

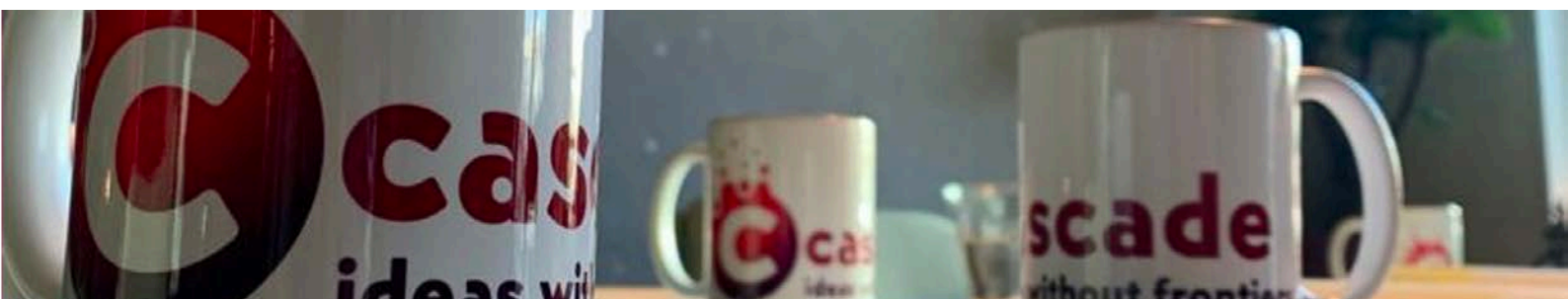
IDEAS WITHOUT FRONTIERS

# DREAMWEAVERS FESTIVAL: CO-CREATING CONCEPT AND CONTENT

## *Sessions Concept and Delivery*

The Cascade Foundation was launched in 2023 to address the inequities in international education and to help organisations and individuals become more globally connected. Following the *Visionary Voices* series of podcasts, the Foundation held a co-creation event with thought leaders working in the field to co-develop a new approach to internationalisation and ‘reversing the gaze’ between the Global North and Global South. As a result of this co-creation session we developed a concept for a new type of Summer School - *the Dreamweavers Festival*. The Festival is designed for high-calibre students from the Global South who don’t normally get the opportunity to travel, to bring them to Europe for two weeks, to work alongside their peers to find solutions to societal challenges through social innovation, intercultural competence training and ideation techniques.

The sessions for co-creating the concept and content of the Dreamweavers Festival were held with professionals working at the coalface of international education - *Cascade Champions* - particularly representatives from institutions in the Global South, to interrogate what the Summer School should look like, how it could redress the balance and really benefit a cohort of students who would not otherwise have the opportunity to travel. The sessions focussed on four aspects: societal challenges within the Global North; issues that the Festival should aim to resolve; indigenous skills or tools that could be applied during the Summer School; the ideal student candidate for the Summer School. As in our previous report, we have tried to reflect all opinions offered by participants and integrate them into a unified article.



## Challenges for the Global North

A central concept behind the Dreamweavers Festival is to reverse the gaze. As such, instead of Global North students coming “to save” the Global South, we wanted to bring students together from the Global South to Europe with the idea of applying their own knowledge to the challenges that we all face. We don't want to create an opportunity that is seen as simply altruistic towards students who don't normally get the opportunity to travel, instead, we want to demonstrate that their knowledge and experience has its own intrinsic value. In order to get a sense of what this might look like, we first asked participants, from their perspective, what are the biggest challenges faced by the Global North. to demonstrate that their knowledge and experience has its own intrinsic value. In order to get a sense of what this might look like, we first asked participants, from their perspective, what are the biggest challenges faced by the Global North.

### *Ethnocentrism*

A clear challenge for the Global North is ethnocentrism and cultural arrogance, which results in a poor of appreciation of cultural diversity and a notion that the Global North has all the solutions to 'save' the Global South. This has also led to increasing nationalism and polarisation where hatred, racism and discrimination have become more prevalent. The Global North desperately needs to understand that their concerns should be global and not limited to their immediate community. Many of the key challenges, especially the looming climate apocalypse caused by relentless global warming and environmental damage, are shared across the world.



Break the sense that they are somehow part of the problem, and replace it with the idea that they are part of the solution.



### *The negative effects of consumerism*

However, many societal challenges ultimately stem from consumerism, individualism and a capitalist system that is characterised by overconsumption, which are key characteristics of the Global North. In turn this has also led to a neglected aging society, a loss of intellectual diversity and a lack of innovation and creativity. There is also a looming challenge of unemployment, caused by new technologies as well as an acute lack of support and chronic under-investment for social entrepreneurship.

By presenting students of the Summer School with these challenges, we hope to help reverse the dynamics of their relationship with the Global North and break the sense that they are somehow part of the problem, and replace it with the idea that they are part of the solution.

## Challenges for the students

Based on the notion of develop a sense of self-worth amongst our students, we wanted to interrogate in more detail the content of the Dreamweavers Festival. Based on the experience of the Champions, what specific challenges could we help the students overcome?

### *Global Kinship*

Our Champions felt there was a need to go beyond an idea of global citizenship and pursue an idea of "global kinship", and a raised awareness and understanding of global issues. The Festival should harness the diversity of knowledge and practice to find alternative contributions to wicked problems.

Celebrate linguistic diversity rather than ignoring it or treating it as an obstacle

### *What does success look like?*

We need to re-calibrate the perception of success among students and challenge the notion of winners / losers of globalization. There needs to be a greater sense of the common good, with values such as self-resilience and environmental justice given greater currency. As part of this, the students need to increase their skills in co-creation, working with colleagues from the Global North as well as the Global South, and applying social entrepreneurship to address challenges such as social inequalities, the climate crisis and wellbeing.

### *Epistemic injustice*

The activities should also help students overcome the prevalence of epistemic injustice, to help them validate the things they know and believe, and thereby to develop agency towards their community challenges and an increased social advocacy and awareness of their potential to contribute. A key skill for this is storytelling. We need to hear the stories of the silent middle.

### *Communication and language*

The students should also become better equipped to address the challenges of fragmentation, that everyone perceives the world from their own bubble. Language is key to this and a challenge for the Festival will be to celebrate linguistic diversity rather than ignoring it or treating it as an obstacle that leads to patronising attitudes towards second language speakers. This should be replaced by a greater appreciation of other cultures and traditions, an awareness of cultural diversity and the ability to socialise effectively within global context. This intercultural outlook should extend to address the lack of communication between different sectors of society. Students should also develop a greater intergenerational understanding, a sense of respect and the ability to hear the voices of people of different ages, increasing our confidence in future generations and recognising the contribution they can make to solving societal challenges.

### *Resource Access*

Another challenge that the students need to address is resource access – both human and technical - to help them confront the unequal distribution of funds and to present and amplify the success of community work and advocacy. This can be very practical, arming them with a greater awareness of opportunities and potential funding available for supporting projects, as well the skills and approaches needed to set up an international network or community.



## Indigenous Skills and Tools

In reversing the gaze we also need to be mindful of the different indigenous skills that our students will bring to the table, which might otherwise be overlooked. In order to explore this more fully, we asked the Champions to propose tools or practices from the Global South that could be utilised in the Festival programme.

### *A shared sense of belonging*

There was a sense that the Festival should be used to celebrate community driven projects and practice as opposed to institutional driven initiatives, placing an emphasis on values-driven leadership. There needs to be a greater appreciation of traditional knowledge; one example suggested was the African notion of *umbutu* or *ubuntu* which emphasises the connection between all life and the idea that “I am because we are”. This is also founded on a universal understanding of our shared history rather than an exclusive ‘national history’. A part of the development of their intercultural competences, the students need to learn to respect values that are very different from their own. As well as encouraging more multilingualism among participants, they also need to confront the social challenges of interfaith and intergenerational dialogue, race and gender, understanding that good communication is as much about listening as it is about speaking.



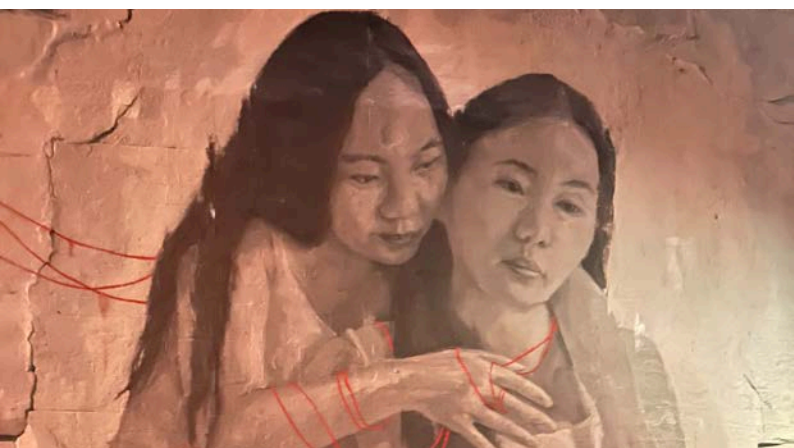
A universal understanding of our shared history rather than an exclusive ‘national history’.

### *The Use of Space*

Another intrinsic characteristic that the Festival should adopt is an effective use of space: spaces that can accommodate vulnerability; spaces for sharing, including meals, to build stronger relationships; spaces for discussion as opposed to conference-style spaces with a teacher/performer. In this sense the students are given greater agency and should be encouraged to apply storytelling techniques to augment their own voice.

### *The tools to communicate*

As part of this, students should have the opportunity to hone their technical skills to allow their voices to be heard, such as through video production, as well as in content creation and designing social campaign frameworks. It should also include ideation and business development and pitching techniques to arm them with the skills to seek funding.



## Ideal Student Profile

Taking all of the above into account, we wanted to know from participants to envision an ideal student to take part in the Festival. What qualities and experience would they bring?

They should have the desire and ambition to bring about societal improvements and become champions for global citizenship.

### *Community Activism*

Students should have a proven track record of community engagement and activism, even though they may not have had specific experience of developing formal projects, and a desire to be agents for change. It would be especially enriching if they came with some direct experience or personal connection to a societal challenge or issue. They should have the desire and ambition to bring about societal improvements and become champions for global citizenship.

### *Engaging with the Other*

They should enjoy working with people from diverse backgrounds and cultures, and demonstrate curiosity and an openness and a willingness to discover “the other” and to realise that we are not so different. They should have the capacity to engage in collaborative learning and active motivation as well as a passion for connecting globally.



### *Confidence without arrogance*

This means they will find themselves out of their comfort zone and should not be afraid to take a controversial perspective and to discuss their ideas in a wider forum. Intrinsic to this is a combination of humility but also a sense of self-worth, of confidence without arrogance.

### *Communication*

Despite the challenges involved, there was strong support for finding ways to cross the English language barrier as much as possible, although there are limits to how much this can be achieved.

### *Academic levels*

In terms of levels, it was felt that it would be positive to mix post- and under- graduates, and what was more important was their desire to explore and a willingness to share and listen as well as the ability to work autonomously. The Festival will offer the space and the tools to help them co-create and develop their ideas, as well as an environment for self-reflection. For practical and logistical reasons, the students would have to come from 4-6 participating universities sending 6-10 students each.



## Participants and Acknowledgements

*We would like to express our enormous thanks to the participants of the Dreamweavers Co-creation sessions for their enthusiasm and unique insights. Without their commitment to more equitable internationalisation and generosity in giving their time to these sessions, this report would not be possible.*

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Doreen Osafo Acheampong	Ghana	Associate, Challenges Ghana
Guido de Wilde	Netherlands	Manager, International Student Affairs, University of Amsterdam
Isabell Majewsky Anderson	UK	Head of Study and Work Away, University of Edinburgh
Jane Song	United Kingdom	Liaison Officer
Jonas Yawovi Dzinekou	Kenya	Director, Yunus Centre, Tangaza University College
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Mark Majewsky Anderson	UK	Director of Research and Innovation, Glasgow Caledonian University
Nadiedja Luna	Mexico	Intern/Human Rights Lawyer - Supreme Court of Justice
Natalia Popielska	UK	Economic & Social Research Council Impact Acceleration Account Project Manager, University of Glasgow
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Thomas Bak	UK	Reader in Human Cognitive Neuroscience, University of Edinburgh
Tong Fu	UK	MD, CUBEL Culture & Education Liaison UK Ltd

# DREAMWEAVERS CO-CREATION SESSION



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Summer School**



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Champion**

**SUNDAY  
21ST APRIL 2024**

**TIME ZONE 1: 9-10AM GMT**

**TIME ZONE 2: 4-5PM GMT**

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BEST SUITS YOUR LOCATION

Over one hour you will work with colleagues to devise the content for an international summer school - the Dreamweavers Festival - to be held over two weeks in 2025. The Festival will bring together around 60 students from a range of low and middle income countries to work together to create solutions to a range of global challenges

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