

Executive summary

On 15th June 2022 a Practice as Research Knowledge Exchange (PARKE) Workshop was held at the Bathway Theatre to explore the question: “How can we learn to love being with less?”

This project explored the UN Sustainability Development Goal 11: sustainable cities and communities using a somatic co-production approach which was based on movement to music combined with the *chormmunity* methodology (Loper 2000) involving movement, images, and words to express feelings and thoughts.

15 participants, specifically selected from various backgrounds and ages, participated in the workshop. Some of the participants were community group leaders, whom we intentionally invited so they could apply any learning for their own practice working with community members.

The aim of the workshop was two-fold:

1. Participants explored the key question and were asked to reflect on what they can take home from the workshop to make changes in their own lives (personal impact).
2. Participants were asked to provide feedback on participating in a co-creation workshop with an intergenerational and diverse group and what they could learn from this for their own current work or future work with community groups.

Outcomes of the knowledge exchange (KE) workshop

At the end of the workshop, all participants reported feeling positive about the day and all stated they could take home from the day something ‘valuable’ (e.g. a new perspective or approach). However, one person, who is active in the sustainability movement openly questioned the value of a workshop like this in the face of a global climate crisis, yet he did agree on the workshop bringing value in questioning representations, active listening and exploring different forms of expressions.

Participants further reported on ideas on changes in their behaviour such as worrying less about technology (emails), but experiencing life more physically, paying more attention when listening and incorporating different forms of expression when working with members of the community.

The diversity of the group was perceived as a beneficial vehicle for participants to learn about new perspectives and to exchange more freely.

A short film of the day has been made and will be circulated to wider audiences.

Key deliverables:

[\(PARKE\) Workshop "learn to love being with less" - YouTube](#)

Blog article: [The Power of Movement in Co-Creation - National Centre for Academic and Cultural Exchange \(ncace.ac.uk\)](#)

This summary report

Acknowledgements & Funding

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developed by David Hockham, Ghislaine Boddington and Jorge Ramos, co-directors of the research group CLEI – Co-Creating Liveness in Embodied Immersion. For more information scan the QR code below



We would like to thank all our participants, supporters, and facilitators for being part of this pilot study.

Pat Anastasi

Hanieh Ayatollahzade

Angela Baker

Andy BATTERY

Edward Currie

Poorani Gaekwad

Rachele Girardi

Rania Hassan

Raymond Langford Jones

Michael Lomotey

Marianne Markowski

Kassandra Matthews

Devanshi Niren Vikamsey

Edith Ntabyera

Jackie Richards

Dominique Rivoal

Kay Scolah

Molly Wright

Background

The PARKE café framework offered with the support of the University of Greenwich's Innovation fund an opportunity to apply for £3000 for a pilot project to carry out knowledge exchange activities. The information workshop that interested parties could attend took place on 2nd March 2022. Dr

Marianne Markowski, Dr Jacqueline Richards and Dominique Rivoal attended the workshop which was structured with specific exercises to develop project ideas to respond to one of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Dr Markowski, Dr Richards and Ms Rivoal continued discussions after the event and invited two further collaborators as they considered this an ideal opportunity to carry out knowledge exchange in the fields of intergenerational engagement and practice-based research.

Intergenerational engagement is an important approach to improving understanding between generations and supporting community cohesion, improving health outcomes and leading to overall improved societal cohesion (Krzeczkowska et al., 2021; Murayama et al., 2019; Ronzi et al. 2018; Webster et al., 2019). Particularly, after the Brexit vote in 2016 in the UK the generational divide about political views is increasing, but also in light of intergenerational fairness (concerning employment, housing and pension) increasing differences are notable (APPG 2017, Intergenerational commission 2018) and it undermines the social fabric of society. Since the background of Dr Markowski, Dr Richards and Ms Rivoal is practice-based in design, dance and video, they decided to further this direction for the PARKE opportunity and concentrated on 'movement' as it is a practice that any person can do at any age.

Dr. Markowski and Dr Richards were particularly interested in breaking down stereotypes between different age groups and generations. However, in discussion with the wider project team (Rivoal, Scolah, Wright) we decided to focus on using a somatic co-creation approach with a specific sustainability topic i.e. the question "how to learn to love being with less" as a vehicle for an intergenerational workshop, and then to also understand whether this activity helped breaking down stereotypes and nurturing understanding between diverse participants. We further considered this as an opportunity for academics and community group leaders to learn directly from community group participants who did not have an academic background.

This aimed to address foremost the UN SDG 11 'sustainable cities and communities' alongside other goals such as 'reduced inequalities' and 'quality education'.

As an approach to this workshop we decided to employ an adaptation of Paul Loper's (2000) *chormmunity* approach (derived from words *choreography* and *community*) and this involved workshop activities where participants collectively choreograph group dances and "movement text" - also called rituals (Loper 2000).

The project team

The project leading team consisted of a unique mix of academic researchers and independent professionals, who came together for the KE opportunity to explore the aforementioned aims.

Dr. Marianne Markowski has been with the University of Greenwich since April 2016. With this KE workshop opportunity, Marianne was able to build on her PhD research interests which are centred around intergenerational engagements, participatory research and co-design approaches with communities as well as research with technology, education and the professional workforce. Her PhD was completed in Feb 2016 at Middlesex University, and it involved intergenerational engagement in design processes.

Markowski, M. (2020). [in the Wild](#). *Societies*,10(1), 25.(43)

See also:

[Teletalker in the field - YouTube](#)

[TT research journey - YouTube](#)

Dr Jacqueline Richards was a senior manager for the international Awarding Organisation: Health, Care & Wellbeing Sectors. She is a social enabler in the local urban community and received her DProf (Older people's dance) in 2018. She further holds a BEd (Hons) M Level Coaching and Mentoring; Diplomas in Management & Leadership ILM and Marketing & Communications: Laban Art of Movement & Dance diploma. She has worked as a teacher/adult education tutor, older dance/performer, and adviser on ageing and arts for older people.

See also: <https://jac.dance/>

Dominique Rivoal holds a First-class BA in Dance in Visual Art, MA in Digital Art, and MA in Choreography. She creates films in collaboration with dance artists, using the body as a starting point to tell stories and display interesting visual effects.

See also: [Kinesthesia \(2021\) - Independent Dance](#)

Kay Scolah embodies over 45 years of experience in research, strategy development and group facilitation as well as extensive study of dance and theatre techniques (contemporary, improvisation, Butoh, Stanislavsky) and development of and performance in several dance theatre productions.

Molly Wright trained at Trinity Laban graduating with a degree in Dance Theatre in 2008. She has since worked as a freelance artist across both London and the UK. Molly has vast experience working in community settings, especially with groups of adults over the age of 60. For example, she runs the dance group: Damn Fine Dance Co.

See also: <http://www.creativedancelondon.org/>

Workshop aims

The workshop had two aims.

Firstly, it aimed at participants (organisers included) to explore the question "How can we learn to love being with less" and what they could do in their own life to address this. The latter intended to explore the personal impact.

Secondly, participants (community group leaders included) were asked to provide feedback on their participation in this intergenerational co-creation workshop where a diverse group took part. We explored how diversity affected the sense of group cohesion and how lessons from this workshop could be moved into their own current or future work with others e.g. community groups.

Recruitment of the workshop participants

To ensure we reached a diverse audience we broke the recruitment process for the KE workshop into two parts. In the first stage, we sent out invitations to respond with an expression of interest (EOI) in taking part. This entailed a form where participants filled in information such as their demographics, age, gender, educational background, occupation, interests, and their wording of ethnicity/heritage. We stored these forms with the participants' explicit consent, adhering to the university GPPR process. Then after a specified cut-off point, we reviewed as a group the EOI with the intention to email the selected participants confirmation for attendance at the workshop. However, due to an unexpected time delay having the university's GPPR statement signed off, the time for receiving the EOIs had to be extended and in the end, we had 13 EOIs for a possible attendance of 20 participants. Yet, our EOIs showed that the group was very diverse regarding age,

ethnicity and occupation. Therefore, we invited all participants who had expressed interest in the workshop.

The participants received £30 incentives vouchers in recognition of their time and expertise and £10 in vouchers towards the cost of travel expenses.

Our participants' age groups ranged from the age group of '18-24' (1 participant) to the age group of '71-84' (3 participants). The remainder were equally spread between those age groups. There was a larger number of participants from a white background than from other ethnicities (3 black participants and one Indian participant). The white participants included individuals from different cultural backgrounds such as American, German and Jewish. There were 3 male participants, and the remainder were female.

Workshop schedule & format

9:30 – 10 am Arrival at the Venue, the Bathway Theater in Woolwich

10:00 Movement. Getting into our bodies.

Facilitator Molly Wright: Circle introductions. Name and a movement to express you/how you are feeling right now.

Broadening our movement palette. Moving around the space.

Finish this by finding yourself standing with a partner...

10:30 Words. Listening to one another on a walk and talking.

Facilitator Kay Scolah: Brief introduction to the Chormmunity process and ways of listening. Head out for a walk and talk to exchange your thoughts about the topic.

11.15 Break

11.30 Images.

Facilitator Kay Scolah: Drawing/mark making. In silence, everyone draws something to represent their conversation.

Still, in silence, we group the drawings until we settle on a small number of groups of drawings.

12:00 Movement

Facilitator Molly Wright: Movement response to the images. What movement comes up for you when you look at your own image? What movement comes up when you look at a group of images?

12:30 Lunch

Participants were encouraged to bring their own lunch as this further supported the goal of sustainability.

1:00

Facilitator Molly Wright: Re-visit circle check-in – move to express how you're feeling now.

1:15 Facilitator Kay Scolah: Form groups of 4 or 5 people around each group of images. Make sure that each group of images is represented (some groups may have more than one set of images, and some sets of images may have more than one group working on them...). Each group creates and choreographs a 4 to 5-minute movement text/ritual that they can present back to the full group.

The facilitators move between groups to facilitate/help if needed.

1:50 Movement

Facilitators Kay Scolah & and Molly Wright: Share the movement texts.

Each group shows us what they have created.

2:20 Words.

Facilitator Kay Scolah: What did we see? Feel? Think? how we might take this back into

- our own lives

- our close communities (family, workplace)
- the wider world (neighbourhood, city, country, world)

2:45 Silent reflection. What will each one of us do more of/less of/differently? Think about what you can take forward into your own life (e.g. pledge).

3:00 Together in a Circle.

Facilitator Kay Scolah: Share your thoughts for 'more of/less of/differently' (1 minute each). express how you are now. Share your pledge.

3:15 Group discussion

Facilitator Marianne Markowski:

1. How might the experience of today affect your:
 - future work
 - artistic activities
 - How do you relate to others in your community?
2. How has bringing together people from different backgrounds (the intergenerational group) enhanced today's experience?
3. Has this workshop helped with your practice?

Documenting the workshop

The KE workshop was documented by videographer Dominique Rivoal. She used several cameras to capture the workshop from different angles, including a 360-degree camera during group discussions. From lunchtime onwards Ms Rivoal invited participants (including facilitators) to provide feedback in a 'vox pop style' interview. The questions asked were:

- Tell us about yourself.
- What brought you here?
- What did you come in with?
- What are you taking away?

The video material was edited and the following summary video was produced, highlighting insightful moments of the workshop: [\(PARKE\) Workshop "learn to love being with less" - YouTube](#)

Outcomes from workshops' group discussion

In the group discussion, personal impressions and views were exchanged. The facilitator Dr Marianne Markowski set the scene by pointing out that we can have different opinions and views, and that we needed to respect the differences in opinions as well as there was no need to achieve consensus or one outcome as this was about personal experience.

Concerning the question of what the diverse group composition brought to the KE workshop participants provided a range of responses, yet all centred around the need to be open towards 'differences', to challenge their perceptions and how the diversity of the group has enriched the overall experience. The following quotes illustrate this:

“It’s important not to assume about others.”

“I need to not ‘discard’ people just because they don’t think like me.”

“I plan to be more open to different types of relationships, including the ones that might challenge me.”

In response to the question on what this workshop has brought to the individual and what they take home from it, participants shared their personal intentions or pledges and reflected on how they could implement these in their practice. Several participants could see their ‘home takings’ on a level of direct interaction with others such as actively listening and paying attention to movement (including gestures) when interacting with people; this was articulated for personal but also work-related interactions. Several participants reflected on changes they plan to implement in their relationship with the environment, such as decluttering, reducing waste and paying less attention to ‘technology’ e.g. emails, but to be more present in the moment. All participants commented on the empowering and uplifting feeling the KE workshop has given them and some described how this had increased their confidence and self-esteem. Some of the quotes illustrate those thoughts:

“I discovered that I could enjoy myself and be welcome in a [academic] place that I feel isn’t for me.”

“Today I really learned to actively listen.”

“I made new connections with others and within myself.”

“The day inspired me to have the courage to re-start my creative self and to draw and move [dance] more.”

One participant, who is active in the sustainability movement posed the question around the value of a workshop like this in the face of a global climate crisis and in what way it really helped to reduce global warming. Participants commented on how they shared his sentiment in principle but pointed out how the experience of collective action as it was experienced in the group dance [the ritual], was empowering and how this was a starting point for creating consensus and working together towards a goal. The workshop further supported the understanding that we all have a responsibility in the climate crisis and although it may be that we do not feel that our single actions make a difference, they do when we bring them all together.

Feedback on the workshop using the JISC survey

After the workshop participants were sent a link to a JISC survey containing three key questions (around overall experience, home taking and improvements). Six participants filled out the survey.

The overall experience question: “On a scale from 1-10 how would you rate your experience at the knowledge exchange workshop yesterday? (10=excellent, 1=not great)” the mean score was 9.1.

The home-taking question: “What are you taking away with you after this workshop? (this concerns your personal life as well as your professional or artistic practice and working with other people)

Respondent 1 wrote:

1. How successful and enjoyable participating in diverse groups can be.
2. How complex and involved our current world situation is regarding climate, resources, equality etc
3. The success of working through different art activities.
4. The importance of friendliness and kindness.

Respondent 2 wrote:

To allow me to explore my interest in watching interpretive dance.

Respondent 3 wrote:

On a professional/artistic level, the seminar reminded me how valuable dance, with the addition of images, can be used as a tool in group work for unpacking important issues and exploring choreographic ways of communicating ideas and solutions.

On a personal level, I appreciated the opportunity to explore, with people I hadn't met before from a range of age groups and backgrounds, issues we found we shared relating to mental and physical clutter and exploring methods of improving the quality of our lives by 'living with less'.

Respondent 4 wrote:

Always include movement and think about less in all shapes.

Respondent 5 wrote:

The greater range of behaviours available for active learning/engagement given a skilled and courageous faculty. I feel my nascent ideas are more firmly grounded and make more coherent sense.

Respondent 6 wrote:

I have even more respect for the power of culture in working on significant socio-political matters. I also have a little more awareness that individualism is a personal choice despite it being driven by corporate and ideological (neo-liberalism) interests.

The improvement question: Is there anything you would like to see improved if we ran this workshop again?

Respondent 1 wrote:

It was a very abnormal group of participants as they were selected. If the workshop is repeated it will be important to aim towards having more diversity.

I think the balance between the two aims could be improved.

Respondent 2 wrote:

Maybe a bigger connection to how the workshop embodies sustainability.

Respondent 3 wrote:

The workshop was very well structured and run by a charismatic team. A great deal was packed into the day. My only complaint is that I would have liked it to have been spread out over (e.g.) a weekend allowing for more detailed analysis of the theme, to get to know other participants better and to produce more polished choreography. However, I appreciate that scheduling and the availability of resources probably made that impossible.

Respondent 4 wrote:

Include refreshments.

Respondent 5 wrote:

Perhaps an opportunity to "question the value statement of the event" should sit at the start? (Speak now or forever ...)??

Respondent 6 wrote:

More information on how urgent and pressing the climate and ecological emergency is. I'd also like to see some content on systemic violence (Slavoj Žižek), i.e. how our comforts and securities are at the expense of people in the global south and how individualism can be a driver of that.

Anticipated impacts and next steps

The video has been uploaded on YouTube and all participants have been emailed the link ([\(PARKE\) Workshop "learn to love being with less" - YouTube](#)).

The KE workshop summary & and video have been presented at the Institute for Lifecourse development research café.

Many participants expressed informally (via email or in personal conversations) interest in being further involved with this type of knowledge exchange as they could see a benefit in working collaboratively between universities, freelance artists/activists and grassroots community groups/participants. The KE workshop has been seen as a possibility to get "grassroots diverse voices" ideas heard even when they express and communicate in different ways than usual accepted academic practice.

The project group has met online once after the video was produced and overall, there is interest in continuing this type of project either as further KE activities or as research. Yet the appropriate funding opportunity still needs to be sought out.

The next project group meeting is scheduled for late spring 2023.

References

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Project budget

Costs:

Note: We anticipated more participants, hence an underspent on the budget.

<u>Item</u>	<u>Detail</u>	<u>£ Cost</u>
Venue	Bathway Theatre Woolwich	Pro Bono
Travel	Facilitator travel expenses £50 Voucher towards Travel expenses 11 X £10	£160
Catering	<i>Participants were asked to bring their own lunch</i>	
Facilitation fee + preparation time	Lead Facilitator £500 Co-Facilitator £400	£900
Participant incentives	11 participants @ £30 each	£330
Filmmaker	Prep, film, edit @ £200 X 3 days	£600
Workshop assistant to greet participants	Job Shop student, SP7 = £14.03 /hour. @ 6 hours	£84.18
The fee to Dr Paul Loper	Use of Dr Loper's patented methodology	£150
Total used		2,224.18