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DICE Digital R&D Fund
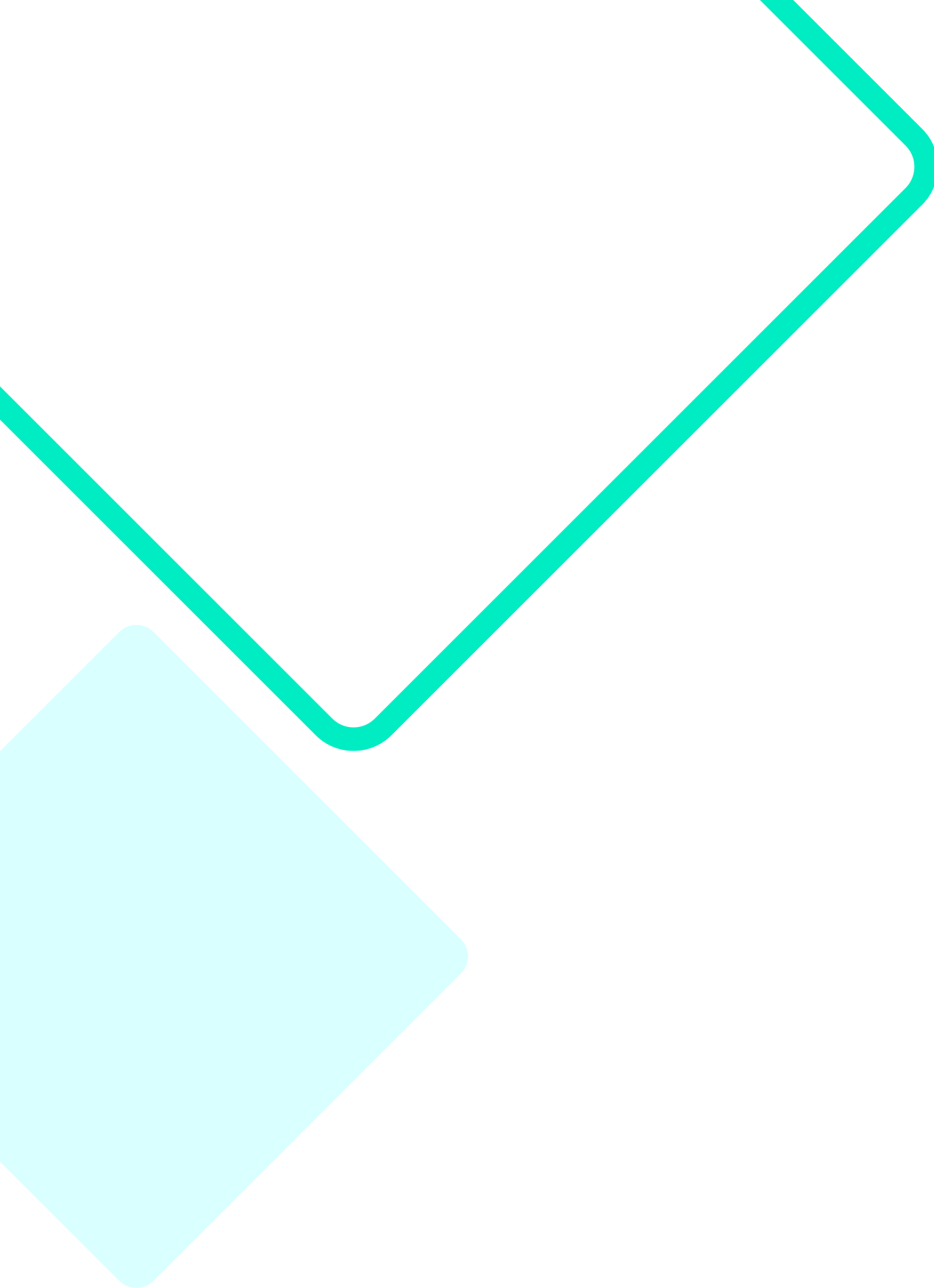
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International Digital Cultural Relations

Contents

Abbreviations

ADC	The Arts Development Company, UK Digital Partner
CoP	The Community of Practice of the DICE Digital R&D Fund
DE	Digital Experience, the project that materialised through the collaboration of Digital Partners in the Fund
DP	Digital Partner, organisation awarded funding to collaborate with another organisation to create a Digital Experience within the DICE Digital R&D Fund (2021)
DQ	DerbyQuad, a UK Digital Partner
EDI	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
The Fund	DICE Digital R&D Fund
f2f	Face to Face
HI	Hatch Ideas Worldwide, UK Digital Partner
ICA	The Initiative for Community Advancement, South African Digital Partner
IFP	Instituto Feira Preta, Brazilian Digital Partner
IV	Instituto Vereda, Brazilian Digital Partner
PWDs	People with disabilities
REDEF	Regional Economic Development Foundation, Indonesian Digital Partner
YBI	Youth Bank International, UK Digital Partner

Executive Summary

During the Covid 19 pandemic, a digital transformation happened in all spheres of life, including cultural relations. The DICE Digital R&D Fund emerged in this context as part of a wider Digital Skills Programme, an effort by the British Council to keep the flow of international cultural exchanges going. Hence, the overarching question of this research: what can international cultural relations (CR) look like online based on the experience of the fund?

Based on the British Council's own definition of the outcomes of CR – "greater connectivity, better mutual understanding, more and deeper relationships, mutually beneficial transactions and enhanced sustainable dialogue" – this summary presents a picture of the fund by selecting the strongest evidence that has emerged from the research into the 20 international collaborations and projects created by the fund in the first half of 2021.

Firstly, the process of creating CR in the fund: this involved international digital interactions among 40 organisations in six countries (Brazil, Egypt, Indonesia, Pakistan, South Africa and the UK), which:

- collaborated in international pairs to create 20 Digital Experiences (DEs) over a period of 4–5 months (February – May/June 2021) during the Covid 19 pandemic

- participated in 7 digital sessions of a Community of Practice[1] to learn from each other's experience and discuss problems and successes of their DEs.

- Most of the international partnerships formed in the fund (12 out of 20) were new – the DPs had not collaborated with each other before. These partnerships were also formed and carried out through purely digital interaction – without any face to face contact.

The 'digital' in international cultural relations

- The digital element in the cultural relations created in the fund was characterised by the following elements:

- Many DPs (13) stated that their projects would not have happened were they not digital, because of the costs involved and geographic distance

- Having only digital tools at their disposal, DPs had to experiment and, in some cases, generate innovation

- The fund brought a new realisation to many organisations about the possibilities of greater international connectivity through digital means – of being able to reach people or markets anywhere

- However, digital fatigue, the challenges posed by poor internet connectivity in some countries and the missing 'human element', were disadvantages experienced in this purely digital programme.

The nature of the international collaborations and power balance

To understand the quality of relationships between DPs in their international collaborations, including the power balance between them, we examined the process of the collaborations in designing and implementing the DEs, how problems were addressed, how leadership within each partnership was perceived by the partners and the extent to which learning from each other was mutual.

Considering that most of these partnerships were new, purely digital and had to deliver projects within a tight timeframe, it is remarkable that 90% of the DPs felt that the experience in the fund had strengthened their relationship with the organisations they partnered with to a 'high' or 'very high' degree.[2] In all these partnerships, the two partners designed and created their DE together.

A large majority (17 out of 20) of collaborations worked well in terms of relationships between partners – either there were no major problems or problems were overcome. 13 out of the 20 partnerships were described by DPs in positive terms by both partners, but three collaborations did not work well. In these three, problems arose from different expectations about their DE and the ways of working, with race and gender power dynamics also being a factor.

Trust was built through a process of solving issues that would arise and addressing differences by talking them through with their partner and finding solutions through open and continuous communication and the willingness to concede.

It was also built through the Community of Practice where an overwhelming majority of DPs stated that they felt safe and free to express weaknesses and seek help from their peers and from the British Council. Most of the DPs (23) stated that no problems arose with other DPs in the CoP or with the British Council. Factors that prevented some DPs from making more out of the experience of the CoP included the fact that many DPs (14) had multiple demands on their time, including the execution of the DE.

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[1] There were also 4 optional drop in sessions during April – May 2021.
[2] Analysis by Emily Rogers, external evaluator.

Most partnerships (17 out of 20) were perceived by the DPs in them as equal. (In the other three partnerships, it is not clear whether the partners saw each other as equal). The sense of equality between partners was largely based on how they had divided the work between them – namely, each partner contributing to, or taking the lead on a specific part of the DE according to their expertise.

In seven partnerships, one organisation provided the methodology on which the DE was based or transferred their expertise to the other partner. In six of the seven cases, the partner providing the methodology was based in the UK and in one case in Brazil. Did the fact that one was providing the methodology and the other was on the 'receiving' end create a sense of inequality between partners? It seems that this was not the case. In four out of these seven partnerships, DPs thought that they were equal despite the expertise coming from one side. There was only one partnership where the partner providing the methodology regarded themselves as the partnership's leader. In two other partnerships, both partners agreed that the leader was the organisation receiving the expertise and not the one providing it, and both these leading partners were based in the global south.

In 12 out of the 20 collaborations, the learning from each other was mutual. Both DPs stated that they had learnt from each other, although not necessarily similar information.

A very large majority of DPs (32 out of 40) stated that the fund's processes made them feel that all DPs were equal in the way the Community of Practice was conducted, the diversity within the cohort of DPs, the way British Council staff treated the DPs and the way budgets had been divided. Where some inequality was felt, it had to do with different levels of fluency in English and of digital expertise among DPs. This sense of equality in these relationships, however, is also partly due to the DPs themselves, how they approached their collaborations and their partners, and not only due to the environment created by the fund.

Many DPs (17) stated that the fund has connected them and, in some cases, also their existing networks or their target audiences to other international organisations or audiences making it possible to build new connections and exposing them to new ideas and practitioners.

DPs' views of the British Council and the UK

The experience of the fund overall changed favourably the views of the British Council held by most of the DPs or it allowed others (13 DPs) to retain or reinforce their existing positive opinions, with one exception. The DPs whose view of the British Council did change, were favourable in their view of how the British Council had acted as a funder – by being inclusive, open, allowing for diverse voices to be heard. 14 DPs who had joined DICE for the first time came out with very positive first impressions of the British Council.

For seven UK-based DPs, their experience of the fund did not change the way they see their own country, be that a positive or critical view, but for 4 British DPs this was an opportunity to appreciate something positive about their country. Likewise, 9 DPs outside the UK did not change their view of the UK, but those who did, changed it in a positive way, to do with exploring new things, creativity and openness.

Conclusion

The fund has shown that it is possible to create new, strong collaborations and team work digitally, to do so more cheaply and for some at least, also more efficiently.

Through their experience in the fund, a sense of a universal 'we' developed among many DPs. They recognised that despite differences from one country to another, people faced similar problems in working for social change and in experiencing the pandemic. Although for many DPs, the experience of the fund did not change how they thought of other cultures, they learnt new things about other countries and sometimes also about their own. This challenged their assumptions about these countries and recognising that they were, after all, stereotypes.

Introduction

The Fund

The fund was created in 2020 "to support the development and delivery of 20 'digital experiences' [DEs] that contribute to the DICE programme mission and ethos", namely that "exclusive economic systems are collectively reimagined and restructured to form a truly inclusive, sustainable, creative global economy".[3]

The fund was set out *"to be experimental with a strong focus on learning", but it also required the DEs to explore how to "foster values such as inclusion, connection, experimentation and co-design" and also "genuine international camaraderie and generosity between each pair and among all the collaborators".[4] Alongside the 20 DEs/ international collaborations, the fund created a Community of Practice (CoP) for the Digital Partners (DPs) "to be together and learn from the wealth of experience and expertise that they bring…a space where partners can bring all themselves: successes and also doubts and questions, safe in the knowledge that they can trust their fellow community members."[5]*

The 20 Digital Experiences/ international collaborations

Each of the 20 DEs was co-designed and co-delivered by two organisations working in pairs, which between them were based in the following countries: Brazil, Egypt, Indonesia, Pakistan, South Africa and the UK. The fund supported 16 UK – global South partnerships and four South-South partnerships. Sixteen partners were based in the UK, eight in South Africa, six in Brazil, four in Indonesia, four in Pakistan and two in Egypt. 12 of the 20 collaborations were new partnerships and half of them met during online sessions that took place in December 2020 and were organised by the British Council to introduce potential candidates to each other, to explore possible collaboration. In the other 6 partnerships, the DPs had known each other previously but had not yet collaborated.

According to the analysis of data in the successful application forms made by the external evaluator, Emily Rogers, most of the DPs were small organisations–24 out of 40 employing one to five staff (full time equivalent). In terms of diversity and inclusion, again, according to Rogers's analysis, ninety five percent of DPs had staff who are women and half of the DPs were led by women. thirty percent of DPs had staff who identified as having a disability (ten percent were led by someone who identified as having a disability); sixty

percent of DPs employed people who self-identified as being from one or more other typically excluded groups. This includes forty three percent (17 DPs) who employed people of colour and/or ethnic minorities and twenty four percent (10 DPs) who employed staff who identified as LGBTQIA+.

Since DPs could not meet f2f during theircollaborations, they communicated with a variety of digital means such as email, WhatsApp and Google Chat. They met on Zoom, shared and developed documents on Google Drive, Google Suits or Livedocs. Some DPs noted differences in preferences from country to country, with Brazilians using WhatsApp more and UK DPs using email.

Cultural relations in this research study

This research has used the definition of cultural relations (CR) by the British Council and the Goethe Institut:

The two CR institutions have defined the outcomes of CR as *"greater connectivity, better mutual understanding, more and deeper relationships, mutually beneficial transactions and enhanced sustainable dialogue"* between people and cultures.

This research has been informed by J.P. Singh's study of CR in DICE, titled *The Cultural Relations of Negotiating Development: Developing Inclusive and Creative Economies at the British Council*, 3.9.20. Singh guided us to pay special attention to the quality of relationships formed during the fund and especially the power balance between DPs. Singh sees trust as central to international CR and as both a condition and an outcome of DICE interactions. He also identifies sharing of knowledge as a potential outcome of DICE.

> **"reciprocal transnational interactions between two or more cultures, encompassing a range of activities conducted by state and/or non-state actors within the space of culture and civil society."**
>
> British Council – Goethe Institut, 2018, 7)

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[3] DICE Digital R&D Fund Research Suppliers Framework Brief
[4] As above.
[5] As above.

This report

The overarching research question of this study is:

What can international cultural relations look like online based on the experience of the DICE Digital R&D Fund?

This report provides the evidence gathered on the outcomes of digital international CR in the fund **at the level of DPs** only and it does not include an analysis of CR at the level of the target audience. The report's findings are based on an analysis of all 20 collaborations. It analyses the process of CR by examining the nature of relationships that developed during the DE collaborations and the CoP sessions, with a particular focus on how power dynamics played out in these partnerships. It examines the characteristics of doing international CR purely with digital means.

The analysis of this report also draws on the findings of the external evaluation of the fund conducted by Emily Rogers and shared with this author during the time of writing and revising this report. When reference is made in this report to the 'evaluator's' findings/analysis/report, it is to the external evaluation of Rogers.

The case studies on four collaborations are examples illustrating how the fund created digital international CR and the different challenges that collaborations faced. As well as presenting the four case studies in narrative format as part of this report, two of them have been animated and the other two have been produced as graphic stories to communicate some of the findings in a visual and more creative way, as required by the British Council's brief commissioning this research.

Report structure

The report first presents findings on the actual outcomes of CR in this fund, namely what changed for the DPs because of their experience of the fund. It then explores what is distinct about these CR having been conducted purely online, without f2f encounters. This is followed by an analysis of the nature of the 20 collaborations exploring the themes of co-creation and co-design, how well the relationships worked or not, leadership, the mutuality of learning and equality between partners and what other values informed these relationships. The report then looks at how the Community of Practice sessions contributed to developing CR and it also presents findings on the extent to which the experience of the fund changed DPs' views of other cultures, the British Council and the UK. It ends with comparing the findings of this study with those of a different type of study on other British Council digital skills projects.

Methodology

This research has used a qualitative methodology, which included an observation of all six CoP sessions, 42 interviews (mostly, one interview with each of the 40 DPs) from late April to early June 2021, when most DEs were in advanced stages of implementation.

It also included a desk review of all successful application forms, matchmaking sessions, sections of the DPs' M&E reports and British Council literature on CR in other projects. An INTRAC report on the British Council's Digital Skills programme *Rapid review of Monitoring Data Management on the ODA Digital Skills programme* (March 2021) provided the basis on which to draw a comparison with other British Council digital projects. The M&E analysis of the fund's external evaluator Emily Rogers has brought the DICE programme spirit alive in her report. Rogers has shared her findings very generously while this report was being written and they have been integrated and referenced in this report many times.

What changed for the DPs?

In their application forms, DPs had expressed their hopes about how their international collaborations within the fund would strengthen and develop them. Below is what many of the DPs had highlighted at the time:

- To learn from each other, share good practice
- To do something that they would not be able to do without the skills of the other partner, work or produce something in a new way, develop new methods
- To expand business/markets/services internationally or in the other partner's country
- To develop their digital skills/infrastructure/products
- To develop/expand their networks, create new international links/connections
- To build a long-term collaboration/partnership
- To raise their (business) profile or strengthen their position within their sector
- To develop/improve the content of their existing programmes/business.

What DPs learnt from their collaborations

A comparison of 'before' and 'after', expectations vs. actual learning, shows that the learning from the experience proved to be more diverse than expected. From interviews, it appears that through the collaborations, DPs learnt:

About the other partner's country and culture.

- The aspects mentioned include social concerns like mental health or disability in each country, digital connectivity, poverty, how people relate or communicate digitally, or the formality or informality of professional/ collaborative communication. This was not one of the expected learnings above, although it is not surprising in any way.

About how to work with partners in other countries:

- overcoming language barriers, including improving English language skills,
- overcoming differences in time zones and
- adapting to different work ethics
- other styles of working and management, including time management and leadership styles.

About methodology:

- the methodology, expertise or product of the other partner's organisation
- how to refine one's own project model or methodology based on the DE
- general project management skills, including approaches to co-design, or management skills specific to the type of project.
- About resilience, or about how to be more pragmatic about a partnership or project, and how to choose project partners in future, especially when collaborations did not turn out as expected. Where collaborations did not work well, DPs drew (painful) lessons about how to choose partners in future.
- New digital skills – this finding also relates to the evaluator's finding from the DPs' M&E reports that 65% of DPs had developed new digital skills, knowledge, approaches and/or confidence through the fund's experience to a 'high' or 'very high degree'.

Other ways in which the fund changed the DPs

Besides the new things that the DPs learnt, some of them also felt that the experience had changed their organisations or them personally. This agrees with the findings of Rogers, the external evaluator, that 60% of DPs *"identified one or more most significant benefit of the fund to be for their team or organisation."*

How the experience in the Fund changed the DPs' organisations:

- **New international connections:** Many DPs (17) stated that the fund has connected them – and in some cases also their existing networks or their target audiences – to other international organisations or audiences making it possible to build new connections and exposing them to new ideas and practitioners. This was particularly valuable because, for some DPs, during the pandemic, such opportunities were lacking

- Although it is too early to say what potential international collaborations may materialise in future, for many DPs (13), the fund has opened the appetite or made them feel better prepared to pursue opportunities **for international partnerships and in** many cases digital ones

- The fund enabled some DPs (4) to **strengthen existing relationships** with partners

- For some DPs (5), it **broadened their (digital) reach**

- Some DPs (4) stated that the fund has changed them in that **it has opened their horizons and viewpoints** about how they could do things and with whom they could work in future. Others realised that there are more potential opportunities to work internationally:
  - having found ways around language barriers or
  - having realised that they do not need to limit themselves to working within their own countries.

These findings agree with those of Rogers: *"Seventy three percent of DPs developed skills, knowledge, approaches, and/or confidence in cross-cultural collaboration through this experience to a 'high' or 'very high degree'. Comparing results indicates DPs felt they had developed marginally more in cross-cultural collaboration compared to the use of digital."* And *"the connections built and strengthened with others was seen by about half of partners as one of the most significant benefits of the fund experience. For most this was linked to the international partnerships supported via the funds, allowing DPs to form new partnerships or deepen existing ones."*

How the experience of the fund changed staff in the DP organisations personally:

- Some felt that the experience made them **more self-confident** and resilient at a personal level (4 DPs)

- others felt that they gained **more confidence in digital skills and experiences** (4 DPs).

According to the analysis by Rogers, *"sixty five percent of DPs had developing new digital skills, knowledge, approaches and/or confidence through the experience to a 'high' or 'very high degree"*.

"I am already an international person… It opened my mind with countries I had not dealt with before. Really interesting to see that we have a lot in common with the ways that other countries do business. Although there are cultural differences, business is done in similar ways".

Anthony Churchman, Music Ally, UK/international

"We do not need to limit our minds to the fact that we can work only in South Africa. It has broadened our horizons."

Ian Calvert, Further Impact, South Africa

"We are often stuck in South Africa, this is where we need to look for connections, but so much is happening outside that is so similar and it would be very good to connect to and we should not restrict ourselves in that little place."

Kamal Nara, Lefika La Phodiso, South Africa

The 'digital' in digital cultural relations

The digital component in the CR created in the fund relates to the fact that the 20 collaborations and the relationships that developed in them were formed and tested digitally.

A large majority of DPs had not collaborated with their digital partner prior to the fund, so their partnerships were formed and facilitated with purely digital means. The digital component also relates to the fact that the end product i.e., the DEs, were digital with only seven out of 20 collaborations creating DEs that included also some f2f element (involving their target audiences). This experience required much experimentation because this purely digital approach was new to many DPs.

Digital has created new possibilities

13 out of 40 DPs said that their collaboration/project would not have happened were it not digital because of the costs involved and geographic distance. The fund brought to many organisations a new realisation about the **possibilities of greater international connectivity** through digital means, by being able to reach people or markets anywhere.

The fund created the opportunity for some organisations to do their **work completely digitally for the first time** (InsightShare – Amava Oluntu, ICA-YBI, Enterprise Academy-Further Impact) or to **work internationally for the first time**. It also allowed some DPs to experiment with digital project delivery or experience.

For some DPs, the experience of the fund **broadened their (digital) reach** (Instituto Vereda, Music Ally, the University of Hertfordshire, Social Innovation Lab and Mymacom). Others felt that they gained **more confidence in digital skills and experiences** (4 DPs).

R&D, experimentation, innovation

Creating these DEs allowed DPs to experiment digitally and explore new ways of working (e.g. AdamStart, The Arts Machine, InsightShare, Making an Impact, YBI). Mymacom discovered that it is possible to train people on Cognitive Behaviour Therapy digitally. InsightShare developed a new approach ('the flipped classrooms') to create community-based facilitators/trainers in video

making with purely digital means. YBI tested their training kit, which had been redesigned for completely digital delivery. Making an Impact experimented with building a community for the DE participants digitally. Young Identity/Sick! Festival and Empatheatre/Klein Karoo had the opportunity to get their British and South African women participants to co-design and co-create their DE.

According to the external evaluator's analysis, some DPs tried new tools whereas others used familiar tools but used them in new ways. Twenty-nine DPs "used one or more digital tool/medium that they had no or limited prior experience of. This included specialist digital tools (such as those specific to 3D printing) and more generalist tools that support different forms of interactions, co-creation, project management, e.g. Google Jamboard, Mentimeter, Miro, and Padlet."[6]

Advantages of purely digital projects

What is distinct about Cultural Relations being created through digital means in this fund is the **realisation** that:

- **Strong** digital collaborations and teamwork is possible digitally

- The experience can be **'richer'** or that there can be **more interaction** than in f2f collaborations. Several DPs found that they had more interaction and collaboration with their partner than they would have had otherwise. Hatch Ideas found that they spent more time collaborating in this way, shortening their meetings, but having more of them. YBI found that they had more information on how Hackathon participants completed their challenge than in the f2f version of the same activity[7]

> ## "Teamwork can also look like this."
>
> Tshego Khutsoane, Empatheatre, partner of Klein Karoo, South Africa)

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[6] Rogers, E. *DICE Digital R&D Fund – Final Evaluation*, draft report, 26.7.21.

[7] The analysis of M&E reports by Emily Rogers shows that the period of interaction with the target audience was longer and could involve more trainers, compared to if they had relied on short visits from one or two people. Additionally, it is likely that more DP staff engaged in the process than would have been possible were any international travel involved.

Geographical barriers can be broken.

- Organisations do not have to confine themselves to partners in their own countries

- That running a project digitally can be more efficient, and not only because it saved travel costs and time. Some DPs found that in a digital project things could be turned round more quickly, they would be more conscious about time during online discussions, or it would be easier to focus on the project's content rather than having to content with organising physical events (BOM-ThinkWeb, Social Innovation Lab, Music Ally-Simsara, Enterprise Academy).

What is also distinct is the **possibilities** that digital cultural relations can create. In the fund, the DPs succeeded in **extending their reach** because their projects were digital in various ways:

- The DEs brought together people from far away countries at a much lower cost than bringing them together physically – in many cases this would not have been possible, were it not a digital opportunity

- The geographic reach of organisations spread – DPs could bring together participants from geographical locations within their countries, that would not have been possible to bring together physically, or they could reach more people than they would have otherwise

- Marginalised groups connected with people they would otherwise not be able to access. For example, Social Starters – Migraflix brought successful food entrepreneurs in the UK to advise migrant food entrepreneurs in Brazil; British and South African LBGTQ+ teenagers exchanged experiences digitally; PWDs in Indonesia and the UK connected through art; Pakistani embroidery women workers with Bolivian and Peruvian migrant seamstresses in Brazil shared techniques and their work

- DPs for the first time could work internationally and deliver something that can be viewed anywhere, and not only by people in one location (The Arts Machine, Further Impact, Instituto Feira Preta).

- For DPs and their target audiences to gain insights into their collaborators' lives that would not have been possible otherwise, such as seeing where people lived/ their homes, or chatting on WhatsApp about non-work related subjects. (Casa do Povo, CLUSTER, Migraflix, SIL)

Enterprise Academy found that collaborating digitally made for **a more inclusive collaboration**, since the whole team in each partner organisation could follow the content of discussions on Livedocs and be more involved in this way.

In another case, working digitally provided a layer of **safety** to the target audience to engage on the sensitive topic of gay sexuality. It also gave the opportunity to many young people to be exposed to new technologies (Lefika La Phodiso – The Arts Machine).

Disadvantages of purely digital projects

Despite these advantages, there are some disadvantages in purely digital interactions that many DPs acknowledged. For some, meeting f2f to build a great partnership or work with communities, is essential and they **missed 'the human element'** during digital collaborations.

Digital fatigue was the flip side of the efficiency in time that digital interaction brings – you can have too many meetings in one day.

Poor internet connectivity, particularly in Brazil, Pakistan and South Africa, due to the cost of obtaining good quality internet access or power cuts and trying to build a new partnership while being frequently cut off caused frustration to many DPs. The lack of sufficient experience with technology created complications that would not have existed were the projects f2f.

As well as generating innovation, **training with purely digital means can have its limitations** and pose challenges. For instance, DerbyQuad were limited in that when they were training online, they could not spend more time to help those trainees who were doing well to progress even further. Amava Oluntu and Hatch Ideas would prefer blended learning to a purely digital format. The British target audience in the DE of Hatch Ideas – Instituto Vereda was not successful in forming a community through digital means only.

> ❝
> **"The whole borders thing becomes obsolete in a way...depending on where the person is and the kind of infrastructure they have, it still can create some challenges – to do with resources to connect, connecting the team, or how the pandemic situation is managed in different countries, and how this affects people differently... But you can transcend a lot".**
>
> Sarah El-Miniawi, Simsara, Egypt

The jury is out regarding **digital-only artistic expression**. For Rearts, going fully digital created a sense of freedom of artistic expression by knowing that anyone anywhere could view what they had produced and not confining themselves to showing their work to a local audience only, with the constraints this may involve. For Ketemu, however, creating art physically but being able to only share it digitally was limiting. Co-creation between artisans in Brazil and Pakistan was challenging in a digital environment where some things could be lost in translation.

The Hive Network and Instituto Feira Preta found that it would be too costly to try to sell the products produced in Brazil to buyers in South Africa and vice versa, despite creating at least one digital market. In Pakistan, IEI participants could only see virtually the physical activity that was taking place at CLUSTER in Cairo with Egyptian participants 'prototyping' together f2f, because the Pakistani participants were scattered in different locations, and it would have been too costly to bring them together physically for that activity.

"**...pre Covid and in physical environments the dig. experience felt like the second option. But now, we should see it as an enabler and that we do not constantly compare it to a non-digital experience**".

Lindsay Cilliers, Further Impact, South Africa

17

Nature of digital partnerships – power balance

We have looked at the nature of the relationships between DPs in each international collaboration and the power balance within them by examining the process of the collaborations in designing and implementing the DEs, how problems were addressed, how leadership within each partnership was perceived by the partners and the extent to which learning from each other was mutual.

Co-design and co-creation

The fund had placed emphasis on equal partnerships and it was expected that DPs would jointly design and implement their joint projects/DEs. Proposals for the projects had to be submitted on behalf of both partners and responsibility for the delivery was to be shared. Indeed, our evidence shows that **in all the partnerships, the DP designed and created each DE together**.

The **division of labour** in all partnerships was based on where DPs could complement each other in terms of experience and specialisations. In some cases, the partners came from different fields and it was clear how they complemented each other and who could do what. In other cases, the partners had similar backgrounds. They identified their respective roles when they jointly designed their projects, some with more clarity than others.

Co-design

The ideas for what DEs to create were agreed and owned jointly from the outset, even when the idea for the project may have originated from one rather than both partners and one partner took on most of the proposal writing. In one exception, the DP felt that their partner had not participated enough in creating the DE concept.

The ideas for the DEs were decided at proposal time or had pre-dated the fund – they were pre-existing ideas that had been waiting for an opportunity to materialise

Co-creation

In some cases, the synergies during the implementation were very close or worked particularly well. In three partnerships, the DPs expressed their collaborations in terms of feeling as one, rather than two separate organisations working together. Three partnerships drew up MoUs at the start of their relationship.

How DPs described their partnerships

13 out of the 20 partnerships were described by DPs in positive terms by both partners, often in glowing terms. Other descriptions used by DPs to describe the collaborations over their DEs were collaborative (seven), open and honest (seven), respectful (six), supportive/caring and mutual (five), organic/natural (four), understanding of each other (three) and equal/non-hierarchical (three). According to the evaluator's analysis, **ninety percent of the DPs felt that the experience in the fund had strengthened their relationship with the organisations they partnered** with to a 'high' or 'very high' degree.

In the next section, the extent of challenges and problems faced by the DP and DE are discussed.

Solving problems within partnerships

A large majority (17) of collaborations worked well in terms of relationships between partners – either there were no problems or problems were overcome. Considering that most of these partnerships were new, purely digital and had to deliver projects within a tight timeframe, this is a success for the fund. Trust was built through a process of solving issues that would arise and addressing differences. Five collaborations reported no problems at all, another 8 collaborations admitted to some problems having arisen, but having been resolved without affecting the relationship negatively. In another 4 collaborations, one partner only said that there were no problems and the other partner felt that there were some problems, but they had been overcome. In three collaborations the relationship did not work out. (These are discussed in the next section).

> **"Four individuals working on one project, not two teams. It wasn't Enterprise Academy has done this or Further Impact has done this. It was authentically collaborative."**
>
> Anthony Catt, Enterprise Academy, UK

The problems that arose and were, in most cases, resolved were:

- **The time difference** between partners meant that communication could take a long time.
- **The language barrier**, when the DE participants (and sometimes the DPs) did not have a common language. Most had budgeted for interpretation.
- **Differences in styles** of management or working.
- **Delays in receiving grants** from the British Council, particularly for first-time grantees, causing uncertainty and delays in DE implementation. In one extreme case, a DP had still not received their grant before the end of the fund.[8]
- **Juggling work with childcare** at home due to lockdown.
- **Ramadan, Easter and Covid-related lockdowns** challenged the short DE timeframe.
- **Imbalance** in resources and skills between the two organisations – one had many staff working on the DE and the other had only one; one had an online market in place, but the other did not; one could 'prototype' with their target audience physically present in one place and the other could not bring its participants to one place.

It is worth noting that Brazilian DPs had to receive their grants through their partners in other countries for administrative reasons, causing delays in some cases.[9] However, there was no report that this made DPs feel unequal within their partnerships. One Brazilian DP drew up an agreement with their partner because they wanted to avoid being viewed as a sub-contractor.

Many DPs stated that problems were resolved by talking them through with their partner, to find common ground and solutions. What helped them was raising them early on, keeping the communication between partners continuous, being upfront and not holding back, making concessions, even when feeling that you were conceding more than the other side and asking for help outside the partnership when partners did not know something.

Why some relationships did not work well

Even though their DEs were delivered, three collaborations did not work out as relationships. In one of these, both partners agreed that their relationship did not work out and an amicable 'closure' was achieved late in the fund's life. In the other two partnerships, only one DP acknowledged that the relationship did not work, and it is not clear, if any kind of 'closure' was achieved.

Differences arose from different understandings and expectations about how the DE should unfold and how they should collaborate, how to do things, or about the performance of the other partner. None had collaborated before with their partner, but this is not a determining factor as more new collaborations between DPs worked well than not. It is worth considering, however, that the time between the matchmaking sessions and the application deadline was very short and this meant that organisations had little time to get to know each other and design their projects.

Power came into play in two ways: gender inequality and the 'colonial legacy' informing behaviours and perceptions. In one partnership, gender was an issue for one of the partners – a feeling that women were executing the work and were telling them what to do. For two partnerships, the differences between the DPs were perceived in cultural terms – different cultures in ways of working, how to relate to one another, how the other sees you. The 'colonial legacy' was used to explain different expectations between partners over the ethnic composition of the target audience or the educational standard of facilitators, or when inequality was felt when someone's tone was perceived as 'patronising' towards the target audience of another country.

> **"It wasn't an overnight thing that happened. It took time to establish that bond and reach agreement. If someone doesn't agree, we can give different opinions on how to resolve a problem. It brought more openness and trust in the group… The stepping stone of trust was crucial. It has been a process. It went through an evolution…"**
>
> Azeem Hamid, Rearts, Pakistan

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[8] This was partly due to a delay in the DP organisation providing the required documentation to the British Council, and partly due to the fact that the British Council had to spend its budget within a determined period of time.

[9] This happened due to national legislation in Brazil.

Leadership within the partnerships

During the implementation of DEs, partners took the lead in those areas that they had expertise in or that the nature of the project necessitated. Most partnerships (17 out of 20) were perceived by the DPs in them as equal. In the other three partnerships, it is not clear whether the DPs saw each other as equal. This sense of equality between partners was largely based on how they had divided the work between them – namely, each partner contributing to, or taking the lead on a specific part of the DE according to their expertise.

In seven partnerships one organisation provided the methodology on which the DE was based, or they transferred their expertise to the other partner. In six of these cases, the partner providing the methodology was based in the UK and in one case in Brazil. Did the fact that one was providing the methodology and the other was on the 'receiving' end create a sense of inequality between partners? In most cases, it seems not. In 4 out of the 7 partnerships, DPs looked at the relationships as equal in terms of leadership despite the expertise coming from one side. There was only one partnership where the partner providing the methodology regarded themselves as the partnership's leader. In two other partnerships, both partners agreed that the leader was the organisation receiving the expertise (both based in the global South), and not the one providing it.

In two partnerships, it is unclear who led the partnership. In another two, the DPs stated that it was their target audience who led in the decisions on what to do in the DE.

> **"We don't have to hold back in our conversation. We are always willing to listen. We each have our strengths. When it is not our area of expertise we listen."**
>
> Lindsay Cilliers, Further Impact, South Africa

The mutuality of learning between partners

In 12 out of the 20 collaborations, the learning from each other appears to have been mutual – both DPs learnt from each other – but not in the same way. In some collaborations, each DP learnt skills or ways of working from their partner, whereas in other collaborations, the level of experience between partners was similar, even if they were experienced in different fields.

In some of the cases where one DP was contributing expertise and the other was contributing the target audience, the learning was not mutual. The former learnt from testing their model on the DE and from doing so in a different cultural context, but they did not from their partner's expertise or skills, although they may have learnt much from the international experience.

In three collaborations, the learning was not mutual, because one DP did not feel that they had learnt from their partner or from the actual experience.

Equality within the fund's processes

Overall, the fund created a safe space for DPs to interact and collaborate. An overwhelming majority of DPs stated that they felt safe and comfortable to share weaknesses with other DPs and the British Council. A very large majority of DPs (32 out of 40) stated that the fund's processes made them feel that all DPs were equal, despite an acknowledgement that some DPs had worked with DICE before and others were newcomers.

What contributed to their sense of equality within the fund was:

- How the CoP was conducted, feeling inclusive, everyone having the opportunity to contribute
- The diversity within the composition of the DP cohort
- The way DPs were treated by British Council staff, including the support offered and their responsiveness to them
- The way budgets were divided between partners.
- Factors that created a sense of inequality among DPs included:
- Different levels of fluency in English among DPs
- Different levels of digital expertise and connectivity among DPs.

In a couple of cases, interactions within the CoP breakout rooms made DPs feel uncomfortable. One DP felt the 'cultural divide within' one's own country when they were the only person of colour in their home group. Another regarded the behaviour of a fellow DP as arrogant due to their race.

Sustainability of the partnerships

It is too early to say to what extent these partnerships will endure, but there are some hopeful signs. According to DPs interviewed for this research, 11 partnerships that worked well want to continue to collaborate and intend to look for funds to do so: Coventry University and Rumah Harapan Mulya, Sick! Festival and Klein Karoo, Amava Oluntu and InsightShare, BOM and ThinkWeb, Hatch Ideas and Instituto Vereda, The Craft Design Institute and the University of Hertfordshire, Casa do Povo and Social Innovation Lab, DerbyQuad and REDEF, Music Ally and Simsara, Enterprise Academy and Further Impact, and The Art Machine and Lefika La Phodiso. The evaluator's analysis shows that 14 partnerships had plans to continue working together by the end of the fund implementation period, eight of these being new partnerships that had been formed in the fund.

At the time of writing, the fund's WhatsApp group is still alive. Ownership of the Google mailing list has been transferred to DPs who wanted to continue communicating within the fund community. In April 2022, this researcher will check in with these DPs to find out whether they have managed to continue their collaboration in some way.

Values underpinning the ways of working

Apart from equality, other values that underpinned the ways of working, according to most DPs, were inclusion, diversity, and generosity.

Inclusion and diversity

The collaborations practised the values of inclusion and diversity in their ways of working and in their selection of target audiences for their DEs. This research deals with inclusion and diversity in the partnerships and not in the DEs' target audience, a topic covered by the evaluation report by Rogers.

In an earlier part of this report, we showed that running a digital project can make it possible to include people in different locations at low cost, but it can also exclude those who are not strong in IT, do not have devices or have no or poor connectivity.

For most partnerships, there were limits to how much DPs could do, in order to make the composition of the partnership teams more inclusive or diverse, because in most cases teams were already set, they were small and their composition could not be changed within the given resources and timeframe.[10] Nonetheless, in two partnerships it was possible to hire new team members:

- BOM hired a disabled producer as co-curator and ThinkWeb included in their DE team a member of staff with a disability to act as a content manager.

- ICA and YBI added a third partner, SCAT, to bring more ideas, content and to broaden the discussion.

- DPs practised the values of inclusion and diversity in their ways of working by:

- Using platforms accessible to all team members and meeting at times that would suit everyone (Ketemu-ADC)

- Ensuring that all points of view could be expressed openly between teams (AdamStart, Migraflix, Rearts)

- By trying to ensure diversity in the composition of facilitator, trainer or mentor teams that they recruited to deliver the DEs (Linha 3 Producoes and Rearts)

- By including their implementation partners in the team (resulting also in project adjustments) (CDI)

- By including the entire cohort of participants that was diverse in terms of gender, professional and socio-economic background, in the creation process (Enterprise Academy).

Generosity

Creating "genuine international camaraderie and generosity" among DPs was one of the fund's aims. DPs found that generosity was expressed in the fund in the way that:

- DPs shared their experience, skills, resources or useful tools with other DPs in the CoP breakout sessions and on WhatsApp (11 DPs)

- The British Council offered the CoP as an attempt to build a community, the time invested in it and its methodology (11 DPs)

- The British Council funded experimentation or social change (10 DPs)

- DPs went the extra mile for their DE and gave more time to them than allocated (four DPs)

A few DPs felt that the fund's processes were the opposite of generous: the small project budgets, the short time in which projects had to be implemented, having to attend the CoP sessions when DPs' schedules were so busy, or not translating the M&E forms for the target audience in the languages of participating countries.

Other values

Other values that were represented in the partnerships, according to DPs, were respect, openness in communication and to other ideas, creativity, honesty and tolerance.

> **"This was an incredibly generous project. The fact that we were funded to explore working online was generous…This funding enabled us to apply our methodologies in a very real way and this felt good."**
>
> Rozanne Myburgh, Lefika La Phodiso, South Africa

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[10] It is worth noting that British Council had offered an access cost budget additional to the £15,000 project budget specifically to tackle digital exclusion. There was no ceiling for this amount and per application guidance, it was going to be awarded based on need/rationale. No access costs requested as part of the application stage were refused.

The Community of Practice

The CoP was created by the fund *"for Digital Partners to share learning, experience and challenges: to create safe spaces that encourage Partners to share their experiences with one another in an engaging way."*[11] Seven digital sessions and 4 drop-in sessions were convened from February to June 2021. DPs participated in a combination of plenary and group sessions on Zoom and communicated also on a WhatsApp group set up for all DPs. As already stated, this was an environment within which most DPs felt comfortable and free to share problems and to ask for help from other DPs. Many DPs saw the role played by the CoP convener as contributing to this sense of freedom and safety. Most of the DPs (23) stated that no problems arose with other DPs or the British Council in the CoP, although a few instances of dissonance among DPs were reported.

For 8 DPs, the best interactions happened in the Zoom break-out rooms where people could connect, something that was difficult to do in the plenary sessions.

DPs stated that they benefited from the CoP by:

- Networking – Eight DPs spoke of the possibility of connecting with other DPs in future, but no specific projects or ideas for collaboration exist yet. Two DPs mentioned that they were helped by other DPs through the CoP to identify people to work with in their projects.

- Forming human connections with other DPs (seven DPs)

- Learning and exploring issues (four DPs)

- Connecting with organisations in their own countries (four DPs)

- Finding solutions to problems – Three DPs found the CoP useful for this, but one DP thought that there was not enough time to get into solutions to some of the big problems, e.g. overcoming the language barrier.

Factors that prevented some DPs from making more out of the experience of the CoP included the fact that many DPs (14) had multiple demands on their time, including the execution of the DE; others found that the time they had in small groups was too short to go into depth on issues; and others found the large number of DPs involved and how much was going on during CoP sessions, difficult to cope with.

> **"Some were fairly big challenges and you could see a lot of time going into them. You don't know people well enough to think that you could pull a group to work on that challenge. You also don't know how long it will take to get over that hurdle."**
>
> Peter Little, YBI, UK

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[11] DICE Digital R&D Fund Community of Practice Supplier Framework Brief

Change in DPs' views of other culture

When exploring their exposure to other countries through the fund, many DPs (nine) expressed the feeling that despite differences from one country to another, people faced similar problems – not least the pandemic, but also in their work for social change. There was a sense of a universal 'we'.

For many DPs, the experience with the fund did not change how they thought of other cultures, as they were already exposed to different cultures. However, many DPs learnt new things about other countries – and sometimes also about their own. In this way, their experience with the fund often challenged their assumptions about these countries and made them recognise that these were, after all, stereotypes.

While feeling that universal 'we', learning from one another, testing things in one place that have worked in another, a recognition was also reinforced that what works in one context does not necessarily work in another.

"A beautiful reminder that in other cultures, be they developing countries or emerging nations, it's so easy to think as 'poor them, they are struggling'... We should never assume anything around the level of creativity or access."

Andrea Gamson, Social Starters, UK

"It opened up our perspective, as there was a recognition that the issues women entrepreneurs face are similar regardless of where they are based. We also were able to understand the cultural differences in how women promote and sell their products."

Making an Impact, UK

"There are many people in other countries not doing exactly the same things we do – very different projects – but swimming against the stream. Very interesting to share. There are many projects and ideas, but there is an essence in common."

Mayara Vivian, Casa do Povo, Brazil

"Not everything is transportable...There is a lot of stuff that a UK business can learn from a business operating in Soweto and vice versa but, there is also a lot that doesn't work, that's different. It's enriching for us identifying those differences rather than just try to import or export."

Mike Bandar, Enterprise Academy, UK

29

Change in DPs' view of the British Council and the UK

The experience of the fund overall changed favourably the views of the British Council held by many of the DPs or it allowed others to retain their existing positive opinions, with one exception.

Thirteen DPs retained their positive view of the British Council or reinforced it. Except for one disappointed DP, the rest of the DPs whose view of the British Council did change, were favourable in their view of how the British Council had acted as a funder – by being inclusive, open, allowing for diverse voices to be heard. 14 DPs who had joined DICE for the first time came out with very positive first impressions of the British Council. Four DPs commented favourably on the fact that the fund acknowledged and tried to address the colonial legacy by allowing for international collaborations to happen without the necessary participation of a UK organisation and holding a session with DICE artists on JP Singh's paper.

For seven UK-based DPs their experience in the fund did not change the way they see their own country, be that a positive or critical view, but for a few (four) British DPs this was an opportunity to appreciate something positive about their country. Likewise, many DPs outside the UK (nine DPs) did not change their view of the UK, but those who did, changed it in a positive way, to do with exploring new things, creativity and openness.

The interviews with DPs have provided some anecdotal evidence of 'soft power' having been exercised on organisations outside the UK.

> **"They showed me a side of Britain I don't know so well. This is about cultural connection, energy put into connecting everyone and enabling everyone being equal and have space for their voice. Not how you see Britain very often. I find British people can be very intolerant of difference, so it was very good to see this side of it."**

Theresa Wigley, Amava Oluntu, South Africa

> **"I did appreciate the BC recognition of the historical legacy of the British Council and how the fund needs to address that…it was acknowledged…also by opening the collaboration to other countries and that this did not have to be with a UK organisation, as if UK has to be the centre.**

Seonaid Murray, The Arts Machine, UK

> **"When we heard we can work with another country, it made us think differently of the mission of the British Council, which establishes partnerships internationally."**

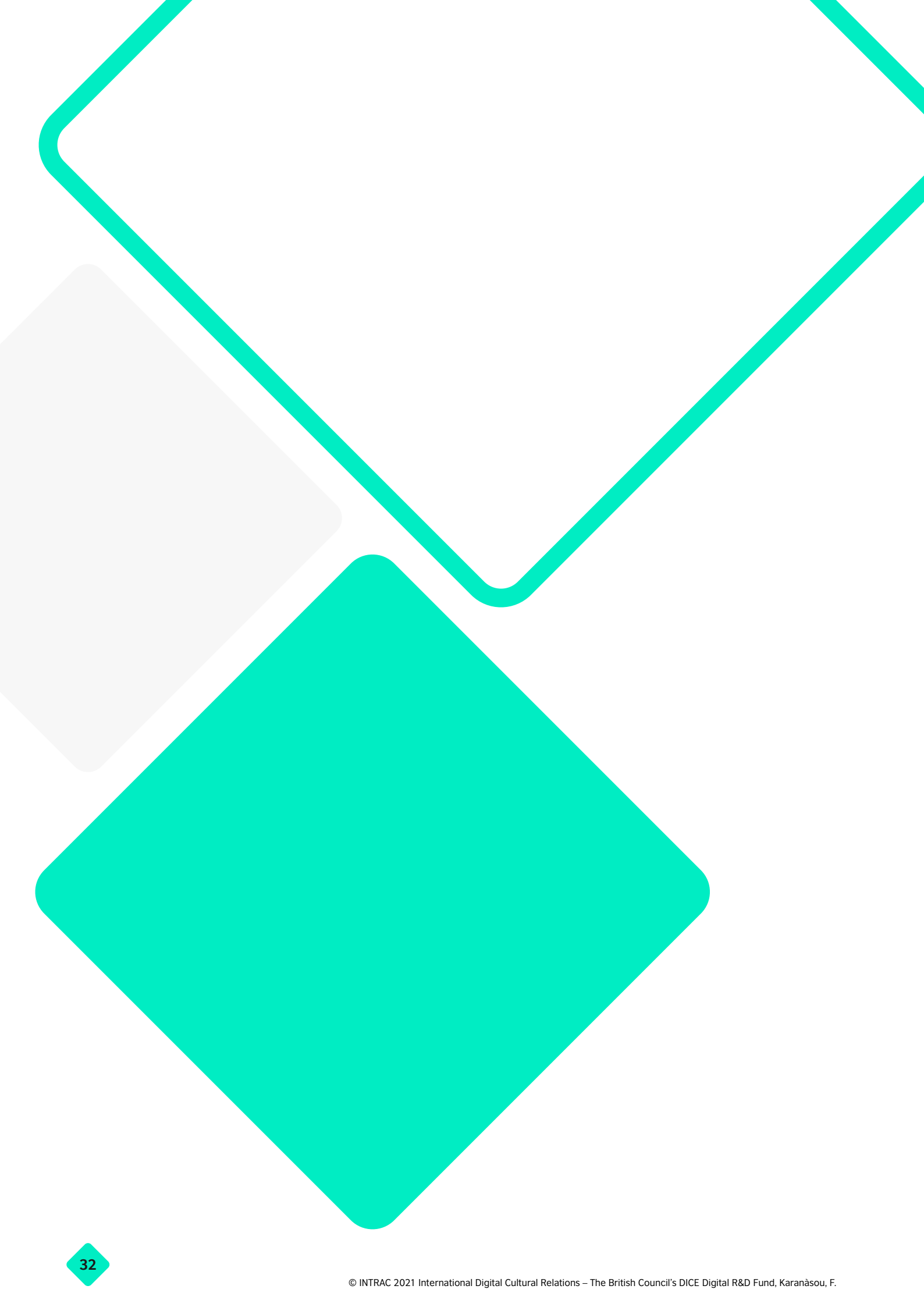Daniel Manjarres, Instituto Feira Preta, Brazil

> **"What I valued the most in this engagement is that the British Council is giving the freedom to DPs to execute."**

Anantya van Bronckhorst, ThinkWeb, Indonesia

Comparison of the fund with other British Council digital projects

In response to the pandemic, the British Council set up the ODA Digital Skills Programme to allow existing f2f projects to be delivered in digital format, to pilot digital skills training and to create international connections through multi-lateral co-designed digital experiences. The last category is where the DICE Digital R&D Fund falls. A study by INTRAC into the programme's data monitoring management included an examination of the extent to which the projects under the Digital Skills Programme reached new audiences and markets and the extent to which they took EDI considerations into account. That study does not allow for a close comparison with the findings of this study, which is about cultural relations and has focused only on the DPs and not their target audiences. However, it is possible to draw some parallels in the findings between the two studies. As with other projects in the Digital Skills Programme, in the fund:

- Several DPs were able to **extend their geographic reach** to new geographic areas and reach audiences that they would not normally be able to reach had their projects not been purely digital. In a few cases, the fund's DPs managed to attract more participants than they would have done otherwise. Additionally, many of the fund's DPs stated that they would not have been able to create their collaborations/projects without doing them digitally due to geographic distance and costs

- Some of the projects funded under the fund were able to **connect the target audience** of one DP with the target audience of another to foster international interaction

- The **language barrier** posed challenges in international communications (between target audiences but also between the DPs), which had been foreseen and were addressed successfully to a larger or lesser extent

- **Access to the internet and different levels of digital competence** among DPs were challenging in some of the fund's international collaborations.

Overview of Case Studies

The four case studies were selected to illustrate a variety of power dynamics in the international collaborations and of problems they faced either within the relationship or by working with purely digital means. As 16 out of the 20 collaborations included a UK DP, here, three out of four cases also include a UK DP.

The Hive Network, South Africa & Instituto Feira Preta, Brazil: a South-South collaboration, in which the Brazilian partner provided the methodology for the DE, but both partners felt equal in their partnership. A new collaboration with interesting lessons from getting to know each other's cultures.

Hatch Ideas Worldwide, UK and Instituto Vereda, Brazil: a North-South, close collaboration between two organisations in similar fields, which enjoyed a lot of synergy. This was also a new collaboration, which overcame a difficult personal moment.

DerbyQuad, UK and REDEF, Indonesia: a North-South collaboration where the UK partner transferred knowledge and skills to an Indonesian target audience through the Indonesian partner, but the idea originated with the Indonesian partner. The seven-hour time difference and connectivity issues were overcome.

Music Ally, UK and Simsara, Egypt: a North-South collaboration where the UK partner provides the methodology and expertise, but it is the Egyptian partner who leads the partnership. The project is digital by its nature, not due to Covid, and the collaboration is happening in at least three different parts of the world.

All the case studies are based on separate interviews with each partner (See Annex one for details).

A number of illustrations have been designed and created by Eileen Lemoine to reflect the four case study's digital experience.
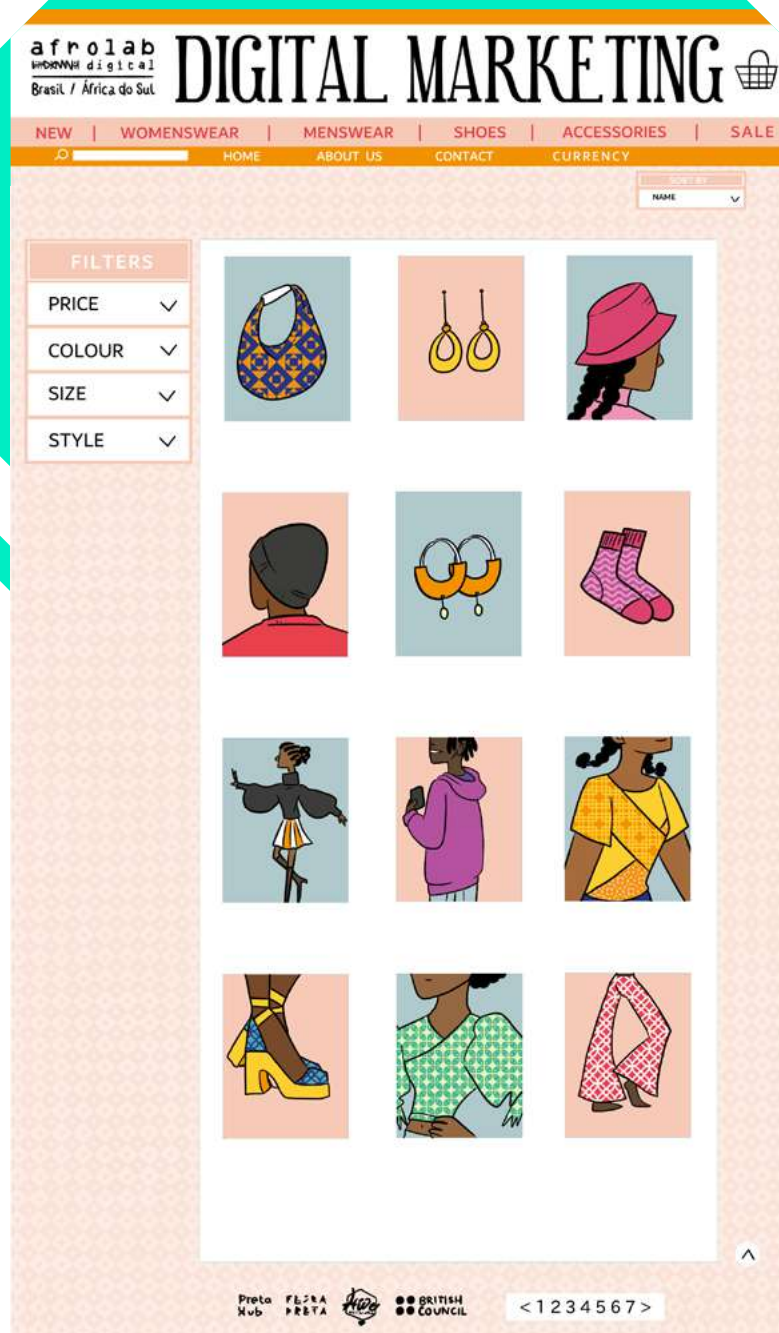
Illustration of the interface created by The Hive Network and Instituto Feira Preta.

© Eileen Lemoine / British Council adapted from the original.

Case Study One – The Hive Network, South Africa and Instituto Feira Preta, Brazil

The two partners

The Hive Network is an agency that connects "talented and experienced creative entrepreneurs with opportunities to drive economic growth, for both themselves and the creative sector"[1]. Instituto Feira Preta[2] is an accelerator & incubator programme for business people of African origin Brazilian black businesses in Brazil. The two Digital Partners (DPs) had not collaborated before, but their directors had met before the fund and Adriana Barbosa, IFP founder and director, initiated the collaboration under the fund.

Their project and division of labour

Their Digital Experience (DE) involved a seven-day virtual course and mentorship on fashion design, business, prototyping and digital marketing for 5 African-Brazilian and 5 black South African fashion start-Maup owners and entrepreneurs. This virtual experience was based on the methodology of IFP, called AfroLab. The agreed division of labour between the two partners was that IFP would provide this methodology and lead in the first phase, the Hive Network would carry out a case study on how the DE benefited its target audience and lead in the second phase, and they would both carry out a social media campaign in the third phase.

How did they describe their partnership?

Daniel Manjarres, IFP: *"Discovery would be that word…Working with an organisation we have not had any contact before was a discovery – to know the people working in the org, then we got to know the entrepreneurs."*

Tshireletso Moloi, HN: *"Smooth sailing for the most part. A few challenges naturally, but open enough to address them. 'This is my issue. Let's work it out'…More equal in the sense that we both have certain deliverables and phases in the project that we are in charge of."*

- IFP could not receive its grant directly from the British Council – something common for all Brazilian DPs in the fund – so it had to receive it through the Hive Network. Daniel, IFP: *"It was important for us to establish that we are not being contracted by the Hive Network, but we are partners on same league… They were very quick and it was very effective. That was very important for us. This brought a sense of trust."*

What problems did they face and how did they resolve them?

Daniel: *"The **time zones** [5 hours difference between Brazil and South Africa], but we worked on that. Also, the **language**. It's hard to facilitate and make connections among people who don't speak the language, but we have done well. The entrepreneurs communicate in Portuguese and English. We ask them to use Google translation in chat. We have simultaneous interpretation in our meetings and try to be creative."*

- Tshireletso, HN: *"Some disadvantages are the part that we have to do the catalogue. They have an online market space, we don't…Social media campaign: we wanted to have a **catalogue** of products, but photos were not good quality…They have budget for that, but we don't…there were things we didn't take into account, translation, for example, finding that everything needs to be translated. We had a budget, but it proved to be more…"*

- Daniel, IFP: *"We understand some limitations that they have. For example, what we wanted to do for the third stage – this special collection with produce from both countries – I think this part is difficult, because we are not able to sell products from South Africa to Brazil and from Brazil to South Africa…There are some things that we are able to do, like share knowledge, best practice and explore challenges, but when you want to do something like e-commerce, it will maybe in a different project. A specific challenge in this project that we were not able to surpass."*

Learning about the other partner'culture

Daniel: *"We decided to focus on women and girls [as their target audience]. The entrepreneurs are 6 women and 4 men. As IFP, we have the mission to help entrepreneurs from African origin Brazilians, indigenous, LGBTQ+ entrepreneurships and produce income… why we do this work, relates to the broken relationship among black culture in South Africa and in Brazil…We like to highlight that we connect a community that was separated hundreds of years before. We get together inspiration from two different continents and we identify what relates as brothers and sisters and what makes us different from both sides. Everything is about creativity and entrepreneurship."*

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[1] DICE Digital R&D Fund Profile Book, 32, February 2021.

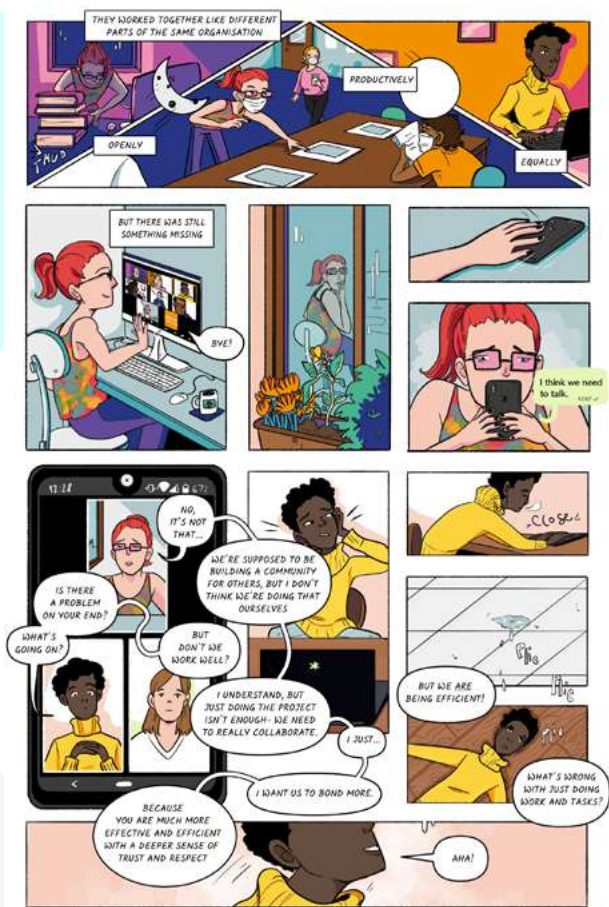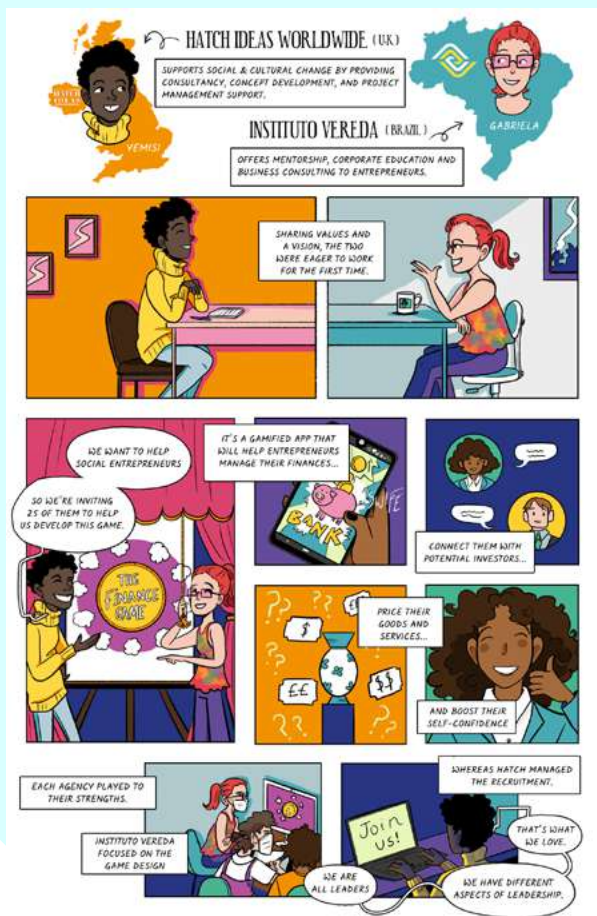[2] 'Feira preta' means black festival in Portuguese.

Getting inspiration from each other across two continents, we identified our differences. As well as the similarities that make us all brothers and sisters.

The members of The Hive Network and Instituto Feira Preta.
© Eileen Lemoine / British Council adapted from the original

"We had this first expectation that we needed to get connected with our African roots, our cultural heritage, we are black people. This is something that is very strong here in Brazil, but we found that in South Africa… they don't need to identify themselves as black people, with values for black people, because they are all inside of that culture."

Tshireletso, HN: *"In one of the sessions, one thing we realised in South Africa the youth here are not in touch with our culture and background whereas in Brazil they are trying to learn more about Africa and where they come from and their roots. We are here in Africa and don't take advantage. We really don't look at it the way they look at it."*

"I also learnt about a different culture. The whole English thing. I grew up speaking Zulu and at school learnt English and Afrikaans as second languages. So, for me it was a culture shock that English is not so dominant in Brazil…From those interactions [in the CoP], we are not that different as people. When we talk about problems they are facing, challenges in their projects, they are very similar to what we are facing. In as much as people are different, we are very much the same and experience the same things."

Storyboards of the digital experience by Hatch Ideas Worldwide and Instituto Vereda.

© Eileen Lemoine / British Council adapted from the original

Case Study Two – Hatch Ideas Worldwide, UK and Instituto Vereda, Brazil

The two partners

Hatch Ideas Worldwide (HI) "supports people and organisations release their social and cultural change projects by providing them with bespoke, high-quality, state-of-the-art consultancy, business development, concept development and project management support."[3] Instituto Vereda (IV) "offers…coaching and mentoring (entrepreneurs, professionals, leadership), corporate education and team development… organizational development and change management and business consulting". [4] The two partners had not worked together before, but they knew each other before the fund and they wanted to work together.

Their project and division of labour

Their DE brought together up to 25 "creative social entrepreneurs from Brazil and UK in two brainstorming sessions and WhatsApp interventions to develop the concept of a game (gamified experience in an app) to help them manage their finances, create confidence, set the right price to their products and services and connect with potential investors".[5] They worked together in planning and implementation and split only when they needed to work with the specialists. Yemisi Mokuolu, HI: *"We are pretty much split in the middle. Due to time, the game design is more on the Brazilian side and HI is more managing the recruitment, because of the tools we have in each agency."*

How did they describe their relationship?

Gabriela Nemirovsky, IV: *"…not a hierarchical relationship…A lot of respect regarding our different agendas and profiles. No criticism at any point. More of an approach of an understanding of how to work with each other…I think that we had in the beginning a mutual interest, because I know they wanted to work with Brazil…and were interested in our profile, because we have worked with creative entrepreneurs before. For us, the interest was in going a bit more international… During the process, barriers fell and we are just doing a project together…there are no hidden agendas. We like their working style, approach. We match a lot the way we work…In the beginning, because they have partnered before with the British Council, we let them lead the way in a sense, because we wanted to understand the way of working a little better…I feel we are really sharing now at the same level."*

"…there was always a mutual understanding on what went well and what did not. Open, transparent communication. We are both very results oriented. We made it very clear what we wanted to achieve. We were very open in terms of ideas."

Yemisi, HI: *"Hand in hand. We are very similar in skill sets but have different strengths. Two people in each organisation…sharing the load…Really adult, open, professional, incredibly caring – we have all been going through quite a lot due to Covid…When we talk, it's like being one organisation sometimes. There have been some challenges due to exhaustion and family factors."*

"We are all leaders. We have different aspects of leadership. That's what we love. Wonderful blend. Time management, meetings, structure…We are very different and fell into our leadership spaces."

What problems did they face and how did they resolve them?

Gabriela, IV: *"A few months ago, I had a thought after one of our calls: there was a frustration from me, because we were not trying to build a community. I called out a meeting and explained my feeling, which was really personal. "How can we say we work in community with others, if we don't do this ourselves – if we don't try to build a different bonding ourselves?" This was a defining step to the way we interact, and it went very well…because we didn't know how to work with each other, we took a non-personal approach with targets and steps, but community is also something we are trying to develop. It made me calmer than I was before."*

Yemisi, HI: *"There was a time when Gabi…wanted us to be closer, so she…said she wanted us to do that. Although I felt uncomfortable, in a very British way, I made myself think about it…and I had to assess some of my own issues…When she first talked about it, to me it felt really inefficient. To me, it felt we should just do our work and our tasks. But now, working through, evolving and breaking through and deepening the relationship, we are much more effective and efficient, because then you get more trust and more respect. This is something I have never done before…I value it intensely. In my own small way, I try to expand it in my other working relationships."*

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[3] Profile Book, 30

[4] As above.

[5] https://sites.google.com/view/dice-digital-v2/projects/hatch-ideasinstitute-vereda

*"We hit it on the head really early on about **time zone difference**. We have a rhythm now and I know when the Brazilian team come online. Four hours* [time difference.] *What is great is that we can do our work and when we finish, they wake up and they can take over. ...And then they go to sleep and we take our work."*

To what extent have they been learning from each other?

Yemisi, HI: *"Massively. In terms of my style and the way in which I work with participants and partners, the way that we plan and design – not necessarily from a technical point of view, but from an approach standpoint – it's been invaluable...being more mindful of our approach has been really amazing for me to develop and mature my style."*

"...it has been amazing in opening us to new participants, new environments, Brazil, business cultures and sectors...In terms of the practical stuff, just giving us the edge in how we work ...giving us things that we are not aware of...I know that we had many 'aha!' moments, because you are talking to people who see things differently."

Gabriela, IV: *"I can say we learnt a lot, at least for me. First of all, about cultural differences...Here is Brazil we tend to think that people are always like us. It has been very important to have this interaction. I feel our partners understand that we act differently."*

"The way of communication here in Brazil is very simple: "let's have a WhatsApp group and we can communicate all the time. But UK partners don't work that way. They connect, but not all the time...It's a cultural difference, but a very important one. They are more formal than we usually are. The way they think is very structured, very organised and focused...Portuguese [participants in the DE] *were speaking and were open, but the British were more organised and focused. But when the questions went a bit deeper, we understood that the understanding that both groups had was very similar. The deepest knowledge was similar."*

Case Study Three – DerbyQuad, UK and REDEF, Indonesia

The two partners

DerbyQuad (DQ) is a "charity focused on intercultural dialogue through supporting diverse audiences to engage, develop skills and contribute to contemporary culture".[6] REDEF focuses on education, research and development, and network building to support small and medium enterprises, disabled children and youth, and senior citizens. The two organisations met for the first time at the fund's matchmaking session in December 2020.

Their project and division of labour

The DE involved the training of 10 artists in Indonesia, who had been recruited by REDEF, being trained by DerbyQuad in film making, game design, animation and graphic design on Zoom, so that they transfer these skills to 21 young PWDs to help them gain employment.

Co-design

Santi Nining Susanti, REDEF: *"One of my colleagues who was involved in another project informed me about DICE. I am one of the founders of REDEF. I wanted us to have an international relationship. Somehow, I came up with some ideas...I decided to participate in the matchmaking session. I met Abbie from DerbyQuad in my breakout room and we exchanged ideas. Between me and Abbie something clicked in the idea. We discussed by email and Zoom and exchanged ideas. The proposal came from REDEF. The model and training material...it is all organised by DerbyQuad...I made the draft proposal and then Abbie put some details."*

Abbie Canning, DQ: *"We met at the matchmaking session and had a very, very short turn around between it and the application, and this caused an obstacle to co-creation. There were only 5 days and over a weekend, just before Christmas. We were very open and we put what we could each offer on the table and saw how these things could fit together. Had that session been a bit further away from the deadline, the co-creation would have been deeper."*

How did they describe their partnership?

Abbie, DQ: *"Overall, outstanding. They have been from the outset very open, honest and we both wanted the same outcome. We have been adaptable and flexible, meeting over weekends and at all hours."* Abbie felt that she led only in so far as she needed to direct REDEF in how to organise the workshops in Indonesia. *"Only on that element. I don't see myself as a leader*

in the project. Santi has been very proactive. We are more equal, perhaps...A fantastic partner...Openness, communication and honesty between the partners has been real key."*

Santi, REDEF: *"Good communication...Each of us has a role, so we cannot say: "Ok, Abbie is leading REDEF or REDEF Derby Quad". The digital material expertise is DerbyQuad's, but the role of the PWDs and artists – that would be the role of REDEF. It is equal because we each play our role...Very equal from the beginning."*

What problems did they face and how did they resolve them?

Santi, REDEF: *"Our activities are affected by the **time difference** [7 hours], but DerbyQuad are very flexible to follow our time...we have to put our egos in a compromise level. Abbie should deliver it very early in the UK, 4 or 5 am, because it suits our time here. But on the other hand, Abbie says I have to do something else. So, I have to rearrange, which is very late for us, but we can arrange. I can work very late, and she can get up very early and we don't have to do this outside our house."*

Abbie, DQ: [**Problems were addressed]** *"through open communication immediately and by having an open conversation. Just certain things came up, but nothing major, because we had been constantly communicating, which helped pre-empt things from building up."*

Learning from the experience and from each other

Abbie, DQ: *"The knowledge transfer was to them, but for our part [learning] was huge. We learnt hugely about working with a different culture and the considerations we need to make there...Learning about other people's experience of digital was really, really*

important…we are a digital organisation and work with vulnerable and marginalised groups. So, we thought we understood. But working internationally, it is kind of difficult digitally. Many people don't have the access or the understanding of its potentials. …We share our tools with lots of people, but the way that the Indonesian artists have taken to them has been fantastic to see."

"It would have been wonderful to do it f2f …We could have helped people really fly – not just achieved – cultivate people who were running with it…We certainly achieved it to a degree, but I was at the front of the room and I had to be mediated to deliver and there was the language barrier. Not having instant access to the work that was being produced [in Indonesia] was harder to do."

Santi, REDEF: *"We learn many things from DerbyQuad, especially on the subject of digital. It's new for us. It's something we need…The training took 5 hours with little break. Internet connection was not always stable. That also was a learning for us."*

How have they benefited from the fund?

Abbie, DQ: "*I think* [the project] would *not have been achieved at all if it weren't digital. DerbyQuad would not have been able to undertake it. This was the exciting potential for us: to take the learning from this and realise the potential to work internationally as well… Never would we have established that partnership without that matchmaking."*

"I was really nervous and hesitant. I hadn't done an international collaboration before. It has fuelled my enthusiasm to work with international communities more. It made me revalue what we have to offer and how much we can do with these international communities and how valuable it can be for them. We are going to support REDEF to run two more projects."

"We don't appreciate what an advantage it is to live in a society with the digital infrastructure that we have…I think that's really been highlighted to me through this programme."

Santi, REDEF: *"A new experience for us, international relations and [to] make a partnership with an international organisation…The project provides us with a very good infrastructure…The people not only learn theoretical, but practise how to use digital devices. PWDs…some use mobile phones, but not for learning. In this project, they really can express their capability, innovation…They have raised their confidence in themselves and also good for their mental health…In Indonesia, PWDs are not respected by the public. They don't have any space to be appreciated."*

"After this project, REDEF is planning to arrange a model that we have agreed with DerbyQuad to give us the authority to work with local government, maybe in next years. From this project it is creating a new project."

A shot of Santi Nining Susanti of REDEF from the animated video produced about the digital experience of Derby Quad and REDEF.

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Case Study Four – Music Ally, UK and Simsara, Egypt

The two partners

Music Ally provides digital training for the music industry and its "mission is to help the music industry embrace digital platforms and build sustainable careers for artists across the globe."[1] Simsara is "an artist management, music PR and special projects agency working with an intimate roster of artists at the forefront of alternative and experimental music in the Arab world."[2] They have not worked together before, but they had wanted to collaborate for a year before applying to the fund.

Their project and division of labour

Their DE, created Tarkeeza, "a self-contained platform for skills development and capacity building" of Arab music artists where Simsara provides "engaging and valuable content from local and international experts in the music business".[3] Music Ally supported Simsara to set up, develop and maintain this platform, as well as a business model and the learning needed to produce digital marketing tutorials for the independent Arabic music community.

How did they describe their partnership?

Anthony Churchman, Music Ally: "*In a very positive manner. It is based on trust. We built our relationship prior to the fund, getting to know each other and understand each other before getting on a joint venture…Simsara are the project lead, because it is taking place in Egypt…They have led it. We wanted to take a back seat, so that they can take ownership and make decisions best suited for the project. It's about Egypt, not the UK, and they have local expertise…*"

Sarah El-Miniawy, Simsara: "*A very effective partnership in a way. We have spent a while having conversations about what they need and what we need and we settled on something that is really genuine and expectations are very clear…We took a while to reach that point – before we applied for the grant. Since then, we have been doing exactly what we said we would do. We were not discovering each other for the first time when we got the grant.*"

"*It's been led by Simsara…– from the moment we reached out to them until we decided exactly how the partnership should materialise…They were welcoming and generous with their time…At the beginning, we were discussing about licensing their content, and a discount around that. But then we came back and said: ', we don't want to license your content. We want to access it and create our own'.*"

Localisation and equality

Anthony, MA: "*They are building an online platform…We have our own e-learning platform from years ago. They wanted to localise that…They have been developing materials and managing the project and they have had access to our content. They want to mirror this, but in their language. We also mentor and advise the Simsara founder, Sarah…There is a need for education in the music business* [in Egypt] *when they don't have access to same level of education you can access in the UK and US. So, Simsara is trying to fulfil that need.*"

Sarah, S.: "*I had attended one of their marketing events. I had enjoyed it and learnt so much from it, so they were on my radar. We reached out to them when this idea came up on digital marketing training. We don't have this among people working in music in Egypt. They were incredibly supportive…We want to create all the courses we will be offering online to be created from scratch in Arabic but use their courses as a basis. A big part of it was also about localising the knowledge. There are a lot of things that they go through in their digital marketing courses that don't necessarily apply to us in Egypt or we don't have the means to access all sorts of software, membership based, all sorts of marketing tools.*"

"*They have given us access to all their modules and opened all their courses for us. One of my colleagues is in charge of taking them and taking note of what to include in our courses. Also mentoring on the business side. We want to understand how Music Ally started and what milestones there have been in its life.*"

Anthony, MA: "*One of the values we hold is the democratisation of information. We want to make sure that countries like Egypt, and Africa, can access information that Western entrepreneurs have. So, being flexible with the business model and how to make it happen, so that you can cover own costs. Also, people working around them to have best opportunity to make a career from their music based on talent and not banking. If they understand how to use it, they will be able to break through. Accessibility, equality.*"

Learning from each other

Anthony, MA: "*From my side, about that particular country and the region in general, I try to understand local challenges and opportunities and see where we can plug in. I have learnt a lot more about E. and the region.*"
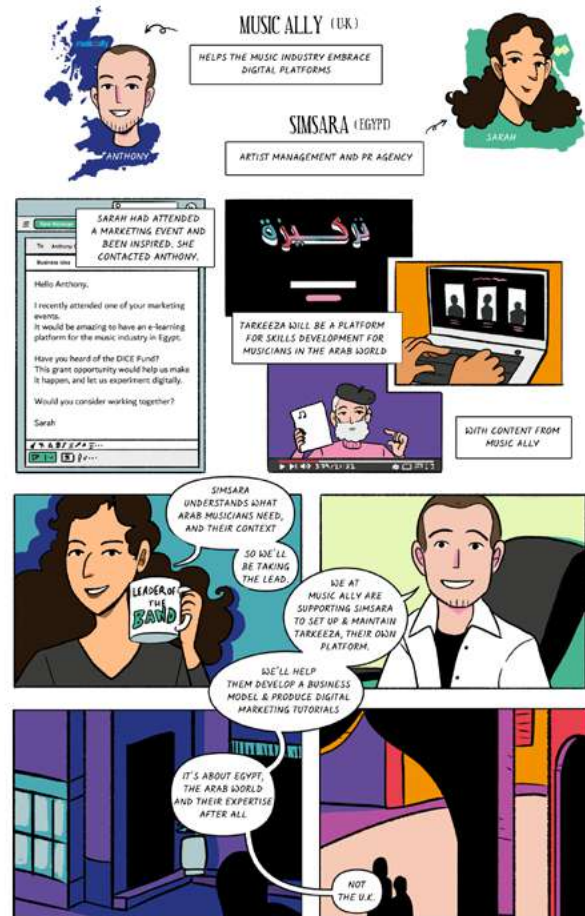
Sarah, S.: "*We have been having a mentoring session and getting to know their team – they started small like*

1 Profile Book, 41.
2 As above.
3 As above.

us – their business model…We looked into that to see how we can develop our team as well."

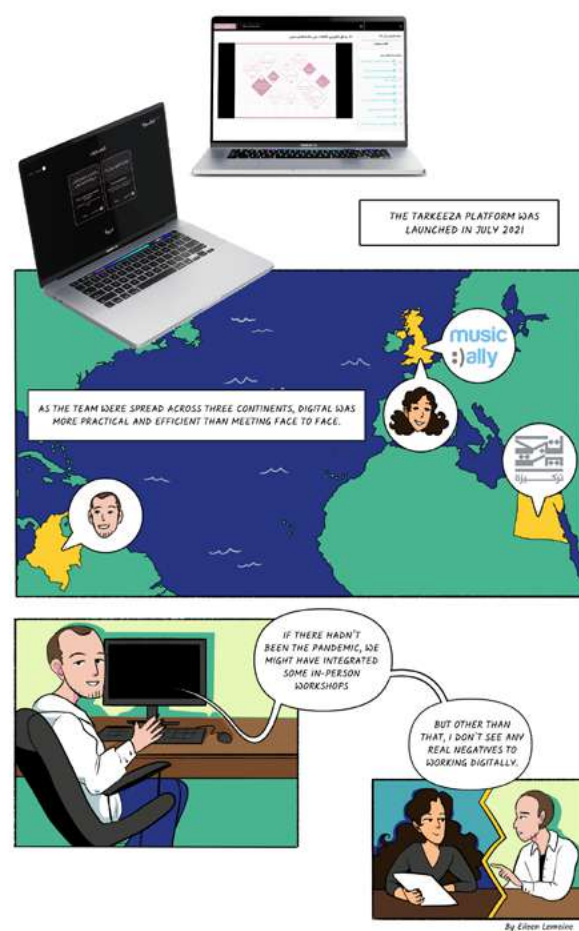## Advantages and disadvantages of being digital

Anthony, MA: *"If we were to do this without the pandemic, we might have integrated in-person workshops, because people enjoy these more instead of being stuck in Zoom more…I don't see any real negatives apart from the fact that it is nice to have f2f meetings sometimes and have real life workshops. Connections are not as strong, if you don't have that physical connection. The project is very fast being digital, you can turn things around quickly, like calls, copy and paste. It doesn't have stress of physical events. Most of what we do these days that is physical has a large digital element anyway."*

Sarah, S.: *"Because they are already a digital platform, the whole thing was digital from the beginning…Both me and Anthony work remotely…My team is based in Cairo and me in London. Music Ally is a UK company and they have offices in York, Japan or China and he is setting something up in Colombia…Digital in many ways can be more practical and more efficient. In this part of the partnership, it was. We are based in different countries, so meeting f2f is not practical. So, it enables us to work."*

Storyboards of the digital experience by Music Ally and Simsara.

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Annex – Sources

1 Remote interviews with Digital Partners

(In chronological order)

Grace Hutchison, programme development officer, InsightShare, 21.4.21

Louise Latter, curator, Birmingham Open Media, 26.4.21

Aldy Rochmat, researcher and designer, and Deka Dyah Utami, Research assistant and instructional designer, Rumah Harapan Mulya, 26.4.21

Dr Richard Tomlins, Assistant Professor, Coventry University, 27.4.21

Mark van den Bergh, director, and Amy van den Bergh, social media manager and content implementor, Mobile Moment, 28.04.2021 and 1.6.21

Anantya van Bronckhorst, co-CEO, ThinkWeb, 28.4.21

Adam Bradford, CEO, and Ryan Bradford, project manager, AdamStart, 28.4.21

Erica Elk, CEO, Fran Cox, fundraiser and strat. project management implementation, and Alan Alborough, strategic support and research, dig. platforms, Craft & Design Institute, 4.5.21

Shaun Borstrock, associate dean of business enterprise and projects, and Tricia Bryan, lecturer, School of Creative Arts, Hertfordshire University, 4.5.21

Najam Ul Assar, co-founders and director, and Azeem Hamid, CEO and co-founder, Rearts, 5.5.21

Dr Tasmeera Sayyida, director, Saad Riaz, management associate, and Ayesha Tariq, management associate, Mymacom, 6.5.21

Nicole Shayak-May, executive director, Young Identity, Shirley May, CEO and founder of Young Identity, Tim Harrison, creative director, Sick! Festival, and Steve Vickers, creative producer, Sick! Festival, 11.5.21

Zarene Zuberi, country manager, and Komal Tariq, design and strategy lead, Social Innovation Lab, 11.5.21

Flavia Reis, partner, Hub Belo Horizonte, 12.5.21

Hannah Baker, senior manager, The Arts Development Company, 13.5.21

Youssra Zakaria, programs and operation manager, CLUSTER, 17.5.21

Santi Nining Susanti, Consultant for Regional Economic Development, Vice Chairman for Investment Promotion and Cooperation, Tasikmalaya City Chamber of Commerce and Industry, REDEF, 17.5.21

Yemisi Mokuolu, founder and CEO, Hatch Ideas, 18.5.21

Daniel Manjarres, executive producer, and Adriana Barbosa, founder and director, Instituto Feira Preta, 19.5.21

Lizanè Basson, general manager, KK, Neil Coppen, co-director, Empatheatre, Shandrè Harris, intern, KK, and Tshego Khutsoane, facilitator, Empatheatre, Klein Karoo, 19.5.21

Mayara Vivian, coordinator of social actions, Casa do Povo, 20.5.21

Tshireletso Moloi, project coordinator, The Hive Network, 20.5.21

Gabriela Nemirovsky, associate consultant, and Daniela Gebenlian, owner and managing director, Instituto Vereda, 24.5.21

Theresa Wigley, director and founder, Amava Oluntu, 25.5.21

Army Firmansyah, participant liaison in this DE, Ruth Onduko, project manager, Budi Agung Kuswara, founder, and Sidhi Vhisatya, Ketemu Project, 25.5.21

Chimell Fortuin, civic engagement prog. officer, and Jeremy Maarman, director, The Initiative for Community Advancement, 25.5.21

Amanda Tristao Parra, project manager, and Julieta Regazzoni, executive producer and co-owner, Linha 3 producoes, 27.5.21

Seonaid Murray, project coordinator and audio producer, and Urbain Ngendahayo, chair of founding body, Art Machine, 1.6.21

Arnd Wochter, founder and CEO, Crossing Borders Education, 2.6.21

Marvi Soomro, founder and prog. director, Innovate Educate Inspire, 2.6.21

Andrea Gamson, CEO, Social Starters, 2.6.21

Kamal Nara, facilitator, and Rozanne Myburgh, executive director, Lefika LaPhodiso, 3.6.21

Anthony Churchman, managing director, Music Ally, 7.6.21

Peter Little, associate, Youth Bank International, 7.6.21

Abbie Canning, children and young people's curator/ digital, Derby Quad, 8.6.21

Anthony Catt, co-founder and director, and Mike Bandar, co-founder and director, Enterprise Academy, 8.6.21

Lindsay Cilliers, co-founder, and Ian Calvert, founder, Further Impact, 9.6.21 *(check for quotes)*

Camila Batista, COO chief operational officer, Migraflix, 9.6.21

Heidi Fisher, Director, Making an Impact, 10.6.21

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The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We build connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and other countries through arts and culture, education and the English language.

Developing Inclusive and Creative Economies (DICE) was a British Council pilot-global programme that imagined and sought to activate new forms of cultural and economic agency. It aimed to develop inclusive creative economies by working at three levels: with creative social entrepreneurs; intermediaries; and policy actors and others within the creative social economy. Specifically, it aimed to address the economic exclusion faced by priority groups, including women, young people, and those disabled by society. In exploring solutions, emphasis was given to creativity, experimentation, co-design, social purpose, action research and international connections. DICE was piloted in Brazil, Egypt, Indonesia, Pakistan, South Africa and the United Kingdom (UK) as part of a £7million two-year pilot beginning in March 2018, followed by an additional year during the Covid pandemic.
www.britishcouncil.org/programmes/dice

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