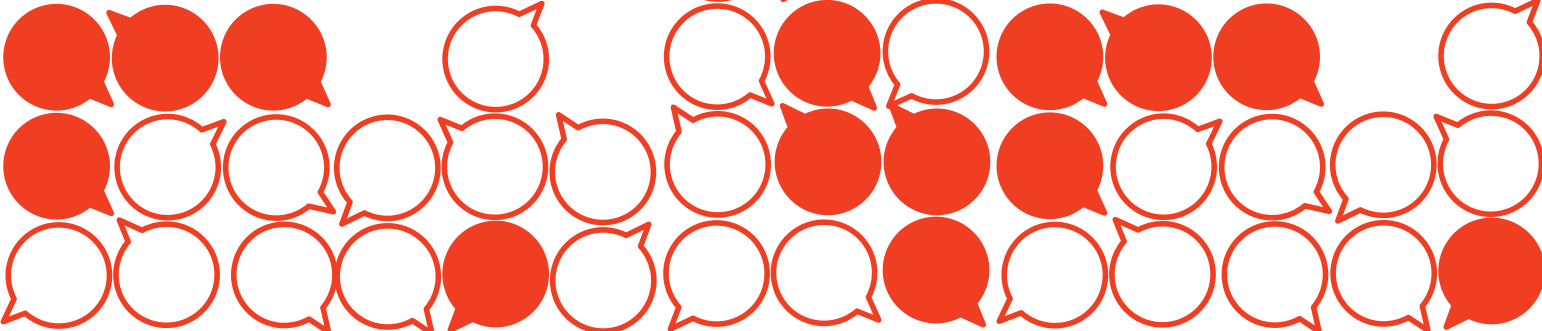
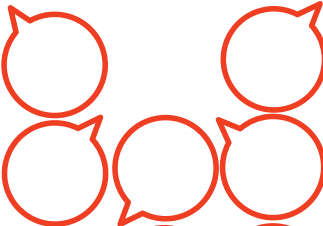
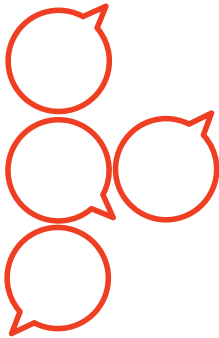
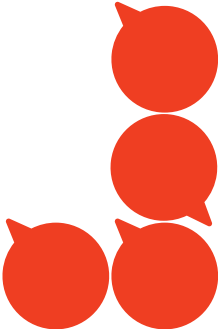
I wonder if the emphasis from heart to mind to action is symbolic to our little region and how we work?

Yeah, just consider how different it must be in a wider geographical context and how much cultural and linguistic differences matter.

We ourselves recognise times in our professional lives when we have felt stuck, not known which direction to take, not been able to figure out “the purpose”. And the thing is, the more we do work that has no real purpose, the less engaged and motivated we are. The less engaged we are, the less likely we are to find and create great work. This applies to all of us; artists, producers and everyone in the team.

We encourage you to practice making clear choices; nurtures a working culture - an environment that identifies what a clear choice is to you and your team. Invite constructive feedback from your colleagues and peers and make sure you set aside time for such conversations to develop. Not everything needs to be explored in a “square” format meeting. Sometimes a conversation is far more constructive than a meeting.

The following two “STOP and THINKS” will allow you time to engage with your values. Please use your experience as a case study.





STOP AND THINK #2

Sometimes we find it useful to look back in time and on past projects to realize what is important to us, today. Reflection on past processes and lived experiences can help us find our core values.

List three projects, which presented a challenge to you and made you aware of your own values.

Project

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Based on a 15 minutes' reflection of these three projects, list the five values that are most important to you when you enter collaboration.

List of values

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

Please save your list of values as chapter **B** in your notebook.



STOP AND THINK #3

When you know your values, you should assess your values because it's time to consider how you can extract more value from each step you have already done. Think of how you have invested your time, energy and funds during the past year. Sometimes, reality is different from what we intended:

- 1) What took the most space in your calendar?
- 2) Identify and write down what you have achieved. Even if you think it is insignificant. We tend to overlook our progress.
- 3) Which were your greatest victories this year?
- 4) When did you take risks?
- 5) Which project had the deepest meaning for you?
- 6) Which project had the largest impact on you?
- 7) What is it that you are the happiest about having achieved?
- 8) Which word or sentence best describes your experiences this year?
- 9) What lesson can you use to build your career?

NO random
emails, please!

We strongly encourage you to get different points of view during your analytical work and process so you can realise your potential from different aspects. A few simple models, repeatedly used, will help plot an accurate landscape. You can use our STOP and THINKs or other models - if you chose what works best for you.

Another refreshing approach is to analyse your biggest mistakes and failures. Selecting one bad case in your development so far and considering the following questions: Why is this failure to you? What would you have done differently? Consider if the error in this case was technical or human, a matter of means or attitude?

Andrew Simonet, in his book **Making your life as an artist**, has interesting theories on the above. According to him, "At every level of success, too many artists are exhausted, overwhelmed and broke, panicked about the present and disheartened about the future."¹⁴

Andrew's take is insightful and we agree with much of his advice and many of his mantras, like:

"The success of other artists is good for me"

Fellow artists, producers, managers and all those working within the dance community are our most important peers and partners. The attention various Nordic dance artists have enjoyed in recent years is, at least in the long run, because of the artistic work they create. And it will only chase light on the art other Nordic artists make. Not shine away from it.

"Apply the skills, creativity and resourcefulness of your art practice to the rest of your life"

Artistic skills are hugely undervalued in our societies. Artists and Creatives see value where others do not and can be brilliant problem solvers.

According to Andrew, these four things help artists thrive:

- a) **A plan. By far the most important**
- b) **A sustainable budget. Including rates for your time and strategies for bringing in revenue**
- c) **A realistic schedule that includes art-making and down time**
- d) **An artistic statement that you love.**

¹⁴ See a link to Andrew's work at the back of the guide

Besides Andrews four checkpoints we wish to add that a very important and on-going task in your daily work is to find and maintain relationships with people, who understand and support your vision. It might seem pretentious to identify a list of five people who are truly interested in your development but if you get this list right, they can help you secure a solid foundation for your work. This list belongs to all periods of your professional development, preparation, delivery and evaluation phases. So, we hope this advice is catching your attention!



STOP AND THINK #4

Who are your five trusted individuals and how do they relate to you?

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____

Please save your answers as chapter **C** in your notebook

Goals and narratives

Now that you have evaluated the past and identified values, it is time to lay the foundation for what you aim for in the coming year and period. In our profession, we come across too many artists and producers who do not know WHAT they want when it comes to working internationally and collaboratively, yet they have a dream of getting there. Somewhere! Somehow! Be real with yourself and if needed we urge you to STOP and RE-THINK.



STOP AND THINK #5

- 1) Do you know what you should offer?
- 2) Do you know your uniqueness?
- 3) Do you know your limitations?
- 4) What moves you - shakes you?
- 5) Do you know your artistic kindred spirits elsewhere – have you had a conversation with them?
- 6) Do you have a specific city, country, region where you feel there might be interest for your work? If so, have you been on a research trip?
- 7) Are there presenters, festivals, venues, centres, residencies out there that are following your work? If so, are you in conversation with them? If not, who do you feel should be following your work?
- 8) Are you ready to start thinking of your international strategy? If not, what else do you need before you start? If you are ready, read on 😊

RE-THINK!

Our experience is that during long-term and shorter-term collaborations, you always communicate through a shared narrative. We are sharing ideas and possibilities, internally in a group and with our communities, to realize the full potential of an idea. The maximum impact occurs when a shared narrative is embedded strongly in the team and when the timing is right!

The performing arts and its landscape are constantly moving, evolving and taking on different forms. In order to place yourself within this landscape, you need to know the terrain. It's our logic that the actual terrain is always more complex than the map you have at hand. How often you update your map is up to you. It depends entirely on where your focus lies, when it comes to collaboration. We encourage you to create your map by drawing, writing and sharing it in a systematic process, developing a shared understand with your team, board, funders and collaborators.¹⁵ Whichever method you use, remember you need to revisit your mapping and narrative frequently so it balances the current situation. Understanding yourself in context is a very powerful tool indeed, and will help you save time and setbacks.



STOP AND THINK #6

Setting goals step by step

- 1) Define your goal/s...
- 2) Break your goal down into steps, one by one. It will be easier to achieve that way.
- 3) What is the first thing you should do?
- 4) Can you put a measure on your goal (how much, how many etc.)
- 5) How will you be able to achieve your goal?
- 6) Do you need outside support to achieve your goal? If so, by whom or what? Those should be part of your steps and thinking.
- 7) When will your goal be realized?

Please save your map of goals as chapter **D** in your notebook.

¹⁵ If you feel you need more tools than we are offering, a useful way to make a map might be to get acquainted with some simple models, which will help you map your landscape. Using the models "SWOT", "SMART", "PESTELID" and a "TIMELINE" you can soon describe your landscape more elaborately. You can find clear advice on each of the above on Wikipedia <https://en.wikipedia.org>

Conversation and collaboration

Now that you have spent time reflecting on you, your practice, your past project and upcoming plans and goals, we turn our attention to the collaborative conversations.

In each meeting and conversation, it is important to be alert and aware of the culture you are engaging with. Don't assume that two artists or two companies or an artist and a presenter think and work alike. Make sure you allow time and opportunity to explore the differences before you enter collaboration. This can save valuable time and effort.



STOP AND THINK #7

We believe any collaboration is a risk and it therefore needs to be built on trust and a shared vision

The conversation begins

- 1) What questions do you need to ask before you enter collaboration?
- 2) Do you trust yourself and your own instinct?
- 3) How can you identify if someone can be trusted?
- 4) Consider carefully if you are prepared for crises, success or simple stability? And is stability success to you?
- 5) How much is at stake in this collaboration?
- 6) What are you willing to risk?

Please save your answers as chapter **E** in your notebook.



STOP AND THINK #8

Qualities of a collaborator

- 1) Name the 10 main qualities you feel a person needs to have to be trustworthy?
- 2) Chose three qualities of the 10
- 3) Do you have those qualities yourself?

Please save your answers as chapter **F** in your notebook.

Think about how you can find out if a potential collaborator has those qualities. Possibly you can find out by seeing a show with them, making dinner with them or writing a text with them. Or it might be a good idea to ask for advice, references or feedback from them, or even going to the studio with them, sharing a problem or telling them a secret. Whichever way you use to find out, we strongly encourage you NOT to engage into a collaborative project unless you have a sense you can indeed trust the person or company you are working with.

Knowing your project

We assume you have by now reflected on our thoughts above and worked on our STOP and THINKs. You are ready for the next step. But before we start on how you could make an international strategy, we want to test you once again. We want to know; is it clear to you what your “international project” is?

The project

When working on any project, it is good to have the five **Ws** in mind:

- **WHAT** is the core purpose, goal and objective?
- **WHO** are taking part and WHO is it for?
- **WHEN** will it be created and shown?
- **WHERE** will it be shown?
- **WHY** should it be created and shown?

The five Ws can be expanded further; the project might have a multitude of purposes. The participants might vary at different stages in the process, but it is important to list the different human resources, skills, capacities and knowledge needed to realise the project and have a clear overview of the different tasks and responsibilities of each participant. The WHO is it for, should be clear from the start. If you do not know whom you want to reach, you should take a step back and think it through. The WHEN is the timeline question. It helps you realise if the DATE you have in mind is realistic, depending on where you are in the preparations and what resources you have. The WHY is the last but not the least. You really should ask yourself what is unique about your project and why is it necessary to create it. So, as we are going towards an international strategy ask yourself – What is in this project that is essential for the world to know?

**If you can think through your project,
identify its core, your dream and steps towards the dream,
you are in a very good place.**

Building an International Collaborative Strategy

You now have a clear idea about what you want to do and where you want to go. At least for now. As we said at the beginning, working collaboratively and internationally is not rocket science, it is just hard work. There is no way anyone can tell you where to go, what to do or what to go for. Only you can answer those questions. Someone once tried to count the festivals in the world. When he got to 35,000 he stopped. There are endless possibilities out there; you just have to know what you want and have to offer, and how to get there. In STOP and THINK #9 are a few basic steps towards building an international collaborative strategy.



STOP AND THINK #9

GOAL

- What is it?
- Why is this important to you?

KNOWLEDGE

- What knowledge and tools do you already have?
- Where will your focus be?

STEPS

- What will be your first steps?
- Are they achievable with the resources you have?
- If not, how will you break them down into doable steps?

OBSTACLES – what might get in your way?

- Your limitations
- Your team
- External factors

STRENGTHS – what will help you?

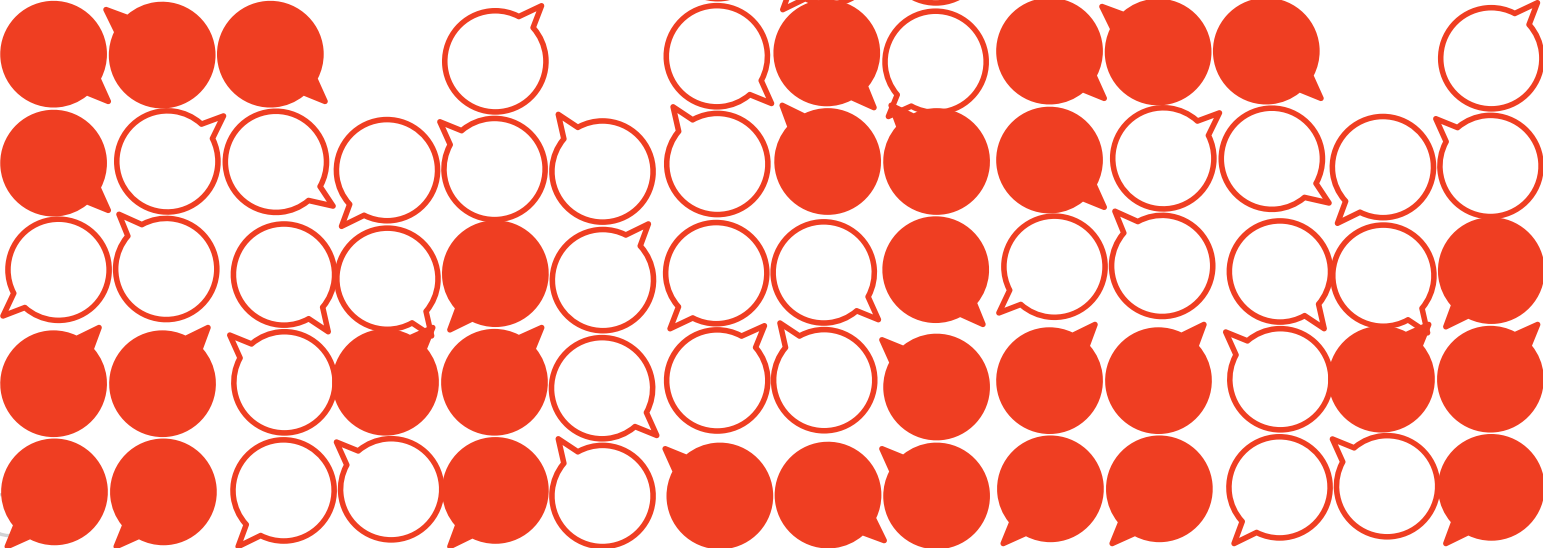
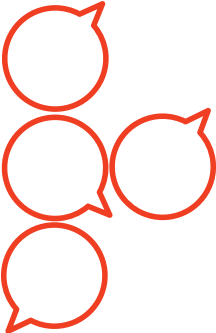
- Personal strengths
- Your team
- Resources

DECISION

- Based on agreed plan and schedule

Please save your answers as chapter **G** in your notebook

These simple questions – and others – can be used repeatedly when you are developing your international strategy. If you don't like the word strategy, exchange it for another word. Do you like PLAN? Fine, use that. Even if your plan is just made on a napkin in a bar, it is still a plan. It means you have taken the time for the needed thought process which has made you think the project through. Never aim for the perfect plan, because it does not exist. Know that you have a very good plan, which provides an overview, so you can deviate from it.





DELIVER


DELIVER

We have reached the point where you are in the middle of delivering the project. Where all the conversations, agreements, plans and papers stand the test. Where you must make sure you have all emergency phone numbers at hand and where you hope no flights are delayed or cancelled, and no dancers are getting injured - as it will challenge your solid plan!

It is our experience that it takes three to five years to build and deliver a solid project which includes co-production and touring.

In your daily work, the reality is always collaboration or a presentation of a collaboration. You are constantly preparing to meet your peers and colleagues to investigate questions and possible solutions. Once you are in the middle of it, the success of the collaboration will depend on how well you are prepared. We need to underline: If you go into collaboration unprepared, the likelihood of it failing is much greater. Pose questions and walk through the different scenarios that might happen during a process. Describe the ultimate disaster scenario and the ultimate success. Knowing this will help you navigate and hopefully avoid stupid mistakes. A valuable tip in the business is to always get a local colleague to walk you through the most important do's and don'ts in the culture you are about to visit and collaborate with.

We argue that the best knowledge is shared in an open conversation. Thus you need to cultivate openness in your professional dialogue. Ask yourself honest questions during the delivery. DON'T assume that your collaborator understands you and your local logic. There might be cultural differences or local laws that affect the way you and your colleagues work.



A cultural meeting can happen between groups as well as countries.



STOP AND THINK #10

Host – Guest – Ghost

In any collaboration, you must manage expectations. A simple allegory to help you manage expectations and step away from postulations is to think around the exemplar “HOST – GUEST – GHOST” perception. During the delivery of a project, consider this – at any meeting there is not only two, but three parties, The Host, The Guest and The Ghost. Imagine this. The Guest is accepted on The Host's terms. The Guest is visiting an unfamiliar landscape. Inbetween them stands The Ghost - The thin air of assumptions, prejudices, judgements, rumours and misunderstood ideas. No matter if you are The Host or The Guest; it's your responsibility at any meeting to minimize “The Ghost”, to make it evaporate by adjusting your assumptions through honest and open conversation.

- 1) Do you notice how you enter a meeting?
- 2) Do you notice how you work?
- 3) And how this affects the world around you. Your attitude? Your contribution? Don't just be alert to the others, be very alert to yourself.
- 4) Are you transparent about your needs?
- 5) Can you help secure a joint success?
- 6) Have you included the right people and stakeholders in the conversation?

Please save your answers as document **H** in your notebook

It's our experience that a “NO” is only dangerous if you have not managed expectations. You and your team need to be aware of what you expect and how dependent you are on a YES or NO in certain situation.



EVALUATE

EVALUATE

Today, evaluation and feedback is an integrated part of project practice. But does feedback create value? The value we aim for? How do you make sure that feedback and evaluation serve a worthy purpose? For whom is it valuable? These are some of the concerns you must consider when working in the arts sector. The more you are focused and aware, the more you can benefit and accumulate information you need. During your lifelong work and development, you will engage with different stages of feedback, and insightful processes.

The in-between time

For many of us, a short-term project culture is the financial reality and the time in between projects is often undersupported or not supported at all.

We recognize that the in-between time is important for your development. This is when you consider your progress, write reports, write new applications to secure funding, or add additional income through side projects, analyse and identify collaborators.

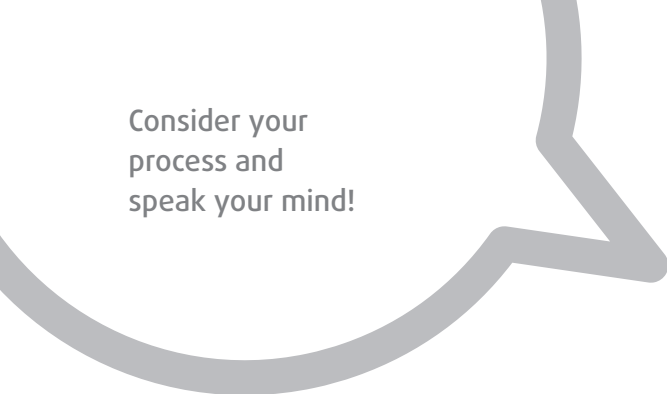


STOP AND THINK #11

It is good to use the in-between-time to reflect and figure out if you are in the right place. We assume you had a plan.

- 1) Did you have a goal that you hoped to accomplish? If yes, what was your goal?
- 2) Did you accomplish your goal or objective?
- 3) How?

Please save your answers as chapter I in your notebook



Consider your
process and
speak your mind!

Managing expectations

Although your practice is “unique”, your voice is part of a wider community and your position has certain expectations. During your career, you need to find ways to navigate in a political as well as an emotional landscape. Here your map and mapping are valuable tools, as you can become an example of best practice. You can point out possible areas of development and you can help shape the future to the benefit of your audiences and fellow artist.



STOP AND THINK #12

Useful feedback can be a strong tool for survival, and its value grows the more prepared you are for each conversation you have. We ask you to consider what kind of feedback you need and ask for. We wish you to consider the following, to “own” your feedback and evaluation practice.

- 1) How can you secure time for Self-reflection?
- 2) To whom can you ask for Individual feedback? Please list three specific names.
- 3) How can you secure Group feedback / project feedback? Please list three questions that are important to you and your current project.

Please save your answers as chapter J in your notebook

The process of feedback and reflection is never a quick fix; it demands your focus before, during and after. We are basically inviting you to secure a reappearance of feedback in your practice and to consider what you “need” in order to be open, to digest and to act on feedback you get.

When feedback works, it provides opportunity to improve your impact, development and delivery.

Feedback takes time, and you are taking that time from others as well, to focus on a specific concern of yours. How do you secure an equal basis for a feedback conversation?

We wish you to step away from a hierarchical conversation, and focus on creating an equal conversation. A learning environment where you thrive, stay curious and develop.

To start this conversation, we advise you to offer a common ground. We recommend that you thoroughly consider what area you wish feedback on and why, before you invite a colleague and/or peer to engage with you. We underline that feedback is about heightening your awareness, so over time you can become a strong communicator regarding how and what you wish to develop, make impact on, retry or close.

By clarifying overall needs such as, “I need feedback on my choreographical practise”, “I need feedback on my professional approach during meetings”, “I need feedback on my application”, “I need feedback on my ambitions to tour the world”, “I need feedback on my premiere”, you set a frame which you again can break down into more specific questions. “Can I get your feedback on the show?”, “Do I actually have a tour-able production?” “Do I have the right team behind me to secure delivery?”, “Do people know enough about my work to book it?”

Make your own analytical framework. Feedback is relating to facts, but based on reactions and feeling. Therefore, any feedback offered is an interpretation of a specific product, situation or task, depending on the individual professional point of view. Placing judgement on how well it was managed / developed / executed.

Always consider your core values. From this strong base, it will be clear which suggestions to pass on - as some suggestions can be generally valid, but not specifically relevant for your career.





STOP AND THINK #13

We invite you to consider the following:

Do you need ...

- 1) ... to be in a specific setting to be able to focus?
- 2) ... to know the person beforehand to trust the feedback?
- 3) ... an outside expert?
- 4) ... others to join the conversation?
- 5) ... to set a framework for how the feedback is offered?
- 6) ... the feedback in conversation or in writing?
- 7) ... to accept all feedback you get? (If not, realize which feedback you welcome and which you will disregard.)

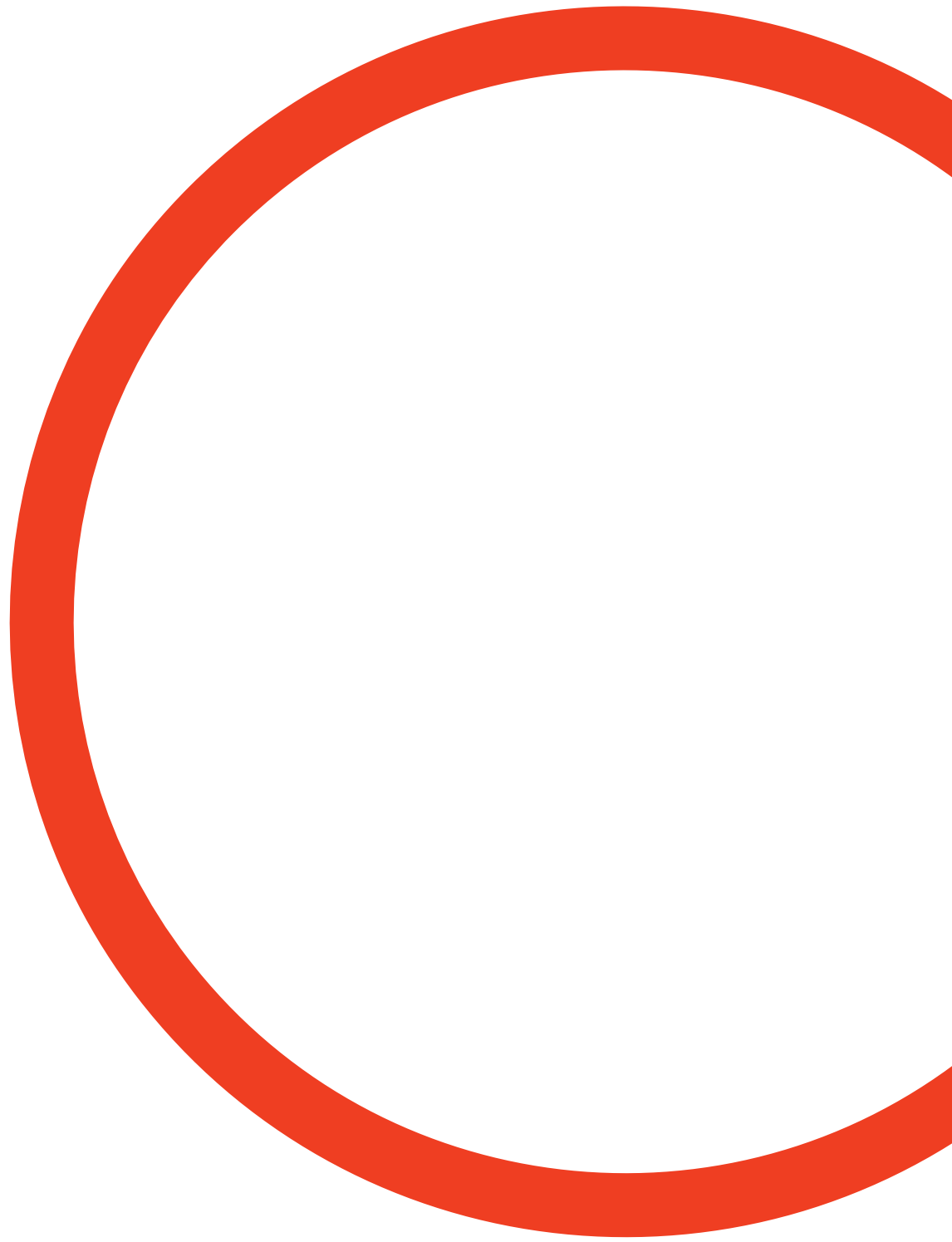
Please save your answers as chapter **K** in your notebook

We want to share a secret with you:

If you prepare well and do the work, the sum of feedback and evaluation can be used to drive a project and organisation forward and even change a cultural agenda.

And remember:

**The best knowledge is always found and shared
in an open conversation!**



EXTRA MATERIAL

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WHO ARE WE?



ÁSA RICHARDSDÓTTIR is the chair of Ice Hot Reykjavík 2018, the biannual Nordic Dance Platform and ambassador for the Nordic Culture Fund.

Ása has led a versatile career in arts, culture, academia, banking, politics and media. She was a television reporter at RÚV Iceland, founder of theatre, Kaffileikhusid, executive director of Iceland Dance Company, president of Performing Arts Iceland and creative producer for various artistic projects. She has taught artistic management and

international collaborations at three leading universities in Iceland as well as at various seminars in Iceland, Scandinavia, mainland Europe and China. After the collapse of the Icelandic bank system in 2008 she was appointed one of five directors of the board of the New Landsbankinn, the largest resurrected bank in Iceland. Ása is active in politics and was elected as city councillor in 2014.



LENE BANG HENNINGSEN is a creative producer, agent and founder of Copenhagen based Lene Bang Org.

In 2001, she started building her experience in coordinating international cultural projects in close collaboration with performing art companies, organisations and individual artists. Her passion and curiosity leads to various partnerships and collaborations in Scandinavia and internationally. Today zero visibility corp. / Ina Christel Johannessen, Stian Danielsen and Jon R. Skulberg are her closest clients.

Lene started building her network in the sector through studying dramaturgy and values her career start at GRAN – teater for dans / Granhøj Dans, which later led to studies at Goldsmiths University of London and collaborations with Skånes Dansteater. Lene is currently a ISPA Fellow– pursuing development of the performance arts sector. Among her merits are; initiator of the Mentor Room at IETM and inventor of a street sign for high heels uniquely made for the city of Aarhus.



TIPS ON ...

TIPS ON . . .

In the following pages, we will share with you various tips which might be helpful in your networking preparation, your everyday work when planning a tour, making a contract or deciding on your next steps.

PLEASE read and decide for yourself WHICH advice is useful for you and disregard the rest.

● HOW TO START DEVELOPING YOUR INTERNATIONAL NETWORK

- Leave the office, studio and desk.
- Go out on research trips.
- Make appointments with potential partners.
- If you can't afford to leave the office at least research specific festivals/ centers/venues /residencies from your current location and reach out via email, messenger, skype, telephone, snail mail or any which way you prefer.
- Make a list of the steps you want to take. Act on them one by one.
- Make friends first, business second.
- Be clear to yourself and others about your intention.
- Invest in your own professional development e.g. by building relationships that extent your current networks and which go beyond your own profession.
- Be brave, be confident and be friendly!

● HOW TO NETWORK AT EVENTS

BEFORE YOU COME

- Be clear about you aim – What do you have to offer and why is X important to your company?
- Research!!! – do your homework - „right fits“, ... markets, venues, festival, directors, tastes.

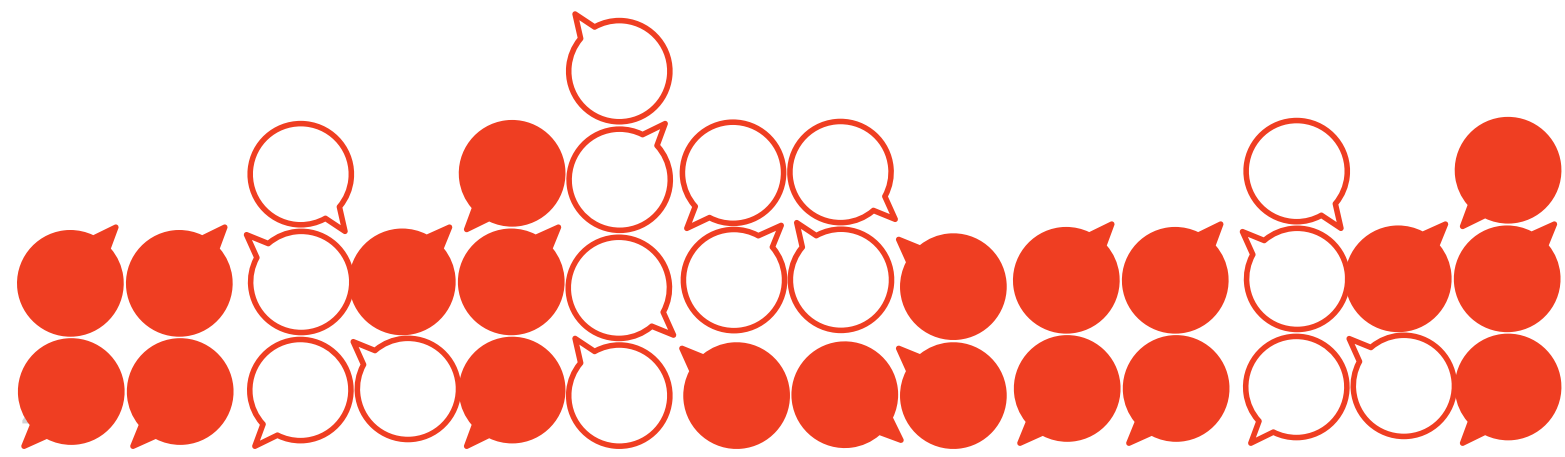


WHAT SORT OF COLLABORATORS ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?

- Know your uniqueness – point of difference.....and what you are proposing.
- Know what you are capable of (finances, resources, manpower, timings...).
- Use your network at home or elsewhere to make personal connections.
- Make sure you visual material (website, booklets, flyers etc) are updated and professional with ALL information needed, including technical riders.
- DO NOT BRING LOTS OF STUFF. It will end in the bin – chose the material you bring carefully and have everything else available in a digital format.
- Invest in high quality full length videos/3 min trailer and GREAT photos!
- Bring a business card – it is practical!
- THEN..... Contact those you want to meet well in time and be clear about what is the purpose of meetings – NO random emails please!

WHILE YOU ARE THERE / HERE

- Remember - WE ARE JUST PEOPLE!
- One good conversation is better than many „so so“ conversations.
- Use the booths, seminars, talks, bars, informal moments, breakfasts at hotels and parties.
- Be honest, polite, clear and respect cultural differences.
- Support your friends and ask for their support = collaborate.
- Don't pitch too much – TALK about your work - your development and what you have to offer for the presenters and his/her community.
- Make notes from each meeting/talk/write down good ideas/tips/advice.
- Take photos of the people you meet.
- Don't skip breakfast at the hotel.



AFTER YOU COME HOME

- FOLLOW UP, FOLLOW UP, FOLLOW UP!!!
- No general emails to all - you have met a person not a donkey!
- Send within a week all material you think is relevant to the conversation.
- Create your general info email list and your close „future collaboration list“
- Share practical info (when and where is your production showing next) as well as more developmental info (your artistic process on an upcoming piece....).
- Share new ideas / ask for collaborations / speak your mind.
- Develop relationships with people you like and trust!

● THINGS TO HAVE IN MIND WHEN YOU ARE IN THE CONVERSATION

- When you have the conversation, invest time in the moment.
- Be curious. Lean in and explore the possibilities. Get to know your colleague and their interest and challenges.
- Be generous in your approach to the work. Consider your willingness to share. Always give fair credit and acknowledgment and help people when possible.
- Know what you have to offer. Know your limitations and be up front about it!
- Get peers to look at your behavior and ways to communicate.

● WHAT AN „INTERESTED“ PRESENTER MIGHT WANT TO KNOW

- Your vision to be shared with his/her audiences.
- Your history.
- Where have you been, lived, studied, toured before and other references.
- Your context, of your work, where are you coming from, artistically and where are you going?
- What are your plans, are you going on tour, where, when, what is your availability?
- Do you deal directly or do you have an agent?
- What are the costs you expect to be covered (travel, accommodation, per diem, set transport AND what do you need as a fee).
- Do you have support from home, support to cover travel or other expenses?

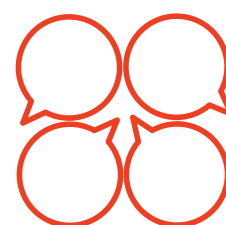
- Make sure you get face time with your collaborator to understand their needs and time and opportunity to express yours to set the best possible frame for a joint success.
- If you are doing a formal PITCH, rehearse!

● THE PRAGMATICS AND REALITIES OF TOURING AND MARKETING

- International touring is hard work and it is not for every one.
- Dynamics of markets and regions are always changing.. you need to follow.
- Does your work fit - with that audience in that country/in that region?
- Do you have the infrastructure for international touring?
- Where do you want to go?
- Do you know that market?
- Is it already saturated with domestic and/or international work. Do you have a point of difference, a uniqueness?
- Is it a limited market now but one with huge potential for future growth?
- What do you want to gain for the future?
- Don't look at touring as a one of thing – Try to see it as an opportunity to nurture a long-term relationship that can lead to a return to the same location or to other larger ventures... a co-production down the line, increase in budget for artistic productions.
- You are doing it together with the partner/programmer/curator. Invest time to get to know them, meet them.

● SOME VERY PRACTICAL THINGS ONCE YOU HAVE A DEAL

- Money matters, think about currency fluxuation and exchange rates.
- Taxation varies from country to country.
- Getting visa takes time.
- Insurance is necessary, be aware of the need to secure A101 when touring in EU.
- Customs and shipping issues, export documentation, ATA carnet certificate.
- Freight and non-delivery.
- Excess baggage.
- It takes time.. lots of contingency.





● WHAT CAN INFLUENCE AN INTERNATIONAL TOURING BUDGET

- Length of tour.
- Scale of production/s.
- Your entry level and development plans.
- Relationships with your agent, presenter, venue.
- The context into which you are placing the work.
- Available subsidy.
- Currency exchange.
- Number of staff/demand for days/hours.
- Regulations in your country and host country.

● CONTENT OF A CONTRACT FOR INTERNATIONAL TOURING¹⁶

1. Contract parties, legal addresses, contact persons

2. Subject of the contract: touring performance and hosting venue. Dates and place of the tour

3. Touring company's commitments:

- Providing necessary marketing material (photos, press clips, etc.), together with the right to use them for advertising the tour.
- Providing necessary technical information.
- Ensuring rights to tour the performance internationally.
- Taking care of all necessary insurances for staff, stage set etc.
- Participation in possible extra activities, such as audience discussions, interviews, etc.
- Providing a right to take photos/videos/audio recording (the maximum length might be specified in the contract) during the performance or/and rehearsal in the hosting venue.

4. Host venue's commitments:

- All administrative expenses, marketing, translations.

¹⁶ Please note this list of advice / checklist was commissioned as part of the International Mobility Fact Pack, published in English and Russian for the Seeds of Imagination project 2008-2010 (www.seeds.fi), an EU funded project building bridges between the Russian and Finnish theatre fields. It was written by Eva Neklyueva, artistic director of Santarcangelo festival, The full document can be found here <http://www.rtlb.ru/file/mobilityFactsheets.en.pdf>

- Payment of royalties (specify the percentages and means of payment).
- Technical equipment hire and technical staff, according to the technical rider (technical rider should be discussed in detail, signed separately by both parties and enclosed into the contract. Never sign the contract without the tech rider and budget!).
- Interpretation of the play (can also be organised by the company).
- Number of free tickets to be reserved for the touring company's guests.

5. Financial responsibilities of the parties – specify who pays for what:

- Travel and visa expenses: route, how many tickets, what class, maximum cost per ticket.
- Local transfer: number of people and trips.
- Who is responsible for booking the tickets and local transfer.
- Freight expenses: air or land, max. cost of the freight, who is responsible for dealing with the transportation company. Customs' costs. Who is responsible for dealing with the customs.
- Accommodation: number of rooms (double or single), nights, lowest acceptable hotel class. Breakfast included or excluded. Who is covering accommodation for the truck drivers. Who is covering minibar and other extras. It's good to include a rooming list in the contract.
- Per-diems: number of persons and days. Specify the sum of per-diems in the contract.
- Catering at the venue, food and drinks in the dressing rooms. Also specified in detail in tech rider.
- Fee and the means of payment. Who is responsible for paying the taxes and possible social costs. Specify if a registration certificate or other documents are needed for the local tax office.

6. Plan of action in case of cancellation

7. Force majeure

8. Enclosures

9. Date, place, signatures

10. Budget



● HOW TO RESEARCH A NEW AREA

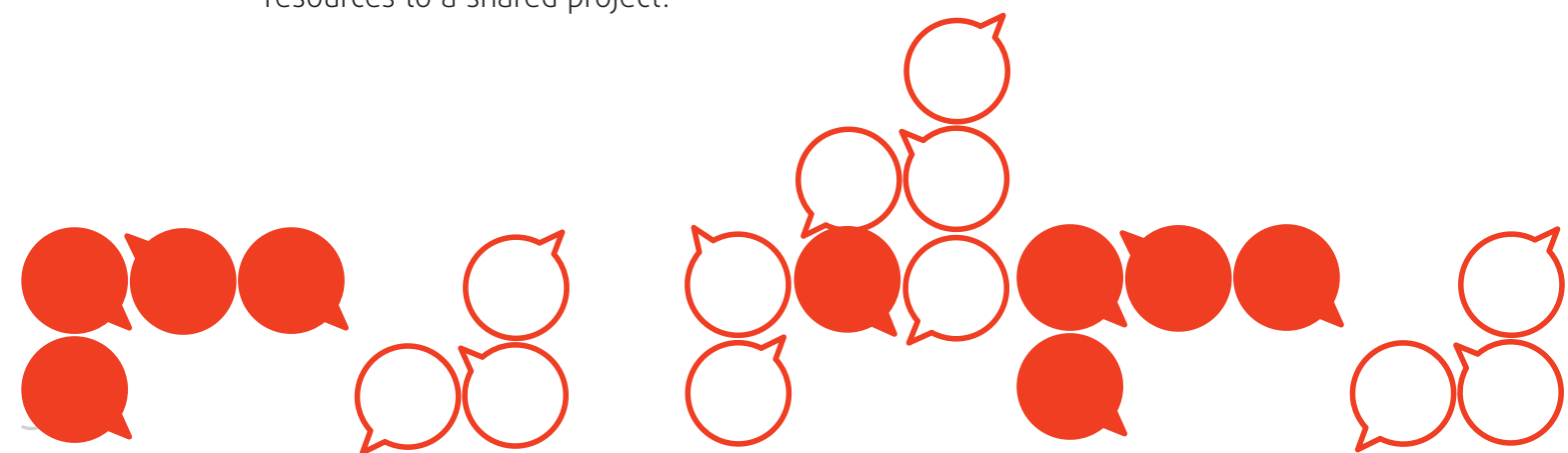
- Research as best as you can where your opportunities might lie.
- Are there certain countries, regions, cities, venues, presenters that might be interested in your work?
- If you don't know think about with whom interest in your own country/ region/ city lies for your work.
- Which influential individuals might be willing to help in spreading the word about you and your work.
- Which venues and festivals do you respect and would like to perform at?

● WHEN GOING TO A NEW CULTURE AND LANGUAGE AREA

- Realize that not everyone might understand English as well or in the same way as you do.
- Get a colleague in the region/country you are visiting to walk you through the does and don'ts – before you come.
- It might be essential to have promotional material in certain language and even a native speaker working with you.
- If you want to make connections, network and find opportunities in NON English speaking parts of the world, you need a native /fluent speaker amongst you.
- Learn about cultural differences and importance of language in different regions of the world.

● WHEN ENTERING A CO-PRODUCTION

- IETM Co-production manual is a great manual. Read it.
- Be clear about what sort of relationship you are entering. The most common co-production model involves an artist or company being supported by several organizations with finance or infrastructure. The other common model involves two or more artists or companies contributing financial, creative and infrastructure resources to a shared project.



- Define clearly the responsibility and commitment of each partner.
- Have a detailed plan and timeline and put everything within a written contract and budget.
- Read the contract together to make that everyone involved understands the deal in the same way.

● HOW TO BUILD AND USE YOUR WEBSITE

- Your website should be the gateway to you as an artist.
- It should have information about your latest work, upcoming work, tours and collaborations, excerpts, your bio, videos and photos in high quality and links to social media.
- It is great if your website is in your own language but it should also be in English.
- Link your website to an analytic tool – a Search Engine Optimization. Then you can follow in detail who visits your website, what they are looking at, how long they stay and much more.

● HOW SOCIAL MEDIA CAN WORK FOR YOU

- Social media is one way of promotion.
- Have a presence on social media that works for you.
- Don't put too much emphasis on the number of followers. It is much more important to have 10 followers who have a genuine interest in your work, instead of 1000 people who have liked your page because of a Facebook campaign.
- Social media should be about social engagement and community. This is not a forum for you to advertise you and your greatness, but to post about your artistic development and events. If you want to share personal things with your audience, do so but don't overdo it.
- Update regularly but not too often.
- Use social media to direct people to your mailing list. If people sign up willingly it means they are ready to receive direct mailings from you. Mailing list programs provide similar info about receives as Google analytics does.
- If you have an artist's/company Facebook site use the backend system to get more information about those following you.
- Monitor which types of feeds gain you the most attention.

OUR FAVORITE INFORMATION SITES AND RESOURCES

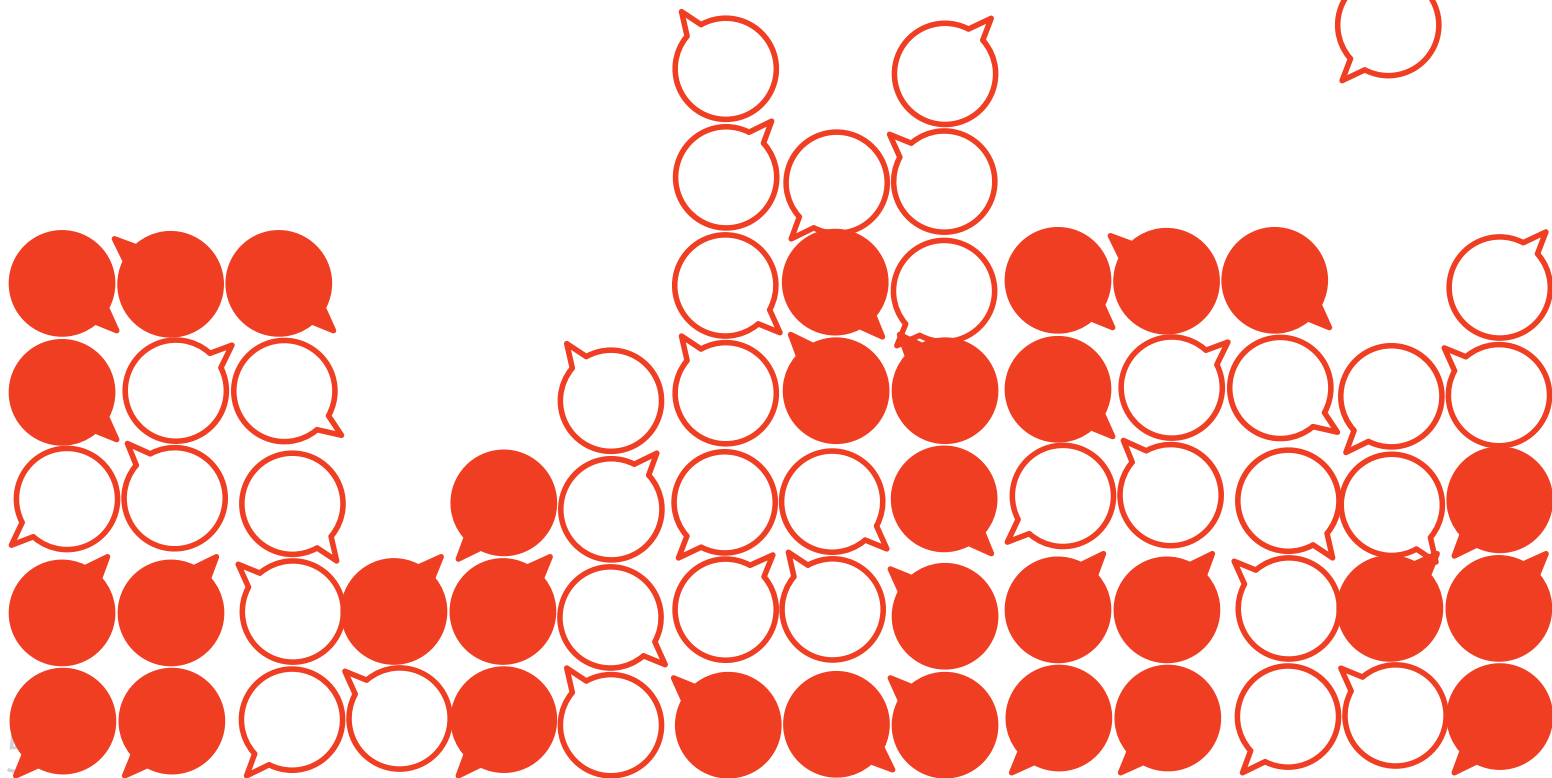
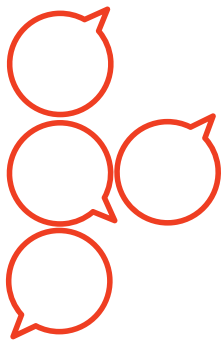
NEWSLETTERS

On-the-Move www.on-the-move.org. International mobility information and opportunities.

Dancing Opportunities www.dancingopportunities.com. The name says it all.

Culture360.org www.culture360.org. Asia-Europe information portal.

Madein-theweb <http://www.madein-theweb.com>. Nordic Dance News directly from the companies.



RESOURCES

IETM Co-production manual <https://www.ietm.org/en/publications/international-co-production-manual-the-journey-which-is-full-of-surprises>

Box of Crayons – Michael Bungay Stanier’s work <http://www.boxofcrayons.biz/resources/>

Making your life as an artist Andrew Simonet’s work <http://www.artistsu.org/>

Keđja Sustainability Think Tank Report <http://www.kedja.net/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/kedja-Sustainability-Think-Tank-Report-2015.pdf>

Nordic Culture Point www.nordiskkulturkontakt.org. They run funding programs, organize event, and publish reports and monthly newsletter.

Nordic Culture Fund www.nordiskkulturfond.org. The oldest joint Nordic funding body.

ALL ARTS www.allarts.nl. Tax advisors in the Netherlands who collect useful information about taxation agreements between countries on their website.

Julies Bicycle – Practical Environmental Touring Guide www.juliesbicycle.com/resources/touring-guide/

Info sites on residencies **Res Artis** www.resartis.org and **Transartists** www.transartists.nl

NETWORKS, MARKETS AND EVENTS

AEROWAVES Hub for discovering European Dance www.aerowaves.org

APAM Australia Performing Arts Market www.performingartsmarket.com.au

APAP Association of Performing Arts Professionals www.apap365.org

ASSITEJ International Association of Theatre for Children & Young People www.assitej-international.org

CINARS Biennale, Montreal, Canada www.cinars.org

EDN European Dancehouse Network www.ednetwork.eu

ICE HOT NORDIC DANCE PLATFORM Reykjavík 2018 www.icehotnordicdance.com

IETM International network for contemporary performing arts www.ietm.org

ISPA International Society for the Performing Arts www.ispa.org

PAMS – Performing Arts Market in Seoul (PAMS), Korea www.pams.or.kr

Tanzmesse nrw, Dusseldorf, Germany www.tanzmesse-nrw.com

TPAM Performing Arts Meeting Yokohama, Japan www.tpam.or.jp

Thank you!

Annelie Gardell

Hanne Svejstrup

Sanna Rekola

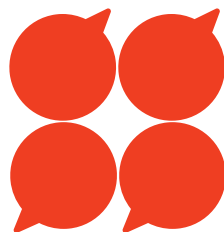
Un-Magritt Nordseth

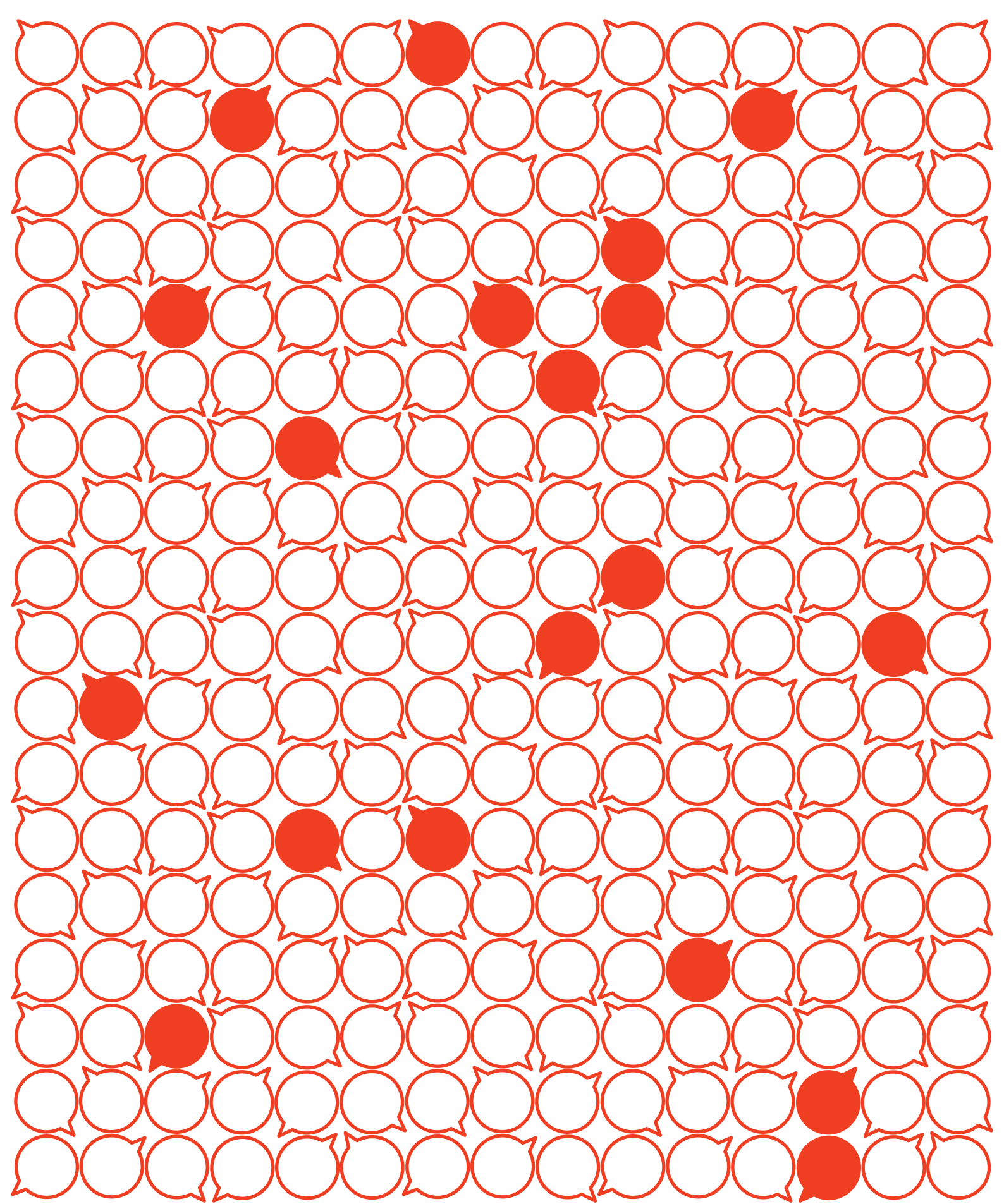
Åsa Edgren

Magnus Nordberg

Nathalie Chalkley

Thomas Schaupp





IT STARTS WITH A CONVERSATION

... QUESTION YOUR KNOWLEDGE BY SHARING ...

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2017