

Here + There



Collaborative Enquiry Report

WATERSHED



BRISTOL+BATH
CREATIVE R+D

Creative
Industries



Clusters
Programme

Funded by the Creative Industries Clusters
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Summary -

and

Made Culture and Watershed embarked on a 9-month collaborative enquiry connecting our cities and network in a new experimental knowledge production process.

This report brings together the process for producing collective thinking, including the tools and concepts it inspired, and insights towards building equitable and just international collaborations.

We hope our enquiry inspires others to think forward towards globally connected futures and contribute to an ever-growing body of collective thought.





INTRODUCTION

Here + There: About

Here + There is a year-long programme within Bristol+Bath Creative R+D. In it we wanted to explore how being locally rooted also allows us to understand ourselves as part of an interconnected global network.

The programme sought to connect the creative clusters of Bristol and Bath to an international creative technology conversation through talent development, research exchange and business development.

Designed and led by Made Culture and Watershed, the collaborative enquiry focused on the production of new knowledge and collective thinking towards the future of international working and collaboration. Using its foundation, locally rooted and globally connected, the enquiry objectives were to:

1

Connect experts and creative professionals from our networks in Bristol, Bath, and Lagos

2

Enhance existing international discourse and encourage the development of new tools and frameworks

3

For its research and potential outputs to inform international development and future thinking

The Why

Existing models for international working and collaboration are moving further out of sync with the creative and cultural industries (CCIs). The global pandemic revealed deep divisions and raised attention to not only the fragility of the CCIs globally but an increased urgency to rethink how we work, connect, and collaborate globally.

How can we build equitable and just collaborations whilst attending to the possibilities of new technology, evolving audience behaviours, the climate crisis, and a changing political landscape?

How can we nurture international connections and communities when we physically cannot be present or connect?

In the future, does where we are matter?

This calls for the generation of new knowledge, collective thinking and experimentation towards future international work.

The What

We wanted to explore future thinking and how we might develop locally rooted work whilst proactively positioning ourselves as part of a global network, ensuring we consider the different perspectives of the network. To achieve this it is integral to design and think of this research with our networks and audience, how they shape and benefit from the enquiry and feel connected to it.

Made Culture and Watershed undertook a nine-month collaborative enquiry where we delved into our networks to create research-driven provocations that were interrogated and developed further by a cohort of 20 creative professionals across Bristol, Bath and Lagos.

This creative cohort participated in an experimental series of research labs contributing their expertise through the exploration of responsible technology, future business, and models for international touring and collaboration.

From our collaborative enquiry, we produced recommendations for creating equitable and just collaborations, a tool kit for provocation-led knowledge production, and a series of co-design concepts imagining future international models.



BRISTOL

BATH

LAGOS



How can we, from our different
locations and *experiences*,
shape and inform *future*
international working through
exploration of responsible
technology, future business, and
international touring and
collaboration?

Understanding our Audience

- **Who do we work with and are likely to engage?**
- **Why are we engaging them?**
- **What is our offer to them?**
- **Who will we communicate and share learnings with?**

In the earliest stage of our research, we observed several differences between creative professionals in the UK and Nigeria. Place is crucial to international working, not only in a practical sense but in relation to localised challenges and barriers, connections to context and histories, and the expectation of audiences.

Understanding the Challenges

It was important for us to ensure that the research was led by the demand, interests, and concerns of our target audience (creative professionals in our network) and that the potential outputs support their international development and future thinking.

We put a series of questions to our networks to set a foundation and better understand the:

- Makeup of our networks
- Level of international experience
- Mechanisms and channels for connecting to international opportunities
- Challenges and barriers



Bath + Bristol

Funding landscape
Availability of resources
Availability of opportunities
Communication + Language

Lagos

Visibility to international opportunities
Finding/developing partnerships
Funding landscape (and financial support)
Availability of opportunities

The initial research findings revealed a few key challenges that shaped our thinking around the design of the enquiry. The table above highlights some differences and similarities in challenges faced by creative professionals in both regions.

Based on the challenges uncovered, we saw the following as ideal outcomes of the Here + There collaborative enquiry:

- Increased opportunities to create connections and share skills and knowledge
- More opportunities to use technology to collaborate, produce and distribute
- Increased opportunity to improve and enhance business skills, generate revenue and access to new international markets
- Increased opportunity for commercial collaboration between creative professionals
- Increased access to finance

Here + There
Logical Framework

Click here

Exploring the Themes

We built the enquiry around three initial themes - Responsible technology development, Future Business, and International collaboration.

Our goal was to discover shared grounds for our networks taking into consideration the differences in our landscapes, understandings, and tensions. In general, we sought to understand how to:

- Use technology in a more inclusive and sustainable way.
- Explore new ways for creative professionals to navigate and negotiate new relationships, opportunities, cultures, and resources.
- Enable more inclusive production and distribution for creative professionals through equitable and sustainable partnerships.

More specifically, we looked at the following questions against our three themes:

Responsible Technology

- What do we define as technology? Using a mobile phone to jump on Zoom calls or creating a drone for distributing medication?
- What are the roles of creatives in the production/design of creative technology and how it connects to its audiences?
- Inclusivity is also about privilege. What is the privilege to be inclusive? If people don't have the infrastructure to be responsible, how can we map it into our definition to ensure that we are not

being exclusive?

Future Business

- Are we referring to the broad spectrum of what future business models should look like? Or interrogating specific things within the business models? Eg. How do we create access to new markets?
- What are the Creative Professionals' challenges when it comes to working in a way that is effective and efficient?
- How do you negotiate and navigate spaces of new locations, or audiences, or working culture (eg. that is more inclusive)?

Exploring International Collaboration and Touring

- How do you create inclusive models for production and distribution that allow for increased access or new audiences?



LAB 1

Following the initial research period we virtually convened a group of 20 creative professionals representing the width and breadth of creative communities in Bristol, Bath, and Lagos to co-design knowledge on international collaboration in two virtual labs.

Labs are familiar settings for both Made Culture and Watershed and the collaborative enquiry affords an opportunity to test an experimental approach to knowledge production and research; an approach built on provocations to see the points of tension and friction, test assumptions, and reveal optimism that reaches in and out of our local and global.

Here + There: Participant Profile

**We worked with local creative professionals working
with creative technology who have:**

- International experience
- Continued international interest
- Commitment to sharing insight, knowledge, and learning
- An interest in accessing tools/resources to improve international working



Starting with a Provocation

“Starting from a place of provocation, was a stimulating idea because it ignited my mind, and challenged some preconceived notions.”

Knowing that every problem has an ecosystem and people within the ecosystem, through enquiry, we wanted to understand how to innovate within these ecosystems. By utilising provocations we invited ourselves to:

- Understand what is at stake and needs to be done to improve things
- Understand where cultural lines of code guide and inform behaviours
- Forensically explore the surrounding context and landscape
- Recognise psychological safety

The provocation methodology formed the framework for exploration and the imagining of a ‘change space’, the tangible gains and loss within a culture or distinct ecosystem.

What is a provocation?

“A provocation can be defined as something that incites, instigates, angers or irritates.”

Leading with provocations was a new approach to knowledge production for both Made Culture and Watershed. We virtually convened our cohort for the first time in June 2022 and set out the broad scope of the Here + There enquiry including the parameters for how we wanted to work together.

The cohort split into 3 groups and were given a core provocation and series of activities in which they would:

- Diagnose the ecosystems associated to their provocation
- Identify and map out people within the ecosystem and who are affected (positively or negatively/gain or loss)
- Imagine a future scenario informed by the previous activities and macro events/actions leading to it - what is the ‘change space’?
- Identify entry points that the group could action that would lead to or enable the macro event/action - what would it take to make the ‘change space’ possible?

The provocations were shaped by the earlier audience and network research, these were:

- Successful international collaboration depends on levels of economic and social advancement in societies. (Inspired by international collaboration and touring)
- Technology is not meeting the heightened expectations and needs of local and global audiences/users. (Inspired by responsible technology)
- Access to finance not dealt with remains the key barrier to international collaboration. (Inspired by future business)

How to lead with Provocations

Click here



Considered & Adaptive Design

In exploring adaptive challenges and responses there is an opportunity to explore the role adaptive design can play towards experimental productions and collective thinking. In the production of our research labs, we found the following two design elements allowed us to create the conditions for deeper collective thinking:

- Purposely designing specific space for connection, small and large discussions, testing ideas and concepts, and reflection.
- Implementing an adaptive design and delivery by revising session structures, formats and activities based on immediate feedback from participants.

Collectively we examined, challenged, deconstructed, and reconstructed the provocations and collated knowledge that drew from their existing knowledge and experiences. At the end of the first lab, we observed:

- Centring our enquiry on the context and experiences of creatives from 2 geographies enabled richer conversation.
- The concept of 'locally rooted' work does not exclusively refer to a physical location or proximity, local rooting exists beyond a place in time.
- The cohort overwhelmingly felt the knowledge produced needed to transform and translate into longer-term impact. Lab two needed to connect thought to action.
- Producing adaptive labs is challenging, however, the cohort valued having their feedback and opinions heard and implemented into the ongoing design.
- To design future models we should closely examine the foundations. We need access to knowledge and to expand our understanding of 'resources' to build equity and address power imbalances.
- There is a wealth of experience/knowledge within ecosystems currently addressing tensions and challenges presented in provocations - it raises the question of how we connect to that learning.



Design Thinking Session: An Expression of *Hopes* and *Fears*

I hope that:

We look towards indigenous systems as a way to build new models.

Something beautiful and tangible comes out of this.
For example, the film and storytelling will create a space for healing and resisting.

We take this on as a messy process that is fluid, generative, and built on a balance of responsibility as well as care.

Making things new is always possible, and there's so much talent and beautifully critical thinking going into these questions within this space, that feels so exciting.

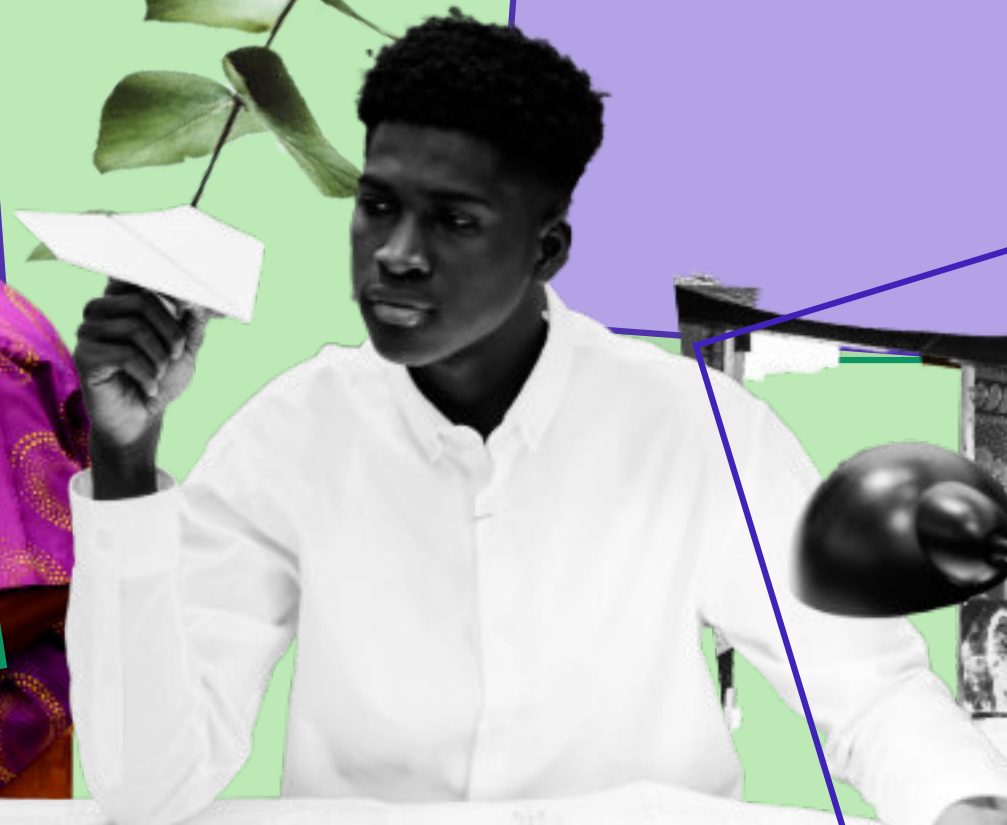
I fear that:

We might leave those that are really in need of our support behind.

We place too much pressure on ourselves to fix everything.

Attempts to create something truly cooperative will always be consumed by capitalistic systems/tendencies

We are just here having another theoretical conversation that won't have any measurable impact



LAB 2



Purpose: Putting in the work

Whilst the first lab set the pace for the enquiry with thought-provoking and insightful conversations around the core themes, we focused on developing insights and ideas into tangible solutions that can be tested in the real world in the second lab. Our goal was to see our knowledge and time together to shape something that can exist and have an impact on the world.

In the first lab, we saw ourselves as co-investigators and in the second lab, we came together as designers and creators. The idea was for our concepts to revolve around the notion of “doing international collaboration better”. Through design we would articulate and visualise models informed through locally rooted and globally conscious practise and knowledge.

What happened:

‘Giving back the work’ was the focus for the second lab. We wanted to give our co-designers space to chart new paths for future international work with little to no interference from the lab producers. As a result, we structured the lab days with more time for working sessions within the groups.

part of the original groups. Jamboards were an invaluable tool for ideation and prototyping in the second lab. During the lab, groups built upon the existing jamboards mapping the transformation from provocations to concepts.

The groups designed three concepts which were shared with the wider group and invited guests.

What we learned:

Based on feedback from the lab:

- We created new working groups to further encourage exchange and deepen connections between participants. Each group had at least one person who was involved in the development of the initial provocation.
- Designed additional opportunities to share and invite others into their practice.
- Sent a resource kit to each participant that included the insights and progress made towards their newly assigned provocation/theme before the lab began. This was to ensure that they had the necessary information to build on previous work and ultimately develop new outputs.

Local creative professionals are experts. Their knowledge of local landscapes and ecosystems combined with their international experience is invaluable. As such, giving them space to explore with limited interference was helpful for the process.

Connecting into the existing pockets of localised knowledge for international collaborations is vital for developing collaborative projects or touring. We don’t need to reinvent the wheel.

Collaborations not only acts as the staging ground for new ideas, they encourage experimental thinking and design whilst holding the needs/interests of the audiences.

Newly formed groups listened deeply to the knowledge and experience of those who were

CONCEPTS

FROM

THE LAB

“Meaningful collaborations start at a micro level and depend on trust built by sharing indigenous and intuitive as well as institutional knowledge. Transformation across groups of people is not as linear as advancement and can come when we reflect on who has power and how it is shared more equitably.”

GRADUAL PROXIMITY



COLLABORATIONS OVER TIME AND SPACE

A filmmaker in London and Lagos meet online. They embark on a journey to meet one another exploring relationships to land and food along the way - the journey is at the heart of the collaboration and becomes the subject of the project. The final work could be a film, a podcast, or a series of artworks.

Tensions:

- **Power, extraction and exploitation**
- **The impact on climate**
- **Slow vs immediate production**
- **Viable funding**

An online platform/tool for creative professionals to collaborate and create features to help them develop their projects, exchange knowledge, and find funding. A digital place for creatives.

BETTER DIGITAL



TOOLS

Tensions:

- Inequalities in knowledge and resources
- Where power is held, who is and isn't involved
- Technology's relationship to the climate emergency (is it just a tick box for tech comps)
- How data is used responsibly - levels of mystery and encoded knowledge,

"International collaboration must fully consider the contextual understanding of infrastructural access between partners. This includes but is not limited to finance, digital, time, support etc."

AN ARTIST



HOME

An artists' home - a physical structure supporting a number of artists over a period of time - paying artists a salary or giving a home space to live/work/be. This space is home yet enables artists to sustain themselves, their practice, and livelihood - this space as poetry, each stage a stanza.

Tensions:

- Inequalities in access and education
- Power and creative control
- Finances with strings attached
- Lack of trust and transparency in systems/ infrastructure
- Co-existent between enterprise and culture

RECOMM-

ENDATIONS

Future models and frameworks should be tailored to international projects and collaborations. What can we think and do to build equitable and just collaborations in ways which are adaptive:

- Is the collaboration rooted in a problem (technical or adaptive)?
- What are the contexts the collaboration is working within? Seeing the different layers that shape the environment of a collaboration including the potential gains and loss of those within.
- What does the collaboration look and feel like at micro level? (Think micro not macro)
- Where are the imbalances? Collectively navigate power structures by identifying power imbalances, not just in structures between people and places but technology,
- Distribute benefit and equitably design it from the start. Creating something which is mutually beneficial and visualises that benefit moving beyond collaborators. Leveraging resources, enriching communities, unlocking knowledge and skill.
- How are you attending to climate in the collaboration? Create a specific climate action plan for each collaboration.

There were many deeper questions arising from our collective enquiry, some more relevant to larger organisations than creative professionals.

- Points of creative and cultural integrity. Those holding power decide the condition or challenge, what does this mean for 'creative control'? (the points of creative and cultural integrity)
- Are there different ways to capture the impact and value of international collaborations beyond just 'outputs'? The word 'output' can diminish our creative hopes ambitions and some value cannot be captured in numbers - where do we hold 'hope and intentionality'?
- Who can and can't engage with

international projects or opportunities? There are still several barriers that disempower smaller creative organisations and professionals.

- Enterprise and culture can co-exist, we just need the space and support to experiment
- How has hostility across borders impacted and made international collaboration harder?
- The Direction of international opportunities, whether it is money or projects, varies country to country. In Nigeria financing for international opportunities most commonly comes from outside the country.
- 'Local rooting' is far more complex as you scratch beneath the immediate association of place. It links us to communities, histories, heritage and culture, in ways which are simultaneous and permeable.



Thank you

Thank you to our collaborative enquiry cohort; you brought the enquiry to life.

From Lagos:

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Here + There Collaborative Enquiry production team:

Malaika Toyo & Remi Olaniyi (Made Culture)

Emma Boulton (Watershed)

Image credits:

Hopeful Futures - Jon Aitken

Meet at The Square – Made Culture

Report Design: Kofo Ajala

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WATERSHED



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