

## REPORT ON FAIR INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL COOPERATION #1 – FUNDING PARTIES Conventions and practical issues in funding international activities.

On October 5<sup>th</sup> 2018, DutchCulture, with special thanks to Marie Fol, gathered a group of 40 international experts at Broedplaats Lely in Amsterdam to discuss values and practicalities of fair(er) international cultural cooperation. This closed meeting followed the publication of the toolkit *Beyond Curiosity and Desire: Towards Fairer International Collaborations in the Arts* earlier in 2018 by IETM with On the Move and DutchCulture, focused on issues influencing expectations and engagement in international and intercultural activities.

As a next step in addressing the points raised by the toolkit, the meeting aimed at offering an opportunity for funders and institutions to discuss and exchange their perspectives, as well as develop shared intelligence to move forward in embedding such practices in our respective organisations and ways of working.

### 1. MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING

#### 1.1 We acknowledge the overall context is unequal, making international cultural cooperation unequal *a priori*.

There are structural imbalances in international cooperation. There is a wide range of causes: e.g. unequal access to funding, different capacity in the organisations and cultural infrastructure, lack of common language (especially in policy and regulations), imbalanced access to visa and mobility opportunities and historical mistrust. Although these forces make it hard to step into a balanced cooperation, acknowledgement can lead to understanding, open discussions and the identification of solutions.

Reciprocity and balanced exchange are not only monetary based (e.g. time-investment, connections, local expertise). Valued contributions based on knowledge, perspective and experience can also raise the sought for results. Acknowledgement could lead to funding of research phase where applicable. Moreover, power relations and influences are shifting, with an influence on our (funding) policies that we don't know how to assess. China is a big player in the African continent, and many Gulf countries fund the sector without going through the heavy administrative process it usually faces. We need to remain aware of changing paradigms.

#### 1.2 We strive for transparency and sustainability to resolve unfair and unequal cooperation.

Being inclusive with grants, assisting with visa and logistics – it is key for funders to practice what they preach and make funds adequately available. It asks for clear choices and thorough implementation.

When being transparent about the power dynamics in which a cooperation takes place, or by being honest about the motives behind said cooperation, we uncover fundamental paradigms. Money flows are crucial to such understanding and partners (being funders, participants, grantees, or otherwise involved individuals and organisations) should be upfront on sources and expectations.

Political agenda, artistic interests, diplomatic and economic relations are some of the drivers for collaboration. This means that the possibility for opportunist approaches and on-off projects or funding is quite high, and will not go away. The question remains for us to find ways to bridge between one-off's and sustainable approaches.

Sustainability – being in the form of funding, collaboration or environmental impact - leads to better legacy of programs, as those become part of every partners' history. Furthermore, sustainability implies - as well as translates in - capacity building for every partner involved. Results, outcomes and impacts of projects and programs should have a leverage effect on the organisations involved, thus developing an ecosystem of resources.

#### 1.3 Feedback needs to be cherished and serves funding organisations to create a flexible architecture.

From the funders side, a better understanding of the effects of application (and jury) procedures and risk-management (e.g. legal and income requirements) affects how (un)fair certain funding schemes might be and/or become. There is a need for feedback from organisations or persons receiving funding and former grantees involved in the application/jury process. There needs to be a safe space for feedback in order for

this to happen. Education of funders is key to develop better programs, as well as actively reaching out to a large diversity of potential beneficiaries who might not be equipped to adopt the language and wording of policy-makers and funding bodies. Think about allowing video's or video calls instead of forms.

We need to be open for a flexible architecture. We are aware that in order to respond effectively to the needs of artists and cultural organisations, we must take up a flexible position. We need a diverse range of forms of support that are adaptable to each particular context. This tailor-made support listens to the problems that are identified by the arts professionals and does not seek to predetermine its solutions. We strive for more flexibility within the organisation itself to establish a more balanced, horizontal, and sustainable relation between the funder and the beneficiary. There should be an active engagement through dialogue and direct involvement with the beneficiaries, empowering a diverse range of artistic expression and knowledge.

#### 1.4 We work with each other rather than for each other.

Co-design of programs and funding mechanisms are core to this discussion: the people who will execute the work need to be involved from the beginning: "don't do it for us, but with us". It is important to carefully assess who sits at the table, who takes part in the discussions and decisions leading to funding programs, policies, and collaborations. Co-construction and co-design start by involving partners you work with from the start.

We need to get to know the context of the partners we work with – either through peer-to-peer relations or the indispensable role of an intermediary (local/regional/expert) organisation. We need to connect further with civil society and with artists who can actually answer the questions: what do you really need? How can we add value?

#### 1.5 We need a humble attitude at the core of developing fair programs, funding and collaborations.

We understand that humbleness is the way to engage in group processes of learning and equality which ultimately sets the ground for trust. It means that we are listening. It means a willingness to let go customary practices and habits and to actively make a patient effort to understand the context, e.g. differences in aesthetic values, knowledge, education should be valued as equal.

We are aware that there is a bigger picture in which we operate, where different interests might be at play and that these might influence our interactions. We try to be self-aware of our own prejudices and position within this constellation. Through humbleness, a common goal can be horizontally established.

Inclusivity and diversity need to be embedded in our own organisations practices. The humble attitude described above is necessary to learn from one another to generate trust – but this can only happen if and when our organisations take their responsibility in honestly looking at themselves and acknowledging their own constituency. Diversity and inclusivity starts with ourselves, and we need to educate our leaders, funders, directors, boards and staff to tackle possible imbalances.

Learning comes with confrontation: be ready to accept that there will be friction in order to get to the full perspective of the matter. Fair collaboration cannot be neutral, but being open prevents it from being patronising or displaying the "been there, done that" attitude– not project is alike.

## 2. PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The points below are not necessarily answers to questions, but lessons we learn from each other and need to continue working on, in order to take concrete action.

### 2.1 Set the example – be an inclusive and reflective organisation. Practice what you preach.

- Create a healthy work environment. Start with yourself and the need to harmonise your programme, and then move to your partners;
- Consider how to address women in the institution (in terms of leadership etc.);
- Develop an understanding of what it means to decolonise your institution.
- Be open to vulnerability within the organisation; transparency requires vulnerability;

- Train directors and managers to deal with difficult issues and criticism effectively;
- Practice what you preach. Start with your own organisation. Make that effort, pay for tickets, find other target groups;
- Engage in peer to peer conversations and consider peer reviews of organisations which are similar;
- Integrity: define the values you have identified within your own organisation, and how you relate to these different concepts of diversity of partners internationally.
- Cultural diversity in representation is key in the organisations involved

## 2.2 Be flexible – there is no one-size-fits-all in funding and international cooperation.

- Question your financial models and adapt to the reality of your partners.
- Fund incubator/research and/or exploration periods (such as Go & See grants).
- Leave aside the concept of charity. We have to move to a new financial model of reciprocity.
- Be transparent about the budgets.
- Invest in capacity building and build a flexible architecture.
- It is very important to have a shared responsibility between the funders, artists and residency organisations. The intermediary function is vital.
- Creative administration has different dimensions. Find a balance between being instrumental, creative, thinking and doing. Be able to converse with diverse stakeholders and their interests.
- Create financing models in the global South. The solution to achieving financial structures in the South is through the civil society not via the political structures.
- Let the content come from the civil and artistic societies in the South.
- Look for crossover themes to bridge Global North – South binary.
- Give art and culture a position in social issues and questions. Culture should fit better with social/economical need.

## 2.3 Reach out – proactively cater to audiences that normally might not apply.

- Work to understand the context of your target audience.
- Find new forms of communicating with them.
- Be sensitive to differences. Don't ignore them, but don't stress them either.
- Be aware of your position and be transparent in the system of selection.
- To be more inclusive, prioritise it by training and hiring the right people.
- Educate your funders about the necessities and needs at stake
- Learn about and from your blind spots
- Use new technologies, new media as infrastructure. A lot can happen also in the virtual world
- Involve diaspora organisations.

## 2.4 Give true agency - trust those you collaborate with.

- Make sure your partners feel ownership and responsibility over the project.
- Be honest and transparent about your power relationship if you are the funder.
- Encourage transparency mechanisms to reflect on your achievements and errors.
- Invite the beneficiaries to be part of your process.
- Explore models and ways of working together that are different.
- Give the funding to local partners and let them decide the way to share it with others.
- Let local peers evaluate local projects
- Have a polycentric approach; operate less from one space and acknowledge difference.
- Consider institutions working more horizontally.
- Consider alternate economies such as creative economy, green economy, third economy.

- Involve partners from the early stages of programme development and policy making, share more information about what works; train partners/grantees about sensitivities before during and after the programmes.
- Match policies to the practice of artists not accustomed to elaborate funding structures.
- Include the artist and public to create an ecosystem. Fairness is not only between institutions but the wider group of stakeholders and their motivation.
- Define diversity in the largest sense, include gender, socio-economic, education, nationality.
- Before you start an exchange, be critical about it in the discussion with your partner (why this project? What is the legitimacy?). Every project is new, every time you have to discuss the shared values at the beginning of the project.
- Recognise the legacy and be humble to history and to presumed knowledge and prejudices.
- Do not feel as a prisoner of guilt or feeling of inferiority. The exchange has to lead to something new.
- Nurture a free and protected space for equal artistic exchange for all partners.

## 2.5 Evaluate in honesty – do not predetermine the results.

- Approach collaborations as a process, successful results are a bonus.
- Allow for failure and value it as a learn-full experience.
- Own the failure and do not camouflage it with hyperboles and lies.
- Be sensitive for intangible forms of impact that might not be immediately noticeable.
- Unlearning process: Dare to lose certain assumptions and convictions.
- Create diversity in expert groups and juries
- Allow time and capacity to experiment for the changes to be able to happen.
- Where possible, embed a long-term and participatory approach in the project / evaluation.
- Recognize that it is an ongoing conversation and create a safe environment to discuss.
- Speak to the enemy.

## 2.6 Be aware of language – be more inclusive in your communication.

- Question the words and formulations you use: literally, culturally, conceptually.
- Certain words have been misused and therefore embed a certain connotation (example: cooperation). We have huge difficulties defining what we discuss.
- Overthink? the meaning of diversity as such. Is this a European concept? What does it mean around the world. Is it an objective for our partners?
- Apply tailor-made communication and exchange ('you cannot flatten your messages in an international and diverse world');
- Build in a philosophy of 'not for us, but with us.' Think about ways in which the language and wording are used;
- Accept and learn from friction when speaking with each other;

## 2.7 Include politics - rules and regulations curb fairness.

- Identify visa and other impediments to artistic or individual mobility and share good practices to tackle them
- Collaborate in order to support individual artists and creators taking part in international cooperation.
- Advocate the issue of visas at European level. The lobby should be stronger, as it is crucial to reduce visa problems to engage into fair cooperation.
- Good practices at city level, for example in Berlin, Amsterdam should be developed.
- Fine-tune arguments to facilitate visa systems and tackle potential counter arguments.

### 3. NEXT STEPS

What comes next? While not being new, this discussion needs to continue. We need to actively take the next steps in making our work fairer, especially when engaging internationally. We cannot pretend that we have done the work by being present at a meeting – homework and follow-up is needed.

As DutchCulture we will continue to work on understanding fair international cultural cooperation and create tools to distribute shared intelligence and ways of implementing practical frameworks. The gathering on the 5 October 2018 functions as a blueprint to organize follow ups and discuss the topic with a range of professionals with different perspectives. This way we hope to identify universal values and conflicting perspectives in order to address those in detail. In 2019 we will organise a new day to discuss issues involving shared heritage.

### 4. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Angie	Cotte	General secretary	Roberto Cimetta Fund
Anna	Söderbäck	General director	Swedish Arts Grants Committee
Annalee	Davis	Co-founder, co-director	Tilting Axis Network
Anupama	Sekhar	Director of Culture Department	Asia Europe Foundation
Dirk	De Wit	Head International Relations	Kunstenpunt
Eelco	Vugs	Country Director Netherlands and Belgium	British Council - Amsterdam
Francisco	d'Almeida	Co-director	Culture et Developpement
Francois	Tiger	External relations officer	Cite Internationale des Arts
Georgiana	Cremene	Grants Manager	European Cultural Foundation
Gertrude	Flentge	Programme officer arts & media	Stichting DOEN
Helen	Larsson Pousette	Former Cultural Attaché Serbia	Independent researcher
Inka	Hyvönen	Comm.s & Project Man. Assistant	Finnish Cultural Institute for the Benelux
Irene	Huberts	Funds and Foundations, Trust Fund	Rijksakademie
Isabela	Silvia Abila	Programme associate	Lutfia Rabbani Foundation
Isabelle	Schwarz	Head of Advocacy	European Cultural Foundation
Jan	Sprengers	Head of international department	Fonds Podiumkunsten
Johan	Pousette	Director	IASPIS
Jordi	Balta Portoles	Advisor on Culture in Sustainable Cities	Agenda 21 for Culture
Khadija	El Bennaoui	Director	Arts Move Africa
Magdalena	Moreno	Director	IFACCA
Manuela	Villa	Head of Centro de residencias artisticas	Matadero Madrid
Maria	Virto Marcilla	Fund Development Manager	European Cultural Foundation
Marie	Le Sourd	Secretary General	On the Move
Marit	van den Elshout	Head of IFFR PRO Fund	Hubert Bals Fund
Martijntje	Hallman	Head of residency	Rijksakademie
Mikko	Fritze	Director	Goethe Institut - Amsterdam
Milica	Ilic	International Advisor	ONDA
Mireille	Berman	Non-fictie specialist, buitenland	Letterenfonds
Nan	Van Houte	Secretary General	IETM
Nikol	Wellens	transitie, kennisdeling & kunsteducatie	Kunstenpunt
Odila	Tribel	Head of Dialogue and Research	Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen
Ola	Kellgren	Director	Nordic Culture Point
Pauline	Burmann	Director	Thami Mnyele Stichting
Pavla	Petrova	Director	Arts and Theater Institute
Philip	Montnor	Project officer	Mondriaanfonds
Pieter	Zeeman	Programme director	DPA
Sophie	Leferink	Programme Development Manager	HIVOS
Zineb	Seghrouchni	Programme manager Internationalisation	Stimuleringsfonds