

DIING

FINAL REPORT



Acknowledgements

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Pamela Conacher
Crafts, Fashion & Textiles advisor for Highlands
Islands Enterprise
Antony Mottershead
Arts Officer at Orkney Island Council
Bryan Peterson
Head of Creative Opportunities at Shetland Arts
Development Agency

Foreword

by Dr Lynn-Sayers McHattie, DING Primary Investigator and Programme Director at The Innovation School, The Glasgow School of Art

The aim of DING was to develop design innovation practices and capability to transform the Highlands & Islands region through creative engagement in the creative industries, with a particular focus on distributed island geographies, specifically the northern archipelagos of Orkney and Shetland. The Highlands & Islands region faces particular challenges that exacerbate further fragmentation in its creative sector, including low levels of entrepreneurialism, start-ups and innovation, dispersed working communities and a lack of technological infrastructure.

DING adopted a participatory action research methodology whereby a diverse range of stakeholders, communities and participants explored design innovation principles and practices and how these can be embedded in non-metropolitan areas. DING employed a design innovation approach to promote knowledge exchange through a series of co-design workshops to stimulate creative engagement and practice. We engaged with existing creative expertise in the Highlands and Northern Isles to mobilise local practitioners as central drivers of innovation. This underpinned DING's participatory action research methodology and aims to examine and understand the complex innovation challenges within island contexts and, in doing so, support practitioners to innovate and sustain their creative work.

DING delivered three DING Studios - design-led knowledge exchange workshops - to a cohort of over 40 creative practitioners, in addition to establishing the DING Innovation Collective, which has had demonstrable impact on the region, and was instrumental in supporting creative practitioners and collaborations. DING

presented a Showcase at XpoNorth 2018 and was part of the AHRC Design Research Showcase, London Design Festival. DING has brought together and had strategic importance for creative practitioners, stakeholders and policymakers, both in the Highlands & Islands region and across Scotland. This has included Scottish Government, Applied Arts Scotland and Creative Scotland, to inform future policy that contributes to wider cultural life, the wellbeing of communities and the concomitant creative ecosystem.

The DING team's expertise in conducting contextually located research inquiries in non-metropolitan geographies and island archipelagos has contributed to ensuring the survival of heritage and traditional craft skills. This addresses contemporary economic concerns in the region, which connect ethically and sensitively to indigenous landscapes and communities of practitioners. This also ensures that the particular nuances of practitioners, and the contexts in which they create, are captured and shared with diverse audiences.

This work has attracted Masters of Research students, whose research inquiries progress design innovation practices and creative engagement in contextually located research in the cultural and creative economy. DING has also underpinned the successful award of the AHRC Innovation Leadership Fellowship, "The Value of Creative Growth," for Dr Michael Pierre Johnson. DING values the contribution of the team and the key stakeholders involved in the project and is confident that this work will continue to have real impact and transform the Highlands & Islands region.

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PROJECT STARTS

JAN 2017

SCOPING

MAR 2017 Orkney

APR 2017 Shetland

JUN 2017 XpoNorth

DING STUDIOS

OCT 2017 Shetland: Collective Innovation

OCT 2017 Orkney: Festival Innovation

OCT 2017 Craft: Challenges & Trajectories

DING INNOVATION COLLECTIVE

MAR 2018 Projects Initiated

JUN 2018 Work In Progress Exhibition

SEP 2018 Projects Completed

DING POP UP STUDIOS

SEP 2018 NEoN, Dundee

DEC 2018 Tower Digital Arts Centre, Helensburgh

ROUND DING EVENT

OCT 2018 Mareel, Lerwick in Shetland

FINAL DING REPORT

APR 2019

Introduction

This report presents the activities and outcomes of Design Innovation for New Growth (DING) - AH/P013325/1. DING is a two year follow-on project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) delivering Design Innovation as a strategy for growth in the creative economy of the Highlands & Islands between January 2017 - January 2019.

DING builds on the activities and knowledge generated from the AHRC-funded Knowledge Exchange (KE) Hub Design in Action (DiA). The aim of this follow-on project was to apply the strategic design methods and approaches developed and tested in DiA with new audiences in the Highlands & Islands region. DING's stance on supporting growth for the creative economy is one that looks to include more qualitative forms of growth that can better consider the interests of and value created by creative practitioners.

The DING Model is based around four key parameters:

1. Network growth - new and enhanced communities of practice
2. Knowledge growth - new and enhanced forms of practice
3. Value growth - new and enhanced products, services and experiences
4. Market growth - new and enhanced audiences and communication

DING used existing creative networks in the Highlands & Islands as a vehicle to scope and co-develop innovation challenges in craft trajectories, festivals and connecting creative talent across Shetland. In October 2017, these co-identified challenges informed three

DING Studios in Shetland, Kirkwall and Cove Park. DING Studios were creative workshops gathering existing creative enterprises, practitioners and experts close to each challenge to collaborate on collective models of action and learn new Design Innovation approaches.

A key insight from this workshop series revealed that creative practitioners in the region faced challenges in finding time and resource to innovate their practice. In January 2018, we launched the DING Innovation Collective programme to support innovative creative projects and development. Eight creative practitioners with innovative projects from across the region were brought together to be supported by DING. This allowed the practitioners to make their own connections and networks to explore the opportunities for innovation in relation to their distributed situations. The projects were delivered between March 2018 and September 2018, and included a Work In Progress Showcase exhibiting the Innovation Collective at XpoNorth 2018.

Between September and December 2018, DING also delivered two Pop Up Studios with existing creative networks focused on digital arts in Scotland to further share Design Innovation approaches and learn from their challenges and opportunities for growth and innovation. These included North East of North (NEoN), a digital arts

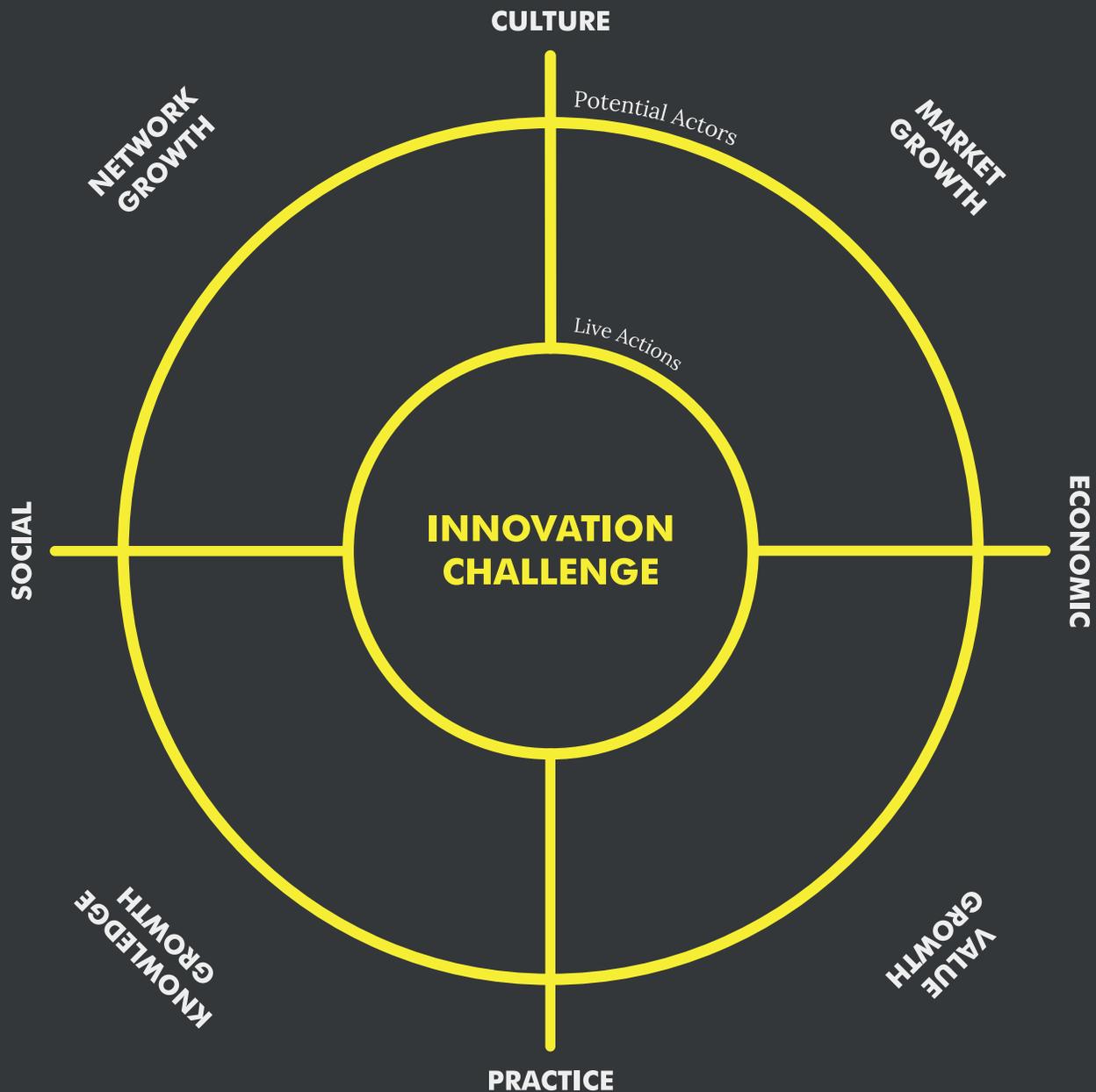
festival based in Dundee; and Tower Digital Arts Centre, a charity bringing arts, heritage, digital experiences and learning together in Helensburgh, and a member of CHArts Argyll and the Isles, a Culture Heritage and Arts network of creative people and organisations based in Argyll and the Isles.

This report shares how these activities were developed and delivered, as well as the key outcomes and learning produced through the project. By delivering Design Innovation approaches in partnership with existing networks in the Highlands & Islands, DING explored an asset-based approach to promote and capture more qualitative examples of innovative growth. This report seeks to support work exploring how such an approach can be better understood and integrated into regional creative economic and cultural policy.

1. www.designinaction.com - The central focus of DiA was to demonstrate design as a strategy for economic growth and innovation, focusing on the value of design-led innovation across business, technology and policy. Due to the geographical location of the partner institutions, DiA KE activities and public engagement was primarily focused on the central belt and cities in Scotland.

The **DING** Model

A qualitative model for supporting and capturing creative growth



The Model was used as a tool to frame discussions, inspire new ideas and capture new growth by mapping the live and potential actors for both individual and collective innovation challenges.

The **DING** Team

Dr Lynn-Sayers McHattie

DING Primary Investigator and Programme Director at
The Innovation School, The Glasgow School of Art



Lynn acted as Co-Investigator for the knowledge exchange hub Design in Action and is an academic partner with the British Council in Crafting Futures and an inaugural member of the British Council Craft Consortia. She was academic lead on Innovation from Tradition, an interdisciplinary research programme that is part of the Creative Futures Partnership portfolio and has recently been awarded funding by the Royal Society of Edinburgh to research precarious craft practices.

Lynn's research foregrounds questions around 'crafting futures' in the cultural and creative economy. Her research explores craft and textile practices that connect to the indigenous landscape and culture of island communities and the role innovation can play in socio-economic renewal towards informing a wider research agenda on the future of craft practice. She works extensively in the Highlands & Islands of Scotland and South East Asia.

Dr Michael Pierre Johnson

DING Co-Investigator and Creative Engagement Leadership Fellow at
The Innovation School, The Glasgow School of Art



Michael gained his PhD through Design in Action in 2016, developing a methodological approach to capturing and analysing design-led innovation. Michael was awarded a Creative Economy Engagement Fellowship in Craft, delivered in 2018 with the Scottish Graduate School for Arts and Humanities and Creative Scotland, which explored 'fragmentation in the creative economy' by focusing on craft makers in relation to place.

In January 2019, Michael was awarded an AHRC-funded Innovation Leadership Fellowship in the Creative Economy. His research interests are on making the effects and viability of Design Innovation approaches for creative growth, and the preferable changes they seek to serve, more explicit within complex collaborative contexts.

Dr Katherine Champion

DING Co-Investigator and Lecturer in Media and Communications at
Communications, Media and Culture, University of Stirling



Katherine is Primary Investigator on the Royal Society of Edinburgh funded project: 'From the margins to the centre: the role of creative hubs in supporting contemporary craft and creative workers in rural and remote geographies' and Co-Investigator on the Carnegie funded project 'Nurturing Scottish Screen Industries Talent: The Case of Outlander'.

Katherine's research interests include the spatial organisation of the creative economy, creative labour and cultural and creative industries policy. Prior to taking up her current post at Stirling, she was employed as a Research Fellow at The Glasgow School of Art on the AHRC-funded Knowledge Exchange Hub 'Design in Action' project and the 'Creative Futures Partnership' between GSA and Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

Scoping

Highlands & Islands Enterprise (HIE) have publicly expressed a demand for supporting “emerging and established creative entrepreneurs with the aptitude, flexibility and tenacity to build dynamic, innovative, sustainable and competitive creative businesses within the H&I region”. They have also explicitly articulated an aspiration to “leverage more from existing assets and activities, to ensure the most appropriate support for creative businesses is provided across the region”.

DING set out to deliver Design Innovation as a strategy for business growth and innovation with new audiences in the Highlands & Islands region. The Preliminary Report on the Achievements of the AHRC KE Hubs², including DiA, found that whilst there have been key benefits shared across the hubs, each region had demonstrated their capacity to identify the strengths of their creative cluster and deploy tailored knowledge exchange models to capitalise on the opportunities they offer. The DING team in consultation with HIE identified a clear opportunity for the delivery of knowledge generated in DiA within their established XpoNorth creative industries networks³.

Alongside a series of introductions, the DING team embarked on three scoping trips to meet and engage with potential partners and participants as a first step for the DING project. These identified existing creative networks in Orkney, Shetland and HIE’s Crafts, Fashion and Textiles network.

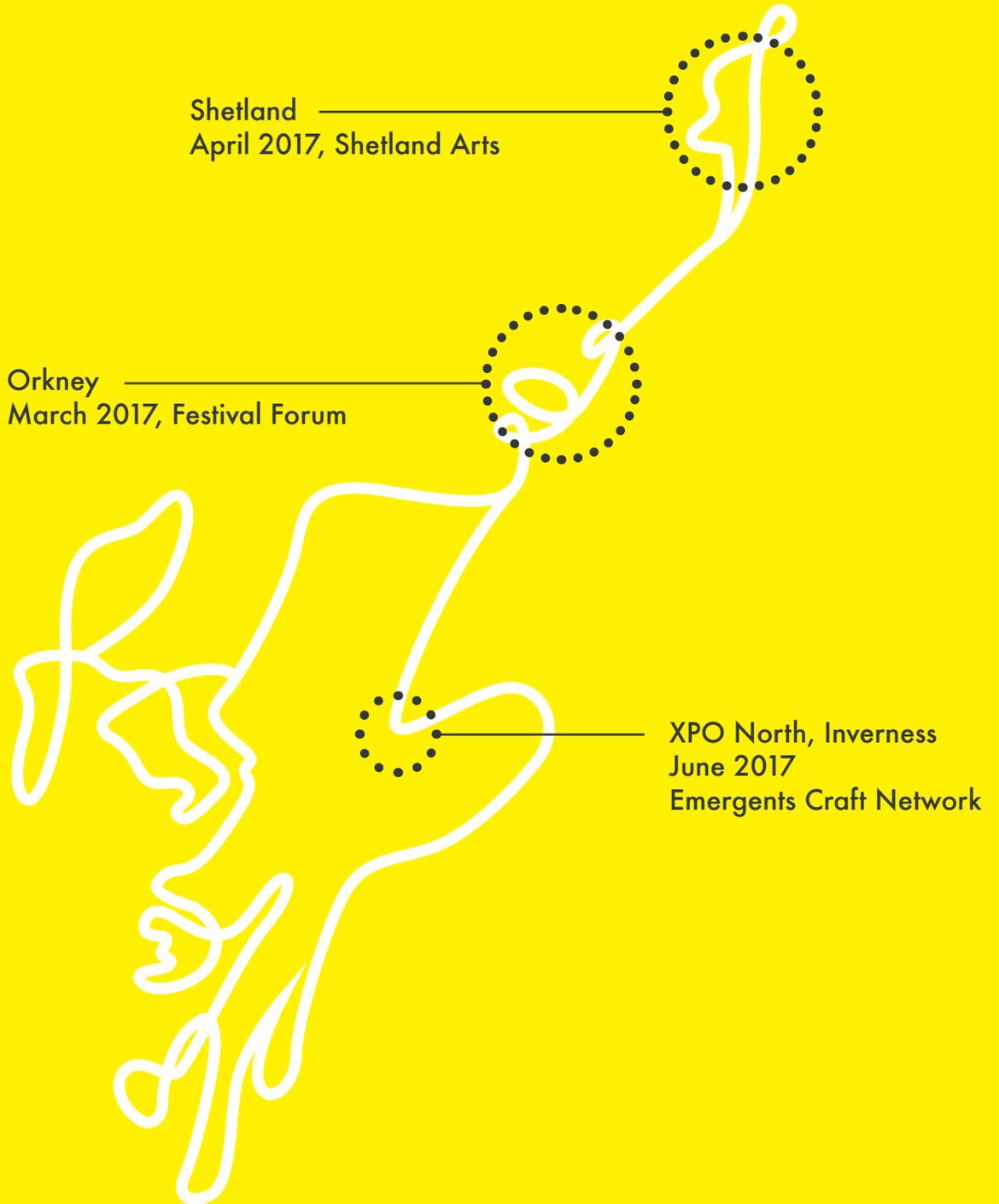
The first visit was in March 2017 to the **Orkney Isles**, where Orkney Island Council’s Arts Officer, **Antony Mattershead**, emerged as our key partner in understanding the region’s creative communities and opportunities, introducing us to working with Orkney’s Festival Forum. Our visit to Orkney revealed the rich diversity of creative practice, calendar of festivals, and range of organisations on the archipelago. The creative community is well established, but also with a sense of limitation for many practitioners beholden to the large-scale tourism industries, rather than accessing wider markets that they feel Orkney could attract. The festivals

programme on Orkney is extensive, with renowned examples including the St Magnus International Festival, the Orkney Folk Festival, Orkney Science Festival and many other small festivals around jazz, nature, wine, film and individual island festivals. This level of activity is also underpinned by multiple established organisations, such as the Arts Forum, Orkney Food and Drink, the Craft Trail, Orkney Craft Association, Pier Arts Centre and others.

Our second visit took the DING team to the **Shetland Isles** in April 2017, in particular to visit Mareel and Shetland Arts Development Agency. It was with the Creative Opportunities Manager, **Bryan Peterson**, that we formed a partnership to co-design DING Studio activities. Our visit to Shetland exposed the potential for bringing together a mix of new entrants and experienced creative practitioners along with local SMEs to contribute to a new narrative for Shetland’s creative community. While there are high quality support organisations, such as Shetland Arts, the potential was identified to provide a broader resource to make Shetland’s creative practitioners more visible to each other, both in their capacity and interests. These interests include reviving unique and internationally recognised stories behind Shetland wool and textiles, the heritage and culture, as well as the portfolio-based lifestyle of self-employment and community roles.

Our final scoping visit was to attend XpoNorth 2017 and engage with programme team, with a particular focus on meeting **craft makers** and SMEs. It was here we had discussions with project partner, **Pamela Conacher**, director of craft maker support agency Emergents at the time, and their cohort of progressing craft makers. Conversations revealed exciting talent and real barriers to growing a business in the context of the Highlands & Islands, from accessing studio resource, limited production capabilities for large or diverse orders, and an intensive workload impacting on their development. As such, there were many incentives to connect craft makers together to try and meet mutual needs, differentiate their offer and identify markets.

1. Highlands and Islands Enterprise (2013) Creative Industries Strategy, 2014 – 2019, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Inverness.
2. Senior, T., Cooper, R., Dovey, J., Follett, G., and Shiach, M. (2016) Connecting to Innovate A Preliminary Report into the Achievements of the AHRC Knowledge Exchange Hubs for the Creative Economy; UWE: Bristol.
3. (<http://www.hie.co.uk/growth-sectors/creative-industries/xponorth.html>)



DING Studios

In October 2017, we delivered three DING Studios around the scoped innovation challenges co-developed with our identified partners in connecting the trajectories of craft makers, Orkney festivals, and creative practitioners in Shetland. DING Studios are creative workshops that gathered existing creative entrepreneurs and experts close to each challenge to collaborate on collective models of action and explore new approaches.

The DING Studios involved three core Design Innovation activities, with bespoke content and programmes co-developed for each context.

One activity included **network mapping** the current and potential people, organisations and assets around individual and collective innovation challenges. A second activity involved **provocation discussions** framed by statements on challenges and opportunities for growth and innovation set within each section of the Model, with participants responding by moving to corners of the room signed with a Lickert scale and stating their position. A third activity involved **trajectory mapping** ideas for growth in response to such challenges and opportunities, setting goals or visions to be achieved and key milestones to get there.

MAREEL, LERWICK, OCT 3. 2018

SHETLAND

Collective Innovation

At Mareel arts centre, Lerwick, a DING Studio brought together creative practitioners to collaborate on collective models of growth for the creative community in Shetland.

There were three parts to the day:

The first session asked creative learners - students in creative disciplines and developing practitioners - to discuss and map Shetland's creative networks and trajectories for them to develop going forward.

The second session offered one hour surgeries of network and trajectory mapping for individual creative entrepreneurs currently developing their business.

The third session invited creative practitioners to a facilitated group discussion based on provocations relating to innovation and creative industry challenges for Shetland, and the consideration of collective strategies for growth.

Insights and outputs from these activities and discussions are summarised here, but were disseminated in more detail as a leaflet in relation to the DING Model.

Participants as 'creative learners' debated the need for new spaces to connect across the islands, how creatives are looking to innovate beyond local traditions, and how being in Shetland both enhanced their story while creating barriers to key markets and growth opportunities. Most participants had expressed how the Model's language and provocations proved engaging and possibly attracting younger creatives. The partner from Shetland Arts shared that he had been using the activities as part of his work:

"Particularly forcing people to stand in the corner to state their position. It opens up this middle ground that helps realise a compromise. The trajectory one as well, creating visuals and methodological bits and pieces that I've definitely picked up from it."





“The model is well laid out and once you understand how it works it’s a very useful tool for taking your ideas in your head and expanding them on paper”

~ Shetland DING Studio Participant

TOWN HALL, KIRKWALL, OCT 5. 2018

ORKNEY

Festival Innovation

At Kirkwall Town Hall, a DING Studio brought together festival leaders across Orkney to share challenges and collaborate on collective trajectories between the festivals going forward.

There were three parts to the day:

The first session facilitated group discussion based on provocations relating to festival innovation challenges for Orkney.

The second session allowed each festival leader to map and develop ideas for taking their festival forward.

The third session used emergent ideas from the previous two sessions to select innovation challenges to be developed as trajectories in pairs towards establishing a strategy for 'Orkney, the Festival Islands.'

Insights and outputs from these activities and discussions are summarised here, but were disseminated in more detail as a leaflet in relation to the DING Model.

Participants as festival organisers explored Orkney as a unique destination to promote new festivals, how to enhance the relationship between the public sector and festivals, how to attract more young people to get involved in festivals, and how digital platforms could grow remote audiences. The network partner for Orkney identified a strength in how the activities:

"...had people from a lot of different creative businesses and disciplines coming together who [...] found that they had some of the same challenges, no matter what it is that they're making or creating."

This was iterated by one of the participants who reflected that the discussions offered new and strong validation for organisers to keep coming together.





“The biggest thing I’ve learnt is just how similar some of the challenges each festival faces... it shows how us organisers should keep coming together.”

~ Orkney DING Studio Participant

COVE PARK, ARGYLL, OCT 11. 2018

CRAFT

CHALLENGES + TRAJECTORIES

At Cove park, Argyll and Bute, DING partnered with Emergents to gather craft practitioners and experts to participate in a DING Studio workshop exploring challenges and trajectories for craft makers in the Highlands & Islands.

There were three parts to the workshop, each based on activities aiming to share and explore the lived experience of craft makers.

The first session probed challenges for makers and asked participants to complete reflective profiles of their practice based upon questions set from the DING Model.

The second session invited craft practitioners to take part in a facilitated group discussion based on provocations relating to innovation and creative industry challenges for makers.

The third session invited makers to discuss and map creative trajectories for growth in the Highlands & Islands and beyond.

Insights and outputs from these activities and discussions are summarised here, but were disseminated in more detail as a leaflet in relation to the DING Model.

Participants as craft makers presented growth trajectories exploring how to connect and reach their ideal clients, how to change the perceptions of craft as a 'lifestyle', and how to enhance the relationship of makers with the 'places' they associate with. These had emerged from the provocation discussion that particularly reflected on what innovation and success meant in the case of rural craft makers. They asserted how doing what they were doing in such places was a form of innovation, balancing multiple roles for highly unique enterprises driven by developing their own practice.

The craft partner reflected how this language of innovation could often be a barrier, with makers thinking opportunities such as Innovation Vouchers were not meant for them. As such, she emphasised the necessity of providing ways to show examples of people who had taken on innovation-based funding and show what they've done and achieved with such opportunities.



Strongly Agree



“Time is the most precious resource, as learning is continual reflection time. You learn by doing; just make it and it often turns out in a way you didn’t expect.”

~ Craft DING Studio Participant

DING

Innovation Collective

Following the DING Studio sessions, one of our key learnings was people lacking the time and resource to engage with the challenges they shared. As a result, we developed a masterclass approach towards forming a community of practice across the Highlands & Islands to support innovative projects for creative growth. The Masterclass approach (bringing creative expertise into the region) adapted towards bringing together a community of practice, or Collective (connecting creative expertise from across the region), to be supported through their own innovative creative projects.

In January 2018, an expert panel composed of our creative industry partners in Craft, Orkney and Shetland selected eight creative projects to be supported by DING. Assembling the Collective provided us with deeper understanding about innovation support needs such creative projects require in the Highlands & Islands, while also allowing the practitioners to make their own connections as a cohort.

The Orkney-based partner commented on the diverse nature of the projects attracted as possibly being due to the design of the call and process overall:

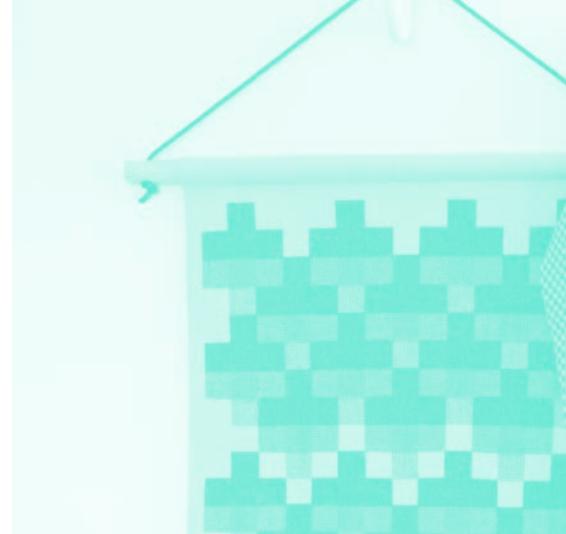
“Development opportunities are either for organisations or artists, and there isn't really

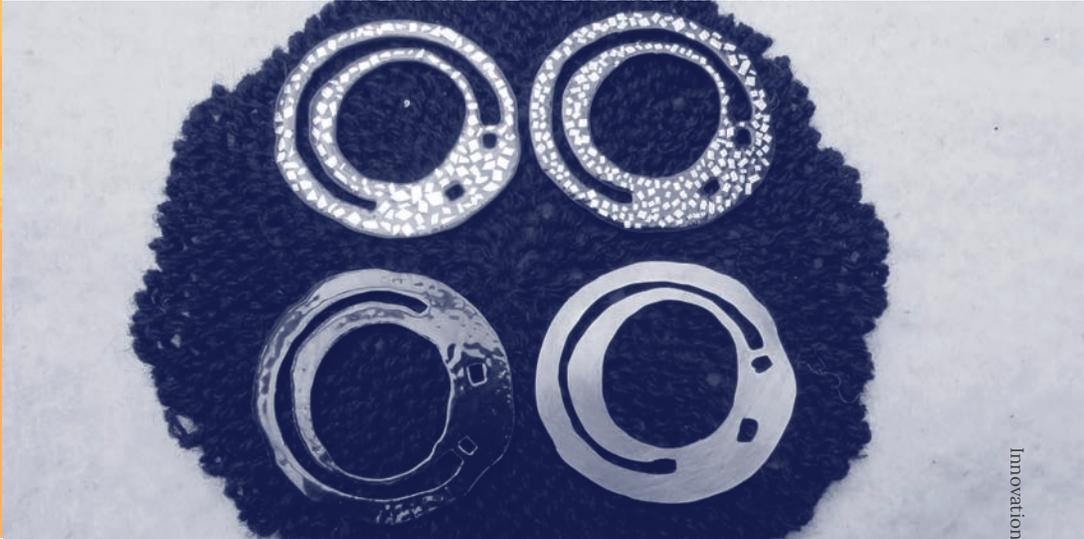
anything that brings those two together, whereas this process managed to work across that.”

The eight practitioners and their projects are presented using the images and reflections produced as part of a Work In Progress Showcase exhibited at XpoNorth in July 2018, and a visual overview of interviews capturing the growth and progress made by each practitioner, based upon the DING Model, that was displayed with quotes for a final RoundDING Showcase.

Reflections and outcomes from the DING Innovation Collective are presented as part reflective discussions in the RoundDING section of this report (page 36). However, the Shetland-based partner articulates key features of the practitioners' experience within the DING Innovation Collective:

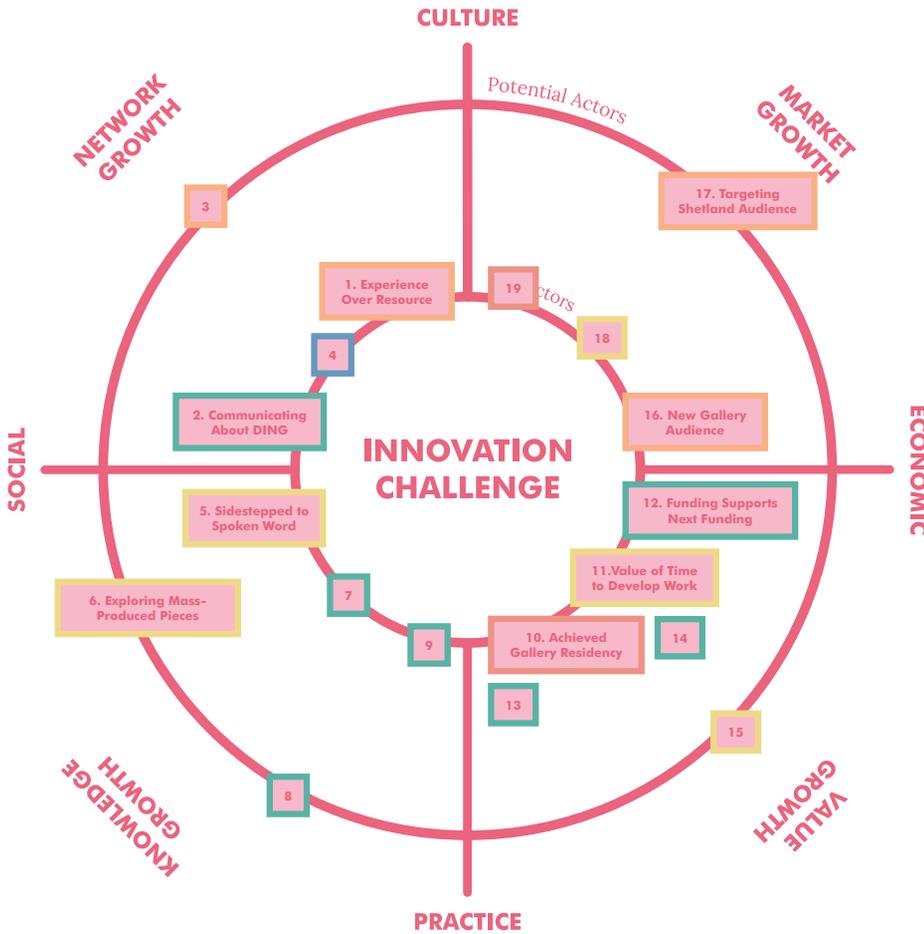
“I think the value of this process was because it was so engaging. They knew that they were talking to experts. They knew they were talking to people that understood their work and they felt valued having gone through the process. There was all sorts of feedback and support, with an exhibition as part of it.”





1. WIP. Early sketch. Since making this boob beach, I have found many tit stones (image 3), and am no longer using this image. Filmed alone, on a beach.
2. WIP. Beach Body (film still). This bum shaped stone key character in the film, and will interact with the knitted work (currently unmade). Filmed with Daniel in the Studio.
3. WIP. Beach Body (film still). I am collecting body shaped stones, that form the landscape of the film
4. WIP. Limpit lungs (sculpture). Limpets stacked together, unable to breathe, forming the outline of human lungs. Made with Jamie Malakoff ship builders.





Amy Gear

Amy Gear is an Artist. She lives in Shetland and works on projects across the UK from her studio in Burra Isle. Amy's practice explores possible (and impossible) interrelationships between land and the body, knotting together notions of identity, language, knowledge and imagination. Amy works across a broad range of media: drawing, printmaking, painting, photography, moving image, poetry, storytelling, installation, sculpture, spoken word, digital knit, textiles and book making.

Grow on us

Grow On Us is a period of practice development focusing on sculpture and moving image. Amy aimed to use Shetland's existing sculpture fabrication facilities to produce three new works that explore the oscillating relationship of human body and the landscape.

The DING Collective has allowed me to explore previously uncharted territory outwith the usual boundaries of my practice. With a focus on sculpture and collaborative making, I have experimented with new ways of working in Shetland, with a emphasis on 3D form, moving image and digital knit. For this project I proposed to make three works, two of which are well on their way to completion. Namely, a metal work and a film/stone work, while the digital knit is a few months off due to unforeseen hiccups in the planning process.

METAL: I have worked with Malakoff Ship Builders to form sculptural linear lungs, threaded with limpet shells. Malakoff were a delight to work with, responding quickly to my emails and pairing me with a very creative welder. However, making something very simple did take longer than I expected, which in turn cost more. I now know what they need to make the work, and in the future, I would make templates prior to my visit in order to speed the process up.

FILM/STONE: I have worked largely on my

own with this material, however I have had help and guidance from my partner Daniel, who has worked in film before. The stone work was originally going to be a sculpture, but during the process of making, a film emerged. I am very excited about this as I have been looking for a reason to make moving image work for a while, finding all the body shaped stones gave me this reason. I have included some stills from this film here, but am still a few months away from completing the DING elements of the film.

DIGITAL KNIT: The digital knit has been the most difficult process, mostly because of the waiting list to use the facility in Shetland, I don't feel I have room to 'play'. This is the area I need to work on the most, and am looking forward to creating my mossy designs. This work will feature alongside the stones in the film I am making.

The work I am making as part of the Collective feeds directly into my practice, and will be displayed in Shetland at the museum in my solo show in August, as well as in Market Gallery in Glasgow during a

residency. The real value of the Collective is the elbow room. DING has allowed me to play in terms of material exploration - this is a tangible leap forward within my practice.

Going forward, the discovery of new effective ways of making will advance my portfolio, and allow me to apply for more opportunities to work outwith Shetland, whilst keeping Shetland as my base. My hope was to create networks within Shetland with those who could help establish art practices and through working with Malakoff, and the Shetland Textile Facilitation Unit. Alongside my existing network of makers/helpers/collaborators/community members, these industry facilities are touchstones of innovation for contemporary making within the isles.

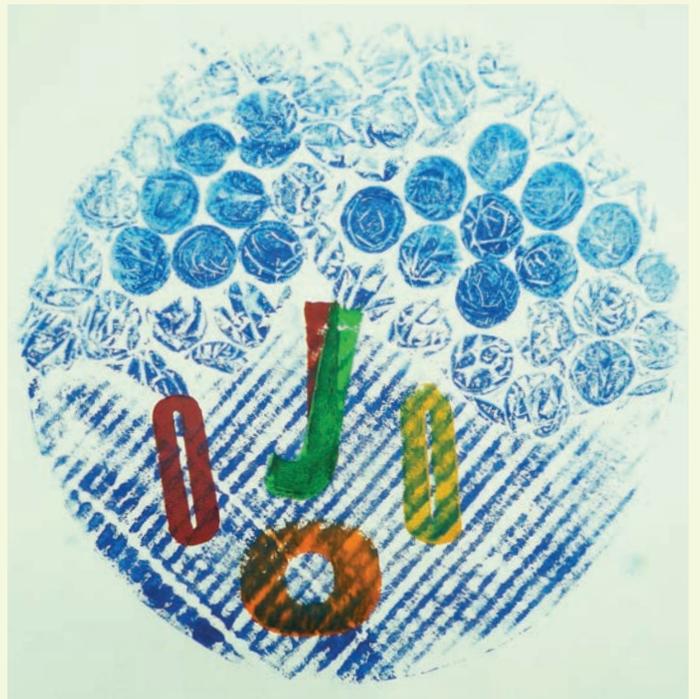
1. Credit: Soulisquoy Printmakers, printed outputs from participants

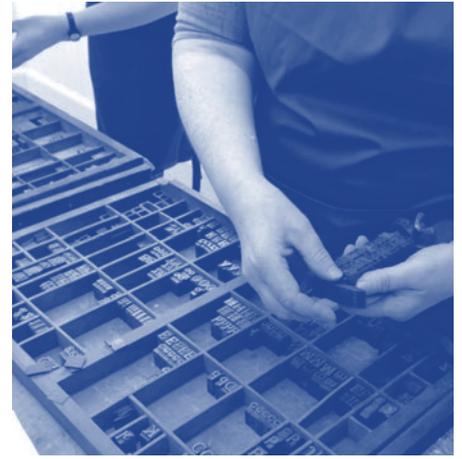
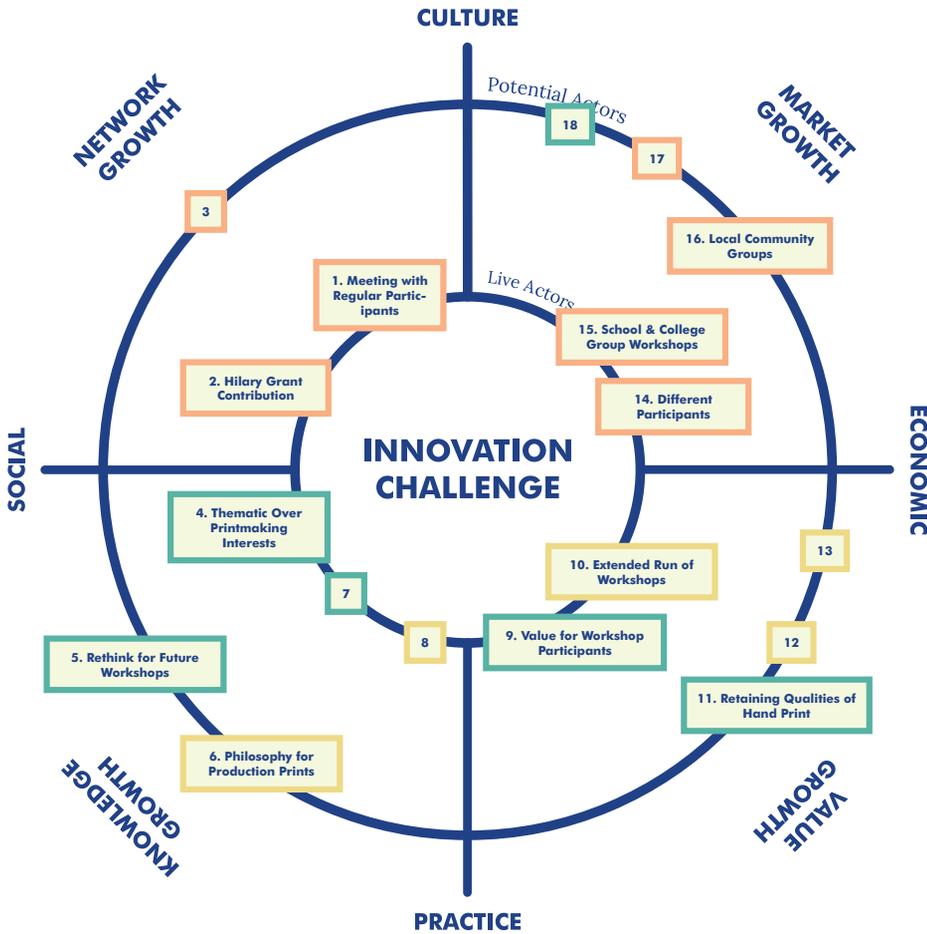
BLASHY

HELLYEFER

GLAMSY

Innovation Collective - Carol Dunbar





Carol Dunbar

Soulisquoy Printmakers Ltd was founded in 1982 dedicated to make printmaking and related activities available for the learning and enjoyment of artists and printmakers from Orkney and further afield, as well as offer opportunities to the wider community to engage in printmaking.

Since October 2016, we have been based in WASPS Stromness Studios in the former town library with an ambition to develop and expand the range of our activities and create opportunities for the wider community to engage in creative activity focusing on printmaking.

word see WIRD

word see WIRD brings the traditional skills of hand printing and typesetting and local dialect with texting shortcuts and messaging in an exploration of language and communication. Project participants exploring words, old and new, have been working on a series of creative responses that will be developed into a series of hand-printed publications.

The challenge and joy of participating in a research project is the flexibility (and uncertainty) of not necessarily knowing what the outcome might be! Since our first 'WIRD' session back in April - which was dominated by the wooden typeset and the use of dialect words - we have encountered some highly skilful, eloquent and contemporary poetic play on words, some visually stimulating 'patterning' of typeface, and some very colourful and amusing hand drawn emoji.

The project has attracted a group of people, whose motivation to take part has been less about printmaking per se, but rather about language and the impact of words, both visually and in the careful and considered context of their meaning - the intrigue of an idea and concept!

Our initial intention had been to run a couple of sessions, gather a few ideas and develop and produce some publications and printed material. That's still the projected outcome, but now with the considerable addition of the intelligence and intellect

stimulated by the participants' creative responses, which have evolved into an extraordinary rich range of unanticipated approaches to text and its visual impact.

WIRD has enabled us to engage with artists, writers, poets, naturalists, archaeologists, textile designers, primary and secondary school pupils, who have all been enthralled by the direct physical contact with typeface, pulling a print on the Columbia press and wondered at the skill of hand typesetting in an age where 'print' simply means pressing P on the keyboard.

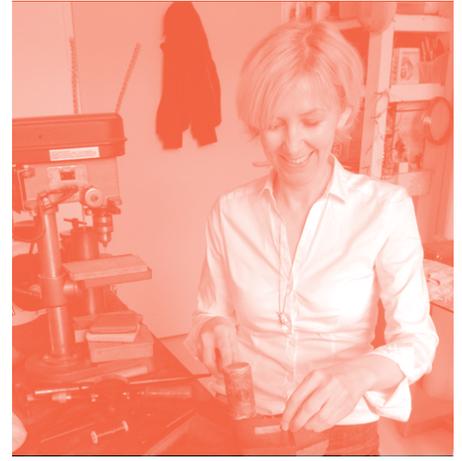
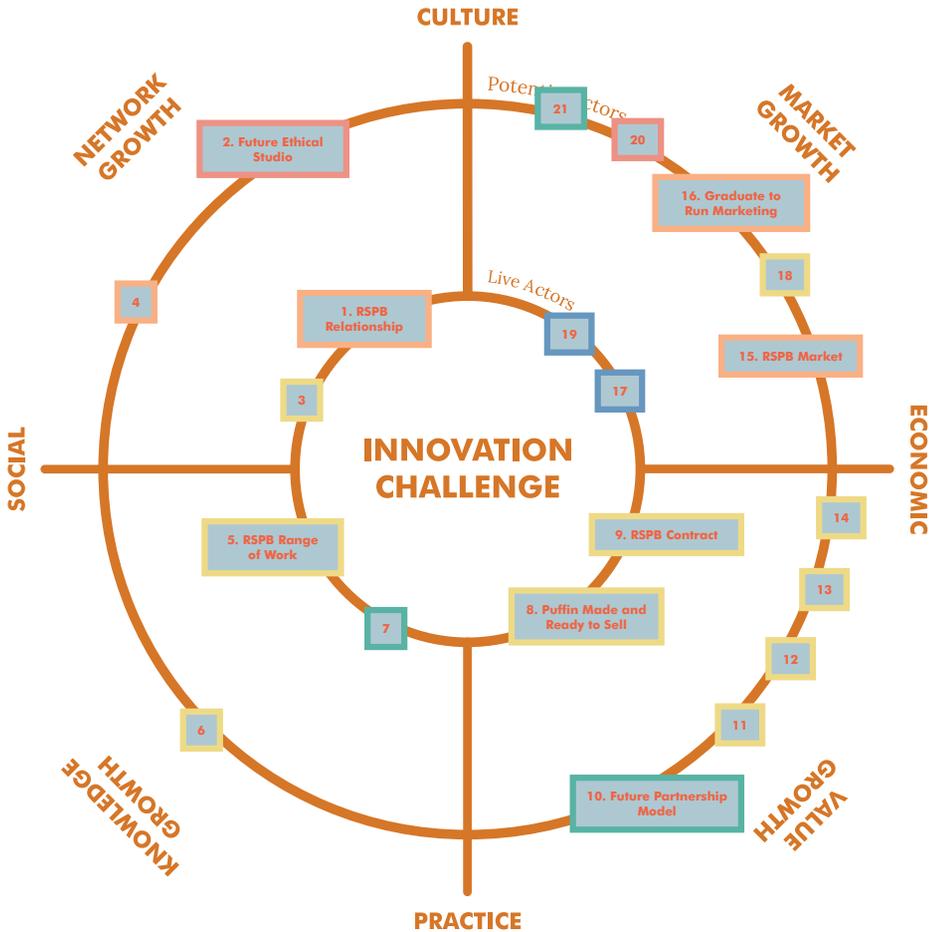
Our Tuesday night sessions continue - no one wants to stop, ideas just keep flowing, sweet collaborations have been established between participants.

Our next steps: a bit of reflection and consolidation; maintain the participant interest; develop other projects using this concept/theme led approach; and resolve some of the participants' work into limited edition prints and publications.



1. Credit: John Bowler, rspb-images.com
2. WIP. 'Prototyping' After many hours of research, designing, and tweaking by our team, the Puffin is ready to come to life in 3D.
3. WIP. 'Clean up' The fun begins as Eileen embarks on transforming the prototype into a beautifully finished model.





Eileen Gatt

I am a jeweller/silversmith and I have been making for over 20 years. Throughout my career I have always made both jewellery and silverware. I love the freedom this brings, working in differing scales gives me more scope for my creativity to flow! In my most recent 'Flight' series I have been exploring the juxtaposition between manmade objects and nature. I am inspired by various topical issues such as climate change and endangered animals. Recent pieces touch upon the decline in Honey bee and ladybird populations. I love the idea that Craft can play a significant role in making changes that will have a positive impact on our environment.

Flock Together

In collaboration with the RSPB, Eileen Gatt is developing a new collection of jewellery inspired by the RSPB's sustainability initiatives. Mixing state-of-the-art fabrication techniques with traditional hand skills, Eileen's pieces become unique talking points, bringing the discussion around conservation and sustainability to the forefront.

Working closely with the RSPB, Eileen is working to produce a collection of jewellery inspired by the projects the RSPB are currently running, with the aim to highlight and encourage support for species in need.

When in discussion with the RSPB, the initiatives highlighted included the Great Yellow Bumblebee project on Orkney, which involves enhancing early forage provision, monitoring the species, and involving communities in providing pollinator-friendly wildflower patches. Other projects currently underway include a puffin watch programme where funding is desperately needed to ensure the conservation of this rapidly declining native species.

Eileen creates master patterns and 3D prints in metals, creating beautiful evocative pieces that tell a story. Focussing on the Puffin as a point for inspiration, Eileen has been working closely with her CAD team to create the perfect 3D modelled puffin and sand

eel (the puffin's preferred meal of choice!).

Eileen is using 3D printed models as masters for lost wax casting. Combining state-of-the-art technology with traditional jewellery & silversmithing practices, each of Eileen's RSPB pieces raise not only an important environmental issue, but hold a wealth of craftsmanship heritage too.

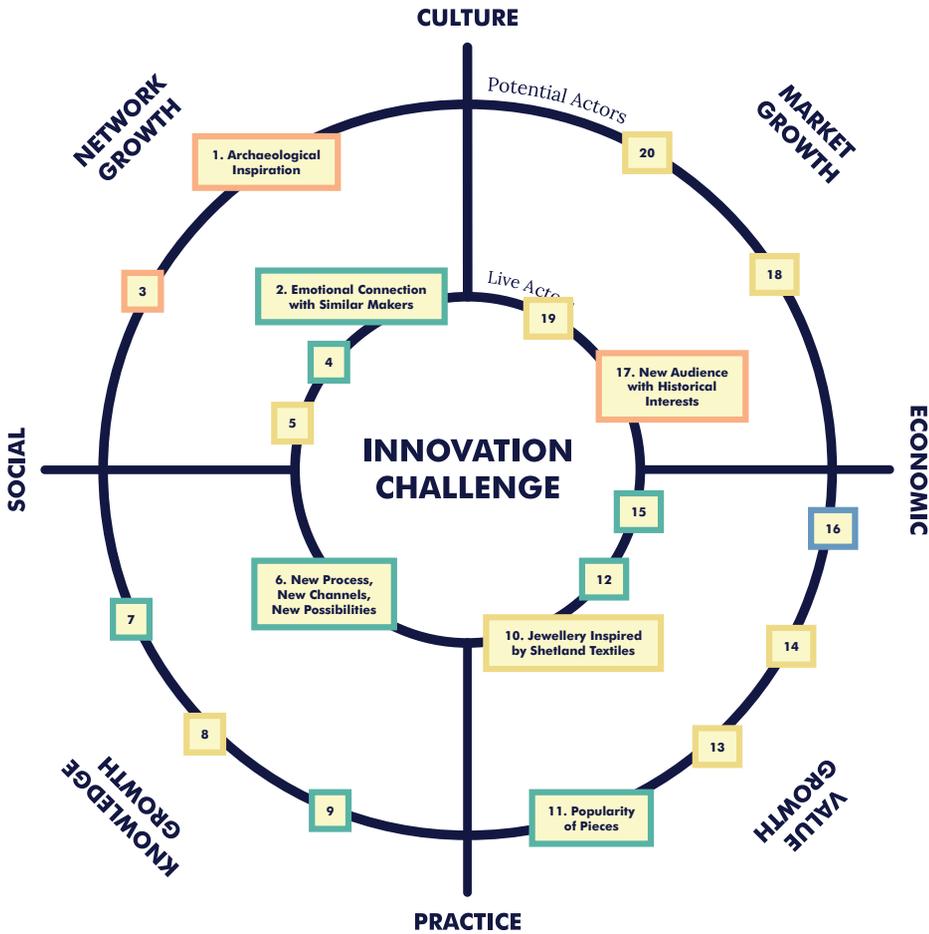
A percentage of the sales of Eileen's RSPB collection will go directly to the charity, and all proceeds from her sales will go towards funding Scottish conservation projects and education programmes within Scottish schools.

The Collective has enabled Eileen to kickstart the project, allowing development time and creative freedom. The long lasting legacy of the project includes both raising awareness for the RSPB's conservation work, and developing Eileen's ever-expanding creative practice.



1. Credit: Helen Robertson - Moussa Broch necklace
2. Credit: Helen Robertson - Moussa Broch brooches
3. Credit: Helen Robertson - developing knitting pattern
4. Credit: Helen Robertson - prototype knitting garment





Helen Robertson

I love creating connections between people, their surroundings and the past. I am in awe of the heritage knitters of Shetland's past and their ability to survive by innovation. I aspire to honour them in my work, while also telling stories through the continuation and modernising of their practice. Living in Shetland, the environment sometimes creeps into my work too. I love when my work moves folk and causes them to pause for contemplation and reflection, if only for a short time. I use knitting, silversmithing and felting to express myself and I savour newness.

Aerial Archaeology Inspired Textiles and Jewellery

Cross-applying the design processes of two different disciplines has led to new complimentary designs in knitwear and jewellery. Inspired by aerial views of archaeological sites the designs are both simultaneously ancient and modern.

By cross-thinking my design process I was able to access new ideas.

This has created a new way of designing for me and given me insight into the limitations of my previous design practice. This trick could be applied to design models to lead to further innovation.

I have realised and completed original and unique designs for brooches and necklaces based on the shapes found in aerial photos of archaeological sites. I have translated the metal process into knitting and created designs based on this.

There are further knitwear designs I wish to develop from this project. I plan to implement this new design method to all my future work. I plan to research other archaeological sites in Scotland to increase the range of

my Aerial Archaeology Collection.

Fundamentally for me, this has provided a whole new way of approaching design. I have had a definite perspective transformation in my design process. Using my previous experience I can develop the design solutions for one medium (e.g. knitting) and flip it to benefit and enrich designs for my other process, e.g. jewellery making. It has married the two sides of my practice together but in an unexpected way. It has opened a door in my head. Thinking about the use of two colours in fair isle knitting designs directly led me to use silver foil pieces on to coloured backgrounds for creating the jewellery. Thinking about varying thickness of wire led me to think about mixing weight of yarn. Soldering metals together led me to think about attaching pieces of knitting and using various textures of stitch. At a practical level

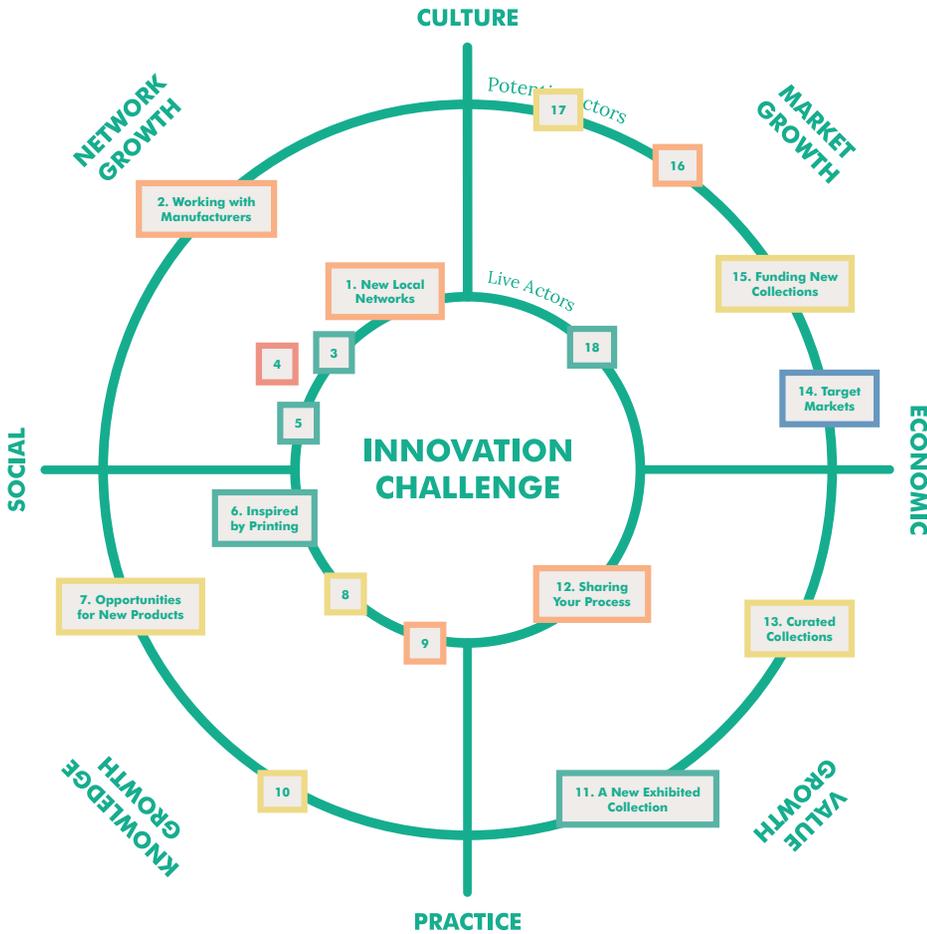
I have new pieces that can be marketed to a new audience. I can build on the interest expressed from the archaeological community. I plan to research and develop further designs using these same methods but inspired by other archaeological sites.

I hope to share my design insights with fellow designers. The interest in my jewellery will have a knock on effect in interest in Scottish archaeological sites.

For me this has been invaluable in that it has given me the freedom to spend time designing with less pressure to be directly commercial. It has been like one of the best holidays I have taken. My work feels revitalised and I feel renewed! Thank you!

1. Credit: Hilary Grant - garment and wall hanging developed through DING





Knit Design Lab

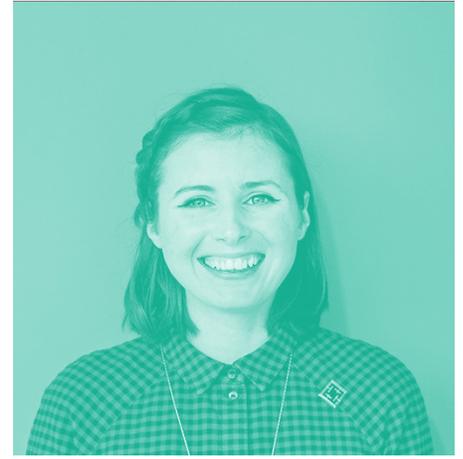
We were lucky to have the unique opportunity to work with The Knit Design Lab in Leicester - a micro manufacturer that specialises in product development and sampling for knitted textiles. For us this project was about having the freedom to experiment with techniques and sample different kinds of products.

The first day was spent with an induction to the factory, being shown all the different knitting machines and finding out about their capabilities. We spent time looking through their sample archive and examined different types of finishing and ending that we might like to use on our own products, which helped to re-evaluate our plan for the week and what techniques and ideas we'd like to try.

The second day we started out producing lots of small samples, trying different types of ribs and textures and then decided to take one of the swatches further as a garment. We ended up having a lot of trouble producing a very simple tension swatch, without any dropped stitches (dropped stitches suggest that the tension is incorrect). We were in the factory until 9pm that day producing sample after sample until we could achieve a full garment panel without flaws, making changes to the tension along the way.

Day three was much smoother, as we were able to produce panels for two garments. It was really useful to see how pattern worked on the scale of a garment and it taught us a lot about the type of pattern that works for different shapes. We've never seen our pieces made up as a 3D piece before, so we had to consider how the pattern would work with joins in seams.

Our last day in the factory was spent finishing one last set of garment panels, sampling small blankets using different contraction techniques. We had been thinking about producing knitted wall hangings for a while. We realised that this very stiff knit the factory was producing (although not ideal for a garment) would be ideal for this kind of product, as it was so stable and firm, so the last moments were spent producing a sample. We would receive the rest of the garments and the wall hanging in their fully constructed, linked form a few weeks after our visit.



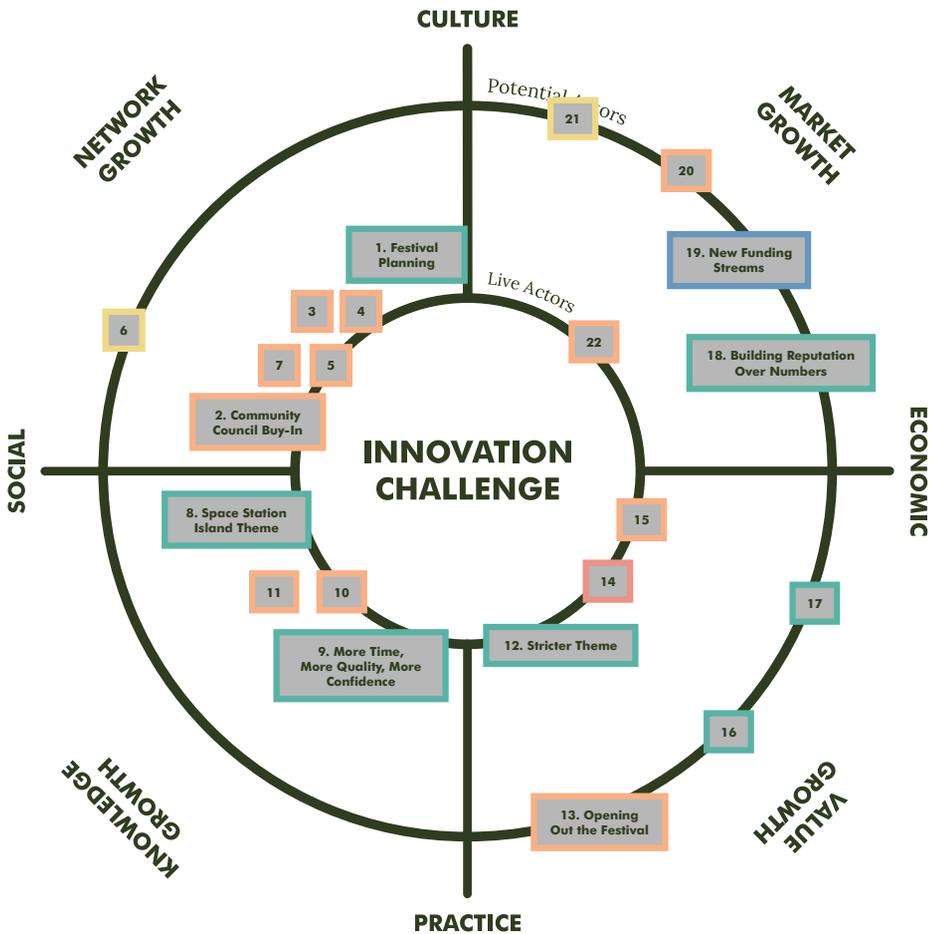
Hilary Grant

Hilary Grant is a knitwear design company and creative partnership based in Orkney. The company was founded by Hilary in 2011 and in 2017 was joined by Robert Harvey. The two designers have backgrounds in design, Hilary's training and professional experience being in textile design and arts education and Robert's in architecture. They work together to create a new collection of knitted accessories every year. Although working to the commercial fashion calendar, they treat this as a way to constantly further their creative practice and develop their skills in graphic and pattern design for knit. They produce all of their knitwear in Scotland from a luxury-grade lambswool.

1. Credit: ØY - programme cover for Space Station ØY Festival 2018

Innovation Collective - Jonathan Ford





Jonathan Ford

I first visited Papa Westray (Papay) in 2013 to see the island where the long extinct bird the Great Auk used to live. I soon returned to the island to live and take on the role as the Papay Ranger. In true island fashion - Artist, tour guide, festival director, dialect collector and guardian of the Auks.

ØY - Festival of Islands

The ØY Festival is an annual three-day festival of islands, held every November at The Kelp Store on Papa Westray, one of the northern islands of the Orkney archipelago. The festival is directed and curated by myself and artist Saoirse Higgins. The festival is supported by the Orkney Islands Council Culture Fund, the Papa Westray Community Council and the Papay Development Trust.

Illuminated by the light of the moon and under nature's gaze, islands have taken their own evolutionary path, developing individual visions of culture and ecology. These island systems of language, folklore, ecology, architecture, craft and making are a beacon to us all. Island identity serves as a testament to human ingenuity and resourcefulness. The ØY festival celebrates this and seeks to innovate by collaborating creatively on such notions of island identity.

As well as the annual festival in November 2018, I plan to deliver other ØY affiliated events throughout this year and beyond. The festival this year will benefit from the previous two years experience and this Collective has allowed us to consolidate it becoming very much a part of the island calendar.

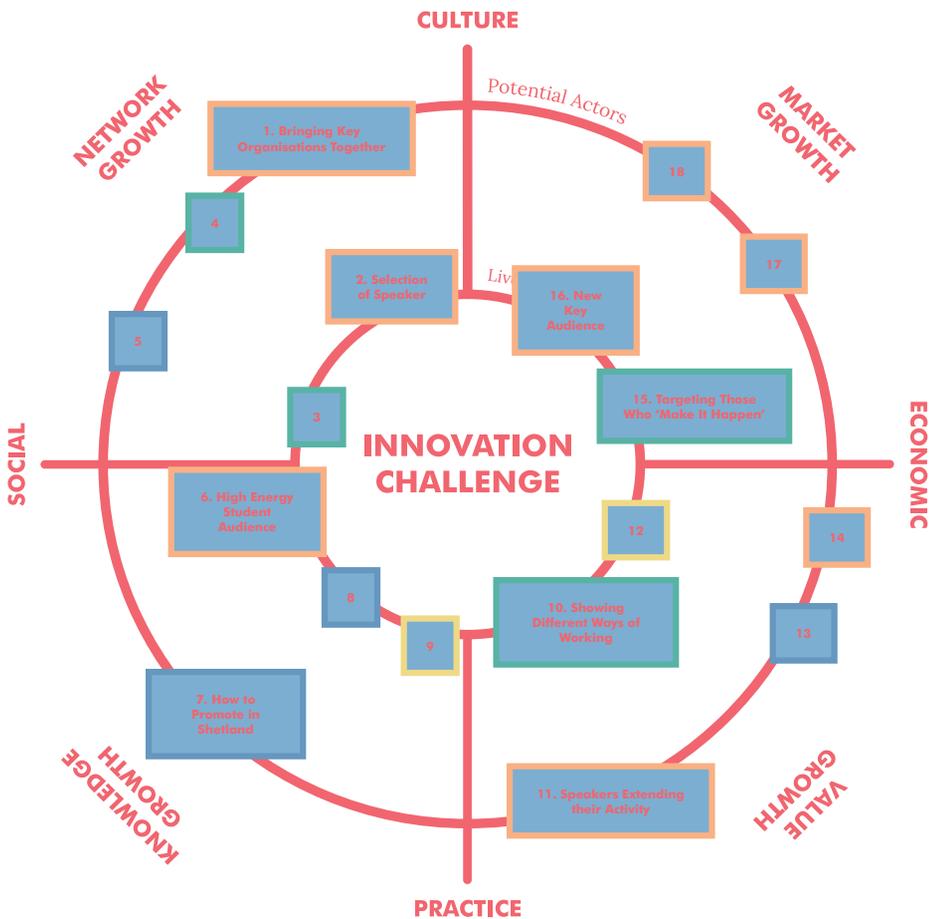
For my personal practice, my role as ranger on Papay is changing all the time and evolving as opportunities and challenges

present themselves. Now that The Kelp Store is up and running, there is a need to create a programme and stand out events throughout the year to get people out to the island. I personally want to challenge myself with every project I take on and create something worthy of being part of the islands folklore for years to come.

The progress of the festival has a valuable impact on Papay itself. Bringing artists and other national and international contributors to the island adds to a vibrant cultural scene on the island. The Kelp Store, where the festival is held, is beginning to gain a great reputation and the festival makes full use of a fantastic facility on the island. We are also forming good relations with artists and collectives on mainland Orkney, as we see the festival as an opportunity for local artists to participate. Orkney needs more venues and events to provide opportunities for contemporary artists.

Our audience is also growing and evolving with the festival, and already we have had artists who took part in last years festival coming back to the island and running their own workshops and events.

Although it's hard to quantify, I feel that the ØY festival has become more real. The broader it reaches and the longer it lives, the more real it becomes. The Collective has allowed me to take the time to plan and develop the direction of this year's festival, well in advance of the actual event, whereas previously the festival would develop in fits and starts. The ØY Festival relies very much on the support of the Papay folk, Papay community organisations and opportunities such as this one.



Maya Darrell-Hewins

Maya Darrell Hewins is a cultural researcher, project manager and maker. She has worked for a number of galleries and festivals across the UK, where she has contributed to the planning and production of exhibitions and events, with particular responsibilities for delivering audio-visual elements of projects, guest liaison and volunteer coordination. Maya has a background in moving image production and preservation and is currently researching community-led archiving initiatives as a doctoral student at Shetland College, University of the Highlands & Islands (UHI).

Innovation Collective - Maya Darrell-Hewins

Make It Happen

Make It Happen seeks to provide opportunities for creative practitioners in Shetland to meet, discuss work and seek advice from others in order to develop their practice. Each event will be led by a practitioner from outside of Shetland, who has been invited because their approach to running projects is considered relevant and exciting.

Make It Happen is my attempt to address needs identified by the Shetland creative community for opportunities and spaces to meet, discuss or critique work and seek advice in order to develop their personal practice. In particular, I felt it was important to link Shetland to other communities in similar situations to remind us that other people make and create in rural and islands communities, and to find out how they manage to do this (or not). Bringing people together and 'hosting' is hugely important to developing meaningful relationships, so I believed inviting people to Shetland (as opposed to connecting virtually) was key to this project. It also allowed the invited practitioners to visit Shetland, creating a personal experience for them and deeper investment in the project/people.

Invitations have been made to a number of practitioners who I feel have interesting viewpoints and experiences to share. As active practitioners, the main challenge has been dates that work for both of us,

particularly when factoring the significant travel time involved in getting to Shetland. I have also approached key organisations, such as Shetland Arts and Shetland College, to ask for support in promoting the events and opportunities to their audiences.

The Collective has allowed me to make contact with and begin conversations with practitioners who create projects in rural and island communities, with similarities to Shetland. It has also encouraged me to seek advice and help from more established individuals and groups from further afield, in order to find solutions to my problems and challenges working in Shetland.

The project aims to generate a supportive environment to encourage development of new and exciting work, and provide an impetus for creative practitioners to meet, make and solve problems together. I hope it will feed in or complement others plans for artists' studios and

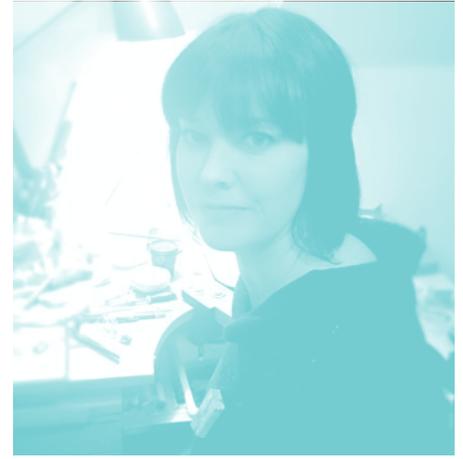
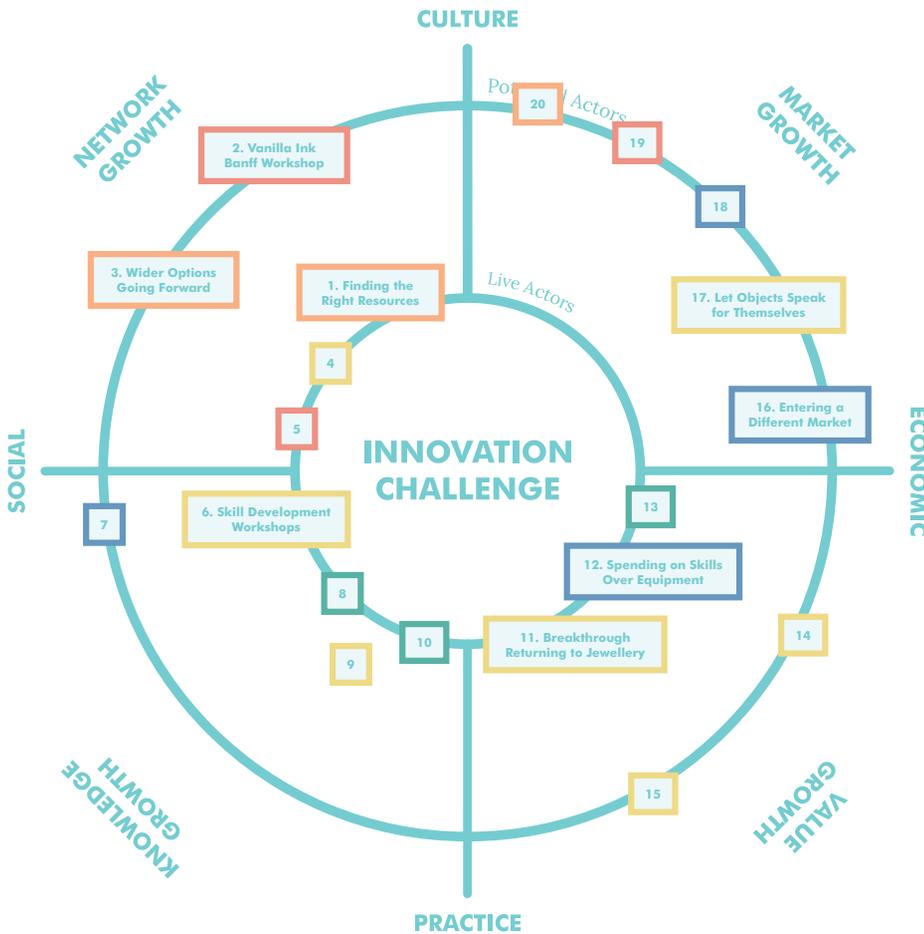
project spaces on the island, and sow the seeds for a professional artist development programme in Shetland.

The Collective has given me the chance to test out an idea, and to see if it offers a solution for the challenges expressed about creating work and a career here. The response to these events from the Shetland creative community will allow me to gauge whether this structure is one that would be valuable to pursue going forwards or if a different strategy would be better.



1. Composition of gathered materials and pieces made in response to rural shelters
2. Looking out from Suardalan bothy
3. A copper spoon in a sun dried rock pool revealing layers of sea salt
4. Raising a sheet of silver into a vessel





Tina MacLeod

Tina MacLeod creates contemporary jewellery pieces and tactile objects that evoke a strong sense of place. The concept of the island and the unique atmosphere of the Hebridean coastal woodland are central to her work, capturing an essence of that sensed but unexplained aura often experienced within the forest. Designing through making, she works intuitively with natural materials gathered from specific places, and by exploring hollow forms, creates objects which represents a connection to place which is realised through the importance of touch.

Shelter

Shelter explores the link between the wild Highland landscape and how we create shelter within it. How we work with and against the elements to contain and protect are presented in the rich narrative around the composition of objects both natural and man-made.

I made a series of research trips to gather source material and develop ideas, visiting bothies, barns and ancient broch structures; I collected the following from each trip:

A paint brush, Kirkton barn; A hazel stick, St Donnans church; A plastic spoon, Dorusduain bothy; A stone, Dun Telve broch; A larch twig, Suardalan bothy

This Collective has opened up the possibility of expanding my current jewellery practice to include larger functional and sculptural objects. This should lead to the growth of my business and allow me to expand my work into other markets/sectors such as interiors and collectors of contemporary sculpture.

After my research period, I attended a silver raising course with renowned silversmith Ndidi Ekubia at Cromarty Arts Trust. I am currently researching new technologies and new ways in making with Glasgow based silversmith Karen Westland and Vanilla Ink, and have studied textured printing techniques at the Highland Print Studio in Inverness. These courses

and collaborations have enabled me to realise the possibilities of my new ideas.

As there is no definitive end to my project, I intend to further my research into large scale press forming and spinning metal to create large hollow forms and vessels and to discover practical and sustainable methods and solutions to small-scale production. I wish to continue to develop the project and expect a new jewellery collection to emerge in response to my research. I also plan to learn more about working with wood on a sculptural level to incorporate into my pieces.

The outcomes so far have been more experimental and 'visual art' based than I expected. Going forward I am happy to let this continue and am expecting tangible products to arise from this project.

As I continue to develop techniques and ways of producing functional pieces, such as tableware, I expect this work to enter the interiors market and luxury end of the contemporary craft sector.

DING

Pop-ups

Following the delivery of the DING Studios and DING Innovation Collective, the opportunity was taken to further share the developed activities and learnings to capture the achievements, experiences and challenges with pre-existing creative projects or organisations. These took a particular focus on the digital arts, as an under developed area of creative industries explored through DING up to this point. As such, the Pop-Ups were seen as opportunities to provide case studies and contacts from such organisations that could be disseminated and connected with interested stakeholders from wider Highlands & Islands contexts.

NEoN

North East of North, Dundee September 2018

NEoN (North East of North) is a digital arts festival based in Dundee that has organised exhibitions, workshops, talks, conferences, live performances and public discussions and established itself as a platform to showcase national and international digital art forms.

They were identified as a highly innovative organisation with aims to advance the understanding and accessibility of digital and technology driven art forms and to encourage high quality within the production of this medium. Our aim was to connect projects and practitioners in the Highlands & Islands with such capabilities and interests.

Members of NEoN's core team were taken through mapping activities using the Model, such as network mapping, knowledge mapping and trajectory mapping, from which we highlight three important insights:

NEoN's development to obtaining regular funding, while enabling long-term planning, had also led to challenges with effectively responding to new bureaucratic and operational demands that they felt a need to be trained in.

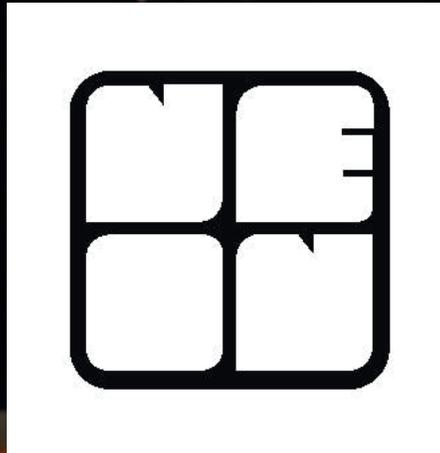
NEoN expressed a very strong identity in representing values of diversity, inclusivity, quality and collaboration in the digital arts in Dundee. However, they saw a real need to develop their methods of capturing such values, both internally on how to deliver on them in practice, but also as part of reporting and influencing their funders.

In terms of gaining traction with key audiences, they identified under-developed relationships with other existing creative organisations and would seek more formal relationships to ensure mutual benefits, rather than be seen in competition with each other.



“We really want to build a voice for digital arts that crosses all audiences... to help the widest constituency understand the importance of creative industries.”

~ NEoN DING Pop-Up Participant



DING Pop-ups - NEoN

1. Credit: Stanza and NEoN - The Nemesis Machine is a large installation (adapted to each place where it is displayed) that is a miniature city. The artwork represents the complexities of the real time city as a shifting morphing and complex system. It was displayed at Centrespace, Dundee Contemporary Arts between Nov 10-26, 2016.

Tower Digital Arts Centre

Scottish Submarine Centre, Helensburgh December 2018

The Tower Digital Arts Centre brings technology and the arts together in the very centre of Helensburgh for the benefits of the whole community. The Scottish Submarine Centre is based alongside The Tower and uses advanced video technologies with the longest single video screen in the UK (50 meters), set around a single artefact X-51 (a 1955 x class submarine), which is used to explain the history of the Royal Navy Submarine Service.

The Tower is an organisational member of CHArts - Culture, Heritage and Arts Assembly - which is a network of creative people and organisations who live and work in Argyll and the Isles. Through discussions with CHArts, and following the DING Pop-Up with NEoN, an opportunity was seen to invite representatives from NEoN to an event hosted at The Tower to share knowledge on engaging wider audiences, involving communities and diversifying programming through collaboration and use of digital technologies.

The DING Pop-Up was delivered as a webinar (currently available on CHArts facebook page) of presentations and roundtable discussion from which we highlight three important insights:

NEoN shared their recent development of an Annual Program, beyond the seven day festival, to share what they can offer with wider audiences. This included providing digital elements to others' events, including many international examples, in order to also then reach their audiences.

The Sub Centre recognised how attracting high quality performers to the region for a period of two weeks, rather than two days just for them, could mean sharing costs and benefits with a whole community in a more viable way.

A strong reflection was for more constructive ways to also share mistakes in collaboration in a professional way. Everybody likes to share their successes, but by framing all collaborations as creative learning, it was argued that collaborators were more likely to value professional creatives more.



“When your organisation is so focused on survival, it’s so rare, yet so vital, to find opportunities like this one to collide with other cultural organisations you share interests with.”

~ Tower DING Pop-Up Participant



1. Credit: DING - DING Pop-up at the Scottish Submarine Centre at The Tower Digital Arts Centre.

“Having the methodology to get together has been really important... it has influenced my thinking and will be used by others. When people are sitting round the table, it’s kind of gamifying a meeting and makes it really interesting for people.”

~ Shetland Arts Head of Creative Opportunities, DING Collaborator

PRACTICE

1. Credit: All RoundDING images, Jonathon Butler, photographer/videographer in Shetland

RoundDING

We invited partners, participants and additional stakeholders to join a Project Showcase on October 30th 2018 at Mareel, Lerwick, presenting and debating the activities and outcomes delivered through Design Innovation for New Growth.

The RoundDING Showcase brought together two of our project partners in Craft (Pamela Conacher, HIE Crafts Advisor) and Shetland (Bryan Peterson, Shetland Arts), expertise from The Glasgow School of Art (Fiona Jardine, Design History Lecturer), three of our DING Innovation Collective (Amy Gear, Carol Dunbar and Maya Darrell-Hewins), and representatives from Creative Scotland (Clive Gillman, Creative Industries Director) and Applied Arts Scotland (Carol Sinclair, Advisor) with the DING team to review DING as a project: the activities it delivered, the insights it produced, the value it created, and future directions.

In a morning session, the project was presented through a slideshow presentation, accounts shared from partners and participants, as well as posters and an exhibition of the DING Innovation Collective progress captured through the Model. This allowed discussions, reflections and questions to be raised about each stage of the DING project to better understand the

value it provided, as well as gain specific feedback and acknowledge thought leadership, influences and opportunities.

In an afternoon session, the participants were taken through a mapping activity, using the DING Model as a framework, to consolidate and build on the morning session discussions. This included mapping *what DING did*, to capture the richness of the DING project; *what DING produced*, to offer key examples of growth in each section of the Model; and *what DING meant*, to reflect on key opportunities and challenges that emerged.

Overleaf we summarise the discussed reflections on the DING project, such as key benefits, opportunities and challenges identified, as mapped within each growth section of the DING Model, which we expect to inform our aims in future funding bids, projects and ongoing dissemination activities.



“I would like to see academic partnerships bolstered in this way with more critical elements and learning on both sides. We’ve got lots of academic interest coming to Orkney, so I’m really interested in how academics can make a lasting contribution... that takes time to develop the trust and engrain development and models.”

~ Orkney Island Council Arts Officer, DING Collaborator

NETWORK GROWTH

Participants acknowledged and saw a vital role to play for **superconnectors** - people and organisations both leading in their discipline and inclusive in their approach - within their regions or networks, and that DING offered an ideal platform to enhance their influence. It was noted how this should include using and connecting local assets to better make things happen in such initiatives, while designing responsive funding built on a trajectory of previous work.

The participants also acknowledged the challenge of how to judge the **readiness** of individuals or projects, how to off-set the **short-termism** implicit in projects such as DING, and how to formalise more **responsibilities** across the stakeholders such a project brings together. It was recognised that the DING team at GSA played an important role in coordinating strong connections and that this mediating role would be difficult to replicate.

KNOWLEDGE GROWTH

Across the DING Studios, it was recognised that a **diverse and young** range of practitioners were being reached. This was felt to offer important insights for the partners on the concerns and ambitions of young creatives, but also

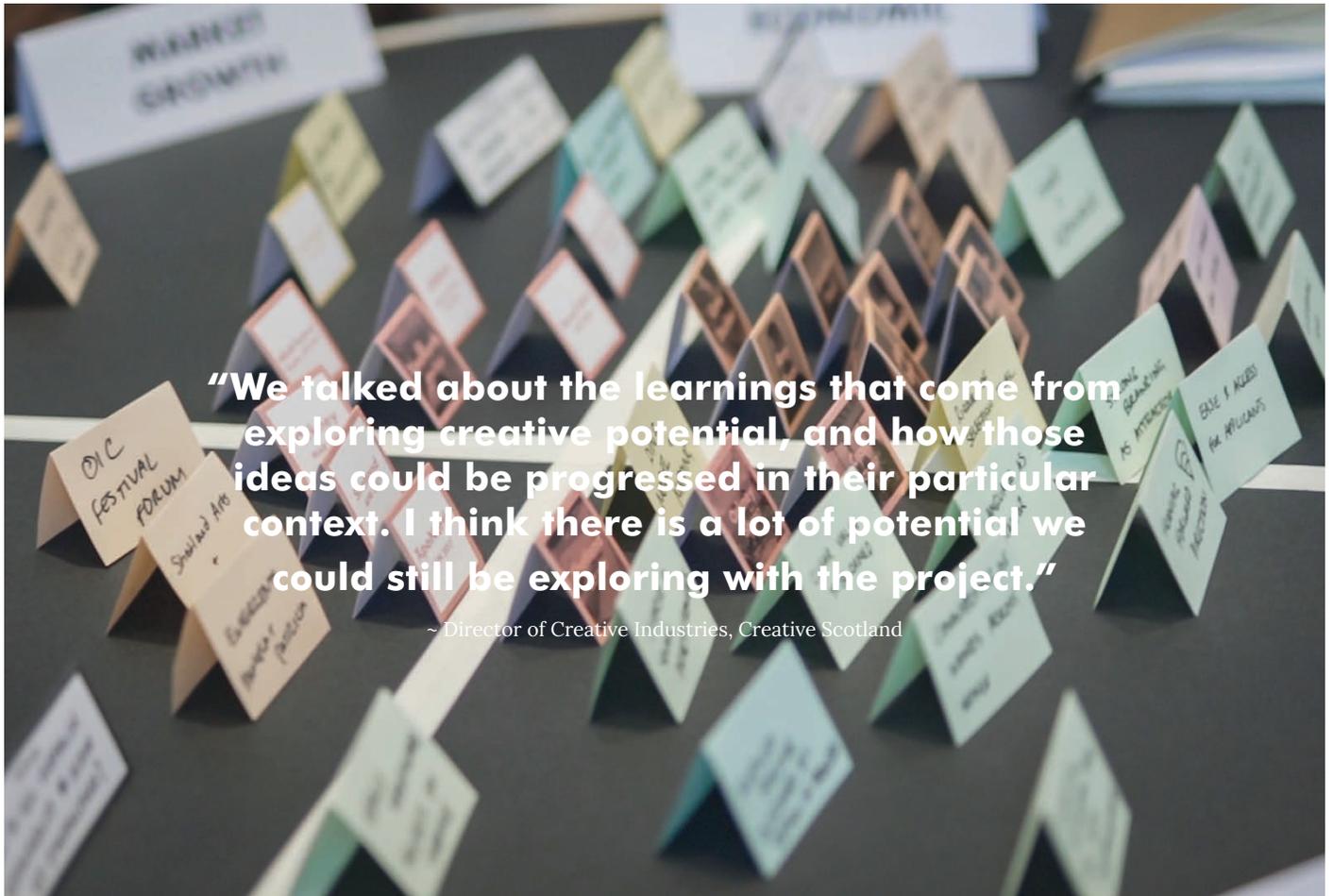
revealed how all practitioners were on a constant learning trajectory.

The presentation of the Studios were commented as attracting clear value to be gained through **strong branding** and accessible language. As such, many participants reflected the Model and some of the activities would work well as a potential planning tool for arts organisations to amplify positive outcomes by reflecting on the design of their own processes.

A particular strength in the approaches taken were noted in the **framing of forward direction** (such as in Trajectory Mapping), as opposed to dwelling on current problems and drawing on the diversity of experience across the practitioners and organisations brought together.

VALUE GROWTH

The Collective representatives commented on how engaging the process felt as **simple and accessible** as any they had experienced before. This was noted as particularly valuable as time spent developing new opportunities could often surpass benefits gained. As such, the wider DING process was commented as demonstrably listening and acting on such concerns, such as providing time and how the Collective and language was formulated. In one case, the work



“We talked about the learnings that come from exploring creative potential, and how those ideas could be progressed in their particular context. I think there is a lot of potential we could still be exploring with the project.”

~ Director of Creative Industries, Creative Scotland

they were able to produce led to help financing a new studio, directly enhancing their own capacity going forward.

The opportunities discussed around such insights were whether DING’s approach could **stimulate a movement** to support creatives in more resource-efficient and accessible ways, while sharing and learning the **different types of value** or progress they could create. In turn, this reflected the challenge of how DING’s learning could help reform wider arts funding. This particularly reflected on the challenge of how DING **absorbed risk** through an academic research programme aiming to learn about creative value and innovation.

MARKET GROWTH

Fundamental to what participants and partners in the DING project gained was a way to reach new audiences in new ways, whether through funded projects or workshops. On the Model, it was acknowledged as helping both individuals and organisations set tasks against the needs of their audiences. Indeed, this drew an emphasis for both individuals and organisations to **consider multiple audiences** for creative projects and innovation and not to underestimate the interest that their work could gather.

Discussion also focused on how a project

such as DING might be funded again. This included seeking in kind contributions from further organisations on the back of the evidence of value gathered. An opportunity was seen in **exploring alternative sponsorship**, where themes could bring together different stakeholders (such as local businesses) to support different stages that they could benefit from. Together participants and partners reflected on how they might help disseminate DING’s value to ensure such opportunities could be taken.

Such strategies were reflected as possibly targeting organisations who have **long-standing relationships** with their communities and networks, and linking in with existing match-funding initiatives. Finally, it was also suggested that such a process and Model, framing fractal growth, could be of value across **multiple contexts** of collaboration and innovation, and not just the creative economy.

Discussion

While this report has many insights to be found in each section of the report, we finish by offering an overview of the key learnings of this work in relation to the activities delivered and considerations for future work aiming to support and evaluate the creative economy in the Highlands & Islands.

The DING Studios revealed key visions for supporting creative growth. In Shetland, participants as creative learners debated the need to use local assets to connect across the islands, how creatives are looking to innovate beyond local traditions, and how being in Shetland enhances their story while also creating barriers to key markets and growth opportunities. In Orkney, participants as festival organisers explored Orkney as a unique destination to promote new festivals, how to enhance the relationship between the public sector and festivals, how to attract more young people to get involved in festivals, and how digital platforms could grow remote audiences. In Craft, participants as craft makers presented trajectories in how to know and reach their ideal clients, how to change the perceptions of craft from a 'lifestyle' label, and how to enhance the relationship of makers with the 'places' they associate with.

The DING Innovation Collective built on these insights by connecting and supporting a creative community of practice to pursue innovative projects. This brought together practitioners demonstrating creative excellence, while allowing us to develop evidence and approaches to continue to support innovation in the Highlands & Islands creative economy going forward.

Using the four areas of growth expressed in the DING Model, we were able to frame how the DING Collective provided new qualitative forms of growth which were characterised as 'fractal' during the RoundDING discussions. This enabled us to capture the journeys of growth creative practitioners experience and the wider forms of value they create.

Finally, DING Pop-Up Studios brought some of these emerging approaches and insights to existing projects focused on digital arts to discuss more bespoke opportunities and challenges. These included recognising the challenges that come with growth for

innovative creative projects, how these are amplified in Highlands & Islands contexts, as well as offering approaches and strategies that make best use of existing assets to overcome such challenges.

Increasing interest in the creative economy has been accompanied by constant demands on the sector for generating innovation and growth. This is why being able to represent the interests, experiences and practices of creative practitioners in regions such as the Highlands & Islands, where common notions of growth and innovation simply do not apply, are so important.

Here we summarise key learnings drawn from DING's activities pertinent to such questions.

Empowering individuals and encouraging interdependence

In carrying out DING, a critical project aspiration (responding to issues articulated by the gatekeepers and partners around creative work in non-urban geographies) was building capabilities at an individual level, but also connecting them to more collective models of operation. Within DING's process careful attention on managing the responsibilities and accessibility to such opportunities were critical, such as through our close collaboration with our three key stakeholders.

Capitalising on resourcefulness

Inherently, creative practitioners are skilled at working within constraints and this provided a basis in DING for looking for repeatable mechanisms and processes for using, accessing and sharing resources more effectively and innovatively to support sustainability and growth, where appropriate. This contrasts with the dominant creative economy policy focus on scaling up and growth as the primary

approach to supporting such industries.

Absorbing risk for open innovation

The early stages of the project identified a paucity of time and resource amongst creative practitioners for innovation exacerbated by some of the place-based challenges of their non-urban locations. This prompted the development of a cohort as an Innovation Collective that reportedly enhanced their ability to deliver quality and meaningful development to their creative practice. Lowering risk mitigation, while encouraging quality, in this process was seen to compliment and cultivate such development.

Stimulating opportunities for collective exchange

In connecting stakeholders and creative practitioners in and across different locations, it was possible for them to acknowledge commonalities in the challenges they faced. This in turn kindled a strong sense of the value of bringing peers together, promoted an entrepreneurial energy on what was possible, and a sense of belonging according to those who participated.

Reframing growth as a fractal process

At the outset the project team acknowledged the tension between the support and funding focus on growth, scalability and expansion and the lived experience of most creative practitioners in the region. In beginning to capture and map the journeys of growth and development of creative practitioners in the H&I, DING was able to capture some of the wider forms of value they created.



“The real value of the [collective] was the elbow room. DING allowed me to play in terms of material exploration - this is a tangible leap forward in terms of my practice, whilst keeping Shetland as my base.”

~ DING participant at the RoundDING

Conclusion

The aim of DING was to use existing creative networks in the Highlands & Islands as a vehicle to connect, collaborate and build capacity in the region, and exploit the opportunities for design-led growth and innovation, by applying the strategic design methods and approaches developed and tested in Design in Action.

DING identified four key objectives to deliver this follow-on funding project:

1. To translate learning on Design Innovation to the demands and needs of the creative industries in the H&I.
2. To apply expertise to successfully establish new collaborations between academics, businesses and practitioners in the region.
3. To deliver bespoke design-led knowledge exchange (KE) supporting entrepreneurial activity and working models of creative collaboration.
4. To demonstrate the value of design-led collaboration as a strategy for business growth and innovation in the region.

DING delivered on all these fronts, including learning that is argued to go beyond what the project had originally set out to achieve.

In delivering on these objectives, the Design Innovation tools and format informed by the DING Model, was co-developed and co-delivered with stakeholders throughout the region. The approach allowed the team, partners and participants to not only frame growth for creative networks, knowledge, values and markets, but provide it in a consistent way that allowed the sharing of reflections, developments and ideas for creative growth across different activities and geographies. In this way DING was able to be responsive to the

complex and heterogeneous demands and needs for growth in the creative economy of the Highlands & Islands.

From our partners' perspective, they all expressed it as a stimulating experience on a professional level, learning from other partners and the DING team themselves. The challenge of maintaining the momentum of such a project was acknowledged, however, they saw potential legacy in its repeatable methods, as well as the achievements of the DING Collective.

The Collective expressed the value of developing the network of people they worked with and accessing their experience and knowledge, both with each other as a cohort and outwith their arts communities and regional contexts. It was commented that the project seemed to listen to their needs and offered a format that acknowledged their experiences of *fractal growth* - growth and development that considers all directions - as being a valid and valuable outcome of creative innovation.

Representatives from Creative Scotland and Applied Arts Scotland expressed their interest in how DING was offering a structure for individuals to gain opportunities to see their potential as part of a community, in relation to wider contexts. As such, they encouraged more conversations with wider support organisations and policymakers to develop these insights further.

IMPACT

The team pro-actively engaged with existing creative networks and gatekeepers in the region prior to embarking on the project activities and co-developed the project with key partners, which was important in ensuring sustainable impact. The project aimed to mitigate and offset issues of precarious creative work by offering opportunities for a supportive, safe context to build capacity in design-led techniques.

The assembling of the Innovation Collective - virtually linked but with opportunities to meet face-to-face - helped offset the risks for creative practitioners of participation and taking time out from day-to-day to innovate. In the longer term it is hoped that this will become a sustainable network, linking practitioners to new business and support opportunities and potential cross-sub-sector, inter-regional collaborations.

The learning generated from the project was shared directly with creative economy stakeholders and policymakers in the region throughout the project, as well as in the more reflective and discursive events. Building on the relationships and knowledge of this project, the DING team are planning further research and engagement opportunities for developing more progressive and sustainable models for support, innovation and sustainability within non-urban creative economies.

If you have any questions about any aspect of DING, its outcomes, or to learn more about the approaches taken, please feel free to contact any member of the DING Team:

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