**Cultural Relations in Action**

**A research study on the British Council’s International Collaboration Grants programme**

Illustration Transcript

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Anna Santomauro: But we’re also aware of how important these kinds of collaborations are. It was amazing to see all the things we have in common, and how when we bring our contexts together, our struggles are really related.

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Francine Kliemann: We realised we have a lot of synergies in the way we work, think and create. Nurturing a relationship. We were working on a weekly basis together.

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Tony Mills: There were a few bumps along the way. Going through that has been a bit challenging but it helped to bond the organisations. We worked through the challenges together by having open and honest conversations and being a bit vulnerable. In these cases you’re able to see each other’s values.

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Anna Santomauro: in the UK, small organisations like Arts Catalyst have less and less opportunities to build international networks. It gave us the opportunity to explore common ecological concerns with organisations operating in different contexts.

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Dana Abbas: We were eager to find new ways of working, and to work with other practitioners worldwide who share the same ambitions and challenges as us. We benefited from the idea that it brought our geographies closer together.

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Dr. Nicola Streeten: From the word go we started having an open discussion. We understood how we work and how we could best implement the project. It was effortless because we had fun! I also found out that it’s possible to be paired with someone you’ve never worked with before and develop a common understanding.

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Romy Assoud: The collaboration helped us to become better acquainted with the dance ecosystem in Scotland. It was refreshing to discover that we could contribute to, and be valuable in, that ecosystem. We also discovered structures and approaches that we don’t have. It was interesting to experience it and inform our practice in Lebanon.

Francine Kliemann: The fact that the pilot happened in Brazil and then we expanded it to the UK and not the other way around is empowering. It’s like decolonising a little bit.

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Dana Abbas: Collaborating internationally through the ICP was a great way to reconnect and also to open up after these hard times.

Talal Afifi: We went into this aiming to produce films and collaborate with international and regional partners, and we got all that. Having the African perspective of the Ayin Network boosted our capabilities in production, which strengthened our network. This also injected some money into the institute.

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Francine Kliemann: I’m already engaging in more networks since I started collaborating with The Necessary Space, and I’m more and more interested in engaging in different communities. It also increased my desire to collaborate internationally by 300%.

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Tony Mills: There were parts where us and the team were able to contribute more, then it was the other way around. It was shared decision making. We took more responsibility in logistics and organising the residences in Scotland, but the ideas generation was a very balanced, reciprocal back and forth kind of conversation.

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Dr. Nicola Streeten: There was reciprocity of welcome and generosity when we visited each other’s countries. This gave the relationship an aspect of equality.

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Anna Santomauro: We observed a ‘generous collaboration’ policy. We discussed a lot about terminology and how certain language is more Western centric, and how it should be translated, or if it needed to be shifted to be more inclusive.

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All characters speaking:

Creatively equal.

Proportionate.

Equally Involved.

Fair.

Equity.

Balanced.

Equally Involved.

Shared Power.

Creatively Equal.

Balanced.

Equity.

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Tom Rhodes: I wouldn’t say it was an equal partnership. I’m ashamed to say we haven’t done as much as our partners. We had confidence in them and their skills. I certainly don’t see it as necessary to be equal.

Dana Abbas: We had partners from many different contexts. Having the British Institution as the lead organisation could be found problematic at the first instance, creating concerns around the dynamics of the project where the European institution is leading such a multicultural and dominantly “non-European” collaboration. But it didn’t happen, because there was representation for different geographies with different struggles. Arts Catalyst is such a diverse and open organisation, and is highly engaged with other contexts.

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Phil Cox: The main challenge was figuring out how to deal with partners on the ground when it comes to criticism and how we problem solve. There’s a greater sensitivity there as they aren’t used to working in the kind of professional environment that we are here. We both had to learn to adapt our expectations and avoid it becoming personal.

Francine Kliemann: Simon has been key in terms of deepening the project. His senior level knowledge brought a new perspective. I now see him as a partner of The School of the (Im)possible wherever the project will go.

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Romy Assoud: International collaboration is important because it enriches us and it gets us out of our bubbles.

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Tala Afifi: As cultural manager, curator and producer, I always need my freedom and in this project I felt it. I don’t remember anyone from the British Council trying to interfere with our vision, or to see the details. We’ve had this from other funders, but this wasn’t the case here.

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Focus on developing relationships, building understanding and trust.

Peer learning sessions.

Dedicated staff time for monitoring and support. Advice, connecting, troubleshooting.