

ART & RECONCILIATION

Project Profiles

CONFLICT

CULTURE

COMMUNITY



In Place of War

Various Countries
Mixed Arts (Music focus)



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Based out of Manchester University, In Place of War, started life as an AHRC funded research project led by James Thompson (now Professor of Applied and Social Theatre) that set out to investigate the work of artists living in war zones. The main research question was to look at what (theatre) arts work was happening in war zones, at how those artists defined and understood their work and the agendas they pursued with their artistic work¹. The focus was on locally based artists who were producing work within conflict and conflicted affected places rather than artists producing work about conflict. The main research output was the book, *Performance in Place of War* (2009)².

Since its research project roots, In Place Of War has now evolved in to an activist arts organisation headed up by Ruth Daniels (Professor Thompson now sits on the board). IPOW aims to create a support system for community artistic, creative and cultural organisations in places of conflict, revolution and areas suffering the consequences of conflict³. Working through and with a network of 100 grassroots community organisations in Africa, the Middle East and Asia, In Place Of War provides resources, training and co-ordination to needs identified by those on the ground. Working with artists they produce music and music performances and festivals as well as tours and cultural exchanges for musicians⁴.

They are involved in 5 different kinds of activities⁵:

- 1) Training, capacity building and skills development: ie. Creative Entrepreneurial Programme and training trainers programmes; online resource platform in English / Arabic
- 2) Creating and resourcing community cultural spaces: in Egypt, Uganda and Palestine
- 3) Research, policy and Advocacy: ie. Power of Hip Hop exchange – 2016 academic conference in London
- 4) Creative production and content production: ie producing music CDs and videos
- 5) Networking and exchanges between grassroots artists: ie. Voices of the Revolution – music collaboration with 15 female artists from sites of conflict – 3 weeks in the UK, performed at 3 UK festivals; collaborative album with UK and Zimbabwe hip hop artists

Funded through grants and donations in the UK, In Place of War is made up of a small team. Their aim is to support artists and creative communities to thrive in their different dynamic responses to the challenges they face. They claim their work is unique because they listen to people in the ground unlike other kinds of international agencies. In Place of War believe that it is local creative organisations that are best placed to appreciate the complex historical, political, social and cultural dynamics unique to their situation and who know best to reach their community. For this reason they work to enhance existing locally driven projects through partnerships with grassroots organisations believing that they have a genuine long term commitment to improve their neighbourhoods.



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There is a real tendency to impose the demand that people remember and produce projects that deal with themes relating to the war and conflict whereas often if you ask communities they say no – we want to have a party, we want to do something that helps us to forget about the war, that has nothing to do with it. A big part of our work is those moments when people are using the arts but not to remember.

Professor James Thompson⁶

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References

(1) Interview conducted with Professor James Thompson for this research, April 2017.

See also Professor James Thompson's lecture for the Annual Cockburn Rutherford lecture, Manchester University, June 11th 2013

<https://inplaceofwar.net/our-work/research/>

(2) Thompson, J, J Hughes, and M Balfour. 2009. Performance In Place of War. Seagull Books.

(3) See In Place of War website

<https://inplaceofwar.net/>

(4) See In Place of War's youtube channel and vimeo tagged films to get a sense of their activities

<https://vimeo.com/tag:in+place+of+war>

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChDZDaRRauhFkOnBifLtC-w>

(5) See In Place of War's 2016 Annual Report

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B44PIOfAykQ5LTU-5clVzeUlsSOhlRnJlRzMyWUIGRVdST2E4/view>

(6) Excerpt from research interview with Professor James Thompson, April 2017