

## **Bringing the arts into socio-ecological research: An analysis of the barriers and opportunities to collaboration across the divide**

### **Arts producer and academic Interview transcript**

Several critical things

People being prepared to explain to each other what they do and why

Explaining ways of knowing and ways of working

Being prepared to pay attention to different ways of working and respect them equally

Working for Epistemological equity

Everyone's way of knowing is of value

Yet in reality, it's important to point this out and say it and invest time in that

Research in an arts journal doesn't count if you're in another discipline

We need to shift this

If our careers don't benefit by straddling disciplines then we won't straddle disciplines [what's the point of writing a paper in a journal that doesn't enhance my career? Why invest time in that?]

However, artists' careers can benefit from working in other disciplines if they are eco-artists and socially engaging artists. This is not necessarily the case for gallery artists

This situation presents underlying challenges [when it comes to interdisciplinary working]

It [interdisciplinarity] is about establishing everyone's way of knowing and producing  
Research led practices happen outside of the arts too.

Open this [research led / practice led] up so people can understand that artists are rigorous in their work and can demonstrate this

If you want to get into arts/science territory you need to understand the rigour of an artist if you are a non-artist

[This rigour opens up new ways of knowing and new knowledge, not just illustrating or engaging communities, or explaining the science']

There is a complexity if you want an artist to be in the team and around the table

The artist needs to be able to demonstrate [through a presentation or a conversation or written statement] a particular sort of practice: a research led practice. They should be able to do this

However, if you want an exhibition by a painter, do they need to be embedded in the team?

A/the selection process is incredibly important

It allows the selectors to see a lot of different arts approaches, which enables them to know/learn much more about contemporary arts practice

By the end [of a selection process] you have a clearer idea of what you want and what fits [with the team and with the research project]

This process helps in selecting the right artist [an artist whose work and research fits within the team and the project]

It allows those selecting to see the differences between different types of art and art practice

It's a bit of a process, but it's a valuable and interesting

He has an interest in how you write briefs

It's important to articulate the messy complexity of the research project

Don't start with the funders, start with the challenge

Spell out the creative challenge

[Could a non-artist do this?]

[Could an artist write a scientific challenge?]

It has to be about the topic and also foregrounding the complexity of the challenges.

A producer works in a space where other people own the spaces. A curator curates a specific space – like a gallery.

A producer works in territory like hospitals and environmental settings and there's always [a period of] negotiation with the owners of the space.

A producer has negotiating expertise, which s/he can bring into art/sciences research projects.

If we have a reasonable guide, someone like me won't be essential.

Many of us are ensembles: we are artists and producers.

A lot of [big] institutions could be supporting this [interdisciplinary arts/science] work, but they don't; it's the small ones like in-situ or the artists themselves. It's individuals and small, embedded organisations that understand place based working.

As yet, this hasn't affected the big [cultural sector] organisations [like major galleries].

In Creative Carbon Scotland project, Cultural Adaptations, artists were paired with sustainability organisations in local governments (Ireland, Belgium, Scotland and Sweden). Interestingly, not the cultural sector; this way of working doesn't interact well with the arts [as a sector].

Issue based work can be challenging.

Society values art as entertainment – just walk through a London underground station and look at the posters. It's all about entertainment.

The form of art we do is little understood and therefore undervalued.

Arts sector are very protective of their own resources, there is a resource disparity. Consequently, the arts splice onto other organisations/institutes.

You get siloing in the arts as well – if it's not in an arts journal [or a gallery] it doesn't count.

There is a lot of great rhetoric [around art/science and interdisciplinarity], but the underlying fact is that the structures don't encourage it, or understand it.

He always stands by the artist who makes use of the scientist's research.

Artists depend on culture

Artists use the world

All artworks are re-presentations that make us see differently

See anew

Imagine differently

Artists need stuff to work with

That might be science

That might be small, towed vehicles.

The funding system is shit for the freelance artist.

It's very difficult.

Sometimes people will write better budgets than other times.

The challenge is around how do you write a budget when you are talking about art?

[With art, especially process based, you don't know where the work will go or even what it will be].

We're not all doing the same thing [in the arts].

[We can't. if we were to do the same thing as someone else, it wouldn't be original.

It would be considered a fake, or copying, or plagiarism. Art always has to be new, if it's not cutting edge, it's not pushing boundaries, it's not rigorous and it's not authentic, it's not contemporary art.]

To overcome this [unknowing the art outcome] we could look at it [the art] as a deep mapping project whereby the artist is paid [for example] one day a week. That doesn't trap them into a given end result.

Then there is a challenge with the materials budget: when you don't know what will be made or needed.

In a budget you can't itemise what you don't know.

It's easier to write the materials into the artist's time/fee.

Or hide them so they look like something else, for example, they could be hidden in travel costs.

The thing is, the point of working with an artist is you don't know what they will do - what it will be.

Can we offer up a model that would be useful for budgets and work packages to fully support the artist and the artwork?

Within these programs [UKRI funded research projects], [along with each budget strand] there is also program project and often a follow on funding pot.

We need to be nimble and alert to this.

The artist can also leverage additional funding [into a project].

Xxx artists as an example, they used their budget as match funding for another bid and found funding partners [outside of academia and the arts sector] to put in those bids.

He has a suspicion that NERC etc don't see freelancers as researchers but more like a consultant.

Freelance artists might not read well in NERC bids. Academics will.

The freelancer is not recognisable in the same way as an academic artist or an artist working in an institution. This seems unfair and unjust.