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Introduction

Diversity Matters Istanbul is the seventh in a series of forums that have been held every two years since 2001. The forums operate as a Think Tank, bringing together civil society, practitioners and academics to discuss key contemporary issues and make recommendations to institutions, governments and organisations involved. Entitled Preserving Culture and Heritage through Generations, this forum was held on May 12 and 13, 2014 at Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Istanbul.

The 7th Diversity Matters Forum was organised by the Australian Multicultural Foundation (AMF) in conjunction with Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University and The Statesman, India. The theme aimed to explore the importance of preserving cultural heritage, identifying it as central to protecting a sense of who we are; a meaningful reference in our culturally diverse world. It featured a wide range of dynamic speakers from different professional sectors and different parts of the world, all of who came together to share and discuss their experiences with preserving of culture and heritage.

The forum covered a wide range of topics within the central theme of preserving cultural heritage, such as exploring traditions and customs of a wide variety of different cultures, examining the way in which governments and other agents can help to preserve culture, looking at ways in which cross-cultural engagements can work to improve preservation of culture and the benefits that cultural diversity bring to a new society.

This report will provide an overview of each of the speakers and presentations, identifying the key themes and discussions which arose throughout the forum. It will then outline some recommendations based upon the learnings of the forum, seeking to establish ways in which we can put some of this gained knowledge into practice. I would like to sincerely thank Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, especially Professor Yalcin Karayagiz for hosting the conference, as well as The Statesman and all speakers and chairs as well as the delegates for their invaluable contribution and for making it such an enjoyable and successful event. I would also like to thank the AMF staff for their work in organising the conference.
Day One

Introduction and Welcome

His Excellency James Larsen
Australian Ambassador - Turkey
Australian Embassy, Ankara, Turkey

His Excellency James Larsen warmly welcomed everyone to the conference and thanked the host university, the AMF and all attendees.

Prof Yalcin Karayagiz
University Rector
Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Istanbul

Professor Yalcin Karayagiz begun by acknowledging all groups and individuals involved in making the event happen and proceeded to welcome everyone to the university, explaining that he was delighted to have formed a partnership with the Australian Multicultural Foundation to explore such an important theme. The Rector then drew connection between the theme and the university, stating that ‘we are pleased to have this forum take place here in Istanbul as the foundations of this university have been built on the preservation of culture and heritage through the generations of our students.’ He noted that sustainably preserving cultural heritage via education is vital, via painting, film, architecture as well as other forms of art.

Dr Hass Dellal OAM
Executive Director
Australian Multicultural Foundation

Hass Dellal identified the aim of the forum as to explore the importance of preserving cultural heritage as central to protecting a sense of who we are; a meaningful reference in our culturally diverse world. He noted that the speakers included prominent academic researchers and practitioners from all around the world, and that as such, the conference will explore many themes including the role of the media in preserving culture and heritage as well as how to preserve heritage, tradition and culture in culturally diverse societies. He stated that ‘the preservation of culture and heritage reflect and shape values, beliefs and
aspirations which define who we are. It is important to preserve our culture and heritage as it keeps our integrity as people and the best way to preserve your cultural heritage is to share it with others’.

**Keynote Address Summary: Preserving culture and heritage through generations**

Chair: Mr Ravindra Kumar  
*Editor*  
The Statesman, India

**Sir James Gobbo AC CVO**  
*Emeritus Chair*  
Australian Multicultural Foundation

After addressing the title of the forum and emphasising the importance of the topic, Sir James Gobbo noted that the preservation of culture and heritage through generations is a relatively new topic, as more attention has been directed toward integrating migrants into the new society, and that the retention of tradition and culture were often seen as a hindrance to successful integration. He asserted that although diversity is now celebrated, proactive measures such as discussion or research into how younger generations can maintain links with their cultural heritage is still minimal.

Sir James then went on to draw upon his own experience growing up in the Italian community in Melbourne, reflecting on the importance of retaining cultural and religious traditions and customs via avenues such as the Church, family, food, language and travel, mentioning that that the seeds of cultural sophistication and depth are in the first generation as much as they are in the second and third generation

He identified tensions posed by policies designed to enhance the links of second or third generation immigrants to their cultural origins, looking at the challenge faced by immigrants to keep their cultural heritage and to become a full citizen in the new society. Furthermore, he examined the issue of people’s knowledge and willingness to learn about their ancestry, exemplifying the Italian community in Australia in which some individuals have no cultural, linguistic or historical knowledge of their family’s origin. He then moved on to discuss potential reasons as to why some people neglect their background, such as an unhappy early life, or wanting to fit in within the conformist school environment. Sir James concluded by stating that sensitivity and balance are necessary to achieve
tranquillity, and that there will always be a need for respectful recognition of cultural richness of a host countries’ population, as well as for advocacy of the values and fundamental obligations that newcomers have to their host country.

**Plenary Session 1 Summary: The importance of preserving heritage, tradition and race**

**Chair:** Prof. Dr. Demet Binan  
*Head of Restoration Department at the Faculty of Architecture*  
Director of Mimar Sinan Research and Practice Centre  
Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Istanbul

**His Excellency James Larsen**  
*Australian Ambassador - Turkey*  
Australian Embassy, Ankara, Turkey

His Excellency James Larsen explored the theme of commonality between mankind, highlighting that we all have a heritage and belief system that pulls us together. He drew upon examples of collaborations between Turkey and Australia and New Zealand in order to remember those who died in Gallipoli. He honoured the support offered by the Turkish government in maintaining the Gallipoli peninsula as a national park, noting that Turkish, Australian, New Zealand and other memorials and cemeteries sit in close proximity within the area. He described the Gallipoli peninsula experience as a practical, contemporary way of preserving tradition and heritage. Lastly, HE James Larsen made reference to a comment by Rupert Murdoch during his speech in October 2013 to the Lowy Institute. Rupert Murdoch referred to the importance of immigration and diversity towards the success of a country, particularly in terms of its ability to be internationally competitive, describing diversity as a ‘precious resource’. He then went on to say that in Murdoch’s view, Australia is on its way to becoming the world’s most diverse nation, a huge advantage. He then added that this diversity is a critical strength that lies at the willingness of Australians to accept others. He concluded by stating that it is the duty of each of us to find out how to preserve traditions as an ingredient to the future of our national life.

**Mr Li Jianhui**  
*Deputy Director General*  
Cultural & Publicity Department  
State Ethnic Affairs Commission PRC
Mr Li Jianhui began by providing an overview and some basic information about ethnic minorities in China, underlining that since the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, 56 ethnic groups have been confirmed including the Han majority group and the others which are referred to as ethnic minorities and which make up 8.49% of the national total.

Since 1949, China has adopted a policy that provides regional autonomy for these minority groups under unified leadership of the state in areas where ethnic groups live in concentrated communities. Mr Li stated that this has guaranteed the rights of ethnic minorities in terms of politics, economy, culture and education and that as a result, ethnic relationships have been characterised by equality and unity.

He discussed different ways in which culture and heritage is preserved through generations within different ethnic groups, via folk tales, songs, novels, poems, dramas, operas, painting, costume and diet, also commenting that there are over 100 languages spoken within these groups, and a variety of religions including Tibetan, Buddhism, Hinayana, Taoism, Islamism, Shamanism, Bimo and Dongbaism. Mr Li described the ethnic minority culture as a ‘dazzling pearl in the treasure house of Chinese culture’.

He then illustrated the achievements of the Chinese government in protecting ethnic minorities, despite the fact that, like many countries, China is facing the issue of loss of traditional cultural resources and lack of successors for cultural tradition due to global economic integration. He mentioned that the government has invested manpower as well as financial and material resources and experience in order to do so. These initiatives have included; the development of policy systems favourable for protecting minority cultures in areas such as education, radio, film and television, news and cultural relics protection, establishing institutions for the development of ethnic minorities, protecting cultural relics through the construction of museums and libraries, creating publishing bases of ethnic languages in various locations across the country, introducing ethnic minority languages into bilingual teaching, administration, legislation, press, literature, and the arts and lastly by organising large-scale cultural activities such as theatrical, literary and song and dance festivals. These preservation initiatives generated some discussion among the delegates, comparing Australia and China’s multicultural policies.
Plenary Session 2 Summary: How do you preserve heritage, tradition and culture in culturally diverse societies?

Chair: Prof. Dr. Ahmet Taşağıl
Head of the History Department of the Faculty of Science
Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Istanbul

Ms Kanchana Mukhopadhyay
Co-Convenor
INTACH (Kolkata), West Bengal

Ms Kanchana Mukhopadhyay begun by stating that 'constant movement is one of the salient aspects of dynamic societies' and that the development of unique features and characteristics of a society and its value systems create traditions which make the society distinguishable from others. Some traditions, such as architecture, are more sustainable than others, such as dance or art who do not have a firm structure and who can be changed throughout time.

Ms Mukhopadhyay then looked to West Bengal to examine interwoven cultures and cultural evolution, as the traditions of this area were embellished with a European tinge, resulting in mutual respect toward other societies. She explained how Kolkata emerged as a power centre from the era of the British Empire, with many European, non-European and Indians settling there, bringing with them their own cultural practices and coexisting side by side with minimal social stigmas. She mentioned that many different traditions such as Chinese New Year, Christmas and Durgapuja occur within the same region and that inter religious and intra provincial marriage have existed since the fifties.

She then explored Kolkata’s diversity in great detail, analysing the way in which its heritage is manifested in a cultural melting pot of architecture, textiles and theatre. Greek Orthodox churches, synagogues, mosques, temples and other various religious centres coexist in Kolkata and landmark its architectural heritage. She also drew upon other examples of how heritage, culture and tradition are preserved, such as the Muslim shops, Chinatown and the Lenin statue, as well as via cuisine, describing it to be ‘like that of a patchwork quilt’.
She concluded by stating that ‘our state, our city, continues to live with all these cultural traditions does not give preference to any culture or caste, which is a unique feature compared to any other cities of India’. She described religious tolerance as a natural phenomenon of Bengal, exemplifying that Kolkata was the only city where Sikhs were not persecuted during the Sikh riot of 1984. She stated that ‘cultural diversity is the magic word in this region’ and that preserving the myriad of different cultures alongside embracing multicultural elements is not a difficult task in Kolkata as it is a natural occurrence.

Prof. Dr. Kenan Mortan
Professor in Applied Economics at the Faculty of Architecture
Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Istanbul

Professor Kenan Mortan begun by articulating that preservation of cultural heritage is an issue that all communities face regardless of how long they have lived in the host country, but that he would deal specifically with the Turkish community in Australia. His presentation was based upon the findings of his research field study in Australia in 2012 surrounding Turkish communities in NSW and Victoria. The study investigated 111 Australians of Turkish origin, looking into their identity perceptions and sense of belonging in Australia. The findings indicated that Australian students of Turkish origin from Melbourne and Sydney have had positive experiences, having peacefully adopted both identities and not feeling as though they are considered as ‘others’. Professor Mortan compared these findings to those of a similar study conducted in Germany, which found the Turkish community to be angry with its status in society.

He then mentioned some observations from the study, firstly mentioning that the Turkish community in Australia is diverse in itself, with groups of different origins such as Greece, Cyprus and Turkey, of ethnic compositions such as Turks, Kurds and Arabs and of different religions such as Sunnis, Baha’is or Orthodox Christians. He then outlined Australia’s cultural diversity in general, with 44% of Australians being born abroad or having a parent born abroad. Almost 60 000 people declared themselves to be of Turkish origin. Professor Mortan’s study found that Turks in Australia benefited from this diversity and from the liberal support of the Australian system allowing them to preserve their tradition. Moreover, they saw their Turkish identity as a benefit to them. He then presented
the findings of two segments of this community, the women and youth, both responding that they felt positively about their place in Australian society and did not feel as though they were discriminated against. He linked this result to the Australian immigration policy and the multicultural quality of Australian society.

He once again commented on a similar demographic in Germany, where this same level of peaceful integration has unfortunately not been replicated. He mentioned that ethnic ghettos have formed, and asserted that Australia had avoided this pattern through its multicultural policies and through developing a system that encourages culture and facilitates cultural coalition. Lastly, Professor Mortan contended that Australia has made a significant effort towards preserving the heritage of migrants through avenues such as SBS, the Victorian Schools of Language and the development of a multicultural policy.

**Plenary Session 3 Summary: Preserving of culture and heritage through education**

**Chair:** Ms Lynn Cain  
*Training and Project Manager*  
Australian Multicultural Foundation

**Ms Padmini Sebastian**  
*Director*  
Immigration Museum, Museum Victoria, Australia

Ms Padmini Sebastian presented using a slideshow providing a snap shot of the Immigration Museum in Melbourne and begun her presentation by quoting Australian Writer Arnold Zable who wrote for the opening of the Immigration Museum ‘Ours is a nation of immigrants and indigenous peoples. A new world with an ancient past. A grand symphony with many melodies.’ She then went on to explain a bit about the cultural heritage of the Immigration Museum and of Melbourne, the traditional lands of the Boon Wurrung and Woi Wurrung people that the museum is located on and how the diversity of Melbourne’s indigenous peoples is a tradition that the Immigration museum continues today alongside many other new cultures.

Ms Sebastian then provided some information about her own background, sharing that she was born in Sri Lanka and sought refuge in Australia due to civil war. She said that she is deeply connected to Australia as well as being influenced by her own culture and heritage. As this is the case for many Australians, the Immigration Museum creates a space for people to reflect on
what has shaped their heritage. The museum brings people together to discuss and explore the movement of people in historical and contemporary times, seeking to inspire, educate and value the benefits of migration and how it has shaped Australia, discussing topics such as identity, racism, heritage and diversity.

Ms Sebastian then emphasised the significance of cultural diversity in Australia, acknowledging that 45% of us were born overseas or had a family member who was born overseas. She focused heavily on the importance of storytelling and provided an overview of the Immigration Museum’s educational learning space and programs that allow visitors or students to share their experiences, challenge and understand one another and spark conversation about topics such as migration and multiculturalism, explaining that the Museum seeks to provoke self-reflection and deeper connection as people come face to face with these stories. She mentioned one program specifically called the ‘Talking Difference’ project in which students of an Anglo background engaged in conversation with Bangladeshi immigrants via a video call. They were able to learn about one another’s heritage and how it contributes to the grand narrative of Australia. She concluded by stating that the role of the Museum is to create a platform for learning and understanding our complex and multi-faceted heritages for future generations, and that equipping individuals with skills and knowledge to participate in a multicultural society is vitally important.

Mr Mikael Morberg, Dr Tobias Hubinette and Dr Charlotte Hyltén-Cavallius
Multicultural Centre Stockholm

The representatives from the Multicultural Centre in Stockholm introduced the activities of the organisation, including research, education, exhibition, publishing, pedagogical cultural work, as well as its resources such as a cultural house, event venue and library. The centre’s research focuses on cultural heritage, urban development, diversity and integration issues, race, whiteness and Swedishness. The speakers provided some example of current projects, including one that seeks to identify Roma camps in ‘hidden places in modern society’ and one that investigates the politicisation of youth in stigmatised areas. The educational programs are targeted at police, cultural institutions, municipalities and schools. This presentation was followed by a number of enquiries from the audience regarding the concept of ‘whiteness’ and the link that this has to Swedish identity.
**Plenary Session 4 Summary: How do the arts strengthen cultural values?**

**Chair: Dr Rizio Yohannan**  
*Founder and Executive Director*  
LILA Foundation, India

**Ms Jill Morgan AM**  
*Director*  
Multicultural Arts Victoria, Australia

Jill Morgan introduced her presentation by outlining the framework of Australia’s laws such as respect for freedom of the individual, equality of men and women, freedom of religion and equal opportunity for all individuals, as well as the universality of values such as respect tolerance, freedom and compassion that are promoted across all religions, also making reference to the mention of these values in the UN Declaration of Human Rights in Article 1 which states that ‘all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights’. Ms Morgan linked this discussion surrounding values with issues such as racism, explaining that our values influence our behaviour toward others and whether we respect people of different faiths, skin colour or language groups. She asserted that by labelling people as racist or by telling them not to be racist, the resistance often increases. Therefore we need to break down this resistance and create the opportunity for people to respond empathetically, and that the Arts are a way in which this can be done without direct challenging.

She then went on to explain that society is facing major challenges such as the ‘crisis of empathy’, but that this, along with racism and intolerance, could be resolved through the arts. She stated that ‘the arts are a vital source for defining our cultural expression, as well as for finding solutions in our rapidly changing world. It can allow people to understand the historic, cultural, economic and social context of a community which is crucial in developing a sense of shared values and thus for building social cohesion. Ms Morgan then provided Black Harmony Gathering as an example of the work of Multicultural Arts Victoria. She explained that it is an annual celebration in Melbourne of the UN International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and national Harmony Day, providing a chance for people from all cultures to make music together, dance, learn about each other and hear different stories. She also advocated for the arts being a way balancing sustaining cultural heritage and promoting new hybrid cultures. She concluded by emphasising the importance of being reflective and creating empathy, saying that ‘the arts are a powerful way to find solutions to our migration patterns and to bring people in dialogue’.
Mr Tassos Ioannides
Composer, Australia / Greece

Mr Tassos Ioannides begun by stating that ‘the basis for avoidance of cultural conflict is recognising cultural difference as an asset’, examining the concept of art as a cultural carrier and as being the root of our cultural values. He described cross-cultural fertilisation as ‘new culture’, creating a cultural dialogue that links our sense of belonging with our future communications.

He reflected on the role that the arts plays in sustaining society economically as well as building community spirit to preserve and renew it’s cultural base, stating that ‘collection of artistic deposits can contribute to a community; this form of cultural integration is a sign of a healthy community.’ The Arts also act as motivators for a healthier life style, making young people less sedentary and more engaged, contributing significantly to education as learning becomes fun using the vehicle of art.

Mr Ioannides then described the creative process involved in producing art, describing an artist as a ‘cultural container’ that can carry energy and information from the past into the future. He then shared his individual experiences of the artistic revolution in Melbourne during the 1970s and 80s, specifically referring to one theatre where artists of various backgrounds workedshopped their creations and the way in which it was well received by Australian Arts organisations and subsequently by the wider public. He identified that this reflects the development of Australia’s outlook from one of cultural tolerance, to one of celebrating cultural diversity. He then described a situation where he had composed the music for an Australian film, in which three separate newspaper critiques noted three different cultural influences on the music, one stating it had South American influence, one saying aboriginal influence and the other said it had no ‘trace of Greekness’. Mr Ioannides said he replied to them all by saying ‘I composed an Australian music score’. He then finished by outlining some of the works he composed in Australia. Following on from the presentation, a question was raised as to whether the arts could make culture more of a people’s movement.
Day Two

Keynote Address Summary: Protecting culture and heritage

Chair: Dr Hass Dellal OAM
Executive Director
Australian Multicultural Foundation

The Hon Nicholas Kotsiras MP
Former Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship and Energy and Resources
State Government of Victoria

Nicholas Kotsiras begun by describing heritage, culture, traditions, history and background as important to as they provide us with our identity. He stated that ‘they are my link to my past and add value to society.’ He asserted that protecting ones culture does not happen ‘by osmosis or by accident’, as it requires the will of the individual as well as the support of the government and civil society to do so within an evolving multicultural society, focusing particularly on governmental support. Firstly drawing upon his own experience as a child migrant in Australia, he explained how now, 50 years later, he has hung onto his heritage and is able to be proudly Australian. He then looked exclusively at the role of the government in protecting culture and heritage in Australia, arguing that to be successfully, governments need to ‘change the narrative’, transforming perceived threats of multiculturalism into opportunities.

He highlighted the bipartisan support from both Australian political parties toward multiculturalism and noted that the Victorian government serves as a leader for other states with its multicultural policy and the way in which it protects culture and heritage through legislation and other methods. He labelled the Victorian multicultural policy as unique, as it incorporates citizenship, manages and utilises our cultural diversity and deals with equality. The achievement of the Victorian Government was then discussed in regards to its services, such as the use of translators and interpreters and the presence of ethno-specific organisations, its citizen participation and social cohesion, and the way in which it maximises the benefits of its diversity.

He specifically made reference to the Multicultural Victoria Act, Racial and Religious Tolerance Act and the Equal Opportunity Act, as well as various
diversity programs through education and refugee action. He outlined the benefits of protecting identity and culture, such as fostering creativity and ensuring a brighter future for the community and highlighted that each nation has to find its own way of embracing cultural diversity, given how different each country is, and analysed the opportunities and challenges facing governments when trying to protect culture and heritage. Mr Kotsiras concluded by emphasising the importance of reflecting on multiculturalism on a deeper level, and by identifying the biggest task in protecting cultural heritage as gaining the support of government. This generated some discussion after the presentation regarding the stigmatisation of the word ‘multiculturalism’ and how important it is to view it as a benefit for all community members and not just ‘about migrants’.

Plenary Session 1 Summary: The role of media in preserving culture and heritage

Chair: Ms Padmini Sebastian
Director
Immigration Museum, Museum Victoria, Australia

Mr Ravindra Kumar
Editor
The Statesman, India

Mr Kumar focused considerably on the issues confronting conventional media in the context of promoting heritage and culture, claiming that addressing global issues such as managing diversity is a challenge as the journalist is often driven to report by his immediate national audience, who may not be interested or who may have a very differing view towards issues of this nature. He provided the example of a report from 1857 on the First War of Independence in India, in which the London Times omitted the fact that one half of the Red Fort, a heritage monument which was the residence of the Mughal emperors, had been destroyed and only focused on the revolt of the local people towards the English.

Thus, he explained that we are sometimes not informed as to the other perspective of a certain event or issue. He asserted that ‘the professional likes to look at change rather than preservation’, and that there is a great need for journalists to try to attract audience members who would otherwise be unengaged with a certain issue as cultural desecration. He identifies the challenges that journalists face in providing ‘both sides of the story’ and
sometimes having to present an unpopular position on a certain issue, exemplifying his own paper highlighting the lack of activism of Burmese politician Aung San Suu Kyi in response to the persecution of the minority Rohingya community in northern Burma.

Mr Kumar then analysed the role of journalists in preserving cultural diversity and harmony by drawing upon the example of the attacks on Indians in Australia in 2009, reflecting on how journalists can provide two views or perspectives on an issue such as this, rather than present a one-sided view. He also mentioned his cross-cultural engagements such as the Asia News Network and the Diversity Matters Conferences as a way of sharing and preserving information and better understanding the perspective of others. Lastly, Mr Kumar referred to the way in which the media, or the Statesman more specifically, contributes to the preservation of culture by digitally archiving papers from when the paper begun in 1818, and making this resource available online as both a research tool and as a modern preservation of heritage. He concluded that heritage is multifaceted and thus the role of the media as ‘history’s punctuation marks’ is to ‘put the commas into contemporary history’ in order to provide the opportunity for future generations to have a better understanding of our own current heritage and allowing the world to be a better place than the one we inherited.

Mr Sun Taihui
Deputy Chief Editor
China Ethnic News

Mr Sun Taihui’s presentation was based on the role of the media in heritage protection in China. He begun by emphasising that it is the role of the Chinese government and the media as a major disseminator to protect culture and heritage in China. He outlined that the Chinese media has integrated modern science and technology with characteristics of ethnic minority groups, and asserted that it is the role of the media to disseminate traditional culture and inform society about that culture, as well as to ‘combine with the times’ to help adapt these cultures to modern development.

He then listed some specific examples of protection of traditional ethnic cultures through the media, such as cultural dissemination which help to get people involved in traditional cultural heritage preservation. He identified the lack of dissemination capacity as the biggest obstacle to preserving ethnic cultures. He then made reference to the promotion of the traditional martial art, Kung Fu, within the media and the film industry as an example of how it has protected Shaolin culture and heritage and has made this accessible to people of other cultures. As a result, pupils in the Shaolin Temple are from China and overseas.

He then emphasised the importance of active participation of the media in giving a constructive role to ethnic cultural heritage in civil diplomacy. He here drew upon the example of the Kirgiz ethnic minority group and how the language and
culture of this group is preserved via media sources such as radio, television and newspaper being available in the local language. Lastly, Mr Sun mentioned the influence of advanced technologies such as digitalised storage and internet media reporting as a means of further showcasing the beliefs, values and customs of ethnic minority groups in China. He drew upon the work of the China Ethnic and Religious Network, a news media agency and one of the most influential websites on China’s ethnic groups and religions in the world today. It stores information on different ethnic groups in China and makes them available worldwide. He concluded by stating that ‘with the support of digital technology, China’s media are rapidly expanding their ability of preserving and inheriting cultural heritage’.

**Plenary Session 2 Summary: Preservation of cultural heritage in immigrant countries**

**Chair:** Assoc. Prof. Dr. Derya Fırat  
Department of Sociology  
Lecturer at the Department of Applied Sociology  
Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University

**Mr Ovagem Agaidyan**  
*Chairman*  
Verien Multiculturel Insbruk, Austria

Mr Ovagem Agaidyan presented, using powerpoint slides, an analysis of the concepts of culture, heritage and diversity. He primarily addressed the challenge that all cultures endure in preserving their heritage, as the world is constantly changing, especially due to influences such as the media and internet. He also got the audience involved in his presentation by asking questions and conducting an activity in which everyone stood up and closed their eyes, sitting down when they thought one minute was up. As everyone sat down at different times, Mr Agaidyan used this exercise to exemplify how diverse the group of people in the room were, and how this is reflected in society today. He also linked it to a concept that he discussed in more detail, and that is that many aspects of culture and intangible and invisible, and that often these are the most important. He provided definitions of the concepts, expressing cultural heritage as being either tangible or intangible, with concepts such as inclusion and diversity having some conditions that are visible and some that are invisible.

Mr Agaidyan referred to Austria’s acceptance of cultural diversity as something similar to that of the ‘stone-age’, particularly regarding the treatment of Turkish immigrants. He provided a hypothetical example of school or kindergarten teachers getting frustrated or overwhelmed in a situation where a group of young children are speaking their native language as they do not know what to do, and how inclusion continues to be a challenge as it starts from the willingness to include others. He concluded by asserting that while we should make an effort to
preserve immigrant cultures, it cannot be forced, and that cultures do change and get lost over decades due to other influences. He here provided an example of a small Italian migrant group in an Austrian state, which due to change over generations, does not retain any of its cultural heritage other than the family names.

Prof. Dr. Cengiz Eruzun  
President  
Turkish Society for the Protection of Historic Homes

Professor Eruzun’s presentation, employing the use of an interpreter, presented on the restoration projects of Turkish Historic Houses, Tarihi Evleri, as a way in which to preserve heritage, adding that only civil society is involved in these projects. He commented on the lack of laws and programs in Turkey encouraging people to participate in and preserve their heritage.

Professor Eruzun stated that to be able to protect and maintain a living cultural heritage, we need to develop a level of community participation. Participation ensures the protection of our conscious formation. Despite the efforts in the last quarter of a century in Turkey to protect our historical and natural environments, we still have not fully realised our potential, and therefore we need to continue to develop strategies to meet this challenge.

Panel Session Summary: The role of civil society in preserving heritage and culture

Chair: Prof. John Nieuwenhuysen AM  
Board Member  
Australian Multicultural Foundation

Professor Nieuwenhuysen introduced the format of the panel session and the topic of the role of civil society in preserving heritage and culture. He mentioned that upon hearing this topic, he recalls that in Australia among other migrant-receiving countries, the pattern of settlement of new arrivals tends to traditionally be in concentrations within communities, providing the example of Carlton being the home of Italian people in Melbourne, Australia. He then went
on to explain the subsequent dispersion of these communities as the younger generations spread and become part of the wider society, often via education and marriage. Professor Nieuwenhuysen concluded his introduction by addressing the challenge in maintaining interest within these younger generations to preserve their cultural heritage as they become more and more integrated in the local society. He ended by quoting ‘learn from the past, dream of the future, but live for today’, before introducing the panel speakers.

**Sir James Gobbo AC CVO**  
*Emeritus Chair*  
*Australian Multicultural Foundation*

Sir James Gobbo primarily reflected on the preservation of culture and heritage in the context of immigration, clarifying that when talking about cultural heritage, we are referring to the cultural heritage of everyone, including those who came to the country. He commented that society needs to acknowledge the heritage of both the source country of an immigrant as well as the host country, and that it is extremely important to find the commonalities between these two cultures. He mentioned the importance of the church to new cultural groups in Australia, contending that Australians need to reflect on their reluctance to construct mosques and highlighting the need to embrace new communities. Lastly, Sir James Gobbo noted that multiculturalism is not just for newcomers but for everyone, beginning with our family circles, community and government.

**The Hon Nicholas Kotsiras MP**  
*Former Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship and Energy and Resources*  
*State Government of Victoria*

Nicholas Kotsiras addressed the role of civil society in preserving culture and heritage, commenting that it can sometimes represent an obstacle and linking this to his speech regarding the role of the government by stating that ‘you have to have the support of civil society to ensure the benefits of cultural diversity’. He asserted that civil society (community groups, churches, schools etc.) need to do three things to ensure these benefits. The first is to make sure that the community they represent are maintaining their culture and traditions, especially language. He here provided an example of a group of parents coming to him because a local school was going to stop teaching Greek, however when he asked them what language the students were choosing to learn it was Italian. In order for a language to survive, he contended that you need the support of the community. The second thing was to make the community aware of the government policies and programs available to them, as this is often better received at a grassroots level such as through the local church, school or sporting club. The last is through uniting people of different faiths and cultures. The former minister asserted that this last thing is the most difficult one as it is often avoided due to a perceived threat to cultural identity. While some community leaders support cultural diversity ‘in front of a camera’, they do not
encourage it in the same way within their own communities. He stated that ‘if they are sincere about cultural diversity, they would not fear it’ as it is not about losing followers of cultural identity but about living together in harmony.

**Dr Tara Mukherjee**  
*Chair*  
European Multicultural Foundation, UK

Dr Tara Mukherjee introduced his presentation by posing the question, ‘Is cultural heritage an absolute?’ He devoted much time to discussing the development of the right wing movement in Europe and its impact on the promotion of multiculturalism, asserting that the problem of immigration is a social one and not an economic one. He believed that political leaders in Europe, particularly in German, Great Britain or France claim that multiculturalism does not work, however he provided the example of India as a country in which multiculturalism does work. He concluded by noting that cultural diversity is a fact, and that multiculturalism is what we do with it.

**Dr Rizio Yohannan**  
*Founder and Executive Director*  
LILA Foundation, India

Dr Rizio Yohannan introduced the discussion by highlighting how the forum has covered perspectives of multiculturalism from an activist, research, government, media and civil society perspective. She offered a new perspective on the idea of preservation and heritage, suggesting that we should perceive it as rather, the conservation of heritage in civil society. She commented on the evolution of civil society and the challenge of bringing preservation into this process. Dr Rizio explored the concept of ‘relevant translation’ as a process whereby one transits themself to the rest of society, identifying how this process involves elevation, negation and preservation, arguing that ‘relevant conservation’ is a much more natural process and is more sustainable. Lastly, she raised the importance of having sanctuaries and spaces that are open for conservation in society in order to preserve heritage.
Forum Summary

Dr Hass Dellal OAM  
*Executive Director*  
Australian Multicultural Foundation

Hass Dellal concluded that the conference was productive, providing the various speakers and organisations to network and come together to share their ideas. He stated that Turkey has incorporated wider networks and has introduced a new country to the fold, and that the topics discussed during the forum are a part of a heritage that requires creative efforts to safeguard. He identified the major theme from the forum as being ‘the best way to preserve heritage and culture is through sharing experiences’.

Recommendations

**Key themes identified throughout the conference:**

- Preserving cultural heritage is integral to preserving a sense of who we are for future generations.

- The significance of preserving the cultural heritage of migrants within a host country as well as the culture of that country itself. This is mutually beneficial for the nation and the migrant, as the culturally diverse societies make for a more tolerant and internationally competitive nation.

- Sharing culture with others as a way of preserving culture.

- The importance of preserving cultural heritage in better understanding the perspective of others.
• Ways or preserving culture identified throughout the conference:
  o Preservation of nature and other tangible heritage sites
  o Via the arts
  o Via governmental policies
  o Via the media
  o Via community engagement

• Multiculturalism is a shared concept – it is not solely beneficial to migrants.

**Key recommendations:**

For the individual:
• Making a conscious effort to learn about and practice our cultural heritage is important as it protects a sense of who we are.

• As second or third generation migrants, it is often difficult to maintain cultural traditions as daily life is so embedded in the local culture. It is important that individuals, families, communities and other groups such as schools and community centres work towards encouraging young people to identify with and preserve their cultural heritage. This is beneficial for both the cultural group and the wider society of that country; multiculturalism and celebrating cultural diversity is for everyone, not just immigrants.

For governments:
• The role of the government is integral in preserving and celebrating the cultural heritage and tradition of its population. This is true for both indigenous and migrant groups; it is important to preserve and recognise the influence that both have had on the modern society. It is mutually beneficial for a government to encourage its people to exercise cultural expression and to preserve cultural traditions, as cultural diversity is a key competitive strength in the international arena.

• It is important that governments understand their responsibility to preserve tangible aspects of cultural heritage such as memorial sites, heritage buildings and natural landmarks and areas so that future generations can appreciate and learn from them in the same way.

• Governments should assess how to best preserve culture and heritage in its own way according to its own demographic. China, for example, focuses on how to best preserve the local languages, cultural practices and traditions of its ethnic minority groups. Australia, on the other hand, seeks to reflect its immense cultural diversity in its policies, which encourage all Australians to practice and identify with their cultural heritage.
For the media:

- Accurate preservation of heritage was identified as a challenge for the media as they tend to focus on current issues for a specific national audience. It is therefore important that media groups look at different issues and different perspectives of the same issue in order to examine the thoughts and opinions of others and share knowledge and understanding.

- Initiating and maintaining transnational and cross-cultural networks are a great way for media sources of different cultural backgrounds to work together to provide their own national audience with a range of perspectives. The best way of preserving culture and knowledge is to share it.

- It is helpful for media outlets to engage with modern technology in order to use their own histories to preserve cultural heritage, such as digital storage of old media material.

- Offering media resources in a wide variety of different languages (majority and minority) is crucial in preserving the livelihood of different cultures. By offering media sources in a local language or dialect, you are keeping that language active in a community, as well as providing a written documentation of it.

For community groups and other agencies:

- It is crucial for various actors involved in preserving cultural heritage to continue collaborating with one another, locally and overseas. Relationships built through the Diversity Matters forums, for example, should be maintained and strengthened in order to preserve these traditions.

- Local organisations and community groups in sectors such as the arts are integral in providing a platform for cultural expression as well as for recognising our shared values and promoting hybrid cultures.
## Appendix 1: Forum Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18.30 - 19.30</td>
<td>Forum Reception and Welcome for Delegates and Speakers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, auditorium</td>
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### Day 1 - Monday 12 May 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.45 - 9.00</td>
<td>Registration Auditorium</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.00 - 9.45</td>
<td>Introduction and Welcome</td>
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<td></td>
<td>His Excellency James Larsen</td>
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<td>Australian Ambassador - Turkey</td>
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<td>Australian Embassy, Ankara, Turkey</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Prof Yalcin Karayagiz</td>
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<td>University Rector</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Istanbul</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dr Hass Dellal OAM</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
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<td>Australian Multicultural Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.45 - 10.30</td>
<td>Keynote Address</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Preserving culture and heritage through generations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sir James Gobbo AC CVO</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Emeritus Chair</td>
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<td>Australian Multicultural Foundation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Chair: Mr Ravindra Kumar</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Editor</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Statesman, India</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.30 - 11.00</td>
<td>Morning Tea University Restaurant</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.00 - 12.00</td>
<td>Plenary Session 1</td>
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<td>Time</td>
<td>Session Title</td>
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</table>
| 12.00 | Plenary Session 2                                                             | How do you preserve heritage, tradition and culture in culturally diverse societies? | Ms Kanchana Mukhopadhyay  
Co-Convenor  
INTACH (Kolkata), West Bengal  
Prof. Dr. Kenan Mortan  
Professor in Applied Economics at the Faculty of Architecture  
Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Istanbul | Chair: Prof. Dr. Ahmet Taşağıl  
Head of the History Department of the Faculty of Science  
Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Istanbul |
| 13.00 | Lunch University Restaurant                                                   |                                                                     |                                                                                             |                                                                                           |
| 14.00 | Plenary Session 3                                                             | Preservation of culture and heritage through education                | Mr Mikael Morberg, Dr Tobias Hubinette & Dr Charlotte Hyltén-Cavallius  
Multicultural Centre Stockholm  
Ms Padmini Sebastian  
Director  
Immigration Museum, Museum Victoria, Australia | Chair: Ms Lynn Cain  
Training and Project Manager  
Australian Multicultural Foundation |
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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15.00 - 15.20</td>
<td><strong>Afternoon tea University Restaurant</strong></td>
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| 15.20 - 16.20 | **Plenary Session 4**  
*How do the arts strengthen cultural values?*  
Ms Jill Morgan AM  
*Director*  
Multicultural Arts Victoria, Australia  
Mr Tassos Ioannides  
*Composer, Australia / Greece*  
Chair: Dr Rizio Yohannan  
*Founder and Executive Director*  
LILA Foundation, India  |
| 16.20 - 16.35 | **Summary of the day**                                                   |
| 19.00       | **Forum Dinner University Restaurant**                                   |

**Day 2 - Tuesday 13 May 2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
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</table>
| 9.45 - 10.30 | **Keynote Address**  
*Protecting culture and heritage*  
The Hon Nicholas Kotsiras MP  
*Former Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship and Energy and Resources*  
State Government of Victoria  
Chair: Dr Hass Dellal OAM  
*Executive Director*  
Australian Multicultural Foundation  |
| 10.30 - 11.00 | **Morning Tea University Restaurant**                                    |
| 11.00 - 12.00 | **Plenary Session 1**  
*The role of media in preserving culture and heritage*  
Mr Ravindra Kumar  
*Editor*  
The Statesman, India  
Mr Sun Taihui  
*Deputy Chief Editor*  
China Ethnic News  |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Details</th>
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</table>
| 12.00 - 13.00 | Plenary Session 2<br><i>Preservation of cultural heritage in immigrant countries</i> | Ms Padmini Sebastian  
Chair: Ms Padmini Sebastian  
Director  
Immigration Museum, Museum Victoria, Australia  
Mr Ovagem Agaidyan  
Chairman  
Verien Multiculturel Insbruk, Austria  
Prof. Dr. Cengiz Eruzun  
President  
Turkish Society for the Protection of Historic Homes  
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Derya Firat  
Department of Sociology  
Lecturer at the Department of Applied Sociology  
Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University |
| 13.00 - 14.00 | Breakfast University Restaurant                                           |         |
| 14.00 - 15.30 | Panel Session<br><i>The role of civil society in preserving heritage and culture</i> | Sir James Gobbo AC CVO  
Emeritus Chair  
Australian Multicultural Foundation  
The Hon Nicholas Kotsiras MP  
Former Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship and  
Energy and Resources  
State Government of Victoria  
Dr Tara Mukherjee  
Chair  
European Multicultural Foundation, UK  
Dr Rizio Yohannan  
Founder and Executive Director  
LILA Foundation, India  
Prof. John Nieuwenhuysen AM  
Board Member  
Australian Multicultural Foundation |
<p>| 15.30 - 15.50 | Afternoon Tea University Restaurant                                      |         |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15.50 - 16.30</td>
<td>Forum Summary</td>
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<tr>
<td>16.30</td>
<td>Gallery Visit  Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University (optional)</td>
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**Day 3 - Wednesday 14 May 2014**

Optional Half Day Bosphorus Tour (10.00 - 12.30). Details at Registration.
## Appendix 2: List of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Country</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ovagem</td>
<td>Agaidyan Verien Multiculturel Insbruk</td>
<td>Austria</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shabiti</td>
<td>Alimu China Ethnic Languages Translation Center</td>
<td>China</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demet</td>
<td>Binan Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lynn Cain</td>
<td>Cain Australian Multicultural Foundation</td>
<td>Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hass</td>
<td>Dellal Australian Multicultural Foundation</td>
<td>Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anne-Marie</td>
<td>Domanski Australian Multicultural Foundation</td>
<td>Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nina</td>
<td>Edstrom Multicultural Centre</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
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<td>Cengiz</td>
<td>Eruzun Turkish Society for the Protection of Historic Homes</td>
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<td>Derya</td>
<td>Firat Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
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<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>Gobbo Australian Multicultural Foundation</td>
<td>Australia</td>
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<td>Shirley</td>
<td>Gobbo Australian Multicultural Foundation</td>
<td>Australia</td>
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<td>Tobias</td>
<td>Hubinette Multicultural Centre</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
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<td>Charlotte</td>
<td>Hyltén-Cavallius Multicultural Centre</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
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<td>Tasso</td>
<td>Ioannides Composer</td>
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<td>Yalcin</td>
<td>Karayagiz Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
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<td>Martin</td>
<td>Kilgus Organisation International Education Stuttgart Information (IEIE)</td>
<td>Germany</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nicholas</td>
<td>Kotsiras Former Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship</td>
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<td>Ravindra</td>
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<td>Haibin</td>
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<td>James</td>
<td>Larsen Australian Embassy Ankara</td>
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<td>Leon-Rosales Multicultural Centre</td>
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<td>Mikael</td>
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<td>Jill</td>
<td>Morgan Multicultural Arts Victoria</td>
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<td>Kenan</td>
<td>Mortan Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University</td>
<td>Istanbul</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tara</td>
<td>Mukherjee European Multicultural Foundation</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kanchana</td>
<td>Mukhopadhyay INTACH (Kolkata)</td>
<td>India</td>
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<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Nieuwenhuysen Australian Multicultural Foundation</td>
<td>Australia</td>
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<td>Taşağıl Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University</td>
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