



Sustainable
Enterprise
London
Festival

Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Adrian De La Court & Siân Prime
Sustainable Enterprise London
Festival (SELF)

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Image



The poster features a large green 'SE' logo on the left. To its right, the text 'Sustainable Enterprise London Festival' is displayed in a clean, sans-serif font. Below the logo, there are three columns of text: the dates '13 - 31 July 2020', a description of the event as a series of live talks and art events on sustainability, and the curators' names. At the bottom, logos for ICCE and Goldsmiths are shown, along with the hashtag #SELondonFestival.

SE Sustainable Enterprise London Festival

For more information, visit sites.gold.ac.uk/iccecommunication

13 - 31 July 2020

A series of invigorating live online talks, online art events and discussions on sustainability in enterprise, wellbeing and resilience. Inspired by all we are dealing with in 2020.

Curated by Adrian De La Court and Siân Prime from Goldsmiths' Institute for Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship (ICCE).

ICCE Institute for Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship Goldsmiths #SELondonFestival

Adrian de La Court, Siân Prime
Sustainable Enterprise London Festival
Institute for Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship
Goldsmiths, University of London

SELF - Overview

Sustainable Enterprise London Festival (*SELF*) was a cross-disciplinary investigation built on existing research by Adrian De La Court and Siân Prime. The outcomes were an online three week Festival, a short film made available on gold.ac.uk with foundations created for this to become an annual event and a new tool for working with individuals and enterprise.

SELF was designed, developed and curated to understand how to build and support the capacity of the creative, social and cultural sectors to withstand the impact of a global pandemic and likely economic downturn. It built on Adrian De La Court and Siân Prime's expertise and existing research, participatory methods, workshops and other enquiries into sustainability and resilience in cultural entrepreneurship. It interrogated issues of equity and inclusion as well wellbeing and financial sustainability.

Using a participatory design research approach, *SELF* consisted of workshops, talks, structured conversations and creative offers. The intention was to create a space for people to come together and be open about the difficulties, honesty and potential that is there. In so doing the project engaged participants from Lewisham, across the UK and East Africa as well as other regions and cities. We were able to reflect together through the creative lenses provided and input equally into the re-creation of a new tool. The skill of improvisation became consistently referenced. The final tool is inspired by Taleb, Eno as well as Cage and Cunningham. Bringing artistic improvisation to notions of enterprise.

SELF was online from 13 July 2020 – 31 July 2020, the programme included 39 creative and cultural sector presenters and the final documentation of the project is here.

SELF used a participatory design research approach to the development of a new framework for “antifragility” for cultural entrepreneurs and a sustainable enterprise ecosystem.

Instead of praising people for being 'resilient', change the systems that are making them vulnerable.

Muna Abdi



Adrian de La Court, Sian Prime
Sustainable Enterprise London Festival
Institute for Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship
Goldsmiths, University of London

Introduction

In June 2020 Adrian De La Court and Siân Prime, of The Institute for Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship reviewed their practice and the outputs from previous research within the new context of a global pandemic and economic downturn. *SELF* was an opportunity to test and collaboratively understand ways of ensuring creative, cultural and social enterprises found ways to re-build their value-chain and repurpose their offers or create new products and services to be able to weather this period in history. People were invited to come together to design, develop and curate a festival of Sustainability, Resilience and Wellbeing in Enterprise, in response to the UK national lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

This festival, a series of talks, workshops, and creative events, was developed to support and inspire enterprises and freelancers primarily based in South East London, but extended beyond this, engaging international participants and audiences.

The intention of this event was to create a space for people to come together and be open about the difficulties that these times have created for their creative and enterprise offers. Also to inspire creative solutions moving forward and to explore approaches to develop resilience (anti fragility) and sustainability in the sector. Furthermore to interrogate the possibilities of reinventing our approaches to delivery in a more sustainable and environmentally conscious way. Through this a spirit of reciprocity was developed that allowed the collaborative creation of a new tool.


Top image, Yallah Hub, Communita
Bottom image, Amina Malic & Reem Al-Awahdi. Yalla Hub

Context

The Creative Industries since their were grouped together and seen as a formal sector by the UK's Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS 1998) with a mapping document and an acknowledgement of the economic potential of the sector. Since then the sector has been viewed as a vehicle for economic and social change (DCMS 2015). While the economic value of a product is dependent upon its 'cultural value', this cultural value embodies a whole set of notions – informal, intuitive and often emotional – that are difficult to define or codify (Banks et al., 2000).

Creative Industry businesses have been noted for being more productive than businesses in other sectors, and yet ninety-four per cent of the companies in the sector are micro-businesses (Garcia, Klinger and Stathoulopoulos, 2018), this leads to precarity. Much of the sector relies on income from performances, merchandise sold at live events, value chains that stretch internationally.

The global pandemic abruptly disrupted the business models, and while there was an external rhetoric of "battle" and "resilience" from funders and the government, the Sustainable Enterprise London Festival (SELF) set out to see how cultural entrepreneurs were responding to the crisis, and ways they identified to survive and evolve. SELF was designed to create a space to understand the impact on some of the sector, develop frameworks of support and vocabulary that resonated with cultural entrepreneurs.



*George Gachara in conversation, with Sian Prime
and John Newbegin
Sustainable Enterprise London Festival
Institute for Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship
Goldsmiths, University of London*

Context

The festival was designed to include a diverse perspective on a range of subjects pertinent to developing new strategies and perspectives for sustaining momentum through these difficult and shifting times. It was initiated after the first lockdown was announced and was a way of sharing insights, optimism and a place to think critically about rebuilding sectors after the impact of Covid-19.

Themes included; - well being, resilience and antifragility, communities, engagement, creative processes reinvention and environmental operation.

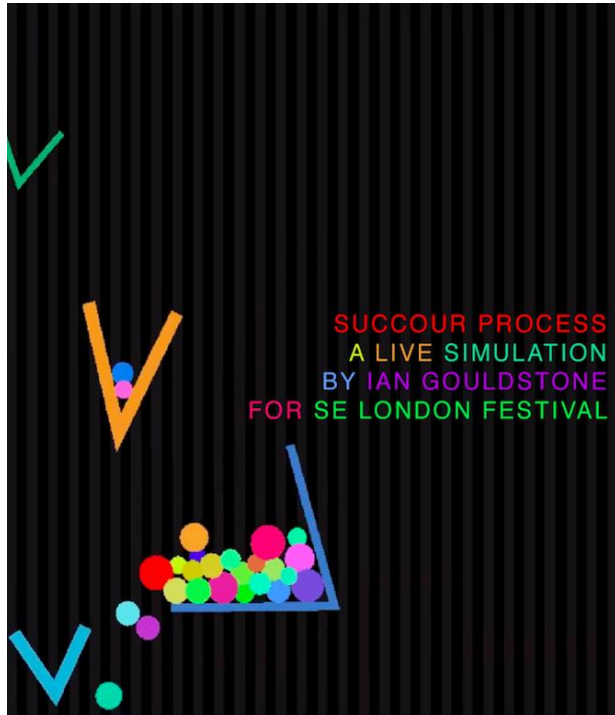
Speakers included Hyundai Mercury Prize nominee Anna Meredith, Mercury prize nominee Sam Lee, Senior Head of the UK Portfolio at National Lottery Community Fund Cassie Robinson, Olivier winner Drew McOnie and award winning novelist and playwright Stella Duffy.

All sessions were held online, and this afforded an international audience with participants from South Africa, the Americas, Asia, mainland Europe and the UK, and speakers from across the UK and East Africa. Recordings were made available to audiences, and people who had not been able to attend for 4 weeks after the festival. It was agreed with participants that we would not keep the full recordings. This gave participants and speakers a freedom to be honest about “the moment”.



*Adrian de La Court, Sian Prime
Sustainable Enterprise London Festival
Institute for Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship
Goldsmiths, University of London*

*Top, Alistair Hall: We Made This
Bottom We Made This*



Adrian de La Court, Sian Prime
Sustainable Enterprise London Festival
Institute for Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship
Goldsmiths, University of London



Research Questions

1 How relevant and useful were existing tools to support self-employed and small enterprises in the creative and cultural sectors during a global pandemic.

2 To what extent would the sharing of online creative sessions, workshops and inspirational talks from industry practitioners and cultural leaders work to support these enterprises through difficult social and financial times.

3 Could an online festival inspire and support sustainability and interrogate more environmentally and wellbeing conscious approaches to delivery. Could we explore and address long term sustainability and antifragility for the creative and cultural sector collaboratively.

4 Could we collaboratively uncover new and sustainable re-inventions of business models for a changing economic environment in a post pandemic world.

left, Ian W Gouldstone: Succour Process
right, Carly Atridge: The Loss Project



*Adrian de La Court, Sian Prime
Sustainable Enterprise London Festival
Institute for Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship
Goldsmiths, University of London*

*Top left, Drew McOnie
Top right, Drew McOnie: McOnie Company
Bottom left Danny Braverman
Bottom middle, katy Pickles: PILLARS
Bottom right, Ashley Evenson: Oval Productions*

Methods

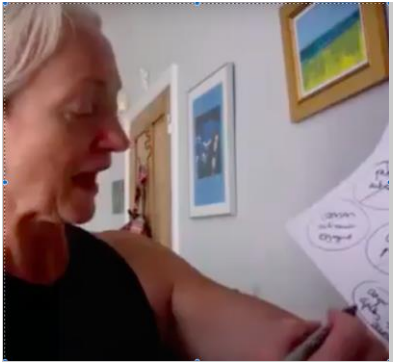
Collaborative Connection and Individual Reflection. We encouraged both instinctive and reflective responses. Participants were introduced to the notion of Soft Fascination and Green Psychology so creative tasks were set as well as created by Professor Vybar Cregan-Reid and artist Ian W Gouldstone.

Audiences and participants were encouraged to interact with the session by posting comments and thoughts to the content in the online chat box throughout the festival. Due to the sometimes personal focus of the discussions - real life cause and effect on enterprises and individuals. Confidentiality was respected, and none of these comments and questions were documented.

Open forums and feedback were constantly encouraged. A selection of which can be found at the end of this document. Creative responses to the sessions were encouraged, with podcasts and blogs being created that gave new insights. A time-based 7 day-24 hour a day digital artwork was created by [Ian W Goldstone](#) for people to interact with, and to stimulate new thinking Five music events were shared.

Communita

- Thinking on our feet - we're always evolving based on the needs of the community
- We remain actively engaged with those around us and are receptive to the ideas the community bring forward to us.



“Antifragility is beyond resilience or robustness. The resilient resists shocks and stays the same; the antifragile gets better.”

- Nassim Nicholas Taleb



Developing the Research

The Sustainable Enterprise London festival was conceived initially as a one day workshop event using toolkits that the researchers had developed from previous research in to sustainable enterprises' needs. It was clear that would be delivered on line and open to participant SME and individuals from the Borough of Lewisham in recognition and support of the economic impact of the Covid-19 lockdown in this borough. (Lewisham is one of the poorest boroughs of London and has been badly impacted by the Covid-19 lockdown). As work on the project began, the value of the involvement of additional external practitioners and creative and cultural industries experts was realised, and work began to contact additional workshop leaders and speakers.

The research project grew and eventually presented 39 practitioners/speakers and 3 creative interventions. These cultural and creative sector leaders were generous of their time and expertise. The festival, conceived initially to target local businesses and students, once promoted over social media (Twitter, Instagram, ICCE blog) developed an audience beyond both the student population and local enterprise in South East London, to engage nationally and internationally.

Adrian de La Court, Sian Prime
Sustainable Enterprise London Festival
Institute for Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship
Goldsmiths, University of London

Top left, Yalla Hub: Communita
Top right, Stella Duffy
Bottom left Stella Duffy
Bottom middle, Yalla Hub,
Communita
Bottom right, Sam lee



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Impact

SELF wanted to look in to the real meaning and use of terms such as “sustainable enterprise” and “resilience” at a time when ways of working in creative sector were being impacted by Covid-19. It also aimed to influence and inspire a community of creatives and enterprises initially based in Lewisham South East London. The impact and influence extended beyond this community nationally and internationally, and has created content and research that will continue to be developed and grow into materials and toolkits that individuals and enterprises can engage with to support and bolster their offer.

The festival presented events for three weeks from 13th - 31st January to a live online audience nationally and internationally. The festival included 34 live conversations, workshops and presentations and three online exhibitions or gigs that could be viewed for 3 weeks.

Updates were consistently posted on our social media sites:

- Instagram - 74 followers
- Twitter - 1,607 followers
- Blog - 2,232 views

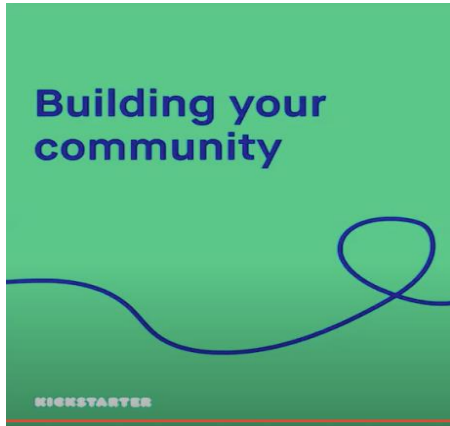
De La Court and Prime have submitted a book proposal to Routledge following a discussion with the publishing house.

An edited version of the festival is available to view [here](#)

An edited transcript of selected sessions is being compiled as an easily accessible guide in sustainability, antifragility, wellbeing and reinterpretation for enterprises and individuals and this will accompany the new SELF TOOL.

Top, George Gachara

Bottom , Tessa Bahana & Rasheed Nalumosu



Research Insights

New insights emerged constantly through the festival. The Sustainable Enterprise London Festival was a three week festival of speakers, workshops and access to toolkits that were developed by De La Court and Prime to encourage new approaches to reimagine sustainable business models in the creative, cultural and social enterprise sectors. Inspired and initiated after the first lockdown was announced, the festival was developed as a way of sharing insights, creative interpretations, optimism and a place to think critically about rebuilding these sectors after the economic and emotional impact of Covid-19.

Following the three-week festival, a short film with insights into new sustainable enterprise was produced as well as a toolkit with practical advice which will be distributed via the Goldsmiths website. The publisher Routledge has also been in conversation to publish a new book on sustainable values driven enterprise building on the insights that the festival has given, indicating the far-reaching impression *SE London Festival* made.

It became apparent that improvisation was key to creative antifragility and sustainability, leading De La Court and Prime to develop the tool as a reflexive instrument. As performers themselves, they reflected on the improvisational practice of Eno, Cage and Cunningham. The *SELF TOOL: framework for "antifragility" for cultural entrepreneurs and a sustainable business ecosystem* was created in this way by them.

Engagement, discourse and conversations, lived experiences, environmental factors, ambition and hopes for a new more sustainable future, shared values, determination, passion, drive to succeed, create, re-imagine, connecting with a new community, retaining and nurturing bonds to existing communities, realising true value/values, individual contributions, group/community contributions, new connections and partnerships



Insights

Quotes

I just wanted to say thank you so much for organising the festival over the last three weeks. I got so much out of it - all the speakers I heard were absolutely brilliant and their insights have really helped move my thinking along. It must have been no mean feat to organise so I just wanted to make sure you know how valued it was.

'Hello - just wanted to share my appreciation of your amazing efforts. I have been to quite a few of the sessions now - I've laughed, cried and tripped out on the bundles of ideas and enthusiasm and endless creativity and empathy - it's been wonderful so thank you for getting such an amazing array of people together! - thanks again.'

'It's wonderful to hear an expert with wide curiosity :)'

Resilience to me is being able or willing to put yourself in conditions that may make you uncomfortable because you have the resource to rebuild after.'

'This was so helpful, thank you for being so candid Catherine [Grieg – Make Good]. Great talk :)'

We have begun a conversation, and will continue to develop this discourse to uncover new and sustainable re-inventions of business models for a changing economic environment in a post pandemic world. Some of the most important features that were highlighted as an outcome of the festival is the value and impact of collaboration, dialogues and generosity to share processes.

The language that resonated was one that reflected “ecology” and “anti-fragility”. With continued collaboration of users and of future users, the tools developed are being strengthened and refined and become more likely to be adopted into a broader range of cultural and enterprise contexts.

SELF helped to highlight the need for new approaches and new ways of thinking to work with existing tools and methodologies in supporting self-employed and small enterprises in the creative and cultural sectors of South East London, impacted by a global pandemic.

The sharing of online creative sessions, workshops and inspirational talks from industry practitioners and cultural leaders, worked to support and inspire these enterprises through difficult social and financial times. Also to highlight the potential for new partnerships and collaborations. Practitioners sharing their ways of working inspired cross discipline conversation and we believe inspired the need to find new ways of problem solving to support and develop enterprise

Feedback from participants of SELF has shown how well the content and thinking has been received. The festival has inspired and supported sustainability and an awareness of the need to consider antifragility. We encouraged participant to interrogate more environmentally and wellbeing conscious approaches to the work they will produce moving forward.

Outcomes and Future Developments

The foundations have been set for this to become an annual event, with work on the 2021 edition of *SELF* already in the planning stage. The festival is being positioned to receive funding to extend its reach, and is already endowed with the generosity of its previous participants in terms of offers to return to present at the next festival and to promote the event amongst their networks.

This research has highlighted the precarity of creatives and creative and cultural enterprises as a result of the current pandemic, particularly in SE London. Moving forward the intention is to further investigate and develop systems to provide support for enterprise in the community and develop access and participation to tools, knowledge and networks that will support individuals and organisations to rebuild and re-invent.

Work has begun to deliver a new series of sessions to enterprises in the SE Creative Enterprise Zone as part of a research partnership from ICCE. The research is purposed to investigate the lack of provision, support and opportunity within the area and develop content and networks that are able to optimise potential for these enterprises moving forward. We intend explore and address long term sustainability and antifragility for the creative and cultural sector collaboratively.

The publisher Routledge has also been in conversation regarding the development of a new book on sustainable values driven enterprise building on the insights that the festival has given, indicating the far-reaching impression *SE London Festival* made.

The *SELF Tool* will be made available by a Creative Commons licence and will be revisited collaboratively to ensure it remains relevant. De La Court and Prime will monitor its use and impact.

Responses:

- Resilience to me is being able or willing to put yourself in conditions that may make you uncomfortable because you have the resource to rebuild after.'
- “ have been to quite a few of the sessions now - I've laughed, cried and tripped out on the bundles of ideas and enthusiasm and endless creativity and empathy.”
- The “insights have really helped move my thinking along. It must have been no mean feat to organise so I just wanted to make sure you know how valued it was.”

Contributors

- Bayo Adalaja
- Ashley Evenson
- Hannah Hull
- Danny Braverman
- Vybarr Cregan-Reid
- Sam Lee
- Drew McOnie
- Katy Pickles
- Stella Duffy
- Heather Corcoran
- William Bryant Miles
- Cassie Robinson
- Anna Meredith
- Rasheeda Nalumoso
- George Gachara
- Catherine Greig
- Eleanor Ford
- Mark Elliott
- Reem Al-Awadhi & Amina Malik
- Jordan Pharoah
- Jacob Hill
- Sydney Levinson
- Alistair Hall
- Becky Grove with Elsa Nuthall
- Susan Aktemel
- Ian W Gouldstone
- The Nest Collective
- Carly Attridge & Steph Turner
- Teesa Bahana
- Ruth Ibegbuna

Image



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Image, caption