

The story so far

## The Emergence Survey, March 2010

Early in 2010 in advance of any of the Emergence conferences and before the project had really got going we were interested in assessing just how involved artists in Wales were already in the whole sustainability agenda. We decided to find out by sending out a survey to as many arts contacts in Wales as possible. At that time, our sense that artists had a real role to play in imagining and shaping the future was more of a gut feeling. Rhodri Thomas, co-creator of Emergence was also convinced that statistics and graphs could not change the world but that artists could. In advance of launching the project it felt important to get a sense of how engaged artists were and what was being done already so we wouldn't replicate existing projects or reinvent any wheels unnecessarily. We also wanted to hear from artists what they needed from Emergence and what type of activity or information would fire them up. The information you get back from a survey is always only a part of the picture. We knew that those who completed our survey might be ones who had strong views either way about these issues. However, this was a beginning and as soon as we began to collect the results we did begin to see some interesting patterns. One of the most important for us was that seemed to be a disparity between how important people thought sustainability was and how they supported engagement and involvement in their *personal lives* but when it came to their professional practice or position at work then these issues did not seem so much of a priority.

Prior to the survey we had spoken to a few people at the Welsh Arts Council and got a sense that sustainability was not yet really on the agenda (this was only in 2010). Sustainability seemed to be something that they arts council knew that they would have to begin to address (especially in the light of the Welsh Assembly's 'One Wales: One Planet' strategy) but it wasn't at the top of the list of priorities at that particular time immediately following a major funding review. We knew that if we were going to be approaching arts council for funding then they would want a sense of how interested and involved their clients were and exactly what was being done already. At this time Julie's Bicycle's had just finished their review of the carbon footprint of bands/festivals and orchestras and they were now set to focus on the impact of touring theatre on the environment. JB were early supporters of Emergence and subsequently became part of a small Emergence advisory group and contributed to the first Emergence conference in Cardiff. This was the first time that Alision Tickell from JB had presented in Wales and it felt like a very significant moment.

Before putting the survey together too, we had lots of anecdotal evidence that the artists who were really leading or getting involved in this whole agenda were perhaps the visual artists. Certainly participation at Tipping Point conferences seemed to confirm these early impressions.

Working on the survey felt a very pivotal stage of the whole project. We were also approaching artists as a whole – not different artforms separately. There seemed to be few gatherings that brought artists as a sector together. From the start we wanted to have conversations across the art-forms and to look at what united us in terms of sustainability, our role and our place in the world.

## Cardiff Conference

**“Are we anywhere near the sort of carbon descent that science demands?” (Paul Allen)**

The first conference was arranged for 28<sup>th</sup> October 2010. We had the results back from our arts survey, support from British Council Wales and had an initial very positive meeting with Arts Council of Wales. It felt the right time to launch Emergence, we had a sense of momentum and felt that any delay would be lose us valuable time. We did not however have any significant funding to speak of. As a consequence this, our first event relied greatly on the goodwill of the contributors and the faith of the organisers! Paul Allen from CAT and Alison Tickell from Julies Bicycle gave their time for free as did John McGrath from National Theatre Wales. James Tyson the then theatre programmer also gave us the use of the venue Chapter Arts Centre gratis. We crossed our fingers that we would have sufficient take up to make the event possible. We did give what funds we had to the contributing artists who received small honoraria and expenses for taking part. We knew that there has been a historical expectation that artists give their time for free and we didn't want to add to that tradition! Paul Emmanuel who had just been awarded Welsh Artist of the year exhibited his 'sheep fleece paintings' and Martin Powell a young poet who had recently made a splash at the Resurgence Festival gave impassioned readings of his work. This set a precedent in that all Emergence gatherings honoured the creative space and the presence and contributions of art.

Our idea for this first event was 'setting the context'. We wanted to look at where we were – build on what was known and what was already developing. Emergence was definitely influenced by the presence of the new strategy 'One Wales: One Planet' and we thought it important to hear from someone at Welsh Government who could give us the details on this potentially ground-breaking policy document- it was after all calling for Wales to use 'it's fare share of resources' as opposed to the three planet's worth of resources we currently use. Huw Charles' presentation became the reference point for the rest of the day and people seemed to want actively to engage even though surprisingly the arts was not mentioned in One Wales: One Planet which did feel like a huge oversight but which also made me think that often we in the arts feel that our impact is perhaps greater than it sometimes is and that the arts has more of a wider reach than is in fact true. For me this was a signal that art does have to engage – to make itself relevant, visible and engaged.

Paul Allen was one of the leading figures behind Centre for Alternative Technology's newly published Zero Carbon Britain – an ambitious and impeccably researched practical report which focuses on 'powering up' renewable energy/sustainable initiatives and powering down wasteful ways of living/exploitative production methods. Paul's presentation was magnificent. There was a real sense of people being enormously affected by the information he was presenting in terms of the scale of climate change and resource depletion. It felt as if this information was truly landing and making a palpable impact on those in the room. The Julie's Bicycle presentation by Alison Tickell came hot on the heels of ZCB giving us tools enabling us to practically address ourselves to this agenda as presenters and makers. Often there is a sense of powerlessness in the face of what can appear to be huge ecological concerns but Alison's expert and practical guidance was articulate, clear and and empowering.

The day was largely a typical conference format but had an informality and energy and for some a surprising honesty and openness in the conversations that began to unfold as the day went on.

We ended the afternoon with a session based on 'world café' conversations led by Jenny Mackewn where delegates were invited to flow between small groups taking questions and information with them from table to table, cross pollinating the new information gathered. There were some important questions – what inspires us, what sustains us and what is each of us doing in our own practices to further the agenda. This all felt a good place to start. I was encouraged by the amount of people who came, the conversations – their honesty and openness throughout the day. I have often found arts practitioners to not necessarily be the most open and welcoming – often there is a hierarchy and entrenched power inequalities between the funded and the not, presenters and makers, freelancers and companies. I found (and this was reiterated by others I spoke to) that the nature of the interactions was more trusting, vulnerable and open than might typically be the case. We were speaking about something that none of us had the answers to and we were all searching and trying to make sense of the issues in our own way. A good beginning...

### **Presenters**

Facilitators: Fern Smith, Rhodri Thomas & Jenny Mackewn

Guest Artists: Paul Emmanuel & Martin Powell

Presenters: Huw Charles (Welsh Government), John McGrath (National Theatre Wales), Alison Tickell (Julies Bicycle), Paul Allen (Centre for Alternative Technology)

### **Emergence Swansea - Interconnectivity**

The response to the first Emergence conference was so positive that it felt we had a real momentum and energy around the project as we began to organise the next event in Swansea set for January 31<sup>st</sup> 2011. We had applied for funding from the Arts Council Lottery fund in the Autumn and been successful. This meant we could go ahead and organise the Swansea and Carnarvon event with more confidence. We always had a sense of the three one day conferences representing a trilogy where the discussion of sustainability became increasingly deeper and more rounded. The first in Cardiff felt as if we were really getting the conversation started. We had organized an event which focused on infrastructure, carbon emissions, and even introduced the idea that the arts could conceivably have a role in this whole debate of how we get from here to there – from a world which uses three times the current available resources to a 'one planet Wales' or a 'Zero Carbon Britain'. Cardiff was definitely about laying out the stall and defining the 'context' inevitably became the focus of that first gathering. We then wanted to dig beneath the nature of it all- to focus on the values which were the bedrock of all this.

The name Emergence implies something which happens when a system develops or responds to changes in an adaptive and holistic manner. There is a sense that the system is 'networked up', all of the parts are communicating and creating information feedback loops to enable it to learn and to grow. A networked system has 'emergent properties' including an ability to constantly respond and adapt to new conditions. These ideas were central to how we saw Emergence as a project from the very beginning. Emergence was a learning entity and responded to new dynamics and was

dependent on growing new relationships. This sense of an interconnected whole is something which inspired the next event in Swansea. We chose the theme 'interconnectedness' and decided to concentrate on what might underlie a sustainable arts sector, society or planet. It was time to look at the values that drive and inspire us. The values or behavior which are also responsible for species to adapt and respond to change or threat. All of the speakers chosen were asked in some way to respond to this theme. We knew that for some this might be too great a leap to make but felt that without speaking about the 'softer' aspects of sustainability it was just about money saving and calculating emissions. Satish Kumar was invited to speak about Emergence and for many people appears to be a living embodiment of the concept. In many ways Satish and his work at Schumacher College, Resurgence Magazine and his involvement with the Schumacher Institute had been one of the inspirations behind the entire Emergence project. It was wonderful to hear him speak and for I can confidently state that for many he articulates why so many of us are drawn to work in this area. He touches on something very deep-rooted and speaks about interconnection with both a poetic power and laser sharp precision. Other speakers were drawn from the Transition Network ([link](#)), People United, Arts Admin from the UK and Meta Theater in Germany. Alan Dix as artist in residence gave one of the funniest and at times moving examples of 'Pecha Kucha' ([link?](#)) ever seen serving to beautifully subvert the formality of the typical powerpoint format . Transcripts of all these talks are available in the online Emergence document ([link](#)). There is also a chance to see the videos here ([link](#)).

Again the world café model ([link?](#)) was used to create a space for delegates to come together and were invited to pair up and go into the natural world to explore a question of mutual curiosity. I trust that many projects and collaborations were dreamt up from just that one conversation.

Possible quotes to use

'The arts are a part of this formidable way that we can actually imagine the world we want and then literally bring it into being' (Lucy Neal, Transition Towns Network)

'How do you want to work, how do you want to live, how do you see yourselves in the future?' (Axel Tangerding, Meta Theater)

'If you really want to experience emergence you have to just trust, trust in your heart, trust in people, trust in the universe' (Satish Kumar, Resurgence Magazine/Schumacher College)

Players & Presenters

Facilitators: Fern Smith & Rhodri Thomas

World Café facilitator: Jenny Mackewn

Artist in residence: Al Dix

Presenters & session leaders: Tom Andrews, Judith Knight, Satish Kumar, Lucy Neal, Axel Tangerding.

**Carnarvon – Resilience**

‘What art does clearly is engage with our emotions; it connects to the emotions and the spirit and can build images of the future that can both frighten and inspire’ (Jean Boulton)

The third Emergence event in Galeri, Carnarvon followed hot on the heels of the second on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2011. Arranging another event so soon after the conference on ‘interconnectivity’ was in some ways foolhardy as it really stretched our energy and resources but the speedy turnaround also meant that we could really continue to develop the narrative. Our first intention was to focus on activism in this event however that felt too narrow a focus and perhaps to great a conceptual leap after ‘context’ and ‘interconnectivity’. We were convinced the three conferences needed to develop the story organically.

I was personally interested in trying to unpick this sometimes unhelpful word ‘sustainability’ whilst at the same time finding ways to define emergence within a very particular context of casting ourselves forward into the future. It might be argued that in order to kick-start the conversation around the role of the arts in co-creating a sustainable future we should have one conversation in all three places – Cardiff, Swansea and Carnarvon. We should then repeat this conversation in as many different places as possible. This would be one strategy but we chose to each time take the conversation forward – meaning that if one person did come to all three events there would be no repetition of the same old ground. Each conference was a learning process for us and each event influenced the nature, form and content of the next. These three events could in some way be said to illustrate emergent learning. Emergence was not then and is not still an organization – it is a focus, a spotlight, a roof (or umbrella!) under which to collect and converse.

Back to the theme of resilience. As we had organised two events in South Wales and had not provided simultaneous translation (largely due to funds) at either it became crucial to create an event which put both English and Welsh on the same footing. We began to think about bilingualism and in this context of sustainability what it might mean and what opportunities it might offer us to think differently about the subject. In the shadow of the knowledge of species extinction we thought about the loss of language as being yet another example of how our planet is becoming less rich in diversity. The theme of biodiversity seemed to be presenting itself however as we discussed the connections between biodiversity and emergence it struck us that of course it is resilience which a system develops through increased diversity. Our emergent theme appeared to arise out of the first and second event of its own accord. In this way bilingualism had a deep-rooted meaning for us within our project. We looked for speakers both local to North Wales and from farther afield who could speak to this theme and interpret it in their own unique ways.

Although the smallest of the events run so far, for me this was one of the most exciting. The mix of science and art was central to this event, as was the marrying of Welsh and English and the synthesis of utopian dreaming with down to earth projects.

### **Presenters**

Facilitators: Fern Smith & Rhodri Thomas

Guest Artist: Bedwyr Williams

Presenters and session leaders: Jean Boulton (Cranfield Business School), Menna Elfyn (poet), Eluned Haf (Wales Arts International), Eric Maddern (Cae Mabon), Ben Todd (Arcolea Theatre), Einir Young (University of Bangor).

### **Launch of document- September 21<sup>st</sup> 2011, Cardiff**

'Emergence has worked from the ground up...it has been a creative catalyst'. (Louise Wright, British Council Wales)

The original intention after the conferences in Cardiff, Swansea and Carnarvon was to finish with a similar event at the Centre for Alternative Technology in Machynlleth. This was what our funding was originally meant to be supporting. As many organisations were facing an uncertain future in the light of new policies and investment reviews from Welsh Government Cynnal Cymru- Sustain Wales included, the timing was difficult to commit to the intended event. Originally this seemed a blow as the energy behind and interest in the project was becoming more palpable. We decided therefore with the support of our funders to redirect our grant not into another event but into creating a publication. In retrospect this seems like we were trusting in emergent design rather than allowing a prescriptive plan to lead us! The talks at the conference were such a valuable resource it felt an important step in the process to make these as widely available as possible. We had already filmed each of the talks and began to put them online however it seemed essential to collect these extraordinary presentations together in one place. This meant that the whole story of the three conferences as it had in fact unfolded – from context, through interconnectivity to resilience – could be told. I met many people since the beginning of Emergence who voiced the fact that storytellers have a great role to play in the transition to a more sustainable society. Transition Town's project 'Tales to Sustain' and Dark Mountain's work are but two examples of the power of story at this uncertain time. The story of industrial

progress of continual growth and the creation of wealth through increased commodity consumption is just that – a story. This story however has become the dominant paradigm and has shaped the world in which we live and is the reason we find ourselves in our current global predicament. There are other stories and it is high time to hear them.

The power that drives Emergence is the story that it is hearing, collecting and re-telling. The Emergence document became the next piece of work – the next project, a homage to the storyteller. With the help of the original speakers, we began the work of editing the talks into a distilled readable version that retained the power, accessibility and immediacy of the spoken word. This was a more complex undertaking than we had originally thought. We wanted to keep the talks fresh, the use of language personal to each speaker whilst at the same time create a coherent document which would make sense to those not at the live event.

I do believe that hearing the right words at the right moment in our life is a crucial precursor of change. Sometime we hear but do not listen – or is it that we listen and do not hear? The spoken word can move us in a way that the written cannot. Perhaps the vibrations enter our bodies and literally ‘move us’ to act. How to retain this power in the literary form? That was the challenge for us when writing the document and on reading it I think that we did achieve it, at least as far as we were able given limited resources and time.

The publication of the document became another marker in the unfolding story of emergence. We decided to shine a spotlight on it by using it’s launch as another opportunity to gather people together and continue the conversation.

The Wales Millennium Centre offered us their venue in return for the opportunity of sharing with guests how sustainability is being incorporated as a core organising principle into the management and practices of this iconic building. This created a focus for the event and encouraged us to organise a low carbon infrastructure seminar. After the speeches and supportive words of encouragement from John Griffiths (Minister for Environment and Sustainability at the Welsh Government) Louise Wright (British Council Wales) and Nick Capaldi (Chief Exec Arts Council Wales) this is what we got our collective teeth into.

The example of what was happening at WMC (and how it had significantly reduced emissions and running costs) and a presentation from Catherine Langabeer at Julies Bicycle galvanized those present into action. Representatives from some

of the major companies, arts organisations and venues in Wales were present in the room. This was clearly one of those Eureka moments when people begin to see exactly what difference can be made by a small committed group of individuals. The power of information sharing and collective action was at the heart of the discussions. Deborah Keyser from the Welsh venue network Creu Cymru and Lori Frater from BRASS (Centre for Business Relationships, Accountability, Sustainability and Society) were also in the room and were the inspiration behind what was to become one of successful early project outcomes of this first phase of the Emergence project –Emergence Creu Cymru.

### **Presenters**

Facilitators: Fern Smith & Rhodri Thomas

Speakers: Nick Capaldi (Arts Council of Wales), John Griffiths (Welsh Government), Louise Wright (British Council Wales), Mark Taylor (Wales Millennium Centre),

Session leaders: Lori Frater (Cardiff University), Catherine Langabeer (Julie's Bicycle) & Jonathan Poyner (Wales Millennium Centre)

### **A Case for Optimism, Swansea April 2012**

A timely New Year 2012 phone call from Rhodri asking if Volcano would be interested in collaborating again on an Emergence activity became the opportunity to present 'A Case for Optimism' (C4O) in Swansea at Volcano's High Street base. Funds had been set aside by Cynnal Cymru-Sustain Wales to support work which focused on attitude and behaviour change within the arts sector. I had attended a C4O event in 2011 in London and as the team were looking for new platforms on which to present, this felt like a serendipitous opportunity. C4O is a programme of workshops for leaders in the field of arts and culture, to explore responses to the ongoing financial crisis, the end of the oil age and the challenge of climate change. The aim of the workshops is to engage practitioners in a much

deeper conversation about the role of creativity, culture and art in the great transitions of our times.

C4O draws inspiration from the work of eco-psychologist, teacher and activist Joanna Macy. Macy's work (The Work That Re-connects) has been developed and offered over a number of decades in the U.S and internationally. In turn it has inspired many in the field of deep ecology to take the work in different directions. All WTR projects share a recognizable structure which move through the spiral form and a number of distinct but interconnected stages; Gratitude, Honouring our Pain for the World, Seeing with New Eyes and Going Forth.

C4O was developed by Teo Greenstreet, Hilary Jennings and Lucy Neal and has been run a number of times in England and internationally. This was the first time C4O was to come to Wales. Lucy Neal one of the developers of C4O had the year prior given a presentation at Emergence Swansea called 'Sustainable Ability'. I felt that there was a much common ground between Emergence and what Lucy had been exploring since leaving her work as co-founder and director of the highly successful London International Festival of Theatre (LIFT). Early conversations and shared interest led to meetings with and invites from Lucy to a number of creative ecological gatherings. I had also myself recently trained as a facilitator of WTR with Jenny Mackewn and Chris Johnstone. C4O was also an opportunity to see how Macy's work sat within a more professional arts context.

We decided to run two separate C4O's on alternate days and our funding enabled us to make it free for invited participants. From previous experience the C4O team felt it was important to run these events with small groups with an optimum number of about 25 participants. An email invitation went out to as many South and West Wales arts practitioners as possible. Some had attended emergence gatherings previously others had not encountered the project. We made it clear that this was an opportunity for people to explore their own personal roles in the great transition as well as a collective role for the sector.'

Paul Allen , from Centre for Alternative Technology had been giving his ‘Zero Carbon Britain’ presentation at previous C4O’s. Emergence’s existing relationships with Lucy and Paul meant that running this event felt like a natural step and also enabled us to make connections with Teo Greenstreet and Hilary Jennings who were both to input into The Emergence Summit which was planned for later that year.

C4O ran on two separate dates, the first on April 2<sup>nd</sup> was aimed at theatre makers and venues and the second on 3<sup>rd</sup> April, for artists working in other disciplines.

C4O as a structure enables a space for the more heady information on climate change and resource use but also more daringly perhaps creates a framework for people to respond in more personal ways. The event is not about making quick fixes but offers an opportunity to ‘sit with’ often uncomfortable information and to share how this impacts us and how it might inform our hopes and visions for a more positive future. In a professional setting with its hierarchies and entrenched relationships this is not always so easy to navigate or to experience. C4O is an event which inevitably brings up discomfort for many, especially those ‘do’ers’ amongst us who want to leap from statistics to a sustainable future without all the messy anxiety and incoherence which might lay between...

## **Presenters**

Facilitators: Teo Greenstreet, Hilary Jennings & Lucy Neal.

Presenters: Paul Allen (CAT), Calvin Jones (Cardiff University) and Rhodri Thomas (CC-SW)

Emergence Summit September 2012

The plan to organise the Emergence Summit for 2012 was hatched in Summer 2011. Surprisingly this felt like relatively short notice to mount something of this scale especially as we had done nothing like it before. Following the success of the previous one day gatherings the event at Centre for Alternative Technology always had the potential to be more ambitious. My thoughts were turning to the hosting of the Olympic Games in London in 2012. I wondered if we could dream up something akin to the Olympics for sustainability! The vision of carrying a torch for a life-sustaining future inspired this new partnership project with CAT. All of the Emergence events so far have only happened due to the energy of a small number of people and their

commitment to work together to bring new people into the conversation. Jenny Mackewn World Café facilitator of previous Emergences and Lucy Neal, presenter at Emergence Swansea and Case for Optimism were crucial to the next phase of Emergence. We already had a relationship with Paul Allen at Centre for Alternative Technology but convincing CAT as an organisation to come into a partnership with Emergence to present The Summit was our next challenge. After a number of conversations and clarification meetings with Paul we came up with a proposal for the partnership to move forward and submitted an application to Arts Council of Wales Lottery Fund in September of that year.

The decision to call this ‘a summit’ was a bold one especially for a small arts and sustainability project which had only been going for a year and had so far only organized a number of relatively small-scale events. As we began to dream and have conversations about what form this could take, an idea emerged to organise a land journey, walk or pilgrimage to CAT prior to the gathering. CAT felt like such an extraordinary flagship to sustainability that we also wanted to celebrate the fact it was here in Wales at all! We knew that people might think that we were organizing an event in the middle of nowhere – CAT of course is in the old capital of Wales Machynlleth. We thought we would make a feature of this by making the journey to the destination an integral part of the event. In addition, all of us on the team had had powerful experiences and worked on projects that involved making a strong connection to the land. This idea captured all of our imaginations and we felt that the summit would not be complete without an element of the project which connected us to the ground on which we stood and the extraordinary landscape surrounding CAT. It soon transpired that we were now committed to organizing not one event but two in one; a conference and a land journey – and then not just one land journey but two! A number of us had always used the word pilgrimage as we spoke about this element of the summit, however as some were unhappy with perceived religious connotations of the word we arrived at land journey as perhaps being more accurate and less prescriptive.

We heard in December 2011 that our funding bid was successful and began planning in earnest. Our initial idea would be that the summit would be an invitation only event. The term ‘summit’ accurately described what we thought we were organizing. The connection with both ideas and geography was not accidental. Lucy Neal reminded us that a summit was elevated, allowing for a birds-eye view and greater perspective of the terrain. It also assumed that a journey had already been made *to* the summit and there was still a way to go to get back down the mountain! A summit is therefore a place of wider vision and potentially of a brief respite from the journey where one can sit and reflect on the work done, effort already expended and the travelling company. This felt like a good description of where we are now in terms of facing future challenges for our communities and planet. Our early impulse was to therefore invite people who were already leading projects, organisations and companies with a track record or a body of work in the area of sustainability. We also were certain that we wanted to continue the conversation rather than to have the same one as we had had in the previous events. One development that we thought was essential was to widen our focus from purely arts practitioners whom we had previously engaged with, to those in different fields who might be eager to enter a dialogue with artists already engaged in the agenda of sustainability. To this end we spent a great deal of time putting forward suggestions as to who we would invite and

having time-consuming discussions which involved making a dream delegate list involving a range of sectors, key networks and projects. We only had 150 or so places so this was often a tough process. We asked a circle of friends, contacts and advisors to put potential names forward of people in different sectors who should be in the room at the summit. This process although in the end did not prove to be the best way forward set a precedent that we would consciously call on many different people for advice and offering an outside eye on all aspects of planning. All gave their support wholeheartedly and it felt as if this event had the goodwill of a substantial number of people in the arts and sustainability networks as months went on and more detailed planning began.

Our dream for the summit was to make something similar to an immersive sensory experience. We knew that the idea of the walk was novel but we also wanted to keep that creativity central to the conference. 'Creating the Future' was put forward and supported unanimously.

Our challenge and our desire was to run an event which welcomed and utilized, as the economist E.F. Schumacher would say 'the heart, the head and the hands.' The head is usually the part invited to conferences but as Joseph Campbell would say, 'the brain is a secondary organ – don't let it run the show.' There is also within the ecological world a great tradition of doing and making gatherings, especially for those who are tired of talking. The challenge we set ourselves was not to only bring people from different sectors together to practice 'dialogue and doing' but to perhaps more radically to put the heart front and centre.

The design of the conference attempted to honour all of these aspects and we attempted to keep these ideas central to our planning and execution of both land journey and the conference. Of course some absolutely see the relevance for one or two of these but not always the third – especially in so-called professional gatherings. Welcoming the heart without alienation, patronizing, provoking or embarrassing is perhaps impossible but it felt too important an opportunity to miss. One of our collaborators advised that perhaps if we could not envisage and risk failure then the event was destined to be too comfortable and predictable.

The land journey and conference called for an enormous amount from us the organisers but it also asked for enormous commitment, trust and energy from those that joined us as walkers or as delegates.

We attempted to be creative, pioneering and sustainable in every aspect of the event and also faced the challenge of bringing two partner organisations together as equal collaborators – Volcano (staff 4) and CAT (staff 150). Every single level of the event was an opportunity for learning and for literally 'co-creating the future' in every encounter, every conversation, every email and every act. We had to work hard with the budget, with our relationships, with our different expectations.

Fritjov Capra in his book 'The Hidden Connections' talks about how health and growth is maintained in a system – whether it be a single cell, the human body, an organization, country or planet. The system is continually being 'disturbed,' by new impulses or information. An adaptive system responds to the disturbance (or disturbing information) and uses it as an opportunity for learning and growth. If the

disturbance is ignored, the system fails to learn, fails to develop and eventually dies. Those of us who worked on Emergence in any capacity certainly had many opportunities to be disturbed and then to learn or to die just a little.

Our design was consciously constructed with disturbance- or risk already built in. At every level our desire outstripped our resources and a small amount of people made these stretch as far as possible. Goodwill and the energy of helpers, collaborators and volunteers also made our resources go further. We were in a sense setting out to build community. This was perhaps the greatest experiment and challenge for the summit – the challenge to build community whether it be in the planning, walking half way up a mountain or in conference inside the beautifully designed eco-venue The WISE Centre at CAT.

Put simply, the Emergence team created the structure and provided the disturbance but it was only a half executed without the input of the walkers and delegates.

Some challenges;

Walkers walked across beautiful but sometimes unforgiving landscapes often in excess of what their body or equipment was capable of  
Mountain Leaders were experienced at working with army recruits but had never led artists interested in sustainability  
Being creative with an over-stretched budget to enable young delegates and bursary holders to attend free of charge  
Feeding 45 walkers local, ethical and nutritious food at campsites often 15 miles away from the kitchen in which it was cooked  
Managing expectations of those who wanted to make art more than walk and managing expectations of those who wanted to walk more than make art  
Assessing and looking after personal safety of walkers in mountainous terrain  
Creating balance between ‘light-touch’ and over managed facilitation on walk and conference  
Empowering young delegates to take a leadership role in the conference and ‘co-creating the future’ whilst also making them feel welcome without being patronized  
Finding a balance between making space for delegate led, emergent sessions and ‘leading from the podium’  
Inviting a mix of newbees and oldbees to the gathering an ensuring the event speaks to all of them.....and many many more.

The opportunities for learning and for failure were enormous. We should probably have never begun! We did it though, in the knowledge that we would not succeed all the time, we would not please everyone and that sometimes we might make some people very unhappy. Knowing this and facing this are different things. I’d say we were 100% successful, took 100% of risks, made 100% sure that we were accountable, accessible and authentic and made 100% of mistakes. Maybe there is a little leeway with these statistics but you get the picture.

### **Some headline facts**

Dates of land journey; 1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> September, conference 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> September 2012.

Number of people on land journey 45

Number of visitors to land journey 10

Number of presenters and delegates at conference 170

Two groups of walkers walked for 5 days and average of 14 miles each day

One group walked from CAT out to the mountains and back to CAT in a northerly clockwise direction, the other in a southerly anti-clockwise direction

Each day there were 'visitors' and 'happenings' in the landscape by local people and invited artists encountered by the walkers without prior knowledge of them happening

Food artists Touchstone Collaboration created a kitchen from scratch at CAT preparing locally sourced, tasty and inventive food assisted by a small team of volunteers

A small support team looked after each route, bringing food, tents, rucksacs etc

A large bell tent was erected each day on each groups' campsite for evening meetings and gatherings.

Each group was led by 2 Qualified Mountain leaders and one group facilitator.

Simon Whitehead, land artist and craniosacral therapist designed the routes and organized the creative visitations.

The two walking groups celebrated and feasted together at the start and end of their journey with a specially prepared meal at CAT.

The land journey finished on the evening prior to the arrival of the other 120 or so conference delegates.

The Summit design was inspired by the work of the physicist David Bohm and his writings on the implicate and explicate order.

Fourteen workshops on a wide range of topics were organized at the conference, from death and dying to alternative currencies, storytelling and Zero Carbon Britain.

The distilled inspiration from each workshop was interpreted by young guides who then gave back to the conference their words which spoke to 'Creating the Future'

An opening and closing ceremony was devised and led by Dead Good Guides Sue Gill and John Fox.

Talks on energy, capitalism and systems theory were given by Paul Allen, Peter Harper, Robert Newman and Rupesh Shah

Chief Executive of Arts Council Wales spoke about the role of the arts in a life-sustaining future

Self-organised spaces were led by delegates and future-oriented projects in service of the planet were led by delegates

A number of artists were commissioned to make work for the land journey and conference, Ben Stammers (land Journey), Fern Thomas & Owen Griffiths (Store for Future), Sarah Woods & Richard Gott (The Roadless Trip) and Ansuman Biswas (Virtual Land Journey)

Ten young delegates took leading roles, addressed the conference throughout the weekend.

## **Presenters & Organisers**

Summit Organisers & Facilitators

Paul Allen, Jenny Mackewn, Lucy Neal, Fern Smith, Rosie Strickland

Land Journey Curator

Simon Whitehead

Mountain Leaders

Toby Dryden, Huw Williams (North), Paul Whitehead, Steve ? (South)

Land Journey Facilitators  
Jenny Mackewn & Lucy Neal

Food of the Land Journey  
Miche Fabre Lewin and Flora Gathorne-Hardy (Touchstone Collaborations)

Support Team  
Rory Duckhouse & Fern Smith (North), Philip Ralph & Rosie Strickland (South)

Conference presenters  
Paul Allen (CAT), Gary & Gabriel Anderson (Institute for Practise of Art & Dissent at Home) Ansuman Biswas, Nick Capaldi (Arts Council of Wales), Sue Gill (Dead Good Guides), Peter Harper (CAT), John Fox(DGG), Robert Newman, Fabio Santos (Phakama) and Rupesh Shah.

Young delegates and presenters Sam Quinn, Kishorn Charles & Cedoux Kadima (Phakama), Selina Nwulu, Samia Aziz & Rotimi Skyers (Platform), Lil Woods, Rhun Bleddyn & Josh Giraldi (Young Welsh Emergence Delegates).

Emergence Commissioned Artists  
Ansuman Biswas, Ben Stammers, Fern Thomas & Owen Griffiths, and Sarah Woods & Richard Gott

Workshop leaders  
Clare Cooper (Mission Models & Money), Eric Maddern (Cae Mabon), George Marshall (Climate Outreach Information network), Rosie leach & Esther Tew (Public Interest Research Council), Morgan Parry (Coutryside Council for Wales), Simon Murray (Virtual Migrants), Clare Whistler (freelance artist), Hermione Elliot & Anna Ledgard (Living Well, Dying Well), Leon Rosselson (singer and activist), Miche Fabre Lewin & Flora Gathorne-Hardy (Touchstone Collaborations), Tobi Kelner, Peter Harper, Allan Shepherd, Rebecca Sullivan, Alice Hooker-Strous, Adam Thorogood (CAT)

### **Creu Cymru Emergence October 2012**

Following attendance at the Emergence conferences, Case for Optimism, Document Launch and Emergence Summit a number of individuals from venues in Wales and their development agency Creu Cymru, decided to take on the issue of sustainability as a key core organizing principle. In partnership with Cynnal Cymru-Sustain Wales, Julies Bicycle and BRASS at Cardiff University a pilot group of seventeen venues was formed to look at every aspect of running a theatre sustainably from the box-office to lighting grid. More details of the project can be found here, <http://www.cynnalcymru.com/news/creu-cymru-emergence-pilot-group-announced>

The next phase of the project (September 2013 – June 2014) will be to look at participation and programming within the context of sustainability. This new phase will be launched at the World Stage Design Festival on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2013.

## Micro Emergence December 2012

After the exhausting but exhilarating enormity of the Summit I found myself needing to withdraw and reflect. I needed some rest but also needed a time of digestion and assimilation. If the research and planning of a project takes a long time (in this case one year), perhaps there is an equal amount of time needed after the event has finished to truly understand and assimilate what has happened. Perhaps only then can we learn from what we have done and build on it.

The immediate aftermath included an array of tidy up activities - the extended 'get-out.' These included returning borrowed/hired equipment (from everywhere!), writing and responding to evaluations, attending to budgetary headaches, writing those important gratitude emails to everyone who made it possible and spending time remembering what exactly we did....

The fall-out of the Summit was big. The genie had really come out of the bottle and no amount of coaxing would make it go back inside. Nothing less than a complete life audit was needed!

On coming home we wondered 'what next'? A facilitator of therapeutic process work once told me that was needed after any massive and potential life changing experience was to 'clean the floor.' This was necessary to come back to earth so as not to get lost in the ecstatic and lose contact with the everyday. Working on the Summit had taken almost a year of research, fundraising and organisation. This in itself did not feel sustainable and I concluded that if we as artists only focus on the big events then the everyday process of living, breathing and connecting goes unnoticed or un-lived. I found myself with questions that I could not answer alone ...

In order to make sense of what was happening, I found myself seeking conversations with fellow travellers. Some of these had attended the Summit and some hadn't but they had all made some important life choice to live and make their work more sustainably. I kept wanting to ask everyone I met the same question - 'how do you live...knowing what you know, what decisions have you taken about how you live?'

I felt haunted by questions...How might we be artists AND address the important issues of our time? Or do we have to give up our art in order to focus on what needs to be done at this critical time in our planet's history? How can we find balance? How can we remain embodied, creative and expansive at a time where everything is speeding up and an air of desperation and overwhelm is often seen all around us?

With all these questions and more in mind I wondered if it is possible to follow E.F Schumacher in his maxim, 'Small is beautiful' and take it to it's logical extreme? **Very small is very beautiful?!**

Along with my partner who had also been bamboozled by the summit, I therefore decided to invite a small group of people to spend a day in one another's company and to do it in the most sustainable place (as in smallest and most cost effective!) I could think of - our home. We decided to gather a small group together in the hope of supporting one another in our attempts to face the unknown and uncertain future.

So, on the 18<sup>th</sup> December 2012 we held the Emergence micro-conference: 'Bringing it Back Home'. Our intention was to make the micro-conference a day of sharing conversation, concerns, sustenance and activities in a domestic and intimate setting. The activities could be connected to 'creating positive visions of a sustainable future' or they could just be enjoyable, creative shared activities. Throughout the day there were opportunities to participate in, or to lead, these small group sessions that took place in our 'breakout' spaces – the living room, kitchen, spare room and office of our small terraced house.

The outcome of the event was not to be predicted before the invitation was accepted. The invitation went out to those who had attended the summit locally and those who had worked on it from further afield. Trusting in Emergence – uncertain outcomes, interconnectivity, developing resilience, creating a learning supportive community- this is what we asked for and hoped to give our guest delegates.

Ten people accepted our invitation – quite a squeeze in a small house. The kitchen table became the podium, the group self-organised and the day emerged with people sharing where they were since the big gathering at the Centre for Alternative Technology. This was followed by clay working, craniosacral sessions, a skype in presentation from Gary Anderson of the Institute of the Art & Practice of Dissent at Home as 'artist not-in-residence,' a walk, feasting on home-made food and the making of Xmas decorations. It felt like planting a tree – or at least a seedling. We can all do that – continue the conversation. I believe they change lives.

There will always be the big, ambitious flag-ship events (2012 was full of them in the U.K) but I feel that if do not make space for the human-size we might be in danger of losing the ground beneath our feet. My hope is that more micro-events – domestic conferences and short walks will follow. Shared intentions with unknown outcomes is all that we can ask for.

**Other micro-events to date include;**

17<sup>th</sup> March 2013 mini land journey (roughly 5 miles) Swansea High Street to Mumbles pier, Swansea.

14<sup>th</sup> September 2013 mini land journey (half day) along the Taff Trail, Cardiff.

Do get in touch if you plan to organise a micro-Emergence event and we will list it here.

**World Stage Design Festival 13<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup> September 2013**

Emergence will be curating a day of events as part of the 2013 World Stage Design Festival in Cardiff on 13<sup>th</sup> September. We will be showing the film 'Walking to the Summit' and presenting 'Doin' Dirt Time' in the World Stage Design Award winning sustainable theatre built to mark the event in the courtyard of Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama. Both presentations will both be followed by a discussion on the role of the arts in creating a sustainable society. We will also be hosting a sustainable venues symposium with our partners Creu Cymru and running a participatory workshop on the Emergence, interconnectivity and resilience.

Participants are free to come to individual events or book for the whole day. For more details and for bookings contact <http://www.wsd2013.com>

In addition Emergence will be organizing a micro land journey along the beginning section of the Taff Trail on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> September. For more details contact [fern@volcanotheatre.co.uk](mailto:fern@volcanotheatre.co.uk)