

Chapter 32

With One Breath: creating art on the climate crisis between the UK and Uganda

Bobby Smith (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4699-2004>), Hussein Maddan, Becky Warnock (<https://orcid.org/0009-0004-9966-6001>) and Rachel Turner-King

Abstract

This chapter reflects on 'With One Breath' – a socially-engaged arts project undertaken with two groups of young people, one in the United Kingdom, the other in Uganda. The project engaged participants in an intercultural collaboration to explore local and global issues of the climate crisis across their different contexts, culminating in an interactive website. Throughout the chapter we consider three key aspects of the project: the conceptual and contextual framing of the work; our attempts to create a dialogical form of engagement with the climate crisis through art; and the logistical challenges of doing so.

Introduction

Breathe in –

With one breath, what concerns you most about the climate crisis?

Breathe out

Breathe in –

With one breath, who needs to change?

Breathe out

Breathe in –

With one breath, what can you do?

Breathe out

The air we breathe connects us – with each breath we take, we inhale oxygen that sustains us and pollutants that endanger us. The products we consume, the ways we travel, the forests we decimate – our local actions have global implications. We invite you to engage with our project – a collaborative artwork created across Coventry (UK) and Kampala (Uganda). We have created visual art, soundscapes, performances and writing which we hope contributes to action on the climate crisis.

(With One Breath 2021)

This chapter considers the relationship between the climate crisis, participatory arts and development by examining With One Breath (W1B) (2021), (<https://withonebreath.world>) – an international project involving young people aged 14-18 years old in Coventry (UK) and Kampala (Uganda). W1B involved a series of workshops using participatory approaches to photography and performance over several weeks. In Uganda, young people worked with Rafiki Theatre – a Non-Governmental Organisation based in Kampala working mostly on peacebuilding projects in East Africa. Bobby met Hussein Maddan, Artistic Director, in 2019 when he was researching applied performance and peacebuilding in Uganda. Becky and Bobby have collaborated several times on participatory arts projects with young people and, in 2020, discussed the possibility of a project with Hussein that would bring together photography and performance to facilitate an international conversation about climate crisis.

In 2021 the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) released a £120,000 fund that would provide up to £10,000 to twelve projects in the UK to engage young people in climate crisis research through creative approaches (United Kingdom Research and Innovation [UKRI] 2021). We established a connection with Highly Sprung Performance, Coventry. Highly Sprung have worked for several years with young people on the climate crisis, including devised physical performances and a youth-led programme – the ‘Changing Climates Festival’ – delivered in partnership with the Belgrade Theatre, also in Coventry (Belgrade Theatre 2022). We agreed that the project should culminate in an artwork to be shared with a wider audience. To achieve this, we worked with Ashley James Brown – a digital artist with a background in working with young people to create projects. Rachel Turner-King was involved in conceptualising *W1B* and she collaborates with Bobby on related Practice as Research projects exploring the climate crisis with young people.

Throughout the chapter, we analyse the process and outcomes of the project to offer key reflections regarding the facilitation and creation of international, collaborative arts to explore the climate crisis with young people. We argue that the multi-arts approach was productive yet flawed. We show that issues regarding how projects are funded and managed and logistical factors, such as timescales, impede international partnership-working. Borrowing from performance scholars Una Chaudhuri and Shonni Enelow (2014), we identify ‘not-knowing’ as an important aspect of engaging with young people to explore the climate crisis. We also identify ways in which the thorny landscape of ‘global development’ shapes participatory arts projects in problematic ways – more specifically, development and modernising agendas shape collaboration and, more broadly, notions of society and change.

The climate crisis in the UK and Uganda

To state that the climate crisis presents humanity with an unprecedented existential threat seems both glib and commonplace. We are constantly presented with images that show the impacts of increased consumption and a warming climate, as well as statistics that warn us of the futures we face and the consequences of inaction. On the global stage, numerous international conferences, celebrity interventions, highly visible campaigns, grassroots activism and youth-led climate action all form part of a highly performative set of interventions, statements and pledges seeking (or at least claiming to seek) change. For example, a condition of the funding received was that projects must be delivered to coincide with the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference of Parties (COP26), which was hosted in Glasgow in November 2021. At the time of writing this chapter, COP27 is underway in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. In 2021, historic agreements were signed but, against a backdrop of war in Europe, the Covid-19 pandemic and cost of living crises globally, there is a sense that such initiatives are

failing: as The Guardian (2022) asked in a recent headline ‘COP27: Was this the year climate progress unravelled?’

Such global initiatives represent the crisis as a global issue shared by all, regardless of geographical location. However, as Limaye (2021:2) asserts, the impacts of the crisis ‘are localised and personal’. One of our aims for *W1B* was to test out ways of drawing on participatory arts approaches with young people to both recognise the global nature of the crisis, but to also focus on the specific and varying ways it impacts different people and places. Here, we were particularly concerned by critiques of global institutions, initiatives and policies geared towards tackling climate crisis.

In the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), goal 13 focuses on ‘urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts’ (UN 2022) and is a central rallying call invoked by politicians and activists. However, when it comes to specific localised action, Dannevig et al. (2022) identify those participatory approaches, which appraise local and indigenous knowledges, have rarely been used to empower community action, particularly in the global South. Indeed, Gereke and Bruhl (2019) argue that while Northern and Southern NGOs tend to have differing perspectives regarding the climate crisis, it is the institutions and NGOs based in the global North that dominate. Ensuring the views and perspectives of those in the global South influence climate crisis policy is, therefore, hindered by a general lack of participatory approaches to engage such communities in dialogue. This is compounded by the poor representation and lack of visibility of Southern institutions at the global level.

It is concerning that those in the global South are frequently ignored, particularly since it is here where the worst effects of the crisis are, and will continue to be, most felt. Therefore, in our small-scale project, we aimed to develop a methodology that could establish more equal forms of creative collaboration and ensured greater parity between the views of the participants and practitioners involved. Furthermore, given the historic responsibility of the UK in terms of carbon emissions and climate change, and inattention to the impact of the crisis on the global South, we hoped that young people in the UK would learn more about how the crisis is experienced by those elsewhere.

Our starting point was to try and consider something tangible that might link the two sites and, through early discussions amongst the creative team, we settled on air pollution and carbon emissions, as well as the urgency of needing to convey a message together, ‘in one breath’. We felt these provocations encapsulated both the ways in which the climate crisis affects us all globally but, also, that there are variances and sliding scales of responsibility regarding pollution and consumption as well as differing lived experiences of the crisis. In Kathleen

Gallagher's (2022) multi-sited, international ethnographic *Radical Hope* study, she draws on Tim Ingold's notion of 'entanglement' as a way of framing her methodological decision to investigate and position 'radically diverse contexts alongside one another' (10) rather than in a contrived comparison. By connecting two contrasting contexts, in which the climate crisis is understood and felt differently, we too hoped to expose 'asymmetrical power relations' (85) in the hope that a meaningful global conversation could emerge amongst the youth and adults. As we will show next, there are some similarities but also stark differences between the two contexts which formed the basis for our collaboration and, as is developed throughout the chapter, offered possibilities and limitations regarding our global collaboration.

With the introduction of the Climate Change Act in 2008, the UK was the first country in the world to set out carbon emissions reductions targets. However, as Somerville (2021) shows, since 2012 the government has consistently failed to address the crisis by missing targets, failing to provide adequate financial support, and not investing in green energy alternatives or infrastructure, such as flood defences, to mitigate against environmental disasters. Approximately 250 local authorities have declared climate emergencies due to increased extreme weather including wildfires, flooding and drought which, in turn, disrupts travel, has negative consequences for agriculture and poses risks to people's lives and homes (Arnell et al. 2021). In August 2022, the BBC reported that 500 more wildfires had been recorded in a few months than in the whole of 2021 (BBC 2022) and forecasts suggest that the frequency of wildfires is set to increase dramatically in coming decades (Arnell et al. 2021).

Alongside the impact of the climate crisis within the UK, it must also be acknowledged that the UK is deeply implicated in, and bears responsibility for, the climate crisis and how it is affecting those elsewhere. During the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the UK was the first country to industrialise at scale which relied on the burning of fossil fuels and resulted in increased carbon emissions (Laybourn-Langton 2019). Furthermore, the economic models that were established in Europe have become global models, shaping 'development' across the world as deeply connected to industrialisation and growth. While countries including China, India, the USA, Canada and Australia now all produce more carbon emissions, the UK's emissions per capita are still higher than many other countries – especially those in the global South (World Population Review 2022). In terms of the kinds of global collaboration we sought to develop in *W1B*, using arts-based practices to engage with the troubling, uncomfortable complexities regarding scales of climate injustice and responsibility were key to our international partnership.

Regarding Uganda, the climate crisis has already had devastating impacts. Barford et al. (2021) mixed-methods study demonstrates the scale of challenges faced by Ugandan youth:

loss of cattle and crops resulting in disrupted livelihoods and displacement as young people move to new areas in search of economic opportunities. For many young people, their futures and their families' prospects are increasingly uncertain and fragile. A World Bank report (2021) shows that over the last 30 years natural disasters including mudslides and flooding have increased with the result that, currently, 200,000 Ugandans are affected by natural disasters each year. Furthermore, Uganda is particularly vulnerable to extreme weather or natural disasters since it is dependent on industries that are 'climate sensitive' such as agriculture, fishing, and tourism (World Bank 2021:9). Uganda's relationship to carbon emissions and climate crisis perhaps echoes that of other countries in the global South. When addressing extreme poverty, such countries have continued to turn towards the promise of economic growth and industrialisation as ways of improving living conditions. However, such growth-focussed forms of development expose already-vulnerable communities to the risks of climate-related impacts. Nevertheless, it would be deeply hypocritical for developed countries such as the UK, who have already benefitted from economic growth of industrialisation, to insist on decarbonisation amongst developing countries.

The issues considered above all form a complex and bewildering landscape in which to engage youth with the climate crisis. Artists and scholars have argued that art has the potential to raise public awareness about the impacts the crisis is having on individuals and communities (Artists & Climate Change 2022; Hahn and Berkers 2021; Michałowska 2020). Artists might seek to communicate scientific research, making it relatable and engaging for audiences, or use personal testimony to highlight the very real impacts of the crisis which are often glossed over by more scientific, and arguably less accessible, modes of presenting the current and projected impacts (Limaye 2021). Furthermore, such approaches might serve to amplify previously unheard voices or encourage those who might not typically listen to engage.

Alongside making complex research more accessible, or amplifying experiences of the crisis to wider audiences, Burke, Ockwell and Whitmarsh (2018) make a case for participatory arts' processes to catalyse behaviour change. However, we were less interested in framing young people as needing to change their attitudes and behaviours or take responsibility for the crisis. Our reasons for this are twofold. First, we did not want to further add to any feelings of 'climate anxiety' young people might be experiencing by focussing on shocking facts and statistics. As a recent study involving interviews with 10,000 young people internationally shows, many young people already have negative thoughts related to the climate crisis – including feeling that the future is frightening and emotions such as guilt, powerlessness, anger, sadness and anxiety (Hickman et al. 2021). Second, as many have argued, the crisis is not of their making (Gasparri et al. 2021; Sanson and Bellemo 2021). Pinning responsibility on a younger generation to tackle a crisis they are inheriting but did not create is thus unfair and problematic.

Not only this, but as Freebody and Finneran (2021:156) argue, sometimes when arts-led methods are used in education, emphasis is placed on “a deficit perspective on messaging – the assumption that the audience is lacking knowledge or ethics and therefore providing clarity and information will bring these people ‘into line’ and ‘on message’”. As we consider later, we found that adopting an approach framed by dialogue and co-learning and by what Lev-Aladgem (2015) calls the ‘ignorant facilitator’ effective. This involves facilitators actively resisting taking on roles as experts or holders of knowledge. Rather, we set out to explore and learn about the issues *together* and, by doing so, both facilitators and participants gained new understandings that can inform our involvement in future action. We wanted to invite young people to think about where ‘power’ and ‘responsibility’ lie: as Donna Haraway (2003: 6) notes, ‘[r]eality is an active verb’ and the ‘world is a knot in motion’. In this sense, we wanted to acknowledge that the crisis shapes young people’s reality and that they should feel that they can, and should be made an active part of, decisions and discussions. To us, focussing on the ‘notion’ of climate crisis as facts to learn about, or teaching about ways of adapting behaviour to mitigate its effects, would render the young people in the projects objects to receive knowledge, rather than active participants creating knowledge for themselves, and others.

Given that our intention was to resist ‘teaching’ young people how to be more ‘responsible’ or influence behavioural change, we utilised a range of approaches that were bespoke to each context. Underpinning the work across both sites were photovoice and Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) methods, both of which seek to actualise Freirean principles of empowerment through education (Budig et al. 2018). These approaches are often used with marginalised communities to foster participant-led dialogue and seek to reshape conventional ‘top-down’ power dynamics that involve facilitators or policy makers dictating to communities what they need to do or know. Bringing together the use of photography with drama was powerful. The use of photography prompted young people to look more closely at their own environments and to also engage with those from the other site. The discussions about their own location were rich in specificity and there was also, therefore, a tangible connection to other ways in which the climate crisis might be experienced. Furthermore, our use of drama to further explore the images allowed us to think together about processes of change and how we might reimagine the issues and contexts represented by the photographs.

Reflecting on With One Breath

As has been described above, our approach was predicated on an understanding that the climate crisis is happening at both the global and local levels. As others have argued, processes of change must connect these two levels and bring communities together – in other

words, 'glocal' action is required (Gupta, et al. 2007). Initially, we sought to use digital photography, filmmaking and Zoom calls to connect the two sites and the young people to initiate creative exchange. However, we were working to a tight timeline and despite our efforts to enable the two groups of young people to meet and share online synchronously, the limited timeframe and different time zones meant this became impossible. Instead, the exchanges across sites had to happen outside of our workshops, and with the adult facilitators only. As Bobby argues elsewhere (Smith, in press), more time is thus required to foster effective global partnerships to undertake work of this nature and to allow for the flexibility needed to ensure meaningful connections between practitioners and, in the case of *W1B*, participants, to emerge.

To compensate for the lack of youth interaction across sites, it became the facilitators' responsibility to ensure that workshop planning was as aligned as possible and that we communicated the young people's ideas and experiences across each site at different points in the project. Critically, we did not plan an identical process to be delivered in the two contexts as this would negate the varying and rich cultural differences and artistic expertise of the different artists and young people involved. We also felt this would impede the extent to which the processes could be youth-led. Some of our first activities drew on the photovoice methodology. In both contexts we asked young people to take photographs of the various ways in which they were seeing the impacts of the climate crisis play out in their communities. However, here we also encountered a logistical limitation: while young people in Coventry were able to use their mobile phone to capture images, in Uganda not all young people had access to this technology. They were also not able to explore the immediate surroundings outside of the workshop venue due to safety concerns. Instead, they provided ideas for images to which a professional photographer working with the group could respond.

Using these images – whether taken by the young people themselves, or on their behalf, the participants then discussed what the images signified and any common themes that might exist. Because of the limitations regarding young people taking their own images in Uganda, Rafiki created an interesting adaptation on the methodology by using printed materials sources from newspapers and magazines – creating collages that considered how the climate crisis is represented to them – and how this might differ from their own understandings. This fed into the work in Coventry, where Becky and Bobby then also decided to include their own images, either taken by the facilitator team or found from newspapers or online. Many of the images juxtaposed nature against the impact of human activity, for example by contrasting the built environment with plants or by showing litter and refuse in different sites, as shown in figure 32.1 below.

< insert figure 32.1 here >

Figure 32.1. On the left, a plastic shopping bag from a supermarket amongst plants in the UK juxtaposed with litter in a residential water outlet on the right in Kampala, Uganda.

Becky, who has utilised photovoice in many settings previously, led this area of the work, helping Hussein and Rosemary (the main co-facilitator working with Hussein in Uganda) to get a sense of how images could be used to prompt open-ended discussions and allow key themes and issues of concern to participants emerge. In Coventry, young people began to group the photographs together into categories that included: how individuals contribute to the crisis; the responsibilities of companies; and more hopeful images that signified change or captured the beauty of local surroundings. As the workshops developed, and more material was shared between the UK and Ugandan sites, we eventually decided that the website would be divided into four categories: individuals; corporate; policy makers; and, greener futures. Each section of the website contains different artistic responses designed to engage those interacting with the site either through more enigmatic and symbolic contributions or, at times, clearer and more explicit pieces – such as recordings of letters to politicians.

As well as using approaches to photography that draw on photovoice, Bobby, Becky, Hussein and Rosemary also planned exercises drawing on Image Theatre – an approach from Boal's TO, which similarly draws on Freirean ideas and involves asking participants to create frozen images using their bodies in response to words or themes, which can then be explored through reflection and dialogue. Whereas the photovoice approach meant that we primarily needed to rely on Becky's expertise, using TO was something of an equaliser – all of us had experience of working in this way, since both Becky and Bobby had trained in this approach in the UK and the Rafiki team with the German practitioner and researcher Claus Schrowange.

In Coventry, we used the creation of still images to begin to create physical theatre which could be filmed, shared, and then become part of the final website to share the work. However, we also wanted to ensure that there was creative ownership and scope for diversity across the two different sites. The result was that the team from Highly Sprung incorporated their expertise in physical performance whereas, in Uganda, Rafiki became interested in using rituals to explore the crisis. The qualities of the creative outputs produced in both sites was shaped by these varying approaches. As can be seen in figure 2 below, the workshops in Coventry led to physical performance taking place in selected outdoor sites close to Highly Sprung's workshop space. These were created through image theatre exercises, whereby the young people were asked to devise and then weave together a series of images in response to the prompts 'what is the problem?', 'where does this come from?', 'can this be solved?

How?'. Once these images were created by smaller groups of young people, they were viewed and analysed by others in the group to find possible narratives and meanings. Then these images were woven together using lifts and skills the participants had learnt through their ongoing work with Highly Sprung.

The more meditative or ritualistic qualities of Rafiki's work are evident through a 'vigil for the world' the group held (figure 32.2). Here, the space is filled with candles to create a calm and reflective atmosphere in which participants were asked to reflect on what they think and feel about climate crisis, and about the relationships between the human and non-human world. One of the young people takes a seat in the middle of the space and other participants begin to paint messages and ideas relating to climate crisis on her shirt.

<insert figure 32.2 here>

Figure 32.2. A still from a film made with young people in Coventry (left) next to a still from a film of a vigil for the world, created by young people in Kampala.

As well as more clearly creative or arts-based exercises and approaches, we also used games and participatory activities with the intention of catalysing open-ended discussions which could develop our understandings of the issues being explored. Here, interesting and at times challenging perspectives and ideas were shared. For example, despite our inability to bring the two groups of young people together for dialogue, Becky and Bobby joined Hussein, Rosemary and the group in Uganda online during one of their sessions. This enabled us to have conversations regarding the differences and similarities across the two contexts regarding the crisis. It also brought up some challenging reflections, as an excerpt from a dialogue after the project shows:

Bobby: From the online session I remember Vanessa [a participant] saying 'well, we always see videos of Europeans driving cars - so why wouldn't we want to have that too?'

There's something around what do we mean by development here? And what it means to have access to wealth and cars and how 'development' is then imagined in a certain way. In the UK lots of people have cars and they need to drive less. But in Uganda, from what she was saying, people could feel that this is something they need to move towards because that's what development looks like.

Hussein: Yes, that's what people look up to. They perceive success as you owning a car, driving it and you having a lot of money. But then you may not perceive other elements of success. And who shapes these narratives in the conversation? This is another question we were asking of the participants – when it comes to accessing information, who shapes the narratives?

The contribution from Vanessa distills a wider tension with the project. In the workshops in Coventry, young people were clear that they recognised the need for people in the UK to drive far less while also not being in a position to necessarily make such choices. On the other hand, this response in Uganda demonstrates the ways in which ideas of development and wealth shape how futures are imagined, particularly regarding aspiration and ambition. We would argue that it was not our role to challenge or seek to change anybody's opinion regarding whether car ownership and wider issues of consumption and wealth. When this was shared with the young people in Coventry during a whole group discussion, it was acknowledged that for those of us in the UK to challenge this perspective is hypocritical since almost all the young people participating had been driven to the session and cars are widely owned. Some young people suggested that there might be a need for the UK to consume less and those in the global South to consume more for greater equality to be reached. However, this remains contentious since a higher quality of life is attributed to Eurocentric ideals and notions of 'modernity' which, as many critics of development argue, is the overriding problem of development: it shapes other places to follow the paths set by Western countries which, ultimately, would lead to ecological destruction (e.g. Escobar 2018; Sachs 2015).

We were mindful of the risks identified above concerning development and a way in which we hoped to mitigate this was by resisting a sense that we were teaching or attempting to instil certain values or ideas in the participants. Instead, we were hoping to provide a platform through which such ideas could be aired and responded to by all, and in which we might not find any clear, concrete answers. In this regard, we sought to create a project that encouraged peer dialogue and learning, but in which we, as the facilitators, were also clearly positioned as learners. In Uganda, for example, young people participated from across the country. Owing to the diversity of the country, this means that different languages were spoken and that there were different cultural backgrounds to be aware of. However, they connected due to being of the same age group and, as the project developed, began to share their varying understandings and experiences. This also led to interesting reflections for us as project facilitators, as captured in the following post-project dialogue between Bobby and Hussein:

Hussein: In the process, we also found that us – the facilitators – being of a different age bracket was an advantage. We had different perspectives from the participants. It created this dynamic where we were all learning.

Bobby: That's interesting. I don't know that much about climate crisis and in the UK part of the project, and in some other climate change projects I've done, I feel that I'm learning all the time. So, there's an interesting space here where we don't know, but we're doing this project with young people. They know some things, don't know others. We converge and need to find this out together and share what knowledge we do have.

Also, I think that's interesting because a lot of work I've been involved with doesn't work like that. Often in an applied performance project you have an outcome you need to meet, whereas with this it's more open-ended because we don't have that expertise. Is that different to other project where there might be set agendas? We didn't have to come out of this with set learning.

Hussein: Yes, it was very different. None of us had ideas about what we were going to do. Not Rafiki, not the participants. We were blank about the topic and it was really challenging! There was a lot of experimental learning!

A positive aspect of the project was the blurring of assumptions regarding who holds knowledge, since this created a sense of mutual investigation and co-inquiry between young people and us, as facilitators, that was productive and, to some extent, meant we could have different kinds of conversations to those that may be more typical in development or education projects working with young people. As mentioned earlier, Freebody and Finneran (2021) are critical of assumptions that participants lack knowledge and, we would contend, doing so shuts down possibilities for open exchange and for participants to be encouraged to recognise what they have seen, read and felt about the issue through their daily lives.

Here, there are resonances with Lev-Aladgem's (2015) consideration of the possibilities of the 'ignorant facilitator' in applied theatre. She draws on Jacques Rancière's (1991) *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, an exploration of the pedagogical approach deployed by Jacotot – a French teacher working with students in Belgium who did not speak French. Since Jacotot did not speak Flemish, he devised classes around a bilingual novel and required the students to read and write in about it in French. Rancière argues that Jacotot was an 'ignorant' schoolmaster in the sense that he taught something he did not already know and, in so doing, became aware of the equality of intelligence between teacher and students and the will of the latter to learn.

As Lev-Aladgem suggests, there are implications for those of us working through participatory arts projects:

Rancière draws attention to *ignorance* in a new light. Rather than thinking it as a negative, he proposes to think about it differently, as a deliberative political position. Being ignorant in this sense entails rethinking what it means to be an expert in theatre? What and how do we as professional theatre makers know more or better than the participants they work with? Do we always have to know more than them? Should our (professional and/or academic) knowledge guarantee our high position or authority? [...] Taking the position of the ignorant facilitator might encourage us to further grapple with issues concerning our privileged position in relation to the participants and also consider what kind of education or knowledge the creative process of theatre in co-communities should constitute. (513-514)

The climate crisis is complex, and our varying relationships to it messy and deeply confusing. The team in the UK live in a highly polluting country and have benefitted from continued legacies of extractivism regarding the world's resources and often travel internationally as part of work or leisure. Simultaneously, we are alarmed by the crisis and have sought out various ways to be part of action and activism to address it. Hypocrisies and inconsistencies are ever-present and lead to many difficult conversations about how we can legitimately claim any knowledge, expertise, or moral authority. Indeed, development has been critiqued as a process led (or even enforced) by the global North, resulting in the imposition of associated knowledges and world views of these more powerful actors upon others. An acknowledgment of our own lack of expertise as facilitators might go some way to mitigating this – at least in the workshop space – and enable more co-equal modes of enquiry to emerge between facilitator and participants.

Despite the possibilities for co-equal modes of inquiry and learning between participants and facilitators, we should also acknowledge that, at times, the facilitation team did need to address perceived gaps in knowledge. From Hussein's experience, climate crisis is not taught in schools in Uganda and nor is it widely discussed topic among young people. This resonates with reports that have criticised limited opportunities for young Ugandans to learn about crisis (Barford et al. 2021). Therefore, it was necessary to provide some information about the crisis before young people could then begin to relate this back to their own contexts across Uganda. Indeed, an important aspect of the work in Uganda was that, since the participants travelled from across the country to be part of the project, they had diverse experiences to draw on and

inform each other about. For example, areas of Northern Uganda experience drought whereas Eastern areas are prone to flooding.

Contrastingly, in the UK some young people were already politically active and confident talking about the issues. Many said they had learnt about these issues at school and had also participated in previous projects with Highly Sprung using art to explore the crisis. However, in both sites we observed that many young people *feel* that they do not know anything about the climate crisis but, once they begin to gain confidence talking about the issues, they realise they already have knowledge and experiences to draw on. For example, in Uganda, despite participants starting out feeling unknowledgeable about the issues, they began to discuss the different impacts the crisis was having in their communities with clarity.

Creative exercises and a facilitation style based on dialogue, rather than teaching facts (which can serve to amplify perceived gaps in knowledge) are an important contribution participatory arts processes can make. Tasking young people with taking photographs helped them to think about how the issues play out in their everyday contexts. Combined with drama-based activities to reflect further on the images, rich discussions were held whereby young people could share their views and gain confidence and ownership over the issues explored. As demonstrated by pre- and post-project surveys, before the project only 27% of young people felt either 'confident' or 'very confident' discussing the climate crisis. This increased to 80% at the end of the work. The activities also offered a tangible and visual reference to the other site included in the project. Indeed, pre- and post-project feedback forms showed that prior to the project 50% of participants were aware of how climate crisis is affecting communities elsewhere in the world. After the project, this increased to 90%. Despite the limitations we encountered, we would therefore argue that international projects of this nature can be highly effective. Establishing some common exercises and points of connection are important, since they provide the basis for sharing and discussion, but this should not result in identical processes. This would limit the richness and diversity of the work, and the varying cultural and artistic factors that shape it.

Finally, a key learning point emerges from our reflections on the artwork that results from the project. As noted earlier, we were careful to try and respond to research that shows the impact the climate crisis is having on young people's mental health. We hoped that by not pursuing a behavioural change agenda, opting instead to try and create a space for open and participant-led dialogue, feelings of guilt or powerlessness could be overcome. Indeed, one of our deliberate strategies was to acknowledge that the crisis is not the result of young people's actions and, through the website, we hoped we could provide an outlet for them to express their feelings and views in a way that felt productive. We were therefore concerned with

whether we could work with the young people to amplify their voices and perspectives so that these might be engaged with by others. However, regarding the website, there are some issues that prevent this from taking place. There are problems with loading the site in Uganda and, as Hussein in particular has argued in post-project discussions, more interactive content with links to social media handles which can encourage further learning and global connectedness would be beneficial.

Furthermore, it is an issue that the final artwork is presented entirely in English. These issues regarding the site, as well as the problems we experienced in trying to bring the two groups together for dialogue mean that although the artworks of the project have been presented globally, there were collaborative limitations between global south and global north connectedness. We have also noticed that there are differences in terms of the tone of the work created by the young people in the UK and Uganda. Whereas the work from the British group is confrontational and activist, the Ugandan material is more meditative, with some slogans stressing the importance of taking care of the non-human world. It could be risky to encourage young people in some parts of the world to follow the more activist tone set by the group in Coventry. From Hussein's perspective, for example, talking about the links between government, corporations and climate crisis in Uganda could be risky.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that utilising a multi-arts approach to foster international dialogue can be effective in the sense that such approaches offer creative, participatory modes of engaging in issues of mutual concern and importance. However, we would argue that there must be flexibility in such projects in two ways. Artists and participants *must* have the scope to (re)shape approaches and to incorporate their own practices and knowledge. Logistical challenges can be frustrating and, as this chapter has shown, impact upon the form and extent of participation. Ultimately, we need to find creative solutions to overcome these limitations as best as we can. Regarding the latter, we would stress that short-term funding that seeks to 'engage' and have 'impact' might be viewed a little more sceptically.

We would also suggest a further point of learning that we will take forward in our own continued engagement in this area, and which might be of interest to others. Facilitators should embrace 'not-knowing' (Chaudhuri and Ennelow 2014) and what Lev-Aladgem (2015) calls the stance of the 'ignorant facilitator', since this can help us navigate the complex realities of development and avoid projects that seek behavioural change or pin responsibility on the individual for climate crisis. The range of methods used each placed emphasis on the young person's participation in the creative process, allowing for what Freebody and Finneran describe as 'active translations of messages that are relevant to context and meaningful for spectators and participants' (2021: 156). It is our contention that didactic approaches only serve to highlight

'gaps' in knowledge and to amplify feelings of guilt and hopelessness when what are required are strategies that can empower all of us to feel able to talk about our feelings, perspectives and struggles with grappling with the crisis.

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