Catalogue of Selected ATSI Schemes



Valorising Artist-led Innovation Through Citizen Engagement

Deliverable D3.2 of the VOICE Project (Grant Agreement No. 101135821).



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Introduction

VOICE is an EU-funded project built to support eco-social art practices across Europe. VOICE builds on the notion of eco-social art as fundamentally a socially-engaged artistic research, critical and participatory creative activity, that brings together artists and communities around social and environmental matters of concern. The project sought to address the interconnectedness of environmental degradation and social challenges, building resilience within communities through empathetic and imaginative engagements. VOICE proposes that artistic interventions in communities can create grassroots and systemic change toward ecological repair and regeneration by empowering both citizens and more-than-human actors. The enabling mechanisms behind this promise consist of a distinct framework with a unique collaborative structure (Art-Technology-Society Interactions, or ATSIs), an iterative process (understanding landscape, mapping, capacity building and ATSI implementation), and supporting core methods of permaCultural resilience (pCr) and Inclusive Design. Eco-social art practices of 20 ATSIs are guided by scientific and cultural insights, collective intelligence of communities and surrounding stakeholders, as well as critical approaches and situated readings of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This catalogue provides an overview of all 20 ATSIs and their stories.

Purpose of this document

This catalogue is meant for:

- Policy makers, researchers, institutions and organisations that wish to have more information about the role that artists can play to find solutions for socio-ecological issues.
- Artists and collectives that wish to work with community-based interventions and seek inspiration from other art professionals.
- Anyone curious about the twenty artist-lead interventions that have been performed across Europe over the course of this 12-month period.

The aim of the VOICE catalogue is to give an overview of the VOICE project, its methods, the people and organisations involved, the stories and the impact of arts interventions. We also aim to show how the ATSI projects contributed to a broader sustainability agenda, policy and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Europe.

VOICE and the ATSI projects reach far beyond the limits of these pages. They involve stories, communities, artists, tools and relationships, and have left an empowering impact on European ecosystems. We are dedicated to providing access to this wide network of resources, relationships, experiences and knowledge, which the reader can find in our key knowledge valorisation effort: our digital environment, the VOICE Vault.

VOICE at a glance

VOICE (Valorising Artist-led Innovation Through Citizen Engagement) is a project financed by the European Union and organised as a **collaboration between seven partners from six different countries.**

At its core, VOICE is about artist-led co-creation. Through the guidance of artists and cultural institutions, VOICE approached local socio-ecological problems by giving every stakeholder the power to collaborate on, and inspire new ways to, address environmental and ecological challenges. These collaborations were based in communities spread across Europe: from indigenous groups like the Sámi in northern Scandinavia and urban communities in large cities like Amsterdam, to rural collectives in the south of Germany. Through the artistic interventions and creative collaborations, the ATSIs created dialogue, provided agency and initiated action for these environmental and ecological issues. This way, they fostered a sense of urgency for the communities and stakeholders involved or directly impacted by these issues. Creative collaborations involved citizens, local governments, science and research partners, non-governmental organisations and industry partners.

VOICE distinguishes itself from the conventional, market-driven approaches that often shape contemporary innovation agendas. Instead, the project promotes a methodology driven by artists that places artistic practice at central stage as a catalyst for critical engagement, collective reflection and knowledge exchange for tackling environmental challenges. In this approach, VOICE empowers communities through creative interventions. This enables participants to engage with technology and ecological issues from a critically informed perspective that is based on their values. VOICE foregrounds care, inclusivity, responsibility and more-than-human relations to cultivate the cultural conditions that support systemic change, rather than treating sustainability as a purely technical or market-based problem.

> **“Sustainability is not just a goal; it’s a shared journey that involves the active participation of citizens, industries and communities. […] VOICE envisions a future where creativity and collaboration lead to innovative solutions for environmental and ecological challenges.”**
>
> **Ana Solange Leal, project coordinator from INOVA+**

VOICE was structured in **two phases**. In the first phase, six ATSI projects (Art-Technology-Society Interactions) were implemented as a pilots, led by artists who had existing experience with eco-social art practices. These projects underwent a semi-structured reflective process where they received support by the seven partners in the form of mentoring, training and funding, as well as opportunities for capacity building and assistance in praxis-based research. In this pilot phase, the methodology and approach of VOICE were tested and iterated and key changes were implemented following artist and mentor feedback in order to further develop VOICE processes to benefit both the artists and the communities they work with.

In the second phase, fourteen additional ATSI projects were selected through an open invitation process. The selected artists already had pre-existing experience with community work, but did not necessarily have knowledge of specific methods and tools for eco-social art practice. Thus, VOICE also provided an opportunity for these artists to develop skills needed for such an intervention.

The key objectives of VOICE were to:

- Establish arts-based interventions as enablers of community-driven systemic change towards solutions to local ecological issues
- Create a culture of creativity and collaboration for addressing environmental issues
- Develop and advance tools, methods and participatory approaches for creative collaborations
- Establish an understanding of the impact of artistic intervention through critical observations and inquiry
- Empower communities to form dialogues with stakeholders, decision makers and policy through art and culture as a catalyst
- Generate a critical approach towards technology and tools as solutions to urgent environmental issues

As its **main achievements**, VOICE:

- Implemented 20 ATSI projects
- Shared and transferred knowledge across ATSI networks
- Set up a community network
- Built a repository and toolkit of open-source tools, methods, and resources tested throughout the project and within the wider VOICE community and for the benefit of future stakeholders in this space: emerging eco-social artists, researchers, commissioners and funders, and policymakers.
- Created Voices of VOICE: an extensive storytelling resource centred around the cumulative expertise and history of VOICE
- Set-up a sustainable, digital, open environment demonstrating the networked structure of people, know-how, tools, projects and initiatives, focused on environmental issues and urgencies

VOICE is connected to four of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations:



SDG 11 is about making cities and settlements inclusive, safe and sustainable. VOICE creates dialogues in communities, thereby using the arts to enhance cultural vibrancy and sustainability in those communities.



SDG 12 calls for sustainable consumption and production patterns. The VOICE project contributes to this by inspiring innovative approaches and solutions to communities, allowing them to think creatively and innovatively around regenerative approaches.



SDG 13 emphasises urgent action to combat (the impacts of) climate change. Through its focus on local environmental challenges, VOICE inspires citizens and industry to think creatively about sustainability to take action against climate change.



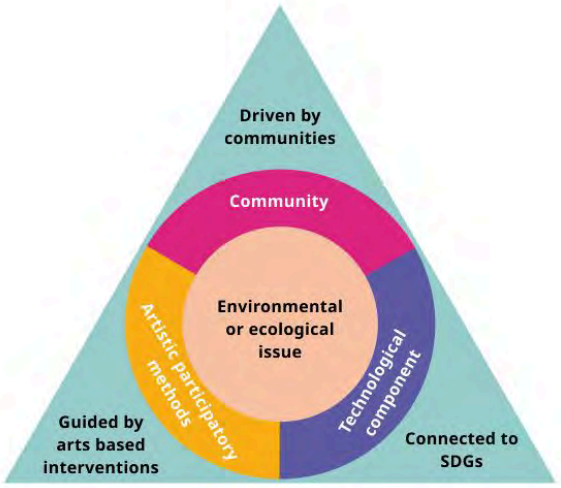
SDG 17 underlines the importance of international collaboration to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. This is reflected in VOICE through its strong emphasis on community-based partnerships, co-creative approaches and continuous dialogues.

SDGs 12, 13 and 11 were the main anchor points with respect to sustainability focus areas of the project. SDG 17 remained as an auxiliary and transversal topic.

The anatomy of an ATSI project consists of three main parts:

- A community
- Arts-based participatory methods
- A technological component, defined as either a proof-of-concept prototype or an established tool in use by industry or communities related to specific environmental or sustainability challenges.

These three components form a collaborative entity centred around an environmental issue as referenced by the 4 priority SDGs. To tackle this issue, the ATSIs are guided by a process that is guided by arts-based interventions, driven by communities and broadly connected to the SDGs, as summarised in this diagram.



Methodologies enabled by VOICE

Although the artists involved in the ATSIs were encouraged to develop and use their own methods, VOICE provides guidance in two main frameworks that connect all of the projects together. These are **permaCultural resilience (pCr)** critical praxis and Inclusive Design.

The permaCultural resilience (pCr) praxis is a whole-system methodological approach for designing, developing and delivering evidence-based behavioural change in communities and education through eco-social art practices in the context of climate change. The pCr approach was developed over eight years across three geopolitical contexts (USA, Ireland and the UK) and was further tested in Environmental Protection Agency, Ireland-funded trials (2018 – 2021) and is endorsed by the Royal Irish Academy for best practices in co-design and sustainability. Its Visual Signs Metrics (VSM) tool enables practitioners to capture and register latent signals of change across emotional, cognitive, behavioural, and systemic domains, enabling projects to capture weak signals of transformation, tensions, and impacts.

1. Relationships with stakeholders are built through consultation of partners and audiences
2. Through a zoning process, the information from the stakeholders in proximity is mapped
3. The Vital Signs Matrix (VSM) and Life Cycle Analysis (LCA) is performed to further analyse impact
4. Finally, an evaluation is done using the Vital Signs Matrix (VSM)

By using this framework, every ATSI had the chance to further develop and enrich their project. Within VOICE, it is primarily coordinated by FutureFocus21c.

The Inclusive Design (ID) Framework, developed by Jutta Treviranus (2018), is a framework which expands understanding of design principles of more equitable and sustainable futures. In VOICE the method is used to assess artist–community activation and to valorise 'edge knowledge'; insights from marginal or atypical perspectives to reframe models of environmental and economic sustainability. VOICE applies this methodology to the arts, enabling artists and communities to co-design social solutions that address inequity, promote inclusion, and improve outcomes across open, social, commercial, and governmental innovation.

The philosophy of Inclusive Design rests on three pillars:

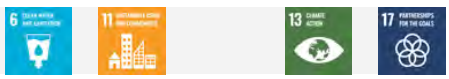
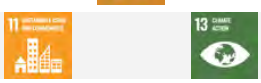
1. Recognise diversity and uniqueness
2. Inclusive process and tools
3. Broader beneficial impact

Using this framework, the ATSIs were designed with a diverse and inclusive audience in mind, which trained the artists to be even more aware of communities they served. The main coordinator of this method within VOICE was University College Dublin.



Treviranus, J. (2018) The three dimensions of inclusive design: A design framework for a digitally transformed and complexly connected society. PhD thesis, University College Dublin

Overview of ATSI's

Invisible Flock + Jenni Laiti	Voyage Part Two	
Ella Ziegler	Custodians of Paradise	
Mari Keski-Korsu	More than Person River	
Nesie Junyi Wang	Flows-Rond	
Mika Satomi	Circular Blue	
Epicuro Lab	Crops Refuge	
Hanna Steenbergen-Cockerton & Nadja van der Weide	Fabric of Us	
Hilary Powell	(S)OIL	
Timo Toots	Bee Art Lab	
Rosie O'Reilly	Hydrohacking the Archive	
YARA + DAVINA	HOPE is an Active Verb	
Ivana Tkalcic	EarthSkin	
Kat Pegler	Flow Space	
Severino Alfonso	Echoes in Conversation	
Jakob Kukula	RiverSync	
Anna Dumitriu	Greening the Lab	
Ruth Catlow	Empower Youth Stewards of Finsbury Park Biodiversity	
Lucie Hernandez	Designing E-textile Practice	
Marina Wainer	Synocene	
Gayil Nalls	World Sensorium	

Community map

VOICE is aimed at communities throughout Europe. This map shows the locations of these communities.

On the map, each project is colour coded corresponding to one of five broad, intertwined and overlapping categories.

We and the Earth both interact with the outside world through layers formed by **SOIL, SENSES AND SKIN**. By caring for these layers we make them more resilient to outside conditions.

The rivers, seas and waterways form the arteries of the Earth which connect all systems together: plantlife, animals and supply chains alike depend on **RIVERS, WATER AND FLOW**.

By giving a voice to **MORE-THAN-HUMAN ECOSYSTEMS**, we hand agency to parts of the Earth that cannot stand up for themselves in any human language.

We must care for the **TREES AND FORESTS** as they care for us. To connect with these lungs of the Earth is to foster a nourishing relationship with nature itself.

MATERIALS, MICROBES AND MAKE all form the products we depend on in daily life. By deepening our connections with these praxes, we can design a future that is sustainable for everyone on Earth.




Iceland
Voyage Part Two
More than Person River
Finland
Sweden
Norway
Estonia
(S)OIL
Bee Art Lab
Latvia
Hydrohacking the Archive
HOPE is an Active Verb
Den-
mark
Lithuania
Irelan
Empowering Youth
Stewards of Finsbury Park
Flows-Rond
Belarus
United
ingdom
World Sensorium
Fabric of Us
RiverSync
Nether-
lands
E-Textile Practice
Circular Blue
Belgium
45 Synocene
Greening the Lab
Luxembourg
Czech Republic
Slovakia
Flow Space
Custodians of Paradise
France
Switzer-
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Liecht.
Slove-
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Romania
EarthSkin
Monaco
San
Marino
Andorra
Monte-
negro
Bulgaria
Portugal
Italy
Spain
Vatican City
Mace-
donia
Al-
ba-
nia
Crops Refuge
Greece
Echoes in Conversation

1. ATSI overview



Invisible Flock + Jenni Laiti / Voyage Part Two

Links

- invisibleflock.com
- invisibleflock (Twitter)
- invisibleflock (Instagram)
- invisibleflock (Facebook)

Communities

- Sámi community and the Deatnu river system

Lead mentor organisation

- Brunel University

2. The challenge

The Deatnu river, which flows through the Lapland and Finnmark areas of northern Fenno-Scandinavia, is the most salmon-rich river in Europe. It is considered to be one of the most important rivers for Atlantic salmon in the world. These fish form a central pillar in the traditions of the Sámi communities in the area, as their culture has been intertwined with salmon fishing for hundreds of years.

However, the salmon population in the Deatnu is threatened by human influences. Climate change, industrial fish farming and unsustainable resource management all have devastating impact on the ecosystem. New industrial technologies like AI-driven fish management cause further pressure on the river ecosystem, and in turn on the Sámi river culture.

3. Impact

Voyage Part II contributed to long-term regulated river monitoring by connecting the documentary to existing migratory fish databases. Through artistic research, the interdependence between salmon and freshwater pearl mussels could be demonstrated, connecting the decline of a culturally significant species with wider impacts on the river ecosystem.

By sharing collected data with local rights groups, the project supported greater local involvement in how ecological knowledge about the river is documented and communicated. The fieldwork brought Sámi perspectives and concerns into discussions about river stewardship, including the effects of restrictions on traditional fishing practices and the wider consequences of salmon decline, as the footage was used in formal Sámi Parliament press releases demanding environmental action in the region.

Furthermore, the project strengthened connections between the Ellos Deatnu community, local river trusts and scientific organizations, thereby creating a shared space for dialogue around the ecological and cultural challenges facing the Deatnu River.

4. The story

Voyage Part Two is an intervention and evolving artwork by the Invisible Flock artist group in collaboration with Jenni Laiti. It explores the Deatnu river's fragile ecosystem, highlighting stories about the decline of native Atlantic salmon populations and the loss of traditional Sámi fishing practices. The artists combined video, sound, documentation and ritual practice, developing film and sculpture to tell a story about the forces of climate change, Indigenous knowledge, river ecosystems and extractive governance.

By working with local fishers, Sámi families, the Norwegian government and the press, the artists of Voyage Part Two strongly embedded perspectives of the community within their research. Their methods emphasised ecological justice, cultural integrity and long-term collaboration to ensure that the voices of the community are central in their artwork.

5. The results

Voyage Part Two brought together a diverse range of stakeholders in the Deatnu river area, and supported them in developing new relationships and collaborations. This is a major milestone towards restoring salmon populations, ecological health and Sámi culture. The artists developed a deep and trusting connection with the community, working to create a long-lasting impact on their cultural integrity.

Using diverse techniques and technologies, Voyage Part Two created underwater film footage and audio recordings of the salmon, which helped the community better voice their concerns about the aquatic population. As a material outcome of the project, the artists are developing an exhibition featuring the gathered stories and documentation.



6. Reflection

The Sámi communities of northern Fenno-Scandinavia have been subjected to many discriminating policies in the past and present. In order to work with such a marginalised community, it proved important to highly prioritise consent. To navigate this, the artists of Voyage Part Two spent much time developing their relationship and communication with the Sámi in the Deatnu river system. Their methods were designed to protect privacy and traditions, and provided space for the community to address any issues with consent in their own way.

By placing such focus on the community relations, the progress of Voyage Part Two was sometimes slow and unpredictable, as the priorities of the community and the political contexts shifted. However, this method also allowed the artists to foster a deep and sustainable collaboration, creating a socially grounded and ethically robust artistic practice that gives the community a central position in the process.

1. ATSI overview



Ella Ziegler / Custodians of Paradise

Links

- www.ella-ziegler.de
- salonuniversitas.wordpress.com

Communities

- Older women farmers in southern Germany

Lead mentor organisation

- INOVA+

2. The challenge

The rural south of Germany is home to many rare and heritage fruit tree species. Culture and ecology center around these orchard meadow landscapes, with links to biodiversity, regional food cultures, sustainable agriculture and traditional care practices such as cider-making, fruit preservation and grafting.

Knowledge about orchard agriculture is often embodied by elderly women farmers aged 80+. The heritage orchard meadows risk disappearing as well, since only few people outside this aging population knows how to take care of them. As these older generations age, this specialised knowledge about important ecological and social rural practices vanishes. The clock is ticking for the knowledge to be preserved, especially as rural areas depopulate, agriculture intensifies and traditional, ecologically mindful practices are abandoned.

3. Impact

The project strengthened the involvement of elderly women farmers. Through kitchen-table conversations in the local dialect, a space was created in which the experience of elderly farmers could be shared and valued alongside scientific understandings of orchard cultivation.

By naming heritage species and recording their histories, the project made previously analogue and locally held expertise more visible and accessible within the community. During the project, a cultural heritage asset, the “Orchard Identity Card system” was built with a database of 37 local tree species and local dialect audio recordings. Thereby, farmers' expertise was validated as a source of knowledge through a digital platform, challenging institutional hierarchies of knowledge.

The project also changed how local tensions around public access were approached, using listening and the neighbouring farmer’s expertise to turn a concern about visitors into a broader exchange about ecosystem threats and livestock protection.

4. The story

With the intervention Custodians of Paradise, elderly women farmers were given the opportunity to tell their stories and pass on their knowledge. Though artist Ella Ziegler originally planned to use public workshops, the methodology was adapted to best suit the bodies, homes, families and rhythms of the elderly participants. Taking the pace and vulnerability of the participants into account, the project centered around walking interviews in the orchards and kitchen-table conversations with coffee and cake.

Using ambient and conversational sound recordings, orchard mapping, pruning activities and drone photography, the orchard meadows were turned into living artworks. The artist took special care to involve families and grandchildren of the farmers, facilitating the flow of specialised rural knowledge.

5. The results

Custodians of Paradise materialised care knowledge for the heritage fruits in physical formats that can be found in and around the meadows. The orchards have been transformed into an living, intangible eco-social archive, which can be accessed via QR codes on tree tags embedded in the landscape. The project left behind many tangible outcomes, including mapped and tagged trees, digitally archived oral histories, voice recordings and fruit species identification.

Social outcomes of the project were also strong. By forefronting care and adapting to the rhythm and language of elderly participants, Custodians of Paradise created trust with participants and strengthened intergenerational exchange and local pride. Through a public event that was especially well received, new connections were created in the village, supporting community cohesion and generating appreciation for the elder farmers' knowledge.



6. Reflection



A key strength of this project of this project is the shift from a standard workshop format to more intimate and care-based practices. This methodological adaptation embraced slowness as a feature rather than a problem, allowing participants to take their time to tell their stories and carefully build up trust with the artist. Local culture was taken into account by respecting the practices of the participants and using the Hohenlohe dialect in the conversations.

The methods and results of the project are replicable across European community orchards, especially the orchard identity card model could play a role in cementing local knowledge permanently into physical spaces via QR codes. Possible follow-ups for the project include collaboration with health and care institutions, educational use of the orchard maps and videos, and a possible pomologist service for orchard owners.

1. ATSI overview



Mari Keski-Korsu / More than Person River

Links

- marikeskikorsu.net
- bsky.app/profile/marikeskikorsu.bsky.social (Bluesky)
- instagram.com/mkk_kuus (Instagram)

Communities

- Inhabitants of Haparanda and Tornio
- The Museum of Torne Valley
- In collaboration with artist Eija Mäkivuoti

Lead mentor organisation

- Waag FutureLab

2. The challenge

Although the entire world feels the burden of the climate crisis, the Arctic is disproportionately affected. As the coldest parts of the Earth heat up much faster than the rest of the world, mountain ice and permafrost melts and rivers are feeling its impact. In addition, the current turbulence in the geopolitical landscape means that superpowers are scrambling for natural resources and transportation routes. The increased pollution from ships and mining efforts puts even more pressure on rivers.

The Torne River forms a large part of the border between Finland and Sweden, which gives it a position as a multi-cultural and historically significant landmark, and an important place in the local eco-social landscape. As the Torne is affected by pollution and more frequent overflowing, local inhabitants are more and more concerned with the ecological health of the river. They are removed from decision making about the river and moreover, the perspective of the river is not taken into account.

3. Impact

The river walks brought people from Haparanda and Tornio together, which enhanced social cohesion across the Swedish-Finnish border by mediating dialogue between the communities.

Additionally, the walk ritualisation methodology can be transferred to other environmentally strained water bodies.

The project strengthened participants' confidence to communicate local environmental concerns to decision-makers, with participants discovering creative means as a way to make their voices heard. In that respect, the project opened up a different form of dialogue with the Finnish-Swedish Transboundary River Commission. When contact had stalled, participants co-created a message communicated through anonymously narrated letters where they spoke as the river through their own voices and delivered this as a gift to the Transboundary River Commission.

4. The story

More than Person River is led by Mari Keski-Korsu in collaboration with Eija Mäkivuoti, and gives a voice to a central and often ignored stakeholder in this ecological challenge: the river itself. It explores the sensory embodiment of the river Torne as it persists through complex crises.

Together with the communities they work with, the artists treat the river not as a resource but as a more-than-human relation with a deep connection to local history, environment and human communities who depend on it on a daily basis. Through guided public walks, interviews and creative methods, the participants of More than Person River were encouraged to think from the river's perspective, gathering local knowledge and stories about the river and developing a prototype for river-informed governance.

5. The results



The guided walks and other activities were performed with inhabitants of twin cities Tornio, Finland and Haparanda, Sweden at the mouth of the river Torne. Participants found that the project gave ample opportunity for community building, even leading to a new cross-border community centred around the river. By engaging extensively with the river, the participants found new perspectives to relate with the water and to 'become with' its ecology. This also led them to discuss the threats of the Torne River.

The project led to many public presentations, publications, events and collaborations. Notably, the participants wrote letters from the river's perspective. The artists used these to create among other works a sound piece, river material collection and letter, which were delivered to the Finnish-Swedish Transboundary River Commission and exhibited in October 2025.

6. Reflection

Although the towns are twins, the border between Sweden and Finland is still noticeably there. Because of the differences in language, cultural context and local politics, the organisation of the public walks had to be navigated carefully. The border provided an obstacle for inhabitants of Tornio to participate in a walk starting in Haparanda. The methods of More than Person River also had a strong basis in relations between the facilitators and the participants, and the practices were intimate and personal. Due to this, the project warranted a significant time investment for building trust and relations.



However, because of this trans-cultural and intimate nature of the project, the walks generated a rich tapestry of stories, sounds and rituals. These form a strong basis for artistic research and advocacy on the river's behalf. By creating inclusive spaces for dialogue between different cultures, disciplines and lived experiences, More than Person River encouraged shifts towards a more ecologically empathic perspective.

1. ATSI overview



Nesie Junyi Wang / Flows-Rond

Links

- nesiewang.com
- nesiewjy (Instagram)

Communities

- Buurtwerkplaats Noorderhof
- Cooperatie Samenwerking Kaumera UA

Lead mentor organisation

- Waag FutureLab

2. The challenge

Sloterplas is a beautiful and iconic artificial lake in Amsterdam Nieuw-West. In this post-war district which was built as a garden city, the lake provides a place for residents to cool down in the summer, play water sports and connect to nature in an urban setting.

This lake was once a flagship of 'living with green' design, which aimed to deepen the connection between citizens and nature. However, in more recent years, low water quality has led to environmental crises in the lake, such as outbreaks of cyanobacteria and E. coli in the past. On top of that, the area has been subject to frequent policy changes, gentrification and immigration, impacting the social environment around Sloterplas. The community is left feeling powerless and estranged in caring for the natural environment of their neighbourhood.

2. Impact

The project brought lived experiences and grassroots perspectives into conversations around local environmental issues, including questions of bird feeding, water quality, and changing relationships with the lake. Intergenerational exchange between long-term residents and newcomers contributed to a shared understanding of environmental change and local experience.

The Goose Game helped shift conversations about local environmental issues from binary discussions about rules and restrictions towards more open reflection on complexity, coexistence and different perspectives.

Beyond that, the project contributed to a stronger sense of ownership among some participants, who became co-creators of the artistic process and expressed greater awareness of their relationship with the lake and its environment. In Flows-Rond, local ecological regulations were addressed through dialogue rather than debate, promoting public participation in local policy development.

3. The story

Flows-Rond was led by artist Nesie Junyi Wang, and it was set to open up new ways for reflecting on residents' roles in the urban landscape and to help them navigate the shifting policies that govern it. The artist invited the community to reconnect with the environment and to reflect on the effects of urban planning at Sloterplas. This was facilitated through participatory storytelling activities, guided walks and workshops.

With weekly activities, Flows-Rond invited volunteers to care for the Sloterplas ecosystem and to discuss the way this designed landscape is lived, remembered and regulated. One of the most important aims of the project was to build a lasting community. Through familiar and low-barrier activities, such as communal lunches and informal conversations, this ideal was deeply integrated in the process.

5. The results

Through the use of relational and sensory approaches, Flows-Rond addressed issues in the local climate and raised awareness of how small-scale consumption habits in everyday life can be used to care for the ecological and communal dynamics in Sloterplas and Amsterdam Nieuw-West.

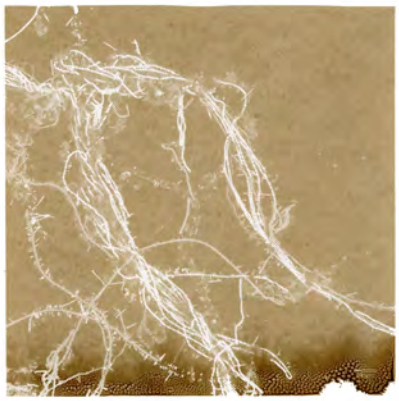
One transferable outcome of the project is the Goose Game of Sloterplas, an interactive game that allows players to reflect on both human and non-human experiences with the lake. The light and playful nature of this game invites dialogue about the eco-social impact of water bodies, and can be replicated more broadly in similar lakes and parks.

Flows-Rond has left a positive legacy on the people living in Amsterdam Nieuw-West, and its impacts have been showcased in the West Beach Film Festival.

6. Reflection

By reflecting on policy changes regarding Sloterplas, such as recent bird-feeding bans and water landscape controls, the participants were able to connect their local lived experiences to policy thinking at the municipality level. To further bridge the gap between policy and public, participants were also introduced to the water infrastructure which led to improved understanding of the connection between ecology and governance. This allowed Flows-Rond to show how governance can be informed by artistic research, and strengthened civil engagement in environmental policy making.

Flows-Rond built deep and long-lasting relationships with the community, creating a network centred around the artist. Through continued care and patience, the artist ensured broad participation and inclusion of as many voices as possible. This resulted in relevant, ethical and community-owned work.



1. ATSI overview



Mika Satomi / Circular BLUE

Links

- www.kobakant.at
- www.howtogetwhatyouwant.at
- www.nerding.at

Communities

- ElisaBeet urban garden

Lead mentor organisation

- Royal College of Art

2. The challenge

The global fashion industry is one of the most polluting industries on the planet. Many textiles are produced in low-wage countries, creating a dependence on global transport chains. On top of this, many materials and dyes are produced from fossil products like oil, and fast fashion products are designed without quality and sustainability in mind.

Market research in Germany has pointed out that many people are interested in more sustainable clothing practices, but are not always aware of how to access these. This exemplifies the need for more awareness and more ecologically conscious relations with clothing and craft.

3. Impact

The community learned traditional Japanese indigo knowledge and cultivation practices through making, daily garden conversations, weekly public workshops, and extensive documentation. The development of the ‘soil to soil’ process connected growing, fermentation, dyeing, and making. This gave participants practical experience of a slower, more circular approach to textile production.

The project strengthened community ownership of a community garden by shifting the initiative from an individual artistic project to a shared activity, in which participants began to form a core group and take greater agency. Furthermore, after an act of vandalism, the opportunity was taken to engage with local youth, to explain the project’s purpose and build understanding of the value of the garden-based work.

The project built a micro-ecology through engagement across academic, economic, artistic, and community sectors. The artist, building her ecology slowly and through relationships, has offered a strong foundation for sustainability and longevity.

4. The story

With the Circular BLUE project, Mika Satomi invited the community of Soldiner Kiez, Berlin to grow Japanese indigo plants in an urban community garden, and to use these plants to dye their own textiles.

Together with the community, the artist grew Persicaria Tinctoria plants, built a communal fermentation vat and revived traditional Japanese composting methods to extract dye in a process called ai-date (藍建て, literally building blue). This process was aimed to reconnect urban communities with the origins of textile colour and its production. Through weekly gatherings, gardening and workshops with the public, the local community was encouraged to engage with the project and build hands-on experience for climate-friendly indigo production practices.

5. The results

Circular BLUE collaborated with neighbours to build a sustainable textile dye practice in an urban environment. By using the used-up dye bath as fertiliser for the indigo plants, the project resulted in a "soil to soil" system, cultivating a circular and local process for producing blue textile.

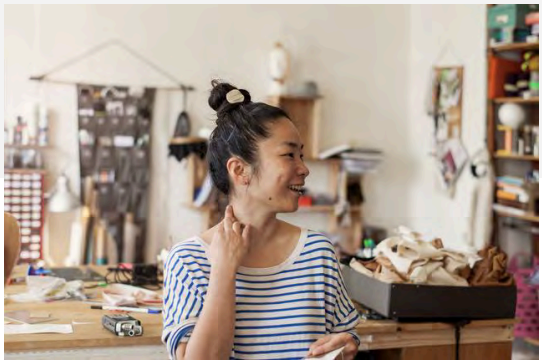
Working with the product in public workshops allowed the residents of Berlin to develop a more ecologically conscious relationship with clothing and craft, as participants learned to appreciate the labour required for making something as seemingly simple as a blue cotton bag.

The project also inspired artistic practise, sprouting an art performance that used aspects from the indigo fermentation process as an analogue sounding board for neural audio synthesis. This way, the indigo plants secured their place in the cultural landscape of Berlin.

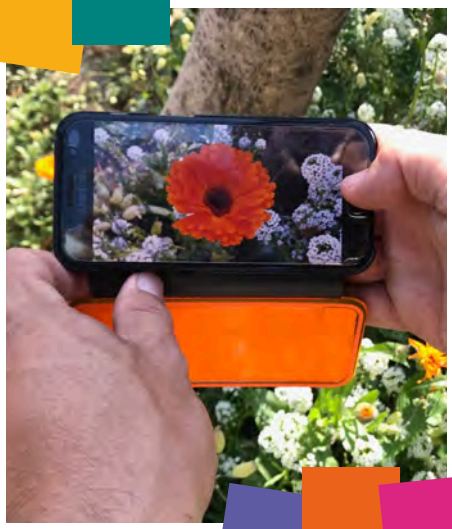
6. Reflection

Even after the project, the indigo plants in the ElisaBeet urban garden continue to be tended by the community that has grown around the project. Circular BLUE allowed the participants to grow closer connections within their neighbourhood, and to learn from an online Japanese community of ai-date experts. Through a presentation at Electric Wonderland, an annual international making/hacking event hosted in Croatia, the project inspired many other communities to work with circular dye practices.

The artist has written a blog on her website, documenting the process and her thoughts in great detail. Using this webpage, the project can be easily transferred to other urban gardens in similar environments.



1. ATSI overview



Epicuro Lab / Crops Refuge

Links

- epicurolab (Instagram)
- quoartis (Instagram)

Communities

- Migrant Communities at MhiC
- Community and General Public at Rubió i Tudurí Gardens
- Collaborating Institutions and Environmental Initiatives
- Ferrer Sustainability

Lead mentor organisation

- INOVA+

2. The challenge

Mediterranean plantlife is connected both ecologically and symbolically with histories and heritages of migrant communities, as many of the crops grown in this region have been historically displaced from their original ecosystems. At the same time, these migrant communities often lack exposure to cultural and scientific content about such topics, with many migrants experiencing barriers to accessing artistic and educational experiences.

Parallels between plant and human displacement form a potential source to create more awareness about biodiversity loss, food insecurity and climate adaptation, though it is largely untapped by art and science.

3. Impact

The project, in reflecting the needs of its participants (migrant and later neurodiverse participants), created inclusive spaces in which these participants could contribute their own ecological memories, stories and knowledge, strengthening the visibility of perspectives that are often underrepresented in environmental discussions. Intercultural and local knowledge about plants, seeds, soil and crop histories were brought together and documented in the Emotional Herbarium, maps and workshop materials, giving these forms of knowledge a shared and accessible form.

Based on its findings, the project advocates for change in European seed policy, and held strategic meetings with relevant stakeholders (Capital of Culture 2028, La Caixa) to do so.

The workshops connected underrepresented perspectives and food with broader discussions about climate change, colonial histories, and ecological systems, creating links between lived experience and scientific knowledge.

4. The story

In three participatory workshops aimed at migrant and neurodiverse participants, Crops Refuge combined several artistic practices like botany, oral storytelling, sensory methods and participatory mapping to bring cultural and educational content about climate awareness to a population deprived of such experiences. These workshops allowed the participants to generate embodied knowledge through activities involving soil and plants, exploring them through walking, touch, smell and taste.

Using low-tech and analogue tools like oral histories, printed cards about carbon-footprint and soil, the participants were engaged in collaborative activities to grow community connections and stengthen their nature connections. Digital technologies further supported this learning, using video documentation and subtitles to create a maximally accessible workshop environment.

5. The results

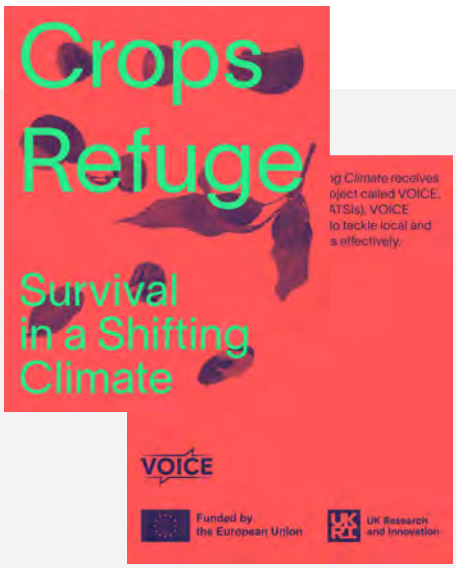
Crops Refuge collaborated with the Museum of Immigration of Catalonia, the Rubió i Tudurí edible garden and the Botanical Institute of Barcelona to host the workshops. By allowing the participants to co-create a herbarium inspired by memory and resilience and integrating this into the Botanical Institute, the project rooted the community more deeply into the cultural and educational environment.

Crops Refuge resulted in artistic and educational content that are more accessible for migrant and neurodiverse audiences. It yielded several tangible outputs, like open-source downloadable Emotional Herbarium and Carbon Footprint cards that help create a stronger emotional connection with local plantlife, and accessible workshop videos with subtitles that can work as educational tools.

6. Reflection

Epicuro Lab's Crops Refuge worked with a variety of stakeholders to discuss their shared concerns about food systems and soil health, connecting the themes of human migration, climate change and regenerative agriculture. By combining art, ecology and education in a reflective approach, the project has resulted in strong community participation and an impact that will live on beyond VOICE.

The future value of the project is educational and methodological, rather than policy. With the toolkits, templates, educational formats created in an ethical and collaborative manner, Crops Refuge shows how to include marginalised groups through the co-creation of educational and cultural content.



1. ATSI overview



Hanna Steenbergen-Cockerton & Nadja van der Weide / Fabric of Us

Links

- www.hannasteenbergen.com
- hanna_steenbergen_cockerton (Instagram)
- www.nadjavanderweide.com
- www.fabricofus.nl
- fabric_of_us (Instagram)

Communities

- Buikslotermeerplein communities

Lead mentor organisation

- Waag FutureLab

2. The challenge

The Buikslotermeerplein is situated in the promising yet developing area of Buikslotermeer in Amsterdam-Noord. Many residents in the neighbourhood have relatively low socio-economic standing, and the area houses an above average share of people who require care for long-term illnesses. It is also home to a diverse range of cultures and backgrounds. Like many parts of Amsterdam, the area is subject to gentrification, polarisation and disconnect.

Because of these factors, there is a growing need for both newcomers and long-time residents to feel more grounded in the area. As a quickly growing neighbourhood, with a projected 22% population growth until 2030, this developing area calls for stronger efforts to fight gentrification, increase social cohesion and build community.

3. Impact

The project connected 18 participants and 2 interns through 14 workshops, culminating in a public celebration of the final work. Participants grew steadily more confident and vocal, building community bonds described as "family" that fostered civic agency and ownership — extending into shared material practice, with participants encouraging one another to reuse existing fabrics rather than buy new ones.

The resulting quilt became more than an artwork: it was transformed into a civic advocacy document, demonstrating how visual storytelling can inform policy consultation. Momentum continues beyond the immediate group, with efforts underway to secure support for a Production Apprenticeship model and a conservation protocol for the piece. The project's ecology is already evolving further, with educational organisations and a local artist group in North Amsterdam exploring an extended version — leveraging the knowledge built to deepen impact within the same community and potentially reach a wider audience.

4. The story

Fabric of Us was a creative response to the growing need for community building in the area surrounding Buikslotermeerplein. By bringing the residents together to construct a collaborative patchwork quilt, they were invited to empower each other by sharing personal stories and having meaningful dialogues.

As the neighbourhood contains such a diverse range of cultural backgrounds, the artists set out to build a space to bring together these different voices. Here, community members could recognise their differences and discuss them in a respectful manner. To best build long lasting social resilience and meaningful connections, the project brought local artisans and organisations closer to the public, deepening the bond between the participants and entrepreneurs in the area.

5. The results

Over the course of 12 weekly sessions, members of the local community constructed a large patchwork quilt. Each session provided space at the opening and ending where the participants could meet each other and reflect on their learning. Together with organisations that work against gentrification of Amsterdam-Noord, the artists focused on inclusion by giving special attention to the integration of immigrants and marginalised groups in the process.

The quilt was central to the project. It functioned as a facilitator for starting new conversations, a platform for storytelling, and a hearth for the community. By sharing stories, the participants grew closer to each other, practiced their Dutch language skills and exchanged their cultures.

At the end of the project, the community presented the finished quilt together. The artists collected audio records of the stories told at the exposition, which will be developed further into audio stories for future listening.

6. Reflection

The participants of Fabric of Us were enthusiastic about the project, and kept returning to further develop the quilt. Self-reported reasons for their return include the development of new skills, such as quilt making and speaking Dutch, as well as strengthening their community, meeting new people and deepening their connections.

By catering for a diverse audience, the project attracted people from many different backgrounds. Not all of them were able to speak Dutch, and so the artists provided translators for Eritrean and Arabian to help overcome the language barriers. This inclusive mindset of the organisers shone through the entire project. Over the course of Fabric of Us, new members were continuously added to the group, while the integrity of the engagement of the participants was maintained. This further shows the success of the project.



1. ATSI overview



Timo Toots / Bee Art Lab

Links

- www.timo.ee
- www.maajaam.ee
- www.wildbits.ee
- timo.toots (Instagram)
- wildbits.ee (Instagram)

Communities

- Otepää Gardening and Beekeeping Cooperative

Lead mentor organisation

- Brunel University

2. The challenge

The EU is one of the largest consumers, producers and importers of honey in the world, with many households eating honey products on a weekly or daily basis. A significant share of the imported honey is fraudulent. For example, honey may be diluted with cheaper sugar sources, the geographical origin of the product may be masked or the consumer may be misled through the use of colourings and additives.

Meanwhile, DNA testing tools for the verification of locally produced honey are not widely accessible and used. This leads to European beekeepers suffering, as they are undermined economically and ecologically by these fraudulent honey practices.

3. Impact

Bee Art Lab formally engaged 4 local beekeepers as collaborators and design reviewers despite privacy-related recruitment barriers, extending peer learning through public sessions including honey tasting workshops and a blind real-vs-fake taste test at Science Night. The project also expanded participation beyond the human, treating bees as co-creators in wax sculptures and embedding reciprocal, care-based ethics (sugar-water exchange) into artistic practice — drawing interest from Kumu Art Museum and Copenhagen City Museum for future engagement.

Five KEMs/tools emerged, including Hive Radio, Sculpture Studio 1, Beeport, the Celvia DNA pipeline, and an AI-assisted sound amplifier. The Celvia partnership opens a path toward honey certification, strengthening beekeepers' grounds to charge more for authentic products against the global fake-honey trade.

The project also revived a dormant Beekeeping Club, fostered cultural connection (e.g. clover honey as "the taste of my childhood"), and positioned Maajaam Art Farm as an emerging Living Lab with potential to inform future certification policy (SDG 12).

4. The story

Bee Art Lab is an art project concerned with human-bee relationships. Led by artist Timo Toots, the project aimed to use art as a means to deepen ecological understanding and community relations. Artistic methods used included experimental hive design, beeswax fabrication and sound listening technologies. By collaborating closely with the beekeepers in co-creating artistic experiences and workshops, stories about honey production were shared with the local community.

In addition, Bee Art Lab collaborated with DNA research organisation Celvia to map local biodiversity, and to address issues about fake honey and food authenticity. The artist employed exhibitions, talks and meetings to translate this gained knowledge to the beekeepers and the local community.

5. The results

Bee Art Lab has been largely successful in engaging its target audience, even attracting visiting beekeepers from nearby regions. Through a process grounded in ethics, consent and seasonal awareness, the artist allowed the local community to connect with the process of making honey, bringing understanding about biodiversity, pollination and environmental care to the audience.

Another impact of the project was public understanding of science. Close collaboration with scientific organisations brought knowledge about honey DNA testing to a broader audience. The importance of food authenticity and the natural cycles that underlie the honey making process were highlighted to the community and the public at large. This is an important step towards informing regulations about fake honey and the rebuilding of lost local beekeeping networks, both across Estonia and internationally.

6. Reflection

Not only did the Bee Art Lab enable a collaboration with artists, beekeepers, scientists and locals, it also allowed bees to participate in the process in a new form of more-than-human co-creation of art. By closely monitoring behaviour, for example studying whether the artworks were accepted, ignored or rejected by the bees, the process was deeply grounded in ecological practices. As many different artistic methods were combined with knowledge from local communities and scientific partners, the project opened up accessible pathways for knowledge exchange.

Of course, working with a living system like a beehive brings its own challenges, especially when they interact with fixed project schedules. As part of building trust with the beekeepers and the bees, the wellbeing and safety of all parties involved must be carefully balanced with artistic experimentation. However, the result of these careful ethical considerations is a long-lasting relationship that extends beyond this single project.

1. ATSI overview



Hilary Powell / (S)OIL

Links

- www.hilarypowell.site
- www.optimisticproductions.co.uk
- www.power.film
- hilary_powell (Instagram)
- power.film.art (Instagram)

Communities

- United Kingdom

Lead mentor organisation

- Royal College of Art

2. The challenge

Heavy metals used in various human and industrial activities are a known cause of pollution. In the United Kingdom alone, several hundreds of thousands of hectares are contaminated with heavy metals and microplastics. This forms a threat to the environment, soil fertility and public health, as the metal particles eventually accumulate in water, plants and human food. Although research from the last decade shows that the metal in contaminated soil can be extracted as a resource with sustainable and environmentally friendly methods, the soil is treated as waste.

In the last decades, soil health has been largely overlooked in environmental policies of the UK. Especially urban communities feel disconnected from soil as a living system.

3. Impact

The project engaged a diverse participant group consisting of mechanics students, as well as the Right to Grow group and the Fire Brigade in Brunel, and reached a large incidental community all over the UK.

S(OIL) is explicitly positioned as open-source R&D, meaning its methods and findings are designed for replication rather than staying a one-off art commission. Chromatography workshops, for example, leave community growers, such as the Right to Grow group, equipped with a cheap, reliable tool to analyse soil nutrients and contaminants independently and long-term. By reframing contaminated land as a resource rather than a liability, the project offers a transferable conceptual model aligned with the EU Circular Economy Action Plan.

The collaboration with Lorna Anguiano's company Phyona (urban mining from contaminated soil) additionally points toward a genuine commercial pathway: sunflower phytoremediation could eventually scale into a sustainable environmental service, with extractions potentially funding further expert support.

4. The story

With (S)OIL, the artists transformed a 1996 Ford transit recovery vehicle into an experimental field laboratory on wheels for soil decontamination and making biofuel. Traveling throughout the United Kingdom with this relic of fossil fuelled culture, (S)OIL was a series of artistic interventions in urban environments. The artists hosted workshops, inspired artworks and did their own research using sunflowers, together with the people in the places they encountered on the way.

In this live artistic and scientific experiment, the artists collaborated with organisations that attempt to decontaminate soil using plants, a process called 'phytoremediation'. Through public spectacle, they tested and harnessed their power to remediate soil in the UK.

5. The results

Over the course of several months, the artists used the van as a mobile community engagement tool to organise workshops throughout the country. Through these workshops, many urban communities in the UK had the opportunity to further develop their awareness and connection to soil care and the environment.

The research within (S)OIL was performed in collaboration with Brunel University, and focussed on testing for soil contamination and biofuel. As a result, the project yielded detailed instructions for a bio-hacked mobile lab and phytoremediation methods, shared openly through a field guide and film. This further empowers the public in soil care and environmental action.

6. Reflection

(S)OIL mobilised their scientific process in the most literal way. This allowed them to bring knowledge about soil testing and phytoremediation to many communities in the United Kingdom. The science was made more accessible, allowing for a strong collaboration between artists, scientists and local participants towards more sustainable soil management. Approaching this challenge in this way also meant that they had to balance depth of community collaboration and reach, as their brief stays made for more limited community engagements. However, travelling in the transformed vehicle also meant that the artists reached a broad community, letting them respond to many sites and contexts and further supporting knowledge sharing. In the end, (S)OIL succeeded in critically reflecting on energy systems and yielded an imaginative exploration of post-fossil futures.



1. ATSI overview



Rosie O'Reilly / Hydrohacking the Archive

Links

- www.rosieoreilly.com

Communities

- Dublin community
- Poddle
- Camac
- Tolka

Lead mentor organisation

- University College Dublin

2. The challenge

The history of Dublin is deeply intertwined with the many rivers that flow through the area. Although these waterways have contributed much to the historical development and culture of Ireland's capital and largest city, many of them are absent from the city archive. Dublin community members find their own ways to interact with the rivers, creating localknowledge, stories and experiences. As there are no existing mechanisms that capture or legitimise the knowledge of Dublin citizens, these stories are not integrated into the city archive. Because of this, the urban water knowledge of Dublin City Council workers is lacking vital information needed for urban and climate planning.

3. Impact

The project changed how local waterways and their histories could be encountered by moving beyond predominantly digital forms of participation towards tactile and sensory engagement.
Overlooked local histories and knowledge were brought into the process of documenting Dublin's waterways, including stories connected to 'ghost rivers' and the Wadian people.

Diverse participants, including Dublin City Council staff and locals, were connected, and wider Dublin was reached as well through a local newspaper publication. The project repositioned local knowledge holders within a 'river archive' to disrupt dominant digital hierarchies. It also used the Oslo Manifesto to frame a shift from Environmental Law to Ecological Law.

Another angle was exploring the non-monetary valuation through knowledge trade with UCD biology and engineering teams. Additionally, it addressed the precarity of the 'gig economy' for artists in institutional settings. Furthermore, it provided a documentary, toolkit, website, and zine as mediators of local river stories to be used by wider audiences.

4. The story

With the artistic intervention Hydrohacking the Archive, artist Rosie O'Reilly aimed to reclaim the overlooked stories of Dublin's river history and to embed them into the city archive. By questioning why certain stories were or were not included in the Dublin city archive, especially noting the absence of water related archival material, Hydrohacking the Archive exposed biases in archival practices shaped by the colonial history of Ireland.

Through interactions with the community in the city, she collected narratives about floods, wildlife, swimming spots and more, focussing on three of the city's rivers: the Poddle, Camac and Tolka. Over the course of six months, the project grew into a collaborative network that spans environmental groups, cultural institutions and hydrology experts.To challenge the dominant power structures, it prioritised including local stories in the form of folklore, hearsay, landmarks and everyday commutes into the archive.

5. The results

As a tangible output of the process, Hydrohacking the Archive produced a community walking trail throughout Dublin, named after the Irish word for river, Abhainn. In this publicly available trail, the history of Dublin's rivers is shared with citizens and visitors alike. Special care was taken to make sure the walk is as accessible as possible for neurodivergent users. The community stories were also donated to the Dublin City archive, further enriching its collection and permanently embedding citizens' perspectives into the history of the city.

By building relationships between citizens, historians, scientists and environmental workers, the project contributed to new forms of knowledge about digital bias and water infrastructure.

6. Reflection

Hydrohacking the Archive was built on a strong foundation of fieldwork, theory and community voices. This grounding allowed the artist to establish a clear, coherent artistic vision and carry it through to practice. Care and collective action were also held in high regard throughout the project, bringing stories from the community together to make a large difference in the water knowledge base of the city.

Over time, the project developed meaningful community relationships, particularly between river advocacy groups, local historians and environmental organisations. The rivers of Dublin were deeply involved as well, as the project emphasised and integrated it as a more-than-human actor into the city archive. The project used analogue tools like community walks as salmon to further connect local and more-than-human thinking to the emotional connection of the citizens with rivers.

1. ATSI overview



YARA + DAVINA / HOPE is an Active Verb

Links

- www.yaraanddavina.com
- yaraanddavina (Instagram)

Communities

- Camden - ODAC and the Somer Town Community Association

Lead mentor organisation

- Royal College of Art

2. The challenge

The Euston and Marylebone Roads are major thoroughfares in central London that support a large share of the traffic flowing in and out of England's capital city. These roads have earned a reputation as the most polluted roads in all of Europe. Although the local district policy makers are working to reduce this pollution, it still has a major effect on the daily lives of residents. As exhaust from the traffic settles on windows and becomes palpable on the air, it becomes a multi-sensory nuisance for the residents.



Headlines and messages in mainstream climate news about these local climate issues often try to create a feeling of concern or urgency. This has caused many of the residents to feel demotivated or powerless to change their situation.

3. Impact

The project created spaces in which local community voices were heard and valued, bringing specific concerns such as air pollution and the relationship between climate action and the cost of living into discussion. In the workshops, intergenerational exchange of knowledge about local climate issues and initiatives could take place, bringing different experiences into a shared conversation.

“Hope is an active verb” also strengthened collaboration between the Old Diorama Arts Centre and Somer Town Community Association, giving both organisations a practical opportunity to work together and identify foundational issues in their partnership.

The Mobile Tattoo Parlour offered a low-resource, adaptable methodology for sparking dialogue on shared local concerns — positioning the project as a case study for integrating artistic methods into environmental policymaking and advocacy. Grassroots themes (e.g. acute concern over Euston Road/Marylebone air pollution and its link to the cost of living crisis) surfaced as insights that are hard for policymakers to obtain through conventional means.

4. The story

To transform climate despair of residents near Euston Road and Marylebone Road into climate hope, HOPE is an Active Verb organised workshops with the local community to collectively design concepts for temporary tattoos. As part of this process, the artists started conversations with the participants, using the tattoos as a basis for conversation and small acts of hope.

In the second phase of the project, the artists opened three tattoo parlours where locals could get the temporary tattoos designed by their neighbours. These parlours functioned as spaces where climate change became relational, embodied and rooted with care, as the visitors discussed their tattoos and explored the link between climate and their everyday lives.


Photo credit: Alice Horsley.


Photo credit: Alice Horsley.

5. The results

Citizens of central London designed and co-created ten temporary tattoos as part of this project. These function as knowledge carriers and conversation carriers that can continuously carry out their purpose for up to ten days after application. Over the course of HOPE is an Active Verb, the artists shared strategies for hopeful thinking with the residents of London.

By forming platforms where stories and voices of the community about the reality of living with heavy air pollution could be heard, the tattoo parlours proved to be a viable space for creating community insights for decision makers. For lasting impact, the artists proposed a permanent climate hope tattoo parlour place where the work could be continued for a longer time.



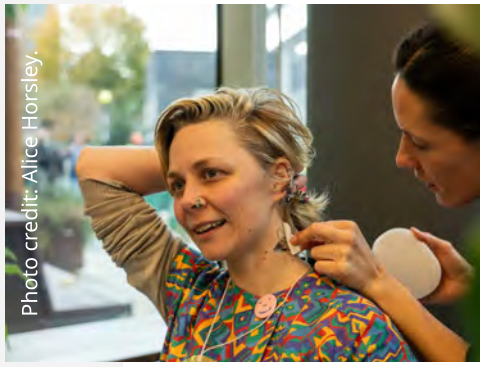
Photo credit: Alice Horsley.

6. Reflection

With HOPE is an Active Verb, tattoos were used as creative prompts and acts of choice in the context of local climate issues. This fostered agency, reflection and dialogue with the participants, allowing them to create their own solutions rather than relying on prescribed suggestions. By transforming complex and often abstract climate issues into personal, embodied experiences, the method invited open and meaningful conversations within the community.

As the project relied on tattoos to convey its message, it had to navigate complex cultural interpretations and associations, possibly risking uneven engagement or limited reach. At the same time, by connecting participants all over the neighbourhood with shared designs, it created strong connections and recognitions within the community, allowing participants to embody their shared values and to continue conversations beyond the workshop space.


Photo credit: Alice Horsley.


Photo credit: Alice Horsley.

1. ATSI overview



Ivana Tkalčić / EarthSkin

Links

- ivanatkalcic.com
- ivana4anavi (Instagram)

Communities

- Sisak community
- City Gallery Striegl

Lead mentor organisation

- Eurice

2. The challenge

The relationship between the city of Sisak and the earth below it has deep roots. The city's history reaches back thousands of years, creating many opportunities for archaeological studies. It is also one of the most important industrial hubs in Croatia, and the soil carries traces from that in the form of contamination. On top of that, the city lies not far from a fault line of the Adriatic tectonic plate, which caused a severe and traumatising earthquake as recently as 2020. These historical, industrial and traumatic layers heavily impact both soil and everyday life in Sisak.

Despite this, there is a disconnect between the citizens of Sisak and the earth beneath their feet. Children of the city view soil as simply dirt, for example. The soil provides an opportunity for community care and healing from the intergenerational trauma of industrial pollution and tectonic instability.

3. Impact

Earthskin reached 53 youth participants over 3 total workshops. The project encouraged participants to understand soil not simply as an inert material, but as a living ecological and cultural element connected to health, place, and collective experience. The participatory process created space for unexpected social concerns to enter ecological discussions, with high school students connecting the topic of soil to their feelings about the reinstatement of military service in Croatia.
Furthermore, the collaboration with local artists, the City Gallery Striegl and the permaculture association ZMAG strengthened community connections and supported more practical, locally rooted forms of ecological engagement.

Ivana Tkalčić developed a highly replicable methodology of scientific soil analysis and restorative storytelling, which can be applied in diverse community contexts. Two additional workshops have already been requested, which demonstrates the project's sustainability beyond funding.

4. The story

At the heart of the artist-lead intervention EarthSkin lies the metaphor of soil as skin: a surface that shows traces and scars of the past, which needs care in order to regenerate. With EarthSkin, artist Ivana Tkalčić studied and cared for the soil in workshops. Together with pupils of local primary and secondary schools, she collected scientific data through soil analysis and used it as an instrument for storytelling. This way, the project bridged data and participants' subjective perceptions to analyse local relationships with soil.

The workshops were co-created together with many local stakeholders. By involving the schools, local gallery and other community members, the project allowed everyone to share their perspectives about the soil. This way, EarthSkin aimed to mediate between confrontation and trauma. In the words of the artist, "Caring for the soil is ultimately caring for the community."

5. The results

The project culminated in a bilingual publication (English and Croatian) documenting the process of EarthSkin and the thoughts of the artist. It is printed on paper containing wildflower seeds, allowing readers to participate in a small act of environmental activism by either returning the document to the earth or keeping it as a document. The publication was presented during a public final event at the City Gallery Striegl. Two future workshops have been planned and the methodology of restorative storytelling was documented.

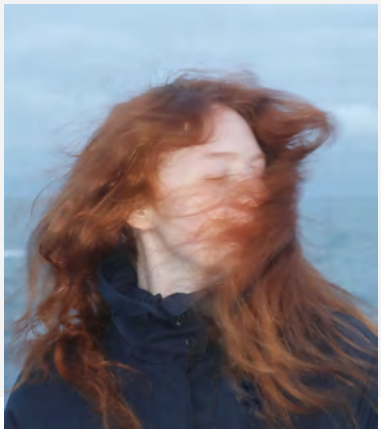
At the workshops, the participants developed newfound connections to the soil of Sisak, describing it as alive and speaking. Poetic and speculative methods were used to create and share stories and experiences, allowing the community to learn about soil and to discuss its influence on the city. EarthSkin left behind a network of connections and shared knowledge. By getting closer to the soil, the youth of Sisak learned to wield it as a symbol of healing and care.

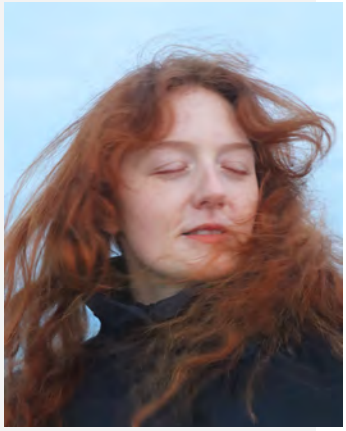


6. Reflection

One of the successes of EarthSkin has been to shift the mindsets of children in Sisak. This will likely have a long-term impact on the thinking and regenerative knowledge of the participants in the future, although this is difficult to measure. The methodology of the project linked personal experience with local ecology, supporting environmental literacy and climate awareness.

The greatest challenge for EarthSkin was the local political climate. As the policy makers prioritised corporate interests and had little interest in environmental protection or arts funding, the project could not fully realise its potential in making change or political impact on soil health. However, by engaging with Sisak citizens in the workshops and distributing the publication, the artist hopes that her work raises local awareness.





1. ATSI overview



Severino Alfonso / Echoes in Conversation

Links

- www.plbny.com/severino-alfonso
- Severino Alfonso Dunn (LinkedIn)
- www.synestheticdesignlab.com

Communities

- FUNDEPAS, Fundación Española de Alta Sensibilidad

Lead mentor organisation

- University College Dublin

2. The challenge

One in every three individuals in Spain is a Highly Sensitive Person. These people are more sensitive to sensory input than others, which can make them feel discomfort in situations that are noisy, brightly lit or otherwise heavy on the senses. Even though this accounts for such a large proportion of the Spanish population, many public spaces are designed without these people in mind.

Hospitals and other healthcare facilities are especially known for their bright and fluorescent lighting. This is because it is important for healthcare workers to properly see what they are doing, to ensure optimal work conditions. At the same time, this may cause Highly Sensitive Persons to feel distressed, or excluded from these spaces, impacting their care pathways.

3. Impact

Facing low response from existing partners, the project built the Medway Collective from scratch — a neurodivergent-led eco-creative hub and seedbed for future nature-sound projects. Thereby, a 740m^2 space was activated through the ATSI, supporting the local cultural economy and providing a sanctuary for the community.

It also produced an accessible "Flow Toolkit" and "Flow Sound Commons" (Creative Commons), underpinning a successful £50,000 Immersive Arts Fund bid. Beyond that, in Flow Space, a 360° spatial audio rig was built from repurposed materials via circular design, which enables indoor nature immersion. A new partnership with Nubia Labs (Barcelona) will extend this remotely to people without nature access, like care home residents.
The methodology of "thinking like a river" was applied at the River Medway symposium, which marks the first confirmed use of more-than-human methodology in civic governance and conflict resolution (SDGs 3, 6, 13, 17). Together, these impacts show artistic research's regenerative power to interlink social, cultural, and economic value.

4. The story

Severino Alfonso's project Echoes in Conversation is set in the urban areas of southern Spain. In collaboration with the Spanish association for Highly Sensitive Persons FUNDESPAS, as well as regional interest groups, it explored the way light modulation affects sensory-sensitive individuals, and discusses practical solutions for light pollution and dynamic lighting in hospital and healthcare settings.

The project used surveys, workshops and feedback sessions to collect data and to ensure community members and caregivers could discuss their respective needs. By exchanging personal stories and sharing design suggestions, the project enabled the community to inform more inclusive light management practices. Echoes in Conversation advocated for more inclusive and sensory-aware environments, demonstrating how artistic research can contribute to people-centred policy innovation.

5. The results

Through its iterative, inclusive and ethically grounded research method, Echoes in Conversation collected meaningful data about the lived experience of Highly Sensitive Persons in urban settings, and used this to produce viable recommendations for dynamic lighting design in hospitals. Due to its depth, the research data has developed policy recommendations to influence national and European policy.

The project integrates industry into the long-term effects: an 'HSP filter' has been proposed for architectural software programmes, which supports architects in making choices that positively impact neurodiverse people. The filter is currently in development, further cementing the inclusive design impact of the project, yet to be shared.

6. Reflection

Echoes in Conversation had a deep focus on methodology, and prioritised ethical and caring research practices for underrepresented groups above tangible artistic output. Using questionnaires, reflective analysis and group discussion settings, the artist collected and organised a rich set of qualitative data. Through a combination of open conversation and thematic analysis, the project produced actionable findings in a way that ensured trust between the artist and the community.

By blending qualitative research methods of social sciences together with an artistic view, the project formed a bridge between artistic practice and policy-relevant research, and created evidence that can meaningfully inform design, advocacy and systemic change.



1. ATSI overview



Kat Pegler / Flow Space

Links

- www.katalice.com
- www.kerbsidecollective.com
- www.leoreader.com
- katkatmusic (Instagram)
- www.culturedeclares.org

Communities

- Kent region musicians

Lead mentor organisation

- Brunel University

2. The challenge

The Kent-Medway authority in the south of England is dealing with many complex crises. Climate change forms a noticeable risk to the area, with parts of the county being threatened with sea level rise, the loss of rare ecosystems, biodiversity loss and increasingly extreme weather phenomena. On top of that, Medway is especially marked by social deprivation and far-right growth, with increasing crime levels, lowering incomes and a poor environment.

In the midst of this polycrisis, a disused office building stands near the Medway River. The building has no community use, no ecological value and no creative economy activity. This provides an opportunity for innovation to improve the area and bring the community together.

3. Impact

Facing low response from existing partners, the project built the Medway Collective from scratch — a neurodivergent-led eco-creative hub and seedbed for future nature-sound projects. Thereby, a 740m^2 space was activated through the ATSI, supporting the local cultural economy and providing a sanctuary for the community.

It also produced an accessible "Flow Toolkit" and "Flow Sound Commons" (Creative Commons), underpinning a successful £50,000 Immersive Arts Fund bid. Beyond that, in Flow Space, a 360° spatial audio rig was built from repurposed materials via circular design, which enables indoor nature immersion. A new partnership with Nubia Labs (Barcelona) will extend this remotely to people without nature access, like care home residents.

The methodology of "thinking like a river" was applied at the River Medway symposium, which marks the first confirmed use of more-than-human methodology in civic governance and conflict resolution (SDGs 3, 6, 13, 17). Together, these impacts show artistic research's regenerative power to interlink social, cultural, and economic value.

4. The story



Flow-state or 'being in the zone' is a term from game theory describing an experience that makes one feel connected to the world on a deep level. Flow Space explores this state as a bridge between social wellbeing and nature connection.

The project aimed to create a network for innovation and creative thinking centred in Medway, catered to a neurodiverse audience. To do this, it combines musical, scientific, human and more-than-human perspectives to connect with nature in flow-states.
Artist Kat Pegler turned an unused office building into an eco-creative hub using recycled materials. Collaborating with a broad tapestry of participants, consisting of academics, sound artists, neurodiverse individuals and elderly, she designed a musical installation adapted to diverse sensory and cognitive needs.

5. The results

Over the course of Flow Space, the artist collective Medway Collective was built from the ground up. This creative asset has settled in the office building, creating economic value that can be relayed back into the cultural landscape and social cohesion within Medway.

The project touched upon many important aspects of the community, enriching the environmental literacy of the participants. It reduced eco-anxiety, built environmental stewardship and promoted inclusive, sensory-based learning and collaboration between nature, humans and technology. Using strategic interventions in the form of co-designed rituals, Flow Space brought agency and engagement to the community through art, further strengthening the artistic and community impacts of the project.

6. Reflection





Flow Space prioritised sensory experience over verbal explanation. This allowed the participants to have embodied connection with more-than-human actors, creating connections with the environment in a way that is well suited to the sensory and cognitive needs of neurodiverse people.Initially, the project had some difficulty starting, as the artist struggled to establish external partnerships with institutions. To deal with this institutional silence, the project was quickly pivoted to a more participant-lead approach. The participants were involved not just in the execution of the project, but also contributed to nature sound collection and creating the method. By focussing on access and reciprocity, the community work was deeply ethical and acted as a critique on other, more extractive projects.

1. ATSI overview



Jakob Kukula / RiverSync

Links

- spreeberlin.de
- jakobkukula.com
- jkukula
- simbioticlab
- spree.berlin

Communities

- TU Berlin - BOL & Technical Development
- The Embassy of the North Sea
- TBA21 Venice - Ocean Space
- Community Spore Initiative
- Motion Lab

Lead mentor organisation

- Waag FutureLab

2. The challenge

Urban rivers are essential lifelines that sustain biodiversity, cultural heritage and community well-being. Yet they remain neglected commons, threatened by pollution, overdevelopment and legal invisibility.
The Spree River in Berlin exemplifies this crisis. Despite its central role in the city's history and ecology, it suffers from contamination, fragmented management and lack of legal recognition. Across cities, rivers are ecologically vulnerable and socially peripheral. Relationships with waterways are often reduced to infrastructure and recreation, while technocratic fixes overlook deeper cultural and legal disconnections. Dominant monitoring practices are extractive and top-down, failing to engage communities in meaningful, continuous relationships with their rivers. Current frameworks rarely acknowledge rivers as actors with their own needs, rights or voice.

3. Impact

The project laid foundational groundwork for sustained impact and transdisciplinary collaboration, showing potential to influence environmental and cultural policy. RiverSync, a transdisciplinary intervention centred on Berlin's Spree River, fused civic ecology, sensor technology, and storytelling to reimagine the river as an ecological, legal, and cultural actor with its own needs and rights, advancing SDGs 11, 13, and 17.
Its "Rights of the Spree" framework is being considered as a replicable model for river justice in Portugal and Latin America, and has been adopted by the Confluence of European Water Bodies. Reusable assets — an open-source platform, co-authored legal drafts, sensor technology, and an avatar storytelling framework — are being archived as a template for future river-rights projects. A legal prototype has been pitched at EU civic commons policy roundtables, with further policy conversations ongoing.
Participants reported increased awareness and shifted conceptualisations of rivers as legal and relational entities, laying groundwork for sustained impact on environmental and cultural policy.

4. The story

RiverSync, led by artist Jakob Kukula, is an eco-social artistic intervention centred on the Spree River. Building on the SpreeBerlin initiative, RiverSync connects rivers across Europe and beyond, transforming them into sites of creative, ecological and civic innovation. By blending artistic practise, sensor technologies, open-source knowledge and community activism, RiverSync aims to reframe rivers as active participants in cultural and ecological transformation.

Community engagement was central in RiverSync. Rather than relying on top-down outreach, the project built decentralised networks that connected technical institutions, grassroots groups and advocacy communities within and beyond Berlin. This was done through workshops that fostered new connections and surfaced rich cultural and ecological history groups.
The participants were diverse, including TU Berlin students, Berlin citizen groups, representations from 15 European water initiatives and communities abroad in Finland, Montenegro and Brazil.

5. The results

Through RiverSync, the communities developed several narrative tools, such as water-sensing systems that let rivers "speak" through data and storytelling, a Rights of the Spree law prototype and others. Community surveys showed that this ATSI resulted in increased awareness of ecological and legal issues surrounding the Spree River, new ways of thinking and new collaborations. Some participants reported significant changes in their practice and were enthusiastic about their experiences. RiverSync didn't just talk about water, it let the water speak and taught others how to listen.
RiverSync's potential for lasting legacy lies in its ability to weave together symbolic and practical infrastructures for civic environmental action. It also built lasting relationships between citizens and academic, policy and cultural actors.

6. Reflection

The tools that were developed as part of RiverSync brought together two different worlds. On the one hand, they stemmed from the artistic vision of Jakob Kukula, and were developed through creative workshops with the communities and other stakeholders. On the other hand, many of the products had to conform to technical constraints. For example, in order for the Rights of the Spree law prototype to have sway as a potential legal framework, it had to be actionable and clearly written. Balancing these two worlds in a project with a speculative nature formed one of the main conceptual challenges for RiverSync.
The challenges within RiverSync were overcome by constantly communicating with stakeholders and experts, and by ensuring meaningful participation. After the project end, a survey was performed of the experiences of co-designers. The responses were especially positive, pointing to high expertise in the execution of RiverSync.





Participant quotes

"It engaged our community in multispecies mapping, avatar building and collective sensing of river ecologies... I now think differently about rivers - not just as ecosystems, but as legal and relational entities. That shift has changed how I work in design and planning contexts."
(Co-designer, Q3;7:2025)

"These methods allowed for deep listening and innovative forms of collaboration. They helped decenter dominant narratives and opened up new ways of relating to rivers and to each other."
(Co-designer, Q5:2025)

"They created an inclusive and imaginative space where different forms of knowledge could meet - scientific, Indigenous, artistic and local... RiverSync is more than a project, it's an emerging movement."
(Co-designer, Q5:2025)

1. ATSI overview



Anna Dumitriu / Greening the Lab

Links

- annadumitriu.co.uk
- annadumitriuart (Instagram)
- annadumitriuart (Facebook)
- annadumitriu (Linkedin)
- annadumitriu (Twitter)

Communities

- Brighton and Sussex Medical School (BSMS) and University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust
- University of Leeds Healthcare Associated Infection Research Group
- University of Oxford: Modernising Medical Microbiology

Lead mentor organisation

- INOVA+

2. The challenge

Biomedical science and healthcare are some of the most resource-intensive sectors in modern society. Laboratories in the biomedical sector produce vast quantities of single-use plastic globally, with the NHS in the United Kingdom generating around 133,000 tonnes of plastic waste per year. Despite growing evidence that many single-use items could be safely reused or repurposed, lab culture has long prioritised sterility over sustainability, leaving little institutional incentive for change. Professional norms around contamination and biosafety are deeply embedded in the field, which make medical workers reluctant to reconsider disposal habits. This gap between medical culture and environmentally friendly solutions needs increased stakeholder support to be bridged.

3. Impact

Greening the Lab reframed biomedical waste as a resource, developing open-source protocols with policy uptake potential; visibility at forums like FIS 2024 and ESCMID Global 2025 opened a platform for continued advocacy.

The project reached further into circular practices across the biomedical sector, engaging biomedical professionals, researchers, clinicians, and the public in collectively rethinking waste and sustainability through a critical-making framework. This surfaced new insights into material reuse and informal conversations on lab waste's sensory dimensions, clean/dirty perceptions, risk, safety, and systemic waste practices.

New methodological knowledge was generated and shared openly: combining scientific protocols with artistic processes (bio-plastics, textile sculptures) fostered inter/transdisciplinary reflection and imaginative thinking. Co-creative workshops explored innovative ways to repurpose lab waste, challenging assumptions that sustainability compromises safety — methodological novelty with potential to redefine how policy frames "research" itself.

4. The story

Greening the Lab, led by artist Anna Dumitriu, is an art-led response to the ecological footprint of the biomedical sector. Through workshops across four institutions, Greening the Lab convened scientists, clinicians, artists, patients and publics around a shared question: what can be made from what is thrown away?

Within these art-based biomaterial workshops, participants experimented hands-on making with discarded lab materials, such as wool from glassware packaging, bio-digested hospital aprons and agar. These were transformed them into textiles, objects and open-source bioplastic recipes. These sessions provoked new ways of seeing waste, contamination and reuse in clinical settings by blending wet and dry felting, biomaterial crafting, critical making and facilitated dialogue. By treating decarbonisation as a cultural and human concern, Greening the Lab opened genuine space for reflection across disciplinary boundaries and reframed biomedical waste as a creative resource.

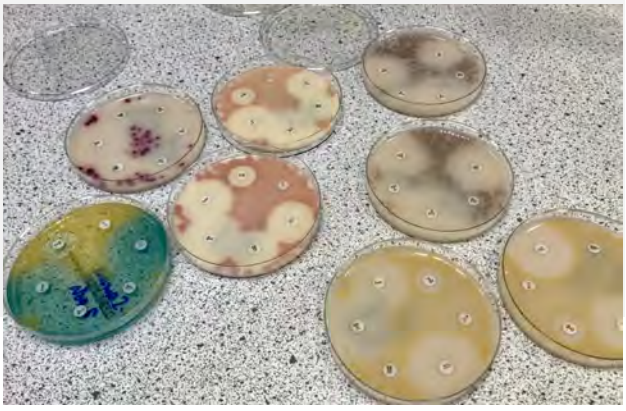
5. The results

Greening the Lab produced and digitally published a set of open-source bioplastic protocols and reuse recipes, freely shared for broad adoption across research and clinical settings. These materials are already influencing biomedical waste classification practices and being incorporated into NHS Green Plans. The project's reach extended to the highest levels of the clinical community: the artist presented the work at Europe's leading clinical microbiology congress, ESCMID Global 2025. Institutional partners recognised GTL's potential to reshape procurement policy and clinical waste management, and expressed strong interest in sustaining the collaboration beyond the project period. Biomaterials produced in the six workshops were exhibited publicly, further amplifying the project's message. Greening the Lab demonstrated that artistic methodologies can generate practically actionable results, raise awareness, and produce concrete tools that institutions and communities can immediately adopt.

6. Reflection

Although Greening the Lab was met with initial scepticism from lab professionals and had to navigate lengthy negotiations with ethics boards for access to materials, the project eventually fostered support and mindfulness about the handling of bio-waste. The rigorous sterility standards of a clinical environment clashed at times with the open, exploratory spirit of an artistic intervention. But these clashes proved generative, and created space for dialogue about the presence and ethics of organic waste, bacteria and living processes.

Greening the Lab demonstrated that artists can gain meaningful entry into highly regulated professional cultures by grounding their practice in genuine curiosity and respect for expertise. This positions the project as a replicable and compelling model for future art–science–policy collaborations.



1. ATSI overview



Ruth Catlow / Felixstowe Youth

Links

- furtherfield.org
- decal.furtherfield.org
- furtherfield (Instagram)
- Furtherfield (Facebook)
- furtherfield (Twitter)

Communities

- Felixstowe Community

Lead mentor organisation

- Royal College of Art

2. The challenge

Urban parks are among the most biodiverse habitats in European cities, yet young people raised in urban environments are increasingly disconnected from the natural world around them. As direct contact with nature diminishes across generations, so does the motivation to protect it. This phenomenon is called the extinction of experience, and especially affects urban youth. In London, where green space is unevenly distributed and often under pressure from overdevelopment, parks carry an outsized ecological and social role. Despite this, local youth are rarely positioned as active participants in their care. Climate anxiety is widespread among young people, yet institutional responses tend to be top-down, leaving them without meaningful tools for action.

3. Impact

The project empowered young people to engage with climate action through multispecies role-play and digital media, aiming to foster youth leadership and address local and global injustices. Participants used their imaginations to inhabit the body forms and explore the senses and life experience of other species and got acquainted with the SDG framing. The project also gained wider visibility as participant interviews and project material have fed into local news coverage and a Green Party candidate's campaign materials. Because the workshop methods, protocols and media templates were released as open resources, tools like the “Interspecies Character Toolkit” and “Ethical Facilitation Framework” remain available for reuse and possible standardisation elsewhere. Groundwork has been laid for facilitator training, curriculum integration and partnerships with educational bodies and local authorities, offering a scalable path to embed the approach elsewhere.

4. The story

Empower Youth Stewards of Felixstowe is an artistic intervention led by Ruth Catlow, co-founder of Furtherfield, building on the five-year immersive fiction The Treaty of Finsbury Park. Working with local youth leaders, the project invited young people to imagine and enact a more-than-human future for the park – one in which they hold real responsibility for its ecological health.

At the heart of the project is a workshop method designed to let participants develop deep, imaginative relationships with non-human beings, like insects, plants or fungi, and to embody these perspectives through roleplay, guided meditation and face-filter technology. By literally seeing the world through the eyes of a species in Felixstowe, participants developed empathy and ecological awareness in an accessible, playful format. These experiences were extended through a dedicated app and co-created media, which connected individual creative work to a wider civic narrative about the park's shared future.

5. The results

Across participants, the project produced a significant shift in confidence and sense of agency around environmental action. By the end of the project, all participants showed a quantifiable increase in their baseline confidence to act on climate change. The participants were profoundly impacted by the experience, with many reporting changed perspectives on their relationship to nature and their own capacity for civic stewardship. A toolkit which was developed through the project is now actively informing local authority youth strategies, demonstrating reach beyond the immediate community. The project also laid the foundation for a sustained youth leadership programme, feeding into Furtherfield's ongoing strategic initiative, and generating a body of co-created media and playable tools available for adoption by other groups.

6. Reflection

The project touched upon complex and emotional topics, creating the need for careful ethical reflection. As the participating youth experienced a deep emotional weight connected to climate-focused content, the project required ongoing facilitation and adaptation. The complexity of environmental justice concepts proved challenging for some participants, reflecting a broader gap in how climate issues are communicated to and with young people.

Yet these challenges deepened the methodology rather than undermining it. The approach of the project was grounded in imagination, play and embodied empathy, which proved especially effective precisely because it sidestepped abstract discourse in favour of lived relational experience. The project demonstrated that youth engagement with biodiversity does not require participants to have prior ecological knowledge; it requires space, trust, and creative tools that make the more-than-human world feel personally meaningful.

1. ATSI overview



Lucie Hernandez / Designing e-Textile Samplers

Links

- touchcraft.org.uk
- touchcrafttextiles (Instagram)

Communities

- Ealing Repair Cafe

Lead mentor organisation

- Royal College of Art

2. The challenge

The global fashion industry is among the most polluting in the world, responsible for roughly 10% of annual carbon emissions and an estimated 92 million tonnes of textile waste per year. In the United Kingdom alone, around 350,000 tonnes of clothing are sent to landfill annually. Fast fashion's business model is built on disposability and it continues largely unchallenged in communities like West London, where garment repair is a quietly countercultural act. Repair cafés like Ealing's are part of a grassroots circular economy movement that extends the life of clothing through skill-sharing and community care. Yet they are chronically underfunded, under-documented, and invisible to the policy institutions that could support or scale their work. Without digital tools, documented methods, or the ability to evidence their social and economic value, community repair groups struggle to attract the funding and institutional partnerships their impact deserves.

3. Impact

Designing e-Textile Practice Samplers (DeTS), in collaboration with the Ealing Repair Café, promoted sustainable fashion practices by increasing participation in clothes repair through community-led workshops and reintroducing traditional handcraft skills.
Because all co-produced resources were released open-access, they remain available for peer learning and reuse well beyond the Ealing Repair Café itself.) Short technique films and QR-linked samples were produced to circulate repair skills and community values online.

The project significantly increased volunteer confidence and participation in clothes repair, revitalising a local community network and exploring new income-generating opportunities.
DeTS leaves ERC itself stronger, with improved organisational clarity, communication and digital engagement that will outlast the funded period.

4. The story

Designing E-textile Practice Samplers (DeTS) was led by artist and researcher Lucie Hernandez. The project began with an ambition to develop e-textile samplers such as wearable electronics embedded in textiles but quickly and deliberately evolved. Listening closely to the community's actual values and priorities, Lucie redirected the work toward visible mending, upcycling, and digital storytelling. This pivot was doing exactly what participatory design should do.

Through weekly workshops and informal co-creation sessions, Lucie worked alongside volunteers to produce upcycled garments, filmed repair tutorials, and QR-coded mending guides that link physical objects to digital instructions. Accessible tools rooted in social media kept the process grounded in what the community could realistically sustain beyond the project. Participants also contributed to a fashion show, performed community mapping, and co-developed a new Instagram presence that gave the repair cafe in Ealing a deliberate and values-driven public voice for the first time.

5. The results

DeTS produced twelve QR-linked repair technique videos, now in active use by the Ealing Repair Cafe and shared with wider audiences online. The project handed the community's Instagram account to a volunteer lead, building internal capacity to sustain digital storytelling independently. A circular business model was introduced to help ERC begin evidencing its own social and economic impact – a crucial step toward institutional legibility. Strategically, the project built connections to the London Textile Action Plan, ReLondon, and Ealing Council, positioning the repair cafe within a broader policy ecosystem for the first time. Volunteers reported significant gains in teaching confidence and public engagement skills. The co-created materials – tutorials, textile artefacts, and social media content – became vehicles for the Ealing Repair Cafe to communicate their ethos and approach to repair culture, strengthening both their organisational identity and their reach as a knowledge hub for other repair groups.

6. Reflection

The most instructive moment in DeTS was its early pivot. The original proposal centred on wearable electronics, but the interest of volunteers at the Ealing repair cafe lay more in mending, reuse, and the social culture of repair. Lucie's decision to follow that signal rather than impose the initial brief was the foundation for everything that came after. It illustrates a challenge inherent to artist-led community work: arriving with genuine technical expertise and creative ambition, while remaining truly open to being redirected by the community you serve.

Practical difficulties like scheduling around variable volunteer availability or initial misalignment of expectations required ongoing flexibility. But the iterative co-design process, grounded in mutual respect and shared creativity, proved that these tensions are productive when handled with care. The project offers a replicable model for others working at the intersection of sustainable fashion, repair culture, and community action: start with listening, let the community reshape the brief, and build tools they can carry forward without you.

1. ATSI overview



Marina Wainer / Synocene

Links

- marinaestelawainer.com
- marina-wainer (LinkedIn)
- marina_wainer (Instagram)

Communities

- Ulvenhout forest residents

Lead mentor organisation

- Waag FutureLab

2. The challenge

Ulvenhout Forest, a protected Natura 2000 site near Breda, sits at the intersection of competing pressures: conservation imperatives, recreational use, and the creeping influence of algorithmic management tools applied without public scrutiny or ethical frameworks. Across Europe, AI is increasingly being deployed in ecological monitoring and land-use decision-making – yet the communities most directly connected to these landscapes are rarely invited to interrogate how these technologies represent, and potentially misrepresent, the natural world. At the same time, the concept of the Anthropocene – the geological era defined by human dominance over planetary systems has entered scientific and public discourse without producing the perceptual shift it demands. We know, intellectually, that we are not the centre of the living world. But we have few tools for actually experiencing what it might mean to think, speak, and imagine from beyond a human vantage point.

3. Impact

Synocene–Beyond the Anthropocene (SBA) uniquely explored more-than-human perspectives through AI-mediated workshops conducted in Ulvenhout Forest, Netherlands. This initiative deployed speculative design and AI chatbots to foster empathy for non-human entities within forest ecosystems, addressing the tensions between nature preservation and human use.
The co-created AI characters representing non-human forest beings offered narrative detachment, facilitating debate around environmental pressures and technology. By encouraging an experience that was not only reflective but also sensory, the perception of forests was altered. Thereby, an increased ecological awareness was gained as well as a novel understanding of AI as a tool for nature-based dialogue.

The project successfully moved beyond traditional outreach, employing decentralised co-creation strategies and fostering genuine participation, empowering the community. SBA critically engaged with contemporary discourses on sustainability and digital ethics, aligning with SDGs 11, 12, 13, and 15.

4. The story

Synocene, led by French-Argentinian artist Marina Wainer, invited communities in Breda to walk into Ulvenhout Forest and to listen differently. Participants of all ages were given reflective masks and binaural headsets and guided through the forest before gathering at a nearby venue to encounter five AI chatbot personas built from Natura 2000 biodiversity data and local ecological knowledge. Each persona gave voice to a forest species or ecosystem element, allowing participants to hold speculative conversations with the more-than-human world. Crucially, Wainer did not simply translate English prompts, but created a custom Dutch language model and addressed the embedded cultural and linguistic biases that emerged. A fifth chatbot persona was left open for participants to create themselves. Across eight multilingual workshop sessions, the project fostered what it called the “community table”: a non-hierarchical, intergenerational space where forest rangers, school children, artists, and policy professionals sat alongside one another as equals.



5. The results

Synocene produced five co-created AI forest personas, a Dutch-language voice-and-text AI interface, and a growing ethical AI design template now available for adoption by other practitioners. Eight inclusive, multilingual workshop sessions were completed. New partnerships were established with Nieuwe Veste Breda, local schools, forest managers, and cultural institutions. Among the community participants was a European Commission policy designer who engaged not as an observer but as an ordinary member of the group, an outcome that speaks directly to the project's potential for institutional influence. The work has been published in the proceedings of CHI 2024, the world's leading conference on human-computer interaction, and cited in a 2025 article in Nature on the science-arts policy interface. It also received coverage in National Geographic España. Plans are underway for a public sound installation exhibition.



6. Reflection

Synocene surfaced tensions that are likely to confront any project placing AI at the centre of ecological and community work. Translating the project into Dutch revealed significant biases embedded in the AI's language model that might have gone unnoticed had the project defaulted to English. This became one of the project's most productive insights: AI is not a neutral tool, and its cultural assumptions require active critique, not passive acceptance. Navigating participant understanding of what fictional AI means also demanded sustained facilitation.



The compressed three-month timeline limited the depth of partnerships with local environmental organisations. Yet the project's afterlife suggests that the foundations laid were solid: academic publication, policy engagement, and an ongoing exhibition plan indicate that Synocene has opened a conversation that will continue well beyond its VOICE timeframe. The project offers a compelling and replicable model for using speculative AI not as a technological solution, but as a tool for ecological imagination.



1. ATSI overview



Gayil Nalls / World Sensorium

Links

- worldsensorium.com
- gayilnalls.net
- worldsensorium (Instagram)
- worldsensorium (Facebook)
- World Sensorium Conservancy (Youtube)

Communities

- Community leaders in a forum set in County Kerry

Lead mentor organisation

- University College Dublin

2. The challenge

The peatlands in Ireland are among the oldest and most biodiverse ecosystems in Northern Europe, and they are disappearing. Drainage, extraction, and climate-driven policy change have erased vast stretches of bogland that took thousands of years to form, and which store twice as much carbon per hectare as forest. Ireland's recent restrictions on domestic peat burning are a necessary climate response, yet they carry a cost that conservation discourse rarely acknowledges: the loss of a deeply embedded sensory and cultural heritage. The aroma of burning peat has been officially recognised as Ireland's most distinctive cultural scent: a living link between landscape, memory, and identity that no policy instrument is designed to protect. When a scent disappears from daily life, something more than atmosphere is lost: an entire register of cultural belonging goes with it, largely unnoticed, unremarked, and unrecorded.

3. Impact

World Sensorium Ireland (WSI) explored olfactory heritage as a critical component of environmental awareness, cultural identity, and community participation. Intervening in the decline of Ireland's bog ecosystems and traditional peat-burning practices, the project used ethnobotanical research, ethnographic interviews, scent-based community activation, and documentary filmmaking, resulting in a full professional cinematic release premiered in S.Kerry, presenting local perspectives back to the community and continuing the dialogue World Sensorium Ireland sought to initiate. This was later screened at the Irish Film Institute.

Artists translated complex environmental and technological issues into accessible, culturally resonant forms, contributing to Europe's olfactory heritage. A symposium and scent-reactive intervention enabled local voices to shape discussions on aromatic heritage while connecting audiences emotionally to key issues of loss and the need for preservation of our natural world. Furthermore, the World Sensorium 2025 aromatic formula, comprised of a bespoke botanical mix of 27 culturally significant plants, along with the digital tool used to gather community views on those plants and their symbolic and real heritage, remain as a managed, reusable asset held by the Nalls Studio and its EU partners.

A notable feature was a national vote to select Ireland's most culturally significant aromatic plant, fostering dialogue around place, loss, and adaptation, and aligning with SDGs 11, 12, 13, and 17.

4. The story

World Sensorium, led by interdisciplinary artist and theorist Gayil Nalls, brought together community leaders, ecologists, farmers, storytellers and heritage stakeholders in Kerry to document, celebrate and collectively mourn Ireland's endangered olfactory landscape. Working through sensory ethnography, oral history, and participatory film, the project treated scent not as an aesthetic detail but as a primary carrier of cultural sovereignty: the right of a community to its own sensory world.

Participants engaged in scent memory exercises tied to native flora and peat, contributed interviews and field recordings, and attended a focus group event that mapped Kerry's aromatic ecology. A national QR-coded digital poll was deployed to identify Ireland's most significant aromatic plant, gathering public input at scale. All of this fed into a cultural documentary, screened at its world premiere alongside a participatory symposium that activated the film as a site of live community dialogue. Scent cards and VR360 footage extended the sensory experience beyond the screening room.

5. The results



The world premiere documentary screening drew 88 attendees and was followed by a participatory symposium that generated substantive dialogue between generations and disciplines. The film has since been submitted to eleven film festivals, extending its reach far beyond its originating community. A national poll successfully identified Ireland's most significant aromatic plant, a small act of collective ecological naming with real cultural weight. Policy contacts were established with the UNESCO Cultural Sector and the Irish Department of Heritage, positioning the project within conversations about what counts as heritage worth protecting. Local educators and tourism professionals commented on the film's value for curriculum development and cultural programming. Dissemination through Plantings magazine and alignment with ongoing UNESCO dialogues have amplified the project's visibility at international scale, demonstrating that a community's sensory heritage can register as a legitimate concern in institutional and policy settings.

6. Reflection

World Sensorium worked with a medium (scent) that is genuinely resistant to conventional documentation. Smell cannot be filmed, transcribed, or archived in the ways that visual or textual heritage can. This is both the project's central challenge and its most important argument: if we cannot document sensory heritage, we risk not noticing when it disappears. Remote coordination difficulties and the logistical demands of community fieldwork in rural Kerry added further practical strain. Conveying these sensory experiences to audiences who have not stood on a burning bog requires creative translation, and not every participant found an immediate point of entry.

Conclusion

VOICE concludes as a strong manifestation of the value of artist-led interventions in addressing local eco-social urgencies. Building on validated methodological frameworks and ethical practices, we deployed 20 Art-Technology-Society Interactions (ATSI) each of which demonstrated the capacity and impact of artistic thinking for connecting communities and building the agency to take climate action, within their local environments. Having aimed to support learning, adaptation, and recognition of context-specific complexities, the project on a broader level has contributed to cultural, ecological, and social value, while also producing policy-relevant insights.

VOICE's impact can be summarised on three levels: (i) contribution to artistic practices with capacity building and development in socially engaged art, (ii) contribution to environmental grassroots activation with communities and broader stakeholder groups through art, and (iii) cross-cutting capacity around knowledge production and valorisation with clear policy-informing outcomes.

Contribution to artistic practices with capacity building and development in socially engaged art

The ATSI pilot phase functioned as a dynamic learning environment for artists, mentors, host organisations, and participating communities. The highly relational, adaptive and embedded nature of the work created forms of learning that went beyond knowledge transfer and emerged through experimentation, co-creation, and reflexive practice.
Artists reported growth in their ability to facilitate complex collaborations, negotiate institutional cultures, and embed evaluation in practice. Several developed new competencies such as building legal or technological tools, supporting youth leadership, and translating ecological concepts into sensory literacy. Their reflections underscored the importance of adaptability, ethical sensitivity, and trust-building in socially engaged art. They benefited from support through mentorship and expert guidance, which played a critical role by offering reflective space and strategic direction as they progressed in their creative and research trajectories, as well as community-based efforts.

Artist-led intervention models enabled the selected artists to conceptualise ideas, pilot existing technologies in new ways or prototype technologies that respond directly to community and stakeholder needs. By creating temporary commons, these schemes provide platforms for sharing, remixing, and disseminating innovative practices of valorisation across diverse communities of practice (CoP) and knowledge cultures. New competencies were built through the transfer of theoretically and empirically established methods of Inclusive Design and pCr. These frameworks enabled artists and communities to co-design social solutions that address inequity, promote inclusion, and improve outcomes across open, social, commercial, and governmental innovation. When artists and citizens are jointly trained in ID methods, they are able to expand the collective understanding of what is possible and necessary to build a more equitable and sustainable world.

Contribution to environmental grassroots activation with communities and broader stakeholder groups through art

The ATSI model was deliberately designed to bring together community, technology and arts-based methods as a coherent structure through which artist interventions would be situated in urgencies and concerns with community relevance. These dimensions were not incidental but purposeful choices. Communities were central to eco-social practice. Technology was inevitable, but was approached critically rather than normatively. And methods supported and guided interactions.

With respect to methods, across the pilots, socially engaged art practices placed co-creation, collaboration, and deep community involvement at the centre of their work. Artists successfully developed strategies that raised environmental awareness and embedded sustainable practices through community activation, individual inclusion, and informed, relational approaches to policymaking. Several participants reported that their voices were not only heard but also became part of shaping solutions and decision-making processes.

Technologies such as sensors, AI dialogue systems, QR codes, and bioplastic protocols were used not simply as artistic media but as critical tools for engagement, reflection, and participation. All pilots demonstrated the value of combining artistic, scientific, and technological approaches, often generating new knowledge and hybrid practices.

These interdisciplinary collaborations were supported by critical and culturally sensitive approaches to ethical community intervention. While the projects produced tangible artistic outcomes – including performances, exhibitions, toolkits, and digital platforms – their impact also extended to less visible but equally important emotional, cognitive, and relational changes. Participants reported increased confidence, strengthened community bonds, new skills, and greater awareness of environmental and social issues. Host organisations and communities gained valuable insight into how arts-led approaches can complement more conventional engagement strategies, with several developing new understandings of accessibility, inclusion, and community-centred innovation.

Cross-cutting topics around knowledge production, competencies and valorisation with clear policy-informing outcomes

Across the pilots, innovation, creativity, and cultural expression played a central role in translating complex environmental, scientific, and social issues into locally relevant and emotionally meaningful experiences. Through storytelling, performance, sensory practices, and co-creation, artists made abstract systems – from biodiversity and legal frameworks to laboratory protocols – more accessible and relatable. This highlights the epistemic role of creativity, not only as a means of communication but as a way of producing, sharing, and validating knowledge. Many projects also contributed to raising climate literacy, using creative methods such as multispecies role-play, sensory engagement, and heritage-based approaches to foster awareness of environmental challenges. However, the pilots also demonstrated that translating awareness into sustained behavioural change requires engagement beyond the duration of a short-term project.

Technology functioned throughout the programme as both a practical tool and a critical framework for engagement. Open-source sensors, AI-mediated dialogues, QR codes, voice recognition systems, and other digital platforms expanded participation and accessibility while simultaneously encouraging reflection on their ethical, social, and ecological implications. Equally important were non-digital sensory approaches involving sound, scent, and haptic experiences, which enabled participants to encounter ecological issues in embodied and non-linear ways. These methods often challenged anthropocentric perspectives and encouraged empathy with more-than-human worlds. Several pilots, such as Synocene, RiverSync, VOYAGE Part 2, More then Person River, and Crops Refuge, explored ecological justice through multispecies perspectives and non-human voices, raising important questions about representation, agency, and ethics in eco-social practice.

The pilots also highlighted the importance of language, translation, and intercultural practice in supporting meaningful participation. Multilingual facilitation, accessible communication methods, informal digital platforms, and culturally sensitive approaches helped reduce barriers to engagement, particularly within transnational contexts. At the same time, the projects revealed both opportunities and challenges of working across diverse cultural and linguistic settings. Successful intercultural collaboration depended on trust-building, contextual awareness, and the ability to adapt methods to local needs and circumstances.

Questions of power, participation, and authorship emerged as critical themes across the programme. The pilots demonstrated that deep co-creation is most effective when communities have genuine agency in shaping processes and outcomes. Projects that allowed for flexible adaptation to community priorities tended to generate more sustainable forms of engagement and ownership, while more artist-led or time-constrained approaches often limited the depth of participation. Artists themselves engaged in ongoing reflexive practice, critically examining their own roles, assumptions, and responsibilities while moving between positions as facilitators, mediators, and co-creators. This reflexivity proved essential for maintaining accountability, responding to emerging challenges, and adapting projects to changing circumstances.

A key learning for valorisation was that value creation extends beyond tangible outputs and should also be understood as the cultivation of relationships, trust, and shared ownership of meaning. Open-source tools, adaptable methods, and modular processes demonstrated the greatest potential for transferability and longer-term use. The pilots further revealed that while the six-month timeframe enabled experimentation and rapid prototyping, deeper trust-building, community ownership, and lasting impact require longer-term engagement. This tension between innovation and sustained embedding will be an important consideration for the next phase of the programme