

# Rencontre professionnelle ZEPA 2

## ZEPA 2 seminar for professionals

ENGLAND FRANCE  
CULTURE IN QUESTION

FRANCE ANGLETERRE  
LA CULTURE EN QUESTION

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Loos-en-Gohelle (Pas-de-Calais, France)



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# **Summery and synthesis by Floriane Gaber, Outdoor arts specialist**

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As you came in the conference room in Loos-en-Gohelle, on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2014, it felt obvious that people gathered there were pleased to see each other. The core members of the network were obviously here but also external participants and speakers, all here for the professional conference **'England France: Culture in question'**. There is a nice feeling of wanting to learn about each other.



And that's the overall feeling over the day and a half of the event. After all these years of partnership, French and English professionals have come to accept differences and have managed to collaborate with people sharing a similar 'façon d'être'.

### **Eighteen years of artistic projects – Brief background**

Daniel Andrieu, Atelier 231 Director, Outdoor arts creation centre in Sotteville-les-Rouen, and lead partner for the ZEPA 2 network

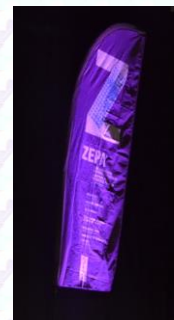


The first network to be set up was Art'Urb, in 1997, around artistic exchanges between three outdoor arts festivals based in France and in the UK. It was supported by Interreg France (Channel)-England, the ERDF-funded cross-border cooperation programme, which will also support the successive projects up to 2014.

From 2001 to 2006, the network brought together four partners and became PECA (European Centre for Artistic Creation), focusing on developing outdoor arts creation centres.

Since 2008, these exchanges have opened up, in France from Brittany to the Northern Region, and in the UK from Cornwall to Norfolk. Between 2008 and 2012, nine partners created ZEPA 2 (European Zone of Artistic Projects), to increase and strengthen such exchanges based on commissioning, programming, residencies, training and outreach, in partnership with about 60 companies including two associate companies (Generik Vapeur et NoFit State).

The ZEPA 2 project involved seven partners and ran from April 2013 to December 2014. About 90 companies (39 French and 51 UK) participated in the project, as well as about 60 arts organisations, local authorities, universities...and several thousand spectators. The project was based on three strands: touring and outreach to reach out to new areas, projects with universities and Anglo-French arts events.



The partnership with several universities has led to opening up the discussions around art in the public space and facilitated mobility opportunities for students and emerging artists by involving them in the various activities of the project. Two researchers followed the 18 months of the project, and made the ZEPA 2 actions their field work. Various artists' residencies involved a wide range of partners, students, pupils and volunteers.

Companies and partners have all contributed to create an 'interactive diary' for the network, a compilation of photos, texts, illustrations, drawings, watercolours, notes etc. set up online by Le Fourneau, communication lead for the network.

ZEPA 2 has managed to experiment new ways to engage with local people, whilst enabling the presence of artists in various areas. This project, which has required a considerable investment on a human level, will end at the end of December 2014. Discussions for a potential new project supported by Interreg V and potentially running till 2020 are underway.



## **Cross-border artistic projects: the UK perspective**

Joe Mackintosh, Chief Executive for SeaChange Arts in Great Yarmouth

Before 2007, Great Yarmouth had never heard about outdoor arts.

Today, the town hosts one of the most established festivals in the UK and an outdoor arts creation centre. None of it would have been possible without the partnership with France and without ZEPA. It has taken some time for partners to get to know and understand each other, understand the way they work, but it is this mutual understanding which led to the best use of the arts in the areas involved, in the limited time and the very specific objectives of ZEPA 2.



The UK partners of the project were SeaChange, Vivacity from Peterborough, Vivacity in Peterborough and the University of Winchester (in partnership with Hat Fair). They created the Fete Franglais, an event with a strong identity which toured to places where culture is very limited or inexistent, but by partnering with existing events gathering several thousand spectators.

SeaChange have also encouraged professional development and collaboration with universities, involving students in various projects, setting up workshops with French company Les Cubiténistes, offering a carte blanche to emerging or established artists (eg Generik Vapeur, Tony Clifton Circus or Coco Loco). Intensive outreach has enabled an increase sense of belonging to a place.

In terms of impact, the results were positive. With a reduced budget from its phase 1, ZEPA 2 has succeeded in broadening its action, including from a geographical point of view. Many companies were involved, even beyond performing,



and the trust between partners meant that that they could push the artistic exploration and experimentation further.

However, maintaining public funding is still necessary for the development of outdoor arts. If they are more and more established as an art form in the UK, many still consider them as cheap entertainment, as a way to liven up an event, at the service of something else. In ZEPA 2, the EU funding, injected in small local events, raised the quality of such events. The challenge is sustainability, and passion is the key. But the current climate is tough, budgets for culture have been cut down and there is a strong pessimism. The positive results need to be put forward, and there is a need to highlight how outdoor arts can inspire people.

Daniel Andrieu notes that the Interreg V managing authority will be based in Norfolk, and SeaChange will be the lead partner of a next project.

The 2020 EU strategy is based on economic development and employment, but many, including the ZEPA partners have fought for culture to be part of the Channel Programme (the only crossborder Programme in which culture is mentioned).



## **Le regard de deux chercheuses sur un projet artistique transfrontalier**

Jean-Pierre Marcos, Director of Pôle National Cirque et Arts de la Rue d'Amiens, ZEPA1 lead partner, introduced the two researchers who have observed and analysed the ZEPA 2 practices over the last 18 months. He recalls that studying art in the public space contributes to the necessary research on local community engagement.

### **The art of 'décalage': encounters between artists, communities and place** Nuala Morse, Cultural Geographer, University of Winchester

The study presented is the result of an observation carried out over four months (from July to September 2014) in Hampshire, Cambridgeshire and Norfolk, involving touring and outreach, and aiming at developing relationship between artists and local communities with low engagement.

This programme, free, was developed in partnership with small local events and festivals, held in rural areas and small towns, and implied the tour of 5 French companies and with workshops involving local groups and higher education institutions.

The observation focused on the various forms of participation, and on how such artistic interventions can connect communities and places. An ideal outcome would be to develop a critical grammar enabling understanding, analysing and evaluating such actions.

A first concept, 'décalage' seems relevant. The different meanings of this concept lead to different impacts. The word has not got an accurate translation in English. It defines difference, a rift, an interval, something slightly off-the-wall.

In its etymological sense, it means the act of 'unwedging'. Here, 'décalage' does not mean 'breaking' as the link is not broke. The aim is to study the social dimensions of outdoor arts.

The show '*Musée de la vie quotidienne*' from Les Cubiténistes was the most performed show, and the company led various workshops. The observation was mainly focused on this. *Musée de la vie quotidienne* consists of setting up a photo lab in the street and invites passers-by to have their photos taken, smiling or pulling a face. 1000 took part, 360 photos were developed.



The notion of play is central to the show, as it transforms the street and encourages people to take part in this transformation, often as a family or as a group. The artists, dressed in orange, barely speak English but they make themselves understood with gesticulation, and passers-by, often shy at first, take part. This playful dimension is complemented by a more emotional, almost intimate dimension. Les Cubiténistes say they just want to bring happiness to participants. An example is that young lad, who will go back in jail for having broken the terms of his release, and asks for a photo of his pregnant girlfriend and himself, to show how much he loves her and thinks of the future baby. Or this young migrant, recently arrived to the UK, speaking little English, who skypes the show to his friends, on the other side of the world.

Even if the participants spend little time in the *Musée*, the show creates moments of sociability and conviviality, almost a feeling of 'being together' that can also be found in the workshops led by Les Cubiténistes. The French artists worked with local artists, and local groups and students, to create installations and decorative signs for the festivals in Peterborough and Great Yarmouth. 100 people took part and produced 200 boards. There, it was physical participation; and creating so many boards in chain created a bond between participants who said they enjoyed such collective work. They were quite excited about the idea of seeing their art work exhibited in town and attend the festival for the first time with their families and friends.

Play, affective and social dimensions are the first elements emerging from the 'décalage' produced by the encounter with artists, places and people, both individually experienced and shared, the show bringing an imaginary dimension to the day-to-day life.

The forms of participation are the second aspect this study is considering. The objective of the UK partners was to reach out to new audiences, many of which being isolated from cultural activities. They were hoping that local authorities would take ownership of the events, which was the case for the painting workshops. But limited time was felt as an obstacle for purposeful engagement for some. Participants



appreciated the opportunity to work with French artists, but they were not necessarily related to the groups' agenda. In fact, short term might reduce the impact of artistic intervention as well as local engagement in the creative process. It is important to distinguish between a show as *participatory art*, and participations to arts *projects*.



'Participation' and engagement carry different meanings, values and expectations, which correspond to a 'semantical *décalage*'. In the ZEPA 2 activities, the different partners (producers, local authorities, artists), did not put the same meaning behind these terms, and there was an obvious lack of clarity between the different levels on which the project was supposed deliver. It is never simple to evaluate social practices, collaboration models, long-term participation, but a lack of clarity at the start of the project can lead to tensions.

The concept of participation, studied in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, can be found in various sectors: social practice, community art, socially-engaged, interventionist or collaborative arts, amongst others. But it is important to distinguish participatory arts per se, which outcome is the 'work of art', the value of which is recognised as such by the 'art world' and its critics, and the participatory art *project*, which tends to emphasise on process and ethical criteria – and which value here lies in the participants' experiences.

Such distinction indicates that social and artistic judgments do not easily merge. Outdoor art can bring a certain nuance to these debates, as their participatory strategies are based on the dynamic between the work and the audience. However, art in public spaces does not necessarily lead to inclusion or participation.

Also, cultural contexts are different in France and in the UK, and this has an impact on the notion of '*décalage*'. In France, the development of infrastructure in favour of outdoor arts has facilitated a relative autonomy and has recognised the value of this art form. In the UK, outdoor arts are instruments used by official bodies to deliver cultural interventions, and the artists have a civic role. The funding is related to community engagement, to develop skills and confidence: art per se is no longer enough and some argue it is a form of instrumentalisation. In this context, engagement needs to be discussed at the start of a community art project.

Outdoor arts are ephemeral, but leave physical legacy (like the boards painted by Les Cubiténistes), and on an emotional level, they can be related to the desire of making an impact (which is requested by various European programmes).

Jean-Pierre Marcos highlights that outdoor arts, through their local mode of intervention, do provide a sense of '*décalage*' to local people's reality. To the notion of '*décalage*', he suggests adding the idea of 'unblocking' ('*déblocage*'), ie breaking down the barriers.

## **Art in the plural: outdoor arts from local resource to cross-border organisation**

HeeKyung Lee, Sociologist, associate researcher to UMR 7217, CNRS, Paris 8

The first part of this research looks at the European project ZEPA 2 as a purposeful construction.

The study observed the French partners. From a working-class family background, they grew up away from Paris (where arts and cultural careers generally were) but they have managed to use the local area as a resource to bring a new perspective on culture, transforming their social 'misfortune' into artistic wealth.

They form a generational group, supporting the values of cultural democratisation. They have a fair approach to artistic forms, consider sharing as a core value, culture as a new deal for 'popular education' (as in 'people's education outside of the school system'), generating local culture. The production of emotions is at the heart of their work, and they consider the artistic dimension as a global project for society. Local work/outreach has often been rejected by the art world, which preferred other perspectives as a means for recognition. The French partners 'forced' the Government to acknowledge them, and outdoor arts became legitimate around 1997-1998.

Their core values rely on humbleness, linked with a culture of proximity, the principle of genuineness of performing arts work, local recognition as assertiveness and the victory of the 'popular', in other words the democratic creativity and the absence of distinction between daily life and cultural life. They rise against the institutional downgrading of the 'popular', and resist the established order by bringing to people something different to what they see on TV or read in the papers.

ZEPA has enabled these people who share such common values to become an organised group. ZEPA 2 has helped them build a shared resource from an artistic and cultural transnationality, based on the idea of sharing, and on the realisation that 'each of us was already doing it in their local area'; it is, in other words, a way to consider Europe on a local level.



**Students collective Push Plus, with 'Bouchée à la reine'**



The construction of a crossborder dynamics has relied on a laboratory for artistic creation, programming and outreach which attracts local audiences or audience from outside, and helps accommodating groups for which public spaces can be a danger (children, old or disabled people). The implementation of an ephemeral Anglo-French outdoor arts common platform has enabled the crossborder poetics to operate.

ZEPA 2 has also been a laboratory of excellence for exchanges between knowledge and art, facilitating a joint work between practitioners and academics, at seminars, conferences, workshops, bringing together various disciplines (performing arts, architecture...) some of which only starting to raise their interest towards outdoor arts. ZEPA 2 has encouraged transmission.

ZEPA 2 is a crossborder market, opened towards an international dimension. The French companies presented in the UK were quite established and were considered as an artistic novelty there. The French partners tended to invite more small-scale shows and brought them out (in festivals such as Fish&Chips or Picardilly Street). This has helped developing a crossborder sensitivity and opening up to potential joint progress.

When artists perform on the other side of the Channel, the 'recipients' (audience, programmers) take ownership of their shows, and on their return, the artists carry an enhanced capital.

Art and local development have often been studied through a social and economic perspective, in terms of turnover for creative industries and value-for-money analysis. But culture also has a non-profitable value: an area with a wide cultural offer is more desirable; its attractiveness and its symbolic capital increase. Cultural activities reinvigorate local networks.

The construction of joint resources is the driver of outdoor arts. It is sort of 'economy of sharing', where 'sharing' is the founding principle of local dynamics. Taking free access as common ground, outdoor arts are not as such 'free', as they are the object of a spontaneous or organised feedback from the audience or the volunteers. The local community shares their homes, the volunteers sort out transport, hosting arrangements, clean the venues.

The 'outdoor arts effect' can therefore be summerised as the symbolic revolution of an 'art of nothing', carrying an esthetical revolution of the technics of expression and a symbolic revolution of the place of the artists and the arts in the daily life, of the object of reception, of the relation between the individual and its environment and of the way to practice the art.

Daniel Andrieu wonders how to explain to funders that outdoor arts are not 'free' as such even if the artists don't request a financial compensation, but that there is a 'gift-counter gift' approach. How to explain that outdoor arts are essential to tackle intellectual and emotional poverty?



HeeKyung Lee: It is the strength and weakness of outdoor arts. The (known) impact does not always appeal to the political power hence a exposure issue. Beyond the art, the communities involved in ZEPA felt that they participated in something together, at crossroads between political and poetic. An art form (theatre, dance, visual art) presented in the street always becomes something different.



The first afternoon finished on these two presentations. The concept of 'décalage', with its dimensions of play, emotions, individually or collectively perceived, as well as the notion of 'sharing', echo the idea of a shared capital/resource, not only between transnational partners and artists but also for the local community to whom such activities (shows, workshops) are aimed.

But how is it specific to 'outdoor arts'? In this context, where is the border with the other forms of 'participative art' performed outdoor? Could we not consider that public celebrations like carnivals create the same 'gift counter gift' dynamics? One could imagine that this shared cross-border resource developed within the ZEPA projects can still be used as a laboratory by opening up to other experience from other artistic forms, or beyond (environment, tourism, health...)

### Cross-border cultural actions: challenges and perspectives

Thomas Perrin, Lecturer in Spatial Planning and European Studies at Université de Lille I  
Lecturer in Spatial Planning and European Studies at Université de Lille I, TVES Laboratory

A distinction needs to be made between the restrictive approach to culture – as in 'intellectual and artistic activities'- and its anthropological approach, involving traditions, costumes, productions specific to a group, a community.

Cultural development first focused on audience development, and then the post-WW2 vision of culture as a public resource which can benefit to all was questioned after 1968, in favour of a more democratic-individual approach.

Around 1982-1983, regional devolution and regionalisation focused on local development in which culture has a role to play. A notion of development follows, development of and through cultural economy, when cultural industries become creative industries.

Cultural policies are either based on cultural democratisation concentrating on education, or on cultural democracy recognising the diversity of esthetical expressions without hierarchy and the broader forms of intervention. The latter leads to cross-sector cultural policies, where culture is linked to broader challenges, such as sustainability, citizenship, social cohesion, planning and attractiveness (see Agenda 21).





The notion of generalised 'creativity' is originally Anglo-Saxon (Australia in 1994, USA in 1997, UK in 1998); it aims to bring together culture and economy in a virtuous circle, on a local, regional, national and supranational level (EU, OECD, UNESCO, UN). Since 1998, the European Union has produced an increasing number of reports and action plans for a creative economy, which is now the name of its latest programme: Creative Europe. From then on, cultural development is envisaged in a social and economic dimension. On a cross-border level, cultural action is a practice with a variety of entries (tourism, IT, urban development, environment...).

The 2020 European strategy focuses on a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The cross-border cooperation programmes will have to concentrate their funding on four of the eleven designated priorities, with the possibility of **culture fitting in the priorities for research, SMEs competitiveness, protection of the environment, social inclusion and lifelong learning education**. The main priorities for the Channel programme are: innovation in response to the economic and social challenges, transition towards a low-carbon economy, local area attractiveness and fair and inclusive development.



Culture can find its place in the attractiveness of the cultural and natural heritage and innovation, in the social innovation, training, support to disadvantaged communities...The themes to explore are **citizen participation in terms of audience development and the promotion of European construction in times of identity crisis**, social, technological and esthetical innovation, placing the cross-border aspect as a laboratory for diversity, and training/education as skills development and professional integration.

Following this rather 'technical' though necessary presentation to understand the European challenges and contexts, the participants' reactions vary:

- On the idea of inclusion, *Daniel Andrieu* highlights that outdoor arts can reach thousands of spectators, but people watching the festival fringe shows in the town centre are often not the same as those watching the more demanding artistic forms of the official programme.
- *Amos Fergombé* warns against the disappearance of the word 'art' in such European programmes and asks 'What is the place of the artist in the European work-in-progress?'. **Thomas Perrin confirms that even in the UK, the 'all creative' is being questioned**, and *Daniel Andrieu* warns against the instrumentalisation of the artist.
- *Anne Le Goff* notes the flexible and innovating approach that arts and cultural organisations have had towards these programmes.
- *Michèle Bosseur* recalls that the expression 'Europe for peace', at the foundation of its construction is no longer used.
- *Daniel Andrieu* regrets that the European budget, on a crossborder level, had not been fully spent, because of a lack of dialogue between the technical services and the elected members.



- *Uwe Derksen* explains that in the UK, the notion of creativity has now moved from the artistic field to the management, business and engineering sector. **Today, the danger is that the art will need to justify itself to show that it is creative.** But the critical dimension of the art must be preserved.

Thomas Perrin answers that the artist's critical approach to the world could be of interest for the political power, in order to transform it, in times when it is necessary to change models (economical, environmental...). The EU puts it out to the citizens to propose such new models.

**At this stage of the discussions, concerns should be raised about the reactions of some of the participants following Thomas Perrin's presentation. Some people did not understand why they should "support Europe's own marketing campaign", others wonder why "Brussels challenges cultural organisations to invent radically different and innovative models".**

**However, European leaders are clear: to face up to the US giant and the emerging countries such as China, India and Brazil, in a global world, new strategies must be implemented to keep up, especially in the cultural sector, a sector which in some ways is part of a market (particularly the creative industries market). To play the European game and request EU funding requires a level of understanding and acceptance towards its challenges. But organisations can also look elsewhere, and apply for other sources of funding and/or other ways to build Europe.**

### **Key points from group discussions**

Four themes, four groups, multiple discussions.

The topics suggested, related to the current EU programmes, particularly the cooperation programmes, have raised a lot of questions, often unanswered, but highlighting various examples and areas to explore.

### **Culture-Education-Training**

The 'smart growth' objective in the EU 2020 strategy refers to innovation and research, as well as education, the ultimate goal being employment and employability.

- ZEPA 2 commissioned two studies observing and analysing outdoor arts and the place of the art in public spaces. What training could be developed to continue such research activities, involving various disciplines (geography, sociology, urban planning etc.)?
- Research must be embedded in cultural projects to increase understanding of the sector. How should cultural organisations and universities work together (particularly around social cohesion, key topics in outdoor arts?). How can the knowledge produced be recognised by and shared with the political power?

Hence the importance of **texts, essays, reports, publications, to share and create a long term legacy.** It is also essential for **researchers and artists to work together from the development phase of a project, in a research-action-creation process.**

## Nature and culture

As part of the Channel cooperation programme, the natural environment is considered as an economic resource with a growth potential to be exploited, and as a shared cultural and natural heritage\* which needs preserving and enhancing.

*\* The expression is understood according to the UNESCO definition, making the distinction between natural and cultural heritage (tangible: movable, removable, underwater or in the event of armed conflict; intangible: oral traditions, performing arts, rituals)*

- What do we mean by 'natural environment' when we talk about outdoor arts? Is it nature? Or would the 'natural environment' for outdoor arts be rather urban? Depending on the focus, nature, from an 'urban' point of view, can be related to an idea of folklore Vs an innovative creation process. How to break misconceptions?

- What relations do artistic creation and event organisation have with nature? Is the question of the environment, sustainable development in the choice of material, hosting the audience and the artists...

- What relations do shows and events have with the natural, built and/or human heritage (see UNESCO definition)? **How can a place reveal a show and vice versa?**

## Culture and trans-sector work

Reminder: trans-sector work is one the development challenges across European cooperation programmes.

The concept of 'cluster' (group of partners from different sectors) is central. Europe encourages organisations to increase smart specialization approaches through the development of clusters in sectors identified as 'strategic'.

This concept must be understood as a **skills network**, involving people from various jobs and expertise, a collective intelligence to build a common project (another central theme).

The difficulty lies in **establishing a common language** and shared outcomes between these sectors (cultural, political, business), hence a **requirement for transparency, and for shared objectives agreed by all partners of the cluster**.

'Positive externality' is another concept to bear in mind when working cross-sector: the idea that an organisation creates an external effect through its activity which benefits an unrelated third party organisation.

- In ZEPA 2, trans-sector work was implemented between art and research.

How can we push it further in ZEPA 3, in order to open up new opportunities for students, and have an economic impact through professional integration? (eg the permanent experimental workshop on art in public spaces involving Brest-based University and Fine-arts School.

- From the Peterborough example of positive collaboration with local shops and businesses (eg an email announcing the festival sent to about 20,000 shopping centre customers), how can we work with local chamber of commerce, in order to develop audiences (in terms of co-programming, volunteers involvement...)

- How can we work with digital technologies to develop new means of communication? (ex1: instead of looking for sponsors to refurbish the furniture of a castle, why not fundraising through an app presenting the actual furniture during the visit? Ex2: develop apps collecting feedback from spectators)
- How to work together better with tourism? How to develop joint promotional documents between tourist offices and festivals (ex. Discover shared heritage thanks to performing arts; develop audience surveys).
- **In practice, two types of trans-sector work seem to emerge:**
  - **Through local outreach** (local authority services, voluntary organisations, elected members, etc.), as part of council strategic plans.
  - **Projects involving artists with other sectors**, working together from the initial development phase of a project.
- As part of a Channel cooperation project, trans-sector work requires **mapping existing skills in specific areas**, and implement multi-disciplinary teams involving artists, sociologists, geographers, architects, urban planners, tourism professionals, etc. to jointly develop projects.

## Culture and local development

The topic was first considered through an economic angle.

- The relationships between cultural professionals and the business sector are slow and difficult to develop.
- It is important to develop new models, involving companies, communities and the charity sector.
- It would be interesting to explore cooperations between businesses from both sides of the Channel.

The second group discussed the role of culture in local development.

- It is necessary to improve the way we measure, monitor and evaluate the impact, in order to emphasise the role of culture in audience development and economic growth.
- In the current worldwide climate, organisations must keep a **dynamic and ambitious vision and not just protect their existing granted activity**.
- Creative projects based in a particular town should extend beyond the festivals and events (ex. Great Yarmouth is building a carousel-bar to attract neighbouring populations outside of the festival season, to also generate income for the festival).

Time to call the meeting to a close; Daniel Andrieu is pleased to see that the discussions will hopefully feed the participants' reflexions.

The quality of this professional conference was made possible by this long-term collaboration set up back in 1997 by the founders of this cross-border cooperation, who



have welcomed (and still will) any new partner by facilitating dialogue between two countries with very different vocabulary, practices and contexts.

The context of the new cross-border cooperation programme, with its challenges in constant evolution, enabled participants to reflect on and inform their individual and collective practices. And the discussions and debates here in Loos-en-Gohelle offered a moment to think and reflect, to better consider various horizons, if not broader.



**Floriane Gaber,**  
**January 2015**  
*(translation Mathilde Vautier)*