



# RISING

FINDINGS FROM A  
CREATIVE CLIMATE ACTION  
PROGRAMME, 2022

[risingdublin.ie](http://risingdublin.ie)



Trinity College Dublin  
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath  
The University of Dublin



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The RISING project brought together a group of concerned citizens to creatively take action on climate change in their local area of Dublin's Docklands — diverse communities residing in areas including Westland Row, City Quay, Pearse Street, Grand Canal Dock and Ringsend. The project, which ran from October 2021 to May 2022, was led by Trinity College Dublin (TCD) and Brokentalkers Theatre Company, in collaboration with Dublin Theatre Festival and Algorithm Creative Production Studio.

This evaluation report outlines the project delivery across five phases:

1. Setting the Stage — Background Research
2. RISING at Dublin Theatre Festival
3. In-Depth Community Engagement
4. RISING in the Lir Academy
5. Follow-on Community Engagement

Phases 1 and 2 led to the RISING premiere at Dublin Theatre Festival in October 2021, a site-specific audiovisual spectacular presented on the Liffey walls around Sir John Rogerson's Quay and Customs House Quay. Audiences used their mobile phones to listen to an audio piece performed by local Pearse Street resident, Kym Delaney. Simultaneously, a light installation displayed a series of texts and animations on the walls of the adjacent quays.

Kym narrated a 20-minute piece written by Brokentalkers, informed by their background research. The script imagines a future in which no action has been taken on climate change, and reflects on the impacts

locally in the Dublin Docklands, as well as on a global scale. The full audio production can be accessed on the [RISING project website](#).

Phases 2, 3 and 4 of the project simultaneously involved community-building within a diverse group of participants who for the most part were strangers to one another (January 2022), community climate actions carried out by sub-groups of these participants (February–March 2022), and a final presentation in front of a live audience in the Lir Academy in April 2022, with a script developed by Brokentalkers Theatre Company and inspired by the participants' own climate journeys and conversations over the previous months.

The research presented in this evaluation report sought to understand the efficacy of the creative approach to community engagement with climate action, the conditions for public engagement, and the challenges and opportunities presented throughout the project. It generates insights and recommendations for future creative community projects, within the Dublin Docklands area, and in Irish communities more broadly, presented in the section Observations and Insights. Data collected for these research studies consisted of

researcher observations and notes, participant surveys, and 11 interviews with participants, artists, project team, and collaborating academic staff from TCD.

The questions asked in the semi-structured interviews varied from participant to participant, but generally probed their "climate stories", their personal reasons for joining the RISING project, their perceived effectiveness of the project and their own activities, their hopes for the future of the RISING group, and their current feelings towards climate change.

Observations and Insights from RISING:

- Strong human attachment to place is a positive means to promote environmental or climate concern and action.
- Creative arts facilitation is an effective means to build community around a shared concern for climate and the local environment.

- RISING utilised effective climate communication strategies by combining personal and local storytelling with reliable scientific expertise, by developing creative supportive networks, and by promoting simple, tangible collective actions.
- Tension is a natural part of climate change discourse. Embracing it and showcasing it to audiences as part of a narrative can draw audience awareness to the complex human experience of embarking on a climate action journey.
- Creative, collective, community-based climate action can have a transformative impact on all stakeholders involved in the process.
- Short timeframes for projects involving diverse participants can be a challenge in implementation.

The report also provides a selection of recommendations for stakeholders involved in this project, which may be generalised to other climate action projects which feature partnerships between Higher Education Institutions, creative practitioners and communities.



Edible Garden Launch Event



# INTRODUCTION TO RISING

RISING is a project which brought together a group of concerned citizens to creatively take action on climate change in their local area of Dublin's Docklands — diverse communities residing in areas including Westland Row, City Quay, Pearse Street, Grand Canal Dock and Ringsend. The project was led by Trinity College Dublin (TCD) and Brokentaklers Theatre Company, in collaboration with Dublin Theatre Festival and Algorithm Creative Production Studio.



The area in question has undergone rapid transformation in recent decades. According to the Ringsend Irishtown Local Environmental Improvement Plan (2018)<sup>1</sup> "Employment traditionally provided by the docklands has now been overtaken by the new tech and financial companies based in the vicinity." Some of these large multinationals inhabit buildings known for some of the most striking architectural design in the capital. These corporations also inhabit a neighbourhood which has faced social problems and huge decline in population since the suburbanisation of Dublin from the 1960s onwards. A community resident interviewed for this research recalls a tragedy in 1963 as tenement buildings collapsed, resulting in the deaths of two young girls who had just made their First Holy Communion<sup>2</sup>.

This led to the forced depopulation of the area over the following decades as the local authorities demolished sub-standard tenement housing and moved families out to the suburbs. According to the interviewee *"In the parish of Westland Row, we had approximately 22 and a half thousand families. And when the depopulation was completed, which took many years, it didn't happen overnight, we were left with Westland Row parish and City Quay parish combined with less than 6000 people."* Since the 1990s, however, the population of the area has spiked again, as gentrification spurred on by the influx of industry has led to "the large-scale construction of private apartments and gated enclaves for middle- and upper-income groups." (Kelly, 2014)<sup>3</sup>.

The RISING project brought together members of these diverse communities, including those who had lived in the area for many generations, as well as more recently arrived residents.

The campus of Trinity College Dublin (TCD), founded in 1592, includes a site of 5.5 acres encompassing Pearse Street, Grand Canal Quay and Macken Street, making the College a long-standing neighbour to these communities. Opened by TCD in late 2021, Unit18 is a space in this Trinity East campus, designated for the local community, a place where residents can engage with the College, local businesses and other services. Unit18 aims to offer new educational, social and cultural opportunities to its neighbours in the area.

Brokentaklers Theatre Company, led by co-artistic directors Feidlim Cannon and Gary Keegan with Creative Producer Rachel Bergin, were engaged by TCD as Trinity East Artists-in-Residence in 2020 with a remit to co-create new artworks along with local communities, using Unit18 as a base. The residency was delayed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

As Covid restrictions eased and the residency evolved, climate action became central to the planned artwork. The residency was extended in 2021 upon receipt of a funding grant from the Creative Ireland's 'Creative Climate Action Fund' in collaboration with Dublin Theatre Festival and creative production studio Algorithm. TCD was the primary applicant and grant holder for the award. The Creative Climate Action Fund was also supported by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.dublincity.ie/sites/default/files/media/file-uploads/2018-05/Ringsend\\_Irishtown\\_LEIP.pdf](https://www.dublincity.ie/sites/default/files/media/file-uploads/2018-05/Ringsend_Irishtown_LEIP.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.dublincity.ie/library/blog/collapse-tenements-1963#:~:text=In%20June%201963%2C%20the%20collapse.were%20residents%20of%20the%20building.>

<sup>3</sup> Kelly, S. (2014). *Taking Liberties: Gentrification as Neoliberal Urban Policy in Dublin*. In: MacLaran, A., Kelly, S. (eds) *Neoliberal Urban Policy and the Transformation of the City*. Palgrave Macmillan, London. [https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137377050\\_11](https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137377050_11).





Dublin Theatre Festival

The resulting project, RISING, ran from September 2021 until May 2022. As an active community of creative climate activists in the Dublin Docklands, RISING continues, grows and evolves. This report summarises the phases of delivery of the project, tracks the outcomes, generates insights, and makes recommendations for the future of this and similar creative community climate projects.

The RISING project embodied a number of principles of effective climate change communication (Stoknes, 2015)<sup>4</sup>, and while small in scale, serves as a valuable case study or pilot project to showcase creative community climate action in Ireland.

Creative cultural practices have a great potential to meaningfully and equitably engage communities with climate change, but there is a need for groundwork and trust-building between communities and institutions like TCD before longer-term projects can be realised. Creative facilitation can support and broker this trust-building.

The creative approach used in RISING generated a welcoming, relaxed and inclusive space for community engagement with climate change. The [audio production](#) that premiered at Dublin Theatre Festival 2021 was developed based on real scientific predictions for the local area, scripted by Brokentalkers Theatre Company and narrated by a local young person, Kym Delaney. This audio track was used as an opening or hook for the introductory community engagement workshops, thus making climate change localised, tangible, and emotive to the attendees during the opening moments of their participation in the RISING project.

<sup>4</sup> Stoknes, P. E. (2015). *What we think about when we try not to think about global warming: Toward a new psychology of climate action*. Chelsea Green Publishing.



RISING in the Lir

Careful creative facilitation that balanced humour with the tensions that arose during discussions on climate change, led to productive dialogue and trust between the participants, the facilitators, and the guest speakers from TCD.

Brokentalkers have vast experience in the facilitation of community groups to develop artistic outputs, and the RISING project greatly benefitted from this expertise. The aim of the artists from the outset was to generate a shared sense of ownership among the participants in any climate action emerging from the project. Their hope was for the group to coalesce, and eventually not to need them any longer. The final idea of the culmination of the participants' ongoing engagement being a scripted presentation on stage in the Lir National Academy of Dramatic Art, Grand Canal Quay, emerged slowly during the duration of the project (September 2021–May 2022).

RISING employed strategies to create accessible, intergeneration responses to local climate-related concerns. A variety of approaches were utilised in workshops and events for the public audiences and the RISING project participants: audiovisual; dialogue; creative writing; humour; academic presentations; embodied practices — walking, planting; scripted presentation.



RISING in the Lir

Collaboration between creative practitioners, university representatives, existing community initiatives and RISING project participants resulted in new ways of engaging with climate action, and influenced changes in individual and collective practices among these varied stakeholders.

This report reflects on the creative approaches employed within the RISING project, the role and benefits of the arts in community climate action, and shares the learnings from RISING.



# RISING PROJECT DELIVERY

## THE RISING PROJECT HAD A NUMBER OF PHASES:

1. Setting the Stage — Background Research
2. RISING at Dublin Theatre Festival
3. In-Depth Community Engagement
4. RISING in the Lir Academy
5. Follow-on Community Engagement

These phases are described in more detail in the subsequent subsections.

Alongside these activities, evaluation of the project was carried out by TCD's Science & Society Research Group, represented by Dr Mairéad Hurley. This research sought to understand the efficacy of the creative approach to community engagement with climate action, the conditions for public engagement, the challenges and opportunities presented throughout the project. It generates insights and recommendations for future creative community projects, within the Dublin Docklands area, and in Irish communities more broadly.

An accompanying piece of research into the oral histories of RISING participants was carried out by Brigid Miller as part of a Master's in Public History undertaken in TCD School of History. Data collected for these research studies consisted of researcher observations and notes, participant surveys, and 11 interviews with participants, artists, project team, and collaborating academic staff from TCD, all obtained with interviewee consent in May, June and July 2022. The research received ethical approval from the TCD School of Education's Research Ethics Committees. The questions asked in the semi-structured interviews varied from participant to participant, but generally probed their "climate stories", their personal reasons for joining the RISING project, their perceived effectiveness of the project and their own activities, their hopes for the future of the RISING group, and their current feelings towards climate change.





Dublin Theatre Festival

**Setting the Stage — Background Research**

During initial phases of the RISING project, Brokentalkers conversed with local residents and youth groups, primarily connected to St. Andrew’s Resource Centre, located on Pearse Street. To develop an understanding of the potential effects of climate change in the Dublin Docklands, they interviewed a number of academics active in climate-related disciplines in TCD, including Professor Anna Davies, Director of the Environmental Governance Research Group, and Professor Quentin Crowley, Director of the Trinity Centre for the Environment. The RISING project team, including Brokentalkers and Mary Colclough, TCD Community & Enterprise Engagement Manager and RISING Project Manager, undertook research into methodologies and science communication approaches for effective public engagement with issues of climate change.

**RISING at Dublin Theatre Festival 2021**

Brokentalkers worked with production studio Algorithm to develop an immersive audiovisual experience which premiered at Dublin Theatre Festival in October 2021, a site-specific piece presented on the Liffey walls around Sir John Rogerson’s Quay and Customs House Quay. Audiences used their mobile phones to listen to an audio piece performed by local Pearse Street resident, Kym Delaney. Simultaneously, a light installation displayed a series of texts and animations on the walls of the adjacent quays.

Kym narrated a 20-minute piece written by Brokentalkers, informed by their background research. The script imagines a future in which no action has been taken on climate change, and reflects on the impacts locally in the Dublin Docklands, as well as on a global scale. The full audio production can be accessed on the [RISING project website](#).

672 free tickets were booked through Eventbrite for the performances over 3 days during Dublin Theatre Festival. In addition people could simply stop along the Quays during the performance, ask festival guides about what was happening and tune in. The event received significant media coverage including RTE’s One O’Clock and Nine O’Clock news and the Irish Times. A full media report for the RISING project is given in the [RISING media report](#).



RISING Workshops

**In-Depth Community Engagement**

Whilst the initial phase of RISING aimed to engage wider audiences (and in particular the extensive arts audiences attracted to the Dublin Theatre Festival) with the pressing issue of climate change, the subsequent stages of the project aimed to empower residents of Dublin’s Docklands to explore the complexities of the issue through participatory creative practice, with a view to translating these encounters into behavioural changes and local climate action. This phase was primarily hosted at Unit18 on Macken Street. Three identical introductory workshops were held to introduce the project to local residents and to invite them to participate over the following months. Dates, formats and attendee numbers are given in **Table 1**:

DATE	FORMAT	NUMBER ATTENDED
9TH NOVEMBER 2021 (11AM–1PM)	In-person	8
17TH NOVEMBER 2021 (7–9PM)	In-person	11
22ND NOVEMBER 2021 (7–9PM)	In-person	4

**Table 1:** RISING introductory workshop details

A further 13 people had registered for one of the 3 workshops but did not attend.

The workshops were advertised through flyers delivered to over 6,000 homes around the Grand Canal area and also distributed to attendees at the Dublin Theatre Festival production of RISING. In addition, the Project Manager met with local community groups to talk to them about the project and sent emails to TCD’s local community mailing list (over 300 groups and individuals). The content and facilitation by Brokentalkers followed the same format for each of the three introductory workshops.

Initially, after welcoming participants, the workshop opened with the RISING audio production featuring local resident Kym Delaney, which paints a dystopian image of the future in the Dublin Docklands. After reflecting individually and collectively on the piece, participants were invited to write down examples of behaviour changes that could reduce climate change that could be made individually, collectively e.g. as a local group, or systemically e.g. at political level. Participants wrote these changes on post-its and placed them on the newly-titled “Wall of Change”: a wall in Unit18 which will continue to host these proposed ideas for change by “me”, “us” and “them” (until the glue dries up on the sticky notes). Participants were also invited to take home a post-it and to try to implement the behaviour changes written upon it over the coming month. These included simple actions like eating less red meat, or cycling more often, or as described by one interviewee “I do my own bits. Like I recycle everything, down in Ringsend recycling. I wash on thirty, quick showers. I do everything in a household way.”



An attendee was noted to comment on the power of the audio production, and wished to share it with friends, mentioning that it had really impacted her perception of the threat of climate change locally.

Subsequently, all attendees of the initial introductory sessions were invited back to join the project on an ongoing basis, which would involve committing to a weekly two hour session, to be held on Monday evenings between January and March 2022. In January, a number of the workshops had to be held online due to Covid restrictions. In-person workshops resumed when it was safe to do so according to public health guidelines, and the recommendations from TCD. All in-person workshops were held in Unit18. Dates and overview of the content of the workshops are provided in **Table 2**.

A core group of 12 residents emerged who committed to the full duration of the RISING project — a diverse group, representing a range of ages and backgrounds and nationalities, but all living or connected somehow to the locality, and with a passion to do something to make a difference.

The general format for these sessions was a combination of creative exercises facilitated by Brokentalkers, as well as a guest speaker. The Project

Manager & Brokentalkers worked to identify and arrange suitable guest speakers from other organisations in the local area as well as staff from TCD active in areas related to climate change, biodiversity, environmental protection and sustainability. Participants were informed early on in the process that the end goal of the project was some sort of creative output in April 2022. The approach to programme development was fluid, shaped in response to participant interests. Speakers were generally not determined until a few weeks in advance of the workshops.

The facilitated sessions led by Brokentalkers included brainstorming, creative writing and elements from improv theatre and comedy. From initial reflections on the climate crisis and potential actions in the first workshops, subsequent sessions allowed participants to determine their own preferences for local climate action. Four main thematic areas emerged with participants naturally aligning themselves with one of the following:

1. Greening the area (4)
2. Tackling litter in the Docklands (4)
3. Campaigning for corporates to act sustainably (3)
4. Light pollution (1)



RISING Workshops

WORKSHOP DATE	CONTENT	FORMAT	NUMBER OF ATTENDEES
6TH DEC 2021	<p>Brokentalkers outlined the project overview — that the group’s journey will be documented around some climate-related behavioural change(s) and finish in some form of public event, showcasing the work done together.</p> <p>→ <i>Writing exercise</i> Write your vision of a world where all the climate change issues have been addressed. Write it as if it has already happened. “I live in a place...”</p> <p>→ <i>Cut-up exercise</i> “Take a pair of scissors, cut up the text and put it together differently — create a more poetic text”. Members read aloud.</p> <p>→ <i>Wall of Change</i> Attendees go to the Wall of Change and choose 2 actions that are meaningful to them, have impact and are achievable.</p>	In-person	12
17TH JAN 2022	<p>Brokentalkers facilitated discussion by participants on choices they made from the Wall of Change; people were asked to choose one that they hadn’t suggested themselves.</p> <p>→ <i>Writing exercise</i> Write a diary entry, imagining that you have been doing this activity for 6 months, tell us about the things that have gone well and gone wrong or have been harder than you expected. As people read their entries, others wrote words in Zoom Chat that resonated with them.</p> <p>→ Presentation by Joe Donnelly from Ringsend Irishtown Sustainable Energy Community (SEC) — recording available <a href="#">here</a>.</p>	Online	16
24TH JAN 2022	<p>Presentation by Michele Hallahan, Sustainability Advisor to Trinity’s Provost — recording available <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p>→ Discussion about participant’s chosen actions — recognition of 2 emerging divisions, one about greening/planting/litter (immediate local action) and another about campaigning / lobbying (more long-term).</p> <p>→ 2 breakout rooms with people discussing changes and actions.</p>	Online	11



WORKSHOP DATE	CONTENT	FORMAT	NUMBER OF ATTENDEES
31ST JAN 2022	Recap of previous week's work and divide into 2 groups to discuss project actions — what will people do and how will they do it?  → The idea of an edible landscape or garden emerged — “a gift to the community.”	Hybrid: In-person and online	9 and 2
7TH FEB 2022	→ Further group work on how participants will work on their projects, document their work and what resources are required.  → A walk around Ringsend was scheduled by the “greening” group to view possible sites for an edible garden.	Hybrid: In-person and online	9 and 1
11TH FEB 2022	Walk around Ringsend and lunch ( video highlights — <a href="#">RISING Walking Tour of Ringsend — YouTube</a> ).	In-person	11
14th Feb 2022	→ Sub-group work on actions,  → Presentation by Prof Quentin Crowley, Director of Trinity Centre for the Environment, Trinity College (“Systems Thinking for Community-based Action” — available <a href="#">here</a> ).	Hybrid: In-person and online	8 and 3
21st Feb 2022	→ Working in sub-groups on projects.  → Improv exercise — participants within groups put their case to Brokentalkers who question them on the value of their actions, people argue their case.	Hybrid: In-person and online	8 and 1
28th Feb 2022	→ Presentation by Dr Zoe Roseby, School of Geology, Trinity College on sea level rises and Linte na Farraige, another Creative Ireland funded climate action project. (video available <a href="#">here</a> ).  → Working in sub-groups on projects.	Hybrid: In-person and online	8 and 1

WORKSHOP DATE	CONTENT	FORMAT	NUMBER OF ATTENDEES
7th March 2022	→ Presentation by Trevor Woods, Technician, Trinity College — Biodegradable plastics and Artists using recycled products.  → Writing exercise facilitated by Brokentalkers: “Why do you continue to come here every Monday evening?”	In-person	8
14th March 2022	→ Update on group actions.  → First draft of script by Brokentalkers for the Lir event (scheduled April) — read-through by participants.	In-person	9
21st March 2022	→ Work on group projects including development of a flyer to advertise the Edible Garden in Ringsend.  → Presentation by David Hackett, Trinity's Environmental Services Co-ordinator — Grow Your Own (available <a href="#">here</a> ).	In-person	10
28th March 2022	→ Reading of updated script for the Lir event.	Hybrid: In-person and online	7 and 2
30th March 2022	Delivery of flyers around Ringsend to advertise launch of Edible Garden.	In-person	
2nd April 2022	Launch of Edible Garden — (highlights <a href="#">here</a> ).	In-person	200 goody bags handed out
5–6th April	Lir performance — available <a href="#">here</a> .	In-person	80

Table 2: RISING participants: weekly workshops





RISING in the Lir

### RISING in the Lir Academy

The final showcase for the project was a 2-night public presentation in the Black Box Studio Two of the Lir National Academy of Dramatic Art, Grand Canal Quay. This space allowed for 50 audience seats, when the stage was set up with the ten participating RISING performers. The participants had rehearsed the written script in the two weeks leading up to the event and on the evening before opening night (April 5th). The piece put together by Brokentalkers reflected the participants' own words, captured through their creative writing exercises, discussion and improv during workshops. Props were minimal with participants seated behind tables, and dressed as they normally did during the workshops. The show was an hour long with participants delivering an emotive performance as they reflected on their journey over the previous months, highlighting their different approaches to tackling climate actions. Tickets were advertised on social media by the

Lir Academy and the RISING project team, as well as word-of-mouth to participants' neighbours and friends. Both nights booked up quickly with a waiting list opening up on the week of the show. Attendees included local politicians and residents, Gardaí stationed locally, TCD staff, and journalists. Audience members were invited to join the climate discussion at a post-show drinks reception in the venue, and in general the feedback about the show during these discussions was very positive. A press release was issued on the opening night, published on the TCD [website](#), and picked up by the [IndiaEducationDiary.com](#).

### Follow-on RISING Climate Actions

By April 2022, a sub-group of RISING participants had developed and launched an "Edible Garden" at the end of St Patrick's Villas (cul-de-sac) in Ringsend. The box garden contained herbs such as parsley, chives and mint and residents were encouraged to maintain the box and help themselves. The group gave out 200 "goodie bags" to attendees and passers-by at the launch on Saturday 2nd April, containing a leaflet about the initiative and some fruit and drinks supplied by Meta (video highlights available [here](#)). Others from the wider group were inspired to continue to tend to and grow their own plantings, initiated at the workshop by TCD's David Hackett — 3 members shared photos of their potted plants or their own herb gardens through the WhatsApp group in mid-April when the project had ended.

The sub-group who wanted to tackle litter around Grand Canal Square have written to, and met with local politicians, Gardaí, Dublin City Council (South East Area Office) and the private company contracted to maintain the Square (Apleona). They have received mixed responses with some evidence of greater awareness by



Edible Garden Launch Event

DCC and increased Garda presence around Sean O'Casey bridge. One of the members of the group has participated in 3 local clean-ups since the project began and posted on the WhatsApp group that a local clean-up would take place on Sunday 12th June. As a result of RISING and attending the presentation by Professor Quentin Crowley, one member of this RISING sub-group was successful in attaining a place on a Climate Leadership Skills programme (10 ECTS module), set up through a project entitled *Ireland's Knowledge Centre for Carbon and Climate (IKC3)*. She is participating in this course alongside her full-time employment until December 2022, and has shared her experiences with the wider RISING group.

The group who targeted corporates as their main instigator for change have created a short video summarising their main "asks" which formed part of the script of the presentation in the Lir Academy ([here](#)). The video has been shared on social media and disseminated to a number of large corporates in the area.

One of the RISING participants resides on a boat at Grand Canal Dock and was motivated by a lack of sleep due to night office lights to tackle this issue. She has since been in contact with Dark Skies Ireland, participating in their stakeholder Zoom calls and is developing an idea for a citizen science project to monitor excess junk light, and is seeking input from Dublin City Council and the Smart Docklands programme.

Many of those interviewed mentioned being keen to continue to work together after the presentation in the Lir Academy. They set up a WhatsApp group on the evening of the final Lir performance to allow them to exchange ideas and organise meet-ups.



Edible garden launch event



In addition, the following actions have taken place since the final RISING presentation:

- 3 RISING members attended the “SEACHANGE” exhibition in Trinity’s Naughton Institute in early May — Transition Year students from 3 schools including Ringsend College exhibited their projects on designing works dedicated to tackling sustainability at a local level.
- 10 RISING members and friends attended a Guided Walking Tour of Trinity’s Grounds, led by Head of Environmental Services, David Hackett on Saturday 21st May. This was part of a Climate Action Day organised by Trinity Development & Alumni.
- The group has met in Unit18 four times since the official end of the project — 23rd May, 13th June, 18th July and 9th August. For the August meeting, there was a presentation by Emma Delemere (Centre for Innovative Human Systems, School of Psychology, TCD) on gaming as a technique to support decision making regarding repairing or replacing broken electronic devices. 3 new members have joined these meetings.
- 4 RISING members attended a walking tour of the Docklands in September facilitated by Darach MacDonncha, programme manager for Smart Docklands.
- Members continue to use the WhatsApp group to share stories and events related to climate change; one of the members shared with the group that as a result of having attended the RISING presentation, his brother has joined Dun Laoghaire Tidy Towns.
- A number of the RISING group participated in European Researcher’s Night on 30th September 2022. This public event held in TCD showcases the impact of science and research on the daily lives of citizens and society. A video extract from the RISING performance in the Lir Academy was shown along with a panel discussion with Prof Quentin Crowley, Tania Banotti and RISING participant, Manuel Salazar. There were 40 attendees.



Edible Garden Launch Event



Ringsend Walk

One RISING participant interviewed in May 2022 spoke of his wish for the group to formalise a “blueprint” which would set out the values of the group and rules for membership, and act as a guide for the kinds of activities they would undertake in the future. He imagined the group as a self-organising entity that would define its own challenges, and use the skills and networks developed during RISING to call on institutions like TCD as needed, and to engage artists like Brokentalkers for creative input as and when called for by the group. This vision for the future of RISING is reflective of the original aim of Brokentalkers to empower a self-sustaining community of climate champions in the Dublin Docklands.

**Deviations from Original RISING Proposal**

In the original proposal for RISING, submitted to the Creative Ireland Creative Climate Action Fund, it was suggested that participants would find actionable tasks that could be replicated widely. The idea was that participants would then take on the challenge of the action for a period of time, and share their experiences through video. Community participants would become leaders, inspiring others to take on the action themselves, demystifying the science around climate change. It was decided during the project implementation phase that while some videos would be made, that would not be the primary vehicle for sharing the results of the actions, opting instead for a scripted presentation in front of a live audience in the Lir Academy.

While the RISING participants’ actions did not directly result in change across other communities within the time frame of this project, some other unexpected audiences were reached:

- One of the RISING members is an Adult Education teacher in Ringsend College and organised for Feidlim Cannon from Brokentalkers to do a workshop with her class. This session combined a number of exercises from the early RISING workshops.
- Brokentalkers facilitated a similar session online with Meta employees globally as part of Earth Week on April 20th — 146 people in total watched the event, either viewing it live or watching the recording, with very positive feedback.

The original target was to directly reach 300 residents for workshops and indirectly reach hundreds more through the online presence. Although the core group for regular workshops was only 12, we reached many more indirectly through attendance at the launch of the edible garden (200 goodie bags handed out), 2 nights performance in the Lir (fully booked with 80 attendees over the two nights), social media (figures in Table 3) and print media (Irish Independent, Saturday in May — approx. 10,000 circulation). During the 30-day period from end March 2022 to end April 2022, coinciding with the Lir performance, our Tweets earned 14.6k impressions.

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM	FOLLOWERS
Twitter @RISINGDocklands	159
Instagram @risingdocklands_	334

Table 3: Social media



Ringsend Walk





Delivering Flyers for the Launch of the Edible Garden

# OBSERVATIONS AND INSIGHTS

Using the various sources of evidence collected for the RISING project evaluation (surveys, interviews, researcher field notes, project artefacts), the primarily qualitative data were analysed using a combination of evaluation coding (Rallis & Rossman, 2003, p. 492)<sup>5</sup>, which involved the application of codes to qualitative data to assign judgments about the merit, worth, or significance of the programme (Saldaña, 2013, p. 119)<sup>6</sup>, and thematic analysis, following the steps outlined by Braun & Clark (2006)<sup>7</sup>. Initial codes were generated, and these were grouped into themes. These themes are discussed further in this section.

## Place identity and attachment

All participants engaged in the early stages of the project with the powerful audio piece created by Brokentalkers specifically for the RISING project. This piece was centred around the narrator's connection to the local area, and was developed in consultation with Trinity College Dublin researchers Professor Anna Davies and Dr Stephan Hugel. According to a review of academic literature on climate change engagement (Nicolosi & Corbett, 2017)<sup>8</sup>, strong human attachment to place is a positive means to promote environmental or climate concern and action. This was extremely evident in the responses from participant interviewees, most of whom demonstrated strong identities as proud residents of the Dublin Docklands area. Many also expressed strong sentiments of environmental care, with great attachment to the wildlife, the waterways and the sea surrounding their locale. One interviewee mentioned the deep local knowledge of the rhythms of the sea and the connection to weather:

5 Rallis, S. F., & Rossman, G. B. (2003). Mixed methods in evaluation contexts: A pragmatic framework. *Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research*, 491–512.

6 Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers+ qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook*. Sage Publications.

7 Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). *Using thematic analysis in psychology*. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.

8 Nicolosi, E., & Corbett, J.B. (2017). *Engagement with climate change and the environment: A review of the role of relationships to place*. *Local Environment*, 23(1), 77–99. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2017.1385002>.





Workshop with David Hackett

*“Well, Ringsend is, we’re all ex-dockers, fishermen, sailors... And so, they would know when the incoming tide and ebbing tide would be coming in and out... During the months or certain times, times of the months you’d have the spring tides. So, then you know, okay so say this month is May, you might have a spring tide at the end of May and we have maybe a bad storm coming in on that high tide and heavy rainfall, maybe over 24 hours. You’re going to have a lot of rainwater coming down from the mountains, River Dodder, flooding, water running out into the river Liffey. So, I think it’s over centuries the fishermen in Ringsend were kind of clued into timetables. And we’re all kind of seaside or living beside the seaside, so it’s kind of in your nature that you know the timetables.”*

Many interviewees also mentioned the geography of the area, and the fact that much of the Ringsend and Irishtown areas were built on land reclaimed from the Liffey and Dodder estuaries in centuries past. Local connection to place, and understanding of its environmental history, was tapped into effectively by Brokentalkers in their script for the RISING audio production:

*“Where you are standing used to be under the water, before the humans moved in. We built up the sea walls to hold back the tide. We evicted the indigenous biosphere, and we built ourselves a technosphere. Is it ok that I’m ok with that? You see, I’m from here. This entirely us-made environment is my home. My community. Where my family and friends live. Where I am growing up. A place I love, despite its unnatural nature.”*

Excerpt from RISING Audio Production, written by Brokentalkers, performed by Kym Delaney.



Ringsend Walk

### Community building through the Arts

Community means different things to different people — it is not just a word describing people living in the same physical location, and it is not reserved for those whose families have lived in an area for many generations. As the skyline of the Dublin Docklands has changed over the decades, so too have the demographics of the area. The diverse group of people who came together for RISING and who continued to meet throughout and beyond the project duration represented a wide range of ages, nationalities, and educational levels. The personal climate stories of the participants were also diverse — these included a Tidy Towns stalwart with childhood memories of the River Dodder flooding, an activist in Extinction Rebellion who grew up in the shadow of fossil fuel extraction in South America, and a retired school teacher who had spent many years in Africa, witnessing first hand the resilience and ingenuity of communities in the face of extreme threats to survival.

Unit18 opened in late 2021, during the Covid-19 pandemic. While it has been operational since then in line with public health guidelines, it had not yet become a hub for community life in the area when the project started. Hence the RISING project faced a double challenge: convening a group of people connected to the local area with interest in climate action, and maintaining connection with them throughout a 5-month arts project. For Brokentalkers, this approach was unusual, as most of their previous projects worked with pre-existing groups or communities.



*"It was a brilliant one, to be honest. We work with communities a lot and in different aspects. Usually, or in a lot of cases you're working with a group that is already formed, and trying to create something with them. But they already have pre-existing relationships, and they already are a group, and they already meet twice a week or once a week or whatever. And so when you're starting a group kind of from the ground up, and first of all getting people there and trying to reach the right people. Then also being in the middle of COVID, but also being at the time when, like people's real lives were starting to come back as well, the fact that so many people came back every Monday was great for us. And what was also really exciting about it was just how intergenerational it was as a group, that there were so many different people of different age brackets in the room at all times.*

Brokentaklers Theatre Company

*And also just the different level of engagement with the topic of climate change too. You know, you have people... who have done their masters in climate science...and then you have people who had no experience in climate at all, who just knew that it was something that they wanted to be part of, and knew that there was something that they wanted to learn about. And maybe someone...who has loads of engagement with the community and changing things in the community and making change, but not necessarily making much change in terms of climate. So that was exciting...So it was a really nice mix of people.. also really nice mix of people in terms of where they're from...there were new people who were part of the community. There were people who have lived there their entire lives, you know. It was really nice to engage with a group like that."*



Initial stages of the RISING project involved building community within this diverse group, connected through their love of place, and their shared commitment to climate action that would improve the lives of others in their area. However, the tensions and differences between those who had lived in the area for many generations, and those who had moved into the area in recent years was sometimes evident during the workshops, and in the interviews with participants. As one interviewee put it *“they’re a different kind of local people, they’re local people but they weren’t born and reared in the area. They’re living here, but they’re not from the area, but they’re interested”*. Another pointed out the differences even within those ‘new’ communities: *“you have to acknowledge that there is a difference between how people who are maybe two or three generations here see the community of the Docklands and people who are new.”*

For some, the project provided an avenue to discover that others in their local area had a shared interest in environmentalism. One interviewee mentioned gaining *“a general awareness...I certainly got to know the locality better and what was going on in the locality and about the Ringsend, and the Tidy Towns group. So, I certainly yeah, it was a lovely surprise to see so many people involved and caring and out in action.”*

The invited speakers shared insights into organisations active in the area, from within TCD, as well as in the locality — e.g. the Ringsend Irishtown Sustainable Energy Community initiative, and the Fair Play café, presented to the group by Joe Donnelly on January 17th, 2022.

From the early stages, the RISING project represented an open and inclusive space for the sharing and exchange of emotion and human experience of climate change, as well as scientific knowledge. As a result of the careful creative facilitation by Brokentalkers, the group quickly built trust, as evidenced during the first session that was held online due to increasing Covid-19 case numbers in January 2022. The group were asked to do a personal creative writing exercise relating to their own climate action journey, and then asked to read their writing back to the group. Despite the worries of some participants that they hadn’t done it correctly, all willingly shared their work with the group, revealing their personal feelings about climate change. Participants also reflected on the most poignant images springing to mind as they listened to others’ writings. As described in the script for the RISING presentation, for some, sharing worries about climate with the group generated positive emotions:

*“I just want to say, it’s a comfort to me. Is that selfish? The concerns I have can cause me some*



RISING in the Lir



RISING in the Lir

*anxiety. Sometimes it feels like a very lonely experience. I often worry that no one cares. or that my actions aren’t as impactful and that can be very overwhelming, so finding people who are passionate and worried, makes me hopeful.”*

For many participants interviewed, the trust within the group led to a sense of camaraderie, of being on a shared journey, and finding connection and kinship. One interviewee described a moment during one of the Monday evening sessions that was particularly memorable: *“Think it was just a little moment when I arrived in once, you know, work is terrible and you’re so busy and so tired....so, I come in here, after a day at work, and then somebody...just squeezes my hand. Like, it’s just great, you know, we’re here to do this together. So that’s a super emotional moment. And I didn’t have to say anything. I just sort of was like, okay, and here’s where we can do something positive and here’s where we can do something, be really proactive, and here’s where we can be really practical as well, because we have the information. And it’s about people and humanity”*.

Another mentioned the good humour and fun as being key to building trust between participants: *“having such fun. Like I do remember thinking, laughing hysterically at each other because it was funny. People were very relaxed, especially after the first couple of weeks, you know, very relaxed and very much in a group. And then Brokentalkers are brilliant at what they do because they let everyone’s personality come through. You know, for the first couple of weeks, people won’t naturally be themselves and will be kind of tentative or hesitant or shy or something or not trusting. So, I think,*

*yeah, they built up the trust very quickly. Very well.”* For another participant, meeting neighbours during the workshops was the highlight of the whole RISING project.

However, the artistic element of RISING was not the primary driver for engagement for everyone who got involved in the project — of 5 participants polled who all appeared on stage during the final RISING presentation in the Lir Academy, the creative element was an incentive to remain engaged with their community climate action for only 3 of the 5. In some cases, participants did not even notice the involvement of the arts in the initial stages. In response to questions probing whether the creative arts element was obvious to them from the beginning of the project, one interviewee stated *“I suppose it just dawned on us as it went along, it was kind of a gradual realisation”, while another said “Not at first. I didn’t. And it was only in hindsight then I realised that those lads were very good. They didn’t tell people what to do.”*

While the creative, arts-based facilitation techniques utilised by Brokentalkers helped to build cohesion among the group, there was no pressure placed on participants to take an artistic approach to their own climate actions. Likewise, all climate actions undertaken by the groups were entirely participant-led, with all choices driven by participants, based on their own interests. This open approach allowed great variation in activity, based on participants’ own interests, and natural sub-groupings within the wider group emerged from dialogue and debate. One interviewee reflected on the process: *“But they had their view on all of this and they were able actually to connect all these dots in a way that no one felt, you know, that they were left out....And that to me was a skill that Brokentalkers had, you know, they managed actually to connect all of us.”*

RISING featured climate engagement *with* and *through* art. Following the framework of Bentz (2020)<sup>9</sup>, climate engagement *with* art occurred during the weekly workshops, when art was both the medium to facilitate and express learning, while the final RISING presentation represented climate engagement *through* art, in which the storytelling on stage in the Lir Academy was co-created with participants, building on the open-ended and personally-relevant climate-related questions explored by them. As described by Brokentalkers during the early stages of the project: *“This is only the beginning. Art is never finished.”*

<sup>9</sup> Bentz, J. (2020). *Learning about climate change in, with and through art. Climatic Change*, 162(3), 1595–1612.





Ringsend Walk

### Utilising Effective Climate Communication Strategies

In the article series Getting Unstuck<sup>10</sup>, science communicator Julie Becker describes three approaches to engaging audiences with climate change and sustainability, building on principles of behavioural science and psychology: tell a different climate change story; encourage people to change behaviour; and work with compassionate values. These approaches harness elements of the “five new main strategies for climate communication” as described by psychologist and economist Per Espen Stoknes in his book *What We Think About When We Try Not To Think About Global Warming* (P. 137)<sup>11</sup>:

1. *Social*. They use the power of social networks.
2. *Supportive*. They employ frames that support the message with positive emotions.
3. *Simple*. They make climate-friendly behaviors easy and convenient.
4. *Story-Based*. They use the power of stories to create meaning and community.
5. *Signals*. They use indicators for feedback on societal response.”

RISING effectively combined personal and local storytelling with reliable scientific expertise provided by Trinity College Dublin to “tell a different climate change story” in the final RISING presentation. The project provided a supportive community-based frame that allowed scope for simple, convenient climate-friendly behavioural change for those who wanted to take a bottom-up approach, but also for large-scale activism for those who wanted to shake up political and capitalist structures contributing to climate injustice in the area. The focus on collective tangible action allowed participants to build personal efficacy, and translated negative emotions into action rather than despondency.

<sup>10</sup> Spokes, Issue 46, November 2018 & Issue 47, December 2018. Ecsite. Available at: <https://www.ecsite.eu/activities-and-services/news-and-publications/digital-spokes/issue-46#section=section-indepth&href=/feature/depth/getting-unstuck-part-1> and <https://www.ecsite.eu/activities-and-services/news-and-publications/digital-spokes/issue-47#section=section-indepth&href=/feature/depth/getting-unstuck-part-2>.

<sup>11</sup> Stoknes, P. E. (2015). *What we think about when we try not to think about global warming: Toward a new psychology of climate action*. Chelsea Green Publishing.

As one interviewee stated:

*“I feel anxious and frustrated. I do have hope ... I feel much more energised as a result of doing this project. You know, I have not yet taken the steps in my individual life that I should have taken in order to really consider my impact. But I feel energised by the people I’ve met, by their enthusiasm, by the fact that we did something. All of those things have contributed to a sense of agency.”*

The group formed and continues to grow through a set of shared compassionate values. One interviewee noted the fact that the group is driven by a shared will to do something for the greater good, rather than any political will or agenda:

*“with RISING projects...there was no political will here. So, if we’re going to do something it is because we care about the community. So, this is there is not an influence of another bigger entity that then pushes us to go forward to something. So, there wasn’t an agenda, that’s what I’m saying. And not having an agenda and still being consistent in trying to address climate change, it gives you the best of the person. And yeah, we managed to have this beautiful project.”*

### Tensions & Scale

A common theme throughout the reflections collected from the participants was the fact that the project allowed them the rare opportunity to come into contact with others whose worldviews differed from their own. One interviewee described the differences as a benefit rather than a challenge, highlighting the fact that each member of the group contributed different experiences for the benefit of the group as a whole:

*“...different people from different backgrounds just thrown together. And we all got on with each other. We all had our different views, but we all did the same thing we cared. So, when you kind of looked at ....activism, could you see me getting locked up in cuffs, no I’d rather do something different. So yeah, I think we all brought something different to the table uniquely, individually.”*

Brokentaklers embraced the natural tensions within the group, reflective of tensions in the wider climate change discourse, by creating multiple pathways for action, and allowing the natural split between local vs global scale, and individual vs collective responsibility to feature strongly in participant discussions and in the script for the final presentation. In reflecting on the sessions, one participant mentioned the fact that Brokentaklers often deliberately provoked debate between the group: *“I think they ... were able to kind of push our boundaries on the chats. Gary was just throwing things in and just get everybody worked up*

*and then walk away ... an awful man for saying things and get us all riled up and then walk off.”*

The introductory workshops and the “Wall of Change” in Unit 18 probed participants’ feelings in relation to the responsibility for behaviour change of the individual alongside the responsibilities of nations, governments, and large corporations. These spurred intense debate among the groups on what types of climate actions could be meaningful in terms of wider impact, and shifting the needle on carbon emissions and global warming. Some members of the group questioned whether local community action is worthwhile or futile. For others, it was something they could feel control over, and could make a difference for the lives of people they know and care about. This was brought to the fore in the presentation:

*“We want to do something we have control over, that benefits people that we know and care about. We don’t have control over big corporations”*

For those on the other side of the debate,, small-scale action is not enough in this time of crisis: *“Well, you can dig around all you like in the dirt, I can’t see how that’s going to make much of a difference.”* However, the script also pointed to the fact that in wider society, these tensions can lead to acrimony among people who are actually working towards a common cause. The fact that the RISING group, while embracing debate, also placed a great value on respect and listening to alternative perspectives was highlighted by the fact that the same speaker later circled back to his previous remark: *“Just before we move on, I just want to apologise for my earlier comment about “digging around in the dirt”. That was uncalled for. It’s just that I think the situation has become so extreme that we need to concentrate our efforts on tackling the major offenders, the big corporations and the government.”*



Ringsend Walk



The participants however, also recognised the potential for learning within such a diverse group. When interviewed for the Irish Independent, the journalist commented to one participant that her strategy was different to that of another RISING member. *“And I said, yeah, but that’s on purpose because that’s the inclusivity of the group. We will decide things as a group, but we support each other’s strategies and we learn from each other’s strategies as well.”*

The narrative of the RISING presentation effectively utilised the climate communication principle of telling new stories, by centring the real conflict and tension that occurred within the group, drawing audience awareness to the complex human experience of embarking on a climate action journey. It drew out the idea that when it comes to acting on climate change, no one approach suits all, and the narrative reflected the range of human endeavour in the face of the climate crisis.

### Transformations

From a survey of 13 participants, 11 agreed that they were more informed about climate change as a result of participating in RISING, and more empowered to act upon it. The TCD Project Manager and Brokentalkers also stated in interviews that they were more informed about climate change as a result of participation. For many, it has led to small or large behaviour changes — for some, it is a personal life choice such as cycling rather than driving, whereas for others, it is professional, e.g. examining work-related travel and beginning to make choices for environmental rather than economic reasons.

The surveyed participants were asked to consider whether they would consider taking action or making changes to your behaviour or lifestyle after participating

in this project, to which 8 answered yes, and 5 were unsure. Those answering yes were asked to identify areas in their lives in which they might make changes, and given the following options to select up to 3 from:

- Plan, buy and prepare food to reduce climate impact and avoid waste.
- Making more environmentally conscious decisions around my travel and transport.
- Planting for biodiversity or working towards better green spaces.
- Avoid wasting heat and energy in my home.
- Taking action to address water waste or flood prevention.
- Shop in a climate conscious way, buying less or products that can be recycled or reused.
- Be involved with groups focused on climate action and supporting the environment.
- Recycling more from my household waste.
- Lobbying politicians and other groups e.g. corporates, local councils for change.

Of these options, “be involved with groups focused on climate action and supporting the environment” was the most popular (8 responses), followed by “shop in a climate conscious way, buying less or products that can be recycled or reused” (7 responses) and “Plan, buy and prepare food to reduce climate impact and avoid waste” (5 responses). This is an unsurprising outcome given that a number of the participants joining the RISING group were already members of other groups such as Extinction Rebellion, Sea Shepherds, Tidy Towns, the Green Party, St. Andrew’s Resource Centre, among other civic or environmental activist groups. Food and waste were also high on the agenda for the RISING group in terms of their own climate action projects, with two sub-groups tackling these issues in the community. Of the same 13 survey respondents, 10 felt that the creative aspect of this project made them feel more engaged with climate action, while 3 were neutral on this point.

A small cohort of participants (5) completed a post-project survey, in which they were asked about the impact of their small-group community climate actions. All believed there would be tangible a climate impact in their community as a result of their actions, in particular affecting pollution and waste. They had mixed opinions on whether the project would have an impact on others, with one respondent saying *“Truthfully I don’t know. I’m doubtful if we have changed the consumer patterns of our neighbours. At best as a participant in the project*



Edible Garden Launch Event



Edible Garden Launch Event

*we are more aware.”* On the other hand, another participant was fully convinced that the RISING project was having, and would continue to have, an impact on the local community through the ripple effect of sharing the new knowledge and experiences gained: *“Absolutely. We are no longer stalling, we are no longer on our own, we are the one tribe, and learning the science, analysing and applying it directly to Dublin Docklands makes it real, and the dangers real and the need to respond real. Therefore the behaviours and attitudes are changing too because of the constant conversation this group is having with other members in the community.”*

RISING provides an example of an effective multi-stakeholder partnership between community, artists, and a Higher Education Institute (HEI), with value added for all stakeholders from the others.

Many of the participants especially appreciated and valued the increased connection with and access to TCD:

*“We’re in a rare situation to have lectures, science lecturers who are connected with who are stakeholders in Ireland’s overall response to climate issues, come and lecture us weekly and you know, empower us with that information and ideas on what to do in response. So that was a rare situation to be in and I felt super privileged thinking, wow, I get this.”*

The Project Manager commented that during the showcase of the biodiversity efforts on the TCD campus led by groundskeeper David Hackett, one of the RISING participants commented that she didn’t realise that anybody could just walk through the Pearse Street entrance to the university. Likewise, many of the local residents attending the RISING presentation were setting foot in the Lir Academy in Grand Canal Quay for the first time. The RISING project has made some steps in breaking down the barriers between the university and its neighbours, but there remains much work to be done to cultivate two-way dialogue across the divide. The increased engagement with the community through the project benefited greatly from Brokentalkers experience in socially-engaged practice and creative facilitation. For the artists, the entire participatory programme as well as the initial audio production were enhanced through access to climate expertise from within TCD. They also appreciated the tactful scheduling and ongoing relationships with guest speakers, so that participants could get an introduction to a topic from a speaker, and be able to access them later in the project if they had further questions. As described by Brokentalkers: *“bringing them in at really nice times through the process, so it wasn’t like people were overloaded with information and it wasn’t like every week you*



were going to two hours of that. You know, you might have 45 minutes to an hour of a conversation with an academic and then follow it up with a conversation with us... and they were able to, you know, have their own inputs and their own thoughts.”

One TCD academic staff member mentioned being “really struck” by a conversation with a RISING participant in which they encountered new perspectives on an issue they sometimes took for granted, in terms of the timescales needed for widespread behaviour change within a socio-economically deprived community. Two-way dialogue in science communication can lead to learnings and benefits for scientists as well as the public: *“I thought that was a very interesting perspective... that’s something I learned because I was seeing the challenge through their eyes, which I hadn’t before.”*

The terms “empowerment” and “agency” featured heavily in surveys and interviews, with many participants feeling that the overall experience combining community building, the arts, and climate science had given the group a unique collective experience, and the confidence and impetus to drive forward their shared passion for positive climate action.

*“... we are becoming more empowered and we’re definitely empowered stakeholders now, I don’t see anybody refusing to listen to us. So that’s wonderful. But we’re still only a few months in.”* A contributing academic who encountered the presentation as an audience member commented on the confidence of the messaging of the RISING group by the end of the project: *“I think to be able to communicate something like that, you have to really be sure of it yourself in terms of developing your own narrative, whether as an individual or as a small group or community.”*

Evidence suggests that emotion is a strong driver of predisposition to climate action and environmentalism, and that both factual and emotion-laden narratives about climate change can elicit both negative and positive emotions (Wong-Parodi & Feygina, 2021)<sup>12</sup>. Similarly, sharing personal stories of the effects of climate change has been shown to influence listeners’ beliefs about climate change, and their understanding of the risks, with emotion playing an important mediating effect (Gustafson et al., 2020).<sup>13</sup> Survey and interview questions for the RISING evaluation research were

designed to probe participants’ emotional responses to climate change. 13 members of the group were asked in January 2022 “How do you feel about climate change right now?” and given the opportunity to select up to three responses from the following list: angry; curious; fearful; hopeful; anxious; optimistic; sad; inspired; guilty; frustrated. The results were as follows: fearful (5); anxious (4); hopeful (3); frustrated (3); angry (2); curious (2); optimistic (2); inspired (2); guilty (2); sad (1).

Interestingly, all respondents selected a set of emotions from either the ‘positive’ side of the list (hopeful; curious; inspired; optimistic), or from the ‘negative’ side (angry; fearful; anxious; sad; guilty; frustrated). No respondent presented mixed selections from these two groups. However, in a post-RISING interview in May 2022, a person who had responded “fearful; anxious; frustrated” in January, while still frustrated in May, mentioned that *“it brings optimism and a bit of hope when you see projects like this.”* Another respondent who had only responded “anxious” in January, when interviewed in May stated that they felt anxious and frustrated, but now also talked about hope: *“I suppose those things can live alongside each other. You can be anxious and hopeful, frustrated and hopeful.”* Another who responded only “fearful” in January found that encountering new people and seeing the level of enthusiasm for climate action among the young people in the group led to a shift in their feelings about climate change: *“A little bit sad, I’d say with what’s going on. But more hope. And optimistic from it. Yeah, I was probably starting off a bit angry and pissed off and nobody’s doing that. But then I came away hopeful, knowing that it was actually young people in the workshop that care. So that was an eye opener for me.”*



RISING in the Lir

<sup>12</sup> Wong-Parodi, G., & Feygina, I. (2021). *Engaging people on climate change: the role of emotional responses*. *Environmental Communication*, 15(5), 571–593.

<sup>13</sup> Gustafson, A., Ballew, M. T., Goldberg, M. H., Cutler, M. J., Rosenthal, S. A., & Leiserowitz, A. (2020). *Personal stories can shift climate change beliefs and risk perceptions: the mediating role of emotion*. *Communication Reports*, 33(3), 121–135.



RISING in the Lir

Clearly, the collective community built through RISING and the climate actions carried out by the group have been a strong driver in shifting emotions in relation to climate change, and in many cases introducing positive emotions alongside negative ones. Research suggests that such emotional flow (a progression of multiple emotions) has an increased persuasive effect, and harnessing this may be a powerful approach in designing climate change communication (Nabi et al., 2018).<sup>14</sup>

### Challenges

RISING attempted to draw together individuals within the geographical area of the Dublin Docklands rather than working with existing established community groups. Hence raising awareness and engaging participants with the project were the primary challenges. The project, while loose in terms of commitment, still required sustained engagement over time. For some interviewees, ill health or caring commitments meant that they could not participate in the project as regularly as they would have liked; however, they were glad that the door to returning to the group was always open despite having missed some gatherings.

The timing of the initiative, beginning in late 2021, meant that Covid-19 still left a strong mark on the project. With the fallout of the pandemic leaving Irish citizens facing multiple challenges, including a housing and cost-of-living crisis, climate issues may have slipped from public focus. The Project Manager suggested this as a potential cause of low levels of engagement within the target communities: *“Climate is not a priority*

<sup>14</sup> Nabi, R. L., Gustafson, A., & Jensen, R. (2018). *Framing climate change: Exploring the role of emotion in generating advocacy behavior*. *Science Communication*, 40(4), 442–468.

*for them and you know when people maybe have kids who are struggling with drugs, are not going to school with COVID and dropped out of school. You know, that seemed to be quite a common problem. Teachers and youth workers saying that they can’t get kids back into school. So parents, you know, are they going to go to a climate workshop?”*

The winter of 2021–22 also saw an upsurge of Covid-19 cases, and in January 2022, a number of RISING workshops were forced online. This led to new challenges for Brokentalkers, having to adapt their facilitation strategies to online, and to try to build trust through Zoom rather than face-to-face. Brokentalkers described the unusual situation enforced by Covid-19: *“normally we’d have loads of different factors to break down those kind of barriers that people create for themselves. But this time we were trying to enforce them to keep everyone safe.”*

The timeframe of only seven months for a project that involved so many layers of engagement and participation was extremely challenging. The compounding effect of Covid-19 meant that for Brokentalkers, the exact format of the final presentation took “a little bit longer to reveal itself than it probably would.”

Finally, the participants’ discussions showcased on stage in the Lir Academy raised questions as to whether climate action on this scale is “enough” or whether we as individuals are actually doing as much as we can. After praising the RISING experience, one participant commented *“But what am I doing? I’m still flying. I’m still eating an awful lot of red meat. I still have my car. And to me, that’s so much harder because it’s actually easier sometimes to do activism, which was what was relayed in the piece.”* The fact that the RISING project took significant effort and resources to change the behaviours of a small number of people who were mainly already well-informed and interested in climate action, does create an awareness of the scale of the efforts still required to shift widespread public behaviour in time to limit global warming to close to 1.5°C or even 2°C.



# LESSONS LEARNED

→ Embracing diverse perspectives and creative approaches can lead to meaningful, long-lasting public engagement with climate action, and can empower communities to take charge of their own responses to local challenges. A success of RISING was that while the funding for the project was hosted in Trinity College Dublin, the community participants had full control of the directions it took, and the artists and university drew in expertise as needed, rather than imposing restrictions or limits on what facets of climate change the group should focus on.

→ Cultivating community from the ground up around a shared interest is time consuming and challenging, but rewarding when trust and confidence are developed within a new group.

→ Climate action projects such as RISING can have unexpected ripple effects—the public performance, further workshops beyond the RISING group (with Meta employees and Ringsend College students), the expansion of the core group and the continued meetings beyond the funding lifespan have extended the actions of the initial group.

→ Varied approaches to climate communication can open up pathways for a diverse group to engage with climate action. RISING made effective use of lectures, dialogue, creative writing, walks, film-making, improv theatre, and an on-stage presentation to a live audience.

→ A project that combines public engagement, community building, creative practices and practical climate action is challenging to deliver in the short timeframe of seven months. A core element of the success of RISING was the effort and time taken to establish trust and human connection. Likewise, the final artistic output emerges through the group as these are established, which can take time — collaborators and participants in a co-creative artistic project such as RISING must learn to be patient and to “trust the process” as one interviewee described it. This may be uncomfortable to those unfamiliar with artistic approaches to tackling a problem.



Ringsend Walk

→ Systems thinking is a valuable tool for promoting different ways of thinking about a complex issue — for example considering the intersection of economic, social, or political systems as well as the environmental systems contributing to factors affecting climate change in a particular area.

→ RISING provides valuable evidence to TCD that there is still a lack of engagement between local communities and the university, but also that these communities place great value on access to the expertise of university staff. As a result of RISING, some participants will contribute to TCD's new Civic Engagement Strategy through a newly-formed Community Advisory Group.

→ RISING has not just created one group to go forward in a united way, but has also led to offshoots, with participants connecting with other existing movements with newfound confidence and enthusiasm, and bringing with them the experiences and approaches from the RISING project.





Edible Garden Launch Event

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## COMMUNITY PARTICIPANTS

- Value diverse perspectives within any group — be open to other approaches to climate action, and to building human connection through the arts and collective action.
- Define the remit of the RiSING group beyond the lifetime of the funding, based on shared vision and core values.
- Consider creating a manifesto or blueprint for membership and further actions of the RiSING group.
- Start recruiting new members and collaborators to grow and sustain the movement.
- Consider the RiSING group as an empowered entity, independent of TCD and Brokentalkers, which now has its own mission, as well as the expertise and access to networks gained through the project.

## PROJECT MANAGERS

- Project Managers should act as a bridge between artists, scientists, and the community, and need to be knowledgeable about the approaches and norms across all three groups. Connecting with other professionals in similar situations could be a valuable avenue for knowledge-sharing and capacity building. This may be achieved through networks developed by Creative Ireland, as well as internationally (e.g. through science communication networks like Ecsite or PCST).
- Be flexible and open to the evolving process, and draw in necessary expertise based on community and artists' needs and interests.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## CREATIVE PRACTITIONERS

- Use creative climate projects to develop practical expertise in science communication. Utilise the body of knowledge on effective strategies for science communication, and leverage local expertise not only in science, but also in science communication as a distinct field of academic research.
- Undertaking creative climate projects can be beneficial in encouraging artists to examine the sustainability of their own practices, in particular in relation to touring. Artists may access supports to tackle the issue through communities of practice, as well as initiatives from arts organisations (e.g. Brokentalkers having engaged in training workshops on sustainability through their membership of the creative production support hub Field Arts).

## RESEARCHERS & HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

- Arts-led projects can be effective means for engaging with communities in the vicinity of the university.
- It is important to create space for community participants to define their own interests, rather than imposing pre-defined expectations on them. Ways of knowing and meaning-making can look very different within and outside of the academy. Communities hold their own expertise, knowledge and cultural norms — two-way dialogue can bring learning and new experiences for university staff.

## FUNDERS

- Timescales for planning for touring artists, venues, universities, and community groups differ wildly, and there is a need within projects like these for flexibility and understanding of the diverse contexts these groups operate in.
- Extend the time frames of creative community climate action projects so that artists can comfortably allocate time for trust building, and so that successful projects can scale and sustain actions over years rather than months.
- Ensure that projects can allocate budget for project managers.
- Be cognisant of artists' schedule and competing commitments — it is challenging for artists to commit to projects at this scale on a full-time basis.



# CONCLUDING REMARKS

RISING as a title was an effective and multi-faceted metaphor for local action in the Dublin Docklands. It not only referred to climate change and rising sea levels, but also drew on the historical events of 1916 in the area, as referred to in the script of the final presentation: *“Will we rise up? We’ve risen up before. We’re known for it around here. We named streets after rebels. Like the street I live on. Used to be called Great Brunswick Street. When it was time to rise up, it was this community and communities like it. It’s time to rise up again. Not for a flag. Not for a nation but for our planet home.”*

One participant also used the metaphor of RISING to describe the need for humanity to go beyond the individual and to harness collective good for one another, and for our environment:

*“we are rising ourselves to something bigger... So then at the end of the day, it’s not just addressing climate change, but it is to go for something that is bigger than us. And somehow the environment is bigger than us, it’s more beautiful. We rely on it.”*

While this concludes the evaluation report for the timeframe of the RISING project, for this group, it is only the beginning of their collective action for the greater good of their community and their local environment — as Feidlim Cannon of Brokentalkers put it during one of the workshops “art is never finished.” In describing the highlights of the RISING project, one participant reflected:

*“Finding that others were anxious about the climate too, and so delighted that we realised we could do something about it and are doing something about it, and there are a million other ideas spinning out from RISING... Brokentalkers are amazing, Trinity have been amazing, we feel we are only just beginning to make progress, to action our ideas.”*



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