

## PROJECT OUTLINE

### **1 CONTEXT**

Co-OS will create an open access and distributed environment for individuals (artists, producers, coders, audiences, researchers etc) to high-end innovation, research and development within institutions, and these institutions will be provided with access to new ideas, skills and knowledge. This will generate new opportunities, practices and collaborations in mutually beneficial or reciprocal relationships capitalising on available resources and those generated through new non-monetary trading model.

The Co-OS model is influenced on the established 'Local Exchange Trading System' (LETS) model. LETS are local community-based mutual aid networks in which people exchange all kinds of goods and services with one another, without the need for money. This influence is integrated with contemporary models of online distributed communities using web 2.0 technologies such as tagging, blogging, streaming media and dynamic media posting. It uses interest-free credit so direct swaps does not need to be made. For instance, a member may earn credit by providing software-programming skills for one person and spend it later on access to another member's technological resources. Each transaction is recorded and generated by the network software system and evaluated by its members in a distributed relationship with all data open to all members, in a mutual credit system.

The design and functionality of Co-OS extends on the LETS model by implementing a range of 'open' principals and practices, along with associated licensing agreements, that have been propagated mainly by activities and innovations in the field of computing. It builds on a combination of online schemes such as Community Recycling Network and social networking sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook. It also looks to develop established tools such as Rhizome and lists such as Spectre, Nettime, Syndicate, Empyre and CRUMB. These latter initiatives are based on theory around outcomes and intellectual development of the field.

Co-OS by contrast will be created on an experiential and theoretical understanding of shared networks and resources forming a major part of media arts culture. It is intended to address practical issues around production and practice that leads up to the dissemination of works of art. Media arts is a resource heavy field which relies on good will and exchange in order to function. Co-OS aims to address these issues and to attach value to the actions and services that people provide in a network and to formalise that exchange of knowledge within media arts. It also looks to expand the resources out beyond traditional geographical networks through e-learning/exchange and knowledge sharing online.

#### **Proven Need**

i-DAT and its partners on Co-OS have identified that opportunities provided by institutions and technologies are not holding the Creative Economy sector back (on a global scale), but that there is a critical need for a new model for a creative social network on a local, national and international level and for access to resources, skills and knowledge essential to create an environment that fosters high quality art and creative production. Co-OS here embraces and incorporates the new opportunities offered by a distributed network and new social networking tools to create a new creative currency.

Co-OS is being created on an experiential, anecdotal and theoretical understanding of

shared networks and resources forming a major part of creative industries 'working culture'. It is intended to address practical issues around production and practice that leads up to the dissemination of works. Primarily but not exclusively these works would have been previously described as 'New Media' products, however as these practices and processes are now endemic to all areas of the sector such distinctions are worthless. This sector is a resource heavy field that relies on good will and exchange in order to function. Co-OS aims to address these issues and to attach value to the actions and services that people provide in a network and to formalise that exchange of knowledge within the sector. It also looks to expand the resources out beyond traditional geographical networks through e-learning/exchange and knowledge sharing online. A major part of the scheme will be to measure the value that is placed on particular activities and resources and how this fits into the creative economy.

According to the recent NESTA Research report: *Creating Innovation, Do the creative industries support innovation in the wider economy?* (Bakhshi, H. et al. February 2008) there are huge assumptions made about the creative industries sector.

"There is also a widespread belief that the 'creative economy', as a focal point for creativity, has a particularly important role to play in innovation throughout the economy (Potts, 2007). But there is little quantitative evidence for this." (Bakhshi, H. 2008)

Co-OS has the potential to provide highly accurate data on the behavior and activities of its participants. To date the Web 2.0 environments such as the Community Recycling Network and social networking sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook and established tools such as Rhizome and lists such as Spectre, Nettime, Syndicate, Empyre and CRUMB provide network of links, contacts and information exchange. However, there is no facility to build an open exchange of human and technical resources which can be openly 'traded' and valued by the community. In a distributed region such as the South West, networks are focused on urban centres which undermine to potential offered by digital technologies geographical independence. Co-OS effectively separates location from the production process by placing a tangible value on traditionally ephemeral 'artefacts' such as ideas and social networks.

## **2 AIMS & BENEFITS**

### **Aims**

- To establish strong cross-national and cultural partnerships
- To raise awareness of the value of shared resources
- To measure the concept of value in media arts through the Co-OS system and its findings
- To work in partnership with organisations that already have considerable experience of media arts and are looking at new ways of working
- To create a lasting body of outputs and findings that can be further transferred to the media arts sector and academia
- To demonstrate the value of mutual exchange and to effect beneficial change and enhance the creative economy initially of Europe and Brazil
- To create an evaluation platform of international exchange, sharing of knowledge and partnership created

### **Longterm benefits and outcomes of Co-here:**

#### **Artists:**

- The provision of new resources, skills and knowledge for creative practitioners.
- Access to an international network of other creative practitioners.
- Access to a 'toolbox' of cutting edge technologies.
- Supporting a critical debate around digital art and technology and other related issues, such as 'bright green' sustainable agendas, bio and transgenic art etc.
- Develop and promote new and experimental model for creative practices and exchange.
- Provide a rich source of critique of artist's work and an international framing of creative practice.
- Novel interactions with audiences and other artists and organisations.
- Effective and productive collaborations with other artists, organisations and interdisciplinary interactions.

#### **Audiences:**

- Provide new experiences of contemporary digital art and technology.
- New opportunities to engage with artists and their work.
- Opportunities to feed back to artists and arts organisations.
- Engender a high level and critical interaction and participation in creative works.
- Bring new works and artists with an international agenda.

#### **Innovation:**

- Promotion of new interdisciplinary collaborations on a local, national and global level.
- New evaluation and trading models for creative practitioners.
- Creating a sustainable and distributed model for the reciprocal exchange of knowledge, skill, idea and resources amongst and across sectors.
- Enabling open sharing of knowledge, skill, ideas and resources between developed and developing economies.
- Develop new insights and opportunities by incorporating the creative and artistic process with other investigative and research processes.

#### **Partners:**

- Championing of new and emerging forms of creative practice.
- Engage a wider range of artists and audiences in the development of new and emerging practice.
- Creating and empowering a source/pool/network of creative practitioners and projects to further partners' agenda
- To continue to build on partners' audiences and provide them with new mechanisms to engage with contemporary digital art.
- To enhance the role of the partners as a centre for cultural investigation on a local, national and international level.

### 3 PROJECT OUTPUTS

The roots of a shared European cultural heritage are embedded in centuries of migratory flows and creative exchanges. With the advent of digital software and hardware technologies these processes of cultural propagation can now extend beyond geographical boundaries to encircle the globe. Europe has much to benefit from a much wider cultural influence through this global embrace.

The UK is a leading hub in the global creative economy, offering artistic freedom, opportunity to experiment and the possibility of openness and sharing of resources, but at the same time the UK looks to other parts of the world for ideas, inspiration and synergy. It is therefore the UK's responsibility to ensure it increases opportunities for creative exchange, sharing of skills and resources, initiating networks for dialogue between artists, creative entrepreneurs, technologists and researchers.

The project emphasizes the huge potential of working with people and cultural institutions that have a multiplicity of different experiences, needs and working contexts. Most importantly it provides a nurturing framework to support and shape the development of artistic communities, institutions and practices. The project has the potential to be instrumental in formalising the unique approaches that emerge from this melting pot of innovation, channelling them to address and invigorate the more established and traditional policies of South East Europe and the UK. It is an initiative that fosters novel interventions, cross border collaborations and mutual understanding.

As a cultural brokerage and social networking project Co-OS facilitates a radical new network model of global collaborative creative production, allowing for the flow and exchanges of creativity, knowledge, resources, views, and artistic expression. It will reach out to citizens, encouraging engagement in social and technological innovation through multi-level dialogue of partnership and sharing, and nurture a cross-cultural environment between Britain and the diverse cultures of South East Europe and Brazil.

Co-OS's ambition is to encourage openness, the generation of free content and services, collaboration and sharing of resources, all distinctive characteristics of the Internet. The intention is to encourage new and exciting creative and artistic opportunities that emerge and profit from openness rather than control and protection.

Co-OS will initially be developed through the partnership with the six listed organisations, (Amorphy, tat ort, Plymouth Arts Centre, SCAN, Galeria Vermelho and i-DAT), and its initial membership base and projects to engage South East Europe, the UK and Brazil. Its future ambition is to become a sustainable platform for international collaboration, freely available and accessible to all, irrelevant of geographical location.

## The project will deliver the following outputs:

1. **Non-monetary trading & creative exchange system**  
establish a non-monetary trading & exchange system for creative and artistic production, research and resources through a social networking platform
2. **Value system / create a new creative currency**  
establish a value system to the actions and services that people provide in a network and to formalise that exchange of knowledge within creative production
3. **New collaborative opportunities**  
generate new opportunities, practices and collaborations in mutually beneficial or reciprocal relationships
4. **Increased resources**  
capitalise on and make available resources previously inaccessible across national and cultural borders
5. **Open Access**  
Increase access to resources ( high-end innovation, research and development, knowledge) for all (individuals, producers, creatives, artists, resources and 'audiences')
6. **Accessibility**  
Increase open/free access to Co-OS in cultural venues, through partnership with organisations. These access points would be used as a tools for Co-OS members residencies, local artists, to access and develop international projects.
7. **Intercultural dialogue**  
develop a forum for intercultural dialogue across cultures
8. **Partnerships**  
forge strong partnerships, initially focusing on UK, SE Europe and Brazilian partners, providing opportunities to bring together artists, creatives and researchers to initiate dialogues across international borders, enabling pairs of artists to enter into new working relationships on an open-ended and informal basis.
9. **Evaluation system**  
build an evaluation system for visualising the data (qualitative and quantitative) generated by cultural exchanges, ( can be used to measure impact in the countries/local communities involved)
10. **Knowledge exchange**  
expand knowledge exchange, for all, beyond traditional geographical networks
11. **Alternative IP models**  
Support alternative Intellectual Property licensing models encouraging openness rather than control and protection of content. Use generated factual evidence and impact studies to influence and lobby innovation in Intellectual Property models within UK/SEE policy

## These outputs can be categorised in the following practical deliverables:

1. **The partnership**  
A partnership between Amorphy, tat ort, Plymouth Arts Centre, SCAN, Galeria Vermelho and i-DAT to collaborate on the delivery of a new non-monetary trading & exchange system for creative and artistic production, research and resources. The long-term ambition of the Co-OS project is to continue to grow such partnerships across cultures.
2. **A dynamic web site**  
With the following functions:
  - **Forum** – discussion forum for members
  - **Member space** – individuals space for each member, with their skills, biography, resources offered, rating and current trading credits listed
  - **Groups** – groups set up on the basis of interest
  - **Market** – trading of skills, resources and knowledge
  - **Ideas** – an space for sharing ideas

- **Search** – search for users, skills, knowledge, members in geographical locations etc.
- **Backend Administration** – content management
- **Backend Stats System** – statistical data on all users and transactions

### 3. Awareness Campaign

Co-OS will engage individuals, communities and institutions, (online and offline), through the production of an awareness campaign, distributing information and marketing, (through traditional media and online viral technologies), tapping into partners local and global distributed networks.

Part of this process will involve identifying, securing and informing free computer access points through partnership with cultural institutions in the partnership countries.

### 4. Knowledge dissemination & project promotion

Each partner is given a budget of £500 to send a representative from their country to a key international creative economy / cultural event, to present and disseminate the Co-OS project, its model, benefits and findings. The partner will also be required to report and disseminate all knowledge gathered at these events to the Co-OS community.

### 5. 4 igniting Co-OS commissions

Four media arts commissions for collaborative work will be developed by the respective partners in each of the four partner countries, (Austria, Brazil, Greece and UK), under the framework of 'Network ecologies and collaborative economies'. Each commission will have a budget of £3k and be developed through the Co-OS non-monetary trading system. The funds made available for the commissions will cover material and technology costs, as well as support the engagement and audiences development. The production itself will be developed through the Co-OS community.

These four projects will be key in igniting the Co-OS network and stimulate its first transactions of skills, resources and knowledge. It is also reflective of the limited funds commonly available for media arts commissions, and offers Co-OS as a resource to underpin and enrich the potential of such productions.

### 6. Publication

A publication will be produced at the end of the project year, documenting the Co-OS projects together with an impact study of its alternative Intellectual Property and trading model. The publication will be designed through the Co-OS network. It will aim to engage and inform potential members, the public and to influence innovation in UK/SEE policy.

## 4 PARTNERSHIPS

The partnerships are:

- **i-DAT**, UK, [www.i-dat.org](http://www.i-dat.org)
- **Amorphy**, Greece, [www.amorphy.org](http://www.amorphy.org)
- **tat ort**, Austria, [www.tat-ort.net](http://www.tat-ort.net)
- **Plymouth Arts Centre**, UK, <http://www.plymouthartscentre.org>
- **SCAN**, UK, <http://www.scansite.org>
- **Galeria Vermelho**, Brazil, [www.galeriavermelho.com](http://www.galeriavermelho.com)

Trans-European creative collaborations are established engines of the global creative economy, drawing talent from many other countries and benefiting from the cultural diversity offered through its partnerships with near neighbours. This project reaches into the Southern hemisphere to extend creative potential. This initiative is synergetic a focus in recent years on investment for creating cultural links between the UK and Brazil.

Brazil, a multicultural and multiethnic society, a true melting pot, with roots from Native Americans, Portuguese, Africans, Italians, Germans, Spanish, Arabs and Japanese, amongst some, is rich in diversity, but with severe problems with unequal distribution of wealth, and previously few financial resources available for creative and cultural production. As a result, its creative and cultural forces (in individuals, organisations and companies), has become adept at sourcing alternative resources, testing new models for production, experimenting and being innovative in the way opportunities are developed. The UK and Europe can learn and benefit from adopting such strategies.

The debates over the intellectual property systems, access to knowledge, and free and open source software are raging worldwide, but perhaps nowhere so much as in Brazil. Through the Creative Commons Brazil project both artists and non-governmental organisations in Brazil has taken up such licensing models. Other examples of such initiatives are the Free Software Legal Support Group, the Cultura Livre (Free Culture) project, and the Open Business project.

**The partnership between the UK, the South East Europe and the Brazilian partners would have the following benefits:**

- Through implementing the network, (of collaborative links, open exchanges, joint productions and development opportunities), with Brazil, UK and SEE countries can learn and benefit from already established and integrated models of openness and intellectual property.
- The diversity of Brazilian culture and its innovative and creative approaches can benefit and influence the Co-OS network and developments in SEE and UK, championing new and emerging forms of creative practice.
- Artists, creatives and researches in Brazil, would benefit from access to new resources and opportunities from SEE and UK partners
- Encouraging an in-depth understanding of diverse cultural scenes in both Brazil and Europe, promoting a cross-cultural environment between UK, SEE and other culture
- Placing shared knowledge and innovation at centre in ensuring Brazil, SEE countries and the UK further invests in the economic potential of the creative economy

## **4 EVALUATION**

The Co-here's backend statistical system will record all transactions and provide highly accurate data on the behaviours and activities of all its participants. It would provide a deeper understanding of collaboration through the visual mapping of this process. A major part of the project will be to measure all exchanges within the system as well as the value that is placed on particular activities, resources and knowledge, and comparative study on how this fits into the creative economy.

The project will be developed and managed through an open method of coordination. This method consists of agreeing common objectives with the partners, regularly following up progress towards them and exchanging best practice and relevant data in order to foster mutual learning and contribution from all involved.

All activities will be evaluated against Co-here's project objectives through the following mechanisms:

- Through discussions with the project partners and British Council representatives
- Stage by stage evaluation. Each project stage will be required the production of an individual report
- Through a dialogue with and critical appraisal from Co-OS members

At the end of the project a publication and impact study of all Co-OS activities and findings will be produced and distributed to all involved parties.

## **5 SUSTAINABILITY**

Co-OS employs a self-generating model that actively supports sharing of the necessary skills and knowledge needed by its community. The accounting mechanisms built into the system ensure that all participants gain a credible understanding of the value of their contribution. These strategies, combined with the strength of the community assembled for this application, will ensure that the network will rapidly establish itself, embedding itself into the working practices of the community, forming a highly sustainable system.

The ambition of Co-OS is to increase its growth and to become freely available and accessible to all, irrelevant of geographical location. With a potential increased uptake, and increase in unique users, the prospect of incorporating monetization strategies, used for similar Web 2.0 projects such as Amazon, Facebook, Myspace, could be possible, further securing funds for future developments and sustainability.