

How to Re-*story* our Relationship with Nature in a Changing Climate?

Engaging artists and culture bearers to craft place-based narratives of nature connection and reciprocity, as a foundation for transformative action towards climate resilience and regeneration

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INTRODUCTION

A. Sharing key learnings and recommendations to guide others in their 'Re-Storying' efforts

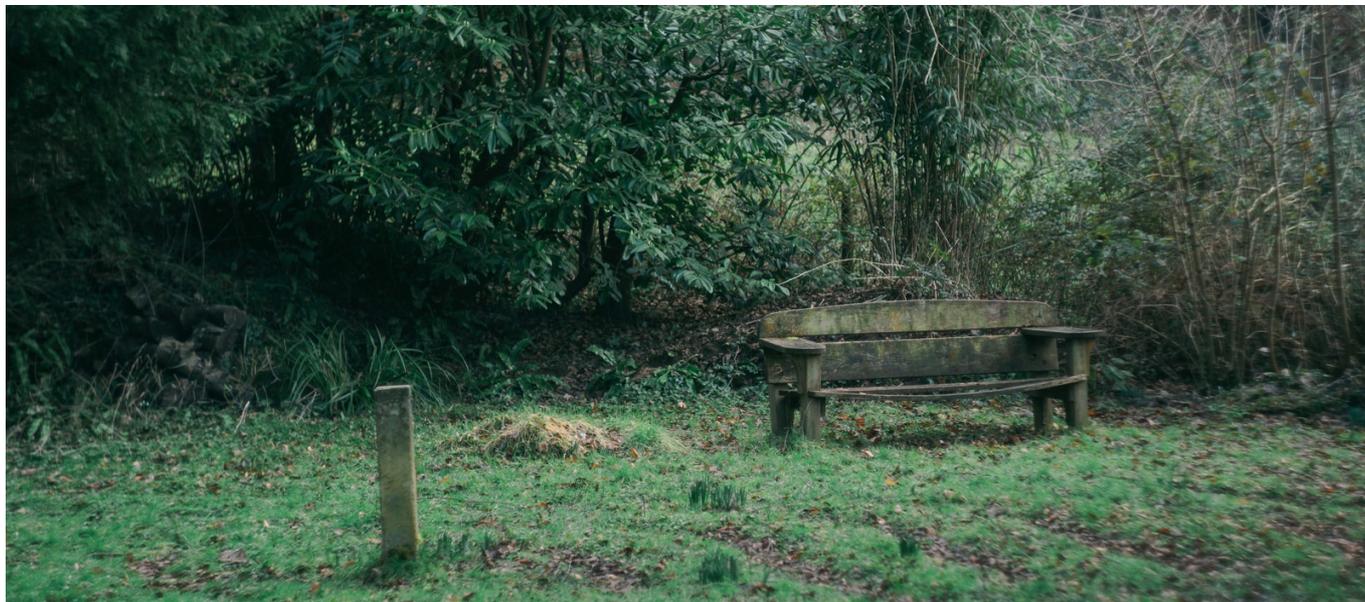


Photo by Hanz Florentino

This guidance document forms part of the project 'Re-Storying Living Cultural Landscapes in a Changing Climate' (the Re-Storying Project), co-designed and implemented by [Living Story Landscapes](#) (Philippines), the [Hawkwood Centre for Future Thinking](#) (United Kingdom) and [One Resilient Earth](#) (Germany), with the generous support of the British Council. The purpose of this document is to share our key learnings and provide examples of what the 'Re-Storying' works can look like in practice. We will also offer some recommendations based on the experiences of the three partner organizations, as well as that of the artists and culture bearers who took part in the project. Our objective is that this guidance document helps other community organizers, artists and culture bearers engage in local 're-storying' initiatives, both in the Global South and in the Global North, as a foundational step towards enhancing climate resilience and regeneration.

'Re-storying' first entails questioning the modern myth of separation between humans and nature. It then involves crafting new narratives or stories of our relationship with the ecosystems we belong to, of our relationships with other beings, close and far, both in the human and in the more-than-human world, and of our relationships with ourselves with a view to reframing our identities and sense of belonging. New stories focus on connection to the Earth and humans' humble efforts towards reciprocal relationships with other living beings.

Through the re-storying process, participants are led to reexamine their relationship to space and time, given that the new stories will raise novel questions regarding the historical processes that contributed to the ecological emergency we suffer from today, as well as highlight the multiple linkages and flows between communities worldwide. Re-storying also raises the question of the 'novelty' of the new stories, as culture bearers (who encompass Indigenous and non-Indigenous traditional ecological knowledge holders) play a critical role in the process. Ultimately, it is our hope that the process of transforming the current climate narratives from separation to connection can lead to better forms of implementation to achieve resilience and regeneration.

Based on the experience of the [Green Releaf Initiative](#) in the Philippines, which gave birth to Living Story Landscapes, and as confirmed through the Re-Storying project, re-storying processes are essential to laying the foundations for the long-term resilience of communities, and the continuous regeneration of local ecosystems. First, the feeling of (re-)connection to our landscapes and all living beings is critical to inspiring community members to protect life as well as engage in tackling climate change and biodiversity loss. Second, re-storying is a life-long, hands-on, place-based, and collective process that opens up multiple opportunities to enhance the health and wellbeing of all, as well as to bolster creativity and collaboration.

The latter are critical to fostering transformative cultural change towards climate resilience, and address the ecological crisis at scale.

Our focus is on climate resilience and regeneration because disaster risk reduction is neither enough, nor inspiring in any way for many communities worldwide. Climate resilience starts with actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and extends to generating knowledge and action on how to: 'enhance wellbeing; strengthen the capacity to deal with stresses caused by environmental change; find ways to deal with unexpected events and crises; and identify sustainable ways for humans to live within the Earth's boundaries' (Stockholm Resilience Centre). Social and ecological regeneration is critical to achieving such resilience, as it is the process of re-building communities and restoring the health of ecosystems after they have been damaged or destroyed. In turn, engaging with regeneration to address the ecological crisis is likely to require a transformation of the mindsets and culture marked by modernity.

Last, our experience is that artists and culture bearers must be actively involved in the design and implementation of the re-storying process. We also have evidence that artists' and culture bearers' involvement can significantly enhance efforts to build resilience to the impacts of climate change and facilitate engagement in ecosystem restoration activities. As such, we wish that this guidance document contributes to facilitating the engagement of artists and culture bearers in climate resilience and regeneration efforts worldwide, including by providing advice to climate resilience and ecosystem restoration stakeholders who may not be used to working with Indigenous Peoples, other local culture bearers, or agents in the arts and culture sectors.

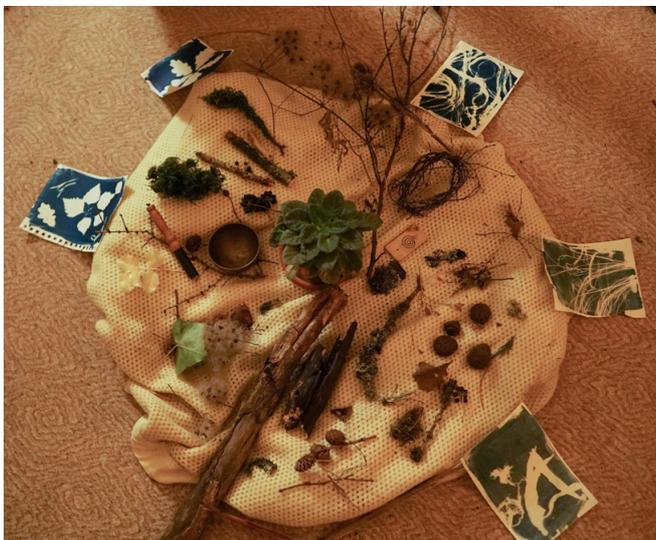


Photo by Hanz Florentino

B. The Re-Storying project in a nutshell

The Re-Storying project is a co-creative initiative bringing together artists and community members based in the Philippines and the UK to collaborate on restoring their natural and cultural heritage through new stories and local regenerative action, for climate-resilient futures. It was co-designed and implemented from April 2022 to March 2023, by three main partner organizations, Living Story Landscapes (Philippines), the Hawkwood Centre for Future Thinking (UK) and One Resilient Earth (Germany), with the generous support of the British Council.

The team of Living Story Landscapes had previous relevant experience through Kalikhasan, a project led by the Green Releaf Initiative. The Kalikhasan project aimed at supporting communities that have been hit or displaced by a disaster, or are particularly vulnerable to loss and damage associated with climate change, in restoring their ecosystems, including by re-storying their natural and cultural landscape through various creative media.

The Re-Storying project brought together 11 artists and culture bearers both from the UK and the Philippines in taking stock and exploring how their practice can contribute to re-storying processes leading to increase in climate resilience and regeneration, with the diverse communities they interact with or are part of. For this purpose, the Living Story Landscapes Project gathered artists doing in-depth community work in the Philippines, and engaged them in further training and testing of tools to implement re-storying community work in Cebu. The Hawkwood Centre for Future Thinking selected UK-based artists who have community-based practices around climate change, collaboration and ecosystem-restoration, and also supported the organization of a week-long residency for artists from the UK and the Philippines in Stroud (UK). One Resilient Earth mobilized its international expertise in transformative and regenerative resilience to climate change, and in-designing multicultural and transdisciplinary educational projects, to facilitate learnings between artists and culture bearers from the UK and the Philippines, both online and during the residency.

The main outputs of the Re-Storying project were knowledge exchange and capacity-building sessions for artists and culture bearers in the Philippines, as well as the design of a [toolkit for re-storying processes in the Philippines](#).

In addition to public launch and closing events online, two in-person community events were organized during the residency at [Hawkwood](#), including in collaboration with the Royal Society of Arts. The artists generated new artworks, which were exhibited in Hawkwood for the UK-based artists, at various locations and during several events in the Philippines, and can be viewed online (please click on the hyperlinks above). One Resilient Earth published several interviews with the artists in [Tero Magazine](#) to dive deeper into exploring artists' role in climate-resilience and regeneration. Social media were also used to disseminate the key findings of this project, including through a short-film produced during the residency.



Short Film by Peter Mosely on the Re-Storying Project

At the end of the project, all participating artists and culture bearers reported feeling better equipped to address climate change impacts, and more inspired to work towards regeneration, including with community. They also expressed appreciation for the creation of a new transnational community of purpose and of support.

C. What to expect from this guidance document

This guidance document offers (I) a synthesis of academic and gray literature related to collaboration with artists and culture bearers towards climate resilience and regeneration, (II) our key learnings from the Re-storying experience, (III) practical recommendations for artists, culture bearers and community organizers or local governments who would like to foster collaboration at the junction of arts/culture and climate resilience/regeneration. Last, we will discuss the next steps for this project, and introduce some call to actions, before extending thanks to all those who participated in this project, and in the drafting of this guidance document.

We acknowledge that this document is part of a learning process and welcome all comments or suggestions to deepen our learnings or improve our recommendations. If you have comments or questions, please write to: contact@oneresilientearth.org. We also hope that this guidance document will inspire numerous artists, culture bearers, community organizers, and other stakeholders (i.e. local governments, business, academe, etc.) to engage in community-based climate resilience and regeneration projects, on their own terms and through innovations that we look forward to learning from. Finally, we are interested in continuing to learn from exchanges between the Global South and the Global North as a way to continuously reframe our understanding of climate resilience and regeneration.

"The [Re-storying project's] frameworks here enabled us to reach deeper parts of ourselves that can really make a difference. It was very uncomfortable for me, but very inspiring to rethink how I carry out my work and pass it on to students. And very inspiring to see how all of you approach your work, with vulnerability that I hold with the highest regards. "



WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM ACADEMIC AND GRAY LITERATURE?

This project builds upon an analysis of academic and gray literature addressing the benefits of working with culture bearers, particularly holders of Indigenous Peoples' knowledge, as well as artists in fostering climate resilience and regeneration at community level. The short synthesis of the literature below also highlights experiences of bringing artists, holders of Indigenous Peoples' knowledge, and community members together in climate resilience and regeneration projects, before underscoring the need for more guidance and tools to support such transdisciplinary collaboration at local level.

A. Benefits of working with culture bearers, particularly Indigenous Peoples in fostering climate resilience and regeneration

1. Local, finely-tuned, dynamic, diverse and crucial knowledge

Indigenous Peoples' knowledge holders' relationship with the environment is finely-tuned, dynamic, and diverse. It is crucial to achieve local climate resilience through knowledge.

- **Finely-tuned and adaptive knowledge:** Knowledge is shifting, cumulative, and altering in interaction with environmental involvement, "just as ecosystems shift and alter, so does the resultant knowledge gained for consistent interaction with that system" (Ingold and Kurtilla 2000 in UNFCCC 2013a). Interaction at a finer scale than science has meant that these knowledge holders could thrive over long histories (UNESCO 2023). This Indigenous in-depth knowledge has become recognised as an essential part of understanding ecosystems and climate change (Lam, D. et al 2020; Eisenberg 2019; UNFCCC 2013a; UNESCO 2023).

- **Locally diverse and crucial practices:** Everyday practices that have deeply co-evolved with local diverse environments over millennia, are crucial for

locally tuned resilience (Haider, L.J. et al 2019). This 'biocultural heritage' contains agricultural biodiversity, social and ecological memory (ibid). Deeper understandings of human-nature relationships as one system through these practices are recommended for effective, holistic adaptation (ibid).

2. Valuing ecosystems and taking action at the frontline

Communities most dependent on their environment, and at the frontline of loss and damage associated with climate change (while having contributed the least towards it) have been the principal challenge to environmental destruction.

- **Indigeneity, class, gender, and race define who is at the frontline of climate change impacts** (UNFCCC 2013b). Those living in high-risk environments with livelihoods dependent on the environment, are the earliest and most severely impacted (UNESCO 2023). Biocultural heritage is often in the world's poorest regions (Haider, L.J. et al 2019). Those who are carrying disproportionate environmental burdens are also affected by unequal value relations through market mechanisms, and social systems of domination and subordination (Bell 2020; Patel and Moore 2018).

- **Communities that know they cannot afford to lose their environment are at the frontline of the struggle against environmental destruction** (Ahmad, Z et al 2022). The principal challenge to environmental destruction is made up of local forms of resistance to unsustainable development, conceptualized as the 'environmentalism of the poor' (Martinez Alier 2002 in Ahmad, Z. et al 2022). These movements disprove theories that valuing ecosystems only comes with affluence, and are not usually represented in mainstream non-governmental organizations (Ahmad, Z. et al 2022). Responses that local communities are taking collectively, can build long-term resilience to crises from environmental extremes (Gòmez-Baggethun, E. et al 2012).

- **To benefit more people, values should bring human and planetary health together.** Learning from Indigenous Peoples' knowledge is understanding the values and traits within its systems of what to look for and how to look for it (Berkes 2009 in UNFCCC 2013a). It is important to bring together concerns for wilderness and humans in health, safety and survival as a healthier human environment is a healthier environment for all species (Bell 2020). Meaningful approaches should connect environmentalism with health, everyday life, the local, labor and ending exploitation (ibid).

B. Benefits of working with artists in fostering climate resilience and regeneration

Art is increasingly going further than raising awareness. It is contributing to knowledge co-creation across disciplines, and transformations in response to climate change (Galafassi, D. et al. 2018).

1. Transdisciplinary co-creating

- **Climate change is an entangled challenge that needs holistic responses across sectors** (Ingold 2000; Strang 2017).

- **Bringing art to climate change, together with other practices, fosters the emotional predisposition for transformation. Art can bring visibility, affect imagination, restore values and motivate care.** The impacts of and solutions to climate change are mediated by culture (Galafassi, D. et al. 2018). Researchers have recommended bringing together natural sciences and 'humanistic' practices that attend to affects, emotions and values; highlighting climate-arts ability to foster the imagination and emotional predisposition for the transformations necessary (Galafassi, D. et al. 2018). Ecological artist Jackie Brookner (1945-2015) worked with ecologists, engineers, communities and policy makers on water remediation and public art.

For true ecological restoration [...] we need a restoration [...] of what we value and under-value in our world, in ourselves [...] as a species. We need to make the restoration processes visible and understandable, and

we need to engage the attention, imagination and the heart of the public. To affect values, to create desire, to make people care about something, you have to affect hearts, bodies [...] and imaginations. This is the work art can do so well (Brookner in Cheetham 2018, 10-11)

- **Combining different types of creative thinking, encourages break-throughs and new insights** (Scheffer, M. et al 2015). Making space for the mind and the feet to wander is needed in knowledge innovation (ibid.). Artists were identified as a key group to collaborate with for triggering sparks of intuition, unexpected connections, and novel meaning-making from deliberate, studied information (ibid).

- **Art has often been spurred by crisis into the role of catalyst, critic and educator, influencing other sectors** (Carruthers 2006, 5; 2013). The boundaries between disciplines have hardened and softened over time as art has influenced planners, policy, and engineers (Carruthers 2006). Artists are ideally positioned to locate and develop responses to the ideologies and practices that brought climate change into being (ibid).

2. Transformative co-creating

- **Artists have a track record of playing central roles in several major transformations of societies** (Galafassi, D. et al. 2018). However, the role of the arts in bringing deep changes of minds and behaviors has been understated in UN climate panel reports: The term 'arts' does not appear once in the IPCC's 5th assessment report (AR5) (Galafassi, D. et al. 2018), not does it seem to appear in the 6th assessment report either.

Using "affective cultural politics", activists involve themselves in systems to 'change these conditions by means of art' (Reestorhoff 2017, 166 in Presley 2020, 2)

- **Exploring beyond instrumentalism and solutionism.** Art is uniquely open-ended in exploring climate transformations, without being forced to come up with a finished solution (Galafassi, D. et al. 2018).

- **Imagining hopeful futures can motivate current action, and build a shared outlook.** Dominant narratives of collapse and dystopia could be inhibiting action (CST-GRAID. 2017). Artists are collaborating in workshops with changemakers, such as imagining futures based on nurturing positive small-scale

initiatives that already exist to grow (ibid). Participants reported that these spaces strengthened their motivation to act towards the socio-ecological paths they hoped for, and there were strikingly shared outlooks built of what those would be (CST-GRAID. 2017).

3. Community level co-creating

- **Art is accessible:** Art can be particularly accessible to co-creating with diverse people and change agents (Galafassi, D. et al 2018)

- **Art is the practice of skills, and being actively in touch with the world:**

Art gives form to feeling [...] guided by the course of our sensory education (Ingold 2000, 23).

Feeling can be described as an active mode of being in touch with the world (Ingold 2000). In the practice of skills such as art, our whole being is in action and perception at the same time (ibid). At the community level, this may enable people's connection to what is inside them, between them, and around them.

- **Artists can co-create storytelling that mobilizes communities, and re-orient them in times of crises:** Storytelling's power through dense social networks and artifacts has secured the protection of green areas against exploitation (Ernstson et al. 2009). By collaborating with authors, scientists and citizens, artists wove together areas of cultural history and conservation biology previously disconnected (ibid). Unifying different social arenas and sets of values, they mobilized different audiences together (ibid). Narratives are vitally re-orienting for people in times of crisis:

'A state of shock is what happens to us when we lose our narrative [...] when we become disoriented. What keeps us oriented, alert, out of shock is our history [...] continuities [...] roots' (Klein 2009)

C. Further gaps for tools and approaches to support artists, culture bearers and communities in contributing to climate resilience and regeneration:

'Non-economic' loss and damage associated with climate change are of value that 'cannot be compared, replaced, or measured in units, and is intrinsic rather than only instrumental' (UNFCCC 2013b). A barrier to achieving long-term resilience is how non-economic impacts are measured, understood and treated (UNFCCC 2013b, p.6). The way people value what they have lost or are at risk of losing is needed in order to understand the magnitude of loss and damage (IPCC in UNFCCC 2013b). It is recommended that participatory practices and tools are used that make the value of 'non-economic' loss and damage more visible to avert, minimize, and address it (UNFCCC 2013b; 2022).

The collaboration of Indigenous, local and scientific knowledge systems is widely regarded to enhance the effectiveness of climate action (Orlove, B. et al 2022). Full mutual recognition and respect of these is called for, but gaps remain in practice (ibid). For example, transformation research in sustainability for more just, equitable futures needs more active place-based collaborations with local and Indigenous knowledge holders, to dismantle its lack of knowledge plurality (Lam, D. et al 2020). It is recommended that plural collaborations show that knowledge systems are interrelated but distinctive, promoting joint efficacy: to 'weave' rather than to 'merge' (Orlove, B. et al 2022). The success of such collaborations should be based on key dimensions of 'fullness' and 'justice' (ibid). Specific tools to protect Indigenous knowledge and local knowledge have also been developed, such as free, prior and informed consent (ibid). How to weave Indigenous Peoples' knowledge systems and practices with art from non-Indigenous Peoples and communities requires further exploration. The role of the artists in contributing to knowledge plurality is also an important dimension we investigated through the Re-Storying project.

WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM THE RE-*storying* PROJECT?

The eight points below summarize our key learnings from the Re-storying project. They provide insights into the multiple roles that artists and culture bearers can play in fostering climate resilience and regeneration. They also illuminate the different dimensions that are at stake when it comes to re-storying. In this section, we focused on the role of artists given that the critical role of culture bearers in tackling climate change and conserving biodiversity is increasingly established in practice and in the literature.

1.

There is limited recognition and understanding of the role of the arts and culture in addressing climate change

- Given the limited references and materials on the role of the arts and culture in addressing climate change, the dominant narrative of climate change is based on climate science. It thus gives priority to cognitive, tangible, and quantitative data over the role of affective, intangible, and qualitative data.
- The potential of relational approaches to influencing and engaging decisions are downplayed by rational approaches. However, rational approaches could benefit from relational approaches' effects in building empathy and deeper understanding of the complexity of climate realities and of the issues involved.

2.

The role of artists goes far beyond communication about climate change and nudging community members towards sustainability

- Artists can offer more than communicating climate science in an exciting or impactful way, so as to trigger behavioral change towards sustainability. This is still largely the way that the arts or artists are perceived by stakeholders working on climate change, while there are multiple opportunities to mobilize artists and artworks differently.
- Artists' main contribution is to create a 'pause' and offer transitional spaces in which new ideas, emotions, and dialogues can emerge. New imagery or immersive artistic setups can help open dialogues about different phenomena happening today as a result of climate change, and discuss what we collectively wish to save, and/or how we wish to move forward.
- In practice, artists can contribute to opening spaces so as to: make the intangible tangible (e.g. for loss and damage, but also regarding the sacredness of nature); process climate emotions and climate grief; grow imagination and creativity; feel connection to the natural world and experience joy; repair damage as a result of violence, climate injustice and/or colonization; map ecosystems and climate actions; capture traditional ecological knowledge and local stories; inspire and make transformation towards climate resilience and regeneration irresistible. Those different possible roles of artists will be presented in more detail below. All those dimensions of the work of the artist are critical to the re-storying process.
- Artists can help create new relationships with ourselves, with the places we are in, and with one another, which are crucial to enabling us to rethink the cultural, political, social and economic structures and systems we depend upon, and to contemplate how those new relationship could help us move towards creating a more livable planet for all.

3.

Culture bearers are essential to re-storying processes and can work hand in hand with artists

- Culture bearers, which include Indigenous Peoples with a deep knowledge of Indigenous knowledge systems and practices, as well as non-Indigenous nature custodians, have a strong connection to nature including through place-based regenerative practices. They can be learnt from directly on-site, or provide inspiration in processes of reconnection to nature.
- In many Indigenous Peoples' cultures, there is no word for nature as separate from people. Many terms refer to the idea of 'kinship'. In the Philippines, the word 'Kalikhasan' for nature is a honoring of nature's innate wisdom.



- By collaborating with culture bearers in ethical ways, following the principles of free, prior and informed consent, artists can help communicate this connection to and love for nature in ways that resonate with their community or audience. This can abolish the distance that some individuals may feel when presented with elements of Indigenous Peoples' culture.
- Indigenous Peoples also hold in their communities and their bodies the history of nature's destruction, of their culture's dismemberment (including through the taking away of sacred objects and artifacts), and often times of genocide. Their direct knowledge can help re-integrate elements of the past and of the present that are not shared through the official story of

'development' or 'economic prosperity.' Their experience can also foster deep reflections and actions towards truth, reparation and reciprocity, including through ethical ways of sharing and using Indigenous Peoples' knowledge.

- Culture bearers can work with artists in creating rituals and memorials that can contribute to healing a community after an extreme climate event has occurred, or to addressing intergenerational wounds and trauma (e.g. in relation to colonization) and collective climate injustice. Ceremonies and memorials can work in ways that words cannot allow. Artists can also gain inspiration from these rituals in an ethical way, to create immersive artistic experiences that can provide healing for participants. Rituals and memorials open up spaces to share 'terrible stories' in a way that connects us to what is beautiful as a group, and from within.



Ginhawa: Well-being in the Aftermath of Disasters
by Lyra Versoza

4.

Artists are critical to addressing loss and damage associated with climate change

- Loss and damage are already taking place as a result of extreme weather events (e.g. storms and typhoons, droughts, floods, forest fires) and slow onset phenomena (e.g. sea level rise, ocean acidification, glacial retreat, desertification). However, we need new

tools to convey the scope and depth of non-economic losses and damages. The latter include loss of lives and ill-health, loss of identity and sense of belonging due to population displacement, loss and damage to ecosystems' flora and fauna, vulnerability and increased violence (including sexual and gender-based violence). Scientific descriptions of those realities and numbers fall short of accounting for the impact of such loss and damage on people. Artists can play a critical part in the understanding and acknowledgement of non-economic loss and damage incurred by various individuals and communities, particularly in the Global South.

- Art provides an 'oblique way' of looking at the unbearable (Dougald Hine), which can help in meeting various individuals' sensitivity while providing an opportunity to stay with the horror, the sadness and the despair. It allows viewers to keep their eyes, minds and hearts open, and hence to engage with the crisis as it is, in their vulnerability, if they feel called to do so.



Blink Video as part of the *Project Restory* by Hanz Florentino

- Art can give emotional language and help unearth deeply buried emotions in relation to the ecological crisis. This idea is central to expressive art-based therapy. Those emotions can stem from traumas resulting from being impacted by extreme weather events or slow onset phenomena, distress induced by climate change as an existential threat in all parts of the world, but also to the grief we feel as parts of the natural world suffering and dying. Artworks can help open up conversations about those emotions. Writers and spoken word artists can also contribute to holding climate grief workshops and writeshops. Expressing climate emotions in a safer space can greatly enhance

all generations' emotional wellbeing, and reduce adverse mental health impacts associated with the ecological crisis. In turn, a strong sense of emotional and mental wellbeing is critical to engaging in cultural transformation.



Unmaking the Glacier - printed fabric, wood. Collaborative work with members of the public.

"We come back to this idea that it's really radical and important to be doing art, whether or not we can see an impact with what we're doing, we just need to keep doing it. Just the fact that we are not conforming, that we are stepping out of the norm; that we are trying to pull out deeper threads, cultivate creative connections and really focus on what we see as the important things."

Read the full article here:

[Art as a catalyst for care featuring Emily Joy](#)

Artists can help foster joy, connection, agency and playfulness

- Art can also help show relationships and entanglements in the crisis, which can contribute to overcoming polarities. This can help foster dialogues across differences of opinion and discuss collective long-term approaches that will not perpetuate the violence embedded in the current structures and systems we depend upon. Art can thus be particularly helpful for addressing topics such as colonization and climate injustice, acknowledging that repair processes take time, effort and vulnerability.

- By facilitating dialogues in spaces where participants can be vulnerable, artists can support deep personal journeys from victims of the climate crisis, to survivors and then to thrivers, when people's resilience is restored and they can open up to transformation through new stories. This journey can be described as a non-linear process of moving from a feeling of inner broken-ness to a sense of sacredness shared with nature.

- Art can also help create a sense of repair by creating beauty, curiosity and joyful emotions, out of the horror. New narratives and mythologies created through art can contribute to relationship-based repair within an individual, a community or between different communities. Creating artworks together can be a metaphor for collective care and repair, and the growing of the resilience of a community.



Re-storying narratives of place and belonging through Climate Memory and Imagination by Sarah Queblatin, Living Story Landscapes.

- Climate change is likely to evoke feelings of distress, grief, sorrow, rage, frustration and sometimes indifference or disgust among the general public. Artworks can introduce new perspectives that decenter the 'doom and gloom' narrative associated with climate change. By focusing on belonging to nature, and our care for all living beings, artists can help re-story our climate response from a place of joy and nurturance. They can emphasize values such as gratitude for life on planet Earth and awe for the sacredness of nature, as well as highlight beauty in the experience of being alive despite the crisis. This is not to deny the very real losses and damages from climate change, but to recognize beauty alongside it, and act with the hope that we can write and realize a new narrative. This will likely transform the way we conceive of and implement climate action.

- Such an artistic experience can offer a pause, as well as a space to listen, to dream and to strengthen one's agency in addressing the crisis in alternative ways that can either complement or question our focus on individuals' sustainable consumption choices and direct political engagement. Artists can thus open up a space of freedom while feeling our belonging to nature and to a time that is beyond individuals' lifespans and the time of political elections. This opening can prove empowering to people who do not recognize themselves in the current ways of taking climate action, and could then explore and offer different ways of engaging to the world.

- Different imagery created by artists and craftsmen can also be mobilized to offer visions of hope amid loss and damage. Such imagery includes the lotus, which is particularly powerful to remind ourselves that much beauty can bloom out of mud. Another practice and imagery is kintsugi, which highlights how broken and repaired objects can still be beautiful.

- Experimenting with artistic creations (e.g. with clay or with weaving) can also open up participants to playfulness and experimentation, which has positive benefits for their emotional and mental wellbeing, as well as for their creativity and potential for innovation. Playfulness can help increase confidence and ambition

when building one's own agency and considering approaches to foster climate resilience and regeneration.

"For me, repair is being able to blend together, creating stories and narratives blending realities and mythologies together. I have looked at Scottish and Indian deities in my work. What if they met?"

Renuka Ramanujan

6.

Artists and culture bearers are crucial to opening up imagination and fostering creativity

- In many Indigenous cultures, including for the T'boli dream weavers in the Philippines, dream time is seen as integral to doing. The dream gives inspiration for the creation process, and weavers only weave once they have had the vision of a new pattern through a dream.



How the T'boli women weave their dreams

- Artists and culture bearers can introduce new visions, dreamlike narratives, myths or stories in alternative realities, including by sharing or exploring stories taking place in the more-than-human world. These stories may not have direct practical applications but that can help people grow their own visions of the more climate-resilient, regenerative, biodiverse, fair and decolonized world that they would like to live in. This process can help question assumptions and biases while opening people up to transformation.

- By encouraging people to explore and develop their own dreams for the future, artists can help limit apathy and lack of motivation in addressing the ecological crisis. They help fuel individuals' inner drive for change, and expand our understanding of what is possible.

- By opening spaces for collective exploration of futures, artists can enhance curiosity in others, help question power dynamics, and foster connections between members of the community. Collective imaginings of the future can also lead to new creative visions and approaches to climate resilience and regeneration. These exercises can support participants in holding multiple narratives of the future together, in a way that spurs more creativity and openness to change.



Imagining Otherwise, We know not what we may be by Zoe Svendsen.

For more information: <https://metisarts.co.uk/imagining-otherwise>

- Fostering collective imagination processes and sharing dreams of the future across cultures and generations can also help becoming aware of convergences, before identifying respective roles in making the dream a reality. Such processes can foster a 'we' feeling: a sense of interdependence and belonging based on co-creation.

- Artists and culture bearers can foster the conditions for all communities to dream, no matter how difficult their situation may be at the time. Often in climate vulnerable communities especially in areas of devastation, dreaming of a future outside of their reality is expressed as a privilege, even a luxury. A trauma informed approach to facilitate dreaming can help restore a sense of dignity and purpose. It also fosters sovereignty and ownership of the future, hence limiting the influence of previous or external narratives of the future, which may not serve the community or be in service of life on Earth in general.

7.

Artists and culture bearers can model being open to emergence and transformation

- Openness to emergence is key to breaking away from cultural legacies and current mindsets that prevent transformation and deep cultural shifts towards reciprocal relationships. The artistic process of inspiration requires being in a liminal space where there is openness to emergence. Hence artists have significant experience to share so as to help others open up to emergence and withstand the discomfort and the not-knowing that arise in that liminal space.

- Many Indigenous cultures also have rites of passage that enable the transformation of community members from one stage to another, in nature and with the support of the community. Working with those rites of passage when appropriate, or learning from those rites of passage in an ethical manner, following the principles of free, prior and informed consent, can support inner change processes, as well as societal transformation in times of crisis.

- When creating immersive artistic experiences through workshops or performances, artists can open up non-hierarchical spaces that facilitate the creation of connection between community members as whole beings. These spaces give an experience of the transformed society some may be aspiring to.

- Engaging in collective creative processes such as weaving or clay sculpting can also open up dialogues about transformation as an unfolding process that cannot be fully controlled, and hence require opening up to emergence. By starting with small creative practices, in a safer space for dialogues, participants in the experience can navigate from personal to collective questions, and approach the embodied experience of inner and outer transformation in a tangible way. A material like clay, which is very easy to use, malleable, and 'forgiving' (e.g. only water is needed for repair) can also materialize transformation and enhance our feeling of agency while contributing to this transformation.



Earth and Forgiveness by Rosa Mirasol

- Many artists have also described their role in the creation process as that of travelers or 'magpies' collecting ideas, images and experiences, without knowing what would come out of them, and with trust in the creative process. This surrender to intuition and to sensing what is asked of oneself at a given moment plays a major part in deep transformation processes, which cannot be fully fathomed nor planned.

8.

Artists and culture bearers can play very practical roles when it comes to ecosystem restoration and regeneration

- Culture bearers are often custodian of place-based knowledge and practices that can directly contribute to the restoration of damaged ecosystems, and/or to their regeneration. The latter can be described in this context as a continuous adaptation of practices to ensure the health and flourishing of an ecosystem despite changing climatic conditions, among other impacts and stressors. Besides, Indigenous Peoples and nature custodians are likely to have a very good understanding of the local impacts of climate change through observation and in-depth knowledge of local fauna and flora. Such knowledge can contribute to improving approaches and actions aimed at building climate resilience locally.

- Artists, particularly storytellers and film-makers can help protect and translate that knowledge in ethical ways, following the principles of free, prior and informed consent, so that knowledge can be shared with the rest of the communities and/or other communities (if relevant), particularly in contexts where culture bearers are looking for ways to ensure their legacy. Such knowledge protection work should be designed to facilitate the passing down of knowledge within the community so as to keep knowledge alive, evolving and rooted in the ecosystems it stems from. Hence, stories should be told by community members for community members.



Restore-Restory x Pangasoy

The Restore-Restory Community Exhibit taking place in the Philippines is the Re-storying's legacy project. It is a multidisciplinary collaboration between artists, researchers, ecosystem restoration practitioners, and culture bearers in the island of Cebu as a prototype. Working with the artists from the Re-storying project, we supported innovators in Cebu who are contributing to ecosystem restoration in urban, rural, terrestrial forests, and marine ecosystems after Super typhoon Rai. Through a community curated exhibition of narratives expressed through art, the project aims to build empathy. It also offers complementary relational tools with rational planning tools for large scale ecosystem restoration planning in the landscape. Learn more about the project [here](#).

- Artists, particularly visual artists, multimedia artists, and photographers, can play an active part in community mapping processes that precede or support the planning and implementation of local climate action at community-level. 3D mapping exercises prove conducive to community involvement integrating a placemaking approach to the arts.

- Artists can also help protect and grow intangible cultural heritage that has economic value (e.g. heritage-based tourism, local crafts and small businesses, local festivals that create economic opportunities...)

- Ecosystem regeneration is tied to regenerative agricultural and regenerative fishery practices, which can include terrestrial and marine permaculture, agro-ecology and the growing of food forests, and other Indigenous practices. Culture bearers' knowledge is likely to cover such regenerative agricultural practices and needs to be integrated into all climate-resilience building initiatives. In the absence of culture bearers, artists can also collaborate with communities and ecosystem regeneration practitioners to integrate art into the design of community vegetable gardens and food forests through land art. This can foster community engagement and wellbeing.

WHAT ARE OUR RECOMMENDATIONS TO COMMUNITY ORGANIZERS, LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, ARTISTS AND CULTURE BEARERS?

For communities to benefit from the experience, knowledge and practices of artists and culture bearers in building climate-resilience building and fostering regeneration, all parties involved need to have a grasp of what the re-storying process entails, and of what it can and cannot achieve. Each party also needs to understand how to best perform their respective role. The section below is based on the Restorying project limited experience, as well as on the experience of participating artists in engaging in community projects.

A. Recommendations to community organizers and/or local governments

1. Engage in re-storying processes while knowing they take time and require commitment

- Collective writing of new narratives requires the creation of safe spaces through the building of trust. The time necessary for building trust varies from community to community but needs to be taken. Building trust is faster in person and in non-hierarchical environments where all feel warmly welcome.

- The re-storying process requires addressing different topics and questions that can be both uncomfortable and exhilarating in different ways for different members of the community.

During the Re-Storying project, artists and culture bearers engaged with a learning ark led by One Resilient Earth that involved collective processes of:

- connecting to one another,
- feeling emotions associated with climate change,
- dreaming of climate resilient and regenerative futures,
- repairing damaged relationships as a result of colonization and climate injustice,
- creating art and community projects, and
- learning from the experience.

- Those different dimensions appear essential to creating an embodied new story that will inspire actions and facilitate engagement at community level.

- Artists and culture bearers should also be integrated at different stages of existing initiatives, plans, projects aiming at tackling climate change.

- Re-storying can start small as all artistic experiences are valuable in building curiosity, openness and trust. All occasions to pause are critical to the re-storying process.

- The re-storying process should be designed locally, in dialogue with the community.

2. Engage different artists and culture bearers in playing a part in the re-storying process

- Artists practicing different art forms and using various media have complementary roles to play in the re-storying process, according to the element of the practice or of the artistic experience they are called to share with community members.
- An important element when selecting artists to work with is their openness to engage with the community either through artistic experiences or through dialogues, and/or to share about their own practice.
- Artists can be local artists or artists that have prior community engagement experience.
- When identifying artists to engage, prior work in relation to our connection to the Earth may be more relevant than an art practice addressing climate change exclusively. Artists focusing on repair, healing and societal transformation should also be considered.
- Artists should be involved in the co-design of the re-storying process, alongside community members, to ensure that their experience informs the whole experience.

3. Know that free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) is a prerequisite to engaging with Indigenous Peoples

- When engaging with Indigenous Peoples, it is critical to apply the principle of free, prior and informed consent in all activities designed and implemented together, particularly when it comes to the use and dissemination of elements of Indigenous Peoples' knowledge systems and practices. Please ensure to align with your local FPIC standards as these may vary across countries and cultures.
- It is also important to acknowledge that permaculture and foundational elements of regenerative agriculture stem from Indigenous Peoples' knowledge systems and practices (see the proposal of a [Principle Zero for permaculture](#)). Community projects provide an opportunity for such acknowledgement.

- Promoting narrative sovereignty and inclusive leadership that engages culture bearers in telling their stories and contributing to restoration planning are some of the ways we can acknowledge the foundations provided by Indigenous Peoples' knowledge and practices.

4. Sustain community engagement by taking regular steps towards implementation

- Community engagement is critical in the re-storying process and needs to be sustained to ensure that the new story is owned and leads to enhanced local action towards climate resilience and regeneration.
- A way to ensure engagement is to translate elements of the new story into changes and novel initiatives to be implemented by the community organization or local government as they emerge. This will help deepen the re-storying work and foster a virtuous circle of engagement. This involves keeping engaging in processes of dreaming, planning, doing and celebrating. Celebrating entails also learning from the action so as to improve its design or rethink the following action.
- Community members are likely to experience strong emotions as they engage in the different phases of the re-storying process. It is critical to make space for those emotions, including for grief, and integrate them into the process with care, so as to sustain community engagement. One way to integrate those emotions is to keep the dialogue open and acknowledge that different community members will come to this re-storying space with different sensitivities, anxieties and blindspots.

5. Share your learnings to support other re-storying processes worldwide

- As more communities engage in re-storying processes, sharing stories of such processes can help foster a broader global movement.
- It is possible to join our online community platform to engage with other stakeholders committed to the re-storying process and to directly benefit from technical advice from the project partners, and other members of the community.

B. Recommendations to artists

1. Know that you have more to offer than you may realize

- Not addressing climate change directly in your work is not a barrier to supporting transformative cultural change with a view to building climate resilience and fostering regeneration. Exploring and re-building our relationships to ourselves/our bodies, to others and to nature is at the heart of the inner and outer work that needs doing today.
- The quality of the support you can bring to the community is less related to the recognition of your art on the arts market, and more tied to your deep experience of the artistic creation process and to your willingness to share it and/or engage others in artistic practices.
- Having an intimate knowledge of the community you wish to support is not a prerequisite. In some cases, being an outsider can facilitate trust building processes and engagement of community members from various population groups and generations.
- Do not hesitate to reach out to the community organizations and local governments, particularly when they are engaging in planning and preparation for climate action. You may need to explain the value of integrating arts-based practices in building climate resilience and fostering regeneration. Feel free to build on this guidance document for that purpose, and to craft a new role for artists locally.

2. Identify where your art and experience may be the most impactful

- Start engaging with a community to identify what resonates best with them while responding to their long-term needs. Early discomfort on the part of the participants is not an indication that the approach is not successful as many community members are not used to engaging with the arts or artistic practices.
- Engage in conversations both with community organizers/ the local government and participants to gain more granular insights into elements of your approach that feel expansive, and elements that may require changes.

Short (online surveys) at the end of workshops or events can also provide helpful information.

- Experiment and learn from other artists when engaging in community work. Collaboration with other artists and co-facilitation of events can also help acquire new knowledge, tools and methods in a mutually beneficial way. Both other artists and learning resources can be accessed through our [online community platform](#).
- In case local community organizers or local governments do not show interest in the collaboration, and depending on the art practice, it may also be possible to work online by creating a new transnational community of citizens committed to building climate resilience and fostering regeneration.

3. Look for support at the junction of culture and environment

- As more funding organizations become aware of the value of mobilizing the arts and artists for sustainability purposes, more funding becomes available through public bodies and foundations. Such funding may also be categorized under the umbrella of 'artivism', which is a contraction of art + activism.
- Some transnational networks and European bodies in particular are also dedicated to supporting artists engaging with sustainability. More resources are available on [our community platform](#).

C. Recommendations in the case of Global South/ Global North collaboration

1. Establish collaboration between Global South and Global North if you wish to offer potent learning experiences

- If you are in the Global North, inviting artists or culture bearers from the Global South (who generally have first hand experience of extreme weather events and other climate change impacts) to share their stories can offer a powerful learning experience to the community.

It will help make the climate crisis more tangible, if need be, and enhance community members' understanding of the scale and devastation of climate change impacts. However, special consideration needs to be given to the design of those events so as not to reinforce stereotypes and existing power relationships between a 'vulnerable' Global South and an 'empathizing' or 'charitable' Global North. Such events should be an opportunity to question those stereotypes and the primary reactions of the community members, so as to start building more reciprocal relationships rooted in an understanding of joint histories and complex interdependencies.

- Collaboration between artists and culture bearers from the Global South and the Global North can help identify convergences and divergences regarding the experience of climate change, as well as concerning their practices in mobilizing the arts in addressing the crisis. In turn, this collaboration can broaden the artists' respective repertoires of tools and methods to be used with communities, and enhance their impact.

- It is critical to explore spaces of convergence where the shared realities of both Global South and Global North can be leverage points for climate action

2. Create conditions for safety and respect to be at the core of such collaboration

- Such conditions for safety need to be in place for the artists and culture bearers from the Global South to be welcome and to have their stories as well as knowledge systems and practices respected by the communities with whom they are invited to share.

- Ensuring safety and respect despite colonial continuities and institutional racism is likely to require specific training related to antiracism and confronting colonialism in relation to climate change, on the part of the community organizer or local government in the Global North.

- It is important to fully integrate the principles of free, prior and informed consent when interacting with knowledge and practices shared by Indigenous Peoples.

- As strong emotions can come up on all sides, particularly when addressing topics such as colonial continuities and climate injustice, it is important to

create some spaces (including possibly separate spaces) where such emotions can be expressed in a way that does not harm either party.

3. Apply learnings from this collaboration to other community processes involving diverse population groups

- Learning gained regarding safety and respect from collaboration between the Global South and the Global North can be applied to dialogues taking place at community levels when members of the community are from the Global South or are people of color.

- Collaboration with artists or culture bearers belonging to Indigenous Peoples from the Global South can also help rethink our relationship with traditional ecological knowledge held by nature custodians in the Global North, and better integrate it in climate action, climate resilience building and regeneration processes.

"Thank you so much for the opportunity, it is like the opportunity of a lifetime. I also learned a lot from what you do, how you love your landscape, how you do your work. I just felt so loved. Thank you so much for the organizers. It is a very beautiful project."

"This project made me feel empowered as to what I can do as an artist. Excited to collaborate more and see what we can all do. Happy to see how we can influence each other as we are apart and meet together in person again. My heart is so full."

WHAT ARE OUR NEXT STEPS?

The next steps of the Re-Storying project are threefold:

Our collaboration with the artists and culture bearers who took part in the Re-storying project continues through exhibitions both in-person and online, communication on their work, as well as through the organization of regular meetings to keep track of their collaborations with various communities. This long term collaboration enables us to collect data and assess the impact of the learning experience we offered to the artists and culture bearers, both online and through the residency at Hawkwood. Consequently, we will be able to improve the design and facilitation of our future Re-Storying projects for artists and culture bearers from the Global South and North, when offering it to new cohorts.

The three partner organizations are also engaging in further exploring the role of artists and culture bearers in addressing loss and damage associated with climate change, including through research with a focus on the Global South. We are looking for additional collaboration to deepen this critical work, for which we could mobilize significant data and experience gathered through this project. One of our key objectives is to further study the role and impact of transdisciplinary approaches in assessing loss and damage, and to garner support for new projects in that field. We would like to collaborate with other organizations, both in the arts and climate change fields, from both Global South and North, who are interested in these questions.

We wish to widely disseminate this guidance material, as well as the toolkit developed for the Philippines' context, in order to support the development of new re-storying efforts, in collaboration with artists and culture bearers in multiple communities and diverse regions of the world. In the Philippines, we have seen how place-based and locally-owned re-storying processes can offer the most solid foundations to climate resilience building efforts that address the root causes of the climate crisis. Those efforts also foster sustained engagement towards ecosystem regeneration. Moreover, we are witnessing the positive impacts of this project in Stroud, around the Hawkwood Centre for Future Thinking.

We would like many other communities to experience the benefits of this approach and engage in transformative cultural change so as to limit climate change impacts and loss of biodiversity today. Therefore we invite you to help us disseminate this guidance material, and to report on its impact, including by [joining our online community](#).

For further exchanges, please get in touch:

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Photo by Hanz Florentino

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