

## **Delineating and Assessing Cultural Relations: The Case of Asialink**

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There has been a turn from traditional notions of state-led, top-down cultural diplomacy toward a cultural relations approach that seeks to build mutual relationships with people and nations through meaningful communication, dialogue, and collaboration—typically without direct state involvement. There is, though, considerable confusion around the distinctions among the models, and a dearth of impact assessments. This article identifies five key features of cultural relations that help to distinguish it from cultural diplomacy. These are used to assess the structure, practice, and outcomes of Asialink’s experimental Kerjasama Residency between Australian and Indonesian artists and Asialink’s involvement in the Fukutake House Asia Art Platform in Japan. Using interviews with participants alongside two senior Asialink staff responsible for organizing the initiatives, the article finds that a cultural relations approach was adopted, but there were also elements of cultural diplomacy, and the projects resulted in mutually beneficial outcomes.

*Keywords: cultural diplomacy, cultural relations, Asia, Australia, Asialink*

There has been a relational turn in cultural diplomacy—with two-way communication, mutuality, relationship building, and collaboration at the fore (Holden, 2013). Relationships can be built with a wide variety of actors through cultural initiatives that connect people across global societies and may include NGOs, commercial entities, groups, and individuals on a mutual basis—with communication at their heart. There are, however, different understandings of the relational turn—from cultural relations to relational public diplomacy, public relations, and soft power. How to define the relational turn is “highly contested” (Pamment, 2013), and attempts to delineate cultural relations from cultural diplomacy are often based on “ambiguous” distinctions (Mitchell, 1986) with “considerable overlap between the two concepts” (Melissen, 2005, p. 16) and “no general agreement on what cultural relations are. Different national cultural relations organisations understand cultural relations through different lenses” (O’Loughlin, McAvoy, & Gillespie, 2018, p. 7).

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While significant time and resources have been invested in cultural relations initiatives around the world, there is a lack of empirical research into their practices and impact, which is also made more challenging because of the lack of agreed-on definitions (Chitty, 2009; Nisbett, 2016; O'Loughlin et al., 2018; Pamment, 2013). This lack of research is particularly true of cultural relations between Australia and its neighbors, which are important given Australia's geographic position and the rise of Asia (Australian Government, 2012). The lack of research is surprising because the Australian government has expressed a "commitment to use cultural relations to make Australia and Australians better understood by the rest of the world" in part because of a belief that there is a need "to reconcile geographical proximity with cultural distance" (Evans, 1991, p. 5).

This article contributes to both the definitional debates and the empirical research base. It does so by empirically assessing the practice and outcomes of Asialink's experimental Arts Residency Laboratory program, specifically two apparently relationally oriented initiatives: Fukutake House Asia Arts Platform at the Setouchi Triennale, and the Kerjasama Residency (Asialink, 2014, 2016). Asialink was chosen because it is a leading independent organization undertaking cultural relations work in Australia and aims to promote public understanding of Asia and Australia's role in the region (Mar, 2014).

### **The Relational Turn**

Cultural diplomacy is a type of public diplomacy that uses a nation's cultural resources to engage foreign publics, and it grew in popularity during the Cold War (Cummings, 2009). Often associated with soft power (Nye, 2004), cultural diplomacy can foster relationships between people and nations and can help people from different cultures understand each other. The arts are often central to cultural diplomacy because they "characteristically challenge and criticize the status quo and promote alternatives [that] cultivate a climate of tolerance and pluralism" (Nelson & Schneider, 2008, para. 3). There is, though, significant contestation within the field of cultural diplomacy.

Traditional understandings of cultural diplomacy have emphasized "formal diplomats, serving national governments, try[ing] to shape and channel this natural flow of cultural exchange and relations to advance national interests" (Arndt, 2005, p. xvii), often in a one-way orientation (Fitzpatrick, 2011) focusing on information projection and persuasion (Snow & Taylor, 2009; Zaharna, Arsenault, & Fisher, 2014); this must be driven by strategic imperatives, otherwise it is "simply" cultural relations (Rose & Wadham-Smith, 2004). Examples include America's Jazz Diplomacy, in which Louis Armstrong was sent on strategic tours (Costigliola, 1984).

There are, though, significant criticisms of the traditional approach. For Alway (2013; see also Ang, Isar, & Mar, 2015, and Salzburg, 2012), traditional cultural diplomacy is ineffective because as power shifts across the globe, the "curatorial authority" that Western countries have enjoyed in defining the terms of cultural interchange is giving way to more complex relationships that are, by design, equally weighted and reciprocal. Such criticisms underpin the relational turn.

While cultural diplomacy is often treated as “synonymous” with cultural relations, and they do “belong within the same broad semantic field and share many common features,” O’Loughlin and colleagues (2018) argue that “it is important to distinguish them” (p. 5). Similarly, Pamment (2013) notes that the “terminology is not to be taken lightly” because it can have “profound effects for how cultural diplomacy is positioned in relation to overall public diplomacy activities” (pp. 45–46), and it creates issues for practitioners

As indicated, there are competing understandings of the differences among cultural relations, cultural diplomacy, and public diplomacy. While Mitchell (1986) argues that the differences are “fundamental, but also complex and fairly subtle” (p. 2), O’Loughlin et al. (2018) argue that “cultural relations are not a distinctive phenomenon, but a set of activities that take place within [the] broader fields of . . . cultural diplomacy, public diplomacy and soft power” (p. 8), and Pamment (2013) argues there is no “binary distinction” among them. As a case in point, the British Council refers to its work as cultural relations, whereas the government often refers to it as cultural diplomacy (Rivera, 2015), and Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) similarly switches between the use of cultural diplomacy and cultural relations (Williams, 1995). Indeed, there are significant country-by-country and organization-by-organization variations, and, importantly, the lack of clarity makes it hard to assess the outcomes of cultural relations initiatives (O’Loughlin et al., 2018). For Rivera (2015), “cultural diplomacy and cultural relations diverge in important ways—their means, objectives, and motivations. All of these differences can be traced to the particular role of government” (p. 9).

Synthesizing the literature on cultural relations, this article identifies five key tenets that differentiate cultural relations from cultural diplomacy. First, structurally, cultural relations are *independent from government* (as opposed to being directed by governments and diplomats). Independence foregrounds the other features that we identify here. Second, the predominant form of communication is *dialogue* (as opposed to one-way monologue in cultural diplomacy; Fitzpatrick, 2011). Third, *mutuality and relationship building* is at the heart of cultural relations (as opposed to top-down projection and targeted messaging), and this can be among artists, communities, organizations, or countries (Rose & Wadham-Smith, 2004). Fourth, activities involve *collaboration* between participants rather than top-down delivery (Cowan & Arsenault, 2008). Fifth, through these different factors, cultural relations focus on *building networks*.

The first tenet is that cultural relations emerge “naturally and organically, without government intervention,” as compared with cultural diplomacy, which can only “take place when formal diplomats, serving national governments, try to shape and channel this natural flow to advance national interests” (Arndt, 2005, p. xviii). Similarly, Pamment (2013) quotes a UK cultural diplomat who takes a similar approach: “Cultural relations has those two big distinguishing features, one is it’s not governmental and the other is it has a much longer time horizon both forwards and backwards than diplomacy does” (p. 45). This is mirrored by Rivera (2015), who argues that “much of what defines cultural relations (and what distinguishes it from cultural diplomacy)—the longer timescale, honesty, mutuality, and trust—is made possible by its independence from government” (p. 13).

The extent to which government can have a role in cultural relations is contested, however. A definition by the British Council and the Goethe-Institut, for example, includes "a range of activities conducted by state and/or non-state actors" (cited in O'Loughlin et al., 2018, p. 7). The general view is that government can only play a limited role in cultural relations, and with conditions:

Government can financially support cultural relations so long as those activities remain free of political influence and independent of foreign policy objectives. Cultural relations can support the "national interest," but any such support would only be an indirect byproduct of the trust, understanding, and relationships developed through cultural relations. (Rivera, 2015, p. 11)

Thus, organizations, such as the British Council, that receive a portion of their funding from government can be considered cultural relations groups because they remain independent.<sup>1</sup> The Australian government is not immune from these debates. It has used the phrase *cultural relations* in its work for decades, but this has been considered "wrongly named" and "ambiguously defined" in part because it is governmental (Department of Foreign Affairs, 1986, p. 96).<sup>2</sup>

The second tenet, *dialogue*, refers to the idea of talking with, rather than at, people from other countries. The British Council and Goethe-Institut definition, for example, emphasizes "enhanced sustainable dialogue between people and cultures, shaped through engagement and attraction rather than coercion" (cited in O'Loughlin et al., 2018, p. 7, emphasis in original). This "genuine dialogue" can be more valuable than any tangible outcome, moving beyond traditional "technical dialogue" (Buber, 1958, p. 19), which focuses on persuasion to obtain strategic goals and instead aims to create a dialogic environment where the perception of control or dominance is removed (Cowan & Arsenault, 2005; Kent & Taylor, 1998). As Cowan and Arsenault (2008) explain, "Nothing helps build mutual understanding as well as a thoughtful dialogue" (p. 11), and "nothing creates a sense of trust and mutual respect as much as a meaningful collaboration" (p. 22; see also Ang, Isar, & Mar, 2015; Ang, Tambiah, & Mar, 2015; Foster & Jonker, 2005; Melissen, 2005). However, as Cowan and Arsenault (2008) note about public diplomacy, the separation is rather arbitrary; they are not mutually exclusive, and both can play an important role. Thus, we argue that there may be some monologic communication (e.g., a speech at an event), but the predominant form, including the underlying organization, must be dialogic.

The third tenet is that relationships are built among participants and that this occurs on the basis of mutuality rather than top-down messaging; these relationships, and the dialogue that underpins them, are seen as valuable in and of themselves (Fitzpatrick, 2011). Relations can be built

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<sup>1</sup> Arguably, the growth of public diplomacy is an attempt to bring cultural relations work into the fold of government work, in that it often draws on the key components of cultural relations (see e.g., Pamment, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> As Mar (2014) notes, "There are tensions in utilising ATSI artists to fulfill public diplomacy objectives of presenting Australia as pluralistic, multicultural and democratic when difficult issues of Indigenous poverty, health status, and social inclusion are well known" (p. 19).

with a wide variety of actors through cultural initiatives that connect people across the world. Relationship building, particularly long term, is arguably predicated on mutual interests (Pamment, 2013).

Mitchell (1986) argues that cultural relations are “more neutral and comprehensive” than cultural diplomacy and that “the purpose of cultural relations is not necessarily . . . to seek one-sided advantage. At their most effective, their purpose is to achieve understanding and co-operation between national societies for their mutual benefit” (p. 5). The head of the British Council’s Education Services, Gordon Slaven, is similarly quoted by Rivera (2015):

The first thing we do is we listen and we hear what other people are saying and we work from that basis, rather than telling them what we think they need to know. It’s the mutuality, I think, that is the uniqueness of what the British Council does. (p. 13)

Thus, mutuality underpins how the relationships are built through dialogue and listening, and, in this case, it occurs early in the process to shape the design of activities. Compared with cultural diplomacy, the engagement is deeper and longer, with long-term objectives. Government-driven cultural diplomacy necessarily focuses on shorter term and strategic concerns that center on political or economic gain (Lee, 1995; O’Loughlin et al., 2018). Indeed, the need for mutuality is one of the reasons that government should not be involved in cultural relations: “no government department or agency can achieve the detachment necessary for mutuality” (Rose & Wadham-Smith, 2004, p. 5).

The fourth key tenet, *building networks*, refers to creating “a set of relatively stable relationships which are of a nonhierarchical and interdependent nature linking a variety of actors, who share common interests . . . and who exchange resources to pursue these shared interests” (Börzel, 1998, p. 253). Some scholars see the creation of networks as a cosmopolitan means of enriching cross-cultural relations to meet shared goals (Ang, Isar, & Mar, 2015; Rösler, 2015), though they are often used strategically (Gershman & Zaharna, 2005). Such networks often foreground the development of initiatives, but crucially, they typically remain after a specific initiative has ended because relationships have formed.

In summary, the dialogue, relationship building, and collaborations in cultural relations are based on at least the idea of mutuality and listening among the different participants. They differ from cultural diplomacy, which emphasizes top-down, one-way communication based on projection and targeted messaging (Cull, 2009). Given the contestation around cultural relations in Australia, it is important to discuss the Australian context.

### **The Relational Turn in Australia**

Australia has a long history of what the Australian government has defined as cultural relations work. Historically, this has been “highly centralised” within the DFAT (Mar, 2014). For example, there has been a “Cultural Relations Branch” since the 1960s (Mar, 2014), with the Australian International Cultural Council

taking the government lead in recent years alongside a range of bilateral councils (e.g., Australia-China Council).

Cultural relations have received renewed government focus in recent years. The Australian Government's *Australia in the Asia Century White Paper* noted that the global center of power is shifting from West to East, and, as it does so, "the tyranny of distance is being replaced by the prospects of proximity, Australia is located in the right place at the right time—in the Asian region in the Asian century" (Australian Government, 2012, p. 1). However, Australia's current relationship with Asia is shaped by a "lack of connection" and a high level of mutual ignorance (Ang, Tambiah, & Mar, 2015).

The Australian government has suggested using cultural relations as a way to build deeper relationships with Asia. For example, the *White Paper* stressed that Australia needed to seek out ways to have "mutual-engagement" and "relationship formation" (Australian Government, 2012), which was supported by Australia's 2013 cultural policy *Creative Australia* (Australian Government, 2013). However, the Liberal-National Coalition that came to power in 2013 subsequently shifted the focus to more traditional understandings of cultural diplomacy, such as projection and influence to obtain political outcomes, rather than dialogue and collaboration (Australian Government, 2016; Mar, 2014; Varghese, 2013).

To date, there has been limited theoretical or empirical research on cultural relations initiatives (Nisbett, 2016; O'Loughlin et al., 2018). Within Australia, there is very limited work, and this has largely adopted a cultural diplomacy approach (Ang, Isar, & Mar, 2015; Mar, 2014). Rösler's (2015) analysis of the Asialink's Arts residency program (as a whole rather than the case study adopted here) is the most directly relevant—but also uses a cultural diplomacy frame. Rösler argues that we need to reimagine cultural diplomacy along more cosmopolitan lines because of the nuanced outcomes of residencies. The current study is different from Rösler's in two ways: Theoretically, we draw on a cultural relations approach, and empirically, while Rösler analyzes the broader residency program, this article focuses in detail on two cases, specifically Asialink's innovative laboratory program. This article extends this work by developing new knowledge on Asialink's latest practices and its understanding and application of cultural relations, alongside the innovative theoretical approach. Furthermore, while Asialink may attempt to design in principles of cultural relations, whether this happens in practice is an open question. Given these concerns, this article addresses two research questions:

*RQ1: To what extent did the design of the Kerjasama Residency and Fukutake House embody a cultural relations approach, and was this achieved in practice?*

*RQ2: What are the outcomes of the Kerjasama Residency and Fukutake House?*

To answer the questions, the article uses semistructured interviews with the artists and chefs involved, and two Asialink staff, with further analysis of secondary materials from the residencies. In doing this, the article provides new theoretical and empirical insights on the definition and practice of cultural relations that add to the scholarly literature, and it provides recommendations for practitioners. It also addresses the challenge presented by Ang, Isar, and Mar (2015): "The conditions for and the actual practical dynamics of idealised processes such as dialogue and collaboration must, however, be carefully analysed in

order to bring out the difficulties, contradictions and actual achievements of such processes" (p. 378). Having mapped out the literature on cultural relations and identified key gaps and two research questions, we now turn to the method by which the questions are addressed.

### **Methodology**

This article examines two of Asialink's Arts Residency Laboratory initiatives— the Fukutake House Asia Art Platform at the Setouchi Triennale in Japan, and the Kerjasama Residency between Australian and Indonesian artists. In 2016, Kerjasama paired an Indigenous Australian artist (Tony Albert) with an Indonesian artist (Timoteus Kusno) with the aim of raising awareness (internationally) of indigenous culture and art. Unlike in previous years, it was a reciprocal relationship. They worked together for 12 weeks, dividing their time between Alice Springs and Yogyakarta. The Setouchi Triennial is an international arts festival held in Japan across 12 islands in the Seto Inland Sea. The festival is held every three years and was established by Japanese businessman Soichiro Fukutake in 2010 with the goal of rejuvenating the Japanese archipelago (alongside 12 art galleries), which had been badly impacted by globalization. Asialink has participated since 2013, through the Fukutake House Asia Art Platform (henceforth Fukutake House). This brings together artists and curators from several Asian countries to have discussions about globalization through art and food (Asialink, 2013). Each nation is expected to participate in an exhibition at an abandoned schoolhouse, and artists live together on the island for several weeks while they set it up. Artists must involve local communities and incorporate a food element. For Asialink, this has involved having an Australian chef go to the island and teach the local community and tourists how to cook Australian fusion cuisine using local produce.

To develop an understanding of the Fukutake House and Kerjasama initiatives, 10 semistructured interviews were conducted. First, two extended face-to-face interviews were conducted with Asialink staff involved in overseeing and developing the Asialink Art programs: Lesley Alway, the director of Asialink Arts, and Eliza Roberts, the Arts Residencies manager. Second, eight artists/curators/chefs from the case studies were interviewed: 2013 Fukutake House artist Jackson Slattery; celebrity chef and restaurateur Andrew McConnell; celebrity chef Adam Liaw; 2016 Fukutake House artist and curator residents Naomi Eller and Joanna Bosse; Kerjasama 2015 residents Karla Dickens and Doni Maulistya; and Kerjasama 2016 resident Timoteus Kusno. Interviews were conducted face-to-face, over the phone, or via Skype and averaged 60 minutes. Interviews were supplemented with textual material from the initiatives.

The data were analyzed using King and Horrocks' (2010) approach to thematic analysis, which identifies the common "outcome" and "impact" trends using descriptive and interpretive coding. The interview questions were informed by our five-part approach to cultural relations, but also included broader questions on experiences and perceptions so that the themes—the "recurrent and distinctive features of participants' accounts, characterizing particular perceptions and/or experiences" (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 148)—that arose organically from the data were captured. This combination of inductive and deductive coding is acknowledged as a more thorough way to approach thematic analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

### **Independence From Government**

The role of government in cultural relations (and public/cultural diplomacy) can create tensions at both the practical and perceptual levels (Brown, 2014). First, there is a concern that, however independent of government, cultural relations initiatives are not perceived as such. According to O'Loughlin and colleagues (2018), "even cultural relations devoid of any signs of the hand of government" (p. 13) can carry what Nisbett calls (2013) "connotations with colonialism, imperialism and propaganda" since "dominant states have always used culture to transmit political, social and economic values" (p. 558). Second, there is a concern that, although cultural relations initiatives are technically independent, this independence can be undermined because "cultural relations practices are often shaped by the priorities set by the ministry of foreign affairs" (O'Loughlin, 2018, p. 14), including the topics and schemes that they open to calls and subsequently choose to fund—or what Brown (2014) has called the "influence chain" in which governments attempt to influence and intervene in specific initiatives once funded.

Asialink is an initiative of the Myer Foundation and is affiliated with the University of Melbourne, with offices in Melbourne and Sydney. It receives significant funding from the Myer Foundation and is formally independent of government. However, Asialink does receive various government grants and often collaborates with different governments on projects (Mar, 2014). Kerjasama is a partnership with the Cemeti Art House (independent charity) in Indonesia and is partly funded by Artback NT in the Northern Territory (this charity receives some funding from the government through the Australia Council and is sponsored by the Northern Territory government) and DFAT's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program (ATSI).<sup>3</sup> Alway (personal communication, 2016) noted that in terms of cultural relations design, Asialink does "get away with more because we are a non-government organisation" but said that government funding had at times "caused issues for us" and that it can be hard to push the cultural relations envelope because "they're not willing to take risks, the public servants are risk adverse, and they're worried about their own reputation so you know we do get a lot more queried. They want a lot more control." Alway cited "questions for curators" and "wanting to assess a particular environment" as examples (personal communication, 2016).

In summary, working with government can involve a delicate negotiation not so much on the details of events, but on the perceived boundaries of what is legitimate government input. That Asialink has a significant amount of other revenue affords it some protection. Furthermore, Australia has strict rules on advocacy work by charities and their political independence through the Australian Charities and Non-for-profits Commission. The government was not perceived as playing a role in our interviews with the artists and chefs, though further research is necessary to understand how the public perceives such initiatives.

### **Dialogue, Mutuality, and Relationship Building**

Asialink argues that its practice actively focuses on relationship building on the basis of mutuality and through a process of dialogue. As Alway noted, "Today, it is less about us just going to Asia and putting on a showcase . . . now there is that notion of trying to learn from and understand each" (personal

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communication, 2016). At the institutional level, Asialink has built partnerships and engaged in dialogue with various institutions. Although the initiatives are innovative and change, they have also persisted and are not one-off events. At the participant level, interviewees largely reported that the initiatives encouraged dialogue through the structure of the program and the selection of participants, leading to positive relationship formation and mutual understanding. There were, however, differences due to design.

Kerjasama (which means "collaborate" in Indonesian) was particularly effective at mutual relationship building among the participants because they lived and worked together for around six weeks in each other's respective countries. Kusno stated, "We definitely became friendly quickly. We were set up in a single house, we shared a house for 7 weeks. You know we were interacting all the time" (personal communication, 2016). The 2015 iteration of Kerjasama had a similar setup, and a positive relationship developed: "We lived and worked together, we are good friends now, we speak a lot on Facebook actually to keep in contact with each other, we also email" (D. Maulistya, personal communication, 2016). Dickens argued that the close proximity and shared experiences in the Northern Territory made them closer: "It bonds you, those memories together" (personal interview, 2016). In this arrangement, dialogue was important, and the friendships that formed are indicative that this went beyond mutuality. But dialogue also requires listening, and people adopted a listening and learning orientation on a mutual basis:

You had to be willing to hear what the stories were, what people are saying. The community in Northern Territory, Karla and everyone else listening to them all the time, learning from them. I mean it was a cultural awakening for us both. (D. Maulistya, personal communication, 2016)

However, broader relationship building and dialogue was relatively limited: It focused on the immediate artists.

The relationships built through Fukutake House were not as strong for some participants. The 2016 residency saw an Australian artist (Naomi Eller) and curator (Joanna Bosse) work together in the Japanese archipelago. In the Fukutake House model, Eller and Bosse worked together as a pair—but alongside some 50 other creators from various Asian art organizations. It appears that this inhibited deep dialogue and relationship formation and that the balance between self and mutual interest became blurred:

In Fukutake House it was everyone from the different organizations, negotiating their own space in some way. It wasn't so much making work together. Having said that, we were all there, ultimately working towards the same goal of the exhibition, it would have been good to interact more. (N. Eller, personal communication, 2016)

Part of the difficulty with relationship building was that although the residents lived in close quarters, not everyone was on the island at the same time, and the length of stay varied. Nevertheless, according to Bosse, "Our understanding evolved at a personal level, spending time there, working with other residents from these countries, speaking to them" (J. Bosse, personal communication, 2016). Similarly, another

Fukutake resident, Jackson Slattery, stated, "I did make some friendships during the three weeks leading up to the opening and that was great. I still maintain those connections. I was invited over there to be a resident" (J. Slattery, personal communication, 2016).

The chefs Adam Liaw and Andrew McConnell, although both overall very positive about their experiences, felt that the time was too short, and more value could have been extracted relative to the effort involved in going to the island. Liaw did build some ongoing relationships (Liaw speaks Japanese): "A few of the people that were involved on the local side—on the organization of it—I am remaining in contact with. It has helped me with a number of other projects." Although McConnell has visited Japan numerous times "and is very comfortable and familiar with the environment," he does not speak Japanese and noted that "the dialogue [long pause] there was limited because of language barriers." Nevertheless, the information sharing was two-way, and "some of my most incredible food experiences occurred during that week . . . because it was on a cultural level—non-commercial—where it was sharing information both ways, not just one way" (A. McConnell, personal communication, 2017).

Both chefs felt, though, that there had been limited follow-up and were unsure about the longer term impact on the island, which was indicative of the lack of relationship building even if there was significant personal impact. For McConnell, it has a longer term impact through his restaurants:

I learnt some new techniques and recipes that I still use today. . . . The heritage of dishes are things that people now are more aware of and people consider. I think that if I can introduce a technique or flavour combination that's come from my time in Japan then great—that's a great thing. And when somebody eats that they'll ask the question: "How did you come up with this?" "Well three years ago I cooked in Japan in a small village" etc. It's a really lovely story, and I've told it many times. And it's an important story. And it gives a few dishes that I cook a history and context and a real meaning. (A. McConnell, personal communication, 2017)

Similarly, Liaw, who has a national and international profile through his various television shows, social media, and cookery books, draws on his experiences regularly:

When we are talking about new shows to do for SBS or articles that I can write . . . there is always a much deeper understanding and also a different spin that I can take when I'm writing those articles or pitching those projects . . . it had a huge impact. (A. Liaw personal communication, 2017)

This *remediation* has a much longer term and broader effect. Liaw has gone on to be a cultural ambassador for Japanese–Australian relationships; he was recently made a Japanese Cuisine Goodwill Ambassador by the Japanese government and sits on the board of the Australia-Japan Foundation. The remediation continues through his social media and magazines. Liaw, who is highly active on social media, noted the feedback was "enormous" and that dozens of people had said they had visited Japan and the islands after seeing his social media posts.

Overall, the Kerjasama Residency and Fukutake House resulted in most participants forming what they considered to be meaningful, mutual, and often sustained relationships with people from other cultures. It also is clear that Kerjasama facilitated a deeper relationship formation process at a participant level than Fukutake House because the relations were more personal and more collaborative, and sustained for longer. The nature of this collaboration is now explored in more detail.

### Collaboration

Collaboration in the context of cultural relations refers to initiatives in which participants from different nations participate in a project together. According to Cowan and Arsenault (2008), cross-national collaboration is often the most effective means of engaging foreign publics. This is because collaboration goes further than just dialogue; it involves building or achieving something together, whether it is an exhibition, a show, or merely partaking in an experience together. The result is that participants are bound together by their common experience.

In delivering Kerjasama and Fukutake House, Asialink required the participation of several international arts institutions. Alway and Roberts stated that Asialink's view of collaboration is primarily at this institutional/organizational level. Alway stressed that the term *collaboration* can be quite confusing in the art world and that, in practice, it is often used to refer to arts organizations having a say in an initiative's planning and implementation:

Usually that's about collaborating on developing the exhibition or residency, whether that's helping develop the concept, or selecting the artist—it's about having some kind of equal exchange, as opposed to someone receiving something of someone else. For us, we would interpret collaboration along those lines, not necessarily as artists working together to produce a joint work. (L. Alway, personal communication, 2016)

Kerjasama, for example, was made possible through the joint efforts of Asialink, Cemeti Art House in Indonesia, and Artback NT in the Northern Territory. Asialink host organizations do not need to provide any funding for the initiatives (though they must meet the Asialink host requirements, which include housing participants and providing access to materials and a studio space; Asialink, 2016). The host organizations must also incorporate a community engagement aspect. Although no funding assistance is required from hosts, important aspects of the initiative are left in their hands. Furthermore, the selection of those granted residencies is often based on how their work aligns with the host organizations and the country they are based in. Hosts are sometimes directly involved in the selection of participants, and at minimum, they are consulted and are not forced just to "accept what Asialink sends over" (L. Alway, personal communication, 2016). This suggests that Asialink actively seeks mutual participation, shaping their initiatives in a collaborative fashion—but within a broader framework that they set. This approach is in line with Cowan and Arsenault's (2008) description of collaboration in cultural diplomacy, which sees international actors come together to deliver a project as largely equal players.

Fukutake House is different because Asialink did not create or design the initiative, but was invited to participate (having some input in the design alongside a range of partners). Like Kerjasama,

Fukutake House's collaboration worked at the institutional level, bringing together six arts organization to deliver the exhibits and food workshops on Shodoshima Island. According to Asialink, the primary collaborative relationship was institutional—among Asialink, Art Front Gallery, and the Fukutake Foundation. Although the artists could work together on specific pieces, this did not happen with our interviewees.

They did, however, collaborate in the sense that they collectively produced the exhibit, negotiating space and the like. Furthermore, collaboration occurred between participants and the local communities they were immersed in. For example, in the Kerjasama Residency, Karla Dickens recalled spending extensive time engaged with Yogyakarta's lady-boy community. Similarly, Jackson Slattery conducted a watercolor workshop with local schoolchildren on Shodoshima, and Naomi Eller conducted walking and photography tours with locals, which later went into a large-scale collage. Eller felt that other artists were not as committed to community collaboration, however: "Sometimes [involvement with the community] was nonexistent, the artist just did their shtick, came in, in a rather dogmatic way and left" (N. Eller, personal communication, 2016).

The cookery workshops were not considered collaborations, as McConnell reflected: "It wasn't a collaboration because it wasn't me working with a local chef. It was more me interpreting local ingredients and working with some of the locals and going through a few dishes in their cooking school" (A. McConnell, personal communication, 2017). Although the cookery workshops were more top-down, they did have elements of partnership: Guides showed the chefs a range of local producers, and this informed the recipe development (though this was largely an internal process). Furthermore, the locals who were taught the recipes during workshops with the chefs were an active audience and continued to cook (passing on) the recipes for other visitors during the course of the festival; during this process, the recipes may evolve. This led to a two-way transfer of knowledge:

The whole time was a genuine swapping of ideas, despite the language barriers. If we were in a different situation where I was presenting, we would have come out the other end and not gained a lot from the experience. Instead you know I learnt a lot from them. (A. McConnell, personal communication, 2017)

Collaboration with the local community and an active audience was important to the work produced by Naomi Eller. In her residency, Eller involved the local community in her exhibit, *Language of Stone*, in several ways. She conducted walking tours with locals and photography tours where they would all take photos together, which later went into a large-scale collage. Eller noted that other artists were not as committed to community collaboration, though: "Sometimes [involvement with the community] was not existent, the artist just did their shtick, came in, in a rather dogmatic way and left" (N. Eller, personal communication, 2016). This kind of "fly in, fly out" culture (Fitzpatrick, 2011) is a common complaint of traditional cultural diplomacy. Eller argued that Asialink actively encouraged community involvement.

The data gathered from the initiatives illustrated that collaboration occurred at two levels. On one hand was the professional level, where collaboration was between arts institutions and individual artists and chefs. On the other hand was the grassroots level, where collaboration occurred among participants

and between participants and the audience or local communities—though we have no audience data to assess how effective this was.

### **Networking**

The collaborative aspects of Asialink's initiatives created the environment for individuals and organizations to establish meaningful connections with others. Such connections in cultural relations are often referred to as networks. Networks typically involve sustainable connections formed between individuals and organizations (Gershman & Zaharna, 2005). The networked outcomes for individuals were strongly present in Rösler's (2015) research on Asialink. The laboratory programs strive to create an environment whereby connections easily form among professional organizations, among participants, among communities, and beyond.

The interview data illuminated that these various connections resulted in individuals and organizations building stronger and deeper regional networks. Asialink created professional networks for the individual participants, and this sometimes led to friendships—an indicator that relationships were mutual and equal. People who formed friendships tended to be more optimistic and were often in the process of organizing future projects with their networks. Karla Dickens, for example, made rewarding professional networks through her residency experience, and this facilitated further trips:

I will be going back to do some work there . . . I met many artists over there, Cemeti were great. I loved being there because it was so easy to make work, cheap too, I can't do that same work here and I'm not around likeminded people where I live—but there I was. So I'm going back and this time I've got lots of connections there. (K. Dickens, personal communication, 2016)

Maulistya noted Asialink's programs helped him build a network of professional connections:

With Asialink, the focus is on the people, the networking you do with other artists and also, really importantly—the organizations. From that you know you swap details, some you keep in contact with. I connected with lots of people. It's kind of ongoing. (D. Maulistya, personal communication, 2016)

In a similar vein, Liaw noted that it helped give him an introduction to the art world and has led him to participate in several other initiatives that link Australia to Asia through art. Both McConnell and Liaw had some time to go around and meet local producers such as farmers and sake and soy sauce brewers, but no long-term relations or networks were formed for McConnell.

For Asialink, the initiatives present opportunities to deepen ties with various arts organizations across Asia. Across Kerjasama and Fukutake House, Asialink is engaging with several arts organizations, including Cemeti Art House, Fukutake Foundation, the Australia-Japan Foundation, and six other arts organizations across Asia. Alway noted that Kerjasama and Fukutake House are initiatives that strive to create deeper and broader industry connections in Asia:

With the host partners, it's a process of making those connections deeper and embedding ourselves in Asia's cultural infrastructure. We see that especially in Setouchi, it's about us enriching our engagement with those nations and building on those networks that have been developed over the last 20 years. (L. Alway, personal communication, 2016)

Our participant interviewees (e.g., Maulistya, Eller, Dickens, Liaw) all reported that the initiatives have led to some sustained networks. In summary, the initiatives were broadly successful at achieving this important aspect of cultural relations.

Bringing all this together, the Kerjasama Residency and Fukutake House initiatives largely adhered to the core principles of cultural relations and, in practice, were successful at facilitating dialogue, collaboration, (often long-term) relationship formation, and networking, broadly on the basis of mutuality. Fukutake House, for which Asialink was participant rather than designer, was slightly weaker in terms of relationship building because of the scale of the arrangement. This indicates the important role that design plays in the forms of interaction that take place. In the next section, we assess the impact and outcomes of the initiatives, an important step given the dearth of such assessments and the difficulty of doing this (O'Loughlin et al., 2018).

### **Impacts and Outcomes**

The interviews have highlighted numerous individual, community, and organizational benefits across Australia, Japan, and Indonesia. All the initiatives involved elements of dialogue, relationship building, collaboration, and networking. With Fukutake House, for example, once the residents leave the island, the community continues to run the platform, curate the exhibit, take commission from visitors, and cook the food as they were taught in the chef workshops. Kerjasama also benefited the Indigenous arts communities in Australia and Indonesia by increasing cross-cultural mobility.

Fully assessing the national level impacts is not possible given the case study approach adopted here; impacts emerge over time (Schneider, 2005). It is, however, possible to assess impacts and effectiveness at the case study level and discuss the potential longer term and national-level impacts. Unsurprisingly, Asialink strongly advocates for their importance:

Residencies in the current situation—global instability, political tension, terrorism and so on do make an impact. The power of residencies really lies in the fact that they are based on intercultural engagement and understanding—they're almost peacekeeping mechanisms. Kerjasama challenged perceptions and stereotypes internally in Australia and in different regions—that's a national impact. Fukutake is about coming together to achieve social objectives in Japan. So both of these have impacts not just in the arts sector but also in the world. (E. Roberts, personal communication, 2016)

First, Asialink's initiatives have proved to be effective at enhancing cultural understanding through the relationships and mutual understanding they facilitated. People left the programs with an informed and generally more positive outlook of the culture they had been immersed in. Dickens noted, "We [Australia] don't get Indonesia," and Maulistya and Kusno had their stereotypes of Australia challenged.

For Eller and Bosse, the experience in Japan proved eye-opening for various reasons: seeing a very rural side of Japan and being exposed to the work practices of different Asian cultural organizations. While some may dismiss this as a few individuals with altered perceptions, the cultural activities reach a far wider audience (including via remediation and social media), and this contributes to the formation of populaces who have a greater understanding of other cultures (Rösler, 2015).

Second, the longer term commitment of the Asialink initiatives resulted in strong transnational individual and organizational networks (a form of Australian-Asia cultural infrastructure), sparking many other projects, and this is arguably "just as valuable to the Australian people as improved trade relations—the primary motivation for cultural diplomacy activities from a government perspective—as it has the potential to advance people's cosmopolitan capacities for a more functional multicultural society" (Rösler, 2015, p. 468). Indeed, the Australian government's strategy had "deep integration" with the Indo-Pacific as a core goal (Australian Government, 2014, p. 2). Liaw expounded on this at length:

That kind of soft power of diplomacy is far more important, far more valuable, than diplomacy done at the governmental level for example . . . it's almost like triangulating somebody's location: the more points of understanding you have of the culture—it doesn't matter what it is. It could be poetry. It could be art. It could be geography. It could be music. It could be sightseeing. The more points of reference you have for it, the better your understanding of that culture. (A. Liaw, personal communication, 2016)

Third, participants gained an increased ability to work cross-culturally. For many of the participants, it was their first overseas residency, and the first time they had worked in a cross-cultural context. This was ultimately a learning experience in which the participant adapts and must draw on skills and networks that enable him or her to work and communicate effectively in a different country—to be "Asia capable" (Asialink, 2016). The following quote from Eller summarizes this:

It was working under pressure working with people from other cultures, working with the local community who don't speak your language, trying to get your work done, trying to be involved at all levels, be involved with them just as much. . . . You learn a lot about others, about yourself, cultures. In the process, you make connections and they're great people to know. . . . For me, you cannot undervalue it. (N. Eller, personal communication, 2016)

Although there were clearly benefits for the participants, for local communities, and at the organizational level, further research is needed to assess the longer term and national-level impact. Our findings are suggestive of such impact, but more data are needed.

### Conclusion

This study has examined the structure, practice, and outcomes of Asialink's Kerjasama Residency and its involvement in Fukutake House. To do this, the study focused on five key features identified from the literature on cultural relations: independence from government; dialogue; mutuality and relationship building; collaboration; and networking. These criteria were used to assess the two initiatives and to help determine the impact and outcomes of the work. The analysis found that both initiatives were designed to adhere to the five key principles of cultural relations. There were, however, some elements that blurred into practices associated with cultural diplomacy. These included, at times, elements of monologic communication, some limited relationship building, and questions about the influence of government.

We argue that Kerjasama was more effective at relationship building and collaboration because the design of the initiative focused on two artists who engaged over a sustained period of time; in contrast, Fukutake House gathered together dozens of artists for shorter periods, many of whom were not on the island at the same time. There were differences among individual artists, too, suggesting that beyond design, individual-level characteristics and circumstances, including whether people "get on," play an important role. Thus, arguably the more intensive approach of Kerjasama brings greater risks that relationships will not build.

Theoretically, we believe that the five key criteria of cultural relations have proved to be a valuable lens through which to analyze the initiatives, and they are theoretically distinct from cultural diplomacy. However, as noted at the start, the practice may blur between the two. In particular, we agree with Cowan and Arsenault (2008) that monologue can play an important role in cultural relations, but that the predominant form of communication must be dialogic. Thus, the elements of monologue identified here do not preclude a cultural relations approach. Furthermore, the greater remit given to participants to shape cultural relations activities means that they may choose to combine elements from cultural relations and cultural diplomacy.

Turning to the second research question, the initiatives had a significant impact on all the individual participants in different ways, from building new networks and contacts to enhanced cultural understanding. Many have gone on to do more work in Japan or Indonesia, for example. Although more data are needed to assess this fully, the data suggest that the initiatives had a national-level impact in three principal ways. First, they enhanced cultural awareness and understanding, principally through the events, but this was also remediated in impactful ways through social media, magazines, and the like. The role and impact of (re)mediation, particularly through social media, are somewhat underdeveloped in cultural relations theory. Second, they formed enduring institutional structures and some social networks and friendships that persist and facilitate other events and collaborations—though there were variations in part because of differences in how the initiatives were designed. Third, they have enhanced people's ability to work cross-culturally—and this has had impacts beyond the individual participants.

The findings presented here have implications for the design and practice of cultural relations initiatives. First, attention needs to be paid to the individual artists who are chosen to participate, including shared language ability. Second, the ways in which people are placed together impact the extent

to which relations are formed. Being copresent was important, as was the opportunity to collaborate. Third, our findings suggest that larger scale initiatives with multiple participants make it harder for relations to form. Finally, although it is understandable that governments wish to have input when they are funding cultural relations initiatives, there must be clear rules around this to ensure that independence is maintained.

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