

**Final Report for CETLD Project;**

**Design and Traditional Indian Village Manufacturing**

Sept 27 2009

Chris Rose project leader

Seainin Passi and David Hood student ambassadors

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**1. Overview of Project**

The project was set up to enable design students to understand differential issues of globalisation and its challenges in a development context. It's purpose was to help individual students to work away from the general and towards the particular in clarifying their own specific applications of these interests in their own work as designers and makers, while benefiting from a group enterprise that was broadly thematically linked but not based upon lectures. The scheme used a distinctive method to bring introductory ideas about this challenging subject into the student's own experience, building a longer-term dialogue and support structure into four semesters of a three year undergraduate experience, more than is customarily possible within the present segmented curriculum.

The student group was convened to promote the growth of a peer-to-peer critical awareness support network, the content of which was established by the participants and subsequently considerably developed through discussion, work in progress, and field visits in India. The process was guided but not prescribed by the project leader. It built up its own resources and references, inspired by unique shared experience on the way. The presence of two ex-graduates of the 3D programme assisted the group negotiate possible anxieties and deal with the challenges of wishing to be adventurous at an early stage of L2, given that the graduates' prior experience of the whole degree programme was brought into this project in addition to the project's agreed format.

The ex-graduates of WMCP (Seainin Passi and David Hood) currently studying for their Masters degree at RCA were teamed up with the four current Brighton undergraduates in 3D Materials or Design programmes. Moving from the latter stages of level one studies, through level two and into the beginning of level three, the structure provided a consistent yet maturing 'satellite' study and research resource for all the participants who in their own individual ways had practice-based or career interests in issues connected with sustainable material culture, social justice, vernacular design and making, and creative development connected with the work of NGOs or multicultural issues in design. Partners to the scheme are the SRISHTI college of Art Design and Technology, Bangalore, who provided generous in-kind support and Faculty hours.

The programme has developed broadly under the original plan, with a late-stage change by the inclusion of a student self-funded visit to India to visit collectives and NGOs in Karnataka, as a student initiative to develop their agenda from the scheme. The final tranche of funds was not released. Students have prepared materials for a simple booklet of outcomes but this has not yet been finalised.

1.0 The project to date has included;

- the student ambassador visit to the Bangalore Region hosted by Srishti College of Art Design and Technology with Faculty member Arvind Lodaya.
- two design scholarship seminars outlining the cultural and disciplinary areas of focus with students and staff, drawing on the previous research visits sponsored by the University of Brighton and Rhode Island School of Design in 2005 and 2007.
- Two meetings held outside term time in summer 2008 and April 2009 by the project leader to begin to develop the research agenda with the student ambassadors and four other participating students, with a view to further developing this agenda with the whole student group in the autumn term 08. This arrangement is in keeping with the peer-to-peer principle of project thematics.
- a further meeting between the Project Leader and SRISHTI faculty member Radha Chandrashekeran at Rhode Island School of Design (October 2008) in preparation for her conference call with the student group in Brighton.
- continued email correspondence with faculty at SRISHTI to develop research references and contemporary developments in India with the SRISHTI school.
- maintained email correspondence with Students and Student Ambassadors assisting with student-initiated arrangements for an additional visit to Bangalore and NGOs and Collectives in the region for Easter '09.
- project leader visiting Brighton on three occasions in 2008 / 2009 to work with the student group and for design scholarship seminars, including the India Project segment contributing to the WMCP/3D Academic Programme 'Creative Week' in January '09 during which the India Group had some dedicated time to the project. The most recent and final student meetings with the Project Leader were April 2009 and July 2009. See 'Student Feedback' below.

### **July 2009.**

The project leader met with the group to discuss the selection of two key images, commentary and 'concluding reflective statement' with the participants. At this meeting, one student was unable to attend for practical reasons connected with relocation.

These materials were submitted for inclusion on the revised CETLD website on 14 Sept.

A one-hour sound recording was made of the discussion, which includes student comment on the relationships between the CETLD project and their regular study, its usefulness in critique especially with regard for preparing for self directed study, and their strong desire to somehow recreate this framework for critical development for the next cohort in the programme.

### **April 2009**

On their return from the field visits arranged in conjunction with the Srishti School, the project leader met with the student group to listen together with them sharing perceptions and personal interests, what was specifically noticed etc. Students have collected images, notes, sketchbook material.

## **History and Content**

### **February 2009**

1.1 The 'India Project Group' has been developing both practice-based and contextual enquiry inspired by considering the collisions of value systems and practices evident at interfaces of traditional and contemporary material culture, specifically those being engaged by NGOs and collectives working with tribal village cultures in Karnataka, and by the developing mission of the Srishti College of Art, Design and Technology, Bangalore. (Founder Director Geetha Narayanan) with whom the project maintains a working link.

1.2 The group met Mondays in the autumn term of '08-9 and continued in spring '09 with weekly meetings. The group formed a concentrated workshop within the larger 3D/W MCP

*creative week* at the start of spring term '09 together with Chris Rose who visited from the USA for this week, and with the temporary addition of other L1 & L2 students in that segment. The 'India project' group thus provided a focus within *creative week*. Because of typical required curricular pressures upon students engaging with CETLD projects, *creative week* was used to provide a concentrated research/ outcome space for members of the group, who devised and carried out a number of self contained individual mini-projects in the Brighton area linked to themes in the group's discussions. Two examples of these are 1/ a video interview visit to examples of self employed repair and renewal operations in Brighton, and 2/ the group recreation of a 'Kolam' pavement drawing outside grand parade. The Kolam or Rangoli traditional artform is a women's meditative practice marking dawn at the threshold of habited spaces and outward connections in society and nature. The individual student films, interviews and topics were presented to the other WMCP/3D L1 and L2 students at the conclusion of the week. Two group discussions were held with the project leader, who also did individual tutorials to consider possible avenues for individual future research with the participants.

### **23 October 2008**

1.3 A skype conference discussion was held with Radha Chandrashekar from the SRISHTI School of Design, Bangalore, at which she posed the following reflective personal question for the participants; "what is your *given* identity, your *cultural* identity and your *chosen* identity? The purpose of the question was to instigate a discussion that would help frame directions in the project- since the questions usually take people by surprise and are not easy to answer without consideration and research.

### **10-14 November 2008**

1.4 A seminar/workshop was held with second year 3D/WMCP students with project leader Chris Rose during which the participants described the development of their individual interests, themes and starting points. These two-way interviews were recorded on video and sent to Arvind Lodaya in India. We expect to receive an equivalent video project discussion from the student group in India. In the Brighton workshop, each individual's statement was 'reported' to camera by a listener, in order that each contributor could 'hear' their own attempt to articulate what was significant and reflect on the discrepancies between what they are thinking and how it comes over to others. Such 'discrepancies' came up in discussion at the design scholarship seminar. (see below).

The approach used in this discovery of themes and issues of meaning personal to the individual student, is consistent with the project philosophy of 'modelling' these processes rather than simply describing or requiring them.

### **Design Scholarship seminar 13 November- content**

1.5 We started with the following concluding statement that Chris Rose had been invited to write by students at Rhode Island School of Design who had formed the [www.respond-design](http://www.respond-design) network, and who had produced a publication on future-oriented design practice titled 'Hi-Res'. This was an exhibition and catalogue of student instigated work, and the publication included texts by Nabeel Hamdi, Charlie Cannon and others.  
(><http://www.risd.edu/hires/>)

Christopher Rose writes;

In all the places I have met students of art and design over the past twenty years, in Helsinki, London, Oxford, Paris, Delft, Warsaw, Berlin, Naples, Bangalore, Sydney, Brisbane and here in the USA, the desire is tangible; for design education to move out of the shadow of the gross consumer business model and to really address the diversity of transferable skills needed by the informed designer of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The evidence

surrounds us of a dysfunctional material culture, yet in our immediate future we really do have the potential and real techniques to move beyond this; to inhabit the materials we are dependent upon, and not merely deploy them. In the context of our vision for materials, Buckminster Fuller observed that an 'important idea' for society took 25 years to register with people, and that a 'really important idea' took 50 years. He said that in 1974, so we are well into the 50-year span he was thinking of.

Learning from nature (from our own nature as well as from the 'other' natures) is essential if we are to grasp the co-dependency at the heart of a living ecology. Although it is true that nature needs only half a chance to draw breath and recover the living imperative at its core, it is half a chance we still have to give it. This applies both internally and externally. Multiple single voices add up to steps we may take in a different direction; away from the exploitative and the empty, and towards a socially constructed material culture; a culture in which the question "Who pays, and who gains?" is more transparently answerable.

'Hi-Res' is a grassroots event. Real design of a humanistic nature is a grassroots process, and a good position to be in for the design schools of the future is to continue to seek ways to nurture this emergent paradigm.

1.6 The Brighton seminar continued with an introduction to the ideas behind the CETLD funded project with Srishti; namely

- to consider vernacular craft and making practices at the fringes of globalisation,
  - to look at interpretations of necessity, commodification, and 'development'
  - the possibilities of gaining an extended perspective on issues of importance concerning material culture in society by the inclusion of different voices
  - to encourage an emergent process among second year undergraduate students that will further their own research capabilities for further study
  - to build links and references to support further work in a critical design context
  - to model a different type of student based pedagogy addressing urgent and meaningful issues of our time, where the dialogue rather than being *staff-student-staff*, is mediated by a third layer where recently graduated students who have completed the same complex degree programme as the undergraduate participants but have in addition completed a PGCE and have their own newly developing practices invested in issues of social justice and material culture. This structure produces from the participants an emergent agenda into which issues of inward and outward facing articulation, rapidly developing links, activities and proposals, and a research based structure for the experience of the participants is contributed to but not defined by the academic staff and project leader. The process is better described as a negotiated agenda between students, facilitated by and periodically critiqued by the project leader and other staff, in this case with the Srishti faculty during the field visit. There have been early discussions with students and staff about whether this pattern could be generalised and employed within the **MDes/MFA** structure as a distinctive peer-to-peer unit. In the project leader's view taken together this project experience represents a forward thinking educational experience outside the existing paradigm of undergraduate teaching, learning and research. This is capable of being mapped onto any collaborative or cross-disciplinary theme. This view would appear to have early confirmation given the positive student feedback.
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- Ronald Jones, Director of Interdisciplinary Studies at Konstfach gave a seminar at RISD in September 2008 at which the following selected points were emphasized. For truly cross-disciplinary studies a space must be provided with a risk of failure. An aversion of risk can be seen as an aversion to responsibility. It is necessary to risk failure to achieve a break through. Breakthrough is equated with high value. Mono- multi- inter- trans- disciplinary leads to hybrid practices.

1.7 The seminar group was reminded of the initial questions posed by the students at the outset and which were noted by Dr. Ian Fairweather of Manchester University as being of equal interest for his students of anthropology and sociology;

- *Are there any universals in material culture?*
- *Can a cross-cultural design process have any meaning?*
- *Which direction does 'expertise' travel?*
- *What is place-based education?*
- *what can we learn here in our own environment from one of the frontiers of cultural displacement?*
- *What can be learnt from an older generation (older culture)?*

We watched a video of *Kolams of Pondicherry* which gave good examples of this traditional vernacular women's art form which could be regarded as a procedural design practice in contemporary terms (procedural design relates to evolutionary or systematic growth of relevance to biomimetics, materials engineering, and algorithms being researched in Digital Media).

See > <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbQcGdyT86M>

And with the help of Christine Sterne we compared these with the study of Cymatics (formative effects of sound and resonance in materials)

See > <http://www.cymatics.org/>

And > <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1iXY2BE1S8Q>

1.8 Coming out of the discussion of Kolam and other vernacular practices, there was a discussion of the implications of an appreciation of 'multiple literacies' as distinct from a Eurocentric view of literacy as it applies to the written word.

It was observed that written, syntactically correct language is associated with control, decision making, notions of authenticity, and with definition and ownership, while what is 'heard' i.e., conveyed by interpretation of sound, is associated with identity, character, individuality and nuance through dialect. The *discrepancies* to be detected here, between different expressions of the 'same' thing, can be taken to imply that additional content exists and that we need a strategy to get to it. (It is significant that sound and practices related to sound experienced in many pre-industrial settings is highly evocative and locative, in contrast to for example the contemporary phenomenon of dangerous levels of noise pollution which creates separation, insulation, interruption and many constraining effects upon individuals and society). (See attached '**Language and Literacies**' PDF appended)

Discrepancy (within the workings of the senses generally) is an important aspect of the constructed nature of sensory experience and knowledge. It is here that relationships between the *practice* of kolam drawing (being based upon a sequence of actions that eventually lead to a completed whole), and the *relational* properties of an ecological theory of perception and action, begin to be seen.

The complete discussion was recorded for sound and can be heard (here\*- when included on web)

## **2. Aims and Objectives**

*Explain any changes to the original aims/objectives outlined in the project plan.*

2.1 The objectives and rationale remained as in the proposal and as elaborated in subsequent correspondence in answer to queries regarding methodology. The pedagogical

model of peer-to-peer development, facilitated by Chris Rose on the UK side and Arvind Lodaya in India, continued to form the basis of the work, with the intention of embracing an emergent content in response to the contexts identified. These include;

- social experience at the fringes of globalisation,
- the relations between the made object and concepts of meaning, and
- the role of the vernacular in mapping complexity.

In particular, learning about issues of meaning in one's own material culture by travelling outside its frame of reference and engaging with what has been inadequately referred to as the 'back story' of 20thC 'development' and consumer manufacture, and bringing back these perceptions to bear upon local conditions but within a developing critical dialogue made possible by the group working over the long term; these are common issues, individually inflected by the students. '*Working over the long term*' has emerged as an important theme for the students in their own perception, in contrast to short duration 'projects' within a curriculum. A blend of short experiences together with sustained thematic work becomes more achievable within the 4-year curriculum model and deserves further consideration.

2.2 Group project work supporting emergent agendas from student self-directed study in design in the broad area of globalisation, vernacular identity and social justice, is an area in need of development within teaching and learning in design. Topics connected to the 'Internationalisation of the Curriculum' also emerge from the project methodology.

2.3 The structural device of employing 'student ambassadors' was agreed through CETLD as a fundamental principle at the outset, including 1/ the participating students get to interview the ambassadors about the field research, and 2/ At the conclusion, the student ambassadors get to interview the participants about their experience on the project. See 'student feedback' for summaries of these.

### **3. Targets**

3.1 The targets have been met to date, with the exception of an application to the final 'Beyond Text' AHRC scheme, consideration of which was deferred until the students were interviewed following their return from India on 17 April 2009. (See '*AHRC*' under *project outputs*) Other components include the research period, communications with the Indian academic partner, the site visits carried out by the student ambassadors, and two design scholarship seminars and a student workshop each held in the CETLD. The planned schedule of the first participatory student project(s) was pushed from summer to autumn for timetabling reasons in discussion with 3D/WMCP staff. Additional discussions with interested 3D students occurred, one with the student ambassadors and one with the project leader, in the period May-Jul '08. The first stage of an emergent agenda was in place in summer '08. This has continued to develop and benefited from an intensive one-week workshop within the scheduled 'creative week' beginning spring term '09 was discussed with 3D/ WMCP staff in parallel with other focal groups on sustainability and materials.

An interim seminar with Chris Rose, following the skype call with Radha Chandrashekeran, was held with the student ambassadors at the CETLD on Nov 12 2008 when the project leader travelled to the UK for this purpose.

The student group is gathering material for the production of a 'Process Book' as one outcome from their work.

3.2 Delays occurred in connection with communication with the Indian partners, and a changed final stage plan was arranged; see below.

#### **3.2.1 Arvind Lodaya**

It transpired that it was going to be impracticable for Arvind Lodaya to visit the UK at the same time as *creative week* as originally envisaged. Delays in communication with India, a common issue, led to the proposed visit likely being too costly for the project, so a more

fruitful use of remaining funds was proposed at the time of the interim report. It turned out also that the students were fully occupied during *creative week* catching up with the outcomes from their own meetings up to that point, and that a new series of 'inputs' would not be the best thing to occur just then since they needed an opportunity to respond to their own ideas built up to date. Other curriculum demands from their main programme of study had crowded this out to date. This connection with a Srishti faculty member was however re-made as below;

### **3.2.2 Visit to SRISHTI and Karnataka**

In the meetings in February the whole student group decided to arrange their own visit in April '09 to the Karnataka region at their own expense, and subsequently made appointments to visit Geetha Narayanan (SRISHTI founder) and Arvind Lodaya (Research and special projects) at the Srishti campus, and to try to repeat at least one or possibly all site visits arranged for Seainin Passi and David Hood on their first visit in 2008. Lodaya formed a summer conference event for young people seeking to engage with meaningful work connecting to social justice (appended). This developed a theme that has been common to all the Brighton/SRISHTI links dating from the first in 2006/7 and before that during meetings at an international conference in 2004 (Haystack Mountain School of Craft conference with MIT). While at Srishti the Brighton student group mounted a workshop for Lodaya's student group. The project leader made a UK visit in April 09 to meet up with the student group to coincide with their return from India and assist with locating issues arising from the visit with the broader project development.

## **4. Project Outputs**

4.1 The two student ambassadors, Seainin Passi and David Hood made the field trips, travelling within the Karnatic region near Bangalore. In the event, and following discussions about refining the agenda for the visits, these took in three tribal village locations; two working with local NGOs and one without. The Brighton ex-graduates met twice with SRISHTI college founder/director Geetha Narayanan, and senior design faculty member Arvind Lodaya. This provided an opportunity to see potentials for the project to mesh with the SRISHTI activities with both local concerns and the internationalisation of design education.

The two Student Ambassadors have subsequently made presentations regarding this visit both to the student group, and in one of the Design Scholarship Seminars.

4.2 The correspondence between partners regarding what the project is, and what it is not; examining presumptions and collecting research references from both an anthropological/sociological and a design and consumption p.o.v.; this has begun to create a useful reference base for the participating students' further research, and the grounding of their practice related questions within differing areas of enquiry. This raw material has not yet been produced into a finished outcome. Should the final segment of funding be released it would be possible to fund a booklet (for example) combining this with the student observations. An illustrated critique of the themes engaged by the project would be a rich resource but is outside the scope of the CETLD scheme.

4.3 To date, the outputs comprise

4.3.1 A project 'process book' gathering a selection of materials, visuals, references and capturing the project design, is being prepared by the participating students. Its production has been delayed because there has been no response to the proposal to apply the unused/unreleased project balance, made in April 2009, to a modest print run of this. Otherwise it would be student funded.

4.3.2 A paper about the project and its process, possibly for the RSA in the autumn, other venues to be considered

4.3.3 the project leader has submitted a chapter proposal for A Way out of No Way: The Arts as Social Justice in Education (Arizona State University call for chapters in multi-authored book, chapter proposal jury outcome Sept 2009)

4.3.4 Project Partner Arvind Lodaya at SRISHTI has hosted a summer '09 conference titled 'NGO 2.0' addressing the international phenomenon of students in the design field increasingly demanding that their work be situated in a socially responsive and ethically considered context. The controversies surrounding NGO operations imply that a re-envisioned NGO model needs consideration. The student partnership with SRISTI has been a player in this scenario and may be suitable for representation in this event.

4.3.5 Bibliography of references has been compiled

4.3.6 Further outputs are anticipated in academic development (L4 Unit) and a student managed structured input to the newly situated "Creative Week" programme in 3D Design & Materials Practice. Further publication avenues have been discussed, e.g., 'Design Week' and 'Design Issues'

## **5. Project Outcomes**

A general outcome is the springboard opportunity and the momentum set up in the group for a broader utilisation of this peer-to-peer method of critical development within a redefined MDes/ MFA structure. It is particularly effective for collaborative ventures, partner schools and departments, and for a greater in depth preparation for research and self directed study than is currently the case. Student feedback and interviews make this clear, although in this case the group is small and the principles in need of developments for larger student groups. It is suggested that the group mount a new seminar/workshop in the autumn of 2009 to introduce this to staff and students. They have expressed a willingness and enthusiasm to do so and are hoping this becomes a reality.

5.1 Attendance at early project seminars by interested 3D/WMCP students demonstrates that the interest is there (in the implied project domain) as claimed in the original proposal. The Student Ambassadors have amassed a range of visual material together with notes from visits and interviews, creating a substantial agenda with which to support and frame future student projects. The student ambassadors continued to research other supportive materials, notably in 'place-based' and 'experiential' learning, as a result of their visit and with a view to their remaining contracted involvement with participating students.

5.2 The written and illustrative material for a "Process Book" that maps individual journeys in this project and developing the view of its critical value and contribution to forthcoming self-directed study; this could build up a more substantial web resource than has been supplied for the CETLD news update. There are audio clips of discussions and interviews to be included. An extract of student reflection is included below;

### **5.3 Student Reflections before and after**

Following the activity in creative week, the project leader asked each L2 undergraduate to forward two short texts, to help clarify the beginning point and the current perception of the student as to where this scheme had got them to date, and implications for next steps. Students wrote approx 300-500 words each. Below are sample responses, illustrative of a personal navigation of meaningful concepts supported by the project methodology;



<b><i>Beginning interest</i></b>	<b><i>Where I am now</i></b>
1 becoming aware of one's own culturally influenced mindset and its unconscious effect upon own work at college	project helped see the needs and effects of cross discipline colab. work and that 'my ideas' need a a method of social construction
2 overhearing project discussion before it started aroused curiosity, responded to a sense of energy and an intellectual journey being possible because of the language being used	interests that have always been there have been set free! energy and commitment. A space to clarify my ideas.
3 powerful early discussions connecting to material vernaculars that connect generations in meaningful ways that differ from commodification	awareness of possible disconnects between appearance and fuller appreciation of meaning in larger context.
4 an occupation therapist knows that direct making experience carries a profound foundation associated with health and wants to recontext-ualise that perception in a broader domain in the design and making environment of the art school and its implications for material culture.	As a mature student I have experienced an effective way of working together with other undergraduates, and my theoretical interest has begun to have a personal, practical realisation.

### **5.3.1 Student Feedback –from July 2009, project conclusion.**

Fuller representation of this and related materials from the students could form a web resource or a pedagogic case study for the L4 unit developments referred to. (It is particularly worth noting 5.3.3 para. 4)

### **5.3.2 Hayley Zierold**

A year on from the start of my involvement with this project, my thoughts have developed beyond my own expectations. I joined the "India project" out of curiosity and with an open mind. The combination of characters which make up the group has created a unique dynamic, within which we have developed mutual and individual interests. It has been, and will continue to be, an ideal arena to initiate, consider, and expand ideas. Ideas which have led me to develop on a personal level, and which have inevitably fed into my university work. We all recognize that the 'group' is a unique collaboration that has benefitted us all. The group has evolved over the past 12 months as have we individually. We begun with a definite hierarchy, of David & Seainin as the two (postgrads) heading up the group. This 'hierarchy' naturally dispersed a two months into the project as we developed a collective curiosity and found common interests to be delved into. We have discovered one another to be valuable resources, and through the project I have grown to really appreciate the diversity of the individuals within the group.

### **5.3.3 Marney Walker**

As an undergraduate student, this project continues to provide me with a thought provoking context for my personal interest: to consider what it means to make things by hand: on personal, physical, psychological and social levels. An opportunity for continuing reflection on the experience of studying design where there is a strong emphasis on workshop based practice.

The context of the India project: focussing on Bangalore, introduced me to another culture where the two worlds of accelerated commercial development and centuries old traditional hand making skills live side by side. Themes that emerged from our initial discussions: (innovation through necessity; what it means to make things by hand; passing on skills, place based learning) we first explored in our local environment: the course we are on, the

town we are living in, the atmosphere of excessive consumption. We were then able to test our ideas first hand in India with students in formal design training and young women practising crafts in a rural village.

Alongside our formal education this process gave us a place to learn without assessment or deadlines where we set our own criteria, timescales, meeting times and agendas. Our learning came from sharing each of our own enthusiasms, which began to merge and generate joint passions. We had access to the experiences and perspectives of the recent graduates as well as the insights, learning methods and resources provided by the project leader. We spontaneously set our own joint goals and projects including our self-funded trip to India.

A number of potential joint projects have come out of this group including two blogs, two books and ideas for a number of joint activities. The most frustrating thing is not having the time or funding to pursue these in more depth while our assessed studies continue to take priority.

Personally, it has provided me with a supportive and less competitive way to test and develop ideas. It has given me more meaningful insights into my particular area of interest: a considerable respect for the hand made, which is now the subject of my dissertation.

#### **5.3.4 Tania Pillay**

I originally joined the project, hoping to have a better understanding of the different views behind cultural displacement, Socially responsible design and design intervention. Though at the beginning I often could not even classify these thoughts, I knew that they connected to India and its relationship with design and craft. The group discussions and research has lead me to find new more specific interests, reminding me how endless these subjects are. I feel that these and other topics around India and countries like India will continually be a part of my work. They have helped to shape my approach to my work within design, as well as my work ethic itself. Specifically the process of emergent research, which worked well within the structure of our small group. I feel the intimate size of the group contributed to the honesty within the discussions. This process lead us to being challenged and supported within our thoughts. I also feel that working with those studying along side with me and those who are studying further (i.e., post graduate), helped to create a different dynamic to the group, one very different from our usual university setting.

Working on ideas as a group as well as individually ran side by side, each often informing the other. I feel that this was very exciting and resulted in approaches to work that I may have not considered within the past. I feel that the project and the people have had such a hugely positive influence on my growth both as a person, and a maker. Shaping the way I communicate and view my world around me.

#### **5.3.5 Seainin Passi**

The India project, for me, was initially a fantastic opportunity to work on a research project within the Brighton CETLD, with Chris Rose, and with a small group with connected interests within design materials practices.

Visiting India has had a huge impact on my view of the world and where I belong in it, the kind of person I want to be, and what it is I believe to be valuable. As I am studying my Masters at the RCA alongside my involvement with this project, the impact of visiting India upon my research and practical work is difficult to express! In short, I am indebted to the project as it has provided a platform that has supported the asking of questions, and allowed in-depth discussions where I previously felt on my undergraduate course this was unavailable. Issues, questions, thoughts or worries that I had felt in my BA, I now could share and discuss thoroughly. Along with the visit to India, which has inspired all of the current research within my work, it is this platform that has shaped, changed and informed

my personal practice at Masters level. Links have been created with the University in Bangalore, Srishti, and an NGO called The Timbaktu Collective, a working link I plan to continue to develop. A second trip to India provided an opportunity to further these relationships and it is hoped that this could be the beginning of a greater working relationship with a continuation the India Project and potentially the University of Brighton. Working with the students from Brighton provided an opportunity to continue and carry out my passion for education, and within this role there has been invaluable insight into the teaching and learning model Chris Rose proposed for the project. For me both facilitating and participating, a dual role created an integral dynamic within the group that showed in practice that teachers should not stop being learners. This project provided hands-on experience of this reality. This method of thinking shall continue to influence and inspire my role in education.

The India Project has helped shape my creative life, what I think, what I believe, and what I might be capable of achieving. It has provided an opportunity to support existing structures within the education system, whether at undergraduate or as in my case, postgraduate level. I deeply believe this project should find a method of continuation, developing within or alongside the current undergraduate curriculum; something that if it is possible I sincerely hope I may be a part of in its future!

### **5.3.6 David Hood**

On reflecting on the experience and process of the India project, and its impact on my personal practice and in the group I would immediately highlight the “specialness” of the collective group, both from a purely personal/supportive perspective but also quite importantly from an educational and practice point of view. This is something that is sometimes absent from a more rationalist and professional education, but it is missing in that a layer of the educational experience is greatly enhanced and deepened with its addition.

It is both interesting to observe and also explore the capabilities and practice potential facilitated in this model. From my individual view it has been a hugely inspiring experience to be involved with fellow students who have dedicated not just their time but also their passion and energy on top of a demanding year of compulsory study.

Their approach has undoubtedly driven the successes of the group and highlighted and strengthened my interest from an educational standing in this peer and autonomous method, and my confidence in pursuing and initiating it. In critical reflection of the project its weaknesses, being non-structured, not goal driven, meandering in certain aspects (in that respect there not enough meandering in higher education, nor the time or willingness to take a risk on it), having a clear absence of a superior or expert to name a conventional few, also emphasises its core and unique attributes, separating it from the characteristics of mainstream education. The project for me demonstrated great flexibility, breadth of interests and research, diversity of perspectives, adaptability in engaging other groups, research and experiments, while also negotiating and self-determining project restrictions and a path forward. Now that path appears to be at a crossroads to truly test the onward journey of this project, the group and the experiment as a whole.

### **5.4 Possible Future Link with Manchester**

Following the recommendation of the CETLD manager regarding academic contacts in anthropology/sociology, a promising link was made with Dr Ian Fairweather and his colleague Dr Soumhya Venkatesan at Manchester, with a view to establishing a cross-disciplinary seminar for students linking current themes in teaching and learning in sociology/anthropology with the art & design field of the project. Ian Fairweather has observed that the following questions that have been identified in the first student workshop are equally pertinent in his own field and which are worth structuring such a seminar around, namely;

- *Are there any universals in material culture?*
- *Can a cross-cultural design process have any meaning?*
- *Which direction does 'expertise' travel?*
- *What is place-based education?*
- *What can we learn here in our own environment from one of the frontiers of cultural displacement?*
- *What can be learnt from an older generation?*

**5.5 Developing 'concluded' outcomes** has been slow, largely because of the general issue of CETLD projects sitting outside the curricular base of the student's home course making it difficult for students to devote time to this 'additional' work. However, the student group commitment has been tremendously strong, creating its own momentum beyond the planned timeframe. Additionally, the focus of the work in the project requires long-term engagement in order to be meaningful, something that has become clear to the participants, who wish to include meaningful results in the project outcomes. While this may indicate that the nature of the project is essentially problematic for the CETLD funded projects concept, features of the participants study experience within this project have been extremely valuable as they will attest, and which it is planned to capture as best we can for the Centre. The project leader will assist with gathering a range of critical notes, examples of visual and conceptual research prompted by the project, together with a paper that develops and summarises the content, method, and experience of this pedagogical initiative.

### **5.6 World Events**

Within the period of the inception of this scheme to its present point, the world became a different place; with the sudden worldwide banking failure, the unsustainable excess of consumer materialism and energy dissipation becoming unavoidable, and the worsening situation regarding social justice and the rapid rise of indigenous group networking, issue-based non-governmental global collaboration as explored by Paul Hawken ('Blessed Unrest', see below, future links) and the student demand for socially relevant study experience becoming more widespread. (This as noted for example by Lodaya in the appendix to this document.) This conjunction of circumstances gave the project a sharpened presence.

### **5.7 V&A S.E.Asia collections**

Although the bid made provision for a liaison with the V&A study collection, it was disappointing that despite various efforts at coordination this did not occur for a variety of timetable reasons. However, the project leader has had continuing involvement with the Learning Trails project at the V&A and should this scheme be expanded a version of this linked to the present theme would be a distinctive example.

### **5.8 AHRC**

There remained a small grants scheme open within the 'Beyond Text' programme to May '09. A specific bid text to this was originally proposed and was considered but not ultimately pursued as it was decided by the project leader, following discussions with AHRC that the momentum within the student group was in a different direction to the intentions of this programme which had received many applications in the area of non-text based 'literacy'. The project leader's original intention was to have the students involved in a research bid but this turned out to be completely impracticable/unmanageable within his project. Such a student inclusion would however be important to a curricular-based version of this project methodology. The emerging potential mix of student identified issues, opportunity for institutional collaboration, and themes emerging from the design scholarship seminars, need to be considered together as a distinctive bid differentiating itself from other 'development' related projects already in existence. Since the student interest developed more along pedagogy, concept development and a shared research/study structure that was able to accommodate different student topics, it may be that a funded doctorate or other avenue

needs consideration for a next step. Srishti and UIAH Helsinki have some connection in this area and the existing academic links with both institutions made by the project leader over the past 6 years could be useful for this. Also potential institutional partners for work linking design, sociology and pedagogy could be Brighton, Manchester and Srishti. Rhode Island School of Design has some active 'on the ground' projects of a social inclusion theme, and the project leader was connected with these in 2009 through the 'Respond-Design' network. This is for further discussion with the Centre or its successor initiatives.

5.9 In light of the two scheme changes outlined above, it was proposed in April 2009 to vary the use of the balance of remaining funding in favour of 1/ paying the student ambassadors a third instalment of income for them to reflect the very significant amount of work over and above the original envisaged input and because of their commitment (not at the request of the project leader) and 2/ putting some print cost toward a process book that will compile the student ideas, observations, project pedagogy, and outcomes. This is an issue that remains outstanding.

**5.10 Future Link** with Manchester University in the fields of Anthropology and Sociology  
Dr Ian Fairweather of Manchester University has expressed an interest in this CETLD project and initial discussions have been held about staging a cross-discipline seminar exploring some of the student-identified topics where art and anthropology meet.  
><http://www.socialsciences.manchester.ac.uk/disciplines/socialanthropology/about/staff/fairweather/>  
See also appended recent links

## **6. Stakeholders**

6.1 To date the engagement has been largely with the SRISHI faculty Geetha Narayanan, Arvind Lodaya and Alan Manly. Another SRISHTI faculty researcher, Radha Chandrashekar, also met with David and Seainin while in Bangalore to discuss her current projects 'Fear and Adornment' and 'Reviving Kolam' which link with educators in Scandinavia and USA.

6.2 Discussions have continued with Geetha Narayanan about possible Brighton / SHRISHTI/ RISD exchange programme in 2010 – 11.

6.3 Student access to the V&A SE Asia collections relevant to that part of India (Karnataka and Tamil Nadu) linked to the project were planned for spring this year but were delayed. Other work that the project leader has done with Rebecca Reynolds at the V&A which has involved parallel text commentaries on selected artifacts as part of a higher education access scheme, has been a highly useful preparation for this aspect of developing understanding of the philosophical and material aspects of curatorially significant objects. The working links with V&A Education have continued to be strengthened during this project albeit through parallel initiatives.

## **7. Risk Analysis**

No problems to report. Student ambassador visit to India was negotiated with academic faculty of the SRISHTI college and although there were instances of certain practical difficulties these were resolved at the time, and these were not associated with risks, only with delays and communication issues. Contact was maintained with the project leader throughout the visit.

Health, diet and personal safety advice and the necessity of individual student GP consultation for travel to India was gone over in some detail.

## **8. Intellectual Property Rights**

*N/A to date*

## **9. Project Management**

9.1 The project leader was away from the UK on a period of leave for one academic year to assist with postgraduate programme developments at Rhode Island School of Design, returning to his 0.2 post with the School of Architecture and design 1 August 09. This was not envisaged at the outset. However the agreement with RISD allowed for continuation of communication and management of this project including periods of working visits to UK (three visits made to Grand Parade in the period) in order to maintain working contacts and meet other Brighton staff involved. Full time work abroad together with other research based commitments here in Brighton have however meant little time available on this scheme during August 2009. Having now returned to the School the scope to get to the next development of this scheme is there.

9.2 In discussion with students it has emerged that the project has the potential to be of use to them in at least three different ways in the short, medium and long term for their academic programme; as a short term development project during their second year; as a preparatory research phase towards self directed study in L3, as a L4 research unit in 2009/10.

9.3 The project has much bigger scope than the current defined programme and further development has been discussed. Student feedback has been particularly positive regarding this parallel long term structure working in a complimentary way with the regular curriculum, providing a much needed critical development tool for the participants, who have observed that They found it so useful to them they would like to commit to re-creating it in some form for the next 3D/WMCP Cohort.

A L4 postgraduate unit can be shaped around the project agenda and operational principle. A potential link with the RISD wintersession scheme as noted in the original proposal remains a viable possibility. (Jan to mid Feb each year)

## **10. Budget**

10.1 The flight cost to India of Seainin Passi was substituted for that of the project leader, since he made a site visit with SRISHTI the previous year.

10.2 SRISHTI have underwritten the site visit costs and accommodation in India.

10.3 Amounts set aside for Lodaya travel to and expenses in UK, publication, and dissemination costs have yet to be spent.

It is proposed to redirect the Lodaya cost element towards paying an additional (i.e., a third) segment of work to Seainin Passi and David Hood to reflect more accurately the significant additional amount of work they have contributed. This has occurred not at the project leaders instigation but through the enthusiasm and commitment of the graduates, and because the group method of working generated commitment, focus and enthusiasm and the participants all wanted to maintain the work beyond what was originally devised.

10.4 Inclusion of more substantive materials and updates on the CETLD website or its successor or on Student Central needs rationalising.

## **12. Evaluation**

Also see 'Student Feedback'.

Combined evaluations for the cross-discipline seminar suggested with Manchester will be an additional outcome, but this is likely to be later in 2009.

The delayed end phase and the CETLD requirements in 2009 were the subject of an update meeting at Grand Parade in August 2009. This present report contains the project leader's evaluations of the scheme, and brief summaries of the student evaluations. External Evaluation has not been carried out at this date.

It is suggested that a presentation is put on at Grand Parade in Autumn 2009 and that this forms part of a final evaluation for the centre, together with being a developmental stage for the M-Unit proposal.

### **13. Dissemination Plan**

13.1 The first Design Scholarship Seminar was well attended and led to a good quality discussion. The second seminar was less well attended, possibly because of schedule clashes, but led to a further very valuable discussion. The content has been recorded, and summarised above.

Discussions with Ian Fairweather (Manchester) are leading to further developments in cross-disciplinary seminar and possible conference involvement where art and design meet anthropology.

13.2 Collation of texts, images and animations for uploading to the CETLD site; The abbreviated project summary and student images have been submitted. Materials and information, including a bibliography and student interviews gathered could support more in-depth seminar or output, or study materials.

13.3 A presentation of the project and its methodology was made to a RISD "Respond-Design" postgraduate seminar group in April 2008 and March 2009, and the project leader plans further presentations in 2009 at Brighton now that he is on campus

13.4 It is proposed that a dissemination seminar mounted by the student participants is mounted in Autumn 2009. This was proposed by the students who feel that both students and staff would benefit.

### **14. Unexpected findings**

14.1 Yes; The original project wording anticipated a focus upon "vernacular objects" made in traditional tribal communities. This is not an uncommon interest in designers and artists who grew up in the shade of modernism in the 20<sup>th</sup>C. With the student group however, the strongest impression made upon the visiting student ambassadors in the field visits was the role of tools connecting people to the land. This observation provides an interesting example of reframing the language based upon observation in the present, rather than with the imposition of over-familiar terminology used out of context. One implication of this observation for the students is that there can be an unconscious reading from the 'outside' of vernacular craft merely as another consumable, rather than as a material connection to necessity. From this we can refocus a design project situated here focussing on tools connected to locally constructed notions of necessity here in the UK. This would begin to address student dissatisfaction, (noted for some years within 3D/W MCP and generally) with the conventional framing of education and creativity directly with existing consumerism, and lacking sufficiently effective critical awareness as contextualised by for example Paul Hawken (The Ecology of Commerce) and Michael Ben-Eli (Five Principles of Sustainable Design). A compelling term used by Lodaya regarding village culture in India and its approach to fabrication is "The Pragmatics of Scarcity".

### **15. Suggestions for project support / organisation / guidelines**

This has been included here for reference in successor schemes.

15.1 There is a generic problem with projects needing the participation of students in groups, in terms of getting them released from existing timetabling, involving unit tutors in the formal inclusion of CETLD project work within an existing unit and understanding its value, getting students to honour scheduled arrangements etc. This has been and continues

to be a difficulty. The project leader and research assistant have had to find ways around this on both of the medical-school linked projects, and ways to solve this have been discussed with other 3D staff for this project. The fact that everything the students do on a project like this is essentially extra-curricular is a serious problem that really puts into question this model of educational development. This particular project benefited from a remarkable commitment from students. It is to be noted that the passion, commitment and enthusiasm from the students as evidenced in their feedback, was sustained over the period of this scheme given this basic challenge. As project leader I found the scheme rewarding and significant in terms of educational development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century for design and material culture. The project leader was disappointed that there was zero feedback, engagement or dialog from the CETLD or staff, during this project as that could have been valuable. The budget was only partly released and this has hindered the practicalities of capitalising on outcomes, such as a project process book. The project leader has expended approx. £1100 in personal expenses, particularly in connection with making the UK visits whilst on unpaid leave. It would be useful to resolve the remaining budget allocation in order to assist with the student booklet printing.

15.2 There are different possible modes for student engagement;

15.1 extra-curricular (as with this project)

15.2 take CETL project topic into existing unit with unit tutors involvement- takes on credit requirement and may conflict with other requirements.

15.3 regard CETLD involvement as guidance for individual self directed study

15.4 'long thin' commitment, i.e., short events spread throughout term / year or years, and/or;

15.5 intensive one-off workshop, say 3 - 5 days

15.6 written research work topic support

### **Outstanding Actions** from CETLD Update meeting August 2009

- Write refereed journal article and possible article for Design Week (?- Design Issues?) (CR to do)
- Submit Final Report for CELTD Progress Review Group by Monday 14<sup>th</sup> September (Herewith)
- Submit one-page summary of project, plus video, audio and images for CETLD website (Done)
- Develop an optional unit for M Level students based on this project, for validation in Semester 1 (CR to Do)

END

CR 27 Sept 2009

### **Appendix I**

Refs. From Ian Fairweather

Arnd Schneider and Christopher Wright (eds) Contemporary Art and Anthropology Oxford, Berg 2006,

Foster, H 1995 The artist as Ethnographer in George E. Marcus and Fred R. Myers (eds) The



Traffic In Culture. Berkley, University of California Press 1995.

New Refs. From CR

Michael Ben-Eli, Former World Bank advisor, Five Core Principles of Sustainability

Paul Hawken Blessed Unrest, Penguin Books 2007

➤ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N1fiubmOqH4>

## **Appendix II – From Arvind Lodaya, SRISHTI project liaison**

### Announcing “NGO 2.0” July 2009 Bangalore

In recent times, I have witnessed a surge of interest and passion amongst "young creatives" (i.e. art/ design/ architecture students in this instance) to engage with and become a part of the social sector. Actually, this trend cuts across contexts as well as age groups, but for the moment I am limiting myself to the "creative student" category for convenience.

Many have dabbled in the social sector, mostly by association with NGOs (generic term for various kinds of non-governmental social change initiatives), and for many of these, the experience has been partially frustrating. The causes for this frustration are many, but one common thread across them is in the cultural and contextual difference between the established NGO and the workstyle and lifestyle of the young creative. In response, at least a few such young creatives have started their own social enterprise, on their own terms. I find this not just interesting, but instructive and inspirational too.

It is time to take a more systemic look at this phenomenon, and provide the young creative with a perspective and platform from which to articulate and conceptualize their own social change initiative, building on but not limited by the knowledge and experience of prior-generation social change efforts - what we might term "NGO 1.0".

I would like to invite your participation and support for such a platform addressing socially-inclined young creatives, in the form of a two-day symposium tentatively titled "NGO 2.0". Please share it with your colleagues, students and any others (yes, non-creative non-students as well!) who you think might benefit from such an experience. I have a PDF/JPEG poster and a draft programme that I can share with you on request, and I have started a Facebook listing on <http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=74657631968> and a Google Group on <http://groups.google.com/group/ngo2dot0> to enable this to be planned and developed as collaboratively as possible.

Of course, you are welcome to email me directly as well, and I promise a fully considered response.

Arvind Lodaya

[www.srishti.ac.in](http://www.srishti.ac.in)