

Transcript

ADN Translocal Connections Panel

Presented by Asian Dramaturgs' Network

Organised by Centre 42

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Lim How Ngean

Hello everybody. First of all Good afternoon in Singapore and the rest of Asia I guess. And good morning in Europe. I'm saying good morning Europe because today our guests do come from Germany. Thank you and welcome to another ADN event series 2021/2022. And for today, we have Ming Poon and Dandan Liu, who's joining us with Fezhah Maznan, who's going to be talking about Translocal Connections: introducing the Asian Performing Arts Lab, which is based in Germany/Berlin. Before we go into that, I'm just going to do a quick introduction. My name is How Ngean, I'm the co-director of the Asian Dramaturgs Network, ADN for short. ADN was formed with the intent of mapping and networking the region's dramaturgical experience and knowledge. ADN has been in collaboration with Centre 42 Singapore, and held its inaugural symposium in Singapore in 2016. Since then, there has been various gatherings of dramaturgs, performance makers, arts educators from around the Asia Pacific region taking place in Japan, Australia, Indonesia. We have had many different forms of discussions, from conferences to symposiums to roundtables and little panels. And we've even had a successful dramaturgy workshop in Yogyakarta Indonesia. Centre 42 Singapore, I'm very happy to say, is a principal organising partner for ADN for which these events will not happen without the administrative and management capabilities of Centre. 42.

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Lim How Ngean

Right. On to today's topic, Translocal Connections: Introducing the Asian Performing Arts Lab in Germany, APAL for short. Is that how we pronounce it Ming, APAL? Is that how you guys pronounce it? Great. Just give you a bit of a preamble. While the world has been isolating and going online, especially the arts world and grappling with technology and digital technology. They have been still emergent but small communities and obviously with very safe measures put in place that are coming together in the process of making art. These initiatives strive for development and works in progress with support from a collective of artists. There are many of these sorts of examples actually not just happening. Today we're talking about one that is in Europe but if you do a search, a Google search, you will find that there are actually many of these types of little initiatives, whether it's residencies, networks of smaller groups of artists coming together in persons actually, and in a more local way, because they do not have the largesse and the kind of freedom to travel, right. I'm talking about, especially in places like Indonesia, where there have been very successful artistic initiatives that are very locally driven. In the city of Bandung, in the city of Yogyakarta, for instance, they have been active for a long time. In Japan, there

have been many little ones in smaller cities like Niigata, Fukuoka, and Kobe. Where they have actually developed and progressed even further with their local community of artists.

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Lim How Ngean

But today, we're here to talk about a very special one called APAL. I'm also still trying to understand it, where I've had a very fruitful two hour conversation with Ming, founder of this particular lab, where it talks about having an aim of providing what he calls a safe holding place for artists to spend time developing and trialling artistic ideas. What is also very special about APAL is that on top of offering what we call a uniquely short residency, whom I'm sure they will tell you more about it, it also aligns itself with feminist, queer, decolonial and translocal perspectives and approaches. And today we'll be hearing a little bit about these ideas of translocalism also from two of them from APAL.

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Lim How Ngean

So in this particular forum, we will be talking to founder Ming Poon and dramaturg Dandan Liu, who comes to us both from Germany. Although Ming is Singapore born and Dandan is from Beijing, I understand. Joining us will be provocateur / discussant Fezhah Maznan. Ming works with applied choreography using it as a tool to interrogate, disrupt and reorganise the social and political relationality of the body in time and space. In particular, he is interested in the potential within the body of the weak or the peripheral, as he calls it, to resist and disrupt hegemonic structures by using choreographic strategies that involve decolonisation, vulnerability, care, queerness and failure. For him, movement refers to the body's ability not to just move but to take action and have agency to create change. His works as he sees his works as choreographic interventions and social experiments, which are interactive and collaborative in design. His practice has been inspired by Buddhist concepts of interdependence and care, but less resistance and vulnerability, Halberstam's Queer Art of Failure, Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed and Bourriaud's Microutopias, so it's rather far reaching and at the same time there is an interconnectivity, we look at all these people right from Butler to Boal, Halberstam's, Bourriaud, there is the stress actually on the marginal if nothing else. So he initiated APAL in 2020 as a platform for artists with Asian backgrounds to meet, share, work together and is also a founding member of Urgent Bodies, which I'm sure he can tell us a bit more. He also manages The Farm, an independent space that combines performance making with activism and co-living.

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Lim How Ngean

On to Dandan, a born in Beijing, She's a theatre maker and dramaturg member of the Berliner Ringtheater Collective. She moved to Germany at the age of 23 to study theatre studies at the Free University of Berlin. So there's again a little bit of pedigree there, where the Free University has always been quite a champion of performance studies. Characterised by her transcultural perspectives and interdisciplinary approaches, Dandan's works focus on the areas of participatory theatre, political theatre and dance theatre. Besides collaborating with numerous young artists as dramaturg, she also works with the established artists including Kadir Amigo, Memis, Yui Kawaguchi, Ming of course, and Naoko Tanaka. Her works have been shown on different stages, such as with Berliner Ringtheater, with Hebbel am Ufer Berlin, Theaterhaus G7 Mannheim, Tanzhaus NRW Düsseldorf just to name a few.

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Lim How Ngean

And then last but not least is Fezhah, who comes to us as a creative producer, and performance dramaturg based in Singapore. Her creative vision centres on the contemporisation of traditional art forms, development of new artistic languages, and growing an audience around the artists whom she works for. I will either say that it's artists that she works with. Her experience is diverse and international, she has managed and produce shows on various formats, both locally and internationally, and has programmed and led cutting edge commission works in both Art Center International Festivals and she has also conceptualised and produced platforms for the development of emerging choreographers and artists and directors in minority groups, cultural groups in Singapore, Fezhah's networks especially span across Asia, Pacific, Middle East, Europe, and the Americas.

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Lim How Ngean

Again, thank you all for the three of you for joining us today. And welcome to the session. I will now quickly hand the mic over to Dandan and Ming, who will tell us a bit more about APAL and where it is now, where it has been before, and of course, the underlying philosophy of translocalism that I'm actually quite taken with. So they will present all that and then this will be about 25 minutes. And then after that Fezhah will join in the conversation to give us a little bit of reflective critical feedback on what she's been listening to, and perhaps also then make links to her own works and her own experiences in producing for minority communities. So over to you. Dandan and Ming, thank you.

[00:09:50]

Ming Poon

Thank you How Ngean for the wonderful introduction. Dandan, should I start? Would you want to start?

[00:09:59]

Dandan Liu

I think you could start.

[00:10:01]

Ming Poon

Okay, then let me begin. So just back to the idea of working with the vulnerable or the weak, or the peripheral, but also with the social actually. So all the authors or things I personally inspired by people within the social aspect of art as well. So these are the combinations I work with a lot. So APAL arised out of that condition: the peripheral and also the, the social aspect. So let me explain how we started or how I started it in 2019. I was in another conference, and we were talking about how, at least in the group, I realised we're talking about making spaces and I realised how in Berlin, there was not a platform or space for Asian artists. There were a lot of spaces in Berlin at the moment or at that time for black artists, for South American artists but the Asian artists, we had a lack, there was a gap. So it was basically this gap that prompted the first thought of starting a space or platform for Asian artists. And at that time, most Asian artists were working separately, even today, they are working separately, they are very isolated. So there wasn't a chance to share in the combined effort or come together to find

solidarity. And this particularly was important because at that time, there was an incident that happened in the German Theatre, where a play that was based on a German-Vietnamese story is about immigration from a Vietnamese family, but the whole play was casted with white German actors. So for many of the Vietnamese actors or performers here, or also Asian artists here, they were kind of outraged because it seemed like there was this kind of tokenism happening or exploitation happening, using stories of another culture, but yet having no representation inside. So they started forming artists to come together and say, you know, we don't agree with that. And that was also one of the reasons it fueled the impulse for APAL. We were thinking or at least I was thinking how we could form a group where we don't have to depend on other people to give us a chance to have representation. What about we do our own representation, so I spoke to my collaborator and also my colleague Frederika good sign and I said let's start something let's do a lab, you know, create a kind of workshop, get artists together, get a whole platform where they come together, they work together and create the kind of solidarity you know other than making work but also forming a kind of bonding and a kind of a group where we can speak, we can exchange but also at the same time, form comradeship or bonding with one another. So this was how it started. In 2019 we spoke about it, we met Dana as well actually, to discuss the possibility of doing this platform and having Berliner Ringtheater to host it or as a co-productions partner. And, but then we want to start in 2020 April, then the pandemic came, so we had to shift it. So our first edition appeared in 2020 October. The first two editions we had were without funding, everything was self organised. And it was supported by many different players. One of them, obviously, is Dana and Berliner Ringtheater. And now we have the fourth edition coming. In fact, today is the deadline for the application sending and we would have it on 28th of April. Yeah. And with that, I want to pass to Dana to talk a little bit about the partnership with us as a dramaturg but also as a member of the Berliner Ringtheater.

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Dandan Liu

Thank you Ming, thank you for the introduction. And hello everyone, I'm going to today represent a little bit of the perspectives of Berliner Ringtheater. Berliner Ringtheater is a venue for new coming theatremakers, especially actually for spoken theatre and Ringtheater is run by a collective, which means that we don't have artistic direction, the artistic direction is collective of about 10 to 12 persons and at that time, at that time that we get out we got the proposal from APAL, I think we have nine members who are white, three members who are BIPOC and at that time, I was the only collective member who do not grow up in Germany. And the first time we got the proposal from APAL which was sent by Frederika Tsai who is also today in the audience, I saw her name. Actually she does not know that the Ringtheater has an Asian collective member I think. And the first topic we discussed in our panel in our collective: what does it mean, "Asian artists"? Because Asian is not identity. Asian is not a political or cultural identity Asian is very heterogeneous and also the Asian countries have some very different traditions has very different political contexts. And there are actually barely political constants between different Asian countries. And also we also very interested like how would be the difference between the BIPOC artists who are growing up in Germany and the art migrants, the first generation art makers, who like I, and Ming and Frederika come to Germany after that we finished one education or like have some life experience in another countries and why APAL going to label all this kind of so heterogeneous groups of the artists and what would it mean in a political way, and we have some doubts, but yeah, very interested also in this idea to create this kind of Asian solidarities which has

actually not existed, I will say beyond the Berlin artist scene. And also, one reason we also discussed and because of Ringtheater, most of our members are white, we also discussed, we tokenise APAL for our own diversity politics, and how are we going to make a difference between tokenism and non-tokenism. So, that's why also very important for us Ringtheater that APAL is run by themselves, they have their autonomy, we don't take part in the choosing of the art projects which are shown by us and also we don't interfere which means that Ringtheater only shares the resource and space with the APAL but still, like Ming and Frederika write in their proposal that in APAL that the artists could do all the aesthetics and topics that they want. Yes, I'm finished, I think from my side.

[00:18:09]

Ming Poon

So maybe let me explain how APAL's design works, right? Since Dana touched on that. APAL is a short residency, we call it a rice cooker, you know, the kind of steam steam cooker, compressed. It started the first two editions, not funded editions. We did five days, it was a five days residency. Artists come for the first four days and then the last day they go, they will go to do the presentation. And now that it's funded, we extend it to seven days because then we could give the artists a bit of money. And with that, we hope that it will kind of cover their period of stay on the farm. So let me explain where the farm is. The farm is 90 minutes away from Berlin. It's in the countryside, totally isolated in nature. And Berlin obviously is a vibrant city, with a lot of artists, a lot of things happening. Now, what they do is they come to the farm for six days, they are kind of immersed in the experience of being with one another and they don't know each other. None of them — usually most of them don't know each other. Maybe one or two do know each other by crossing paths somewhere. But usually they are working isolated. Like I said before, most Asian artists in Germany work isolated. And on the farm, we have very basic stuff, which means we asked artists to work on the very basic level of light and sound. Let me explain later on why that was. So part of the concept we have at APAL as well. APAL works on two levels, on the one level is the artistic level. And on the other side is a social level. So on the artist level, it is important that the artists work on, like I said, on a very basic level. On the technical stuff, we ask them to really concentrate on their craft. Rather than concentrate on for better or worse, the decoration. No, we're not looking, for example, we're not looking for end products, we tell them to go for the work in progress, experimentation, research. So they usually apply with an idea that they want to work on or they would like to rework a draft, or they want to experiment with an idea that they want to find a new direction. This is what we asked the artists to come to the residency with. So they are not expected to produce any end product. And we explicitly tell them, we do not need or want an end product. So it's explicit, even in the open calls. So they know it. And usually we choose five artists, and sometimes it can be in a group, but they are all Asians and there cannot they cannot be a mix of Non-Asians inside. Partly because we have in our experience, when the response from our artists from last editions was that having just a purely Asian, which is obviously a very broad definition, allows a sort of space for dialogue and openness and kind of releases them from this having to, how do I say, when they live in a white society, we're living in Germany, sometimes you have to excuse themselves, explain themselves a lot in the community where they don't have this other person, a non-white person in the group. He allows him to speak about things and share experiences without having to explain. Everyone somehow understands it, for example, racism. It's so simple to just talk about it and not have to excuse themselves or explain themselves. And that gives them a kind of freedom, letting them sink into the group and the working. And that allows them to also create work with meaning. We ask them to go for

their voice, be fearless, say things without having to explain. So that allows them to just bring up topics which they normally would have to reframe for the white society. So that allows them to go directly to the topic.

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Lim How Ngean

Ming, can I just quickly interject here? It'd be interesting if you can tell us also in the past few residencies, where are your artists from originally or their birth place? Right? Because you've been talking a lot about the diversity of Asian artists coming to APAL.

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Ming Poon

Yes, so the artists are from a range of Asian countries but also some of them are first generation Germans, which means your German-Vietnamese, German-Koreans, German-Chinese, there are a mix of French, Japanese — so I'm just thinking off my head who they are — and they are from different countries of origin like Japan, Korea, Malaysia, and India, USA as well. So it's a diverse range. And obviously, like Dana says, this idea of Asian it's a very broad definition. And even we — me and Frederika, we are aware from the very beginning, what is Asia? How do we define Asian, you know, it's an identity which is very broad, very porous, and also very problematic as well, if you want to see it that way. But we also think it's interesting to bring it up, you know, like, just talk about it. It is problematic, you know. So yeah, the range is wide, and they come from different backgrounds and languages, obviously, they are different. Maybe I will explain why this is important when we talk about translocality, but this is to let you know that we have a wide range. And back to the topic of how they work artistically, we require them to go to the core of their work, but also to go to the core of their voice. So having this Asianness inside the group, it allows them to say let's say something and they support one another's voice, because within this group, they work together, they help each other outside "I" or give feedback, go stronger on this voice. So they encourage each other to work on that voice. And so it's very important to have this very, I wouldn't say cohesive group, but a group that allows us that voice to appear. And like Dana says Berliner Ringtheater does not interfere in our selection of the artists, we ourselves as organisers, me and Frederika and Jingyun, who is also our coordinator and communicator officer, we do not interfere with the artists choice or working process, we do not enter into the rehearsal space, they actually work on their own, we do not do any advice or anything unless they ask us specifically to enter into the space, we do not do any of that. The artists work among themselves, they support each other, they themselves help each other. We also encourage them to use this presentation at the end not as a performance, but as a first contact with the public to get feedback, to see if they need to rework it, or to see how the work can be reframed, or reworked on. So this is what we encourage artists to do. And also to tell them, you know, coming back to this idea of finding the inner voice. It was very clear from the beginning, I told the artists that even if you fail, it's okay, because it's the first time you're making the attempt, just go for the extreme, go for the challenging part. Rather than trying to be safe and please anyone. That you don't have to please us, you don't have to please the organisers. That you just have to please yourself. And so we also encourage them not to be afraid of — or at least we tell them you do not need to succeed for us. You can do whatever you want. So that's the space they work with. This is the artistic level, right? And Dana actually comes in at the artistic level, she comes in as a dramaturg, she comes in as a kind of what we call the booster. She comes in and

just on the fourth day of the residency, she comes in to give a little bit of advice or little feedback. That's all. And she's only one hour with each person. So it's very short feedback. Dana.

[00:26:26]

Dandan Liu

Perhaps I could also introduce very briefly how I'm usually going to give this feedback. And as a dramaturg, I have one principle. Yes. How I'm going to do advice. I call it empowerment advice. Which means like I don't give them my judgement about if the art is good or bad. I try to help them to find out their own interest. Their own especially artistic interests on the topic. Because according to my experience, most young artists are also BIPOC artists, they have a lot of messages about what they want to say, want to talk about. They want to explain a lot of things. Like explain their lives to Asians, explain racism, also explain the cultural differences. But I think it's a very good starting point but still they need to develop their own artistic methods. And what I can do in this very short time one hour is trying to find out which are their own interests actually on the topic of why they're why they want to doing it through artistic way. And then I'm usually going to strengths and also I'm going to conform them in their own artistic interest and help them to develop this artistic part further. Yes. And also I must mention, according to my experience, it would be quite problematically if I represent Ringtheater and I'm white, to be doing this kind of job then otherwise, like what happens all the time in Germany, like the BIPOC artists present their work, and then we're judged by a white institutions, and so it's actually quite lucky that Ringtheater could do it like this way. Yeah.

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Lim How Ngean

Great. Thank you, Dandan. I just want to at this point, maybe flag up, maybe it's me being a bit sensitive about what we know and what we don't know. And I just want to say that or rather I want to just flag up this term that we've been using BPOC. I'm not sure whether we do use it in Asia proper, actually. I have to admit that I've only come across that word since moving to Australia and working in the artistic terrain in Australia. So forgive me if I feel sound patronising, but for the uninitiated BPOC was a term that was coined to sort of represent non-white communities and it stands for Black and People of Colour. Right. So that, especially when we deal with arts and culture in the West, that has become almost like a default term, when we talk about non-caucasian artistic or cultural communities or even aesthetics actually. Sorry, that's all I want to say, please go on. Sorry Black, Indigenous and People of Colour. That's right. BIPOC.

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Ming Poon

Right. And so also to add on to what Dana said, most artists coming into APAL, because we give them such a big space, it becomes very challenging. This is the first time they can do whatever they want, without having to second guess what would be approved by the institutions, right, which are usually white. So would it be read differently if it's read by a white but here for us, you read whatever you want, we don't need that. And so sometimes, it's quite harrowing to say, oh, I can do what I want. What do I want now? And then that becomes the first time we have to think what do I really want to say? So most of the time for like seven days, the first three days people just trying to figure out if "I get this chance to say what I want to say, how do I say?" so the first three days actually, they're spent on thinking what

they want to say. And then when Dana comes in, gives a little push, and then they sort of resculpt it again. So it's a very intense process for the artists because the space is so wide and the time is very short. Seven days and the presentation by the way, we tell them to limit it to 12 minutes, which means we tell them go to the core of your work, don't go for the fluff you know. Go to the core of what you want to say in the 12 minutes and that 12 minutes is maximum. They can do three minutes, they can do six minutes. So again very broad, very free it's not like 12 minutes. They must do 12 minutes, it can be shorter, actually, the 12 minutes is also because of the fact that we want to care for the last presenter. Like you know, if you have too long then the audience gets tired we tell them we care for one another so we make sure that the presentation doesn't extend beyond one hour or more because then the last artist will have a very tired audience and we do not want that so everyone gets enough attention for their work. So it's a rough gauge but usually artists understand that. They understand if the person is the last artist on the list it will be great to support each other by keeping it within a framework. So this is on the artistic level. Now on the social level, how APAL works. And this is equally important actually. It works in tandem with the artistic level. And you will see they're all together; they are not one separate from the other. First of all in the artwork they support one another right they do outside eye, they give each other interviews, they help each other with material, helping each other so costume sometimes. You know they work through the night, three o'clock in the morning. Last addition someone wanted to sew something and the team were helping her sew till like two three o'clock in the morning. They really work together as a team. This is on the artistic side but on the social side on the day to day functioning side they they also organise their own spaces, their rehearsal timing, who does what, who has time for what, they also do the cooking kitchen routine and they clean together, they organise their meetings, their group meetings, they even have to organise the changing of scenes between each pieces. There was no stagehand in the theatre, or at least we deliberately did not have the stagehand, partly also because of money, and the first few editions were not funded. They do their own change of scene by themselves. And then we kept it even though now you're funded, we captured it, because we think it's great because it creates a kind of a homogenous group, or homogeneous team, equates a team, they knew each other's work very well.

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Ming Poon

Then, we talked about the place as kind of a safe space for them, there was no place for Asian artists. So that creates a sort of very tight bonding for them. And also this idea of working together and getting to know one another creates friendship, which I think it's important for solidarity. So usually after their APAL experience, each group actually forms their own mini-collective, they actually do their own things. Each one is tightly linked to each other. And they even have this crossover between different editions. They come to the performances, they start to have dialogue with the other artists from the other editions. So they kind of slowly create a network among themselves. They have been requesting me, can we connect me with the other artists over there, because I see my theme is similar to the other person, so I connect them. So it becomes a connecting point between the artists from different editions. So as you can see, for us this idea of solidarity networking, that was also one of the aims of APAL, it was not just artistic level. It's this other part, this other socio-political part, which was the source of the motivation, why we started APAL. There were too many artists working isolated. This network solidarity was what was the starting point. And that's why APAL works this way, working together. So with that, I

guess, any questions on this before we talk about translocality, maybe? Any questions about how APAL works, the basic structure, How Ngean or?

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Lim How Ngean

No I think for now, it's, the picture is becoming clearer. And it's great that this is a good time to bring in this underlying philosophy or underlying politics that you have, right? The translocality or translocalism that you're going to talk about. So for me, I think you talked about APAL having this aesthetic, artistic and then the social strands. But for me, I think there is also the third strand, which sits right under these two, which is the translocality. So please, continue.

[00:28:33]

Ming Poon

Yes, this translocality is something like you say, the undercurrent. It's not on the surface, you don't see it, but just a little bit what interests me, I came to this term actually itself, like maybe eight, nine years ago. And I realised it came from the studies of current migrant and refugee studies. It came from this idea that before, in the early 19th century, 20th century, when we talked about migration, the idea was uproot yourself and plan a new route and integrate, assimilate into the new culture, a new place. In recent migrants studies or refugee studies it has shown that we don't do that anymore. And because of the internet because of cheap travelling, we always keep our connection with our place of origin and place of destination. There are always these two places, we alternate between two origins, the two centres, and that we are multiple centred people. Our identities are not just truncated, we actually continue growing our route with our centre of origin and our centre of the new destination. And this is what interests me and then when I was introduced to this term, and then when I look at APAL what happens is that all the artists are translocal, I mean, literally right? They all either come from another country or if they are first generation German, Asian-German, German-Asian, Asian-German, so there is always this other centre that's pulling them there's always a tension, a dialogue, attention, negotiation, however you want to call that.

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Ming Poon

So this is important, this little tension between two places. And in these two places, these two identities are merged into one person and they are equally important. They are not like one more important the other. They are equally important and they are in dialogue. And this is what makes translocalism so interesting is that at least for choreographers, the idea that you can be rooted and at the same time mobile. Mobility and rootedness, or groundedness doesn't have to be exclusive. They can be together. And that was a new concept that I really loved and also speaks to my experience as an Asian person living in Europe, that I am translocal. And then seeing it projected into a larger space where the artists come together, and that's what I'm saying when they come together, there was no need to explain, actually. They understood this, even without explaining it, they were expressing themselves in that very translocal terms very instinctively. And it's very interesting how they negotiate two different cultures or three different cultures at the same time and all of them were doing it all the time. So that was very interesting. And also the interesting thing for the artists is that when you're talking about translocal at least in APAL, we move beyond the identity of national identity. So nobody is concerned whether you

are German, or you're not German. This idea of if you're in Germany, you talk about German themes. Nobody talks about the topic of identity through the lens of nationality, which was kind of bypassed, they talk about being local, I come from Berlin, they start to talk about localities. And so that creates a point of convergence for the artists, even though they actually have different passports, but they create a sense of community and a sense of commonness, because they talk about localities. And in the localities, they are equal. There's no one saying oh, I'm a citizen of Germany. So I have more right to say about this topic, there was no such thing. Everyone's talking at a very equal level, this idea of bypassing this national identity, this national right to certain topics of certain knowledge, there wasn't. There were multiple centres of knowledge and this is interesting. And obviously, also very importantly, it opened them especially for people coming from outside Germany, you open them to a new way of positioning themselves in relationship to the environment, which is German politics, German landscape, German culture, it allows them to enter in not just as a foreigner, it allows them to enter in as a local. And yet, without being a citizen, they can be local, and talk about local topics. So it allows them to enter into the environment very easily. And that was very interesting. So this is on the side of translocality, how the artists work.

[00:40:37]

Ming Poon

And on the second level it was on, as you can see, the artists come to the farm, and then they go to Berlin. So this translocality is, again, not about national boundaries but also between the rural area and the city, that is moving the centres of art making from the city and transporting it backwards. So there's moving forward and backwards. So while the presentation happens in Berliner Ringtheater, which is in Berlin. The whole process for the artists, actually the real process begins on the farm. So when they think about APAL and art making and the origin of their work, they didn't think of Berlin as the source, they would think back always to the farm, which is very interesting, because this way they built the bonding, the artwork was germinated there. So that became a very interesting dialogue as well. To decentralise this concentration of power of art in the city, how do we move it outside? It is especially important in Germany, because we do have a right wing tendency, right? This is where art must go into as well. How do we move it up into the rural area? Because this is where our most conservative part of the society is situated at the moment? How do we not congregate ourselves and become a bubble? How can art, especially Asian artists who it's easy to make Asian art queer art in Berlin, but we're talking to the converted, you know. If you want to really get an impact or touch the edge of making art they need to move up to the rural area. So this translocality is happening between city and rural areas. And it is still a new thing for us, for me, at least. So I'm trying to figure it out as well. I must be honest, so it's not like I have a concept, how it works. I'm still figuring out and smelling it. How can that work? How can that be more strengthened? And last thing as well in the translocality concept. Because translocality works on process. Obviously, it's about a process. It's not about the endpoint. It's also a nonlinear process, but it's also about community, working with community outreach. Whether it's Asian artists, I'm talking about the community, we need to listen to them, we need to understand them, but it's also the village as well that I'm in, I need to talk to my neighbours. And Berliner Ringtheater, it's all about different communities. And the last thing is about the place. This is about locality, right. It's a placing, finding place. And it is very tangible. It's no longer an abstract concept. Place meaning where you stand, where you live, where you function. So there's a relationship happening, this is all about relationships. So this is very important because it's based on all this. So when the pandemic comes,

when we're working through the translocality principle, we adapt very fast, because we are listening to the community, we are responding to the place, we are using process. So well many international collaborations did collapse, we actually could readapt very quickly, because we are on the ground. So these are three things I myself discovered, that was very interesting to work this way, it allows us to be very agile, very adaptable. And yeah, I want to pass it to Dana.

[00:44:12]

Dandan Liu

I would like to add on something also at this point as being mentioned about placing and I would want to talk about this meaning of this word placing to not always mean physically or geographically placing by migrants. Sorry, sometimes I just pronounce the word in a German way without noticing it. As art migrants, we might have relationships with three different societies. At first, the white society we are physically living in, secondly, the societies which we are growing up in. And also the third one is the communities, which we are living in, in Germany. And these communities might be a BIPOC person who shares the same similar experience and for me, to think about the local of the art means to redefine our relationship, and also our responsibilities with the three different societies. And I think this kind of responsibilities. I think, for me, identity has the same meaning as responsibility for one society, that's how I'm going to understand my identity. And as artists, usually we need to define our identity and also our responsibilities to decide which kind of message we want to give and on which society we want to have our impact. So to redefine our relationships, not only with the white society but also within the communities and with another society we are growing up in, actually gives us also a source or reconnections, of part of our identity and also gives us a motivation to doing some of our artwork. So I think this kind of idea about translocalism is also very essential for the art migrants to doing art, because in certain point of our work progress, we need to know that we are being seen as others in all of these three contexts. We are seen as other in the white society, we experience a very strong self-othering process, we learn to see ourselves through the lens of the white society and knowing our identity in this society as minorities, and also we are seen as a foreigner. I'm seen as a foreigner in China, in Chinese society, because I don't live there, I don't work there and also I might not know things so we are in exactly the same way like the people who are living there, but like to redefine this translocalities is like to find out why this kind of distance, this distance with both society, might be some productive and also because of this kind of distance. We have the freedom or we can have the opportunities to deal with certain topics. So that's why this translocalism might also give me another concept about the diaspora. I think we all know that now we have a lot of critical voices about this concept 'diaspora' because they always define one root and also see the diaspora like people whose pried from the roots. And translocalism is like to give the artists the freedom to define "Okay, I can put my emphasis, by my own, I can choose to which kind of society I want to relate more without denying part of myself." Yes.

[00:48:10]

Lim How Ngean

Great. Thank you for clarifying that. That's very interesting. And I think this is a very good time for me to invite Fezhah to join in the fold, to give us an idea of what she's thinking of when the two of you have been talking about this project that you're doing. And to hear a bit from her. Fezhah

[00:48:35]

Fezhah Maznan

Oh, hi, oh, my god, I have so many things. And I go like, Oh, I experienced that, too. Oh, that's what I wanted to do. And so I just want to kind of maybe begin with about making spaces, your very first point about why you started APAL because for me, that was one of the main concerns. I kind of moved, I was a producer-programmer with the Esplanade, and now I'm with SIFA. But I've also have things that I do on the side and working with, like artists.

[00:49:08]

Lim How Ngean

Sorry - SIFA as in Singapore International Festival of Arts

[00:49:13]

Fezhah Maznan

And I was thinking about it because of my interest, and actually, maybe I FOMO a lot, I do not want to miss out on things. So I follow a lot of artists, who perhaps do theatre, not at the centre, not at city centre, not at your usual arts venues, but in the heartlands of Singapore. So they do either what you would call like, more catering for the community. And that, for me, has always been interesting to see who's doing what, what are people saying? Or what are they saying with their work? And who's coming in? Who's watching? And so that's me being like, FOMO, and busybody going around watching people and watching works, right. And I realised that. And as for me who programmes and produces or who used to programme and produce, I realised that when programmers programme, they do a lot of the same. They present the same artists over and over again. And so for me, it gets, it gets worrying, it gets worrying for me, because I believe that when we present art, or when we programme, we need to think about the diversity of voices. And so for me, I go, who else? So I'm always in search of that right? Who else is not at the table? Who else should we try to amplify and who should we try to support. And so I guess this is where the two programmes that I'm currently working and working on that might be of interest and relevant to this discussion is first Gelek. Which Gelek means to kind of move your hip and to Gelek. So Gelek kind of followed Joget which I started — and Joget means to dance or a form of, of Malay dance — a kind of a platform that started when I was in Esplanade to feature Malay dance artists who are doing more contemporary expressions. So most of them kind of start from traditional Malay dance and kind of moving into contemporary dance and I wanted to like in Singapore, where Malay does what you think about Malay dance, it goes immediately to the traditional. I thought like, well, where's the space for artists who want to try and do things differently? And who wants to kind of experiment and explore. And I knew of people or choreographers who are already doing, but never have the opportunity or space and resources to fully explore what they are doing or what they are doing. And so Gelek came two years after. Actually, it started from sort of a roundtable discussion where someone kind of put together what is talked about Malay dance in Singapore, or dance by Malay artists. But during that discussion, we had your traditional Malay dance gatekeepers. People who have the power to determine what's right, what wrong, how things need to be. Versus the young who are trying to kind of use — really loosely okay — the young who are trying to do things on their own terms, right. And in the discussion it became really obvious that why are these young artists playing to the rules that have no relevance to their work, right. So then it became obvious, so maybe we need to kind

of find space for this. Maybe we need to find a new field. Maybe we need to find our own rules. Maybe we need to find our own words or to articulate what it is that we're doing so that people don't hijack, or we don't have to be defined by someone else's definition of what Malay dance is. So that's where Gelek came because after Joget realised that there were actually more artists, you know P7:1SMA company started by Norhaizad, Hasyimah Harith, and Hariz, they became like sort of the beacon and the safe space for such an artist who want to kind of work in contemporary expressions, but with Malay dance training, with Malay dance identity. So we decided that, hey, there's actually more who are coming forward and in doing these things, so what can we do, what is lacking? What can we, how can we profile them? What needs to happen? And so for Gelek and also for — later on I'll elaborate on Tunjuk Arah/ Iyakkunar, which is a capability development programme, for Malay and Tamil theatre directors. It came about because there's the grant money, right? So the Singapore government was like hey, we give you money, you're self employed freelancers. You want to help yourself and get paid, do projects, we'll support. And we decided we were going to take the opportunity. We were already in discussion, I was already thinking about these things. And I say, hey, there's an opportunity here, right? The group of us came together to do this set. Let's just do it. Let's see what can happen. So we decided to kind of, for Gelek to think about what are some of the things that are necessary, perhaps, in creating a work.

[00:54:51]

Fezhah Maznan

So I guess I like what you're experiencing Ming and Dandan. Most of the artists or dance artists or theatre artists in Singapore that occupy a particular space, don't usually have formal training in the art form. And so these are most of the things that they do or how they create works are things that they pick up as they go about working on projects. So artists may have long years of experience, but in terms of craftsmanship, it's a bit kind of loosey goosey sometimes, or, in the sense of thinking critically about what they're doing, it feels like they come to a certain point, and they kind of stop there. So we're thinking, could there be something else too, for us to do to unlock certain things, unlock in terms of critical thinking, unlock in terms of craft, unlock in terms of opportunities. And so like you, in terms of how you think about societies and how you travel from the margins, back to the centre, in Gelek and in Tunjuk Arah/ Iyakkunar, we also think about how these artists we can find opportunities for them, after they have kind of come into this space. So for me, I talked to other producers, I talked to venue programmers, I talked to festival programmers and like "Hey, would you be interested? Could you come, you know, let's just come in and, and have a chat, find out what they're doing." Because sometimes, these artists just don't come or they're not amplified, they're not seen. You know, just like your social media algorithm, you only see what you see. Or you only see what you like. And so that was one of our ways to kind of break the algorithm and kind of push them for. There were also other things that for us, I mean, in this part of the work, let's say for Gelek for example. We were kind of insistent about having something at the end of the six months together. So the programme has been designed in such a way that there's like a series of masterclasses or sharing by artists. So it goes from classes on performance making, classes on archiving, classes on — because for Gelek, we were looking we queering bodies and looking at the identities, identity politics, so we had people to kind of talk about how that relates back to Queer, what does Queering mean in Southeast Asia or in Malay or in the Nusantara context. So we really want that. We didn't want to think about oh it always has to be in a certain kind of methodology. But we wanted to bring it back into the Malay Archipelago and the traditions and knowledge that comes from the Malay Archipelago. And so we had Rianto coming in,

doing a couple of master classes, we had Alifan to come in to think about all the slangs of Queer slangs. Or looking at cultural context. So it was, we felt like we needed that, you know, in order not just think about where knowledge comes from and to. And to also, I guess, emphasise that, even within the Malay Archipelago, we have all these traditions and knowledge that we could find out use in our work. Yeah. So there's that.

[00:58:34]

Fezhah Maznan

That's just one project, I'm already breathless. But the second project I have that is still kind of going on is Tunjuk Arah/ lyakkunar. Again, this developmental programme, for Malay and Tamil theatre directors for me, was something that as a programmer producer, you know, there's always like, "Oh, who else can I commission?" because that's how Singapore works, right? You commission and you produce something. Or because you have more resources if you get commission, because there's money there. But most of the time, I find that there's a lack and there's also a dwindling Malay and Tamil theatre directors who are able to helm commissions. And so you kind of see again, the same names, or you see opportunities given to Chinese people, right. Or to people who are not Malay or not Tamil. So it is also working with that. Working that politics, because for me, it's like what I've learned and what's coming out from this first round, because this programme is also an experiment. Myself, and Edith Podesta created or designed the curriculum based on what I have seen, my observation of what Malay and Tamil theatre directors are doing, what maybe might need to kind of go into the thinking and the creating. So the programme has two layers, first layer, again, the master classes and sharing. So I managed to get like 17 theatre directors from Malaysia and Singapore, and theatre makers like designers to come in and talk about what directing is to them, how to direct or specific aspect of directing, and also in working collaboratively with lighting and set designers and also in the different formats. And the second layer is actually mentor mentorship by Edith Podesta. So Edith would come in, because we've given the tools now how can the tools be applied in their own work, right? So we want to personalise the experience for each of the directors so there are eight directors in total. So then we realised that when we went into previews, like yes, Edith is there to help them with using these tools, but Edith can't understand the language, can't understand the cultural context. So that's when I come in and go, "hey, you know, there's all these other questions that we can ask through the language, through history, through this identity" and that, for me was something that I kind of took away in terms of this directors program. Yeah. I don't know. I'm rambling right now. I feel but please interject. Yeah.

[01:01:34]

Lim How Ngean

No, you're not rambling. There's a lot to unpack. I just wish that you would actually speak a little slower.

[01:01:41]

Fezhah Maznan

Oh, I'm sorry.

[01:01:42]

Lim How Ngean

You're very excited, it's good. These two projects that you are talking to us about? They are exciting and needful projects. Just want to give a bit of context. And Ming and Fezhah please help because we have Dandan who is new to the South East Asian scene as it were, right? We are talking about Singapore with a population that is predominantly made up of Chinese, Malay and Indian and then there are the small little smattering of races. Do Ming or Fezhah have sort of a percentage breakdown of the population at the moment? What's the percentage of the Chinese population in Singapore? The last time I read it was about 70%. Is that correct? Yeah. And I think Malay comes in at about 15%. Definitely below 20. Right. So we're talking about that kind of a population breakdown where more than 70% is made up of Chinese migrants who are into their fourth, fifth generation already. And we had a very interesting conversation yesterday among friends at dinner where there are so many of us who still believe that in terms of the governance of Singapore, it is based on communism. The governance of Singapore is based very much on the central governance of how China was run, except that now, capitalism plays a huge part, right? But it is about a very authoritarian, socialist approach, where there is always the Father. The Father, who is the one who is leading this country into success, and it has to be a very strict definition of how success is seen. Honestly, it was really just about economic success, because Singapore is a small, tiny island with what's the population at the moment? 26? Is that correct? There you go, the statistics are up, I was sort of quiet about this kind of numbers where, if you're going to be looking over going at really only 5.45.

[01:04:21]

Fezhah Maznan

Quite a number of people left Singapore because of COVID.

[01:04:30]

Lim How Ngean

So we're talking about a society where everything else if you're talking about cultural, and aesthetic production, in terms of the kinds of diversity, the Malays, and Indians really are a very small number. And that's why Fezhah's talking about minorities. Whereas when you then switch it back over to Germany, you're talking about also a dominant society of Caucasian, which is what 90%, if not more, and then if you're zooming in on even a minority, Asian population, that will probably be one or 2%, right? Because these days, I think, especially in Europe, migrant communities, especially in Germany, the bigger ones would actually be from the Middle East. And East European refugee communities if I'm not wrong, right? We're talking about Turkey, Syria. Right. So Asia represents a small part. And I think if my history serves me well, when we talk about the Mekong wars, Vietnam and Cambodia, the refugees that went over to Europe were very little, or the numbers were small, because when you look at Cambodia and Vietnam, you're talking about mostly French influence also. So they will go via France more than to Germany. And of course, then there was the US who came. And then they went that way, too. I think this is also very interesting to track. And that's how you see, if you will look at modern migration patterns, I think it's very tacked on to the aesthetics and cultural movements, also of how we go about organising ourselves as communities and artists. I have a huge question for all three of you. And it's interesting, because I think it was either Ming who brought up the idea of solidarities. We talked about solidarities in our panel yesterday also. And this idea of minorities, right, you have APAL, you have Tunjuk Arah, you have Gelek, who are quite specific in looking at certain cultural communities, right. For APAL it's slightly larger, because like you said, it's so hard to define Asia, but at the same

time, there is a group, right. So the idea is that to find these minority voices, to express them in different ways, for Fezhah, specifically in Gelek, you are also not looking at expressing a minority, cultural and aesthetic voice, but you're also trying to encourage the expression of a different generation of cultural and aesthetic expression, right from the old guard, like you said.

[01:07:18]

Lim How Ngean

My question is then, and because APAL is more of at the moment, a constant entity. I think it's great that you have these artists coming together to support each other. When does it become more do you think they'll ever become where these kinds of minority support groups or artistic support groups: is there a danger of them actually ghettoising themselves where they become an us against them thing? Right? Yeah. So you get together, you talk about your politics and yes, there is an affirmation of the politics and affirmation of the identity. But is there danger where you suddenly always will go for lack of a better term, of inciting certain kinds of prejudice against the dominance, also. I think that's something that I have become very aware, being actually BIPOC in Australia where it's all right to find your own voice and identity. But I think the bigger problem is always that what happens when this minority voice starts to actually express resentment, and anger and rejection towards the dominant community? For instance, APAL coming together for seven weeks, you know, what happens in the most colloquial terms, what happens when these artists get into a bitch fest? About why is it so hard to live in Germany? And why bloody whatever, whatever, or the white societies, you know? Do you ever see a risk of that happening? This is a question of all three of you. And actually, I'd like to give a shout out to Frederika also, if you want to join and we'll find a way yeah, Eugene. So Frederika you just have to wave at us and we'll try and get you into the conversation. Yes, Dana's hand is up, please.

[01:09:20]

Dandan Liu

Okay, so, quickly try to give an answer to this question. Okay. I think one very important aspect, community buildings, which Ming and I are following is a self critique. I think the self critique is the premise of all the critiques. Which means, also beyond being in these minority communities, we need to have a very critical awareness about construction of identities, we need to have a very clear awareness about our problems of our own traditions, when I'm allowed to use this word own tradition, and also very clearly aware about power structure. The power structure beneath certain artist communities, which are very patriarchal and non-feministic and also as you mentioned, as very old-fashioned family structures in a lot of ways. So I think at first I want to emphasise as lady team, when the minorities experience certain racism, they articulate their anger, and also to work for their own right. But at the same way, without this kind of self critique, there is no true critique. There is no true critique towards this kind of majority society.

[01:10:51]

Lim How Ngean

So I'll even then add on Dandan to say that what you're looking at is not just the term self-critique, but rather to have a real sense of reflexivity right, which is the more critical term actually yeah, which actually it is to politicise one's own view, but also to critique if right. Ming.

[01:11:19]

Ming Poon

This is where also what Dandan brought up which also I find important is to be aware of the power structure and power dimension right. Power dimension, power relationship, meaning we always say that we are the minority, we are minority. That's why I say in APAL we do not see ourselves as a minority. Number one, one of the rules is that when you come into the safe space, you're no longer the minority you speak. And when you speak through that lens, you're not speaking to a victim lens, you have an empowered lens and you say therefore you become very critical. You say if I have the power to say what I want to say then you you're no longer able to play the card of I'm the victim anymore so we become very critical of each other that's why it's very important in APAL there should not be a white person there because there will be the dimension changes once we say we are Asian now we can critique you because I have a right to critique that you are now playing victim card I'm sorry. Because we are all in the same group now. So we self-check one another, each other's power relations, we cannot play the idea that we are all victims because we are all in the same group now and then Dandan comes in as dramaturg. She brings in the perspective of self reflection, this job as a dramaturg is very critical about the artist's relationship, but also within our relationship in APAL we become very aware of a power relationship because none of us are coming from a standard Asianness. Some German-Asians, some Asians from Asia, some people like me are colonised Asians. So diversity is important not here. So the understanding we all situate ourselves in different power structures, and that your power structure may be different but I can critique your idea of victimisation I say sorry, but for me, from my perspective it's not the same. So this diversity is very important. So the selection of the artists are very important. So in every group that we select, we select a group of artists that can have a conversation. That's why the selection is an important process. So the curation between me and Frederika is part of this. Selecting the grouping, because we don't want to kind of like bitch party, like you say. Come in and all bitch about things. So the curation becomes important here. It comes into play. Yeah.

[01:13:27]

Fezhah Maznan

I think for Gelek, it came out of a bitching party. So it was, we go like, okay, we tell you're bitching, we tell you're ranting, can we do something about it? What can we do? How can we change the rules. But within Singapore, for me, unfortunately, I think we still need to kind of say these are minority artists. I still need to use the label of Malay and Tamil, etc. Indian however it is, the identity still needs to be kind of attached mainly because if not, you can't see. You don't see Malay and Tamil, you know, and the thing is, at this moment, it is important to say there are differences between us, we are not all on an equal playing field. And kind of by naming, I feel like I'm highlighting the differences and going, there's a gap here, or there's a potential here that we can grow. And we can help support and amplify. So I had a critique in 2018, when I first started Joget, it was like, "Oh, aren't you ghettoising these artists, why is it necessary?" But the language that also comes out artistically from the artists goes like, "Oh, I've never seen that before. Where did that come from?" It came from a Malay tradition, you know. And so I think, at this point, now, in 2022, I think I still need to use those labels. That's why for me, even when I'm thinking and conceptualising Tunjuk Arah, I did say, I wish in future, I do not need to use these labels anymore. And that we can go past because everyone kind of has got the same resources, because at

this point Malay and Tamil artists are still not getting paid equitably in Singapore, so I think that needs to be highlighted.

[01:15:16]

Lim How Ngean

I don't think there's a question about the labelling of those categorisation. I think it's what Ming said, also, it's about reprising the victims role, basically, right. The reinforcement of the minority category, I think, is very important. Because it is like representation. We keep not seeing BIPOC people on stage, BIPOC representation on stage, then it just perpetuates itself. But the thing is, then, like you said, for Ming, it's about not playing the victim card anymore. And to say, yeah, we've got to really get out of that and have an expression that might be political, and mostly it is, but there is also the coming together to actually express a different kind of artistic dimension. Right. But I think in Singapore, the categories, unfortunately, are very important. Yeah. Ming

[01:16:22]

Ming Poon

I also want to say that the situation in Singapore is different from what we have in Germany. That the ecology is different, right. That the constellation of artists are different, the Malays, the Malay artists, you have a constant like 100 years in Singapore, since we're not talking about the founding of the government, but the idea of Singapore being longer than the Singapore government. The idea that the Malays have been subjugated to a certain power structure for a long time is consistently right. Now where we are at in APAL is different. Me, I migrate here 30 years ago in Europe. Not Germany but then I came here 10 years ago. Dandan as well. So we all came here new. We are attacking the power structure with our capacity because we hold tools. But I think the Malays in Singapore have been deprived of those tools consistently and systematically for too long, which means you need a different tool. So I'm not saying you're wrong actually. Maybe you're right. If I'm in Singapore, I would do the same thing. Because you need different things now you need different processes or different stage. I came in with the tools already. I'm like no, I don't need this tool. I don't need the tools that Malays need in Singapore because I have tools, I know I can attack this system in the different way. You have only certain limited tools with you. Therefore one of them is a bitching party, which I think is not a problem. It can be a tool. It's a tool where we come in, put our grievances together and see what the injustice are. I think this is important to acknowledge and hold space for the injustice. To say this is it, and not to let it go away. Not to let it go away and not to forget it. I think this should not be discounted. This is important. It is very important, right. But I don't have a grievance with German society systematically for the last two generations. I just came here. So there is a difference in dynamics and ecology. And I think this is why I think our strategies are slightly different. And our needs are slightly different. And I think it's all correct. It's just, we are responding to our context, actually.

[01:18:32]

Lim How Ngean

Okay, one last comment from Danda. And I just want to quickly flag up now that for those of you who are tuning in, please feel free to also ask questions and give us comments, if you want to just raise your hand, and I'm sure someone will unmute you. Or maybe you unmute yourself. But yeah, we're now going to the second last part of it, where we welcome feedback and questions, Dandan.

[01:18:58]

Dandan Liu

Thank you for the opportunities, and I am going to make my words very short. I think by this political aspect of building communities, one thing that is very important is that do not assume that because you share the same geographic or cultural background, you have constants about political issues. There is no constant just because we are all Chinese or we are all Asian. And also inside of this community, you need always give space for negotiations about it. There are real political, same interests between views. And if you let this process start, if you really talk, discuss and try to find a stately or political constant, then I don't think there is this kind of risk to get to build a homogenous communities against the majority because actually — Ming also want to add on something — because this process of negotiation is safe, is democratic for me.

[01:29:03]

Ming Poon

Adding on so this is how APAL works, right. So we do not try to have consensus. That means everyone is self-organising, so they have to negotiate. So for example as organiser, we don't tell them what is the consensus. There's a framework, and you can do whatever you want. So the idea is that we don't direct the conversation at all. And I think that's why I think APAL was a space where all the artists, they can have conflict even and differences. And I thought that was a great part about it, that it builds the solidarity stronger, because they knew that they were all very different, even though they share similar experiences. But the solution to those problems is handled differently. And that was the best part about especially during dinner time, we can see that, you know, people talking about how to deal with it. Everyone is different. It's really nice to see this diverse political stance, even among minorities.

[01:20:56]

Lim How Ngean

Thank you. Fezhah, is there any comment that you would like to take through to Dandan and Ming?

[01:21:17]

Fezhah Maznan

No, I think for both of the programmes it's really to kind of create our own rules to create the kind of circumstances that we want. What is the ideal for us to grow as artists, as minority artists in Singapore or Tamil theatre because, you know, even like what you're saying, right? Even within one identity, there's so many differences. So for me, like in trying to or in conceptualising Tunjuk Arah I was very ideal. This is really a draft of one of my programmes right, I go okay, we go with Malay and Indian theatre directors then after I sit down again and go like, "Indian but who, what, language, what culture what?" You know, and then even for Malay, I go like, who, what kind of Malay because the class of Malay is also very different. So does it matter does it not matter? Do I need to introduce language here, do I not need to introduce language? So all these kinds of negotiations even. And I didn't want to kind of, in a way, play against someone. So it was really just okay, now, what resources do I need to provide or to help to support these artists? So in a sense that whether there's any kind of antagonism with the majority minority, I feel like we're kind of more focused on how we develop ourselves in these

programmes, and then what is our politics? What do we want to say? And how do we say that best? And so that is also what in both programmes we're trying to support the artists with.

[01:22:45]

Lim How Ngean

Thanks, Fezhah, I'm just gonna read out what Frederika has put up on the chat. Right. She says quote, for me, it is very important to be aware of the German white dominant society during our work in APAL. Though I totally agree with Ming, we don't play the victim card within APAL. We are indeed so different. And this difference could be discussed in APAL. Still, it depends on the artist, but we don't want to, but we don't want to. All right, and we don't want to. The motto is: do what you always want to do. So in that sense, I guess for artists coming to APAL for residency, there is really a need to generate something in them already. Ah, yeah? Obviously, with some kind of, I wouldn't want to use the word 'advice'. I don't even want to use the word 'mentorship'. More the fact that there might be some help in terms of dramaturgy if you like, yeah? And someone who is there to drill in this thing about reflexivity. Right. So that's important, I think. Whereas in Fezhah's programmes, I think, there is a certain kind of structuredness, which is probably needed. Right? Because we are talking about younger artists, I would say, who could not infiltrate the main system. Right? The dominant system or the mainstream system actually. Just across the board from Ming, Dandan and Fezhah, the artists whom you guys work with, whether it's APAL, whether it's Gelek, whether it's Tunjuk Arah, what are the age groups we're looking at? And would they all usually be considered young or entry point artists or artists in their mid careers, perhaps? Where would you literally place these artists in their trajectory?

[01:25:04]

Fezhah Maznan

So for Gelek, we have quite young artists, so they are mainly below 30 years old. They're kind of graduated or just graduated or have been working informally in dance. So they do more of like tertiary dance groups choreographing for Singapore Youth Festival dance and things like that.

[01:25:28]

Lim How Ngean

I like the way you made a face when you said that.

[01:25:34]

Fezhah Maznan

And then they're also for Tunjuk Arah; it's very different. We actually have up to about 40. And I think our youngest is about 23, 22, thereabouts. And I guess the kind of range is because some of the older artists have been working in, in between amateur and professional theatre. So there's that line that they've been working at. So that's been interesting also to observe what they're interested in. And I think for Tunjuk Arah we were able to kind of reach out to quite a number of such directors. Yeah, because that was our interest to kind of bring out other voices. Yeah.

[01:26:19]

Ming Poon

And for APAL, because of the structure, because of the time, like 12 minutes and seven days, obviously attracts only certain kinds of artists. And also, we were looking for experimentation, ideas, new ideas. So the age range usually are more the young, between like 20 something to about, 40, the oldest probably, and usually starting out or artists experimentation with experimentation. So younger artists trying to find their voices, or until artists who want to have a little switchover like experiment or live in a different colour, different aspects of their work. So yes, so mid-career, young artists, starting out artists, yes. This is usually the range also, because of the way we frame it. Only certain artists would apply anyway. Right? Yeah.

[01:27:10]

Lim How Ngean

And we're talking about diversity of artistic fields, right? From dance to theatre to whichever because that's the politics or that's the kind of underlying philosophy that you have, is there any field of arts? Am I correct?

[01:27:29]

Ming Poon

Any field of performing arts, anything performing related. So, the last one, we had a sound designer, so we were wondering how a sound designer could do performing art but she did it. So as long as they can define themselves within the performing arts genre. It can be anyone. It can be mixed genre as well. It can be cross, it can be experimental, it can be as long as the artists can define it themselves. What that is, why is that performance? I think we do not try to define that for them. I think this is the right offer.

[01:27:57]

Lim How Ngean

Why don't you go ahead and share with us some of the visuals if you want to, we can still continue talking while you share the visuals. Yeah, Dandan, is there anything you want to add to what Ming has been talking about? My other question would be then in terms of longevity for all of you, actually, longevity and sustainability of your programmes, right? Where do you see APAL going? I guess the exciting thing is that you've finally got official funding, right, which means that there is some sort of consistency and sustainable rolling out of the programme. But more than that, do you think that you would actually want to have a longer kind of residency and develop it to a different degree? And for Fezhah, the question would, of course, be then Gelek, now going into Tunjuk Arah, especially with Tunjuk Arah is, are you taking on another Tunjuk Arah? Or are these budding directors from Tunjuk Arah then going to be guided into the next phase of their career? Also? Maybe we hear from Ming and Dandan first and then Fezhah.

[01:29:14]

Ming Poon

Fezhah can go, I don't mind. Okay, let's go.

[01:29:19]

Lim How Ngean

Sorry Ming, your pictures very fast leh? I can still speak. It's fine.

[01:29:40]

Ming Poon

Anyway, yeah. So where do we go? Yes, funding, still it's very important, it's about solidarity. So one of the key things that we have is that we can always depend on funding, we always think our baseline is that it's always self-organised, we have to keep this idea that we always learn to self-organise. Because a programme like that, always, depending on funding puts the programme at danger, meaning we always must be self-sufficient. That means community always comes first. How to build community always so that we do not use funding as a reason to be community. We build community and if money comes, everyone benefits. If not, we will benefit in other ways. So our baseline of APAL states that we work with our funding, funding comes great, we spread out. But if not, we continue to not let funding be the defining factor for doing APAL. So the community must always work. Come first. So this is how we work. So does funding change something? Yes, it does allow us to, for example, in the next edition, we will have empowerment workshops for the artists so they will be ex-APAL artists who will come and so we also work within ourselves. We get artists who are empowerment facilitators to come and give workshops as well. So we always work within ourselves. Also, one of the artists will now be our technical director as well for this edition. So we work within ourselves to learn to connect to share resources. So how to make sure that we as a community, even without funding, we will help each other and we will collaborate even within each other. So we did not need to have to go outside all the time to find your source within yourself. So this is how it works. So this funding change, yes. But it doesn't, it will come and it will go. I just want to be honest about funding, we are not unrealistic about it. But we do not let that be the defining factor of how we work. APAL will go on, they will change, we will listen, we will readapt because we are translocal. We do not use the funding as the mark of how we make APAL's programme. It's the community that makes the APAL. So there are artists who come up now who want to do new programming, they want to create new ideas. So I say, let's do it. Let's do it. Also think about it. But don't think about the money first. Think of how we want to do it and why it is important for us? And so that's why APAL now we split APAL, the residency now it's called AmnAsia. If you go to the website, you'll see AmnAsia now, because we have different programmes coming up now because artists are proposing other things. And so I put the residences for AmnAsia but the artist will self-organise other programmes now which are going to be created by other artists within APAL so it's always self-organisation that comes first. It's the number one thing. They must be motivated to do. So it's no longer curated by Ming Poon or Frederika Tsai or Dana, from the artists themselves. Of self initiation. This is how it works for us. This is principle.

[01:32:39]

Lim How Ngean

Thank you. Dandan, anything to add?

[01:32:43]

Dandan Liu

I think I would like to add on as an outside person because I'm not the organiser of APAL but I see the potential of APAL to grow up and become a platform which also holding international conferences, or workshops and festivals, like to build up a South to South cooperation or East to East cooperation

platform to show in contemporary Asian, the output from the contemporary performing art from the Asian artists without emerging in certain kind of white and European-centric institutions. That's my wish. For APAL.

[01:33:27]

Lim How Ngean

Thank you. Fezhah.

[01:33:30]

Fezhah Maznan

Well, I think one of the things that I actually didn't manage to do successfully for Tunjuk Arah is actually the sense of community, the social bit that APAL had. And for me, I think, really, I was working on a very short, tight deadline to kind of meet certain funding and all. But I have been thinking, I mean, it has been sitting with me on what to do with Tunjuk Arah after because in Singapore there isn't a directing school, or there isn't an art school that is really very affordable. So how can I garner the support of our already practising directors, and to kind of give back in that sense, because it was actually one of the things that really surprised me was the generosity of each of the directors and makers that I've invited to kind of share the experience, give a lecture, or give a workshop, I was really moved by that, how the community come together. And I think there isn't the lack of desire to share, or to see how they can give a helping hand. So for me, I have been thinking about why I think of Tunjuk Arah in the sense that it's almost like a school, a directing school. But do I want to set up a school, what kind of resources to go to that, go into that. And so I was thinking, I mean, for Tunjuk Arah, the first part, there are two parts to it, right? The first part is the master class and sort of the mentoring. And there's also the presentation, which I've been kind of busy with for the past couple of weeks and into next week. And the first part is actually supported by the National Arts Council with the self-employed persons grant. But the second part is actually supported by Centre 42 and Teater Ekamatra. I didn't manage to get national government funding for that, but I was very moved by Centre 42 and Teater Ekamatra stepping up and say, "Hey, we believe in this programme, we see the need for it. Therefore, you know, we want to kind of put in money and put in resources with you." So it's also partly self-produced in a sense. And for me, I'm also thinking, because I don't think that projects like this should be isolated on its own. To be so insular. I'm thinking, do I make connections with ITI, do I make connections with LASALLE, do I make connections with other theatre companies who have the same kind of interest and who see the need for Malay, Tamil theatre directors right now. So that's that, right. So that's for Tunjuk Arah. So I have all these questions that I'm still kind of sitting on. For Gelek, the funding ends end of March, we really can got support from Esplanade to support the work in progress sharing. So we are actually presenting 6 works or 6 works-in-progress. And we have also kind of received interest from other organisations to kind of think about commissioning some of the pieces. So these are the what I shared earlier like we're trying to make these connections and finding opportunities for dancers and these new works to be seen to have a life after. And then also think about how can we, because actually, the organising team is made out of myself, Shaifulbahri, Dr. Amin Farid and the folks from P7:1SMA, Hasyimah, Hariz and Norhaizad. We're also thinking how do we want to take this on ourselves, because some of us are producers or you know, place a programme under P7:1SMA perhaps their programming for the year that season. So we're also thinking just not only for organisation, but also how we, who have kind of kickstarted this programme, support these artists. Because we have been working with them. We

believe in their work, we believe in what they do. We want to see them kind of take on bigger stages and grow that for them, with them. So yeah, so that's a commitment. Sorry, I kind of went a bit long.

[01:37:35]

Lim How Ngean

No, no problem at all. On that note, I want to again, express my thanks to Ming, Dandan and Fezhah for being with us on this roundtable/panel. I think it's time to call it a day. For Singapore, for Fezhah, I think it's almost time for - what is it now? It's three, it's five o'clock, right. A nap. Whereas Ming and Dandan are just beginning their day, thank you again for taking this time out in the early morning to be with us.

[01:38:13]

Lim How Ngean

So we're gonna wrap here but before we go, I just want to flag up a few things that's been happening to us in ADN with Centre 42. This year, starting last year has been very busy year also in terms of not just the speaking, discussing, discourse part. But a lot of it also was about publications. We put out three, what we call E-Zines, called the ADN Re/View E-Zines Volume One, Two, and Three. And these are actually a collection of writings and transcriptions based on all our activities in the past. It might be something of interest to Dandan to look at these E-Zines on PDF format that you can download from our website. And we also then, from these E-Zines generated online discussion panels based on simple symposiums conferences of the past. That's one. And then the other one that I want to just flag up to people who have been part of our ADN ongoing activities. There is a little fun thing where please contribute to our ongoing mapping of dramaturgs and artists and performance makers around the world, yeah, so please put a pin on where you're from, and where you might be from or where you originally from or where you are now to help us make this map grow. On that note, I think I'm ready to say good day, good evening, good afternoon, good night to all of you. Thank you so much again for being part of the this quite insightful roundtable. Thank you and good night. Thank you. Have a nice evening, morning, afternoon.