BLUEPRINT

TOOLKIT:

BRIDGING CREATIVITY AND CLIMATE RISK COMMUNICATION THROUGH CO-CREATION

Capturing lessons from Derry-Londonderry, Tyrone and Mayo to inspire future artistic co-creation and partnership between government authorities, artists, researchers and communities at-risk.

JUNE 2025

Table of Contents

Do you find it challenging to **communicate and engage with communities around climate risks,** extreme weather events and adaptation strategies?

You're not alone—and you're in the right place to explore how **creativity and the arts** can support and strengthen your efforts. As **local authority representatives** in Derry City and Strabane District and Mayo we've been on a journey of learning through the Creative Ireland funded **BluePrint project** which co-created risk communication materials with flood-affected communities, and partners from research (University College Cork) and the arts (The Playhouse).

When approached by University College Cork to get involved, we were stepping into the unknown but saw an opportunity to try something different and learned to trust the creative process. Many times, we felt uncertain about the outcomes and worried about how it would be perceived, but in the end, we are very proud to have been part of the project.

So, what were the benefits of the artistic co-creation process? We've seen the power of creative process for:

- Building **community connections** and capacity

- Providing a **supportive space** for processing and reflecting on lived experiences

- Facilitating **open and collaborative dialogue** between communities and authorities (a new language to communicate experiences / amplify voices to policy levels)

- Increasing **knowledge and awareness** of climate impacts and adaptation

How can you use this toolkit?

1. Set up a **project partnership** bridging the arts, research and government bodies
2. **Implement a co-creation process** with communities, generating creative outputs
3. Develop **pathways to resilience** with communities through continued dissemination and collaboration

This toolkit will walk you through these different stages and **'stepping stones'** of an artistic co-creation process using a Visual Guide. To guide you in each section we highlight our lessons and experiences in the following ways:

BluePrint Experience	**Reflections**	**Tips**	**BluePrint Examples**	**Additional External Resources**

For us in local government, BluePrint has demystified the creative process and has encouraged us to continue to maximise the opportunities that creativity and the arts offer climate action. We encourage others to step outside their comfort zone and experiment. We hope this toolkit can inspire you, and others, to join us on the journey.

Cathy Burns,
Green Infrastructure Lead - Climate & Biodiversity, Derry City and Strabane District Council (DCSDC)

Laura Dixon,
Climate Action Coordinator, Mayo County Council

ARTS

COMMUNITY

PROJECT PARTNERSHIP SET-UP

CO-CREATION STEPPING STONES

FOUNDATION STEP

LISTENING STEP

RESEARCH

WOBBLY STEP

MAGIC STEP

EXCHANGE STEP

GOVERNMENT

DISSEMINATION & COLLABORATION

REFFLECTION STEP

OUTPUTS

OUTPUTS

PATHWAYS TO RESILENCE

OUTPUTS

OUTPUTS

OUTPUTS

BluePrint Toolkit Visual Guide

2.1 How to Begin a Project?

Climate adaptation and resilience is a multifaceted complex problem that needs diverse thinking from different disciplines and sectors. A creative project can be initiated in many ways by different partners given their specific interests, priorities and networks. Think about the **different skills you need** and which partners across government, science and the arts can bring those skills to your project.

Table 1: Skills needed across partners in an artistic co-creation process

|	
ARTISTIC / CREATIVE SKILLS	Use experienced, socially-engaged artists and different creative mediums (e.g. sound, visual art, sculpture, technology) to spark imagination and facilitate a supportive space/ environment for group/ individual experiences and wider transformation.
INFLUENCING SKILLS	Identify leverage points—strategic areas where focused actions can lead to meaningful change—to engage and support communities, and to influence other actors and decision-makers, such as politicians and policymakers.
REFLECTIVE SKILLS	Support the artistic process with 'embedded research' such as observation, surveys, interviews, and photo-voices to create space for reflection and documenting learning, with support from videographers where feasible.
ORGANISATION SKILLS	Coordinate the partnership (administration, finance) and community engagement (logistics, communication).
SPECIALIST SKILLS	Allow for flexibility to integrate specialist skills such as psychosocial support consultancy and specific scientific expertise e.g. climate data.

BluePrint Experience

BluePrint was initiated by the **MaREI Centre at University College Cork (UCC)** which led the funding application to Creative Ireland with the objective to understand the role of the arts for climate risk communication. UCC approached **Derry City and Strabane District Council (DCSDC)** and **Mayo County Council (MCC)** to be involved, and then engaged **The Playhouse** as the arts and community engagement partner. When awarded, UCC signed the Service Level Agreement and established a collaboration agreement with partners.

DCSDC and MCC led in identifying the communities and supporting engagement. The Playhouse led an **Open Call** to find a suitable artist without a predetermined plan on the creative medium or approach. Dr. Sara Walmsley a socially-engaged sound and performance artist was then selected to join the team.

TIPS
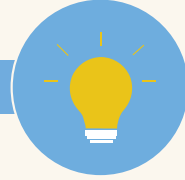
Build a strong, flexible partnership

- Combine diverse skills and allow space for new expertise
- Engage partners who may contribute in-kind (e.g. government, researchers)
- Socially-engaged artists can bring both creative and reflective strengths

Collaborate with communities

- Ensure project reflects community priorities and preferred ways of working
- Be flexible as plans and timelines will evolve
- Prioritise meaningful engagement alongside artistic quality

Plan for practicalities

- Allow extra time for agreements and paperwork (e.g. ethics, vetting)
- Budget for inclusive participation (e.g. transport, childcare, translation)
- Fund documentation (e.g. videographers, communication specialists)

Focus on legacy and learning

- Use BluePrint resources to explain the value of artistic collaboration
- Plan for the long-term impact and legacy from the outset
- Keep arts offices/ organisations informed to help connect with socially-engaged artists

REFLECTIONS

I was quite excited about the prospect of being involved in a creative project, albeit a little nervous of the unknown. One of the biggest challenges was explaining to both colleagues and communities what we were going to deliver – however having The Playhouse on board provided reassurance that the artistic approach would be successful and once our artist was in place I felt more confident and able to trust the creative process.

Cathy Burns, Derry City and Strabane District Council

This particular partnership worked in such a collaborative and mutually respectful way, with room for the multi-disciplinary skills and experience of everyone in the partnership to come forward and shine as needed.

Paula Larkin, The Playhouse

Leading the BluePrint project allowed us to manage it smoothly while adopting an embedded—yet neutral—role that strengthened local risk communication and ensured key connections to policy and research, ultimately supporting long-term impact and legacy.

Lydia Cumiskey, University College Cork

BluePrint Examples
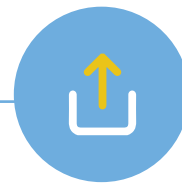
Artists Brief (Open Call) for BluePrint
https://www.creativeireland.gov.ie/app/uploads/2023/11/Final_BluePrint_ArtistsBrief.pdf

Film about the BluePrint artistic co-creation process, outputs and reflections:
https://youtu.be/_M6GQ_2Z-WA

BluePrint report:
https://www.creativeireland.gov.ie/en/publication/creative-climate-action-blueprint-report/

Additional External Resources

Social Practice Toolkit
https://www.socialpracticetoolkit.com/

Paying the Artist: An Arts Council policy
https://www.artscouncil.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Paying-the-Artist-Policy.pdf

Creative Ireland Climate Action project reports
https://www.creativeireland.gov.ie/en/publications/?_sft_category=creativity-and-climate-change

2.2 What Shared Goal Are We Working Towards?

Implementing a co-creation process, especially with an artist, is a new experience for many partners. Together with your partnership it is important to identify your **shared goal(s)**, so you are clear about the purpose and **expected outcomes** of the co-creation journey. To improve climate risk communication and community engagement between authorities and citizens, projects could target specific ongoing (or planned) climate adaptation or resilience activities such as flood warning communication, risk-informed development or flood schemes. Another approach is to allow this focus to develop based on the interests and concerns of communities, with the broader goal to support relationship building and knowledge exchange.

BluePrint Experience

In BluePrint we had the **shared goal to empower and amplify local voices**, providing a creative platform to share their lived experiences with other communities and decision-makers (authorities) to build momentum for more local community resilience activities. By doing so creatively, we wanted to tap into **how decision makers feel** about the climate risk, not just what they know, and to build lasting **human connections** within and between communities and authorities.

The expected outcomes for the project were to co-create **new risk communication outputs,** increase knowledge and capacity among at-risk communities involved in the process, **improve collaboration and dissemination** locally with authorities and communities, and build knowledge and capacity among the project team to support collaborative future projects and initiatives.

TIPS

Align with local needs
- Connect the project to existing community challenges or priorities in risk communication and engagement.
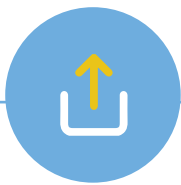
Build on what exists
- Map local authority, research, and creative initiatives to avoid duplication and strengthen collaboration.

Co-design with the community
- Share initial goals early, listen, and be open to adapting based on community input.

Set clear expectations
- Be transparent about goals and limitations to manage expectations for all involved.

Guidance on Risk Communication & Community Engagement Practices
https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/research/ccjhr/disasterlawpdfs/GuidanceonRiskComm
unicationCommunityEngagementPracticesFINAL.pdf

Including Citizens Handbook (LINKS project) providing guidance for disaster management authorities on communicating with and involving citizens
https://links.communitycenter.eu/index.php/Including_Citizens_Handbook

Pocket Guide for planning disaster risk communication to support early warning and early action
https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/documents/rica-pocket-guide.pdf

Place-Based Climate Adaptation Partnership Framework for building the capabilities necessary for successful partnership working
https://talx2020.github.io/

3. Implementation: Artistic Co-Creation Stepping Stones

Each creative/artistic practitioner will use their own process, methods and tools but to help you understand what to expect, here we capture key **stepping stones** along the flexible and dynamic co-creation journey. These steps do not necessarily happen in a linear way and each stepping stone can be returned to at any stage and the order adapted to suit the needs of the project.
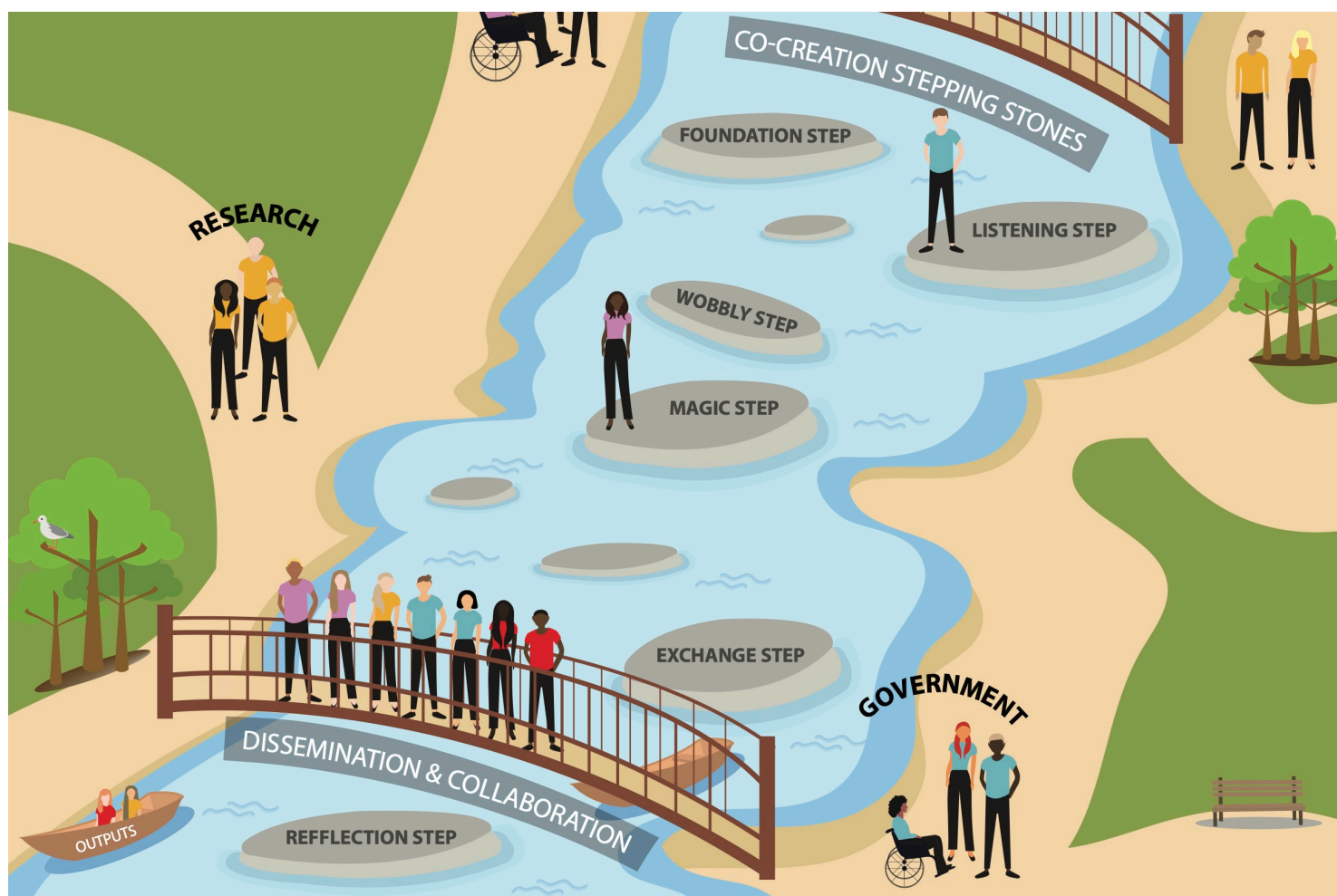
3.1 Foundation Step: Inclusive Participation of Communities

Using the arts as a means to engage communities in socio-political processes is not new, however, this method can often appeal most to those who are already active in creative activities like theatre, music, crafts and painting. Here we focused on initially **engaging people around a shared problem** i.e. flooding and climate change, and then used creativity to support and **stimulate imagination and communication** in new ways within those communities and beyond.

BluePrint Experience

BluePrint engaged people from two different communities, **Eglinton and Newtownstewart**, in the co-creation process, with entry points made via DCSDC with the Eglinton Community Resilience Group and Newtownstewart Heritage Group. Both communities had experienced flood impacts to homes and infrastructure (to varying extents) but demonstrated different relationships with local waterways and reported different levels of local community resilience activities. Those involved had a mix of direct and indirect experiences of flooding but shared a common desire to build community resilience locally. Participants had **no previous experience in creative activities** and did not consider themselves 'creative' at the outset.

REFLECTIONS

"
When I was on the floor making things, I was thinking why am I here, I am not creative at all. But [individual] said I have to go, so I have to go.

Newtownstewart participant

Sally [artist] definitely was a core part of me sticking with it.

Eglinton participant
"

TIPS

Understand the local landscape

- Work with local organisations and authorities to identify communities and entry points.
- Manage expectations around influence and policy impact—honesty is key.
- Start small—initial engagement can expand as trust and interest grow.

Build trust through committed, flexible engagement

- Facilitate informal early interactions between artists, communities, and authorities to explain the process and build trust.
- Meet people where they are; offer varied, adaptable ways to engage.
- Stay open to new ideas, structures, and creative 'hooks' that suit different groups.
- Be honest about the uncertainty of creative processes and avoid rigid planning.

Be trauma-informed and respectful

- Acknowledge ongoing trauma in communities affected by climate impacts like flooding.
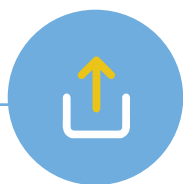
Additional External Resources

Toolkit for Youth on Adaptation & Leadership
https://youthtoolkit.gca.org/introduction/

Participatory Mapping: A process to gather lived experience of climate change
https://adaptation.scot/take-action/participatory-mapping-approach/

Creative Confidence
https://www.creativeconfidence.com/about/

3.2 Listening Step: Sharing Lived-Experience and Stories

The creative process can include a variety of methods at different stages of the journey to **capture lived experiences** and local stories from different perspectives. Regardless of the method, it is important that **communities feel listened to** and have a range of opportunities to share in a **comfortable supportive space.**

BluePrint Experience

In BluePrint, **interviews** were conducted with community members who were directly affected by the flooding, homeowners, church officials, members of the GAA club, fishermen and those who supported the response efforts. **Soundwalks** were hosted by each community, and involved collecting audio recordings and exchanging related stories. Reflections after the walks highlighted the physical differences between the river catchments, the flood impacts and local capacity/resources. Eglinton, an urbanised village, is battling to protect its remaining green spaces from housing development and strives for a deeper community connection with its hidden rivers. The river is a central recreation point for Newtownstewart, but the community does not feel as prepared for the next potential flood event and wants to build climate resilience and support for those who may be flooded. Both communities include people **living with trauma** and fear over future flooding and climate change events.

TIPS

Involve diverse communities

- Interviewing individuals outside the main co-creation process can help capture diverse voices and perspectives.
- Engaging multiple communities (by place, identity, or interest) encourages knowledge exchange and richer dialogue.

Prioritise trauma-informed practice

- Consult experts when working with communities affected by trauma to ensure safe and considerate engagement.

Centre lived experience

- Ground communication outputs in real stories to foster empathy and deepen public understanding of risk.

REFLECTIONS

"

Whilst the river created great harm it also created great harmony. There are two very different sides, our experience is different. It does give you another dimension.

Newtownstewart participant

Then you start to hear people telling their stories, you could just see that the years had passed but the memory had never passed.

Newtownstewart participant

Going around with the recorders made me listen more for the sounds of nature – the water, the birds, the sand and stones, and I've never really thought about it before. It's a visual rather than a hearing thing. The night of the flood the sound was something you'd expect to hear at the Niagara Falls – this thunderous roar of water.

Eglinton participant

[I took away] connection – to each other and to the environment and nature. Being in the water skimming stones and talking to each other who appreciate and understand where we're coming from.
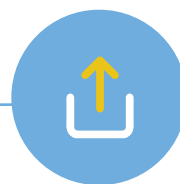
Eglinton participant

"

BluePrint Examples

Annex A: Creative Roadmap – BluePrint Artist Notes on soundwalks as a creative engagement method

Additional External Resources

Living in fear of the Rain. The impact of recent flooding in Greater Belfast. British Red Cross (2010)
https://www.salzburgglobal.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Documents/2010-2019/2015/SAC_09/Steenbergen__Margot_-_BelfastReport2010_final.pdf

Deliberate Futures Toolkit: Toward 'future-oriented' communities and decision-making
https://www.marei.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Imagining2050Toolkit.pdf

Storytelling for Systems Change: Listening to Understand - Centre for Public Impact
https://centreforpublicimpact.org/resource-hub/storytelling-for-systems-change-listening-to-understand/

3.3 Wobbly Step: Recognising and Responding to Concerns

For anyone new to working with an artist in a co-creation process, the uncertainty and need for flexibility may feel uncomfortable at certain moments. For this reason, it is important to form a partnership built on **trust and open communication**. By openly discussing any concerns, and adapting when needed, we can build trust in the creative process and feel more comfortable with the 'unclear/uncertain' outputs. This step will likely be returned to at different points during the journey.

BluePrint Experience

At the beginning of the BluePrint project, we knew the artist planned to use sound as the creative medium to work with the community, but had no specific plan on what the final 'soundscape' would look like. The community members found this **uncertainty and lack of clarity a challenge** at the start but learned to trust and embrace the creative process. Allowing for a flexible process facilitated participants to grow and expand their willingness to tap into their own creativity along the journey. Sharing between the communities also supported this process, for example, hearing the creative outputs produced by participants in Newtownstewart inspired participants in Eglinton to explore new ways of creating that felt comfortable to them.

TIPS

Communicate clearly & openly
- Use simple language to explain the creative process and expected outcomes.
- Keep communication channels open for honest, two-way feedback.

Embrace flexibility in creative practice
- Not all art forms will resonate with everyone— encourage an open-minded, adaptable approach to creativity and change that allows space for different ways of engaging.

Support collective participation
- Invite others along for the journey—shared experiences foster deeper connection and learning.
- Be ready to shift direction as new ideas and challenges emerge.

Bring in missing skills when needed
- Seek external expertise (e.g. psychosocial support) when your team needs additional capacity.

REFLECTIONS

"

Now it made me nervous that Sally [artist] had no idea what the end result would be. Yeah, I had no idea what a soundscape was. I thought I was going to be making something out of plasticine. [....] It was a little bit anticipatory. Yeah, of what this is going to look like. And a bit of a fear to a certain extent.

Eglinton participant

Now I have to say that I was the biggest sceptic at the start. [...] I was like, what have we signed up to here. I didn't realise that using a creative medium would actually make it more impactful. I was thinking that you were coming to us to ask if you want a statue or a monument or a picture, what way would you like it, black or white, or whatever. I was just waiting to tell you; any colour would do.

Newtownstewart participant

"
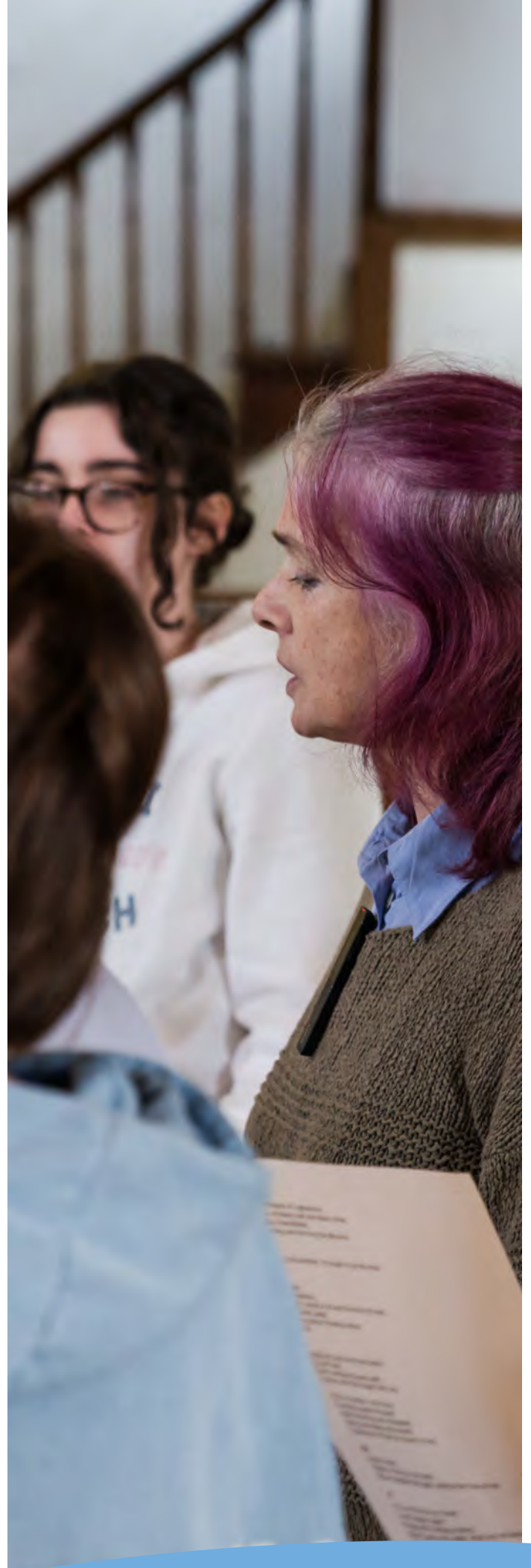
3.4 Magic step: Stimulating Creative Outputs

Going on a creative journey with participants will stimulate **unexpected moments** that demonstrate the hidden creative power that lies within individuals. These moments are hard to plan for or predetermine but emerge when the artist allows for **flexible, adaptive engagement** and creative process. These 'magic moments' build partners and participants' confidence, inspiration and awareness around the power of the arts and creativity for communicating and engaging differently on challenging, complex topics. Guided by the artist, these moments help to connect different parts of the process and can set a clearer vision towards co-created outputs.

BluePrint Experience

The key creative magic moments in this project were the **song and creative writing workshops**, which were not planned at the outset. The artist worked with St. Eugene's Choir using words from interviews with community members to create harmonies, and even though many people in the choir had not been directly impacted by the flooding, singing together about real experiences helped to re-create the community spirit that occurred during the flooding and awaken responsibility for the future.

The artist worked with Eglinton participants to help them write three poems from different perspectives – the river, a flood affected community member and an unaffected community member - which spontaneously combined into one powerful poem. The **trust built with the artist** was key for participants feeling comfortable enough to step completely out of their comfort zone to challenge their creativity. They exceeded both their own and the artist's expectations about what they could co-create together.

TIPS
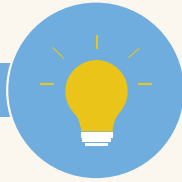
Encourage creativity and push boundaries

- Encourage participants to explore beyond their comfort zones and discover unexpected creativity.

Build trust in a safe space

- Establish a relaxed and trusting environment to help participants feel comfortable in the creative process.

Interact for inspiration

- Let others observe the creative process to build interest.
- Inspire and engage others by sharing snippets of the work during the process.

Stay responsive

- Adapt creative methods as needed to keep participants motivated and engaged throughout the journey.

REFLECTIONS

"

It showed the respect that we have for individuals in the choir. I was blown away by it to be honest. We have to do more of this.

St. Eugene's Choir participant

Even though every time its pouring rain you think oh no. It is really nice to be reminded of it again and to feel that sense of community. It will happen again. It's really different to do this through sound.

St. Eugene's Choir participant

We weren't quite sure how this flooding could translate into the soundscape, but today it is really starting to make sense, how the music and the individual voices is all starting to come together into this wonderful project that is going to capture how this awful thing, the flooding, impacted all the different aspects of our community.

Newtownstewart participant

The artist made me feel very comfortable about participation. She was really, really good. She just gives you the confidence to indulge in the process without worrying too much.

Eglinton community participant
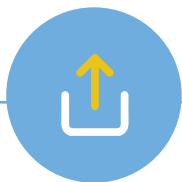
"

3.5 Exchange Step: Creating New Opportunities to Share Experiences

This step aims to create opportunities for (two-way) exchange at multiple levels during the process. Supporting exchange within the community between those directly, indirectly, and not affected helps to **build empathy and understanding** of past and future impacts. Exchange with other local communities helps participants to build solidarity and exchange experience beyond their own locality. All-Island exchange with other communities in different governance contexts can help share learning on resilience and adaptation measures and challenges, while **inspiring and motivating new ideas**. Building in elements of exchange helps to build supportive friendships and enable deeper reflection. Exchange also involves capturing opportunities to interact with policymakers when opportunities emerge.

BluePrint Experience

Exchange between Eglinton and Newtownstewart communities was embedded within the BluePrint project through the soundwalks. An opportunity for policy exchange with Northern Ireland's Secretary of State emerged and was facilitated by The Playhouse. An additional key component of the project involved an **All-Island Learning and Exchange Workshop** in Crossmolina, Co. Mayo mid-way through the project (July 2024). Here, 15 participants across communities, government, research and the arts came together to share experiences on artistic co-creation with communities exploring climate adaptation and resilience. Community participants from Eglinton, Newtownstewart and Crossmolina engaged in creative activities and all participants joined a walk of the town hosted by community participants. It was the first time the initial creative outputs from BluePrint were shared within the project team and with wider stakeholders. The All-Island learning and exchange continued in Derry-Londonderry with Mayo participants in attendance during the BluePrint showcase events in October 2024.

TIPS

Learning and exchange

- Structure the project to provide participants with opportunities to travel and learn from others facing similar challenges.

Engage decision-makers

- Engage local councillors and policymakers to learn from new approaches and ideas, fostering broader support.

Streamline activities

- Keep creative activities interactive and simple when time is limited, collaborating with local artists to enhance the experience.

BluePrint Examples

News brief on BluePrint All-Island Mayo Learning Exchange
https://www.marei.ie/building-all-island-connections-and-exploring-the-role-of-creativity-to-support-climate-resilience/

REFLECTIONS

"

Probably the more we met the people from Eglinton you really saw the mental health impacts. They are on high alert all the time, worried, scanning newspapers and legal journals and all this.

Newtownstewart participant

Taking part in this project, the big learning is that the communities could relate to each other, they've both been impacted and to talk about that trauma, give a voice to it.

Laura Dixon, Mayo County Council

It's amazing what music and poetry has done for different areas and what can be done if we bring that to areas like ours [Crossmolina] … if we had that facility after the flooding it would have brought the community together in a way that we would never have imagined.

Councillor Michael Loftus

"

3.6 Reflection Ripples & Step: Embedded Evaluation and Continued Learning

At every step in the artistic co-creation process it is important to create space for **reflection and learning** (represented as ripples) both within the project team and with the community participants. This approach allows for activities to adapt based on emerging challenges or opportunities. Working with research partners enables an embedded approach to observe, document and **evaluate the impact of the process**, while artists can also creatively embed reflective exercises during the process. Capturing this feedback and learning generates evidence about the value of the approach from individual, community and policy perspectives, and supports in identifying opportunities to influence change. Reflective moments throughout and at the end of the process help build shared understanding among the project team and with the community, developing open and trustworthy relationships for future collaboration.

BluePrint Experience

In BluePrint, UCC researchers observed the artistic co-creation process, interacted with participants to reflect on their journey and conducted evaluation **focus group discussions** at the end of the project. Our artist utilised an exercise at the end of the workshop where participants gathered in a circle to voice their key take-away by "throwing" thoughts onto an imaginary piece of fabric in the centre of the circle. Short **feedback forms** were also used to capture reflections. Videographers captured video footage of the process and captured short feedback interviews after the soundwalks, choir workshop, and dissemination events. Audio recordings of the interactions during the process were also taken. Within the project team, impact planning and evaluation workshops were conducted to build a **theory of change** as well as regular team meetings to reflect on how to adapt activities. Wider representatives from DCSDC and collaborators were invited to join evaluation and **roadmapping workshops** to support targeted discussions on next steps for building community resilience.
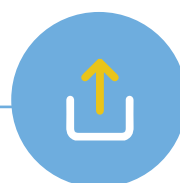
Additional External Resources

Creative Climate Action: Project Evaluation Toolkit
https://www.creativeireland.gov.ie/en/publication/creative-climate-action-project-evaluation-toolkit/

Participatory Impact Planning approach
https://steps-centre.org/pathways-methods-vignettes/methods-vignettes-participatory-impact-pathways-analysis-pipa/

Engaged Research Planning for Impact
https://www.iua.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Guide-IUA-Engaged-Research-Planning-for-Impact-Framework-2022-Update_V5-25.pdf

TIPS

Impact planning and evaluation

- Develop a theory of change outlining goals, activities, outputs, and impacts to guide project evaluation.

Participant reflection and feedback

- Gather group reflections and individual feedback (e.g., short interviews, surveys, feedback forms with quantitative and qualitative insights).

Documentation and tracking

- Capture the process through photos, videos, and audio recordings, and track participant engagement to improve activities.

Ongoing reflection and adaptation

- Allocate time for team reflection to adapt activities based on emerging needs.

Collaboration and evidence

- Partner with researchers for impact evaluation.
- Engage wider stakeholders to hear reflections and guide future efforts.
- Ensure informed consent for data collection.

REFLECTIONS

"

The group feedback exercise was just a lovely, positive way to finish up on something that was maybe touching on some sore points for people.

Eglinton participant

Excellent process. Effective. Definitely an idea that has more to offer. Confident it will lead to more community engagement. Thoroughly enjoyable and would do it again.

Newtownstewart participant

By having our representative from the Regional Community Resilience Group present, it allowed them to hear more about the impact of the project on communities and provide guidance on next steps for Newtownstewart to get more involved and build their own community resilience plan.

Cathy Burns, Derry City and Strabane District Council

This project has given me a new perspective for my work. I now as an artist see unlimited possibilities in using my sound art practice for communicating climate risk. Especially at this junction of art/science where the ethnographic approach I take to eliciting accounts of lived experience can be enriched by linking this with climate data.

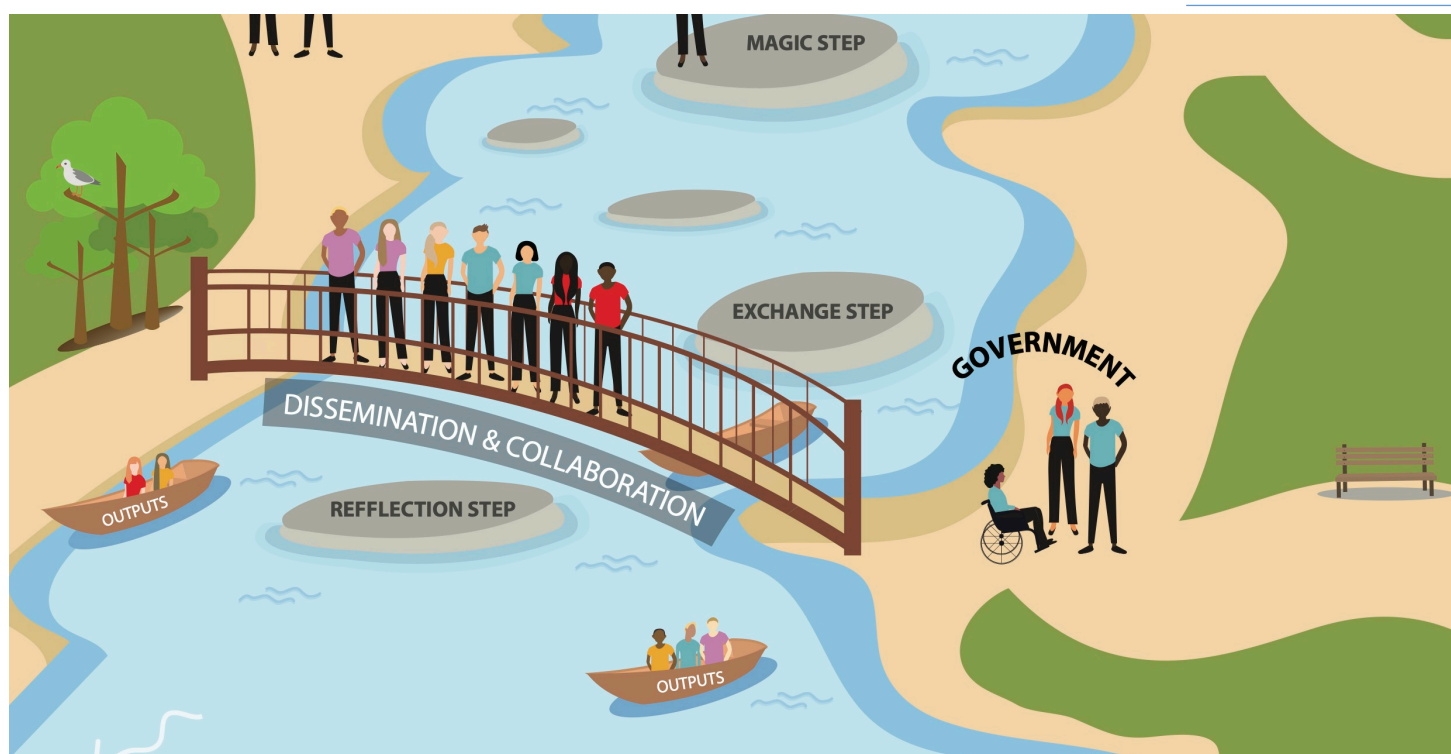**BluePrint artist Sara (Sally) Walmsley**

"

4. Creative Outputs: Platform for Dissemination

The co-creation process will **generate creative outputs** that can be used to communicate and engage with the wider public and decision-makers at different levels. These outputs can emerge during the process and/or at the end of the process e.g. co-created videos, songs, installations, exhibitions, performances. The outputs will likely require additional and varied creative capacity from the artist to produce, and from the communities to perform where applicable. Physical outputs like community green spaces or sculptures are possible too. Depending on the duration, resources and partnership, different creative outputs will emerge.

The project team can create **platforms for disseminating these outputs** to **amplify their messages,** build awareness around climate risk and highlight the need to take action locally and collaboratively support community resilience. The outputs have deep meaningful value in the flood-affected communities where they were co-created but also more broadly to other communities that will be impacted by climate change who can learn from their lived experiences and stimulate climate action.

BluePrint Experience

The co-creation process resulted in multiple artistic **risk communication outputs**. A **choral piece** by Newtownstewart and **poetry piece** by Eglinton culminated into a sound and light Installation entitled "In at Midnight and Away by Morning: The Uninvited Guest" that weaves together their lived experiences of flooding, sonifies historic and predicted rainfall data, and calls for climate resilience. Communities were given a platform for dissemination locally among decision-makers and their communities at the **Derry and Strabane Climate Commission** Launch, and the **BluePrint Showcase event** with attendance from the Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District and other elected members. The sound installation was also open to the wider public at The Playhouse. The project team disseminated to other communities in Ireland e.g. Science Week in Cork, the Alley Theatre in Strabane and to university, government and practitioner communities nationally e.g. Climate Ireland Adaptation Network, Regional Community Resilience Group (Northern Ireland) and internationally e.g. EU Climate Adapt, working on disaster resilience and climate adaptation.

TIPS

Process and impact

- Prioritize the creative process and meaningful outcomes over artistic complexity of outputs, especially with limited time.

Openness and accessibility

- Ensure creative outputs are openly accessible for participants, partners, and wider actors.
- Use open-access platforms (e.g. YouTube, Zenodo) to support long-term visibility.

Strategic dissemination

- Collaborate with multi-disciplinary partners to broaden dissemination.
- Share widely to support climate communication beyond the project's context.
- Stay open to unexpected outcomes and timely opportunities for sharing.

REFLECTIONS

"

An artistic experience creates a more powerful way to bring focus to flood experience and climate change. I really enjoyed the process - I am a convert. Let's now put the actions in place for the impacted organisations, people and community.

Newtownstewart participant

You see it from a different angle. It's like looking at it through a different set of eyes

St Eugene's Choir participant

I thought it was mesmerising just to listen to the words and to bring it all to life and bring it back into all our consciousness. You forget.

Newtownstewart participant

I now have a better understanding of how Arts can break down barriers which can be difficult to do with facts. It allows for more emotional connection and conversation and become a more inclusive space for discussing climate impacts and resilience.

Laura Dixon, Mayo County Council

That's my first-time hearing that and it's powerful. For me it's the local accent, it's real people singing in their words. I'm struggling to get people to listen at other levels in government. I keep saying we need to put the heart and soul back into conversations. It's not just about finance and stats. And that does it for me – it's amazing.

Cathy Burns, Derry City and Strabane District Council

Working so closely with climate researchers and local authorities on this project has definitely cemented my belief in the valuable role that the arts can play in climate risk communication, and reinforced just how important the arts can be in helping communities to communicate and build relationships with policymakers.

Paula Larkin, The Playhouse

"

BluePrint Examples

Sound installation extract "In at Midnight and Away by Morning: The Uninvited Guest"
https://zenodo.org/records/14036832

Choral piece co-created with St. Eugene's Choir
https://zenodo.org/records/14020085

Poetry piece by Eglinton community representatives
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GRkHMWPbmfA

BluePrint video capturing the co-creation process, outputs and reflections
https://youtu.be/_M6GQ_2Z-WA
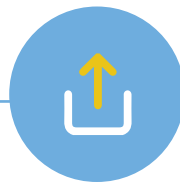
Additional External Resources

Drowned Galway directed by Ríonach Ní Néill is a multi-media series of artworks visualising life in a near-future inundated city
https://www.hopeitrains.ie/index.php/en/drowned-galway

Pathways Sandcastle Challenge and Soundscape for building community climate resilience
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yyp_6X-8HYI

The Knitted Flood Wall with artist Martina O'Brien and The Ballsbridge Dodder Residents Association, Dublin
https://notanatlas.org/maps/knitted-flood-wall/#:~:text=The%20Knitted%20Flood%20Wall%2C%202012,%2C%20Ireland%2C%2024%20October%202011
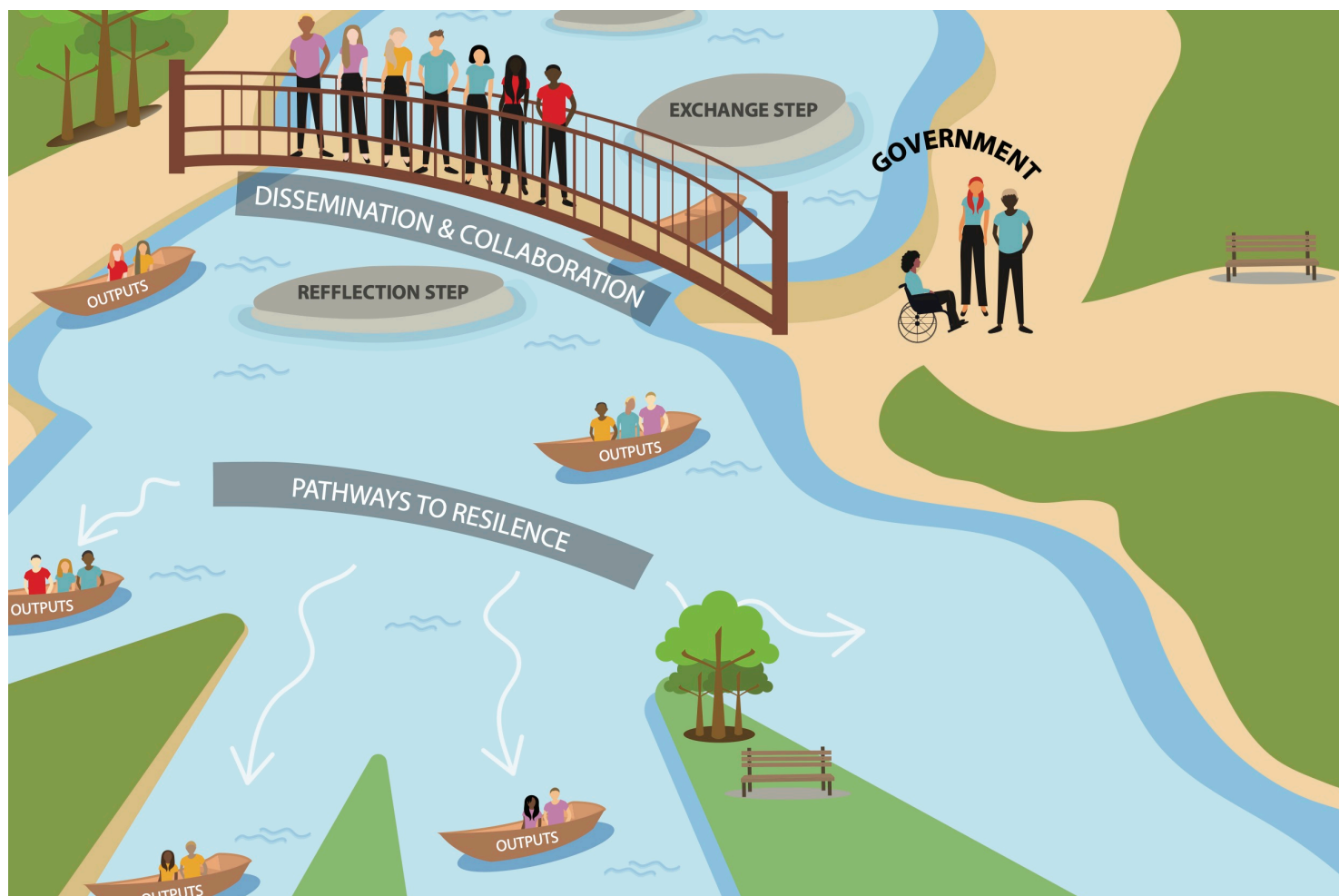
Sea Change – Culture for Climate Scotland programme working with coastal communities:
https://cultureforclimate.scot/project/sea-change/

Time & Tide Bell – Sea Level Rise:
https://www.timeandtidebell.org/

The co-creation journey doesn't stop at the creative outputs, instead they can be a tool for further **risk communication, engagement and influencing at different levels** – supporting local action to build local resilience and advocating needs to decision-makers. As a project team it is important to create space to reflect on how the outputs, learnings and relationships can stimulate future activities that support the communities involved but also the wider research, creative and policy community. This allows for opportunities to emerge around future dissemination, funding and spin-off activities possibly linked to ongoing projects, that can sustain and progress the collaboration developed. It is also important to be upfront about managing the legacy of the project e.g. who is responsible for continued dissemination or maintenance of the outputs.

There are multiple benefits of such artistic co-creation projects to enhance climate risk communication and engagement, including **building awareness, connections and motivation for action** at different levels of government and within the communities, while supporting individual wellbeing of impacted communities. By being clear about the shared goals of the project at the outset, communities can understand the degree of influence the project team has on the governance structures often failing to support them on climate action (e.g. planning policy, flood schemes, risk mapping). Communities are calling for a **joined-up approach from government** around climate resilience and these projects can help to explore ways to do so.

BluePrint Experience

The BluePrint project succeeded in delivering its expected outcomes and shared goals to build knowledge and capacity within the communities and to empower and amplify community voices and lived experiences to decision makers, while carving a pathway for future collaboration around climate resilience. The shared experience built awareness, connections and motivation for action locally, while helping individuals' mental wellbeing. Roadmapping workshops with each community mapped different dissemination paths for the creative outputs and stimulated discussion on future collaboration. Newtownstewart has since developed a Community Resilience Plan because of engagement with the Regional Community Resilience Forum and DCSDC. In Eglinton the existing Community Resilience Group has activated new members and continues their efforts advocating for risk-informed development in their village. A series of dissemination events and meetings are ongoing to continue collaboration and support knowledge exchange within the project team,

Transparency and trust

- Set clear expectations early and maintain honesty and transparency throughout to foster long-term relationships built on mutual respect.

- Ensure communities feel valued—e.g. through gestures of appreciation.

Ensuring legacy

- Embed a legacy plan from the start, including long-term care for creative outputs (e.g. museum hosting, community maintenance).

- Continue exploring dissemination opportunities throughout and beyond the project.

- Co-develop dissemination pathways with the community and explore future collaboration towards resilience-building.

- Agree on communication channels to support continued exchange and opportunity sharing.

TEAM & COMMUNITY REFLECTIONS

"

The BluePrint Project is a call to action. We must respond to this climate emergency with everything we've got. The fight against climate change requires all of us to play our part, the simple changes we make in our everyday life can have a collective impact. It's time for us all to step up.

Lilian Seenoi-Barr, Mayor of Derry City & Strabane District

The BluePrint project may not have directly delivered flood defences but as a result of the project, communities have a stronger platform and a voice that they potentially felt they didn't have before.

Cathy Burns, Derry City and Strabane District Council

The true and long-term impacts of this project have yet to be fully revealed, but even now it is clear that this project has had a profound positive impact on me, the audience, policymakers and community we represent. It has been a positive part of this horrible thing [flooding].
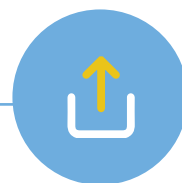
Eglinton participant

For me I initially took the opportunity because I knew it was an opportunity to speak about flooding in a different language and to be able to articulate that from the start to the end, without the same aggression, without the same trauma and knew that is bound to have some impact. It was a powerful experience on the whole and tonight was the proper pinnacle to end that process.

Eglinton participant

The project has raised for me that the transformative process of creative engagement and co-creation can be framed within a discussion around artistic citizenship laying foundations for active citizenship. This for me is the legacy of the project.

Sara (Sally) Walmsley BluePrint artist

"

Additional External Resources

TalX Climate Adaptation Partnership Framework
https://talx2020.github.io/index.html

Climate Ireland Adaptation Network (Newsletter and Forum)
https://www.climateireland.ie/resources/what-is-climate-ireland/climate-ireland-adaptation-network/

Adaptation Stories (EU Mission Adaptation to Climate Change)
https://climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu/en/mission/solutions/mission-stories

Climate Northern Ireland Local Government Climate Action Network
https://climatenorthernireland.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/

Northern Ireland Regional Community Resilience Group (Multi Agency Network)
https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/regional-community-resilience-group

6. Final Message from the BluePrint Partnership

The success of the BluePrint project was made possible by the active engagement, openness, and sustained commitment of the flood-affected communities in Eglinton (Derry–Londonderry) and Newtownstewart (Tyrone), who were central to the co-creation process, as well as the community in Crossmolina (Mayo), who supported the all-island learning exchange.

BluePrint demonstrates how working with the arts and creative sectors can amplify climate risk communication, portraying the lived experience of communities. Creative outputs connected with people on an emotional level on the realities that we face from climate change and the need for collective action. The arts provide opportunities for all partners and participants to engage in a different way and allows space for difficult discussions and innovative solutions to emerge.

In summary, the BluePrint Toolkit highlights the following key messages to enable artistic co-creation for climate risk communication:

- **Build inclusive partnerships:** Create diverse, transdisciplinary teams that centre community voices as equal partners.
- **Prioritise care and safety:** Listen deeply to lived experiences in supportive environments that acknowledge ongoing trauma and promote wellbeing.
- **Stay flexible and responsive:** Expect challenges—be open, adaptable, and attentive to evolving needs and concerns.
- **Trust the process:** Embrace creativity; meaningful and unexpected magic moments will emerge.
- **Foster peer exchange:** Connect communities facing climate and flood risks to share knowledge, stories, and solutions.
- **Embed learning throughout:** Integrate reflection, evaluation, and adaptation across all stages of the project.
- **Amplify lived experience:** Create platforms that share community stories with wider audiences—especially policymakers—to build empathy and drive support.
- **Support lasting impact:** Identify and strengthen pathways to resilience through ongoing collaboration, learning, and shared ownership.

As partners from research, the arts, government, and communities, we collectively hope that this BluePrint Toolkit—and the lessons within—will inspire others to embark on their own creative journeys in climate risk communication.

Acknowledgments

We are deeply grateful for the time, energy, and insights that the communities of Eglinton (Derry–Londonderry), Newtownstewart (Tyrone), and Crossmolina (Mayo) shared. The success of the project was facilitated by the transdisciplinary and committed nature of the project team and the willingness of communities to become involved in this artistic co-creation process.

Annex A: Creative Roadmap - Notes from BluePrint Artist

Context: Why consider using creative engagement as communication with communities?

- Facilitated and shared creative activities can offer a safe space for people to share their lived experiences of (possibly) traumatic events.

- Being creative in a group setting offers a new way of being around people, and alternative uses of language which move away from constant recounting of traumatic experiences.

- Creative engagement and imagination go hand-in-hand.

- Being with others in the structured and playful space of a workshop can be liberating and potentially transformative for all involved.

- The process of co-creation and shared design is empowering, offering the experience of a solution-oriented approach to working together within a community setting.

- The final creative outputs emerge from an organic process which is negotiated by participants.

- The final outputs may be used to support effective communication with policy makers from a community perspective.

- This approach highlights lessons learned through the lived experience of climate change and adaptation, informing future policy decisions to reflect community input.

Running workshops in the community setting: What do you hope to achieve? What might you need to consider?

- "Workshop" is a difficult word. People have associations which may come from their workplace training sessions where a "workshop" was not a particularly active experience.

- "Creative workshops" are participatory in nature.

- Often people think of "the Arts" as something you need training in, in order to participate.

- A socially-engaged approach to creative engagement works with a creative pedagogy which centres respect for participants and the life experiences they bring with them as the most amazing potential creative resource.

- A good workshop will be well thought out to give participants a positive if at times challenging experience.

- Sometimes it is helpful to think of these workshops as akin to "structured play". This means there is no "right or wrong", there is just whatever happens.

- A successful workshop will allow participants to explore and experiment with an art form whilst not feeling "stupid or incompetent" even if this is their first encounter with the particular art form.

- It is important to accept not all people like working in group situations or may not initially see the creative potential that this way of working may offer. Allow space for such views to be voiced and any questions to be answered. (This may take up more time than expected in the initial phase of a project.)

- As people begin to enjoy being creative together, they will start to see the relevance of a creative approach to a practical problem they are facing. (It is the dialogue generated as they negotiate the process of creation that is so valuable.) Their sense of ownership of their role in the success of the project will increase and the project will gradually gather momentum.

- It is important to provide feedback and reflection opportunities during workshops and at the ends of phases of the project. A creative process is organic and develops in tandem with the energies and commitment of participants. This is enriching for all involved but can also be daunting.

EXAMPLES OF CREATIVE APPROACHES USED IN BLUEPRINT

Soundwalks

- Allow communities to visit each other and walk around the affected areas. (In our case flood-affected areas around rivers.)

- There are many ways of doing a soundwalk. In the first instance it is an opportunity to allow communities to get to know each other. The chats that emerge will contribute to the ongoing narrative that will be emerging throughout the project and this is useful for everyone involved in the project.

- Do a briefing session with the group to explain why a soundwalk is a worthwhile use of time and send each small group of 2 or 3 people off with a sound recorder and a list of things to record. This allows strangers to have a joint task. In the doing they will exchange stories and become much more aware of that person's experience of flooding and what is being done locally to alleviate problems for the future.

- Do a debriefing session to allow all to share their recordings plus give them space to talk about the experience and what they are getting from this.

- In our project these audio recordings generated material for the final creative sound installation.

Opening and closing a workshop

- Explain at the start of the workshop what its purpose is but also reassure participants that there is no right nor wrong and we are here to share and have fun.

- At the end of the workshop gather in a circle. Imagine there is a piece of fabric on the floor in the centre of the circle. Ask all participants to "throw" a thought about the workshop or what they will take away from the session onto the fabric. At the end all bend down and lift this now "heavy" piece of fabric and fling all into the air. (People tend to cheer at this point and clap!)

- This last step is important as it brings a clear end to whatever has been done in the workshop. It also provides a final space for reflection, and it is good for participants to hear others valuing their input. It makes people feel they are being heard and belong.

A creative approach to a workshop

- A workshop format can be used with any art form. In our project we used music and theatre practices within the setting of a performance task workshop. This structured approach begins with a warm-up, takes participants through structured activities which equip them with the necessary tools to carry out a performance task.

- In a song workshop a choir used words drawn from interviews to be led through an improvisation which produced a polyphonic account of flooding in their locality. This performance task was to make a song from interview transcriptions. This workshop drew on approaches to using voice and music composition techniques.

- In a poetry workshop participants were tasked with writing 2 poems each. The poems were to follow particular formats, so for participants they simply had to follow the "instructions" and a poem would emerge. The merging of all poems allowed this workshop to generate a performance poetry piece. This workshop drew on approaches to creative writing and theatre choreography techniques.

Annex B: Research Roadmap – Notes from BluePrint Researchers

Workshop feedback form example questions

These questions are extracted from the form used for the Mayo Learning Exchange Workshop in July 2024.

Rate these statements:

- The learning exchange workshop met my expectations.

  ☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree

- The workshop helped me increase my knowledge of local climate adaptation and community resilience activities.

  ☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree

- The workshop helped me gain knowledge on how creativity/ arts can support risk communication and dialogue with communities.

  ☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree

- The workshop helped me recognize the importance of co-creation processes (collaborative engagement) with communities and others (governments, science/ research, creative sector) for climate resilience

  ☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree

- What did you find most (or least) useful about the workshop?

- What action, message and/or connection will you take forward from the workshop into your work/ community?

- Would you be willing to participate in future activities involving co-creation, creativity and climate resilience?

  ☐ Yes ☐ No

- Is there anything we could improve for future activities involving creativity and climate resilience?

AUTHORS:
Lydia Cumiskey, Denise McCullagh, Cathy Burns, Laura Dixon, Paula Larkin, Sara Walmsley, and Kevin Murphy.

CONTRIBUTORS (ALPHABETICAL ORDER):
Andreea Alexandrov, Daniel Clancy, Aoife Deane, Lorna Dennehy, Aoife Desmond, Anne Gallagher, Elaine Harrington, Stephen Jones, Siobhán Keogh, Gabriel Mullarkey, Rose Mary Murphy, Ríonach Ní Néill, Rebecca O'Malley, Baiba Prūse, Caitriona Reid, and Gillian Simpson.

For more see BluePrint website: https://www.marei.ie/project/blueprint/