



## SA CITIES OF REFUGE PROJECT: REPORT ON THE MALMÖ CITY OF REFUGE TOUR OF THE WESTERN CAPE

5-10 May 2015



### 1. Background

The **South African Cities of Refuge Project** was started in 2012, after IAJ Executive Director Michael Schmidt had attended by invitation the General Assembly of the **International Cities of Refuge Network (ICORN)** [www.icorn.org](http://www.icorn.org) in Stockholm, Sweden. At that meeting, it was decided to initiate a project to get the SA cities of Johannesburg and Cape Town, and the university towns of Stellenbosch and Grahamstown on board ICORN. Subsequently:

- a) Over 2012-2013, the SA Cities of Refuge Project was founded as an IAJ institutional social investment project, drew in Margie Orford of **South African Pen** (Pen International's Writers in Prison Committee vets ICORN applicants) and started conceptualising how the Project would work, and began making contacts.
- b) The Project held two **Film Premieres** to introduce itself to city officials, journalists and academics, in Johannesburg in May 2014 and in June 2014 in Cape Town; the Johannesburg launch at AFDA's Milpark campus premiered the Norwegian film *Silenced Voices* about exiled Sri Lankan journalists, was addressed by director Beate Arnestad, and was funded by Schmidt; the Cape Town launch at AFDA's Observatory campus premiered the French film *Silence or Exile* about ICORN Guest Writers, was addressed by director Marion Stalens, and was funded by the French Institute of Southern Africa (IFAS), though Schmidt's trip to Cape Town was funded by the IAJ. AFDA provided the venues free of charge.
- c) The Project's Schmidt and Orford then met in Cape Town in October 2014 with representatives of the Arts & Culture departments of the **City of Cape Town** and the Swedish **City of Malmö**, an ICORN City of Refuge. The City of Cape Town agreed in

principle to donate to ICORN the Goodwood Museum as a Guest Writer's residence, to restore the house where it is located to liveable condition, and maintain it into the future including covering its lights and water. Schmidt's trip was paid for by the IAJ. ICORN subsequently submitted a formal proposal to the City of Cape Town.

- d) In 2015, the Project invited to Cape Town Fredrik Elg, director of the City of Malmö's arts & culture department, Elisabeth Dyvik of ICORN's headquarters in Stavanger, Norway, former Guest Writer Parvin Ardalan, a journalist and writer from Iran, now working with Elg, and current Guest Writer Ramy Essam, an Egyptian musician, to cement the relationship between ICORN and the City of Cape Town. This report covers that tour.

## 2. 2015 City of Malmö Tour of Cape Town & Stellenbosch



**Speaking at Stellenbosch Journalism, from left to right, Elisabeth Dyvik (ICORN, Norway), Parvin Ardalan (Iran), Fredrik Elg (City of Malmö, Sweden), Ramy Essam (Egypt)**

The tour was organised by Schmidt, now working as a consultant to the IAJ, and Elg in his role of project director of the City of Malmö's arts & culture department. ICORN and Malmö costs were borne by themselves, and IAJ costs borne by Schmidt. The programme included meetings with relevant officials and potential partners, as well as open engagements by the former and current Guest Writers:

- a) **Tuesday 5 May:** The Project delegation of Dyvik, Elg, Ardalan, Essam and Schmidt met with Zayd Minty, the Manager of the **City of Cape Town Arts & Culture: Tourism, Events & Economic Development**, and his deputy Robin Jutzen. The meeting went very well and the two officials reaffirmed their October 2014 offer of the Goodwood Museum as a residence for future ICORN Guest Writers. The Project now needs to raise funds for the

ICORN scholarship which covers the living expenses over two years of a guest writer and their immediate family (if relevant).

In the evening, the delegation had a relaxed traditional cuisine dinner with local activists including Mandy Moussouris of the Fair Trade movement in the Cape winelands and Shawn Hattingh of the **International Labour Research & Information Group (ILRIG)** – as most Guest Writers are political activists in various pro-democratic fields.

- b) Wednesday 6 May:** The Project delegation held a talk at **Stellenbosch University's Journalism Department**, showing a brief film on ICORN and explaining the Project (universities are expected to provide in future both peer networks for Guest Writers, and platforms/venues for talks, publications, public engagements etc). The talk was well-received so SUN Journalism looks like a good future partner.

The delegation then met **Stellenbosch Mayor Conrad Sidego**, a former journalist turned diplomat who had served in Scandinavia; the Project was introduced to him and he expressed great enthusiasm for it, though noting that for the sake of continuity, it should be lead from outside the municipality; this was agreed so the Town of Stellenbosch also looks like a good future partner.

- c) Thursday 7 May:** The Project delegation viewed the **Goodwood Museum** and was pleasantly surprised by its size, condition, good location (walking distance to all necessary amenities) and suitability as a Guest Writer residence. Some residual museum functions may still be required, but the venue is easily divisible into a daytime museum and private residence (kitchen, bathroom, shower to be installed, two bedrooms, a study, a lounge and a garage). The Project will submit to Minty & Jutzen a refurbishment proposal which their department will cost and for which it will seek funding.

Elg, Ardalan, Essam and Schmidt met with Phillipa Tucker of **Aids Accountability International** to discuss points of convergence and mutual interest, particularly relating to women migrants.

Elg and Ardalan then met with the **District Six Museum** in furtherance of the 18-year city-to-city relationship that Cape Town has with Malmö: although not a direct part of this Project, bilateral municipal relations naturally strengthen the Project.

- d) Friday 8 May:** The Project delegation met with Richard Freedman, Director of the **South African Holocaust & Genocide Foundation**, which has three centres in Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban, with a view to seeing how ICORN could in future collaborate with the centres because of their diverse outreach work on migration and prejudice especially (the Rwandan Genocide, xenophobic attacks in SA, etc). The Cape Town Holocaust Centre has great venues for events, screenings and dialogues, and all present agreed the Foundation would make an ideal partner by assisting with such in-kind assistance.

Elg, Ardalan and Essam met in the afternoon with Janine Johnston, director of **The Shift**, an innovations hub that, while not directly related to the Project's work, is involved in various ties with the City of Malmö. Schmidt met the following day with Johnston.

In the evening, a **Free Concert** was organised by Schmidt at The Armchair in Observatory, with the Egyptian promoting the Project by jamming with local musicians Ongx Mona on lead, Eldred Schilder on bass, Ramy Essam on guitar and vocals, Hilton Schilder on box drum and bows, and Gavin Bonner on conga and tambourine, later joined by Dave Ferguson on harmonica and loop-pedal. It was a lot of fun and a huge success!

### 3. Conclusion and Way Forward

The tour was considered a success by the Project, by ICORN and by the City of Malmö seeing as how it reaffirmed the City of Cape Town's commitment to refurbishing, donating and maintaining the Goodwood Museum as a Guest Writer's residence, and the positive reception the Project received from the Mayor of Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch Journalism, and the SA Holocaust & Genocide Foundation in particular.

Then next steps are:

- a) Within the next two weeks, Schmidt and Elg to draft a **Refurbishment Proposal** for the Goodwood Museum for Minty of the City of Cape Town, who will then seek budget for it. We are expecting this work to take into mid-2016.
- b) Within the next month, Schmidt and Elg to draft a **Funding Proposal** for the ICORN Guest Writer Scholarship for pitching to the likes of SIDA, the Prince Klaus Fund, Omidyar Network, Knight Foundation and other philanthropies. We are expecting this to be secured by early 2017 by which stage Cape Town should be ready to welcome its first Guest Writer.

It remains up to the IAJ whether it will continue to support this Project as part of its institutional social investment or whether it prefers to rather be involved as a third party downstream (ie: providing a debate venue for Guest Writers, etc), but it is a low-cost, high-value investment in the IAJ's reputation, so I'd suggest the former. Meanwhile, Schmidt and Elg will cement the relationship between ICORN & Malmö and the City of Cape Town with a view to seeing the first Guest Writer placed at Goodwood by early 2017.

**Best regards**  
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