



Fieldbook

Yogyakarta Iteration



Drawing by Oming Putri, ASEF LinkUp 2025 participant



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CONTENTS

- 01 THE WHY AND WHAT OF ASEF LINKUP ASIA-EUROPE CULTURAL DIPLOMACY LAB**
Why ASEF LinkUp?
What is ASEF LinkUp?
- 02 WHAT WAS ASEF LINKUP 2025 ABOUT?**
ASEF LinkUp 2025 Theme: Rethinking Cultural Diplomacy Together
Format and Methodology
ASEF LinkUp 2025 Fieldbook
- 03 THE TENETS OF *GOTONG ROYONG* AND COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY IN CULTURAL DIPLOMACY**
Nuancing and Broadening the Understanding of Cultural Diplomacy
- 04 OUR EXPERIENCES OF GOTONG ROYONG ACROSS BORDERS**
Fri-Son
Cambodian Living Arts
The Season of the Commons
Voyage by Invisible Flock and Jenni Laiti
Sur Jahan
ArtJog Festival
- 05 BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE**
- 06 TOOLBOX TO IMPLEMENT YOUR INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL RELATIONS PRACTICE**
Sustaining Networks Framework
Collaboration Compass
- 07 WHO ARE WE?**

01

THE WHY AND WHAT OF ASEF LINKUP ASIA-EUROPE CULTURAL DIPLOMACY LAB



Since 2023, ASEF LinkUp was developed to bring the arts and culture sector closer to the government representatives working in international cultural cooperation.

Why ASEF LinkUp?

In times of geopolitical uncertainty, shrinking cultural budgets and increasingly polarised environments, the space for dialogue and collaboration across borders is narrowing. Yet it is precisely in such moments of fragmentation that international cultural exchange becomes most vital — offering ways to connect, to listen, and to build trust across divides.

Since 2022, ASEF has asked a simple but urgent question: **what is the future for Asia-Europe cultural relations?** Through the closed-door roundtable series [Recalibrating the Compass](#), one insight stood out: healthy and resilient cultural relations depend not on single actors or headline events, but on an ecosystem of diverse stakeholders, from governments and international organisations to artists and cultural professionals, civil society groups and networks working together.

With its mandate to advance mutual understanding and collaboration between Asia and Europe, and to act as an interface between civil society and governments, ASEF is uniquely placed to respond to this challenge. [ASEF LinkUp | Asia-Europe Cultural Diplomacy Lab](#), launched in 2023, is that response: a laboratory where the arts and government sectors can meet, exchange and test ideas, and reimagine cultural diplomacy for today's realities.



What is ASEF LinkUp?

ASEF LinkUp is a laboratory for cultural diplomacy in action. It creates rare meeting grounds between the arts and government sectors in Asia and Europe, fostering encounters that would not otherwise take place and offering safe spaces for exchange, reflection and experimentation.



ASEF LinkUp 2023 | 23-27 October 2023, Singapore The Pilot Edition

The first edition brought together 20 participants from 13 countries. Through workshops, provocations and immersive role-play, they stepped into the shoes of different stakeholders in cultural diplomacy – navigating priorities, constraints and institutional realities. Designed as an exploration rather than a product-oriented exercise, the pilot planted the seed for a much-needed common space for intercultural learning between two sectors that otherwise rarely meet as equals.



ASEF LinkUp 2024 | 10-13 June 2024, Prague, Czech Republic Planting the Seed for a Community of Practice

The second edition gathered 18 participants from 15 countries. Building on the Singapore pilot, the group co-created [How Do We Navigate Cultural Diplomacy? Key Learnings, Challenges and Takeaways](#), a collective reflection on principles, challenges and opportunities in international cultural relations. Most importantly, they voiced a priority: **to create a community** for ongoing dialogue, learning and collaboration that would outlast any single edition of the Lab.

The group advocated for understanding cultural diplomacy in a holistic manner and in a global context, where both local voices, realities, systems and transnational contexts are considered.

The creation of a community 'to ensure continuity of dialogue, learning and collaboration' beyond ASEF LinkUp was also a priority brought up by the 2024 participants. These formed fundamental values that ASEF carried forward into the third edition of ASEF LinkUp.

02

WHAT WAS
ASEF LINKUP
2025 ABOUT?

16 participants from 12 countries at ASEF LinkUp 2025, organised from 18-21 June 2025 in Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

ASEF LinkUp 2025 | 18-21 June 2025, Yogyakarta, Indonesia Growing a Community of Practice

Themed '**Rethinking Cultural Diplomacy Together**', the four-day gathering brought together 16 participants from 12 countries to explore the importance of shared efforts, inclusive partnerships and participation in cultural diplomacy. The 2025 edition of ASEF LinkUp was co-organised by ASEF, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, supported by the Yogyakarta Royal Palace, Regional Government of the Special Region of Yogyakarta, [Sonobudoyo Museum](#), [ArtJog Festival](#), [UNESCO Jakarta](#) and the [European network on cultural management and policy \(ENCATC\)](#).

ASEF LinkUp 2025 Theme: Rethinking Cultural Diplomacy Together

Building on the parting reflections from the ASEF LinkUp 2024 group on the importance of localising international cultural relations, this year's theme was decided together with the local partners and grounded in Indonesia's context.

ASEF LinkUp 2025 drew inspiration from *gotong royong*, an ethos of mutual responsibility and collective care deeply embedded in Indonesian society. More than simply "working together," *gotong royong* embodies **a responsibility to prioritise the collective good over personal gain**. It is a principle long visible in Indonesia's artistic field, where collective effort and shared responsibility have sustained creative practices and opened space for diverse voices to shape solutions.

Against this backdrop, ASEF LinkUp 2025 explored how cultural diplomacy might be reimagined through the spirit of ***gotong royong*: putting the collective first, carrying responsibility together, and building relations that draw strength from solidarity** across public institutions, universities, cultural organisations, museums, and individuals alike.

"When it comes to the concept of collective responsibility, it is an extension of *gotong royong*. Something that naturally comes from the social construct in Indonesia."

Format and Methodology

ASEF LinkUp 2025 was the culmination of three online meetings in May followed by a four-day in-person gathering in Yogyakarta in June. The 16 participants came from diverse backgrounds – policymakers, educators, curators, researchers, managers and practitioners across the arts and culture field – each bringing distinct experiences and perspectives.

The participants had already begun working with and engaging with one another online and they got to further their conversations upon meeting in Yogyakarta, a city that safeguards its cultural tradition and heritage, while being considered as the epicentre of independent and contemporary art practices. Yogyakarta provided a stimulating setting for participants to connect tradition with modernity, hear from the local arts community and learn good practices of working collaboratively in the sector.

Similar to the first two editions, the programme was designed to be highly participatory, supported with a **social learning approach**. Undertaken in **a spirit of mutual learning and inclusion of diverse voices**, ASEF LinkUp 2025 incorporated a range of session formats such as debates, Case Clinics, collective reflections and sharing. The sessions were led by two facilitators, creating multiple entry points for the participants to explore different opinions, experiences and viewpoints relating to collective responsibility in cultural diplomacy.



ASEF LinkUp 2025 Fieldbook

The ASEF LinkUp 2025 participants are eager to strengthen the case for international cultural exchanges, especially in a world undergoing constant change.

At the onset, participants were posed with the question **'what difference do you care to make by doing the work you do (and in the particular way you do it)?'**. The reflections brought to the forefront highlighted dedication and a shared goal by the group to create a better future for the arts and culture and cultural diplomacy.

SEVERAL INTERESTING COMMONALITIES BETWEEN EVERYONE'S PERSPECTIVES INCLUDED:

- The need to create a collaborative environment where there is less competition and more cooperation amongst the sectors
- A strong close-knit support system, that generously helps and shares knowledge and resources
- A space that amplifies local knowledge and cultural capital and diverse voices
- Access to resources and opportunities for all

TO ADVOCATE FOR THE CONTINUITY AND CHERISHING OF WORKING INTERNATIONALLY, THE GROUP HAS WORKED TOWARDS A FIELDBOOK TO:

- Consolidate their key insights and knowledge that can be build upon in the next iterations of ASEF LinkUp
- Gather case studies as examples of what is currently working in the context of cultural diplomacy in Asia and/or Europe
- Reflect on the relevance of *gotong royong* and collective responsibility in cultural diplomacy
- Document the building of a lasting ASEF LinkUp community of practice

The reflections brought to the forefront highlighted dedication and a shared goal by the group to create a better future for the arts and culture and cultural diplomacy.

03

THE TENETS OF *GOTONG ROYONG* AND COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY IN CULTURAL DIPLOMACY



"What keeps you up at night in Asia-Europe cultural diplomacy?" ASEF LinkUp participants explored this question, uncovering motivations and challenges in international cultural relations.

The heterogenous, fluid and complex nature of cultural diplomacy is widely recognised. To further nuance and expand our understanding of this concept, the group reframes cultural diplomacy through the lens of *gotong royong* and collective responsibility.

A) Principles of Cultural Diplomacy and International Cultural Relations

ASEF LinkUp 2025 built directly on the foundations laid in the second edition in Prague. While ASEF LinkUp 2024 focused on identifying guiding principles for cultural diplomacy – plurality, holistic perspectives, and the call for a community of practice – the 2025 edition shifted the lens toward lived practice. Grounded in the Indonesian ethos of *gotong royong*, it explored how collective responsibility can move from principle to experience: how to put the community first, enact solidarity across diverse sectors, and embody cultural diplomacy not only as a set of values but as a way of working together.

“While *gotong royong* literally translates to working together, in its deeper spirit it means ‘working together for everyone’s happiness’.”

1. Cultural diplomacy is a reflection of a collaborative effort. It involves working across, within and beyond our respective roles, sectors, differences and hierarchies.

KEY VALUES RAISED BY THE GROUP INCLUDE:

- **Solidarity within a community:** a ‘sense of belonging to a group’ bound by a shared goal

“Every colleague, artist, intellectual and whoever we work together with, adds up to achieve our common goals in the best possible way.”

of ‘harnessing the power of culture to build global understanding, peace and mutual respect’. Affirmation that ‘individuals are not alone’ and that we ‘share a degree of accountability’ in contributing to and shaping cultural relations.

- **Genuine generosity:** ‘sharing is caring’ and ‘putting the common good above individual interests’.
- **Mutual help and reciprocity:** ‘taking care of people within and beyond your community for the sake of care and knowing that others will take care of you’.
- **Inclusivity:** ‘taking into account different voices and opinions’ and ‘prioritising bottom-up mechanisms’.
- **Shared commitment:** ‘it is on all of us to act and there is no barriers to who can and who should act first’.
- **A dynamic process:** being responsive instead of reactive, ‘shifting in accordance with the community’s priorities and needs’.

2. Cultural diplomacy is a slow, iterative process of fermentation.

LIKENED TO FERMENTATION BY THE GROUP, FOSTERING INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL RELATIONS:

- Requires trust, time and commitment, where each value is an uncompromising pillar of the process.
- Prioritises patience and processes over product. It is an organic process where there might not be any ‘direct return on investment’.
- Unfolds at different rhythms, resisting uniform timelines.

3. The development of genuine, long-term cultural relations is built on the principle of collective care.

Imbuing a duty of collective care when nurturing cultural relations, is about sharing the responsibility of looking out for the well-being of all members. This could mean small acts like ‘checking in on peers beyond project deadlines, being honest about limits, and celebrating others’ wins as our shared success’. It also means bringing various communities into the conversation – ‘truly understanding and valuing each other’s role and perspectives’.

“Gotong royong also means holding space for those with less visibility or access and recognising that care and solidarity are the foundation of sustainable cooperation.”

“It is not just about putting voices on display, but making sure everyone involved feels part of the journey... It is a shared effort where everyone brings something to the table.”

4. At the heart of it all, cultural diplomacy is about being human.

Recognised as an iterative and cyclical process by the group, cultural diplomacy comprises making space for vulnerability, failure and growth. As one participant aptly puts it, **‘making mistakes is also part of the process and you cannot have learning without failing.’**

B) Theory vs Practice: Challenging What We Know About Cultural Diplomacy

The key, often contentious issues in the cultural diplomacy field require ongoing debate and reflections. The group explored provocative statements, arguing for and against issues that are often perceived as being at odds, in an attempt to better understand the logic behind differing perspectives.

1. Cross-sector collaboration is more symbolic than impactful.

Key Tensions

Cross-sector collaborations can be deemed tokenistic when they are driven by underlying political agendas of economic growth, a prioritisation of visibility and building of a country's reputation. Consequently, it results in a growing number of big 'lighthouse' events and output driven activities that are often short-term and less impactful.

This comes at the expense of producing quality programmes that truly invest in the growth and capabilities of the local arts community.

Lessons Learnt

Art is never free and is often happening in an ecosystem between funders, government, artists, cultural professionals, cultural institutions and more, who have a multiplicity of interests.

Yet, there is potential for such collaborations to move beyond being a state centric activity by galvanising greater community involvement, connecting with private actors, partners, networks, non-governmental actors and individuals, who place social and community-oriented goals at the core of their work.

Can cross-sector collaborations be both symbolic and meaningful with the right intent?

2. Culture should not be funded if it is not useful.

Key Tensions

Who defines culture and usefulness? What kind of usefulness are we referring to? Who is funding culture?

Culture is inherently valuable and its rewards are often in the form of 'non-monetary features', such as strengthening our imagination, building our sense of belonging and community. However, with a promotional mindset, it could lead to propaganda, extraction and misrepresentation.

Lessons Learnt

One priority will hinder the other if there are no checks and balances in place. 'The challenge would then be trying to strike a balance, where the intangible features of culture and a promotional mindset mutually reinforce rather than conflict with one another'.

How can we leverage the unique, intangible features of culture and shift the notion of usefulness to be rooted in the values of the arts and culture sector?

3. Impact of culture cannot be measured – then why fund it?

Key Tensions

'Numbers are not a reality' – reporting processes are often catered to the requirements of funders, where the impact of culture is measured in quantitative terms and on a short-term basis.

What about the longer-term contributions such as the cultural competency one gains, impact on the local arts community, or the potential multiplier effects in the field?

Lessons Learnt

There cannot be a one size fit all evaluation method to assess the value and impact of culture. Different methods for assessing culture are necessary, taking into account the purpose of the project, partners involved, artistic aspiration and context in which the project is implemented.

Can the frameworks for evaluation of the impact of culture be developed jointly with funders before it is imposed on us?

4. Global cultural exchange mostly benefits selected few.

Key Tensions

Systemic inequalities persist such as an imbalanced access to education, knowledge, resources, networks, platforms, institutions and geographic location (e.g. bigger, well-connected cities vs rural areas). An unequal playing field is 'a fact of life'.

Lessons Learnt

We are a small part of a much larger system and fighting for a system change is only partially within our reach. Instead, can we acknowledge the systemic barriers and make more with less by embodying the values of 'sharing is caring' and carry forward the spirit of 'uplifting others'?

Care and genuine generosity are foundational in cultural diplomacy, reinforcing the first and third principle outlined in the previous section.

“Having an open and generous approach to life and work has a positive value in the cultural field. For instance, when a festival curator is looking for a project that none of the artists I collaborate with can deliver, I always try to suggest alternatives, creating opportunities for others rather than shutting the door and losing them for good.”

04 OUR EXPERIENCES OF GOTONG ROYONG ACROSS BORDERS



A collection of six case studies across Asia and Europe, showcasing examples of policy and practice that may serve as inspiration for those working in the international cultural relations field.

Cultural diplomacy in the Asian and European contexts is manifold. The case studies presented hence include a mix of bottom-up, local, regional and international initiatives. The variety of examples offer a good opportunity for knowledge exchange between the two regions, providing learning arenas for those working in the field of international cultural cooperation.

Case study #1: Fri-Son – Independent arts get their independent space

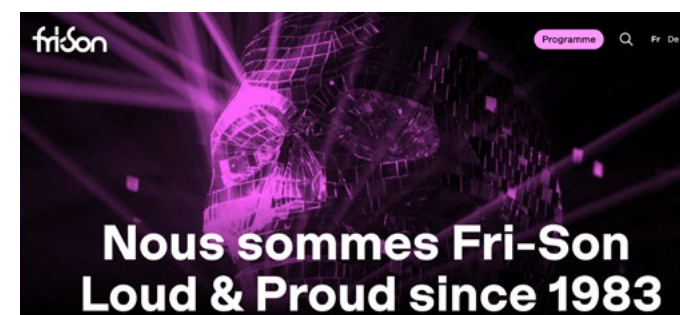


Image: Fri-Son

URL: <https://www.fri-son.ch/fr>



CONTEXT & CHALLENGE

Situated in Fribourg, a city focused on supporting high art, Fri-Son emerged as an independent music club in 1983, being an alternative cultural space for rock and pop music. When the industrial building it rented was put up for sale in the mid-nineties, in addition to the lack of financial viability, ongoing gentrification of the industrial neighbourhood where it was located and limited state support, Fri-Son faced the risk of eviction.

RESPONSE & ACTIONS TAKEN

To provide the music club with a safe home for future generations, actions were taken to purchase the building by:

- Leveraging its legacy as a grassroots cultural space to gain partial government backing
- Approaching various public and private institutions to raise funds
- Mobilising the community and forming a cooperative, comprising Fri-Son association members

Today, Fri-Son has developed into a well-respected music club and cultural venue, staying true to its long-standing commitment of championing independent and innovative music even after 30 years.

GOTONG ROYONG IN PRACTICE

Proactive engagement of other grassroots stakeholders: A coalition of Fri-Son members, private and public partners came together in solidarity to save the building of Fri-Son. Additionally, by forming a cooperative, the board members mobilised their base financially and created independent bargaining power.

Prioritising a common goal over extrinsic motivations: The private sector agreed to put aside its business and economic agenda, contributing funds towards the purchase the Fri-Son building.

Enabling the community to take control of their agency: While the city government expressed little interest in buying the building, they have instead shown support to the community by convincing the state bank to grant a loan to Fri-Son.

INSIGHTS FOR INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL COOPERATION

- To achieve something, you cannot do it alone. Cooperation, consultation and dialogue are necessary.
- Partnerships built on a shared purpose and leveraging on expertise, resources and what each partner can bring to the table are often more sustainable.
- Long-term cultural resilience is possible, especially when local actors are empowered, trusted and enabled like in the case of Fri-Son.

Case study #2: Cambodian Living Arts – Fostering regional and international collaborations to strengthen the capacity of the arts sector in Cambodia through a mobility grant



Image: Cambodian Living Arts

URL: <https://www.cambodianlivingarts.org/en/>



CONTEXT & CHALLENGE

Cambodia's arts sector faces ongoing structural barriers: limited funding, a shortage of dedicated venues for the arts and a lack of professional development opportunities and creative platforms. The fact that Cambodia's cultural policy continues to prioritise the revival and preservation of the traditional arts sector leaves little room for contemporary and creative arts expressions to grow and develop.

Cambodian Living Arts (CLA), an independent non-profit arts organisation, was hence founded in 1998 by Khmer Rouge survivor and musician, Arn Chorn Pond, with a mission to strengthen and develop a vibrant Cambodian arts sector.

RESPONSE & ACTIONS TAKEN

In response to limited cultural mobility opportunities in Cambodia, CLA actively implements its Mobility Grant Programme. This flagship programme supports Cambodian arts and cultural practitioners across all disciplines to participate in regional trainings, residencies, and festivals across borders. CLA also regularly collaborates with regional partners (e.g. the Bangkok International Performing Arts Meeting) to co-design its Mobility Grant Programme, ensuring that meaningful hands-on experience, new skills, and international networking opportunities are available. In addition, CLA prioritises joint resource mobilisation, exemplified by a collaborative EU funding proposal with labor unions, positioning arts within civil society and linking culture to development goals.

“We do not just fund travel; we work with regional partners to co-create meaningful learning experiences and encourage long-term connections. Similarly, in our emerging role as a cultural intermediary, we act as a support structure, not just administratively, but strategically helping other cultural initiatives grow within a shared ecosystem.”

GOTONG ROYONG IN PRACTICE

Supporting those in the sector who have limited access to professional development opportunities and resources to sustain their careers: CLA embodies the principle of uplifting others while fulfilling a missing, much needed gap as a cultural intermediary in Cambodia. This is evident from the multiple roles it undertakes, as a grant-maker, a connector, and a support system for artists navigating both local constraints and opportunities abroad.

Engaging in cross-border and cross-sectoral alliances in response to challenges faced by Cambodia's arts and cultural sector: CLA's joint partnerships with grassroots actors and other cultural intermediaries reflect a cooperative spirit by collectively navigating resource constraints and restrictive artistic environments.

INSIGHTS FOR INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL COOPERATION

- Cultural diplomacy must extend beyond state-led initiatives to include grassroots actors and cultural intermediaries.
- International cultural cooperation is most effective when it responds to local realities and invests in long-term capacity.
- Cultural work when meaningfully linked to global development agendas can provide a common ground for cross-regional cultural relations to develop.

Case study #3: The Season of the Commons – Emotional clusters and commons-based cultural policy in Naples' organic crisis, Italy

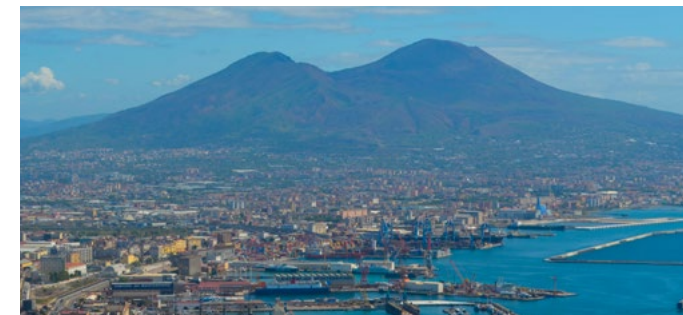


Image: City of Naples, Italy

URL: <https://www.frontierspartnerships.org/journals/european-journal-of-cultural-management-and-policy/articles/10.3389/ejcmp.2024.13013/full>



CONTEXT & CHALLENGE

Between 2012 and 2021, Naples, Italy, experienced a 'Season of the Commons', where the city suffered from austerity, clientelism and emotional burnout in the arts and cultural sector. The core challenge was a 'democratic freeze' – publicly funded cultural institutions were co-opted by political elites and grassroots actors (e.g. activists, artists, and municipal representatives) were excluded from public cultural policies. The occurrence saw an erosion of institutional and social trust, leading to an 'emotional diaspora', where local cultural actors found themselves disengaged and alienated.

RESPONSE & ACTIONS TAKEN

Led by a diverse group of actors, including the mayor, cultural activists, jurists, and civil society, transversal, temporary alliances or 'emotional clusters' as termed by ASEF LinkUp participant, Giuliana Ciancio were formed. These clusters have been key in looking at how negative emotions of burnout, solitude, mistrust can be transformed into positive collective energy, fostering participation and new narratives of cultural governance.

GOTONG ROYONG IN PRACTICE

Solidarity in the form of 'emotional clusters':

The channelling of emotional sentiments to form a temporary, informal value driven alliance pushed by a shared purpose, fostered new forms of civic participation, leading to new ways in which cultural policies emerge.

INSIGHTS FOR INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL COOPERATION

- Cultural diplomacy today extends beyond state actors and formal institutions; it thrives in emotionally charged spaces and coalitions between top-down and bottom-up actors.
- Embedding relational values – trust, care, mutualism and accountability – within institutional frameworks can be powerful tools for promoting mutual understanding and dialogue.

“In my work across borders, I have participated in and witnessed how these collaborations among organisations, institutions, artists, activists, policymakers, and political stakeholders often arise from personal exchanges and shared values (even across countries), becoming concrete when directed towards cultural justice. For example, enabling diverse voices to be expressed or supporting diverse forms of cultural mobility across borders. In these moments, collective responsibility takes form, influencing governance and contributing to the shaping of policies and norms.”

Case study #4: Voyage by Invisible Flock and Jenni Laiti – Addressing systemic structures and policies that impact the land and cultural rights of communities living along the Deatnu river system, through a creatively led, transdisciplinary collaboration



Image: Invisible Flock

URL: <https://invisibleflock.com/projects/voyage>

CONTEXT & CHALLENGE

Threatened by climate change, warming seas and an invasive species of humpback salmon, the native Atlantic salmon population in the Deatnu River ecosystem plummeted in 2017. In response, Finnish and Norwegian governments banned fishing and introduced AI-enabled dams (to distinguish native and invasive species), without consulting the Indigenous Sámi and river communities.

For the Sámi communities, the fishing ban has severed traditional Indigenous livelihoods and cultural practices. The dams are also potential environmental disasters as they prevent Atlantic salmon from swimming upstream to spawn, in addition to being economic and cultural violations.

RESPONSE & ACTIONS TAKEN

Invisible Flock and Jenni Laiti co-created *Voyage*, a series of artistic interventions that connect Sámi and international artists, Deatnu river communities and freshwater scientists. The initiative aims to build greater awareness and equitable participation and action on the plummeting native Atlantic salmon population in Deatnu.

In July 2024, a 200 km communal rowing relay was organised, rowed by 50 people, in 10-30 km sections of the river that held meaning for each family of the Sámi community along the Deatnu River. Rowing continuously for two days and two nights, the relay was a prayer for the Atlantic salmon population to return.



GOTONG ROYONG IN PRACTICE

Honouring and advocating for traditional Sámi fishing practices and technologies that centre ecological stewardship: Support understandings and dialoguing that forefront Indigenous knowledge-sharing, Sámi self-determination and equitable participation.

INSIGHTS FOR INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL COOPERATION

- Enhance and contextualise lived experiences and knowledge through creative practices, poetic and meaningful artistic engagements, to draw attention to social and global challenges.
- Long-form, community-led, cross-sector collaborations can create a foundation for cultural diplomacy.

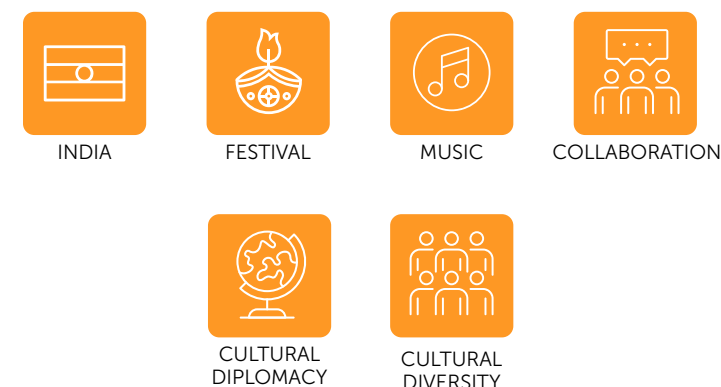
“Our practice aligns strongly to the principles of *gotong royong*, particularly in the ways in which we define collaboration as long-lasting partnerships that hold the ability to expand knowledge, deepen community and extend the possibilities of what might be created, with who and where it might exist. As artists, we believe that collaboration is what allows us to iterate long form, strategic ways of working that connect to real world action.”

Case study #5: Sur Jahan – Harmony across borders: cultural diplomacy through music in changing times



Image: Banglanatak dot com

URL: www.banglanatak.com



CONTEXT & CHALLENGE

Launched in Kolkata in 2011, Sur Jahan is an annual international Peace Music Festival, founded to unite marginalised West Bengal folk musicians with international artists. While it has become a major platform in championing the universality of music, promoting equity, social justice, and international cooperation for peace, organising the festival required overcoming visa restrictions for international artists and precarity in funding. Volatility in the geopolitical landscape also inhibits the participation of artists from certain countries, despite their rich musical offerings.

RESPONSE & ACTIONS TAKEN

Led by Contact Base, Sur Jahan draws support from embassies, cultural bodies, state governments and individuals to promote international cultural exchanges and advocate for solidarity through music.

GOTONG ROYONG IN PRACTICE

Forging partnerships with a wide coalition of national and international entities: As securing consistent funding from state or national governments and other traditional mechanisms proved challenging, this approach leverages institutional resources, existing project-based funding, and national priority areas to collectively plan and execute the event.

Developing long-term partnerships and linkages: International cultural events and exchanges are actively promoted and facilitated with the help of partnerships and linkages that have developed through the years. Advocacy for solidarity and peace remains the foundation of such exchanges and cultural interactions. While dedicated funds are crucial for a collective initiative, strong relationships and a collaborative spirit among partners are vital for its success.

INSIGHTS FOR INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL COOPERATION

- People-to-people connections and a strong strategy towards forging diverse partnerships are essential for the sustenance and resilience of cultural collaborations.
- The arts and culture should not be seen just as entertainment. It should be mainstreamed as a driver of sustainable development, ensuring multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral participation.
- It is crucial to promote local cultures globally, countering the negative impacts of globalisation and cultural homogenisation. Cultural professionals should proactively strive to forge new partnerships for exchanges, using cultural diplomacy as a vehicle for peace, equity, and solidarity.

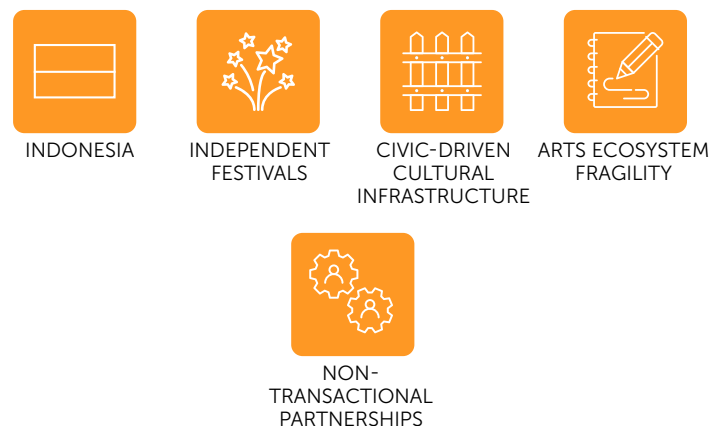
“The proverb ‘it takes a village to raise a child’ closely aligns with the Indonesian principle of *gotong royong*.”

Case study #6: ArtJog Festival – Driving Indonesia's contemporary arts ecosystem without a formal playbook



Image: ArtJog Festival

URL: <https://artjog.id/2025/>



CONTEXT & CHALLENGE

Indonesia's cultural infrastructure is decentralised and lacks a formal arts council. Contemporary art is not fully integrated into public strategy, often positioned more within the tourism framework rather than cultural policy. In this context, ArtJog emerged as an independent art fair in 2008, fostering experimental practices and public engagement without relying on state-driven systems.

The barriers encountered by ArtJog include operating within an arts ecosystem that is seen as 'fragile', defined by:

- Limited understanding of contemporary art within both government and corporate sectors
- Lack of clear and consistent funding mechanisms and rules for artist support
- Lack of clarity in policy or infrastructure for contemporary art – there is currently no contemporary art museum or centralised institutional hub in Yogyakarta

RESPONSE & ACTIONS TAKEN

Despite the challenges, ArtJog maintained independence by curating exhibitions without commercial pressure, while adapting to grow community support.

For each edition, they emphasised accessibility by initially offering free entry and hosting the event in non-formal spaces such as Taman Budaya and later, heritage buildings like the Old National Museum. Over time, ArtJog has gradually built formal relationships with the government by aligning the festival's value with tourism and soft power outcomes, even as policy-level arts engagement were still evolving.

GOTONG ROYONG IN PRACTICE

Shared effort and community participation: Over 18+ years, ArtJog has built long-term social capital and public trust, as demonstrated through its consistent programming quality and community relevance.

Open access, equity and non-hierarchical opportunities for artists: ArtJog has embraced cross-disciplinary programming, including elements of visual art, performance, design, film, to appeal to wider audiences. It also encourages participation from young and emerging artists is also evident, often through curated themes such as *Motif: Amalan* in its 2025 edition, to reconfigure perspectives on curation and creation.

INSIGHTS FOR INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL COOPERATION

- Cultural diplomacy can thrive outside formal state infrastructure when driven by collective action. Despite operating without formal infrastructure, support systems, fixed rules or state mandates, ArtJog consistently innovates to create common ground while engaging large and diverse publics.
- Prioritising collective care in collaborations. ArtJog created a model of partnership that balances artistic integrity with financial and logistical pragmatism. This was done by inviting state actors into the conversation and operating on principles of collective care which invites students, artists, and partners to engage meaningfully.

05 BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE



"Could you help me with growing ASEF LinkUp and other similar knowledge sharing networks?"

This Fieldbook aims to provide the current group of participants with more reasons to stay connected. Concurrently, creating a space for intellectual and cultural exchanges amongst and beyond participants across the various ASEF LinkUp editions.

What does it take to grow ASEF LinkUp and other similar knowledge sharing networks that build lasting relations and promote cultural diversity and equity?

As participants of ASEF LinkUp have reflected, we must prioritise the following key elements:

- **Informality as a strength:** Networks thrive when there are less bureaucratic pressures, respecting each member's opinion and giving space for ground-up ideas and voices to be heard. Voluntary networks such as ICOMOS and UNESCO informal working groups, Green Lab Art Alliance (GALA), and informal WhatsApp exchanges are effective because they are grounded in personal commitment, shared beliefs and purpose.
- **People first before projects:** Lasting networks often begin with an investment in personal ties rather than mere transactions. Trust, empathy, and interpersonal dynamics should take precedence. These take time, effort, and care — especially when working across borders, languages, and constraints.
- **Importance of cultural organisations active in bilateral and multilateral contexts:** Organisations like ASEF who are uniquely placed in bridging civil society, government and policymakers and are actively engaging in people-to-people exchanges have a key role to play in facilitating and enabling such multilateral encounters at the regional and international level.

“Gotong royong shapes the way I view collaboration — not just as a task to be completed, but as an ongoing conversation for relationship building between institutions and individuals.”



Gotong royong reminds us that networks require nurturing — they are rooted in an ethic of collective caring and sharing, showing up and by doing the work together. In the words of a participant, collective responsibility is ‘the result of people being crazy enough to make this world a better place’.

06

TOOLBOX TO IMPLEMENT YOUR INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL RELATIONS PROJECT



Consult and use our tools as a building block to support your work across borders!

The set of mini tools listed below – Sustaining Networks Framework and Collaboration Compass, are inspired by some of the themes and discussions from the group, to address common challenges that they face while working internationally, mainly in building a community of practice and cultural networks and engaging in cross-sector collaborations.

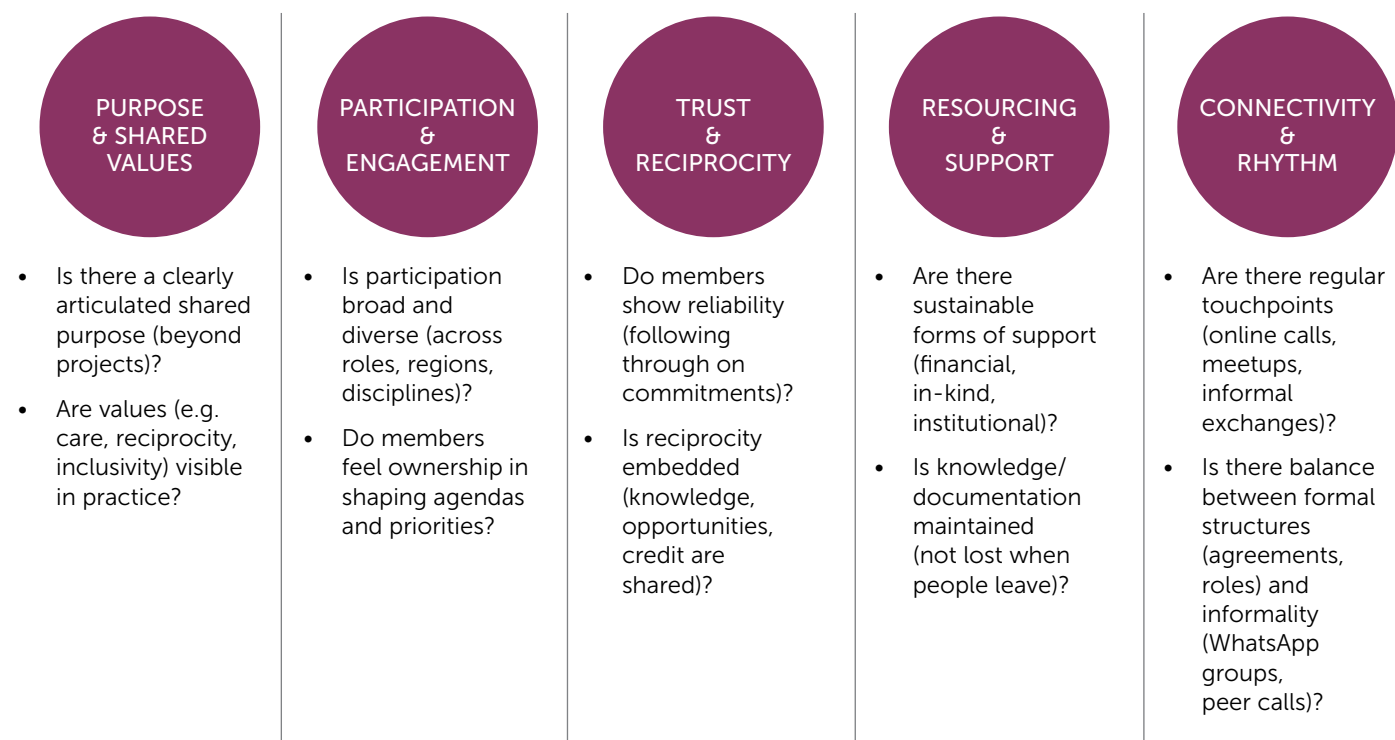
Through a self-reflection and assessment approach, the tools are hence designed to help those in the international cultural relations field explore and understand the challenge that they are facing in more detail. Steps and elements which need to be further improved and/or redesigned for future iterations are highlighted via the mini tools.

Mini Tools:

1. Sustaining Networks Framework

Purpose: Assess the health and resilience of a community of practice or informal cultural network.

How to use: Score each dimension from **1 (weak)** to **5 (strong)**. Discuss where your network needs attention.



Scoring Guide:

- 20–25 (Thriving): Network is resilient, adaptive, and rooted in shared practice.
- 15–19 (Promising): Healthy, but requires attention in weak spots.
- 10–14 (Fragile): Participation uneven, purpose unclear, risk of fading.
- Below 10 (At risk): Likely to collapse without urgent attention.

2. Collaboration Compass

Purpose: Help practitioners assess the depth and orientation of a cross-sector collaboration, and decide how to strengthen it.

STEP 1: PLOT YOUR COLLABORATION

Draw a point on the compass for your project.

Axes:

X: Time Horizon: Short-term (event, project) Long-term (sustained partnership)

Y: Depth: Symbolic (visibility, statements, branding) → Transformative (shifts practice, policy, community impact)

You may plot multiple collaborations if relevant.

STEP 2: DIAGNOSE POSITION

Short-term + Symbolic: ‘Showpiece’ partnerships (e.g. joint events, branding exercises). Useful for visibility, but limited in depth.

Short-term + Transformative: Pilots, experiments, labs. Can test new ideas but need follow-up to avoid fading.

Long-term + Symbolic: Stable but stagnant partnerships. Risk of formality without innovation.

Long-term + Transformative: Deep, sustained collaborations. High investment, high resilience, systemic change potential.

STEP 3: GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR EACH ZONE

Short-term + Symbolic:

- What risks of tokenism do we face?
- How can this project plant seeds for longer-term engagement?

Short-term + Transformative:

- What is one concrete next step to embed learning?
- Who else needs to be at the table to sustain momentum?

Long-term + Symbolic:

- What value are we actually generating?
- How can we introduce more experimentation or co-ownership?

Long-term + Transformative:

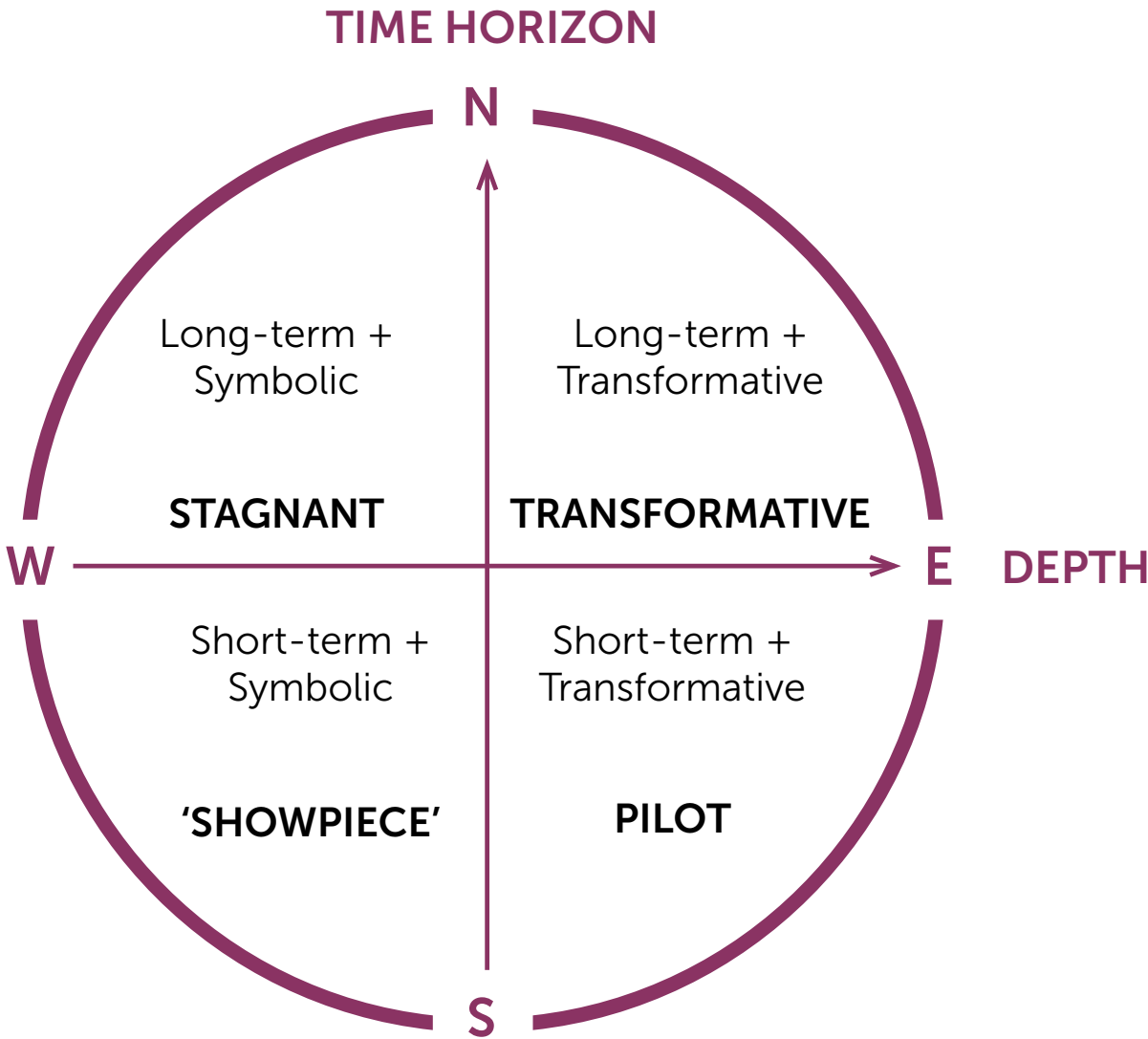
- What makes this work? (map enabling factors)
- How can we document and share lessons with others?

STEP 4: NEXT MOVES (ACTION PROMPTS)

Move Right → To deepen: add co-creation mechanisms, share decision-making, embed reciprocity.

Move Up → To lengthen: secure resourcing, align with institutional strategies, create rhythms of reconnection.

Move Diagonal → To transform: combine both depth and duration.



07 WHO ARE WE?



Meet the participants of ASEF LinkUp 2025.

ASEF LinkUp 2025 gathered the following participants:

NAME	ORGANISATION/PROFESSION	COUNTRY
Catherine Baxendale	Executive Producer, Invisible Flock	United Kingdom
Dr Cissie Fu	Head of McNally School of Fine Arts, LASALLE College of the Arts, University of the Arts Singapore	Hong Kong
Dicki Armawanto	Cultural Office of Special Region of Yogyakarta	Indonesia
Dito Yuwono	Visual Artist, Curator and Director of Cemeti Institute for Art and Society	Indonesia
Ghofar Ismail	Diplomat, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia	Indonesia
Dr Giuliana Ciano	Cultural Manager and Researcher	Italy
Jang Elroy Anak Ramantan	Founder and Curator, Minority Agenda	Brunei Darussalam
Dr Madhura Dutta	Culture and Development Specialist	India
Mari Shogase	Director of Arts and Culture Department, Japan Foundation, Bangkok	Japan
Matthias Ventker	Director, Goethe-Institut Bandung	Germany
Michelle Kuek	Partnerships Lead, National University of Singapore (NUS) Museum	Singapore
Oming Putri	Organisational Development and Partnership Manager, Koalisi Seni	Indonesia
Shalihah Sri Prabarani	Junior Specialist on Culture, Ministry of Culture of Indonesia	Indonesia
Shayanid Prasertpol	Diplomat (First Secretary), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand	Thailand
Sokhorn Yon	Programmes Director, Cambodian Living Arts	Cambodia
Stéphane Noël	Artistic and Executive Director, Materialise Limited	Switzerland

ASEF would like to thank the facilitators for their valuable contributions to ASEF LinkUp 2025:

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The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) promotes understanding, strengthens relationships and facilitates cooperation among the people, institutions and organisations of Asia and Europe.



ASEF LinkUp | Asia-Europe Cultural Diplomacy Lab aims to bring artists closer to the diplomatic sector, enabling common spaces for mutual knowledge, intercultural learning and cultural collaboration amongst various agents involved in international cultural cooperation.



Fieldbook

Yogyakarta Iteration

