CREATURES DELIVERABLE

D2.2 Review report of transformational strategies v1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grant Agreement number</th>
<th>870759</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action Acronym</td>
<td>CreaTures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Title</td>
<td>Creative Practices for Transformational Futures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding Scheme</td>
<td>H2020 Societal Challenges: Inclusive, innovative and reflective societies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Version date of the Annex I against which the assessment will be made</td>
<td>October 9th, 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start date of the project</td>
<td>January 1st, 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due date of the deliverable</td>
<td>August 31st, 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual date of submission</td>
<td>August 31st, 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead beneficiary for the deliverable</td>
<td>University of Sussex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissemination level of the deliverable</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ACTION COORDINATOR’S SCIENTIFIC REPRESENTATIVE

Prof. Tuuli Mattelmäki
AALTO–KORKEAKOULUSÄÄTIÖ,
Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture: Department of Design
tuuli.mattelmaki@aalto.fi

This document has been produced by the CreaTures project, funded by the Horizon 2020 Programme of the European Community. The content presented in this document represents the views of the authors, and the European Commission has no liability in respect of the content.
Authors in alphabetical order

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Beneficiary</th>
<th>E-mail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kat Braybrooke</td>
<td>University of Sussex</td>
<td><a href="mailto:K.braybrooke@sussex.ac.uk">K.braybrooke@sussex.ac.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lara Houston</td>
<td>University of Sussex</td>
<td><a href="mailto:L.houston@sussex.ac.uk">L.houston@sussex.ac.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann Light</td>
<td>University of Sussex</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Ann.light@sussex.ac.uk">Ann.light@sussex.ac.uk</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Abstract

This report provides an overview of our approach to the building of the Observatory repository of transformational cases. It is the first report in a series of three (published at 10 month intervals until April 2022).
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION .............................................................................................................. 4
  1.1 About CreaTures ........................................................................................................ 4
  1.2 Partners and project structure ................................................................................. 4

2 ABOUT THE OBSERVATORY .......................................................................................... 6
  2.1 Background and Objectives ....................................................................................... 6
  2.2 Review of transformational strategies v1 .................................................................... 6

3 OBSERVATORY – LABORATORY INTERFACE .................................................................. 7
  3.1 Standardisation .......................................................................................................... 7
  3.2 Our learnings .............................................................................................................. 7

4 MAPPING AND BENCHMARKING .................................................................................... 8
  4.1 Rationale .................................................................................................................... 8
  4.2 Benchmarking COVID-19 responses ......................................................................... 8
  4.3 The next phase of identifying “transformative” cases .............................................. 10
  4.4 How we use “Transformation” .................................................................................. 10
  4.5 Our pilot: Network mapping the CreaTures team .................................................... 11
  4.6 An expanded view giving project detail .................................................................... 13
  4.7 The next phase of work: practitioner interviews ..................................................... 13
  4.8 Our survey ................................................................................................................ 14
  4.9 Analysing the in-depth research interviews with creative practitioners .................. 16
  4.10 Analysing the entire corpus of cases ....................................................................... 16

5 COLLECTING AND ANALYSIS ...................................................................................... 18
  5.1 Our approach to collecting ....................................................................................... 18
  5.2 Project categorisation: generative questions ............................................................ 18

6 CONNECTING COMMUNITIES ...................................................................................... 20
  6.1 Our initial strategy ..................................................................................................... 20
  6.2 Routes to participation: ............................................................................................ 20

7 FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS ........................................................................................ 22

8 REFERENCES .................................................................................................................. 23

9 APPENDIX A ................................................................................................................... 24
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 About CreaTures

Creative Practices for Transformational Futures (CreaTures) is a three-year EU funded project that investigates the role that transformational creative projects play in helping people to imagine and to build environmentally and socially sustainable futures. We begin this project at a particularly urgent moment in time. Newly released modelling predicts that our climate will change more in the next 50 years than in the previous 6,000\(^1\). We must find new ways of living within the limits of the earth’s systems and, at the same time, develop new capacities to deal with the rapid changes that are already underway. Artists, curators, designers and citizen-led collectives are already reacting to these challenges by mobilising from their own platforms using distinctive forms of expertise. They are catalysing change by gathering groups of people (“publics”) around issues that matter to them in a variety of domains, and using a range of aesthetic, affect-driven, playful and participatory interventions that have multi-layered impacts across a range of scales. Creative practitioners move publics towards social and ecological sustainability by supporting change in lifestyles, co-creating new ways of being, and prototyping new systems. In doing so, they develop new forms of environmental citizenship, and also social cohesion—to help communities withstand the environmental changes that are already underway\(^2\) and take change into their own hands for purposes of adaptation, mitigation and better resource use. This interlinking of social and environmental transformation, inseparable in attending to issues of culture, underpins our research.

The CreaTures project has two key aims: 1) to promote action for social and ecological sustainability through creative practices, and 2) to increase the visibility of existing transformational creative practices and strengthen their reach. Our team is currently working with creative communities across the arts, design and citizen activism to identify the ways that practitioners set the conditions of possibility for change through a range of creative interventions: for example, through staging participatory events, games, and immersive installations on topics such as sustainable food production and mobility. Our project will support partners to articulate their transformative vision—what they are trying to achieve by using particular techniques. As a team of co-researchers, we will then test and iterate with the techniques that practitioners find effective in creating transformational interventions and develop these into an open source framework that can be shared and used by creative communities and policymakers (the “Open Creative Practice Framework”).

1.2 Partners and project structure

The project brings together an interdisciplinary team of eleven organisations to conduct the research, including both academics and creative practitioners acting as co-researchers. At the centre of the project is the Laboratory, a series of creative projects organised by innovative design organisations Superflux (UK) and Hellon (Finland); along with long-established arts and cultural producers Furtherfield (UK), Kersnikova (Slovenia) and Zemos98 (Spain). Each of these diverse partners has agreed to open up their creative processes for collaborative investigation with researchers. The Laboratory format enables each particular intervention to be studied in detail as it unfolds over the duration of the three-year CreaTures project. Design researchers from the Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture in Finland lead the Laboratory research and co-ordinate the CreaTures project.

---

Running alongside the Laboratory is a programme of Evaluation, stewarded by researchers from Utrecht University’s Copernicus Institute of Sustainable Development in the Netherlands. This involves working with the creative partners to co-design new methods to understand the effects of particular processes, and their contributions to sustainable transformation. This strand of work also explores links between creative practice and policymaking, with additional expertise provided by the Open Knowledge Foundation Finland and UK-based sustainability organisation Sniffer.

This program of research is connected and amplified to other key stakeholders by RMIT’s Care-full Design Lab (working with RMIT Europe based in Barcelona, Spain), through the curation of a programme of Engagement and Dissemination activities.

Finally, the Observatory (co-ordinated by the University of Sussex) plays a dual role: firstly in coordinating the documenting of the Laboratory projects and contributing to their analysis, and secondly developing a repository of transformational cases. The next section gives an expanded overview of the Observatory research strand and describes how this Review report of transformational strategies v1 deliverable sits within it.
2 ABOUT THE OBSERVATORY

2.1 Background and Objectives

Objective 1 of the CreaTures project is –
- To identify and map existing, new and emerging initiatives that aim to produce transformational action through creative practices.

In applying for CreaTures, we agreed to meet this objective by:
- Working within our multidisciplinary consortium and extended networks to locate a variety of initiatives that are already focusing their work on the area of social and ecological sustainability.
- Conducting systematic mapping, connecting, and analysis of their purpose, how they operate, with whom/how/where they work, their conceptual and practical approaches to creative practice, and how they currently understand and evaluate the social and ecological impacts of their work.
- Presenting the findings of this work on an evolving website that functions as both a repository and a hub, named the CreaTures Observatory.
- Standardising research approaches and making findings commensurable, so that the Observatory also co-ordinates the documentation of the Laboratory programme of creative works organised by creative partners.

2.2 Review of transformational strategies v1

This Review report of transformational strategies v1 is the first in a series of three CreaTures deliverables that are intended to chart our progress towards addressing Objective 1 above. Iterations two and three will be published at ten-month intervals: June 2021 and April 2022.

In this version, we summarise the work that we have undertaken in the first six months of the CreaTures project and present our practical and conceptual approaches to the next phases. Since many of the Laboratory projects have been delayed due to COVID-19, this report briefly discusses our approach to working with creative partners inside the Laboratory (in Section 3), then turns to the work of putting together the Observatory repository of transformative cases.

We have identified three phases of work that are required to build the repository.

- Mapping and benchmarking
- Collecting and analysing
- Connecting communities

Section 4 provides a detailed exploration of our mapping and benchmarking research with links to our recent working paper. Section 5 outlines our thoughts on the work of collecting and analysing relationships and cases. Finally, Section 6 contains a summary of our strategy for connecting to communities of creative practitioners.
3 OBSERVATORY – LABORATORY INTERFACE

3.1 Standardisation

Deliverable D2.1 sets out in detail the processes we have adopted to ensure the standardisation of data gathering. Given the diversity of projects and activities in the Laboratory, our approach has been to work with creative partners to create bespoke Data Gathering Plans for each project. This has entailed interviewing creative partners to learn about their transformative visions for each project, identifying less obvious outcomes to be documented and evaluated and selecting a suite of appropriate methods – for example, participant observation, auto-ethnography and reflective journaling will all be used to document Laboratory projects in Autumn 2020.

Assigning responsibility for developing the Data Gathering Plans to the Observatory team has been an important mechanism for ensuring that methods and techniques are used consistently across the project. The data collection itself can be undertaken by any member of the CreaTures team, all of whom bring expertise in a range of methods, from ethnographic to participatory and practice-led approaches. Part of our brief is also to ensure that all of the data gathered are made available to other team members in lively, connected and meaningful ways. As the project’s design is deeply interconnected, we have also put significant energy into developing collaborative relationships across the different research strands. Regular meetings and workshops for shared ideation are being held, in addition to reading and discussion groups.

3.2 Our learnings

The Observatory seeks to identify the fragmented and hidden processes and languages used by practitioners in different creative fields to describe their work. Therefore, our approach to documentation has been to centre on practitioners’ concepts, modes of expression and choice of terms, falling in with their plans and needs. This means that the actions of the creative practitioners sit at the heart of the project and determine its rhythm, which has recently reflected their susceptibility to the upheaval of COVID-19.

The Observatory and Evaluation teams have worked particularly closely together, as we have come to recognise that the processes of documentation and evaluation are, at times, inseparable. Co-designing evaluative mechanisms with practitioners means that CreaTures researchers will play multiple roles. For example, in this Autumn’s programme of events, a CreaTures team member will observe how groups play the Commonsopoly³ board game, and then lead a “de-briefing” discussion that is oriented towards evaluating participants’ changed sense of the Commons.

³ The game is available here: https://commonsopoly.cc/
4 MAPPING AND BENCHMARKING

4.1 Rationale

The CreaTures team has chosen to focus on the impacts and effects of “creative practices,” taking a deliberately broad, cross-sectoral framing. Pilot research by Light et al. 4 has noted that similar or identical processes are being used across sectors but are being described differently, reflecting fragmentation and arbitrary distinctions across projects using socially engaged techniques. Mapping is therefore an important first stage in producing a more detailed understanding of what types of creative organisations are working on sustainable futures, including locating existing communities and connector networks5, and identifying boundaries and areas of disconnection. We want our repository to capture and highlight the specific ways that practitioners articulate their own work but also to create shared spaces of translation, where practitioners can connect to peers in other creative sectors who are using different languages. We want to enable practitioners to share their insights and amplify their work as part of a larger community. Here, mapping provides an input into our programme of Engagement and Dissemination and contributes to the second key aim of the CreaTures project—increasing the visibility of existing transformational creative practices and strengthening their reach.

Mapping existing communities and relationships was also intended to help us to establish a benchmark—a snapshot of existing conditions that acts as reference point against which to measure change. Here, mapping provides an anchor point for the Evaluation strand of work to track transformations across the lifetime of the project. In practice, the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically reshaped the mapping process (and the very idea of what it means to create a benchmark or a baseline), as explored in the next section.

4.2 Benchmarking COVID-19 responses

The CreaTures project launched in January 2020, and in February we began desk research to identify transformational creative projects and key practitioner networks. By mid-March, it became clear that the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV2 world would not be contained as we hoped. The World Health Organisation declared a global pandemic and public-facing creative activities began to shut down across Europe. This abrupt closure delivered a seismic shock to creative sectors globally and remains largely unresolved at the time of writing, although a limited number of creative activities are beginning to restart.

The cancellation of programmes had an immediate emotional and financial impact for creative practitioners. Shuttering venues and writing off unique events planned with effort and care caused grief and turmoil within arts communities. More worryingly, lost income from ticket sales and project-specific funding threw creative organisations into potentially long-term financial distress. Creative organisations of all kinds were forced to take wide-ranging action to mitigate the effects and attempt to stay afloat.

The pandemic had an immediate effect on the CreaTures project. The creative events organised as part of the Laboratory were postponed as organisations figured out what could be achieved using videoconferencing technologies and what would have to be deferred until in-person participation could be safely resumed. For the Observatory, it became more urgent and important than ever to document the changing conditions in which our partners were operating and how they were articulating futures at


5 Two examples in the UK include Culture Declares Emergency, and Julie’s Bicycle.
such an uncertain time. We paused our broader mapping and turned to documenting organisational responses to COVID-19.

The pandemic resulted in a highly unusual social situation, as governments across Europe shut down large parts of their economies. Citizens in many European countries went through the experience of being “locked down”. With venues closed and participatory programmes suspended, creative organisations (particularly those within the arts and cultural sectors) quickly adapted their mission to work around the social, physical and emotional distances that the pandemic introduced.

In lieu of merely developing standardised means of approaching our partners’ work, we decided to capture the COVID-19 responses of environmentally engaged organisations as a means of understanding its impact and the context in which our project was now running. We took the 300 arts organisations that have joined the Culture Declares Emergency (CDE) movement as our sample. CDE launched last year to promote divestment from fossil fuels, climate change education and other ways that cultural organisations could make a difference in addressing the global climate crisis. It is an important connector network and represents a good cross-section of activity, from visual art and theatre to local community arts.

First, we collected any COVID-19 statements on organisations’ websites. Then we reviewed other communication channels used by the organisations to reach their audiences as a way to identify new online activities. We used thematic analysis to identify five ways that organisations responded in the immediate aftermath of this crisis to create forms of creative connection and co-production in a newly distanced world.

- Organisations are grieving their immediate programmes of work, and any sense of a stable future in the short-to-medium term horizon.
- Organisations are caring for their peers, particularly those in more precarious situations - by stepping up to offer a wide range of peer support.
- Organisations are sharing their back catalogues online, to entertain audiences in a frightening world; creating a new media landscape of online creative work.
- Organisations are connecting to isolated audiences using digital tools to foster new connections and provide emotional and practical resources.
- Organisations are co-creating with audiences to produce new creative works, some of which document these unprecedented times.

We have attached the full text of CreaTures Working Paper 1 How are environmentally engaged arts and cultural organisations responding to the COVID-19 pandemic? to this report, as Appendix A.

Although financial support has been provided by governments in Europe and beyond, there is a risk that many environment-oriented socially-engaged organisations will not survive the coming months. We intend to undertake 6-monthly reviews of the CDE sample until the CreaTures project ends, to track the short to medium term impact of COVID-19 on this group. We want to understand how their work evolves in response to social distancing and ultimately to record any loss of capacity, as these factors impact on both our core aims of promoting action for sustainability and increasing the visibility of creative organisations. We will also review our benchmarking methods every six months, to understand if additional activities are required to monitor the changing situation, or a change in approach is warranted.

---

4 A summary of support packages can be found in The Guardian article: "World spends to protect culture from economic ruin" (18 June, 2020).
4.3 The next phase of identifying “transformative” cases

The desk research and benchmarking that we have undertaken so far has yielded a large sample of creative organisations that are engaging with sustainability concerns in very different ways. Some organisations are programming sustainability-focussed work, others are working to practically reduce their carbon footprints, and others still are amplifying the message of climate emergency using their high-profile platforms. All of those activities are valid and make a contribution to the climate movement. However, the CreaTures project has chosen to focus on “transformative” creative practices. Since June, we have turned towards identifying the sub-set of organisations attempting to make transformational change as a means of understanding what this encompasses and how each organisation understands the relation between social and ecological issues.

In pilot research Light et al. distinguish transformative creative practice from other types of arts intervention (namely, illustrative, practical and responsive) to draw attention to practices that change participants’ orientation to the world, their sense of agency and sense of potential. The term “transformation” already has associations within sustainability research and policymaking. Feola notes that it is “gradually becoming institutionalized in the vocabulary of the scientific and policy communities” to describe the radical changes that are needed, for example to meet major policy goals such as the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals. In his review of the nascent literature around sustainability transformations, Feola finds that the term is most often used “as a metaphor to convey the idea of fundamental, systemic or radical change”. He identifies eight strands of work where theories of transformation are more fully conceptualised, often emerging from sub-fields within the interdisciplinary umbrella of sustainability studies. The majority of these approaches take social-ecological systems as their starting points, with the exception of social practice theory, which—like CreaTures—takes practices as the unit of analysis.

Transformations made within/by creative practice are likely to provide generative counterpoints to the systems-focussed and solution-oriented segments of the sustainability literature, where the goal is to move large-scale systems from one given state to another. Creative practice may transform by opening up new playful and experimental spaces that operate on the level of aesthetics and affect, deliberately engaging hesitancy, improvisation and speculation as forms of “material participation”.

4.4 How we use “Transformation”

We note here that the team does not want to engage with “transformation” simply at the level of metaphor or accept every definition or claim made by practitioners for their work, yet we also consider that adopting a specific theory of transformation prior to empirical work is unhelpful to the overall aim of uncovering hidden and fragmented languages across diverse creative sub-fields.

Instead, our goal is to understand how practitioners identify and define transformation within their own work and that of their peers and how they currently evaluate their transformative achievements. We will analyse these materials inductively to locate boundaries, definitions and logics of change that are meaningful to practitioner communities. At the same time, we will continue to review the logics of

---


9 Ibid, 377

transformation that are operational in sustainability studies and policymaking. This strand of work on transformation within the Observatory will be woven together with parallel work using complementary methods in the Evaluation, and Laboratory strands. This process is intended to produce a rich and multi-layered Open Creative Practice framework that draws on knowledge from multiple disciplines including practice-based research.

Therefore, within the CreaTures research we explore the question of transformation at three different levels:

1. The shared imagining of sustainability transformations, in terms of shared goals and pathways considered towards these goals.

2. Concrete actions toward sustainability transformations.

3. Considering / measuring the depth of meaning and feeling as indicative signals of transformation that can be more attuned to detect the changes that creative practice brings about in individuals or communities.

Working across these three levels we will be able to address different articulations of subject and scale as they emerge in each case (e.g. systems, practical actions, sets of relations, groups and communities, individuals and their behaviours etc.).

4.5 Our pilot: Network mapping the CreaTures team

The core Observatory team is piloting and refining an approach to mapping projects by involving other team members in identifying suitable cases—a form of snowballing, i.e. a method to learn about significant practitioners at one remove. Given the expertise on the project, this has involved inviting colleagues to choose a small selection of projects—made by other practitioners—that they regarded as transformative.

Discussions have been rich and nuanced, opening up multiple definitions of transformation that engaged tacit knowledge, attachments, values, and (partial) logics of change. In so doing, we have been learning more about the orientation of our partners. We intend to invite all the CreaTures team members to add their transformational projects to the repository via an interview with us. Practically, this provides a way of intellectually aligning an interdisciplinary team and creating interfaces with the Evaluation and Laboratory strands.

In our pilot interviews, CreaTures members sought to contextualise the question of transformation by asking us: “transformative for whom?”. In answering this question, the interviewees themselves deftly moved through different subject positions: they talked about projects that had profoundly moved them as audience members; projects that they had created in order to do some kind of transformative work; and projects made by peers that had contributed intellectual or practical resources that they had appreciated or used. Interviewees often chose projects that were united by particular themes or dynamics. We noticed that many of the projects they named were hybrid in form, often sitting across creative practice and other terrains, including science, law, policy and economy—an initial observation that we would like to investigate more thoroughly in the next phases of the research.
We have also been experimenting with plotting the CreaTures team and their chosen projects on a network map. This allows us to visualise the social and intellectual networks that both align and distinguish us and also, in the process, to develop requirements for the final repository website. The work-in-progress version is publicly available\(^1\). Screenshots are provided below. (We have been using the Graph Commons open source tool to mock up interactive web functionality, which provides clickable nodes and links as shown.)

Pilot network map, created using Graph Commons. Nodes are coloured by experimental categories including hybrid project types.

\(^{1}\) The CreaTures Network Map is available here: https://graphcommons.com/graphs/980d936d-92fc-4e12-9702-1b226b55f33
Node selection opens a project summary and highlights the nature of the linkage.

An expanded view giving project detail.

### 4.6 The next phase of work: practitioner interviews

In the next phase of data gathering, we will ask a wider group of creative practitioners to nominate transformational projects and to elicit their thoughts about the nature of transformation. We plan to interview a range of figures working on sustainable transformation in creative practice across Europe, making sure that we represent a diversity of backgrounds and sectors. These interviews will replicate the process we piloted with the CreaTures team—using an in-depth, semi-structured interview format, based around the nomination of key transformative projects into the Observatory case repository.

The aim of these interviews will be, firstly, to build a corpus of cases that creative practitioners understand to be transformative, and, secondly, to surface their understandings of what constitutes transformation (taking ontology and epistemology together). During the interview itself we will ask practitioners to share their cases, and to articulate why they feel each one is transformative. We will ask
practitioners how they learned about the projects, and how they experienced them (e.g. as participants, as examples of peer practices). This structure will provide consistency and comparability across interviews, whilst leaving room for practitioners to articulate their own interests and concerns. This will give us insights into how to shape the Observatory repository’s design in ways that are generative for practitioners.

We recognise that there are many practitioners with considerable expertise on these topics, and these interviews will act as invitations into the project more widely, as described in Section 5.

4.7 Our survey

Taking inspiration from the Seeds of Good Anthropocenes project\(^{12}\), we have developed a second data collection instrument to help us gather a diverse corpus of cases. This will provide a way (among many that we are developing) to reach beyond the group of interviewees identified through our networks and desk research.

We have designed a short online survey, to be promoted on the Internet (via social media and mailing lists), to reach as many creative practitioners as possible. The survey asks respondents to nominate transformative projects for the repository. Following the same trajectory as before, it asks respondents to identify what the project transforms and their opinion on its effects.

Respondents are invited to nominate at least two projects and can nominate up to five. The survey can be accessed online\(^{13}\) (see screenshots below).

---

\(^{12}\) Available at: [https://goodanthropocenes.net/](https://goodanthropocenes.net/)

\(^{13}\) A pilot version of the survey is available at: [https://universityofsussex.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_qAbkvFsmOGNgD4p](https://universityofsussex.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_qAbkvFsmOGNgD4p)
We intend to experiment with network mapping techniques to visualise these data. The approach we take will, to some extent, depend on the size of the response. For this visualization and analysis, we will not record the names of respondents, but focus on dynamics of interconnection at scale.
4.8 Analysing the in-depth research interviews with creative practitioners

Our approach to the Observatory research takes seriously John Law’s observation that research methods “not only describe but help to produce the reality that they understand”\(^{14}\), demanding a reflexive approach to data collection and analysis. We recognise that the data that we are gathering about practitioners’ knowledge structures and ways of knowing are shaped through our interview questions and data analysis techniques.

Unlike the Laboratory, where we start with the projects-as-phenomena, in the Observatory we bring the idea of “transformations towards sustainability” to the interviews as a strong normative framing. In recognition of this (and, as previously articulated) we try not to foreclose the term “transformation,” allowing it instead to act as a prompt for participants to articulate their own sense of the changes brought about by particular interventions. We seek, as much as is possible, to surface practitioners’ own categories and ways of understanding how other people’s projects change things in the world (where we also recognise that “the world” might be materialised differently\(^{15}\)). We note that transformation is a more open and less freighted term than possible alternatives such as “impacts” or “effects”.

This core philosophy of method also extends to the analysis of the data itself. We intend to transcribe the interviews and analyse them inductively, using qualitative coding processes\(^{16}\) to identify and refine themes and emerging research questions, cross-checking with different members of the team for consistency of accounting. We will be tuning in to how practitioners articulate, define and set boundaries for particular concepts or logics. For example, those related to change and transformation, organisational or community missions and visions, issues concerning aesthetics and forms of affect, and impacts and effects. A more detailed account of the final data analysis techniques will be provided in the next deliverable, Review report of transformation strategies v2, to be published in June 2021.

This set of interviews with practitioners is one of several datasets being created across the Observatory, Laboratory and Evaluation strands about transformation using different methods, as a way to knit together diverse forms of knowledge production to create richer and more robust research outcomes.

4.9 Analysing the entire corpus of cases

All of the cases nominated to the repository will be held together as one corpus of data (whether they come from the individual interviews or from the wider survey). We will analyse the cohort of cases iteratively as it grows, again using coding to identify and record patterns inductively, following the generative, inductive approach used by Light et al. in the pilot research\(^{17}\), for example, looking for clusters of cases on particular topics or themes, or that produce particular types of impacts or effects.

We are also keen to test the initial observation that many of the “transformative” projects nominated were hybrid forms (which was prompted by the CreaTures team interviews). Using a larger corpus of cases we will explore more fully the notion that cases many be transformative when they do translation work between different domains or regimes.


\(^{15}\) See, for example Helen Verran Science and an African Logic (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 2001)

\(^{16}\) For example, Johnny Saldaña The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers (Sage: Thousand Oaks 2009).

It is important to note that this phase of the research is deeply exploratory, and is designed to open up the domain in order to develop a more specific program of research, and further, more detailed research questions. Though we are aiming for consistency and some level of commensurability, we are not seeking reproducibility of data. In other words, we are looking structurally for consistent patterns rather than aligned meanings at this stage.
COLLECTING AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Our approach to collecting

In collecting and curating objects, certain associations are brought into being—between objects and ideas, between perceptions and realities, between humans and more-than-humans. We are conscious that in the process of curating a list of “featured” projects, we inevitably legitimise certain knowledges and ways-of-being, and omit others. As such, we are inspired by critical applications of curatorial practice that shift emphasis from traditional amplifications of objects and collections to new modes of organisation, which highlight the existence of emergent forms, from collective and hybrid engagements to networks of esteem.

In doing so, we acknowledge the "often overlook[ed]" and "low-status" practices of infrastructuring and connecting that are commonly associated with the labour of curatorial production and organisation, but rarely mentioned or legitimised. We also want to resist taking an approach to collecting which systematizes the relations of actors according to flows of hierarchy and competition, as is all too often seen in the taxonomization nomenclatures of ascending and descending objects. Our dual approach to surfacing data through both a collection of featured objects and a network map that illustrates their interactions is thus an attempt to honour co-dependence and interconnectedness by surfacing moments of flux and dynamism—both between projects and their interactions, and between ourselves and our participants.

Since the outcome of this strand of work is a repository of cases, we have begun to consider the forms that the "case studies" themselves might take and our role as collectors and curators of these.

We expect the website to visualise the names of the projects that we have gathered from our interactions with practitioner communities and our own desk research. We hope to show other sets of relationships too using data visualisation techniques (e.g. the number of people recommending the same case and the interconnectedness of cases recommended by the same person). Amongst the named projects will be “featured” case studies that will hold fuller accounts of the projects at hand, with descriptions of who found them transformational and why.

5.2 Project categorisation: generative questions

In our brief pilot of the network map, we have faced complexity in constructing a categorisation to organise projects across the dimensions noted above and more. This is particularly true where projects/organisations take hybrid and/or multiple forms.

The Dark Mountain project in the U.K., for example, is variably understood and articulated as a community, a publication, and a festival—roles that evolve according to the shifting contexts of the individuals and groups who produce it, but also that reflect how different people encounter the work.

In the sample projects gathered from members of the CreaTures team, we have already started to see that some projects will be discussed by more than one participant, and our system will include these kinds

---


of findings, while staying alert to the effects of working with a snowballing method, where some relations will be emphasized.
6 CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

6.1 Our initial strategy

Working with the Engagement and Dissemination team, we have developed proposals for the CreaTures Practitioner Network, an initial mechanism to facilitate the flow of information into and out of the Observatory.

The work of mapping outlined in Section 3 involves connecting with creative practitioners and asking them to participate in data gathering for the Observatory case repository. It is important for us to nurture these relationships and to find ways to share our co-authored insights back into practitioner networks in ways that are tailored and useful to them. Given that the Observatory repository research is involved in identifying hidden and fragmented practices across sub-fields, we must ensure that these are shared spaces of connection across different sub-fields.

The CreaTures Practitioner Network is a decentralised community of practice that fosters peer-to-peer knowledge exchange and collaboration between creative minds. This community will grow an ‘outer ring’ of individuals and organisations who are already engaged in transformative practices, and who want to become (more) involved with others engaged in similar work—and with CreaTures itself. Its members will act as both 1) collaborators and 2) audience for CreaTures initiatives.

In the first stage, we will ask Network members if they’d like to help us gather and organise data on transformative projects and processes for the Observatory case repository.

Research questions:
- What kind of projects are transformative for creative communities of practice?
- How can creative transformation be transmitted through tacit knowledge sharing?
- How is creative transformation encoded into community/public discourse?

6.2 Routes to participation:

We have identified three routes to participation in the CreaTures project for members of the Practitioner Network. As described in Section 4.6, we will invite key creative practitioners working on socio-environmental transformation to add projects to the Observatory case corpus, via a one hour research interview. We will also share a wider public invitation to nominate transformative projects using an online survey that is accessible to all (see section 4.7).

A second route to participation will come from a series of invitations to creative practitioners to share work in progress on a public peer-to-peer discussion list created in collaboration with the Engagement and Dissemination team. This will be separate, but highly complementary, to the planned 1-way CreaTures listserve. We will also use this list to issue invitations to public launches, workshops and events organised by the Engagement and Dissemination team - as well as co-designed events run by creative practitioners, for creative practitioners.

Related outputs from these activities might include: a series of interviews (long & short) with network members to help us analyse key concepts, infrastructure for peer to peer knowledge-sharing and exchange between us and Network members and a proto-paper outlining collaboration strategies, with core questions explored. Finally, we will use these experiences to experiment with and prototype other mixed media outputs, e.g. videos and/or podcasts, to share key insights contributed by practitioners back into the Network. We expect to put this strategy into action in Autumn 2020.
7 FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

This deliverable has provided an account of the research that we have undertaken for the CreaTures Observatory in the first six months of the project. In Section 2 we delved into the rationale for this work, and reviewed the process described in the bid. Section 3 reviewed the interface between the Laboratory and the Observatory strands of work. Section 4 charted the unprecedented impacts of COVID-19 and explored our pivot towards a different kind of benchmarking exercise, as we come to grips with the fact that our project will unfold against a backdrop of profound change and uncertainty with severe consequences for environmentally engaged creative practitioners. Future work includes a commitment to tracking the impacts of COVID-19 on the sector by repeating our review exercise every six months until the project finishes, alongside other methods of enquiry that may be required given the unknown nature of the coming circumstances. Likely outcomes include further working papers on this subject.

Section 4 reviewed our approach to mapping transformative creative practices and our proposed strategy for the next phase of work. We have identified the need for research activities that surface practitioner categories and understandings of transformation as part of the wider work of developing an understanding of the impacts and effects of creative practices for transformational futures. We have proposed and piloted a set of targeted interviews and a wider programme of crowdsourcing to develop a unique data set around transformation. We will begin this work in Autumn 2020, with a fuller update to be provided in the version 2 of this deliverable, due in April 2021.

In Section 5, we identified the dynamics in collecting and analysis that require further exploration in the project, as we take selections made by creative practitioners, apply our own lens and expand some into longer-form cases. This provides an indication of the direction of our research, to be developed further for the version 2 of this report. In asking practitioners to participate, we will seek to develop rich relationships between the CreaTures project and a variety of different creative sub-fields to ensure these aspects of CreaTures work are useful and relevant.
8 REFERENCES


Gabrys, J. *Program Earth*, University of Minnesota press: Minneapolis, 2016


How are Environmentally Engaged Arts and Cultural Organisations responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic?

CreaTures: Creative Practices for Transformational Futures
Rapid Response Working Paper v1.0

Lara Houston, Ann Light and Kat Braybrooke

Note that this paper describes the period April 8 - 30, 2020. It will be updated as we further collate organisations’ responses.

“Hope is a radical act in these times and we want to share all our hope for now and the future with you all.”

*Matt Bauman, Artistic Director, Cambridge Junction arts centre* - [COVID-19 statement](#)

In lockdown, many people are turning to creative activities and gratefully finding new sources of online entertainment from the arts and cultural sector. Yet, it is a sector now struggling for survival. It has been hard hit by a lack of buffering and the vulnerabilities of a largely self-employed workforce, now extensively on furlough as all public activities are cancelled.

We are tracking the responses of a number of arts organisations whose mission has been to support and further ecological knowhow and the growth of neighbourhood resilience. Our CreaTures project is a five-country study of the role of the arts to make societal transformations with a focus on these environmental issues. Unfortunately, the first challenge for arts organisations since we started the project in January 2020 has been to transform themselves into online engines of change. How are cultural organisations reacting to the new social distancing measures?

To find out, we explored the COVID-19 responses of over 300 arts and cultural organisations who have joined the Culture Declares Emergency (CDE) movement. CDE launched last year to promote divestment from fossil fuels, climate change education and other ways that cultural organisations could make a difference in addressing the global climate crisis. It represents a good cross-section of activity, from visual art and theatre to local community arts. First, we collected any COVID-19 statements on organisations’ websites. Then we reviewed other communication channels used by the organisations to reach their audiences as a way to identify new online activities. We used thematic analysis to come up with five notable ways that organisations are responding in the immediate aftermath of this crisis, and to discover interesting examples of creative connection and co-production in a newly-distanced world.

1. Grieving

“Temporarily closing the doors of the MAC has been very emotional for our tightly knit team. We’re going to miss seeing the unbridled joy on children’s faces when they visit our theatres and galleries for the first time...However, we know that our closure will help our community tackle the Coronavirus together, which is more important than anything else now.”

*Anne McReynolds from the MAC arts centre, Belfast* - [COVID-19 statement](#)

From theatre shows to participatory arts, creative and cultural activities are often things that we do together. We find excitement and comfort from sharing spaces and experiences. In the time of COVID-
19, the act of being co-present – once a source of joy – has become a risk. Processing this is difficult. It is a source of grief. Arts and cultural organisations have acted to safeguard their communities by halting all activities. They are now joining the shared effort to break COVID-19 transmission chains by encouraging people to stay at home.

The cancellation of programmes has an interlinked emotional and financial impact. Artists and producers are dismayed that unique events – brought together with creativity and care – will not be experienced. But, worryingly, lost income from ticket sales and/or project-specific funding means that many arts and cultural organisations are facing an uncertain future.

Age and status do not necessarily protect organisations from COVID-19 related financial shocks. Despite celebrating its 202nd birthday, the Old Vic theatre will launch a “critical and major fundraising campaign” to recover from the closures. Many theatres, festivals, and event organisers are asking ticketholders to consider donating a portion of cancelled ticket prices to offset mounting losses – an act of shared solidarity.

2. Caring

“We will do everything we can to support those artists and freelancers least able to weather this crisis. We would welcome the support in turn of anyone who can help us through this unprecedentedly difficult time.”

Camden People’s Theatre - Temporary closure announcement

In the immediate crisis, we have also seen organisations respond with deep care for the wider arts community. During this time of isolation and uncertainty, unprecedented levels of peer support have been offered. Many organisations have made specific financial commitments to pay the multitude of freelance staff that make creative events possible. Jerwood Arts have announced that they will honour all contracted commitments to independent staff, and Yorkshire Dance will continue to pay freelance workers for cancelled sessions. This support is crucial. The Creative Industries Federation reports that an astonishing 42% of creative businesses and 62% freelancers have lost their entire incomes since the COVID-19 shutdown began. Freelance creative workers must subsist until June before receiving financial help from the Government; and, even then, unions argue, a significant number will fall through the safety net, including new starters, parents and part-time workers.

Some organisations have responded by developing intensive practical and inspirational resources for arts workers, such as this comprehensive list from the Live Art Development Agency. These mutual aid resources disseminate the details of funding support across arts communities, including relevant UK government schemes, support schemes from existing national funders and new “virus-proof” home-based commissions.

The UK’s energetic theatre and live arts community are working together to help freelancers apply for these pots of funding. Artsadmin staff are offering open, online Artist Advisory sessions and manning a new COVID-19 Artists Support Phoneline. Fuel Theatre and Cambridge Junction producers are mentoring freelancers, giving a special leg up to those who haven’t managed to secure national Arts Council funding before. Support for new writing provides an immediate lifeline for writers and keeps the pipeline for productions going. The High Tide theatre company has set up a comprehensive package of support called the Lighthouse Programme which will enable the development of new work. Their Cancellation Catalogue will also record and try to re-home orphaned plays that were never shown due to COVID-19 disruption. In the same spirit, Theatre Deli’s directors are helping to scaffold emerging creative work by offering free, online consultancy sessions.
3. Sharing

"Take time to watch, stay well, stay at home and please continue to support the arts. We offer this to you free of charge. We put our heart and soul into this show."

_The Roughhouse Theatre, introducing their Lockdown Performance_\(^{\text{xxvii}}\)

A subset of the CDE organisations have begun to move their programming online. The modes of engagement that they have chosen differ widely. Larger institutions already have well-developed online resources that are now being extended; while other groups are experimenting with digital activities for the first time. The choice of activities and platforms also reflects the feasibility of transferring physical—and often highly local—artforms to the digital realm.

Organisations that have the resources can gather and retain their audiences, which is particularly important for those groups that rely on ticket sales as income. Theatre, dance and live art performances have been most amenable to digital translation. Existing recordings have been speedily uploaded to online streaming services. Most are employing donation models with free access, which keeps an audience for the future but does not compensate with a viable revenue stream. National institutions have become important centres for the sharing of performances. The Bristol Old Vic (a CDE member) shared their co-production of Jane Eyre on the National Theatre's online streaming channel\(^{\text{xviii}}\). Although the channel has enjoyed a remarkable 4 million views, National Theatre director Rufus Norris cautions\(^{\text{xxx}}\) that this is not a financially sustainable model for the industry, which remains in limbo.

Within the CDE sample, other venues have put high-profile performances online, including the Royal Court Theatre’s co-production of _Cyprus Avenue_\(^{\text{xx}}\), and Sadler’s Wells’ series of “Facebook Premieres”. Their “Digital Stage”\(^{\text{xxi}}\) features even more recordings of dance performances, plus new activities for people to do at home.

Theatre companies have also been contributing to the efforts to keep people entertained. Human rights campaigners the _Belarus Free Theatre_\(^{\text{xxii}}\) have put their entire back catalogue of social justice-oriented works online, as part of their #LoveOverVirus campaign. The _Roughhouse Theatre_\(^{\text{xxiii}}\) company have shared a recording of their current production “When The Eye has Gone” as a special “Lockdown Performance”. Social media has been an important dissemination point for these materials, creating a new and diverse media landscape for those who are connected. New listings sites _Cultural Digital_\(^{\text{xxiv}}\) and _The Shows Must Go Online_\(^{\text{xxv}}\) have begun to catalogue these new resources.

Art galleries have dug into their back catalogues to put pre-recorded talks, interviews and tours online. Interactive exhibitions are taking on new relevance, as virtual galleries are newly promoted on websites and social media feeds. The Nottingham Contemporary has curated a page of “Virtual Visits”\(^{\text{xxvi}}\), where visitors can navigate models of the past exhibitions and click through to interviews with the artists.

4. Connecting

"The Watershed building is shut for now, but our arms are wide open"

_The Watershed, COVID-19 statement_\(^{\text{xxvii}}\)

Though much face-to-face participatory work has been paused, some organisations are using digital tools to maintain existing connections and foster new ones. Arts and cultural activities fulfil an important social role within communities, and there is widespread recognition that these are needed now more than ever to help those feeling isolated or overwhelmed. Many take the form of live online events hosted on videoconferencing platforms, which involve different registers of participation. The _Riverhouse Barn_\(^{\text{xxvii}}\) is hosting a virtual choir, and play-reading nights. _Rural Arts_\(^{\text{xxix}}\) has launched the RADISH programme (Rural Arts Daily Inspiration while Staying Home) which features taster workshops for creative techniques, an art club for kids, and social media sharing prompts.
Creative new event formats are also beginning to emerge, as practitioners adapt to working from the confines of their homes. The Deveron Projects team has developed the “Month of Sunsets” workshop series – part live cook-along and part writing workshop – to mark the observance of Ramadan. Interactive theatre producers Coney have developed a series of online game events including a murder mystery called “You Hold the Crocodile’s Jaws”. Bringing a focus to the body, dancers with the Akram Khan Company have developed a programme of live-streamed movement sessions entitled “Architects of Stillness” that people can follow at home.

Other events are explicitly using this moment of profound disruption as an opportunity to re-imagine more environmentally connected futures. Furtherfield’s Marc Garrett has launched a new podcast called “News from where we are” that addresses how artists, techies and activists might work together to create more sustainable post-capitalist realities in the aftermath of COVID-19. Culture Declares Emergency’s weekly series of seminars and events are open spaces to discuss what to do about our collective climate crisis.

Arts and cultural organisations are developing new resources to support communities, with a particular focus on wellbeing and education. Manchester Art Gallery and Derby Quad are hosting weekly art-focused mindfulness recordings. Many cultural organisations have adapted their online learning programmes to support families and young people affected by school closures. The Bristol Old Vic’s new learning-at-home activities are linked to the National Curriculum, and Somerset House is hosting an integrated programme of new, rapid-response live art commissions, lectures, workshops, and peer exchange events for young creatives.

5. Co-creating

“We want to transform our state of fear into a living pulse of creation that breathes life into our community as together we head into unchartered territory. Turn your experiences into art and share them with us and your community...In times of adversity art will out.”

The Courtyard, Hereford - Call for IsolationCreations

Many arts and cultural experiences simply cannot be migrated to online media. Encouraging artists and audiences who both consume and create (e.g. “prosumers”) to produce new creative works together is an important way of keeping relationships with audiences alive while events are cancelled and buildings are closed. The Tate has developed an engaging programme that shows kids (and playful grow-ups) how to create visual art at home using household materials to reproduce artists’ techniques. Kids are then invited to share their creations to an online gallery. The Bristol Old Vic is offering their audiences a creative outlet via its online Open Stage which features performances, music compositions, drawings, texts, and photographs submitted by members of the public.

Other organisations are using co-creation to produce a shared record of life under lockdown. The Artists and Climate Change network is collecting 100-word Tiny Coronavirus Stories that convey fleeting thoughts and feelings from isolation, assembling very different experiences of this shared global phenomenon. The Courtyard’s IsolationCreations project is gathering and sharing performances, photographs, drawings, and poetry produced by members of the community, forming a crowdsourced visual record of mundane happenings under the conditions of lockdown. Continuing their existing work with young people, the Gulbenkian Arts Centre curates a video-based “Coronavirus Time Capsule” that documents teenage experiences of family life in isolation with humour and panache.

These shared activities bring us together in the moment, and at the same time record the legacy of COVID-19 as an event that is shaking up – and challenging – our global social, cultural and economic rules.
"At the heart of theatre is a sense of ritual return... The company is committed to returning. Not returning to remain in the same place. But to return as an act of persistent enquiry; to bear witness to human experiences which demand. Which cry out. So that we can constantly reaffirm that what joins us is stronger than what divides us."

**COVID-19 statement** by Simon McBurney, Artistic Director, Complicite theatre company

How the COVID-19 pandemic will unfold is clearly uncertain. We have no idea how long arts and cultural venues will have to remain closed - but we do know that whatever happens, they will be severely affected. The organisations that are responding to COVID-19 are playing an immediate role in keeping communities entertained, nourished and inspired as they stay at home in the collective effort to slow the spread of the virus. As we continue to understand how the world has changed in the wake of the pandemic, cultural production gives us a way to think together about these transformations, and how we'd like to move forward.

Links to get involved:

A version of this report can be found on the Sussex Sustainability Research Programme blog.

One of the authors, Kat Braybrooke, co-founded the #CovidCreativesToolkit, a mutual aid resource to support artists and cultural organisations in going digital which has been compiled by 30+ creatives around the world.

Sign up to Culture Declares Emergency.

Notes

1 Read the full COVID-19 statement from Cambridge Junction here: https://www.junction.co.uk/news/covid-19-update
2 For more information visit our website at: https://creatures-eu.org/
3 For more information visit the Culture Declares Emergency website: https://www.culturedeclares.org/
4 To read the full statement visit the MAC website: https://themaclive.com/about-us/news/a-statement-from-our-chief-executive
6 Read the full Camden People’s Theatre closure announcement here: https://www.cptheatre.co.uk/blog/announcement-of-our-temporary-closure/
11 Read the LADA resource list here: https://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/resources/covid-19-support-resources/
12 For more information visit the Artsadmin website: https://www.artsadmin.co.uk/artist-development/advice-info-training/advisory-service
13 For more information, see Fuel Theatre’s Twitter feed here: https://twitter.com/FuelTheatre
14 For more information, see Cambridge Junction’s Twitter feed here: https://twitter.com/CambJunction
For more information on the Lighthouse Programme (including the Cancellation Catalogue) see here: https://hightide.org.uk/

See Theatre Deli’s website for more information on consultancy support: https://www.theatredeli.co.uk/blog/free-consultancy-support

Read more and view the lockdown Performance here: https://www.roughhousetheatre.com/lockdown-performance

See the National Theatre’s streaming channel here: https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/nt-at-home


Watch Cyprus Avenue here: https://royalcourttheatre.com/whats-on/cyprus-avenue-film/

Watch the Sadlers Wells Digital Stage here: https://www.sadlerswells.com/whats-on/2020/digital-stage/

Watch the Belarus Free Theatre back catalogue here: https://www.youtube.com/c/BelarusFreeTheatre

Watch the Roughhouse Theatre’s Lockdown Performance here: https://www.roughhousetheatre.com/lockdown-performance

Cultural Digital list of online events is available here: https://streams.culturaldigital.com/

The Shows Must Go Online listings are available here: https://theshowsmustgoonline/

Visit the CDE website here: https://www.culturedeclares.org/

View the Rural Arts RADISH programme here: https://www.ruralarts.org/radish

View Coney’s remote socials programme here: https://coneyhq.org/2020/04/17/coming-soon-remote-socials/

View Akram Khan’s “Architects of Stillness” series here: https://www.facebook.com/AkramKhanCompany/

Listen to Furtherfield’s podcast here: https://soundcloud.com/furtherfield

See CDE’s new events here: https://www.facebook.com/events/5040527736958692/?event_time_id=504052770292022

View Riverhouse Barn events here: https://riverhousebarn.co.uk/

View the Rural Arts RADISH programme here: https://www.ruralarts.org/radish

View Deveron Projects’ work here: https://www.deveronprojects.com/home/

View Coney’s remote socials programme here: https://coneyhq.org/2020/04/17/coming-soon-remote-socials/

View The Courtyard’s “Isolation Creations” here: https://www.courtyard.org.uk/isolationcreations/

Read the Tiny Coronavirus Stories here: https://artistsandclimatechange.com/2020/03/17/tell-us-your-coronavirus-story/

View The Courtyard’s “Isolation Creations” here: https://www.courtyard.org.uk/isolationcreations

View the “Coronavirus Time Capsule” here: https://thequiblenkian.co.uk/what-we-do/the-coronavirus-time-capsule/


See the SSRP blog post here: https://www.sussex.ac.uk/ssrp/resources/forum/lara-ann-kat

Find out more about the COVID Creatives Toolkit here: https://blog.codekat.net/post/614021219451273216/covid-creatives-toolkit-mutual-aid-for-digital

Visit the CDE website here: https://www.culturedeclares.org/