# Fair Collaboration in Cultural Relations:
# A Provocation

Elaborated in June 2021 by Cristina **Farinha**, Avril **Joffe**,
Matina **Magkou**, Anna **Steinkamp**, Sudebi **Thakurata**
and Katelijn **Verstraete** in the context of a EUNIC
commission to elaborate a toolkit on fair collaboration in
cultural relations.

This paper intends to be a thought provoking attempt to approach the idea of "fair collaboration in cultural relations". It serves as a first entry point for discussion, exchange, and reflection, not claiming to be comprehensive or complete. Methodologically, it is meant as a work in progress, as the concepts and questions featured here will be further developed by inputs from upcoming roundtables, the survey and individual interviews on "fair collaboration in cultural relations".

The paper is structured around four sections that
1) introduce the context,
2) unpack underlying concepts,
3) unfold what diverse documents tell us and finally,
4) end with a set of key questions to kick off
 a collective

# 1. Introducing the Creation of a EUNIC Toolkit on Fair Collaboration in Cultural Relations

### EUNIC in a cultural relations context
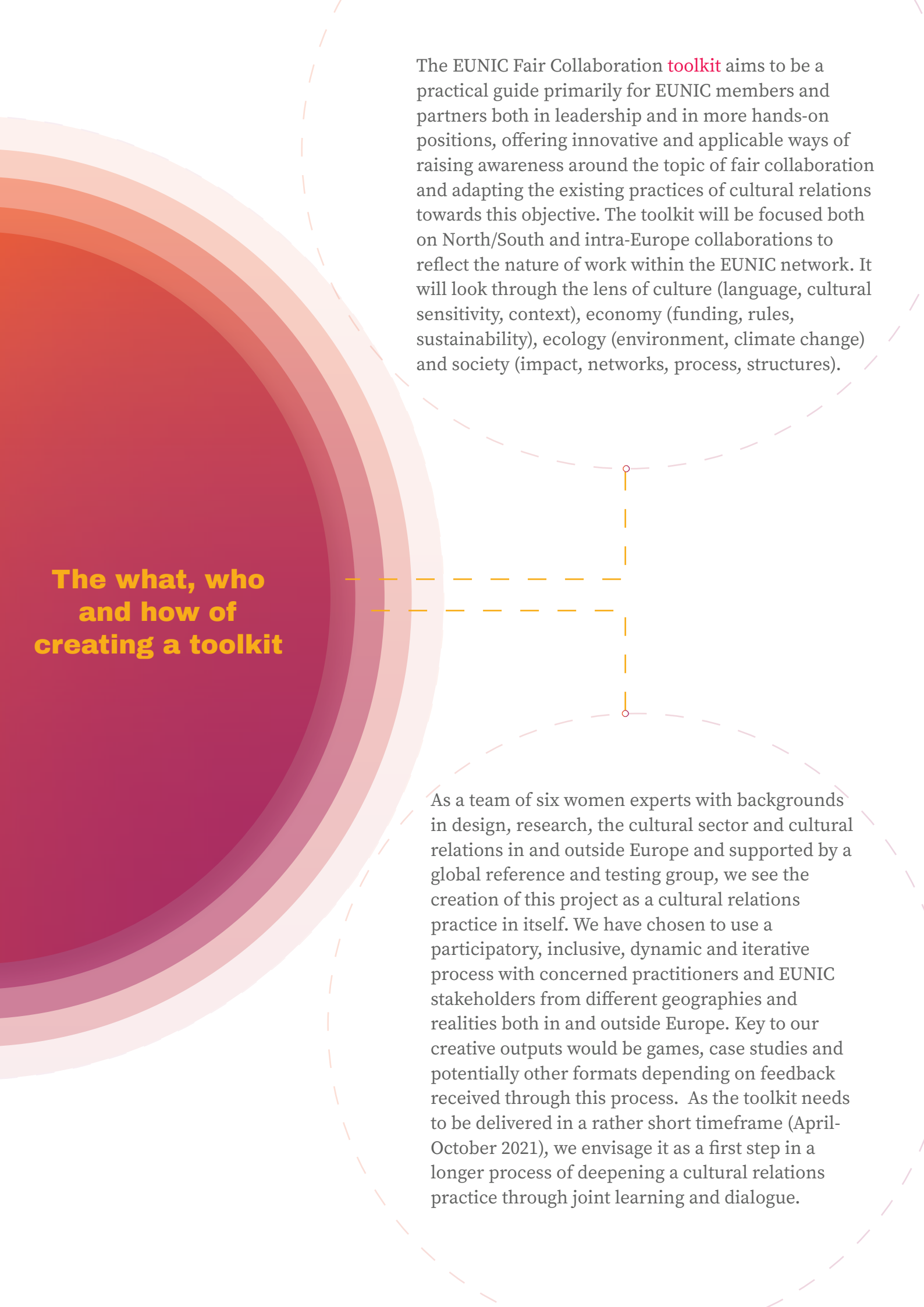
In March 2021, EUNIC commissioned a toolkit for fair collaboration in cultural relations to provide concrete ideas, recommendations and instruments to collaborate with its partners in a fair way. As a strategic partner of the EU and together with local partners, the EUNIC network brings cultural collaboration to life in more than 102 countries through over 132 clusters, tapping into the experience of its members. The European Spaces of Culture and EUNIC cluster collaborations, as well as initiatives by its members, are based on the guiding principles of the EU agenda in international cultural relations as established in the 2016 Joint Communication "Towards an EU Strategy for international cultural relations". Restating EU's commitment to the 2005 UNESCO Convention, this document positions cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue as core values of cultural relations and "promotes a global order based on peace, the rule of law, freedom of expression, mutual understanding and respect for fundamental rights".

'Through culture, EUNIC strives to build trust and understanding between the people of Europe and the wider world. We work to make culture count in international relations. EUNIC's work is based on the principles of cultural relations. We aim to build fair partnerships by practicing mutual listening and learning and engaging in dialogue, co-creation, and joint capacity building' EUNIC Strategic Framework.
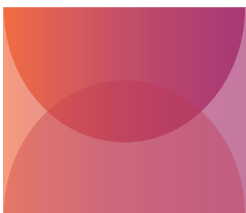
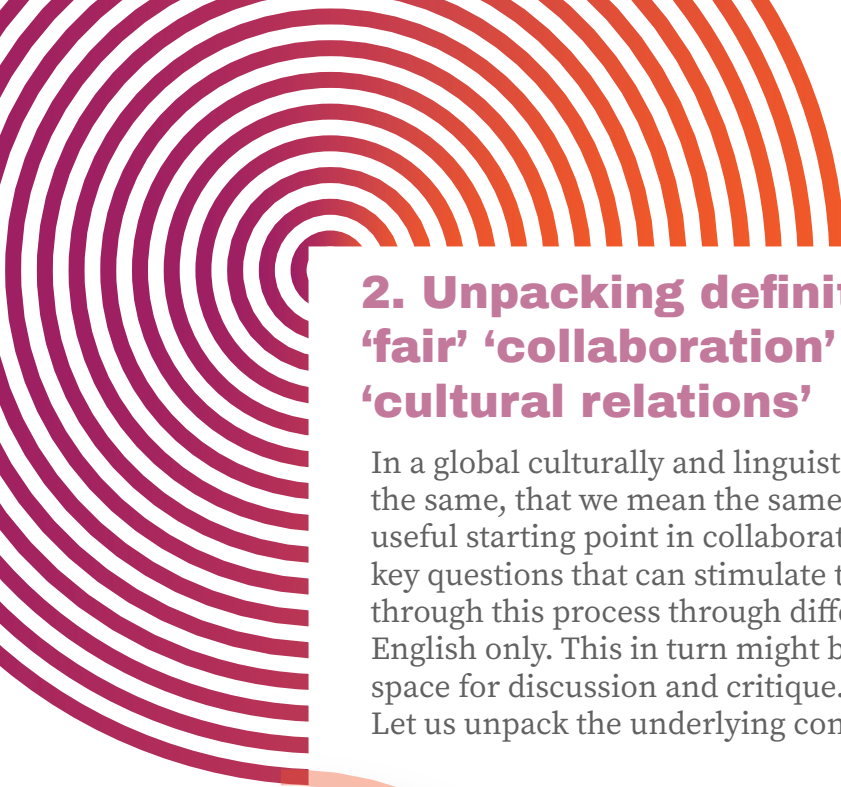### Cultural relations in a changing global context

Cultural relations are woven into the complexity and uncertainty of our contemporary world. Some EUNIC member organizations were established in the war-ridden early 20th century. With the end of the Cold War, the initial establishment of the European Union and its eventual enlargement, relationships between European countries were strengthened resulting in growing interest in democracy and fair cooperation. At the same time, rapid industrialisation and globalisation combined with digital transformation deepened inequalities, affecting culture and biodiversity at the expense of the Global South. The configuration of global challenges, as addressed in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and felt through global human rights, anti-discrimination, gender equality and climate change movements, is rooted in many of our histories and world views. International instruments, such as the UNESCO 2005 Convention, have addressed some of these challenges and have contributed to the advancement of cultural relations. Finally, in this ever changing context, tthe European Union has in the last 15 years demonstrated increased awareness of its changing position in the world and the importance of cultural relations. Today, the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated inequalities and the faultlines of societies, accelerating the need for new narratives, new models for collaborations, and processes aimed at re-thinking our values.

The EUNIC Fair Collaboration toolkit aims to be a practical guide primarily for EUNIC members and partners both in leadership and in more hands-on positions, offering innovative and applicable ways of raising awareness around the topic of fair collaboration and adapting the existing practices of cultural relations towards this objective. The toolkit will be focused both on North/South and intra-Europe collaborations to reflect the nature of work within the EUNIC network. It will look through the lens of culture (language, cultural sensitivity, context), economy (funding, rules, sustainability), ecology (environment, climate change) and society (impact, networks, process, structures).

# The what, who and how of creating a toolkit

As a team of six women experts with backgrounds in design, research, the cultural sector and cultural relations in and outside Europe and supported by a global reference and testing group, we see the creation of this project as a cultural relations practice in itself. We have chosen to use a participatory, inclusive, dynamic and iterative process with concerned practitioners and EUNIC stakeholders from different geographies and realities both in and outside Europe. Key to our creative outputs would be games, case studies and potentially other formats depending on feedback received through this process.  As the toolkit needs to be delivered in a rather short timeframe (April-October 2021), we envisage it as a first step in a longer process of deepening a cultural relations practice through joint learning and dialogue.

## 2. Unpacking definitions: 'fair' 'collaboration' 'toolkit' in 'cultural relations'

In a global culturally and linguistically diverse context, it is not because we say the same, that we mean the same. Unpacking the meaning of words is always a useful starting point in collaborations. Therefore, we let ourselves be guided by key questions that can stimulate thinking and dialogue. While we will engage through this process through different languages, the first output will be in English only. This in turn might be questionable, yet once it is realised allows space for discussion and critique.

Let us unpack the underlying concepts of this toolkit reflection process:

**Cultural relations**

"Cultural relations are reciprocal, non-coercive transnational interactions between two or more cultures, encompassing a range of activities that are conducted both by state and non-state actors within the space of cultural and civil society."
*Source: Wikipedia [taken from Grant, J. (2017). Sport, Culture and Society. Routledge]*

**>>What do you understand by 'cultural relations'?**

How is this term different from 'cultural diplomacy', 'cultural cooperation', and/or 'culture and development'?

What values should underpin cultural relations?

**Fair**

"Treating everyone equally and according to the rules or law."
*Source: Oxford Learners dictionary*

**>>What does fair mean to you? Is there an equivalent term in your language?**

Does the word connect to specific cultural references?

What values should underpin fairness?

## Collaboration

"The act of working with another person or group of people to create or produce something."
*Source: Oxford Learner's dictionary*

**>>What does collaboration mean in general and in the context of cultural relations?**

Is there a difference between cooperation and partnership? Which one?

What are the benefits, challenges, and downsides of collaboration?

## Toolkit

"1. A set of tools in a box or bag
2. (Computing) a set of software tools
3. The things that you need in order to achieve something"
*Source: Oxford Learner's dictionary*

**>>What do you understand by the word 'toolkit'?**

How does it translate in your language?

Are there particular benefits and specific downsides when using a toolkit?

# 3. What do diverse documents tell us about these concepts?

In reviewing texts on international cultural relations, it is clear that, over the years, there have been numerous concepts used to assert the importance of these relations being equitable and fair. The following section draws from texts emanating from governments, EUNIC members, the arts and cultural sectors, as well as the development sector. The texts have a broad range and include policy documents, manifestos, charters, toolkits, and institutional think pieces. Our research is ongoing and we invite readers to contribute with references for further inclusion in our reflection process.

We organised texts relating to fairness in cultural relations around key values underpinning the notion of fairness such as ethics, human rights, mutuality, solidarity, equity, equality, sustainability, decolonisation, inclusivity, and care.
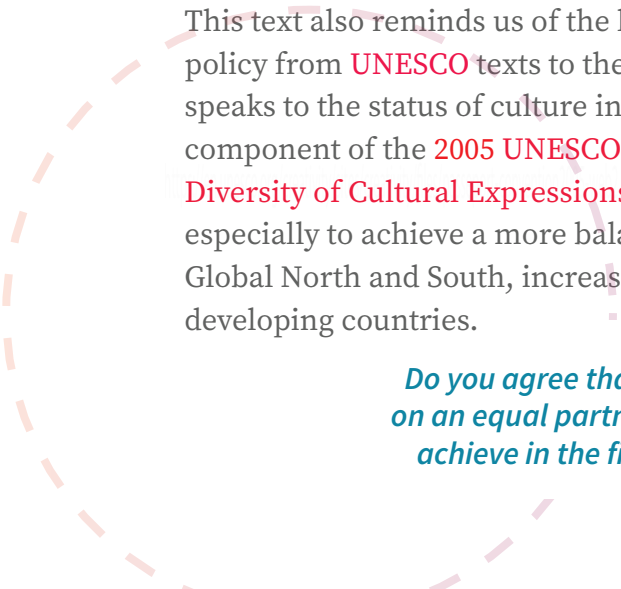
They also include concepts relevant to the context and process of fair collaborations. The following analysis is not meant to be a comprehensive review but rather provide a first provocation for reflecting what fair collaboration in cultural relations might entail.

## Ethics in cultural and development policy

An early text from the Finish Ministry of Education "Fair Culture? ethical dimension of cultural policy and cultural rights" (2007) uses the concept of Fair Culture to describe the ethics of cultural policy: "Fair culture means the realization of people's cultural rights and inclusion in cultural signification, irrespective of age, gender, language, state of health, ethicist, religious or cultural background". Key values expressed in this concept of Fair Culture are central to a nation's identity, cohesion, self-determination and self-esteem.

This text also reminds us of the long tradition of initiatives relating to ethics of cultural policy from UNESCO texts to the Council of Europe, UN Summits and many others. It speaks to the status of culture in development cooperation, which is an important component of the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions that positively impacted the role of cultural policy, especially to achieve a more balanced flow of cultural goods and services between the Global North and South, increased artist mobility and preferential treatment for developing countries.

*Do you agree that basing cooperation for sustainable development on an equal partnership between the North and the South is easier to achieve in the field of culture than in the economy or other fields?*

## Human rights in sustainable development

A recent report by the German Commission for UNESCO uses the term 'Fair Culture' to reference fairness in trade of cultural goods and services as well as in the mobility of artists and cultural professionals.
Fair Culture - a key to sustainable development (2021), draws on principles of fair trade, the due diligence standard and both the 2005 UNESCO Convention (preferential treatment) and the 1980 Recommendation on the Status of the Artist. The concept of Fair Culture here in relation to sustainable development is strongly based on a human rights approach.

*What does a human rights approach to fair collaboration entail?*

## Mutuality, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The idea of Fair Culture is not however universally referenced by EUNIC members. Rather they refer to values such as equality, diversity and inclusion (incorporating all aspects such as gender, disability, race, sexual orientation)  and the mutuality, connection, inclusivity, openness, quality (British Council), or guiding principles such as cultural diversity and human rights, mutual respect and intercultural dialogue, respect for complementarity and subsidiarity, cross cutting approaches and existing frameworks for cooperation following the EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations.

*If 'culture' in its broader sense is subjectively perceived by and within a community, what concrete steps are needed to understand each other in order to collaborate better?*

# Rethinking International Collaboration

International cultural collaboration has also been framed through the lenses of human, social, economic and natural capital and addressing values like solidarity and equity along with fairness in (Re)Framing the International which Flanders Arts Institute initiated in 2016. This process reflected ongoing discussions in the Flemish art sector that questioned conditions of fairness, and supported the Fair Arts Almanac, as well as other ongoing initiatives.

In 2018, Dutch Culture (in cooperation with IETM and On the Move) released a toolkit: Beyond curiosity and desire: towards fairer international collaborations in the arts. It starts from the premise of two key fault lines in collaborations, that of structural inequalities and cultural differences. It emphasises the need to consider history, language, project length, mobility conditions, artistic traditions, cultural mores, logistical and project infra-structure, political space, technical equipment and skills; administrative capacity and health risks. The order of the three elements of international cultural collaborations (raising funding, having an idea and finding an appropriate partner) needs to be considered to ensure fairness.

*How can we consider history, language, project length, cultural mores, artistic traditions, mobility conditions and infrastructure when planning collaborations?*

In another text commissioned by Dutch Culture "What does cultural internationalisation mean anno 2021", the author advocates for the necessity for reformulating international ambitions, because of the three main broken promises of globalisation, namely, the challenges of inequality and segregation; of international solidarity; and of facing the ecological dilemma. From the perspective of fairness, the text emphasises that "internationalisation remains one of the most important and promising potentialities of artistic freedom, but it must always be prevented from becoming a dead dogma. Rethinking artistic internationalisation … involves finding a more thorough understanding of the necessity and value of international ambitions".

*How can international cultural relations take account of inequality and segregation, international solidarity, and the ecological crisis?*

## Solidarity and Equity

The Reshape EU Creative Europe project is a collaborative, bottom-up research process that proposes instruments for transition towards an alternative, fairer, and unified arts ecosystem across Europe and the Southern Mediterranean. It rethinks existing instruments and collaborative models in response to 5 major challenges. It questions for example the very frameworks for trans/post national artistic practices, fair governance models and solidarity economics and finds a concrete expression in Reshape's solidarity tax to mitigate power dynamics in cultural projects, creative control, diversity and eligibility. It is a mechanism to create conditions and models which tackle the inequality of access to mobility and funding and ensure the unfunded (and thus virtually impossible) projects get funding and support. It allows for an appropriate percentage of the grant the institution receives (1-10 percent, depending on the size of the grant) to go directly to an artist from an ineligible country, giving him/her full creative control. It tackles the power relations between 'Europe' and its 'outside' through an independent tax system that always includes the communities excluded from the European territories and global cultural elites.

*How can we relate issues of solidarity and social security to values of non-discrimination and diversity?*
*How can we relate issues of gender equality and ecology to processes that aim to generate better working conditions?*

## Climate Justice

Current key global challenges such as climate change also impact on international cultural relations. Initiatives such as Julie's Bicycle started to mobilise the cultural sector as early as 2007 championing climate justice across the cultural community and recognising that the climate and ecological crisis has its roots in harmful systems and unfairly impacts those who have contributed least to its causes. The Adapting our Culture - a toolkit for a climate changed future (2021) by Creative Carbon Scotland is but one of such recent reports focusing on an adaptation plan, that is, different types of actions needed to address

issues of climate change including avoiding the risk, reducing the extent of the risk and transforming the risk into an opportunity. A later publication Culture Shift Methodology for supporting arts and sustainability collaborations to tackle the climate emergency (2021) emphasises that climate change is the most pressing issue of our time. It poses "fundamental challenges to the ways in which we live". In the cultural relations context "arts and culture have an essential role in achieving the necessary transformation to a more environmentally sustainable and socially just society". The methodology encourages the interweaving of cultural and creative perspectives in our response to the climate emergency.

*How can cultural relations contribute to an environmentally sustainable, resilient and just society?*

## Collaborative Processes for Parternships

The Culture Shift Methodology offers practical advice for ensuring everyone's perspectives are equally valued and respected. Following the Swedish Arts Agency Tillt, these include an "anchorship phase" to build relations of trust by allowing for sufficient time to build shared expectations among the project partners and in identifying gaps in capacity or financial resources. This would be followed by a partnership agreement. The agreement would not only identify roles and responsibilities but document the procedure for changes in project scope, personnel or finances and how to handle issues or conflicts.

EUNIC's European Spaces of Culture project outlines how partnerships can be more collaborative, including a detailed set of principles governing international cultural relations. The European Spaces of Culture monitoring and evaluation toolkit provides a clear framework for these issues, including objectives of collaboration:
-Foster collaboration and partnership with both non-EUNIC members and within EUNIC networks;
-Innovation (new ways of working with and in the cultural sector);
-Awareness raising of current and local topics though original cultural means and tools, fostering new ways of thinking towards beneficiaries and target groups);
-Visibility (the importance of the local level and local context for both European cultural relations and products);
-Focusing on EUNIC's cultural relations principles.

*How would you approach (and what would you include in) the "anchorship phase" of your partnership and/or collaboration?*

## Decolonisation and Racism

Decolonising international cultural relations needs to be guided by both the work to decolonise international relations as well as that to decolonise diplomacy. Decolonisation is used to speak about restorative justice through cultural, psychological and economic freedom. "International cultural relations needs to be concerned about the element of redress and acknowledge the colonial paths underlying these relations" (EULAC focus research project). The African Union's Agenda 2063 seven aspirations speak directly to decolonising international cultural relations, recognising Africa as a strong united, resilient and influential global player and partner. Racism and non-discrimination (white supremacy) have been made visible by decolonial thought and recently by #BlackLivesMatter (BLM). The BLM points to the failure of multiculturalism and makes urgent the work of decolonisation.

*What concrete actions do you think*
*can contribute to decolonising cultural relations?*

## Social Justice and Co-Responsibility

Reshape's proposal for action is underpinned by a new paradigm; one that builds on a culture of co-responsibility and collective survival of the living, the free and of justice. "By shifting towards a paradigm truly rooted in social justice we are then able to create models that imagine fairer ways of being together and value the most vulnerable in our communities, rather than seeking to 'include' them in the structures that are designed to exclude. Within this new paradigm we can work together to create new narratives, common goals, forms of cooperation instead of competition, informed by a wide range of understandings, lived experiences and perspectives".

*What are the key elements of a*
*paradigm truly rooted in social justice?*

## Digital Inclusion

The global Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the role of digital technologies and virtual collaborations. During the many online debates and studies commissioned on the impact of Covid-19 on cultural collaborations, topics such as digital accessibility and inclusion, digital skills in the development of new (digital, hybrid) formats, fair remuneration for digital collaboration were discussed as well as how the digital realm has opened up opportunities for more diverse voices to be heard in a more democractic and horizontal platform. However, digital technologies can also be seen as a challenge to cultural identities and cultural diversity. The  Charter for African Cultural Renaissance for instance calls for "universal mobilisation to promote dialogue between civilisations"

*What are the conditions needed
for creating fair digital collaborations?*

## Care as a Practise

During the pandemic consideration has now moved to the notion of both care and solidarity. An ethic of universal care has been made prominent by the release of the much lauded The Care Manifesto (2020). It puts forth a vision for a truly caring world. Care here is a practice, a core value, and an organising principle. The authors suggest that we (people and the planet) are all dependent on each other, and only by nurturing these interdependencies can we cultivate a world in which each and every one of us can not only live but thrive.

*What concrete steps could we take to nurture a
politics of care and the interdependencies
of people and the planet in our cultural
relations approaches?*
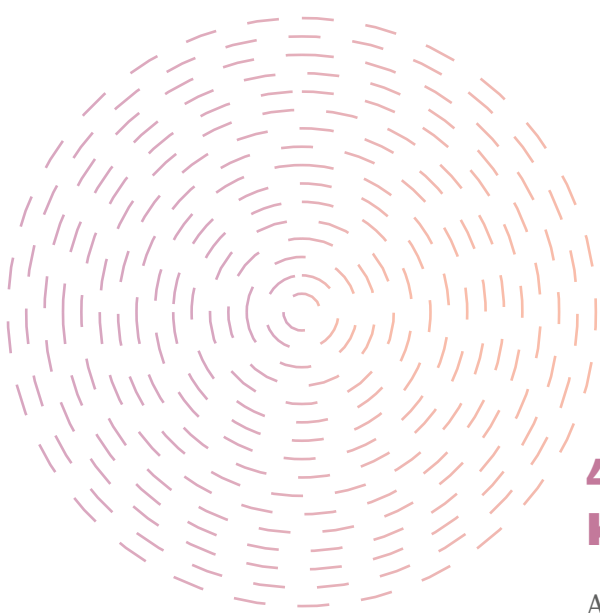
# 4. Food for Thought: Key Open Questions

Asking questions is a starting point for a better understanding and self-reflection. Therefore, based on the above analysis and provocations, we would like us all to consider some key questions we will explore further in the roundtables, interviews and the survey, the following steps of our iterative process to co-create the toolkit, to proceed from theory to practice - linking these to the practical level, working fields and every day working life.

The questions are framed under the lens of culture, society, economy and ecology. To end with, we ask which tools can best support this first theoretical approach to fair collaboration in cultural relations.

## Culture

How does the use of dominant world languages impact on the fairness of collaborations?

Should we rather talk about 'fair culture' than about 'fair cooperation in cultural relations'?

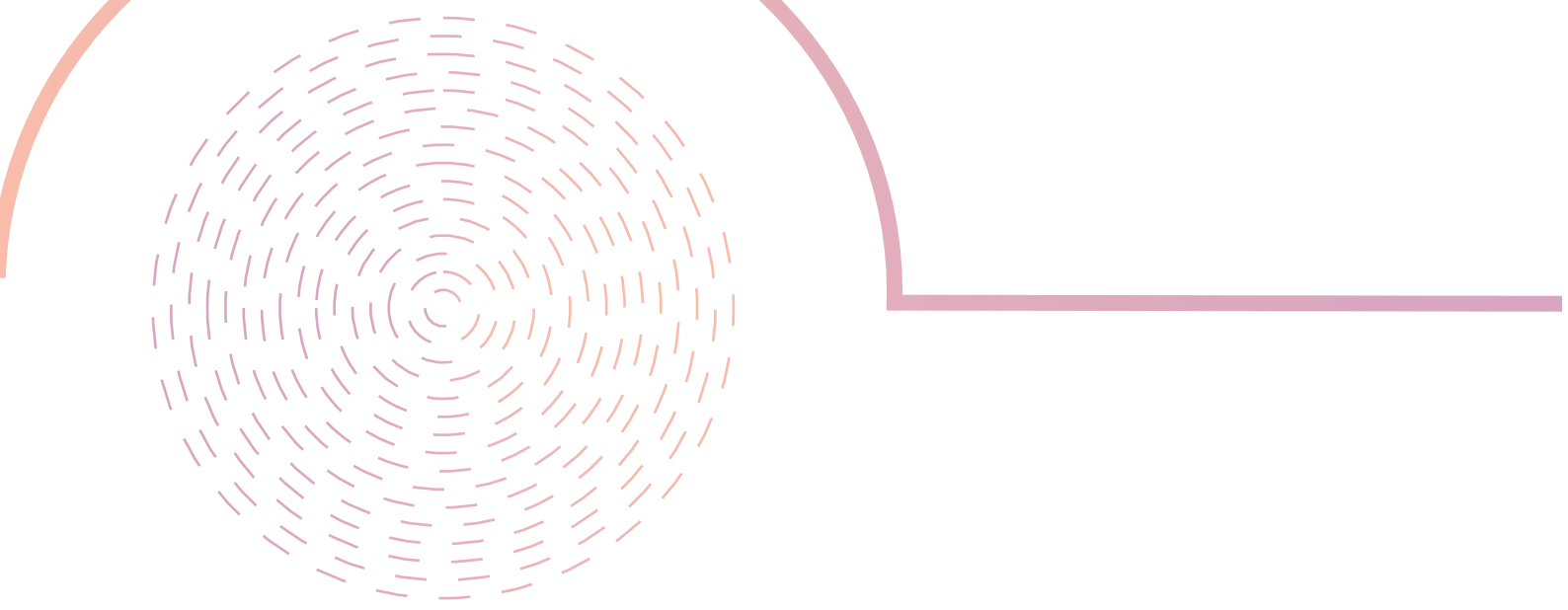How can we better embrace diversity in our collaborations?

How to balance potentially different concepts of time and work practices?

## Society

How can collaboration be fair in the current unequal world?

What would a fair collaboration process look like?

Can it be fair if the focus of collaboration in cultural relations is on outputs rather than processes?

## Economy

Can any collaboration be designed fairly when there is a power imbalance through funding e.g. one-source/ dominant funder setting the rules?

Is it fair that different inputs (in kind, co-creating, time) are not equally valued in collaborations?

## Ecology

Is ecological fairness in collaboration possible when the ecological crisis unfairly impacts those who have contributed least to its cause?

How can those coming from unprivileged contexts without option be accountable to adopt greener practices?

## Tools

Can a toolkit for fair collaborations ever be fairly conceived?

What values and logics should it entail to ensure it is embedded in fair principles and processes?

What are indicators for 'fair collaboration'? How can we measure fair collaboration?

## Feel Invited!

Should you have further ideas on resources on fair collaboration to consult or case studies you would want us to look at, please be in touch via **faireunic@gmail.com.**

Please do also use the opportunity to share your views via the survey **before 30ᵗʰ of June 2021.**

### The Team
Cristina **Farinha**, Avril **Joffe**, Matina **Magkou**,
Anna **Steinkamp**, Katelijn **Verstraete** and
Sudebi **Thakurata** along with **D.epicentre** as design partner

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