# The dichotomy and the in-between: Pacific and Eastern perspectives on the challenge of globalised aesthetic.

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**Abstract:** Globalisation has created increased complexity in relation to institutions, governments and events. While traditional social and cultural enclaves are increasingly vulnerable to and wary of the impact of globalised commerce, technology and human movement, some contemporary artists and designers actively seek out these sites of difference in order to explore the intricacies of aesthetic value. In universities and schools of art and design, the influence of this ever-expanding horizon of cultural and political perception is evident in the changing nature of student design and artistic work. The impact of embracing globalised perspectives is potentially positive and negative: productive and repressive. Ideas and information, transported as new knowledge through creative practices, are moving seamlessly across institutional and national boundaries. This fluidity of transfer, encouraged by open access to institutions, partnership and trans-national agreements, is further enabled by widespread use of digital media and financial support for academics and students to be mobile. While geographical mobility is encouraged and increasing, the patterns of adaptation within educational programmes and structures may not be responding as fast. This paper reflects on artistic identity and aesthetics based on personal accounts of immersive experience in educational environments. We examine the value and risks of flexible artistic identity and aesthetics and conclude by proposing a couple of key adaptive strategies for ensuring that the strengths and cultural integrity of internationalised creative practices are protected.

**Keywords:** local/global, values, flexible identity/flexible aesthetics, border crossing, institutional exchange.

**Short description:** This paper examines differences, relationships and trans-national impacts on practice-led artistic and performance education and training from a multi-disciplinary perspective.

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**BACKGROUND**

Within the academy, there has been a radical adaptation to influences resulting from the wide-ranging flow of people working or migrating across the globe and the parallel flows of capital, commerce and technology. Our educational institutions feel the consequences of these global political and economic changes. International agreements encourage student and staff movement while internal administrative drivers compel the internationalisation of course content and research partnership agreements. At the local level, however, the decision to study internationally is made by individual students with unique expectations of experiential enrichment and a strengthened sense of identity. Their personal stories bring to the fore the lived realities of internationalised education agendas as young people chase "cosmopolitan promises" (Cicchelli, 2013, p 206). The real stories comprise beneficial and adverse elements from discovery to destabilization. It is important to consider the positive and the negative implications of the drive towards globalisation of creative arts and performance education. The challenge is to enable and support students who wish to work in international environments while appreciating and fostering local, regional and location specific cultural engagements.

The backdrop for this collaborative transdisciplinary analysis is the Aotearoa/New Zealand context. Within this locale social concerns have shifted from the bicultural to the multi-cultural and educational institutions are rapidly adapting educational values, study programmes and cultural strategies to accommodate the rising tide of Māori, Pacific Island, Asian and Chinese students. With increased diversity of student backgrounds, the dynamics of the artistic self vs. the others' expectations, and many versions of western/non-western contradictions play out in the educational contexts of creative arts and performance programmes.

While traditional social and cultural enclaves are increasingly vulnerable to and wary of the impact of globalised commerce, technology and human movement, many contemporary artists and designers actively seek out these sites of difference in order to explore the intricacies of aesthetic value. In universities and schools of creative arts and performance, the influence of this ever-expanding horizon of cultural and political perception is evident in the changing nature of student design and artistic work. According to Burns & Lundh (2014) " . . . perpetual global mobility is one of the current hallmarks of contemporary artists" an expectation that many young artists have of their career trajectory as they build networks and compete for residencies and studio placements across the globe.

Ideas and information, transported as new knowledge through creative practices, are moving seamlessly across institutional and national boundaries. This fluidity of transfer, encouraged by open access to institutions, partnership and trans-national agreements, is further enabled by widespread use of digital media and financial support for academics and students to be mobile. While geographical mobility is encouraged and increasing, the patterns of adaptation within educational programmes and structures may not be responding as fast.

Contained within the local-global ethos is a significant challenge for educators. David Hansen, the educational philosopher, describes a particular sensibility for dealing with this challenge. He defines the notion of the 'cosmopolitan' as "a sustained readiness to learn from the new and different while being heedful of the known and familiar" (Hansen, 2008, p. 289). Hansen understands this sensibility in terms of: 1) an interest in and awareness of what lies beyond local, familiar contexts; 2) creative engagement with the unfamiliar; 3) openness to being persuaded or changed by the new knowledge and 4) fidelity to valuable local knowledge.

This paper reflects on artistic identity and aesthetics based on personal accounts of immersive experience in educational environments. Taking an ethnographic approach, we examine the value and risks of flexible artistic identity and aesthetics and conclude by proposing a couple of key adaptive strategies for ensuring that the strengths and cultural integrity of internationalised creative practices are protected.

**NEGOTIATED IDENTITY: TE OTI'S STORY** [1]

*I watch the children arrive to rehearse. Noisy, excited, energised and unfocused, they speak to each other in English mixed with a variety of South Pacific languages. I am a stranger; they do not know me. They make eye contact and hold my stare. Their initial curiosity, edged with suspicion, gives way to cultural conditioning. They recognise me as one of them. It's a simple test. They raise one eyebrow to indicate they acknowledge me. I respond with the same gesture. Our mutual cultural background established they accept me as another child of the South Pacific. This is not the exotic paradise of Gauguin's paintings; my tribe*

[1] This narrative by author Te Oti Rakena, was triggered by his visit to one of the poorest and most crime ridden urban areas in New Zealand. The community is home to Sistema Aotearoa, one of the many global subsidiaries of the Venezuelan music education phenomenon known as El Sistema. The author was invited to observe the programme that uses orchestral music making as a model for social development.

*settled much further south. A different vision of paradise, these fertile lands have been shared for over two hundred years by the first settlers, Māori, the exotic Polynesian cousins of the natives Gauguin immortalised in his paintings, and migrants from the United Kingdom and Europe, a body 'colonial' Māori called Pākehā. In this context, Aotearoa/New Zealand, my identity has always been fluid, shifting between my native self and the colonial friendly persona I have become.*

*I have been invited to observe this music programme (Figs. 1 & 2) and to speak with the students and the programme's leaders. I greet the children. It is an easy and comfortable exchange. I am familiar with their languages and their cultures. When I approach the teaching team it is a different story. I am caught off guard. The experience has triggered memories that were previously covert and elusive. In this moment, re-experiencing my past, I have exceptional clarity. I realise that I am only superficially similar to these children. After a career committed to the other's artistic traditions my identity has shifted. This room is full of brown children. They are happy, confident orchestral players. They are fluent in the others musical language as well as their own. They have tutors who appreciate the knowledge and prior musical learning these children bring to the creative space. For these children of the South Pacific, differences are blurred.*

Figure 1: Student volunteers as role models and teaching assistants. Figure 2: Peer to peer learning happens on an informal and formal basis. Photos: courtesy Sistema Aotearoa, Auckland Philharmonia orchestra.

*In this space, I see the Māori notion of 'ako' at play, a learning concept found throughout the South Pacific (Edwards, 2013; Thaman, 1995). The role of teacher and learner are fluid and interchangeable. Both parties expect to benefit and learn from the culturally validated relationship and its associated responsibilities, to support and care for each other (Glyn et al. 2010). In this creative space the different cultural strands entwine, activating new artistic possibilities and encompassing the collaborative and reciprocal nature of the learning process.*

*In this community hall I find myself in a state of interactive introspection. I am relearning my own country and reliving my past. To experience this type of inclusive artistic milieu I had to leave my homeland. Away from the assumptions and messages of a nation desperately searching for the "post" in postcolonial, it allowed other "others" to define me and to contribute to my cultural and artistic identity. It was a difficult transition, culturally and socially. I remember the experience as painful, often confusing but also, in this moment of spontaneous reflection, transformative.*

**RECOGNIZING FLEXIBLE IDENTITY AND FLEXIBLE AESTHETICS**

Four contextual facets are proposed here for better understanding the idea of flexible identity/flexible aesthetics. The first relates to the very notion of 'becoming'. Developing the talent and maturing professionally as a creative artist, is a socialization process as much as it is a process of acquiring experiences, capabilities and disciplinary knowledge of a primary field of creative endeavour. Artists and performers invest large amounts of time, effort and dedication to their work binding them into a disciplinary code. Continuing practice reinforces the behaviour and attitudes of that field. In addition engaging with others in the field, through performances, creative collaborations, group work, exhibitions, conferences, festivals and all communication activity results in stronger identification as that kind of professional.

The second facet is the uniqueness of individual educational experiences. Kell and Vogl (2012) point out that the literature on studying abroad is dominated by macro-level studies, national reports and market analysis of movements and destinations. However, this information does not offer anything useful for educators wanting to understand the implications of global exposure on artists and performers. Kell and Vogl (2012) draw attention to the way in which these market driven studies depersonalise the individual and ignore the human dimension of mobility; the actual, embodied experiences of international students. Critical information comes from reflective engagement with the unique contexts of individuals, artists, performers, and students. Educators in the workrooms of artistic and performance practice (the studios and the labs) have direct access to the situated contexts of creative activity and it is here in the messy spaces of creative production that we will be able to excavate the differences and contradictions of internationalised practices. It is through an examination of the personal narratives and hesitations of individuals that we will bring to light some of the unexamined factors that account for reactions and responses in creative practitioners working at the

intersection of cultures/disciplines/nationalities.

The third facet is the subjectivity of artistic and performance practice. Artists and performers share the language and meaning of a practice, inhabiting an immersive world of accepted, pre-theoretical experience and action. It is a world of responsive interaction and empathy in the sense that Husserl explains in the *Cartesian Meditations* (1931, 1988). According to Husserl, we construct all of our personal and interpersonal notions of self and other through intersubjectivity: through shared understanding and empathy. Even a conscious effort to diverge from the shared or common understanding of a field is still anchored in a discipline or a disciplinary life-world, the concept developed by Husserl as *Lebenswelt* (1936, 1970). This notion of the life-world, "which is culture-bound, ego-centered, and pre-interpreted in the ordinary language of social groups and socialised individuals" (Habermas, 1970, p. 170) provides a frame through which we can consider the intersection of cultural and creative practices.

Applying this philosophy to educational and professional communities of artists and performers allows us to reflect critically on the dislocations and misjudgements that are inevitable when disciplinary and cultural boundaries are crossed. Creative practitioners can bridge these gaps between different creative cultures. Misunderstanding and incongruent expectations can be a stimulating zone to work in but it can also be a disorienting experience.

The fourth facet is connected to the idea of a *third space* as described by Homi Bhaba (1994) and the notion of *cultural translation* which is the term he used to refer to the process of moving between cultural traditions, actively changing old values, renegotiating cultural identities and ultimately, introducing new practices (Bhabha, 1996). Edward Soja's parallel theory of Thirdspace in which "everything comes together… subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable . . ." (Soja, 1996, p 57) enlarges the conceptual lens through which we can examine flexible identity/flexible aesthetics. This notion is also identified in linguistics, where the analytic concept, 'translanguaging' [2] is widely used in reference to multi-lingual practices of making sense, communication and

[2] Translanguaging is a term coined by Cen Williams as 'Trawsieithu' in the Welsh education context. It refers to the simultaneous use of multiple languages and implies movement between different linguistic structures and systems as well as going beyond them, using multiple linguistic repertoires as available. It is a creative, flexible form of communication.

creative adaptation. A translanguaging space is understood as a mentally constructed space with porous, shifting boundaries. It is a conceptual space in which there is great potential for creative, transformative agency (Swain, 2006; Maschler, 2009) as well as expanded scope for criticality (Wei, 2011). In borrowing this linguistic term, we assert a direct parallel with the enactment of artistic practices where

**BEING IN-BETWEEN CULTURES: A CASE IN POINT**

In today's creative context, an era driven by technological communication, Western mainstream culture has led the way, adapting concepts and methods from other cultures. The rapid pace of this reshaping results in a transitory effect and cultural origins that inform artistic practice are becoming blurred. Artist Ai Weiwei[3] (2010, p. 81) suggests that cross-cultural difference does not exist today positing the disappearance of the local in a global context. However, this view does not take into account the gap caused by misunderstanding and misinterpretation of artistic works. Arguably, misunderstandings are ubiquitous in cross-cultural creative arts and performance practices. This is the idea of the 'transformative opening' where ideas can mutate, evolve and be adapted, an idea about interpretation or adaptation that has survived for centuries in Chinese art practice. The gap between the intended idea and the appreciation of it opens up a discursive lacuna for potential new knowledge. In recent decades, the economic upswing of non-Western countries, led by China, has disrupted the Western self-centred dichotomised view of knowledge making. Fang's notion of harmony but no assimilation (和而不同) (2003, in Ho, 2007, p. 28), based on the Chinese philosophy of constantly seeking a balanced harmony in-between cultures, opens the way for consensual co-existent views.

Despite Ai Weiwei's view of the non-existence of cross-cultural local and global contexts, his trajectory as a globalised phenomenon is an example of the difficulty of transplanting an artistic practice and parallels the dilemmas facing our world travelling students. It is significant that Ai Weiwei's works are rooted in the geographical and political contexts of China. It is his political proposition and his criticism towards the social and political ideology of China that bridges the cultural barrier. Ai's work will be less influential if he moves away from the geographical (local) contexts of China. His

[3] The original text is in Chinese during an interview by Hu Zhen[胡震] and He Jin Fang [何金芳] of Gallery magazine[畫廊雜誌] in 2007: "… 我從來没有關注過許多在國外的藝術家所謂東西方文化的偽問題。… 當我們進入一個所謂全球化或者互聯網的時代，很多陳詞濫調都將無法找到它們的立足之地。現在長大的孩子你能說他是哪個文化裏長大的嗎？而文化本身就是各種差異之間交流和轉換的一個過去。 "

inability to pursue a career in the United States in the eighties[4] is evidential of the significance of the cultural roots in his works.

> *… in the end you have your cultural roots, your upbringing, and it will always shape your art, and it probably would be wrong to deny that in your impulse for artistic creation.*

This view on the permanence of local identity expressed by Sigg in an interview with Moore, (2014) may better explain the tension arising from Ai's perception and criticism of the local with a global view. Yet it is this very tension between the global and local views in his work that accounts for his success. From a non-Western point of view, however, the exploitation of a global stance may be interpreted as a tactical approach to colonise the political and social thinking of China. To avoid this kind of cultural imbalance we can adapt an alternative philosophy, Zhuangzi 's notion of 'no self and no others' which is the "genuine appreciation of the equal capabilities of different individuals, peoples, and nations: a universalist position . . ." (Zhang, 2005, p. 11). Zhang articulates a belief in the fundamental equality of things, a broad acceptance of all cultural circumstances unaffected by colonialism or ethnocentrism. He argues "that the belief in the possibility of common knowledge and cross-cultural understanding, in the availability of conceptual tools for the interpretation of human behavior across the boundaries of language, geography, culture, and time, can indeed come from a genuine appreciation of the equal capabilities of different individuals, peoples, and nations." (Zhang, 2005, p. 11). This mind-set, when applied to creative practices in internationalised spheres, makes possible an expectation of mutual aesthetic appreciation that exists in the third space. However, in defining cross-cultural and the local/global conditions, we have already constituted 'the self' and 'the others', which is paradoxical to Zhuangzi's (369-286 B. C.) 'no self' and 'no others'. The conundrum associated can only be resolved if 'embracing the other' is a strategy toward achieving harmony. This is a necessary, reciprocal relationship. While there exists the self and the others among cultures, the process of appreciation should not recognise 'the others'. The relevance of Zhuangzi's philosophy, in the contemporary context, is that it offers a working philosophical strategy for transcending transcultural complexities.

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[4] During an interview in 2007 by Zhang Jie Ping [張潔平] of Asia Weekly, Ai said in Chinese: "沒有人認可我的作品, … 要不然怎叫混了十幾年？那會兒在美國過得挺 … 生活挺慘淡的, 但是精神上是極度自由和愉快的。" (Ai, 2010, p. 50). In another interview by Hans Ulrich Obrist (2009), Ai discussed his life in America that: "… I knew I was an artist but didn't do so much. So the few works [done in America] we see today are probably the only works I did. I was just wandering around. I didn't have much to do. And after a while it became very difficult, because I was so young. On the one hand you want to do something, to be somebody, but at the same time you realise it's almost impossible, economically and culturally. It was an excuse for me to go back to China …" (p. 20)

**NEGOTIATED IDENTITY: SOPHIE'S STORY**

*I am from Rotorua. I am a dancer. I have been a student at the University of Auckland, in the Dance Studies programme for the last five years. I did an undergraduate degree, followed by an honours degree and I am now doing a PhD. What I have been learning at the University of Auckland could be viewed as 'Western' contemporary dance. While I have been immersed in this world of academia and contemporary dance I have also been involved with Tuhourangi Ngāti Wahiao kapa haka (Māori Peforming arts genre) group for seven years. These two worlds are my life, but only over the past three years have I started to cross over between the two realms – kapa haka and Western contemporary dance.*

*The conversation between two cultural worlds is now seamlessly woven into my dance practice. This has come about because I have been educated as a dancer at the University of Auckland and because I have also learned tikanga (Māori customs), Māori cultural knowledge and values through the guidance of my whanau (family), all throughout my childhood. Even now I continue this cultural education through my involvement with the kapa haka group. But it was not always this way.*

*For the first three years of my time studying at the University of Auckland I never connected the two culturally distinct practices of contemporary dance and kapa haka. I thought that to be a 'serious' dancer I should leave the kapa haka in Rotorua and embrace the contemporary dance ideas I saw in the theatres and classes of Auckland. I felt that I had to become the Western contemporary dancer I saw modeled around me. I could not see a place for my kapa haka knowledge to be integrated, and those around me, who knew I carried this history with me, never explicitly mentioned it as something I could consider drawing on in my university learning. In reality, I was probably trying to hide my kapa haka knowledge because I did not see the value of it in my new dance environment.*

*After three years something changed, something clicked. Our class was preparing for a big international performance in Taiwan. The choreography was a collaborative effort between the students and lecturer. We purposefully decided to fuse our own cultural practices with the cultural practice of Western contemporary dance. This was the first time I felt I could join my two worlds together, and I realized it was possible to create a very high quality performance work while also including culturally diverse ideas, movements and motivations. It was a transformative experience. I felt that it was the moment I established my own identity as an artist, and discovered who I was and where I could*

*belong.*

Figures 3 & 4: Sophie Williams and Mattie Williams performing *Nga Whaiaipo o te roto* (Lovers of the lake) October 2013, at the Tempo Dance Festival, Q Theatre, Auckland, New Zealand. Photos: courtesy the performers.

*Today, when I make dance work and perform the lineage of my whakapapa (genealogy), my Te Arawa (name of tribe) heritage, whanau and history provide the foundation on which my ideas stand (Figs. 3 & 4). This has also informed my artistic approaches and influenced my conceptual outlook as a Māori researcher, artist and performer. I have become particularly interested in Māori performative knowledge within contemporary dance, and how this is carried through in practice and performance.*

*As a Māori wahine (woman), I am situated within the Western academic tradition and at times I am overwhelmed by academic conversations and discussions. I am no different to other first year PhD students who are learning the ropes, the terminology and structure - what research entails. But now, within all of this I feel I am discovering distinctive ways to bridge cultural worlds, choreographically, through performance and within writing. I feel confident that this knowledge will assist other students who carry diverse dance histories into the world of academia as I once did.*

**SUBJECTIVITY AS INTERCULTURAL LENS**

Many scholars have documented the impact of globalization on educational processes and pedagogical practices, and dance education is not excluded from such internationalised development (Martin, 2012, 2013). While there is a body of scholarly work investigating internationalized education in foreign contexts, there is limited documentation focused on dance within these contexts. As a dance researcher Rose Martin investigated the reasons why dancers train abroad and how they approach dance in their home environments once they return. Her discussions with dance practitioners from across the globe uncovered some of the more nuanced, embodied experiences of dancers working at the crossroads of cultures, disciplines and nationalities.

Drawing on Martin's study (2012), the subjectivity of artistic or performance practice is re-examined here through the personal account of one contemporary dancer whose work and creative practice straddles an internationalised academy and a local community. Like the earlier subjects of Martin's study, Sophie Williams encountered a Western cultural context through her University experiences, which was at odds with the dance culture to which she was accustomed. Her story highlights the confusion and alienation that is typical in these circumstances. While the confusing lens of an intercultural experience can distort the subjectivity of an artistic or performance practice, there is also the possibility that aesthetic empathies can be shifted through these learning experiences. Sophie's experience of learning a Western dance tradition that eclipsed her own cultural traditions reveals specific pedagogic issues, such as confusion over the modes of teaching and expectations of dance in different learning environments. Sophie's story reveals the difficulty she faced not knowing how to integrate her own cultural dance traditions into the new contemporary dance context in which she was immersed.

According to Martin (2012) there is also the possibility that students arrive in new learning environments with diverse expectations and associated anxiety about what they will learn. Dealing with unexpected course content and structure can be a further complication. While the subjectivity of an artistic or performance practice reveals much about the alienation one can experience when learning within an intercultural context, there are also stories of transformation. Sophie's story (above) offers an account of her own transformative experience - "I felt that it was the moment I established my own identity as an artist, and discovered who I was and where I could belong." She ends her story acknowledging a sense of 'becoming' through which she has discovered distinctive ways of bridging her cultural worlds, choreographically, through performance and within writing. She feels confident that this knowledge she has acquired can be passed on to others who carry similar diverse dance histories into the world of academia.

On the other hand, many artists/performers returning home find that the notion of 'becoming' a performer has been artificially strengthened by being part of a creative community within the learning environment. On returning home, some discover that their new artistic practice may be somewhat isolated from the local creative community and their sense of 'becoming' can be shaken (Figs. 5 & 6). This dilemma can invoke processes of cultural hegemony, counter-hegemony and anti-hegemony (Martin, 2012, 2013; Rowe, 2008, 2009).


Figures 5 & 6: Contemporary 'Western' exuberance/ancient backdrop. Nadia Khattab, dancer with El-Funoun Palestinian Popular Dance Troupe, Ramallah, Palestine. Photos: courtesy Arnaud Stephenson.

The quandary of replicating foreign dance forms with little reference to the socio-cultural environment in which they are being taught and performed can be deeply problematic, with repercussions that have the potential to reverberate through cultural practices (Martin, 2012; Rowe, 2008). Conversely, the approach of choosing to rebel against aspects of foreign dance practices may be viewed as a way to preserve cultural identity (Grau, 1992, 2008; Martin, 2012; Seaver, 2008). The professional career of Lin Hwai-min[5] of Cloud Gate Dance Theatre, Taiwan provides an example of this quandary for the international performer/student and a realisation of the long-term implications. After forty years of performance, he has not only bridged the global/local contradiction, but in so doing, his creative work has found a transitory median that expands the aesthetic notion of modern dance.

**IMPLICATIONS: AN ORIENTATION FOR ADAPTING TO THESE CHALLENGES**

This paper has examined the experiences of artists and performers who attempt to synthesize and apply what has been encountered and learnt elsewhere with local traditions, disciplinary forms and cultural practices. Potentially the approach of synthesis may allow for anti-hegemonic approaches to emerge. The synthesis of 'other' practices with local artistic practices can lead to a cultural translation within the 'third space', as described by Homi Bhabha (1990). As educators, we see this occurring in our studios and recognise the effect on learning, performing and creating. In the educational context, this third space can also be described as the 'creative lacuna' for the 'translanguaging' of practices and ideas. We identify it is a space requiring temporary, critical neutrality for all forms of cultural and disciplinary knowledge to be brought into play, unfettered by hierarchical aesthetic codes. We liken this to the Māori concept of

[5] Lin founded Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan in 1973 and Cloud Gate 2 in 1999. He successfully brought in Western modern dance idioms to reform Taiwanese dance performance and in return also has reshaped the global notion of modern dance by amalgamating local cultural concepts into his work.

ako where individuals are both teacher and learner, and each creative mind brings insight to the 'creative lacuna' (Fig. 7).

Figure 7: Māori students from the School of Music and the School of Fine Arts, National Institute of Creative Arts and Industries, University of Auckland. They are members of a peer support and mentoring programme based at the University of Auckland Marae. Photo: courtesy University of Auckland.

The essence of both the Māori concept of ako and the Confucian concept of median is a philosophical orientation that involves provisional, negotiated criticality. It is an orientation that allows us to align ourselves as 'inbetweeners'[6] rather than insiders or outsiders. It opens the way for authentic participative expression to take place and collaborative construction of new knowledge or appreciation. In practice, it is a strategy to interpret a temporal and balanced solution. We propose that critical neutrality within the creative learning environment is essential as a positive position for adapting to challenges of internationalised education. Provisional neutrality in the critique of new ideas, like Zhuangzi's notion of 'no self' and 'no others' is undoubtedly a very difficult goal, but one worth pursuing.

We concur from our disciplinary perspectives that an internationalised education can be valuable. It results in transformative learning experiences, development of international collaborations and networks and opportunities to reflect on artistic choices in relation to cultural contexts. From our collective experience, we note anecdotally that international student experiences also appear to increase feelings of social

[6] For an interesting application of this term in cross-cultural educational research, see Milligan, L. (2014). Insider-outsider-inbetweener? Researcher positioning, participative methods and cross-cultural educational research. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, DOI:10.1080/03057925.2014.928510 http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2014.928510

responsibility, leading individuals to become proponents of change within creative practice communities. On the other hand, we recognise that internationalised education poses numerous challenges such as alienation and isolation, confusion over learning expectations and modes of pedagogy, and uncertainty about how to adapt disciplinary knowledge in various cultural or professional contexts. As educators, we need to be attentive in mediating the 'third space', so as to foster positive transformative learning spaces, where individuals are receiving culturally relevant education and have support and flexibility within their studies to achieve fully, both in their home environment and abroad.

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**The personal narratives:**
The narrative by author Te Oti Rakena, was triggered by his visit to one of the poorest and most crime ridden urban areas in New Zealand. The community is home to Sistema Aotearoa, one of the many global subsidiaries of the Venezuelan music education phenomenon known as El Sistema. The author was invited to observe the programme that uses orchestral music making as a model for social development.

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