

CREATIVE PRODUCERS INTERNATIONAL

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1. INTRODUCTION

"Our task was to inspire motivation and pathways for making change and to facilitate an open sharing of knowledge and skills. But more important than this, was that the Creative Producers came to know, respect and like one another, invested in the process of sharing their collective resources to help each other do great things." **Pete Vance, Lead Producer – Creative Producers International, Watershed**

Creative Producers International was an international talent development programme which worked with 15 Creative Producers based in cities across the globe. Their areas of expertise ranged from contemporary art, placemaking and community engagement through to corporate collaboration, urban innovation and social activism.

Watershed, with our partners UWE Bristol, [insert project partners], have spent the last three years asking urgent questions about place, identity and public space, and exploring how arts and culture can be empowered to take a leading role in the development of our future cities. Our aim was to form and amplify a network of connected ecologies of practice that influence, challenge and support each other, and build an international bank of knowledge and experience around city change.

This document is aimed at a global audience. We hope it is insightful and useful for a wide range of readers, those who might identify as Creative Producers, who are curious and passionate about connecting and building creative networks; cultural organisations who are inspired to support and work with Creative Producers; or those working in non-creative industries interested in connecting with the cultural economy in their cities. It contains our reflections, and actionable tools for you to use in your own practice.

Who we are

Creative producers international was created and led by watershed. Watershed champions engagement, imagination and ingenuity, working locally, nationally and globally from our home in Bristol, UK. Our building houses an independent cinema, the Pervasive Media Studio, a café and bar.

Pervasive Media Studio is a partnership between Watershed, UWE Bristol and the University of Bristol. It is a world-leading research lab and offers free space to a thriving community of around 160 artists, technologists, start ups, researchers and industry exploring work at the intersection of art, technology and society.

Our project, Playable City, puts people and play at the heart of future cities around the world.

The Creative Economy Unit, part of UWE Bristol's Digital Cultures Research Centre, is a research team dedicated to exploring new ways of understanding the impacts that creative work has on the world.

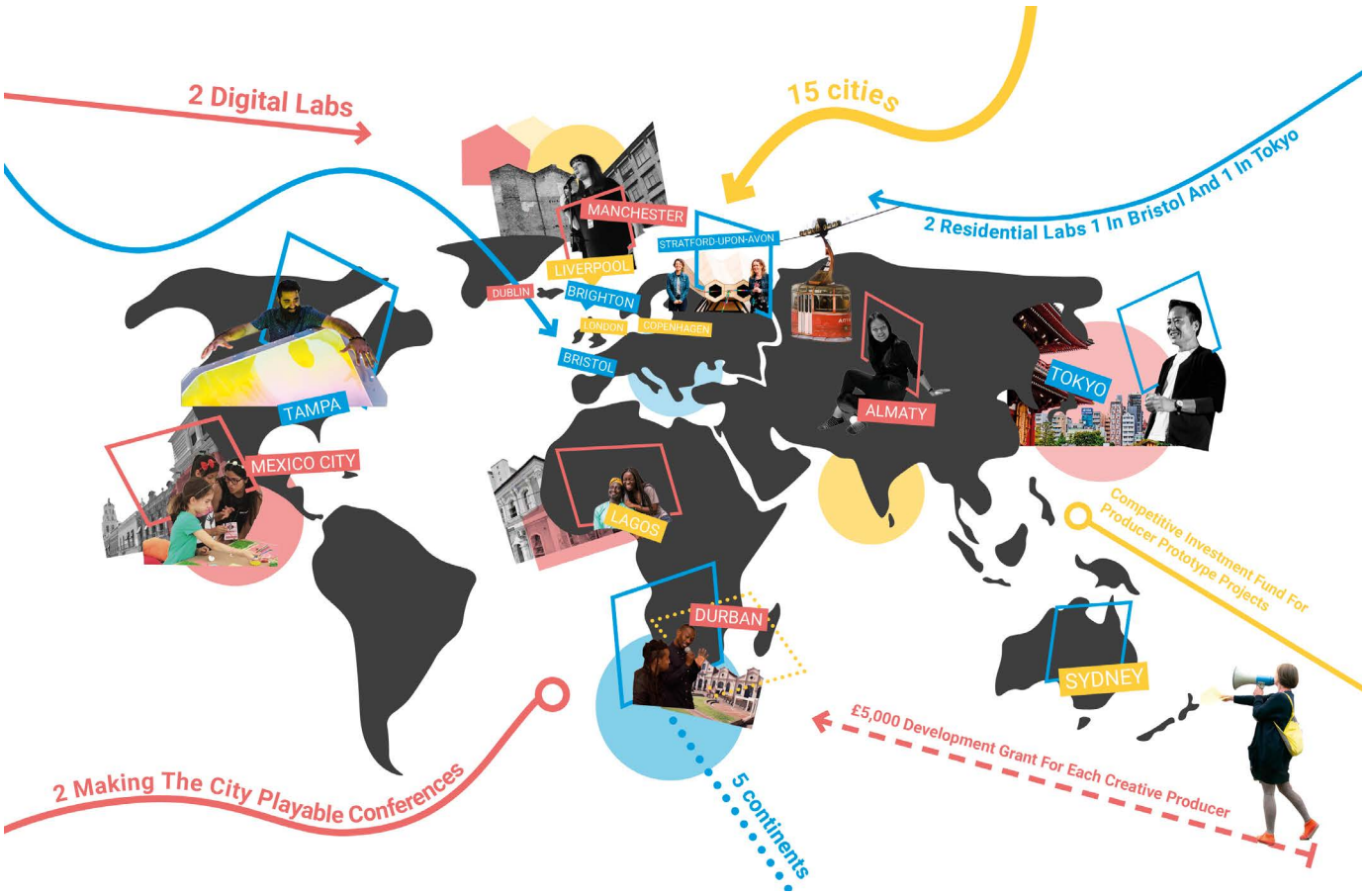
THE TEAM
Pete Vance (Producer, Watershed)
Hilary O'Shaughnessy (Research Lead, Watershed)
Joanna Lansdowne (Executive Producer, Watershed)
Clare Reddington (Chief Executive, Watershed)
Jonathan Dovey (Professor of Screen Media, UWE Bristol)
Simon Moreton (Senior Research Fellow, UWE Bristol)

OUR PARTNERS
Arts Council England
British Council
British Council Japan
Laboratoria Para La Ciudad, Mexico
Lagos Urban Network
Manchester International Festival
Rhizomatics Studio, Japan
Royal Shakespeare Company
Somerset House
Unlimited



Programme Overview

"Our task was to inspire motivation and pathways for making change and to facilitate an open sharing of knowledge and skills. But more important than this, was that the Creative Producers came to know, respect and like one another, invested in the process of sharing their collective resources to help each other do great things." **Pete Vance, Lead Producer – Creative Producers International, Watershed**



We recruited a cohort of Creative Producers from all over the world and ran a programme of peer support, Labs, conferences and commissions. We built an international bank of knowledge and experience around identity and public space, privilege and play, value and impact.

We ran a 3 year professional development programme for Creative Producers across five continents. Find out how we did it.

1. INTRODUCTION

"We can create buildings with nice facilities but it is hard to find people who can both develop programmes and collaborate with artists, which is where the real differences are made" **– Manami Yuasa, British Council Japan**

More than half of the world's population now lives in cities, and how our cities grow, adapt and thrive is becoming the key issue of our age. Yet conversation around the future city is still more focused on policy and technology than people and culture. Artists and cultural organisations play a unique role in re-imagining the cities of the future, ensuring citizens are engaged, that public spaces are open and that infrastructure solutions are people-centred, appropriate and textured. We believe the Creative Producer sits at the heart of this possibility for change.

For over 10 years, Watershed have pursued this belief by growing a team of Producers in Bristol, by nurturing emerging Producers from around the UK and by reflecting on what we do with research partners. Four years ago, we began an ambitious journey to create an international talent development programme, bringing together Creative Producers from cities across the globe. Building on Watershed's Playable City work, we curated 15 incredible leaders working across contemporary art, placemaking, community engagement, corporate collaboration, urban innovation and social activism, and set out to learn and make change together.

We asked questions about identity and public space, about privilege and play, about value and impact. Our aim was to form and amplify a network of connected practice and build an international bank of knowledge and experience around city change. This document seeks to capture, codify and share some of our approach and some of that learning – we hope it is insightful and useful and helps you to build your own practice of change.

I would like to thank Arts Council England, British Council, UWE Bristol, Manchester International Festival, RSC, Situations, Somerset House, Unlimited, Future Lagos and The Laboratorio para la Ciudad for partnering with us on this incredible journey. Thank you to the Watershed team who shepherded the participants with incredible care and kindness, and most of all thank you to our Creative Producers, who stepped up to the challenge, and who continue to amaze us with their generosity and brilliance.

We obviously didn't imagine we would be releasing this report in a time of global lockdown where the values that sit at the heart of our work would be so constrained and yet so vital – wherever we are in the world. As our cities re-open and reassesses what is important, it is clear that the human desire to be together in public space will be more important than ever, and we will need Creative Producers to shape and stitch and poke and guard the desire for change.

Clare Reddington
CEO Watershed

About Us

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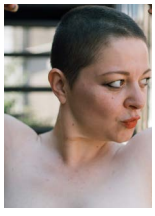
2. MEET THE COHORT

Creative Producers International brought together a group of talented Creative Producers, united them as a single network and provided them with time, space and financial support to step away from the pressures of their day-to-day professional lives.

We wanted to facilitate a professional development journey that was rooted in a shared set of values, where the cohort could share their knowledge, skills, successes and failures, and sensitively interrogate one another's practice. We wanted to collectively explore the value each of the Creative Producers brought to their creative projects, to better understand the type of projects they were passionate about creating, and how we could support one another to deliver that work.

When we were recruiting the cohort, we considered the importance of both innovation and friction. We wanted the participants to demonstrate a shared passion for creativity, but also possess a divergent range of perspectives and skills that would allow for the group to learn from one another and, where necessary, challenge and encourage one another in new directions. The ambition was to curate a group of individuals who could come together to co-create solutions to challenges, and expand their practices in a safe and supported environment. We curated a cohort not just diverse in place, but also in practice and methodology.

Seven of our cohort were nominated by our partner organisations, and eight were recruited through an open call. We looked for Creative Producers who demonstrated a distinct enthusiasm for peer-to-peer learning and collaboration, as well as a strong desire to deliver meaningful and accessible work in city spaces. The result was a varied mixture of practitioners across the world – Mexico City, Mexico; Tampa, USA (later Brooklyn); Dublin, Ireland; Liverpool, Manchester, Stratford-upon Avon, Bristol, London and Brighton, UK; Copenhagen, Denmark (later Santa Fe, USA); Almaty, Kazakhstan; Lagos, Nigeria; Durban, South Africa; Tokyo, Japan; and Sydney, Australia. Their expertise ranged from contemporary art, placemaking and community engagement, through to corporate collaboration, urban innovation and social activism.



Alice Holland, Brighton, UK
Alice is a producer and theatre maker with a particular interest in subversive political art, diversity and equality, pageantry and underground culture. She launches POWERHOUSE in 2020, a festival of routes to power for womxn and non-binary people.



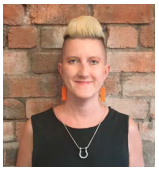
Anel Moldakhmetova, Almaty, Kazakhstan
Anel is a cultural projects curator and creative producer at Light+Space studio, specializing on urban design and city development projects.



Bruce Ikeda, Tokyo, Japan
Bruce is a president and the creative studio producer of JKD Collective. He specialises in production of audio-visual content for the new era.



Karishma Rafferty, London, UK
Karishma is Curator: Public Realm and Partnerships at Somerset House and works on large scale public art commissions, as well as festivals, exhibitions and events.



Kate Stewart, Liverpool, UK
Kate is a creative business practitioner with a wealth of experience in the design, regeneration and learning sectors. She supports projects and people to create public spaces, buildings and community events.



Leticia Lozano, Mexico City, Mexico
Leticia is the Creative Director and Co-founder of MACIA Estudio, a transdisciplinary practice combining architecture, experience design, play and applied research. Previously, she led the action-research area Playful City within Mexico City government's innovation lab (LabCDMX).



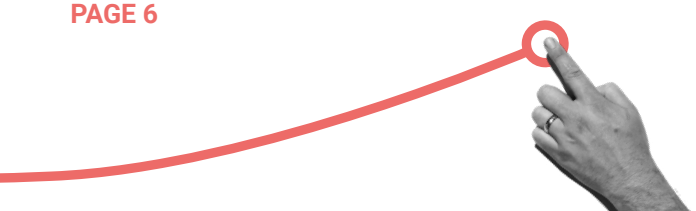
Louisa Davies, Stratford-upon-Avon, UK (now Birmingham, UK) Louisa is now Senior Louisa is now Senior Producer, Cultural Programme & Live Sites for Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games. During Creative Producers International, she led on public and creative programmes at the Royal Shakespeare Company and Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.



Luke Emery, Bristol, UK
Luke is the Studio Producer at the Pervasive Media Studio, which hosts a brilliant community of over 100 artists, creative companies, technologists and academics exploring experience design and creative technology.



Malaika Toyo, Lagos, Nigeria
Malaika is the founder of Made Culture, a project management and communications consultancy. Her work focuses on delivering high social impact projects within multiple sectors including cities and urban development, creative industries and technology..





Michelle Browne, Dublin, Ireland
Michelle is an artist, curator and lecturer. Her work focuses on socially engaged practice and performance, often bringing people together to activate public spaces in ways that question their design and uses, while imagining new futures for the built environment.



Paula le Dieu, Sydney, Australia
Paula is Creative Director and Co-founder of SimpleMotion.com. She has worked with organisations such as Arts Council England, British Film Institute and BBC.



Russel Hlongwane, Durban, South Africa
Russel is a cultural producer and creative industries consultant. His area of interest is the intersection of culture, heritage, tradition and modernity in South Africa with particular emphasis on black subjectivity.



Ryan Swanson, Tampa, Florida, USA (now Brooklyn, NYC, USA)
Ryan is a designer, place maker, and founder/creative director of the award-winning design studio, The Urban Conga.



Sarah Brin, Copenhagen, Denmark, (now Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA) Sarah is a creative producer who develops strategies for bringing unprecedented creative and technological experiences to life. Previously, she led business development for immersive experience design company Meow Wolf and the creative technology residency at Autodesk's Pier 9 Workshop.



Sarah Hiscock, Manchester, UK
Sarah is Engagement Manager for Manchester International Festival. She is passionate about cross art form practice and co-producing work with the communities of Greater Manchester.



3. What is Creative Producing?

A creative professional who acts as a broker forging collaborations and relationships, connects parts of [a] network together, puts people in touch with resources, identifies advantageous development routes for creative people, and frequently translates between different parts of the ecosystem where professional languages and approaches to work often differ. **(Network for Creative Enterprise, Final Report 2019 p.18)**

3.1 Creativity, culture and city change from the bottom up

Creative Producers International was designed to illuminate the work of, and respond to the needs of, a newly emergent category of creative practitioners called Creative Producers. We define their role as:
A creative professional who acts as a broker forging collaborations and relationships, connects parts of [a] network together, puts people in touch with resources, identifies advantageous development routes for creative people, and frequently translates between different parts of the ecosystem where professional languages and approaches to work often differ. (Network for Creative Enterprise, Final Report 2019 p.18)

We see these skills applied across a number of sectors, drawing together creative practice and cultural organisations, to realise projects in cities and communities, with artists, businesses, policymakers and more.

Fundamental to Creative Producers International was an exploration of how Creative Producers, as a distinctive kind of cultural professional, can effect city change. The programme drew on over ten years of work by Watershed and its partners into understanding and illuminating the impacts that Creative Producers make to the world. We have had a strong sense of the importance of Creative Producing for a long time but wanted to learn more about how the idea was understood internationally and aimed to do so through international exchanges with cultural organisations from a number of cities across the world – notably Lagos, Nigeria; Recife, Brazil and Tokyo, Japan.

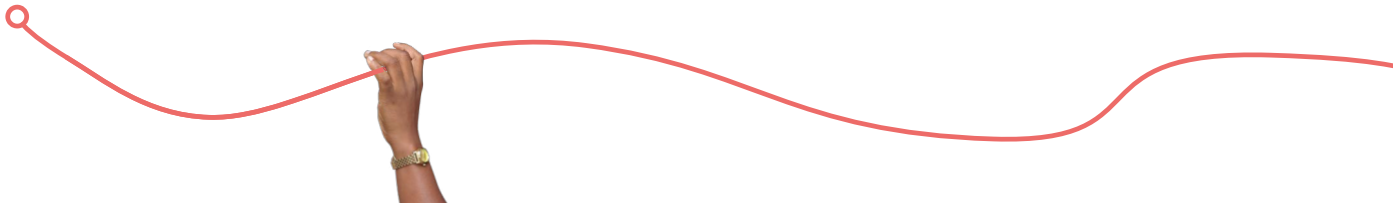
Our intention was for Creative Producers International to consolidate existing international relationships, and build new ones, in order to explore how Creative Producers generate grassroots city change in a global context. Our conviction that cities across the world need Creative Producers to instigate change emerged from within a very specific UK cultural policy context, so we aimed to design a flexible and responsive programme to create a shared space for organisations and individuals to learn from one another, collectively stretch our practice, and explore how creative producing was already unfolding in various international contexts..

A collective and collaborative approach to cultural practice feels ever more important as the question of how our cities grow, adapt and thrive continues to become more pressing. Problems like climate change, searing global inequality, social division, displacement and militarisation are among the many seemingly insoluble challenges of the twenty-first century. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has further demonstrated the fragility of economic ecosystems. The rate of social, economic, political, technological, and environmental change in the twenty-first century is often overwhelming. Cities all over the world are booming in both planned and unplanned ways and, while emergent digital technologies have been argued to offer solutions of all kinds, these are often talked about in terms of 'big data' processing, such as systems to monitor or ease traffic, provide surveillance, or otherwise create 'frictionless' cities. This means that the conversation around the future city is more focused on policy and 'smart' technology than people, culture and creativity.

The challenge is further compounded by the way that creativity has often been mobilised by urban development imperatives in western countries as a means to promote economic growth, rather than address deeply entrenched social divides. This is because creativity is assumed to have an impact on how neighbourhoods regenerate, how markets expand, and how health and wellbeing, tourism, education, social innovation and sustainability can be improved through its market function. Yet, more often than not, these top-down strategies for creative regeneration lead to gentrification and high levels of inequality. Creative work is increasingly precarious, and many cities are often compelled to market themselves as destination cities where a creative lifestyle can be purchased rather than created.

We don't believe that this is the only blueprint for the future. While we know these problems have no single solution, we believe messy, cooperative interventions produce the best possible responses. We believe mobilising and connecting people through the lens of creativity and culture provides a real opportunity to open up more democratic, grassroots responses to contemporary challenges. We are exploring an approach that harnesses creativity, technology, culture and city infrastructures, mobilising direct dialogue and collaboration with the grassroots, to grow messy solutions to intractable problems.

We therefore believe that artists and cultural organisations have a unique opportunity to help re-imagine the cities of the future, ensuring citizens are engaged, public spaces are open and infrastructure solutions are people-centred, appropriate and textured. Creative work can change the conditions of what is possible by offering encounters with other ways of thinking, being and living through new imaginative visions. Creativity can give voice to people in ways that changes their experience of themselves in the world, and in so doing they can see



and be seen by others differently. Playful approaches to creative work encourage participation and reduce barriers to entry which can in turn empower a wider range of people to act creatively in tackling the big challenges we face.

The path to a better future is not straightforward, but through collaboration, co-creation and participation, we feel there are opportunities to meet the challenges that face us. This programme has been based around the belief that to make socially impactful, creative work many different kinds of networks must be mobilised. These might be governmental, third sector, education, technological or cultural or beyond, but what is needed are the right kinds of creative talent to connect, amplify, and move forward creative and inclusive responses to our messy world. This is where we think Creative Producers are already playing a role.

3.2 Creative Producers

Creative Producing is a category of creative work where participatory practices, creative work, political change, technology and innovation intersect. It isn't a new concept – producers have occupied a privileged, though often backstage, presence in the traditional creative industries of many countries. In Theatre, Film, and Broadcast, producers have usually been in charge of the management of relationships, whether between investors and artists, between technical production and creative direction, or between 'the talent' and the delivery of a finished article. Producing has been a key caretaking function for a whole project, ensuring delivery on time and on budget. There are other roles such as the contemporary art curator, that are deemed more as critical visionaries, but they are often still in service to the artist, the gallery, or the museum.

In this sense, the role of the creative auteur has been reserved for directors, writers or artists. It excludes the agents who practically realise ideas, curate conceptual and meaningful connections between networks of people, and whose own talents are essential for the realisation of cultural work. So while public and stakeholder understanding about Creative Producers has grown across the UK creative and cultural sector, support for Creative Producer as a unique set of talents and a unique family of practices is still rare. As Kate Tyndall, freelance arts consultant and author of The Producers: Alchemists of the Impossible, wrote in 2007: "the Creative Producer is a role that has struggled to establish itself in the arts. Yet at this time of massive social, cultural and environmental change, perhaps we have never needed them more."

We are seeking, along with many others, to rethink the definition of producer as a caretaker, both in our home context of the UK and internationally. We want to argue for the Creative Producer to be recognised as having a skillset in their own right; as a role that mobilises the inherent creativity, power, and potential for change that comes from connecting people, institutions, and places together. Writer and cultural commentator, John Holden, identified producers as key connectors in the ecology of culture:

"…[They] put people and resources together, and move energy around the ecology. Producers and impresarios have traditionally undertaken this role, gathering together money, artists, technicians, venues, musicians, and whatever else it takes to make a cultural event happen. These connectors have to have an intimate knowledge of the micro-operations of their field and they need strong and eclectic networks." – (Holden 2015:30)

These roles aren't only useful – they are vital. In a complex world of interconnected stakeholder networks, addressing messy challenges requires people with the Creative Producing skillset to bring together the resources and the people to make change happen. But to do this effectively and in a global context, we need to learn from one another, at home, and abroad.

3.3. Motivations and Skills

Creative Producing is a tricky skillset to pin down. Not only is it rarely seen as a job in its own right, many of the skills, attributes and approaches are performed by people in roles with all sorts of different job titles, from consultant to project manager, to stage manager, to curator or agent. As such, we have felt for a long time that being a Creative Producer is as much about an orientation to work as it is about a specific job title or category: it's a way of seeing the world and realising solutions underpinned by a series of critical capacities rooted in creativity, a sense of place, the importance of relationships and communication, the ability to take risks, and the chance to advocate for change.

To find out more about what makes a Creative Producer, we asked our cohort about the motivations that lie behind their work, the skillsets and approaches that they use on a daily basis, and the outcomes they hope to achieve. We have grouped their responses under loose headings but, of course, these motivations, skills and outcomes weave and overlap with one another.

Motivations
The Creative Producers International cohort are values driven and use cultural activity to generate change.

Kate Stewart (Liverpool) roots her practice in, "protest, citizen-led stuff, engagement and development of community."

Russel Hlongwane (Durban) sees his practice as being centred around the transformative power of culture:

"Coming from a very working class, low-income, background, the arts, in many ways, opened my world and provided a set of answers to existential questions that I had. It also allowed my voice to echo across the wider community and provided me with a productive way of occupying the world."



Ryan Swanson (Tampa, now Brooklyn) is motivated by a desire to change how public space is envisaged and used in the US, using open-ended play as a means of connecting people:

"Play is such a way to bond people and get people to just connect…I feel that it should be an essential part of urban development and design. Right now…there's a lot of this mindset of separation between people because they're different…looking at how play can begin to bring people together and not separate them, and how important that is within the public space, is vital."

Skills

Creative Producers are often risk takers, forming networks that are sometimes temporary and sometimes long-lasting to realise projects that may be innovative, politically charged and about seeing social change happen, sometimes in very challenging contexts. Using the unpredictable and hard to manage resources of creativity, while being visible behind the scenes as the connector in a network is not without its challenges. To work successfully, Creative Producers employ a wide range of capacities and skills, which the Creative Producers speak to below.

Flexibility and adaptability

Flexibility is a thread that connects so much of a what a Creative Producer does.

Sarah Brin (Copenhagen, now London) suggests:

"interpersonal skills, flexibility, the ability to roll with the punches" is vital. This is because, "in lots of organisations I've worked in, things change all the time. And not being precious and having the ability to understand what is really important and what you really need to make a fuss about if something gets changed or goes away is really important…"

Creative Producers' flexibility allows them to adapt to different roles as necessary, in order to connect people and ideas. Anel Moldakhmetova (Almaty) says:

"Creative Producing is something that unites different fields. I can be an initiator of any idea or project. I also can be responsible for its implementation as a project manager, and as a team lead I can invite people to join the project…I can fundraise for this project. I can make it happen and it's important."

Creative Producers are required to be comfortable in different professional spaces. As Karishma Rafferty (London) points out, to do this effectively involves crossing professional silos:

"I'd say, for me, a creative producer is someone that can cross a lot of different boundaries and work across different groups, practices or industries – they become a thread or a connector in between different ways of working."

Russel Hlongwane (Durban) comments:

"I'm shifting between so many roles, it becomes difficult to be absolutely proficient in one. I kind of have to be an admin person, I have to be a finance person, I have to be a comms person, I have to be an artist somewhere in there, and a project manager."

While Michelle Brown (Dublin) describes how a producer juggles many different tasks at once:

"It does feel like juggling a lot of the time…you're the person who's holding it all in your head, or hopefully on a piece of paper as well, but it often requires dealing with multiple things, because there are always six things going on at one time."

Tenacity

Alongside a sense of flexibility, a Creative Producer is tenacious. As Luke Emery (Bristol) reflects, tenacity is about:

"…not being intimidated by a challenge or problem but always thinking there's a solution, and finding a solution. Sometimes that solution is stopping, but it's still a solution. I think you have to have confidence in the face of chaos."

For Leticia Lozano (Mexico City) tenacity expresses itself in:

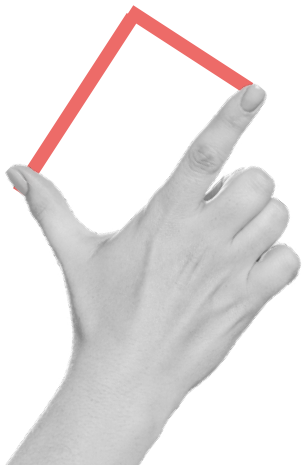
"someone who has no fear of being flexible or has the skill of, "I'm not going to stop until I see it turn into something." I'm not going to say 'finish' but turn it into something…[A Creative Producer is] a person that's full of curiosity and full of desire to solve problems, even if that creates more problems for the person. A creative problem-solver."

Connecting People, Ideas and Communities

The Creative Producers International cohort recognises that much of the work that they do involves reaching out to different people, making links, meeting new people, leading conversations, hosting meetings and building dialogue around the issues that matter.

At an organizational level this might involve universities, local government departments such as housing, business improvement districts, social services or planning, as well as their clients on the ground, schools, healthcare providers, community development organisations: the whole rich texture of governmental, third sector and creative organisations that constitute civic society.

For this to be successful the Creative Producer has to understand who the key people in their network are and what those people care about, about how best to support them. As Michelle Brown (Dublin) puts it, "there are some key people who need to be engaged – the creative citizens, the community makers, the lynchpins."



While, Louisa Davies (Stratford-upon-Avon) stresses the importance of working meaningfully with 'real people':

"…for the kind of work and the kind of projects that I want to initiate and commission and produce, I want us to make those projects with real people. I don't really want to just commission an artist to go off and do whatever they fancy. I feel like it's really important that our practice is embedded with real people."

Care and Communication

Because building, caring for and maintaining relationships is crucial to the work of Creative Producers, good communication is a central part of the role. As Karishma Rafferty (London) describes:

"It's quite clichéd, but communication skills, listening to people, figuring out the right tone or the right ways to present myself to develop something, depending on who you're working with… I mean, there are different sides of it, but to be intuitive and reflective, I think, is very important."

It is also about being attentive to your audiences, their needs and their values. This is often about understanding whose needs you are prioritising. For Russel:

"My role as a producer, it's to protect artists and collaborators that I work with, negotiating with commissioners and decision-makers on the one side but also being nimble enough to go and antagonise the world of public administration and engage with policy-makers, property developers."

For Kate Stewart (Liverpool), while her work may have specific, material policy goals, it is the journey and voice of the participants that are central:

"In the neighbourhoods in which I work … it's about developing and supporting a lot of individuals, and what that does is build a stronger community. I work a lot around helping people find that inner creativity, and using techniques around play. By making people feel less worthless, by making people feel important and creative, feel that they are more able to be resilient individually, and then to work collectively to become part of protest and make change"

Pragmatic Creativity

Most of the cohort have some kind of creative practice in their portfolio, from writing and design, theatre, architecture, music, through to creative approaches to community organization. They are comfortable and familiar with lots of different creative forms in order to achieve the goal of a project.

For Russel Hlongwane (Durban), Creative Producers must strike a balance between artistic practice and practicalities in order to realise a common goal:

"[In creative work] you can either be too creative to a point where you neglect all the other essential and fundamental things, stakeholder engagement, reporting, impact measurements, etc. etc. Or you start to compromise and be insensitive to the artistic work. The Creative Producer has an equal investment and attention and interest in both, so I think they're particularly important for that reason."

Outcomes

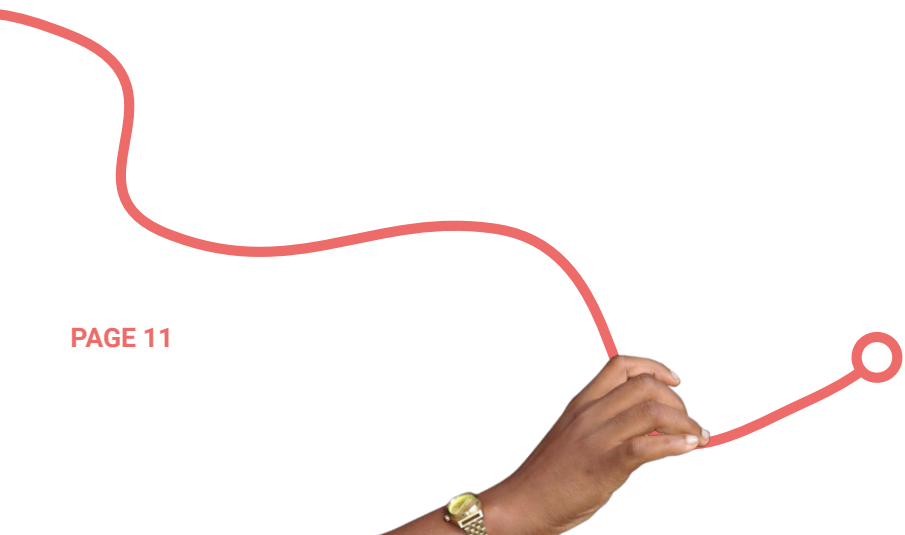
Creative Producers convene networks, bridge gaps and professional differences, and care, respect, and maintain the network of people they've bought together. This way of working leads to a wide range of different outcomes.

Sarah Brin (Copenhagen, now Santa Fe), who is motivated by the chance to build creative opportunities, recognises that outcomes don't always look the same:

"I derive a lot of satisfaction from creating infrastructure and value that supports creatives in ways that they haven't been supported before. So that can look like a supportive work environment. That can look like an exhibition platform. And that can look like new economic systems."

Creative Producing supports many different sites for advocacy, debate and agenda-setting, as Anel Moldakhmetova (Almaty) observes of her own practice in Kazakhstan:

"We do advocacy and also discussions about value criteria, creating some cases, using some specific buildings. Also it's a lot of education, open educational events, especially, they're open for city activists, urban professionals, architects…. It starts with discussions and then people pick up the topic and they move on and more and more projects appear with a similar agenda."



4. Programme

Having recruited our cohort of Creative Producers, we began a programme of Labs, events, regular check-ins, commissions and more to bring everyone together. Our vision was for the cohort to work together to explore their ideas for effecting change and producing exciting innovation in their cities. However, their geographic separation presented the very real risk of the Creative Producers feeling disconnected and producing work in silos.

What was needed was a space for other kinds of communication to happen, not just in-person, but at a distance, to keep conversations and ideas flowing, and for the producers to work together in lots of new ways, outside of the programme, as well as within it. Explore the programme below, and find out more about the activities and approaches we adopted in the section Producing the Producers.

4.1 Creative Producer International Labs

Central to our design of Creative Producers International were two major events held in the first two years of the programme, in Bristol and Tokyo respectively. Each of these events consisted of an extended residential lab and a conference on the theme of Making the City Playable.

4.1.1. Bristol Residential Lab

We began with a three-week residential Lab which brought the Creative Producers together at Watershed in Bristol. The Lab utilised the skills and experience of Watershed's producing team and wider network and was designed around our core beliefs and core aims, as outlined below..

Core Beliefs

- Creative Producers are the key to change in cities
- Inspiring future city projects embody inclusivity
- We transparently share what works and what doesn't in a safe space
- We prioritise the importance of peer to peer learning

Core Aims

Cohort Building
Create trusting relationships. Sow the seeds of self-empowerment, collective cohesion and collaboration. Ensure cultural differences don't lead to inequality in participation. Work towards effective communication across cultures and time zones.

Network Building
Establish the network of participants themselves as the primary source of knowledge. Enable participants to share their experiences, expertise, methods and networks with each other.

City Change Making
Understand specific city contexts and the landscapes of city-change making. Learn from best practice and latest thinking. Generate ideas for city change and an understanding of how to deliver and communicate them.

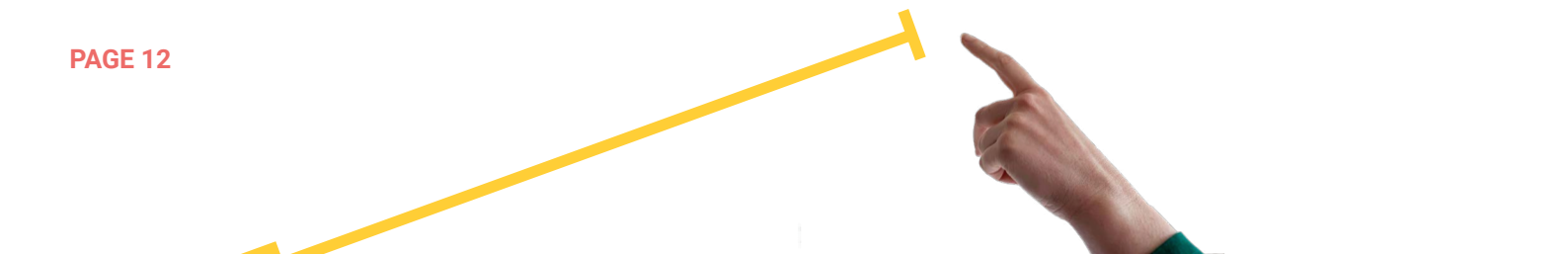
Tools, Skills and Confidence
Equip participants with skills, confidence, networks and language to start the change and make work in their cities.

Practice and Reflection
Foster an open atmosphere where questions, honesty, agency, exploration and failure are important constituent parts. Give ample time to reflect, share and absorb.

Morale and Atmosphere
Have a good time! Keep space for discussion and disagreement. Leave with energy and inspiration.

4.1.2. Tokyo Residential Lab

A year on from the Bristol lab, we hosted a second residential lab for the cohort in Tokyo. By this point, the Creative Producers had spent a year researching and developing strategies for city change and were now comfortable with what change could mean or look like in their own contexts. Building on this foundation, we wanted them to think beyond the local and familiar, and connect into a global conversation – emphasising the value of having access to viewpoints from five different continents across the globe. Tokyo was a context that, for the majority (ourselves included) was very different to their own. We encouraged the participants to reflect on their work in relation to their new surroundings, to challenge their habits and preconceptions, and consider how their practice would translate (or need to adapt) for this city.



By leading them through this process together, we hoped that they would grow comfortable with this kind of critical interrogation, and realise the benefits of exploring their ideas through the perspectives of the other Creative Producers' cities. Here, the global conversation became more urgent and important than ever before.

"It's easy to make assumptions about how the world works without actually going to visit the places that you're making assumptions about working in, and to place a lot of your own bias and privilege into those environments from afar and from within, when you're here. So, I think a broadened horizon is definitely something I will take away from this, and a sense of new possibilities."
– Luke Emery (Bristol)

We worked hard to replicate the open and trusting environment we had so successfully created in Bristol but holding a space in a city in which we ourselves were guests proved to be challenging.

4.1.3. Making the City Playable

As well as bringing the cohort together to connect and converse, we created opportunities for them to actively collaborate and engage a wider audience. In both Bristol and Tokyo we held a public conference on the theme of Making the City Playable which brought together an international mixture of artists, producers, academics and policy makers to examine how we engage with play in the modern world and look at its potential importance in the future of our cities.

The Creative Producers designed and delivered playful workshops for the conference delegates held in a variety of public spaces – from an empty shop and a church crypt in Bristol to busy public plazas in Tokyo where messy creativity is not usually permitted. Co-designing these activities for our audiences at the Playable City conferences gave the Creative Producers' joint ownership of the programme content. They experienced each other's methodologies in practice, explored how to adapt their ideas to new surroundings and grew comfortable with collaborating and co-creating solutions together. This process laid important foundations for ongoing collaboration over the course of our time together.

4.1.4. Digital Labs

We bookended the programme with two Digital Labs and worked with Fred Deakin, Professor of Interactive Digital Arts at University of the Arts London, to create an online Lab format that would allow the Creative Producers to collaborate remotely. The Labs experimented with synchronous and asynchronous methods – some sessions involved coming together online to workshop ideas in real time, whilst other tasks were completed independently and shared with their colleagues for development.

The process presented very real challenges; from difficulties in finding humane meeting times for synchronous communication across different time zones through to subtle cultural differences that can be easily misinterpreted when using video platforms. But the results were extremely encouraging: the labs allowed the cohort to co-design creative workshops to be delivered for public audiences during our Tokyo conference and a manifesto for the continuation of the network into the future.

4.2 Supporting new work

During the programme, each Creative Producer was supported with a development grant of £5,000 to put their ideas about city change into practice. Cities around the world share common characteristics but are also defined by their unique histories and cultures. The interpretation of city change, and the strategies developed to address it, were distinctly different according to the specificities of person and context. In some cases, the Creative Producer was able to identify a specific social issue, while other Creative Producers faced a more complex set of challenges within their city context.

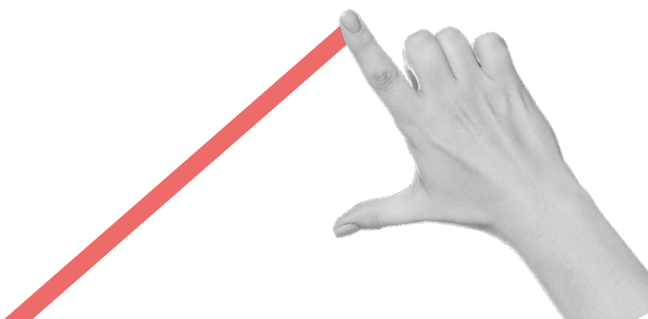
Many of the cohort found they already had solid foundations to build upon, particularly those who worked within organisations and had access to their resources. For others, it was necessary to use the grant to begin to build a foundation, whether this was the development of professional skills or leading research into the specific needs of their city. A lot of the Producers built communities of practice among local creative talent and involved citizens in a collaborative engagement process.

Because it was important that Creative Producers International provided the opportunity for our participants to activate their learning and develop their research around city change in a live context, they were invited to apply for a competitive investment fund of up to £10,000, designed to support the creation of new, artist-led work in public space which would leverage the individual and collective value of the network.

As part of the application, we asked Producers to raise match funding, appropriate to their economic context. When, at first we set match funding as an individual target, we only received applications from the US and Europe-based Producers. So, we repositioned fundraising as a collective target, ensuring the burden was shared relative to the privileged position of individuals.

The investment fund projects encouraged the Creative Producers to utilise the expertise of local practitioners across disciplines and root their work in the communities they were hoping to benefit. Brilliantly, many of the Creative Producers directly involved other cohort members in their process, whether through one-on-one coaching or as panellists during the artist selection process.

While one creative project alone, no matter how innovative, cannot solve our cities' complex problems, these projects demonstrate that simple interventions can make places more liveable, hopeful and collaborative. Over time, we hope that projects like these go further, support and speak to one another, becoming part of an ecology of answers that produce better futures.



5. Projects

Through the Creative Producers International investment fund we commissioned seven new, artist-led commissions which provoked, inspired and engaged people in conversations about public spaces and city change. These commissions allowed our cohort to activate their learning and develop their research around city change in a live context, responding to specific local city challenges.

Here are some of the projects delivered by members of the Creative Producers International cohort.

Project profile: Umongo we dolobha, The Marrow of the City
Russel Hlongwane, Durban, South Africa

A combination of traditional performance and a piece of ambient literature which leads audiences on an audio walk through urban space, reflecting on identity, ownership and the legacy they intend to leave behind for generations in the future.

All of South Africa's cities were built during colonial and apartheid South Africa, serving a white minority. Since the country's first democratic election in 1994, cities like Durban now need to serve the entire population but much of its black and brown subjects feel no sense of agency over their city.

For black South Africans who arrived in cities as cheap labour, the city is viewed as an "extractive beast" which needs to be tamed. Umongo we dolobha: The Marrow of the City sought to reflect the city back to this generation, a mirror of themselves in the city. The piece took place at The Workshop Amphitheatre in the centre of the city occupied by a colonial building which is the old train station built in 1860.

The project involved two stages. Firstly, a performance involving traditional music, dance, song, artefacts and rituals transformed the site into a 'temporary memorial' to the undocumented generations, reclaiming a 'centre of power' in the middle of the city. The performance served as a provocation to engage audiences with the subject matter and to fuse city change discourse with artistic practice in a city where these two fields seldom meet. Stories and responses were then collected and used to create a piece of ambient literature in the local language of isiZulu, crossing the chasm that exists between tradition and technology. A guided audio walk featuring citizen's voices and city soundscapes narrated the history of Durban and its black subjects as it encouraged the listener to navigate the surrounding urban spaces. Audiences were asked to reflect on their relationship with their surroundings, urged to claim agency over the city and consider the legacy they intend to leave behind for generations in the future.

We interviewed Russel about his work and he elaborated on the South African cultural context:

"Just at the break of democracy, South Africa had received a lot of support and attention from mostly Dutch, British and American cultural funds that were looking at freedom of expression and cultural diversity from a development mandate.

"Coming into 2009 to 2014 there has been a fairly strong movement away from arts as development into art as economy…the UK being at the forefront of this…when Europe found the mechanisms and instruments to talk about the creative economy, there was a knock-on effect into the South African space. So, I think the South African government understands that there's this fourth industrial revolution, and somehow they have to talk about it to drum up votes, but they haven't invested in the infrastructure – both hard and soft infrastructure – to enable this fourth industrial revolution. There's a more deliberate and tangible set of outcomes and outputs from programmes that are supported by the Europeans as opposed to those supported by the government.

"South Africa is a fairly unique country in the sense that we're one of the few countries on the continent, definitely Sub-Saharan, with a cultural fund that is fairly sizeable and has its own ministry and is budgeted for every year. So, what this means for South African is that inasmuch as we can complain that there isn't a creative economy supported by the government…there certainly is a creative economy in South Africa because there's a strong political infrastructure and framework which allows trade and commerce to happen across the region, across borders and internationally…"



Project profile: Meet at the Square
Malaika Toyo, Lagos, Nigeria

An experimental public space installation that focuses on encouraging social interaction across communities through the collective creation of a live art gallery which invited citizens to write or paint a response to the provocation 'what does community mean to you?'

Meet at the Square was a three day interactive installation inspired by the African village square, which by day is traditionally known as a space for social interaction and trade and at night comes alive as a hub that creates a nexus between play, storytelling and artistic display.

Taking place at Campos Square, which was adopted by the Lagos state Government Ministry of Youth and Social Development and renovated by the Committee of Wives of Lagos State Officials (COWSLO), the square serves the community and its residents in several ways. It has several political purposes such as meetings, manifestos, rallies and awareness programs as well as being used by various religious organisations and schools.

Our intention was to work with an artist team, including artisans from the local community, to create a hyper-interactive open-access art gallery anchored by children and their families through live painting and play. We wanted to engage a diverse audience through interactivity and inspire them to challenge, think and reimagine the use of public spaces in Lagos.

"Through our project Meet At The Square, the Creative Producers International investment fund gave my organization, Made Culture, the support we needed to prototype our co-design approach to delivering projects. It lends itself to gathering context-driven evidence that can be used to inform conversations on city development and urban planning." **Malaika Toyo, Lagos**

Project profile: Oscillation
Ryan Swanson, Brooklyn (previously Tampa), USA

An interactive installation that uses sight, sound, and movement to spark community activity and social interaction through play.

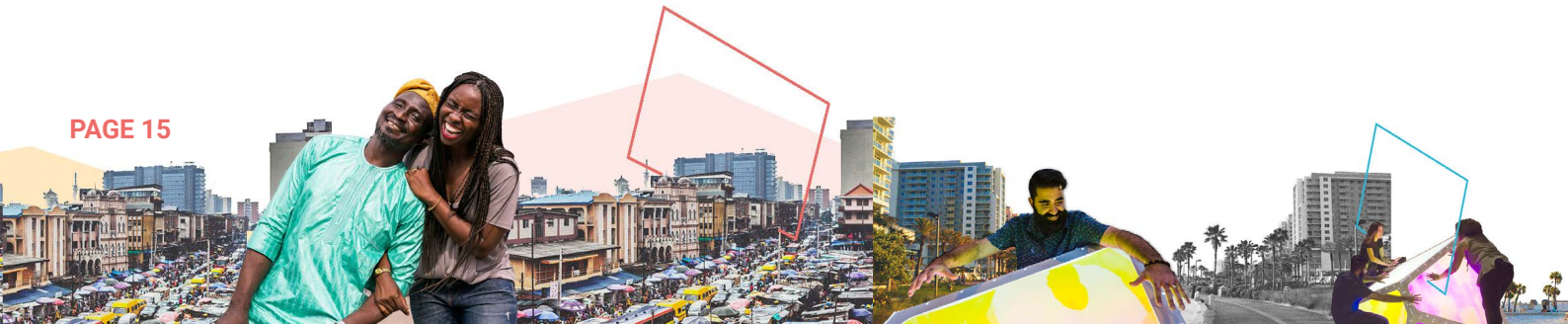
Ryan Swanson produced A Guide for Creating a Playable City, a publication designed for municipalities, city officials, architects, planners, creatives, and institutions that advocates for the implementation of playful innovation in everyday city spaces. This was based on his experience delivering projects that put play at the heart of public spaces.

One such piece of work was the project, Oscillation, which took place in Clearwater, Florida. The downtown area of the city is a predominantly nine-to-five district. Outside of business hours, the area goes underused. The area lacks a positive identity, and so fails to attract citizens from surrounding communities. The City of Clearwater Redevelopment agency commissioned Urban Conga (Ryan's company) to create an interactive piece of work that would animate the downtown corridor, contribute to its local identity, its economy and the health and wellbeing of residents in the surrounding neighbourhoods.

The resulting interactive installation acts somewhat like a theremin, an unusual musical instrument that you can play without touching it. As you walk toward the piece, it plays different sounds and pitches depending on your distance from it. And as you move and dance around it, colours reflect and refract light in different ways based on your angle and position. Oscillation is made up of five parts that are deconstructed from a solid cube using a Voronoi algorithm. The crystal-like forms can be moved around and placed in a variety of formations. The result is a totally immersive experience that breaks down social barriers and fuels joyful conversations between strangers.

The installation sparked spontaneous playfulness and conversation between strangers and captured the imagination of city stakeholders. It demonstrated that smaller, creative interventions throughout the city could have immediate and lasting impact on the lives of their citizens – and create a more vibrant, active atmosphere in the city's downtown region for tourists and residents alike.

A Guide for Creating a Playable City is free to download and was launched through Let's create a Playable City, a three-week-long immersive exhibition in the city of Clearwater, Florida: "The city became so inspired by the ideas and vision of a "Playable City" that they came up with a playable agenda that will start next year."



"The Creative Producers created compelling prototypes that inspired people to stop and think, to connect with each other and the built environment, sharing experiences that encouraged them to question the status quo. These projects demonstrate that simple interventions can make places more liveable, hopeful and collaborative. They provided our participants with valuable evaluative evidence to make a case for continued investment in creative practice in their cities"

Pete Vance, Producer – Watershed

Project profile: Urban Toys
Leticia Lozano, Mexico City, Mexico

A series of playful workshops with children and families in a disadvantaged area of Mexico city to co-design a playful installation that would transform a disused public space. The resulting project, Urban Toy Tamaulipas, aimed to promote a safe, playful territory that gives children a sense of agency and belonging in the city. As a result of her work, Leticia won the support of local municipalities who are currently fundraising to expand the project throughout a larger space and use it as a prototype for other areas of the city.

Mexico City is home to 2,363,748 children but encountering a child playing outside is a rare sighting. Lab for the City – the experimental and creative arm of Mexico City's government (2013 – 2018) – led a strand of research called Playful City which sought to position play and children's perspectives as central factors for urban and public policy design, pursuing the (re)integration of children into the public sphere.

Through the Urban Toys project, Leticia developed a methodology of co-designing solutions with children to trigger new paradigms around education, urban planning and spatial justice, and advocate for the recognition of children's rights with municipality leaders. The project re-activated three underused public spaces located in proximity to areas with high population densities of children and advocated for the importance of children's participation in the design of their surrounding urban environments.

The three installations each pushed the boundaries beyond traditional playground equipment, responded to the demand for children to explore the world through play and create multi-functional objects which adapted to their surroundings. They were:

Aros at Plaza Loreto
Polerama at Plaza Santa Catarina
Parque de los Monstruos at Equity Park

Urban Toys was developed in collaboration with the Historic City Centre Authority and ten other government areas and sought to be a replicable methodology that could be used in other cities to advocate for the importance of play in urban communities.

Project profile: Manchester Street Poem
Sarah Hiscock, Manchester, UK

A growing collection of stories highlighting the voices of the city's marginalised communities. Through sharing these stories, Manchester Street Poem aims to build a community with a collective approach of 'no us and them', dispelling prejudice and helping to create environments for change.

Sarah used her development grant to develop her work around homelessness in the city of Manchester. She created an expanded iteration of the project Manchester Street Poem, an artwork which uses performed installation and soundscape to share the stories of marginalised homeless citizens. During MIF19 (Manchester International Festival), Manchester Street Poem took the conversation out into the city. Over 13 days new stories were fly posted onto a billboard opposite city hall, holding a mirror up to society in the centre of the city.

Conceived by Karl Hyde and Rick Smith from the band Underworld, and co-produced with pioneering local organisations including Mustard Tree and the Manchester Homelessness Partnership, Manchester Street Poem premiered as part of Manchester International Festival 2017. During the course of a week Hyde covered the walls of a disused city centre space with words and phrases drawn from the streets. The space was also filled with a powerful soundtrack by Rick Smith, built on fragments of human voices recorded all over the city.

At the very first meeting, I sat down amongst people who clearly didn't suffer fools and pitched Manchester Street Poem with the open invitation for them to hijack the idea. Well, that's exactly what they did! Since 2017 we meet every month to run city-wide workshops inspired, driven and run by the whole team. Being a part of Manchester Street Poem is life-affirming. I love this project, it's the best not-job I've ever had. Karl Hyde

For MIF19, Manchester Street Poem took root at the very heart of the Festival, with a daily-changing exhibition. Hyde was back, brush in hand, and painting as part of the growing Manchester Street Poem team. Members of the public could visit a temporary city centre workshop space in Old Bauer Millett arches to see the artworks being made. And, every day from noon, artworks were posted in Albert Square, right at the heart of the city.



6. PRODUCING THE PRODUCERS

"At times, my oddly meta role as the Producer of other Producers could be challenging, particularly during the development and delivery of the investment fund projects. It was important that the participants had complete autonomy over their own work, and I had to fight my Producer's instincts to get involved. I've learned a great deal about the value of having clearly defined roles and responsibilities on creative projects and how integral it is to maintain open and honest communication when working collaboratively." – **Pete Vance, Producer – Watershed**

One of the central pillars for Creative Producers International was the role of the programme's Producer. This role, held by Pete Vance at Watershed, was designed to coordinate the delivery of the programme. From designing the activities and systems used to connect the cohort, to being the first point of contact for the producers, understanding their needs, encouraging the delivery of their work and keeping the cohort energised and active.

Holding space

At Watershed, we often talk about our role as facilitators and our desire to hold space for diverse groups of people – producers, businesses, artists and more – to come together and explore ideas. While we recognise that our role is often vital, we also know that the best way to learn and support the learning of others in that context, is to give the floor to the people who are passionate, driven, experts in their own work. The expertise, in this sense, is often 'in the room' and not held by us.

We took this approach when we designed Creative Producers International. We knew we had convening power and a great deal of experience and practices to be critically explored and developed. But to make it truly collaborative, it was the voice of our Creative Producers that was the most important: not only did we want to support them to learn from us and from each other, we also wanted to rethink, reassess, develop and challenge many of our own assumptions about Creative Producing.

Here, we describe some of the key approaches we used to hold the space for this to happen. These provide the beginnings of a pathway to working internationally with a diverse group of practitioners. Where appropriate, we have included some of the activities and tools we developed, which are open for you to use in your own facilitation work. Most importantly, the voices of our cohort are also here, too: this toolkit features approaches, techniques, and ideas that they brought to the programme to help us learn, too.

We explore the idea of 'holding space' in How to facilitate in a place that isn't 'yours'

Co-designing terms of engagement

As a UK-based cultural organisation working with people from cities across the world, who are making change in contexts very different from our own, it was vital we developed a process of co-design to empower and include the perspectives of the cohort.

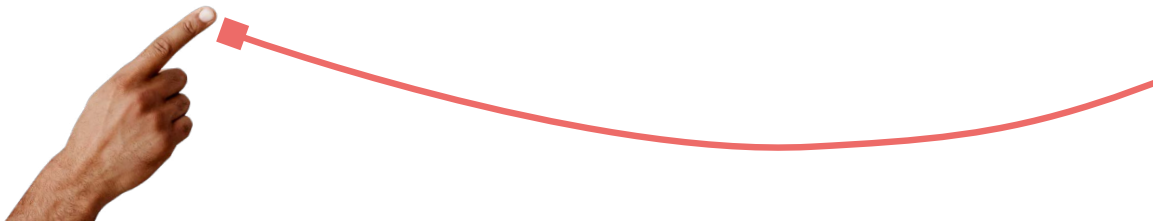
As a response, we ran a session during our first residential lab in Bristol through which the Creative Producers could design their own terms of engagement, allowing them to define their interaction over the course of the lab.

Creative Producers International Terms of Engagement
We agree to

- Commit to a culture of openness, honesty, respect and trust
- Support, celebrate and respectfully challenge
- Ensure our focus is people centred (work with not for communities)
- Take risks, don't be afraid of making mistakes
- Be curious and flexible, share a willingness to learn
- Listen to each other and be kind

Holding these values at the core of our facilitation had important results: it created a safe and supportive environment which helped the participants acclimatise to their surroundings; they felt able to share openly about successes and failures; they grew to champion one another; they developed a genuine interest in the cultural landscapes of their colleagues' cities.

What we couldn't know at this stage was the huge influence these co-designed values would have over our leadership approach for the wider programme. While this activity felt reasonably common place to us, feedback from the Creative Producers emphasised that it felt radical to others. The values and our programming became symbiotic; we tested, shaped and adapted our ideas in conversation with the participants and our design became stronger and more relevant as a result. In return, the Creative Producers became invested and galvanised, collectively committed to realising the aims of the programme. A dynamic co-designed methodology evolved, one that has fundamentally shaped our organisational approach to facilitation moving forwards.



Thinking about city change

Creative Producers International aimed to support and empower Creative Producers to create innovative work and advocate for the importance of art and culture in shaping our cities of the future. Understandably, for the majority of the cohort the concept of change on a city-wide scale was intimidating and many participants expressed a degree of imposter syndrome.

The programme represented a journey in which we explored the idea of change at different scales and across different sites, gaining an understanding that 'small' change can still be significant. We encouraged each of the cohort to reflect on their cities and the issues that made them angry, frustrated and ignited their passion. The power of the network came into its own in the interrogation and refinement of their ideas; it provided an environment of championship that replaced imposter syndrome with a motivation to challenge the status quo.

We used a number of rapid prototyping exercises with the cohort, who already had a depth of knowledge and history of engaged practice within their cities, as a way into thinking about city change as a cohort – what they might do, focus on and think about – and to test ideas and build confidence. These activities helped connect the Creative Producers to one another, strengthen skillsets and to elevate confidence and ambition to deliver projects in their own cities.

Staying in touch

"Without digital tools this programme wouldn't have been a success. Choose tools with a low barrier to access, that are freely available to everyone in your network. Be creative. Experiment. Get people interacting outside of the work you are making together – maybe start a digital book club or have video 'hang outs' with no set agenda. Really simple ideas can help promote a genuine sense of community over distance that will improve your ability to collaborate."
– Pete Vance, Producer – Watershed

A WhatsApp group encouraged regular informal conversation, providing a platform for sharing selfies when our paths crossed in the real world which ignited excitement and anticipation for future connectivity. The creation of a 'digital home' on Slack (an online communication platform) was useful for seeking advice or sharing opportunities. Regular one-to-one video meetings with the Lead Producer allowed us to check in with their progress and achievements and respond quickly to any challenges. Whilst these interventions may not be ground-breaking, it became habitual for the Creative Producers to engage with each other at distance and utilise the collective expertise of the group during their creative development process.

Encouraging play

Each day we spent physically together as a cohort began with a member of the cohort leading a warm-up game. Scheduling time to be playful lowered inhibitions and helped the Creative Producers relax into the space. It gave us routine, created bonds, allowed freedom of expression and immediately infused energy into the room when levels inevitably dropped along the way.

Organising optional extra-curricular activities – such as the theatre, karaoke or a group dinner – offered the opportunity for shared experiences and created a vital sense of community away from the workspace.

Play was not just a vital ingredient of the success of the labs, but a central tenet running through the programme. Play presented ways of exploring the rules and generated creative possibilities for being gently subversive.

Giving time and being responsive

We curated a wide range of talks, practical activities and workshops but by far the most impactful thing we programmed was unprogrammed time.

Allowing the Creative Producers time and space to talk and reflect raised important issues and created strong bonds. Experiences shared during these times were powerful both individually and societally, and provided important opportunities to learn and widen perspectives.

There were similarities: challenges of creating work in public space, the need for cultural activism, the value of leading by doing and of reaching those with little access to arts and culture.

There were shared concerns: the dynamics of privilege, navigating the legacy of (post)colonialism and how to care for themselves, as well as others, to avoid mental health challenges and burnout.

And there were differences: diverse cultural, social, geographical and racial lived experiences meant things resonated differently with different people.

We held a group reflection at the end of each day to consider what we had learned and offer an opportunity for feedback. We responded to what people said by adding new sessions by members of our network and by Creative Producers themselves. This was vital in the success of the programme. They felt heard, it built trust, it allowed us to co-design and stay relevant, which was particularly important as a UK cultural organisation with limited knowledge of the Producers' own contexts.

Exploring solutions to access barriers

"We wanted a way to help everyone dig into their own creativity to come up with access solutions, rather than seeing the removal of barriers as something only 'experts' can solve – and we wanted to make it playful as well as educational."
– Jo Verrent, Senior Producer, Unlimited

Across the programme we adopted an attitude of enquiry to actively explore solutions to access barriers. In this way, access and inclusion permeated the programme, and were key motivations for many of the Creative Producers.



Using her development grant, Creative Producer, Alice Holland (Brighton), collaborated with Unlimited, an arts commissioning programme that enables new work by disabled artists to reach UK and international audiences, and leadership coach Sarah Pickthall, to experiment with developing ways for neurodiverse practitioners to lead change-making careers that allow them to navigate the challenges of their health in a safe and sustainable way.

We also worked with Unlimited to test a prototype of Cards for Inclusion, a game designed to help the arts sector explore solutions to access barriers.

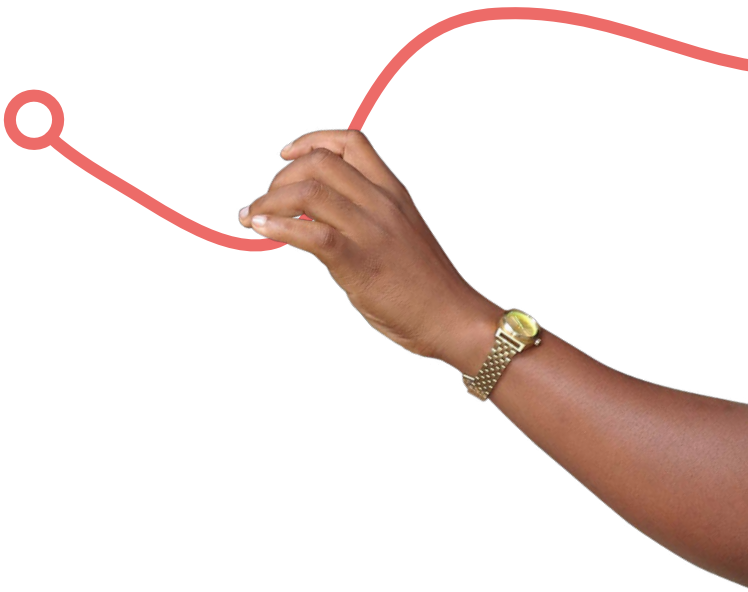
Through this exercise the cohort learned how to better collaborate with and support disabled practitioners and audiences, and how to ensure access considerations are built into the fabric of their creative practice.

Their international perspectives were integral to shaping and developing the final Cards for Inclusion product. Cards for Inclusion is now a valued resource freely available. You can learn more about the game here. Our Creative Producers all have a copy and have used them in workshops around the world.

Taking care

One of the challenges of being a Creative Producer can be looking after your own mental health and avoiding burnout. Creative Producers, because they often take on the burden of responsibility for looking after multiple people, relationships and projects; leading teams and driving things forward – sometimes in very challenging contexts – often do not prioritise themselves and their own mental health.

One of the most impactful sessions of the programme was led by participant Alice Holland who focussed on how to articulate and address personal needs in the interests of self-care.



7. UNDERSTANDING OUR IMPACTS

"We are Creative Producers and we are connected and I don't feel lonely anymore."
– Anel Moldakhmetova (Almaty)

Individual Practice

Creative Producers International had a positive impact on the individual practices, skills and confidence of our participants.

Leticia Lozano (Mexico City) and Malaika Toyo (Lagos) each founded their own social enterprise in their home cities, through which to continue the research and development they began through the programme. MACIA Estudio, in Mexico City, specialises in the development of integral processes that give an answer to urban communities' real needs and are manifested as public spaces, placemaking strategies, participation methodologies, temporary interventions or urban public policy recommendations. Made Culture, in Lagos, has developed a human-centred methodology to co-design tailor-made solutions that simplify complex systemic issues in the city to make them more solvable.

Louisa Davies (Stratford-upon-Avon) has seen a transformation in both her practice and her professional role and began a new job as Senior Producer of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Cultural Programme at the start of 2020.

"My experience on Creative Producers International has helped me rediscover my personal ethos as a producer, and has given me the tools, resilience and supportive network to be an agent for change working inside significant and large-scale cultural institutions. It has done this through the shared experiences and values of the cohort, the thinking and reflection on the role, transferable skills and aptitude of producers, the first-hand experience of other city-change contexts, and the space and resources to reflect on the place in which I work and act on its particular set of challenges."

Michelle Browne (Dublin) used her development grant for skills development – training in stakeholder dialogue, creative facilitation and life coaching – to better enable her to engage with city authorities and citizens and support vital cross sector collaborations.

"As an artist and curator and initiator of projects in the city communication is key. Asking the right questions and focusing on what answers are given seems like an obvious and easy task, but when you get down to it can often lead to misunderstanding and conflict. The development grant has allowed me to really focus on this core aspect of my work and the work of any producer working with multiple stakeholders, participants and collaborators to effect city change."

Luke Emery (Bristol) began his Creative Producers International journey with a clear idea of his process for effecting change by delivering socially engaged projects that had immediate impact. Throughout the programme Luke has gained a broadened perspective on change-making and the potential of working alongside partners to rethink policy for longer term and more sustainable impact.

"It's made me ask difficult questions of myself and given me valuable context, which has shifted my own perspectives on what I want to be a part of. It's changed my thinking enough that it's played a big part in my decision to make a significant career change, moving from independent producing and into a full-time position at the Pervasive Media Studio. The '3 years ago' me would very likely not have put themselves forward for the role, nor been able to talk with the level of informed perspective that this residency gave me."

Bruce Ikeda (Tokyo) dedicated his Creative Producers International research to exploring creative use of public space in the city, which is usually restricted to traditional festivals. Earlier this year Bruce's design studio JKD Collective, won a commission to deliver a major public installation as part of a new theatre park in Ikebukuro. His project Global Ring is a digital art-linked audio-visual installation which floats above the park. The installation is linked to a time signal, which analyses information like weather, temperature and humidity in real time and changes the production of sound and visual in response. It is a landmark project for Bruce and his studio and a revolutionary project for public space in this context:

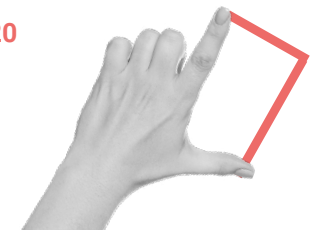
"This is the key moment of impact I have experienced in the past few years, and it never would have happened without my involvement in Creative Producers International."

Thought leadership

Over the course of the programme, several members of the cohort established themselves as thought leaders in their fields, strengthening the role of arts and culture in their cities.

Karishma Rafferty (London) gained recognition in the field of using arts and culture to enable collective action in response to the global climate crisis. Through her development grant work, Karishma became a key contributor in the consultation around the redevelopment of Strand-Aldwych, a new pedestrianised area in central London. She contributed to discussions, and hosted workshops with local community groups developing creative solutions around environmental sustainability in the city, submitting their collective findings to the local council. She continues to work in collaboration with different audiences, local stakeholders and council officials to develop playful and participative processes engaging Londoners in these themes and collective challenges.

Russel Hlongwane (Durban) has established himself not only as a prominent cultural influencer in his home city, but as a thought leader across the cultural sector of South Africa; he was invited to share his Creative Producers International learning with the Durban Tourism Board investigating ways to make the city more playful, was selected



by NESTA through a call for theorists to speculate on the future of the internet and was recently nominated for the Most Patriotic South African Arts Ambassador Award.

Sarah Brin (Copenhagen, now London) moved back to the USA to become Strategic Partnerships Manager at Meow Wolf in 2018. In the Summer of 2020, she relocated to London with an Exceptional Talent visa to pursue creative producing with British organizations and enterprises. She is a sought-after public speaker in the field of play and immersive experiences and specialises in developing strategies for bringing unprecedented creative and technological experiences to life. She has collaborated with San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, The Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, The Hammer Museum and The European Union.

"The impact [of Creative Producers International] is pervasive and deeply embedded within all areas of my work. It's why I decided to move to London."

Exchange and Collaboration

The connectivity which began during our residential labs has continued to grow and led to on-going exchanges of contacts and methods across the network. There have been many cases of cultural exchange and collaboration both supported by the programme and outside of our programme activity

Kate Stewart (Liverpool) and Louisa Davies (Stratford-upon-Avon) co-facilitated an artists lab for Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. This is a valuable new connection for Kate. Together, their skills inspired an innovative way of working for a heritage organisation.

Kate and Russel Hlongwane (Durban) also secured a grant from British Council's DICE Fund which enabled them to explore their shared conviction about the need to address furniture poverty and to ensure that locally manufactured, affordable solutions for basic furniture are available to all. Kate travelled to Durban to explore how to implement an incubation of her social enterprise furniture project Urban Workbench in the city. They have applied for further funding to continue this partnership long term.

Inspired by the residential labs, several of the Creative Producers have collaborated on events in their cities which utilised and disseminated the skills and resources we shared with them.
In Almaty, Anel Moldakhmetova and Watershed Producer Hilary O'Shaughnessy led a workshop for city officials, Creative Producers and activists.

In Dublin, Michelle Browne co-facilitated a City Change Masterclass with three of her Creative Producers International colleagues (Leticia, Ryan and Kate), working with 15 artists, activists, architects, producers and students to foster greater capacity in the arts community in Dublin to engage with city stakeholders, and to create and produce ambitious work that imagines alternative futures for the city.

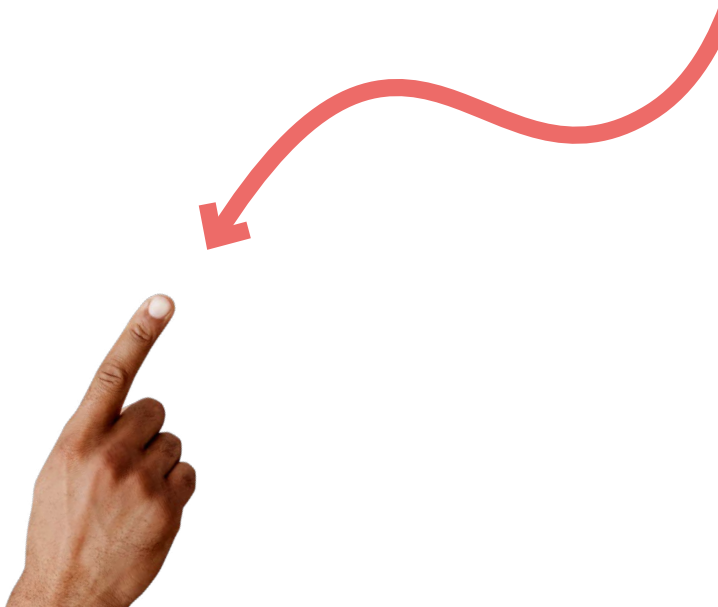
In Clearwater, Florida Ryan Swanson co-facilitated a three-day workshop called 'Change Through Play' with two of his Creative Producers International colleagues (Leticia and Anel). The workshop brought together a group of 15 municipalities, local artists, community organizers, and representatives from local institutions to explore ideas of creating the city of the future. Ryan, Leticia, Sarah Brin and Malaika were recently selected to host a panel on 'City Change Through Play' at SXSW 2020, which was unfortunately cancelled due to COVID-19.

Our cohort of Creative Producers continue to develop communities of friends, teams and colleagues who have a kind of shared language – their work rooted in their local environment but connected to an international set of ideas and experiences.

"Through Creative Producers International overall I have begun to see opportunity, and this is not to be understated, where I never could have imagined myself belonging, often because I simply didn't know it was there before."
– Alice Holland (Brighton)

"My understanding of my community, my city, and my work have changed astronomically because of my engagement with different people doing very interesting and dynamic things from different parts of the world. Coming from Nigeria, a country riddled with systemic social challenges, every problem seems too big to handle. But what I have learned is to not be burdened by things that don't work, but instead focus on prototyping micro-interventions that have the potential to deliver impact and are scalable at the macro-level.
– Malaika Toyo (Lagos)

"The team created the most extraordinary context in which we could all explore profound questions about how our work/passions informed our sense of self. Perhaps even more importantly it raised questions as to how much of ourselves was unrealised creativity hidden behind the ever supportive producer. Scary, exciting and obviously just what was needed given the wonderful work that I have seen coming out from the gang."
– Paula le Dieu (Sydney)



8. LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Creative Producing is not a linear process, and mobilising networks, organisations, institutions and people is often about flexibly managing, and often capitalising, on unexpected outcomes.

With the completion of Creative Producers International, we have looked back over the programme in this report, reflected on the role of the Producer; what they are for, what they do and how they can be supported. We provided seed money and support to begin a networked conversation, and collectively sketched out the first attempts to draw together an international practice that looked at creative producing as part of city change. We've seen that the methodology and tools in this report have already been borrowed, hacked and built into programmes in cities all over the world. We are now looking forward to continuing our relationship as part of this extraordinary global network, and hope that it has indeed become a living, breathing, caring thing of its own, strong enough to adapt, thrive and grow.

In this emergent, extended set of relationships we have been reminded that the notion of Creative Producer must be held quite lightly. 'Creative Producer' continues to be a complex term, understood differently across sectors, and sometimes not at all; we might talk about Possible Producers, or Creatish Producer-like work, or producers with a very gentle 'p'. We have come to recognise Creative Producing as a group of attributes and approaches to work that transcend one occupational category. We are interested above all in the work that is done and the how and the why it is achieved. Creative Producing is not a linear process, and mobilising networks, organisations, institutions and people is often about flexibly managing, and often capitalising, on unexpected outcomes. However, a discussion of the practice of producing has always included attention to questions of power, complexity, culture, courage, value and contradiction. Where creative producing and city change intersect, the conversation extends to include the materials of the city – the buildings, the technology, the people, the streets, the weather and more – always in negotiation with its systems; its rules, its markets, its histories, its politics, its relationships. These are conversations underpin the practices we supported in this project. We see it as vital to have and to create space for these discussions as a core part of generating change, and we hope that our cohort continue to convene them with people who are supporting creative work that itself attends to these things.

Creative Producing is not a linear process, and mobilising networks, organisations, institutions and people is often about flexibly managing, and often capitalising, on unexpected outcomes.
The group sits in a circle at the end of two long days together in a beautiful, light room in central Durban. We have talked about the sub-cultures that offer artistic identity but divide audiences, about the lines of race and class that intersect the city, about the value of trying to make change at home and the benefits of moving away. Earlier in the day we lay on the floor and drew around each other, populating the strange silhouettes with our skills and qualities – some proudly declared, others gently noticed. As we go around the circle sharing reflections, this session is mentioned again and again – to spend time thinking about their own development in the negotiated presence of others feels like a radical conversation here. One woman looks down at her notebook and quotes me from the day before 'to invest in yourself is to invest in your community' she reads and though I don't remember saying it, I hear Lety and Sarah and Alice and Malaika and Kate in the thought… 'I feel less on my own in my work now' she adds and I agree, she invites the group to meet at her place next time.

Our network is growing exponentially, with our cohort of Producers developing communities of friends, teams and colleagues who have a kind of shared language – their work rooted in their local environment but connected to an international set of ideas and experiences.
We think that this both enables learning through difference and comparison but also engenders a kind of global outlook that might inspire in ways that are hard to describe or predict. This recognition of how different perspectives on creative producing are played out in different contexts has been vital. In Lagos we found observations about how people eat in public space were a key indicator of engagement for our evaluations. We saw that games are played differently; in Durban we didn't play a game with lemons so as not to waste or trivialise food, and in Tokyo we experienced the strong cultural norms associated with how public space should be used appropriately, and learned how creative responses must be sensitive as they engage with them. If you are tangled up in a system that you want to change, getting a perspective on it from someone else, somewhere else, who understands how to look at systems but has a different vantage point to your own might shine a light on things that you can't see.

If you are tangled up in a system that you want to change, getting a perspective on it from someone else, somewhere else, who understands how to look at systems but has a different vantage point to your own might shine a light on things that you can't see.
As with our Creative Producers and their work in their cities, we have found that a little can go a long way. It can be a daunting idea to think about your work as part of a complex international system but when the energy and knowledge is well connected it can be widely dispersed. A weekend visit, an hour online together, a WhatsApp group chat – being exposed to other people's ideas and sharing your own in return – can have more impact than you might imagine. At Watershed we sometimes talk about Producers building corridors, passageways between things so that other people can more easily travel between them. As our network of Producers grows so too does the maze of routes by which to support new work. The cohort have begun to commission artists from each others' communities, share creative products and co-locate projects. In a world that can sometimes feel increasingly fragmented and difficult to navigate, this approach offers us the possibility to support a creative response.



Watershed exists in a particular context with a set of particular values and methodologies about art, technology and culture and yet the more we work internationally, the more we find that our approach resonates in unexpected places. The depth of our partnership with UWE Bristol and our shared approach to research and development, knowledge production and critical practice is more unique than we previously understood and a model that other cities are keen to learn from. At the same time, we have learned from the approaches and visions of practitioners from across the world. Together, the impact of art, play and technology in public space has been interrogated. We have built on the existing momentum to work more inclusively to explore questions about who is allowed to play, what behaviour is excluded through the design of new technologies, who are the gatekeepers of 'public' space and whose story is told. Our commitment to supporting the practice of Creative Producing as an agent of change is stronger than ever, and we now have a stronger network, and a more refined set of tools that can adapt to context and build sustainable practice.



TOOLKIT

1. Activity: How to run your own creative digital lab by Fred Deakin
2. Activity: Write your own self-care manual by alice holland
3. Activity: How to facilitate in a place that isn't 'yours'
4. Activity: Terms of engagement
5. Activity: Thinking about city change

Toolkit

1. ACTIVITY: HOW TO RUN YOUR OWN CREATIVE DIGITAL LAB BY FRED DEAKIN

Planning

Identify your goals and/or line of enquiry
There may well be a subject or issue you want to explore, or a specific task you need to complete. Ask yourself what would be a successful outcome for this group of people? What would make them want to commit to this process? What are you trying to achieve together by the end of the lab?

Pick your time slot
What amount of time can people realistically commit to and how frequently can they meet? Be clear: they will need to devote 100% of their time to the lab during these sessions. No multi-tasking or last minute rescheduling – not with 14 other people involved. A sprint of five daily two-hour sessions for ideation followed by an offline production period and a delivery/reflection session a week or so later works well, but ultimately it's your call. You may want to experiment with techniques such as blue sky thinking, rapid prototyping and theoretical models. The location of international participants may well dictate when your sessions will be, depending on intersecting time zones.

Plan breaks
Think about when you are going to schedule breaks and what form these will take. Stand up and stretch every half an hour? Break of 10 minutes every hour? Give people permission to leave and come back if they want to.

Participant Preparation

Enlist your participants
Between 9 and 15 people works well: more than 15 will be chaotic and won't work in a digital space so subdivide if that amount is needed. Forward plan – make sure everyone is in a space with a reliable internet connection and let them know any basic kit they might need, like headphones.

If participants are likely to have poor internet, think about running Slack or WhatsApp alongside the session, scheduling a phone call after to update, emailing documentation in advance or having an assistant facilitator on hand to help. Record the session to send afterward.

Identify access needs
You may need to adjust your plans to allow for different access requirements, like visual or audio impairment, internet access or sensory issues. Ask what adjustments people need in advance and research what is available via the technology you are using e.g. Zoom has built in auto captioning.

Set expectations
What can participants expect from this experience? What shouldn't they expect?

Facilitation Advice

Establish facilitation roles and rules.
Someone needs to lead on structure, deciding what the intention is for each session and making it happen. It can help to have an external person doing this: alternatively take turns to lead.

Who do you need on the facilitating team?
- A main facilitator who is clearly in charge
- An assistant facilitator if needed
- A tech person to deal with problems (who can phone people in background or speak on Slack)
- If possible, someone who is also taking the emotional temperature of the room
- A note taker (one for each room if doing break outs) as these notes are a useful research output.
- Agree well in advance what kind of structure would work for your participants, or brief and delegate the whole job to a trusted facilitator.

Choose Outputs
Many outputs are possible so choose what is most desirable. Examples include (but are not limited to):

- a spoken presentation with or without slides and/or props (puppets are fun)
- a short film, screened live to the lab
- a PDF report to be digested before discussion
- an online performance
- a social media presence
- a real-world offline project that is subsequently documented and presented to the lab
- Divide and conquer

Come together to be briefed (very clearly!) on proposed activities, then split into three sub-groups (three is a magic number) to allocate, discuss and/or carry out the necessary tasks. When the lab comes together again, groups take it in turns to informally present their progress: this way each group has an audience (the two other groups) for their presentation.

Check-In and Check-Out
Do this every time, for everyone. Getting people to nominate the next person makes sure people have to concentrate throughout.

Reflection
Absolutely make sure you have time allocated for reflection and integration afterwards – the most important session!



Toolkit

2. ACTIVITY: WRITE YOUR OWN SELF-CARE MANUAL BY ALICE HOLLAND

Aim Get thinking about what ingredients you need in order to do your best work and present them professionally in a non-threatening format.

What self-care deal would you make with yourself? I encourage you to give as much respect to your wellbeing as you can. There are no prizes for suffering, stress and drama will always exist, but in offering yourself the chance to flourish you will help others do the same.

1. Look at some existing contracts, riders, recipes or manuals and pick a format to use as a template
What is the goal and what are the terms? My rider is sometimes titled 'A Guide to the Machine that is Alice', or 'Working with Alice.' Sometimes it is simply added to the body of a contract as terms.

2. Think about your ideal working environment and conditions
Working with others may require a different set of conditions to working from home, you may need more than one version. I recommend it be a living document that you revisit periodically.

3. Start with your physical needs
Sleep, hydration, nutrition, support for any medical conditions or disability. Close your eyes and think about yourself at your strongest, your happiest, your most focussed – where does that feeling live in your body? What fuel does that require? What does it feel like to be at your most confident? Does 9-5 fill you with dread? Then don't agree to it, if intense bursts of activity with breaks to rest makes you shine then go for it.

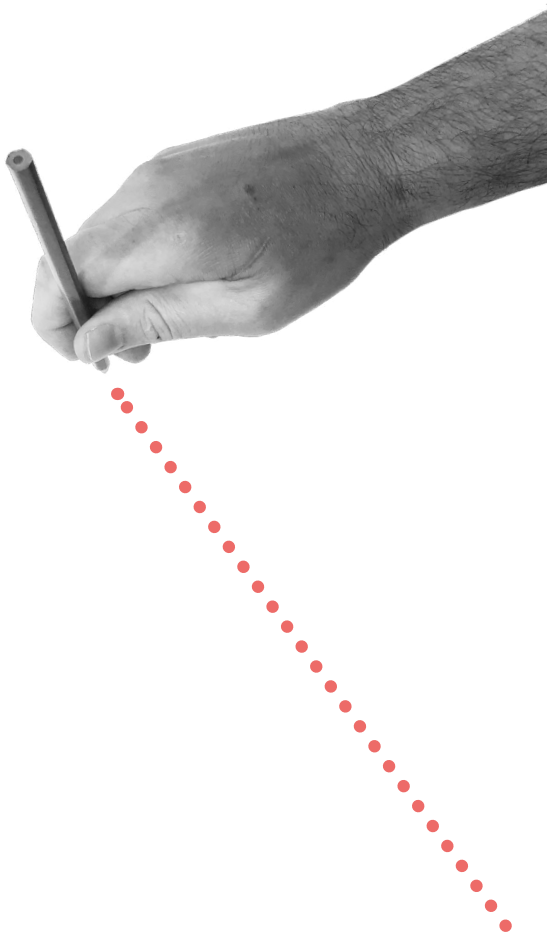
4. Communication is at the core of almost all work
How do you prefer to do this? If talking on the phone makes you anxious then perhaps prioritising face-to-face or email contact can help you. How are you speaking to yourself? Kindness can be so easy to offer to others whilst denying ourselves. As a rule I try to speak to myself as I would to someone I love dearly. If you wouldn't say it to someone else, don't say it to yourself!

5. Where do you most like to work?
I struggle to concentrate in open-plan offices but inviting people to have a 5-minute walking meeting helps me to focus and think more clearly. Do you need music or silence? We can't always choose exactly where we work but it is possible to make adjustments to bring you closer to your ideal.

6. If you travel, think about what you can bring with you to keep yourself centred
For you it might be making sure you have a stash of your favourite tea in your suitcase, or a candle to help you relax. Be yourself, wherever you are.

7. In case of crisis or emergency make sure you have phone numbers ready
Whether for a friend, your doctor or a mental health service. You may like to share recommendations with your team as to how to approach you if they see you exhibiting certain behaviours e.g. 'If I seem distressed please ask me if I want to take a break and/or phone my dad' 'If I leave the room suddenly please give me space'. This will give your colleagues a sense of your boundaries and allow them to be better equipped to support and respect your needs, providing practical routes to compassion.

8. How flexible are these terms?
Not every work situation will be your ideal, so it is good to think about what you can budge on, what you absolutely require and what is appropriate to your situation. It is your responsibility to yourself to know this and to communicate it to your collaborators.



Toolkit

3. ACTIVITY: HOW TO FACILITATE IN A PLACE THAT ISN'T 'YOURS'

Power is everywhere but is unevenly distributed. Individual power is drawn from our body, institutional position, history, language, knowledge, resources and cultural capital.

Holding space is an attempt to negotiate/navigate some of these structures to provide an environment where a group of people can encounter each other more easily and feel able to express and develop ideas, share thoughts, listen and respond honestly, learn, grow, and challenge assumptions. It is an approach often used by Producers seeking to connect people in new ways. t is complicated trying to do this in a place that doesn't 'belong' to you which will often be the case while working on an international project.

Here are ten questions that we learned to ask ourselves during Creative Producers International.

1. Why are we there; who has invited us and why? Should we be there?

2. What are the organisational values that normally govern our work and do we need to adapt these to be here? Does changing our values feel okay?

3. How will we learn about the place we are going e.g. can we learn some of the language, is there etiquette we need to follow in specific scenarios, what time do people work/eat lunch/need to be home?

4. Who can we work with who lives and works and who is understood to be 'of' that place e.g. who can find good locations, co-facilitate sessions, find the right people to get involved?

5. What are we asking of people that we are taking with us and have we made that clear to them e.g. who are they representing, what have they got to offer, who will they be meeting and what should they be aware of, who are the local stakeholders?

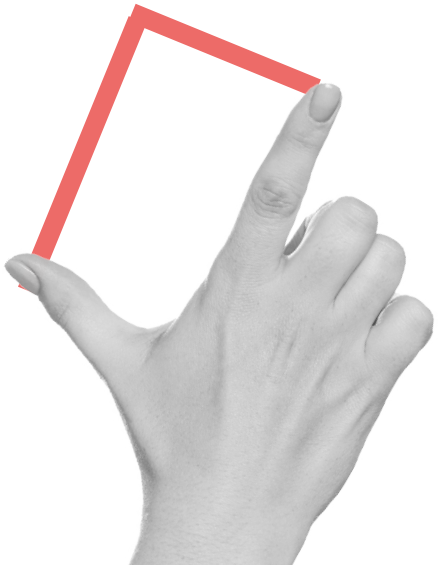
6. How can we gently adjust the power structures to create a more neutral space e.g. is there flexible furniture, can we sit in a circle, are we able to use given names not titles, are we based in a place that is accessible?

7. How do we encourage the group to have collective responsibility of a physical space e.g. can we play games, rearrange the furniture, make food together?

8. How can we ensure that we have consent to lead them e.g. how can we make our role transparent, how can people feedback on how it is going, when is it ok for people to not participate?

9. Do we need translators and, if so, how do we find really good ones that can convey tone and energy?

10. Who do we know that has done work in this place (as an outsider) before and what can we learn from them?



Toolkit

4. ACTIVITY: TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT

AIM: To create a set of core values that define how you would like to engage with each other.

TIME: 1 hour

This process is scalable, it can be project specific or used more generally for your network.

Personal Reflection (10 mins)
Take some time by yourself to think about the values that are important to you when collaborating with others. You may wish to note them down.

Provocation: Ask these questions:

How do we want to be together in the space?

How do we want to behave?

How do we want to share?

What do we need from each other?

How can we support each other's access needs?

What are our fears or uncertainties and how do we address them?

Share your ideas (10 mins)
Put your ideas together in a way that suits your project. This could be a wall covered in post it notes if you are together physically, or a shared google document in a digital space. Group together similar ideas.

Group discussion (40 mins)
In a group, whether digitally or in person, discuss your ideas. Take this opportunity to question, celebrate and respectfully challenge. Make a list of the core values that feel important to you all.

Provocation: Consider these questions in your discussion.

How does it feel?

Is anything missing?

Do you have any questions about any of the contributions?

Will these thoughts support successful collaboration?

Keep your Terms of Engagement list in a place that is accessible to your group for the duration of your project or collaboration. Take joint ownership of it and treat it as fluid. Everyone should be able to absorb it, edit or add to it as you go along.



Toolkit

5. ACTIVITY: THINKING ABOUT CITY CHANGE

AIM: Get comfortable talking about city change. Develop and test an initial project idea.

TIME: 2 hours

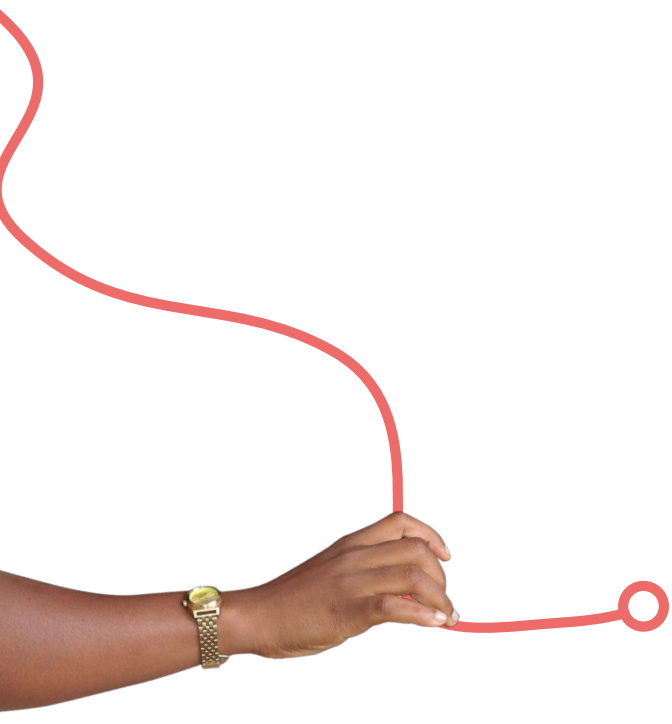
Discussion (20 mins)
In a group, whether digitally or in person, discuss what the idea of change means to you. What might it mean in your city.

Provocation:
Think about change. What does change mean? Does it look different to your collaborators? What can we learn about change from other contexts?

Mind Mapping (30 mins)
On your own, consider the changes you would like to see in your city. Scribble down as many things about your city you can think of that you would like to see done differently. You may want to find a quiet space, talk to your collaborators, or get some fresh air for inspiration. In the last 10 minutes, narrow your ideas down to your top three changes.

Provocation: To help you with this task, you may want to ask yourself these questions about your city and the changes you would like to see.

What does it look like now?
What is your vision?

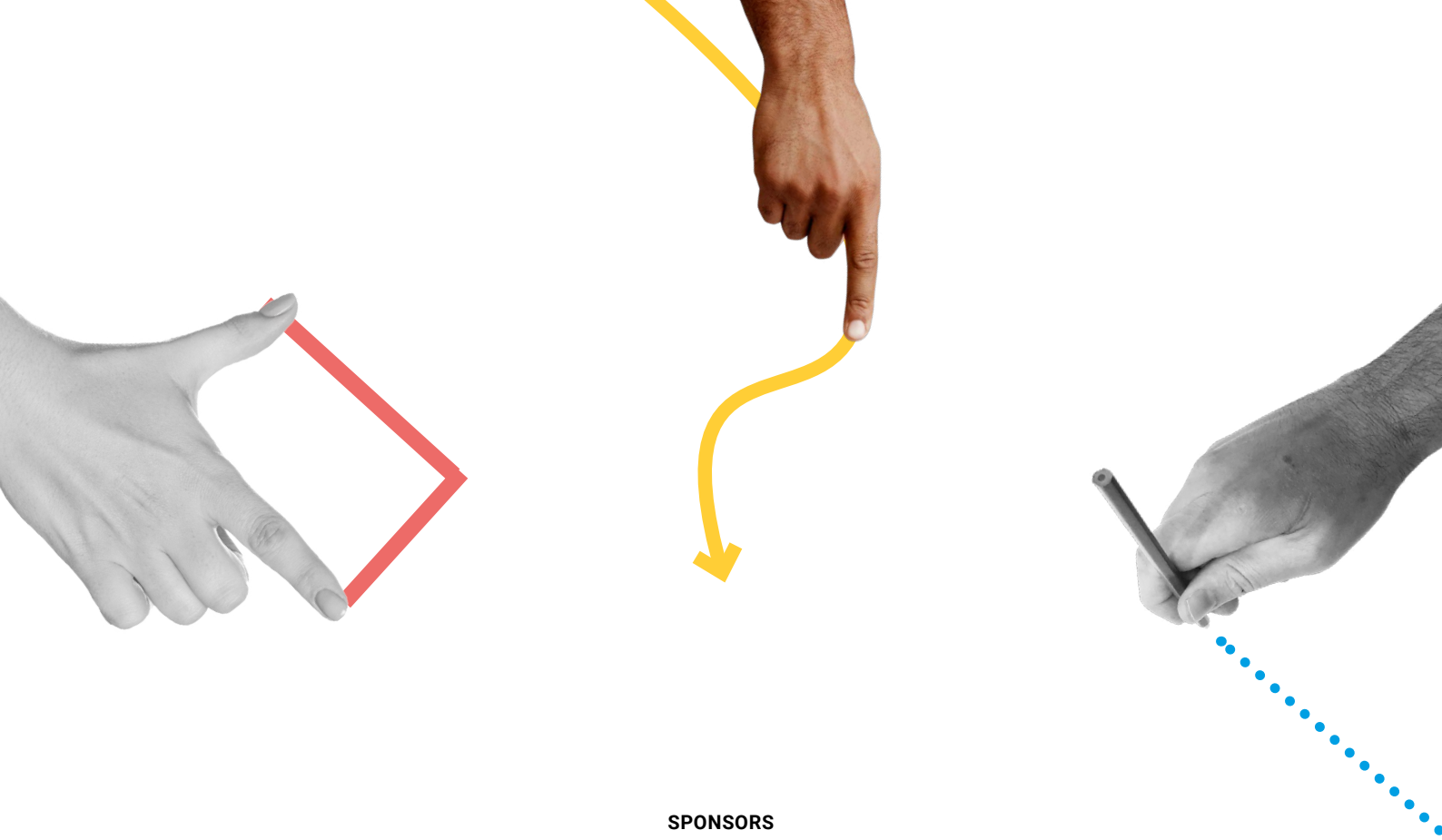


Rapid Idea Generation (40 mins)
Choose one of your three changes. Think about how you might address it through a creative project that takes place in public space in your city.

Provocations: Use these questions to shape your idea:

Are you making an issue more visible?
Are you solving a problem?
Who do you want to reach through your work?
What are the gaps in your knowledge?
Who in your network might you want to talk to about your ideas?
What creative art form might your project take?
What are the first steps?
What are the barriers?
Why is it important to you?

Feedback (30 mins)
In groups of three feedback your ideas. In turn, for 10 minutes each, share your project idea with your group. Take this opportunity to question, celebrate and respectfully challenge.



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