



INITIAL CROSS-FERTILISATION ACTIVITIES REPORT (2020)

DISSEMINATION LEVEL	PUBLIC (PU)
WORK PACKAGE	WP3 COMMUNITY OPERA CO-CREATION
DELIVERABLE NUMBER	D3.4
VERSION	V3.0
SUBMISSION DATE	21/12/2020
DUE DATE	31/12/2020



Authors

Authors in alphabetical order		
Name	Organisation	Email
François Matarasso	FM	matarasso@me.com

Control sheet

Version history			
Version	Date	Modified by	Summary of changes
0.0	14 October 2020	FM	Beginning document
1.0	30 November 2020	FM	Document complete
2.0	14 December 2020	FM	Final draft complete
3.0	21 December 202	FM	Amendments from reviewer 1

Peer review		
	Reviewer name	Date
Reviewer 1	Mikel Zorrilla	20/12/2020
Reviewer 2	Camille Donegan	22/12/2020

Legal disclaimer

The information and views set out in this deliverable are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the European Union. The information in this document is provided “as is”, and no guarantee or warranty is given that the information is fit for any specific purpose. Neither the European Union institutions and bodies nor any person acting on their behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained therein. The TRACTION Consortium members shall have no liability for damages of any kind including without limitation direct, special, indirect, or consequential damages that may result from the use of these materials subject to any liability which is mandatory due to applicable law. Copyright © TRACTION Consortium, 2020.



Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
1 INTRODUCTION	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
1.1 The TRACtion concept	6
1.2 Purpose of the deliverable	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.3 Intended audience	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2 CROSS-FERTILISATION ACTIVITIES	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
2.1 The purpose of the activities	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.2 The approach taken	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3 CROSS-FERTILISATION ACTIVITIES IN 2020	9
3.1 Partnership meetings	9
3.1.1 February 2020	9
3.1.2 May 2020	9
3.2 Trial team meetings	10
3.2.1 Cross-fertilisation workshop 1: 6 April 2020	10
3.2.2 Cross-fertilisation workshop 2: 11 May 2020	10
3.2.3 Cross-fertilisation workshop 3: 18 May 2020	11
3.2.4 Cross-fertilisation workshop 4: 15 June 2020	11
3.2.5 Cross-fertilisation workshop 5: 13 July 2020	11
3.2.6 Cross-fertilisation workshop 6: 28 September 2020	12
3.2.7 Cross-fertilisation workshop 7: 5 October 2020	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.2.8 Social evening	13
4 CONCLUSION	17
4.1 Assessment of progress	17
4.2 Plans for 2021	20



Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
CASMP	Creative, Artistic and Social Management Plan
DoA	Description of Action
EC	European Commission
FM	François Matarasso
INO	Irish National Opera
LICEU	El Gran Teatre del Liceu
SAMP	Sociedade Artística Musical dos Pousos
WP	Work Package



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report concerns the TRACTION project's approach to cross-fertilisation during its first year (2020). TRACTION researches how new digital technology can facilitate opera co-creation with communities at risk of social exclusion and involves three separate, but connected, community opera trials, taking place in Spain (LICEU), Ireland (INO) and Portugal (SAMP).

One strength of this approach lies in the distinctiveness of each trial, which enlarges the range of TRACTION's research into different situations and problematics and permits the sharing of ideas, experiences and methods across the trials. The cross-fertilisation activities provide a formal structure for this and a methodology to support the process. [Part One](#) of this report outlines the reasoning behind this approach and the approach taken.

[Part Two](#) provides a detailed account of cross-fertilisation activities in 2021, divided into (1) Partnership meetings; (2) Opera trials team sessions, including meetings with people outside the consortium; (3) Work to strengthen conceptual coherence of TRACTION; and (4) Other related activities, notably commissioned essays and blogging.

[Part Three](#) is an assessment of progress made in these activities, based partly on feedback from the people concerned. The work is evaluated as successful both in its content and in building a better understanding across the consortium of the key concepts and methods at the heart of the project. Some areas for improvement and development are noted, particularly in finding better ways to involve the technology partners.

The principal difficulty has been the necessity to conduct almost all work online because of the travel restrictions imposed by the Covid 19 pandemic. As a result, activities which had been planned to take place over longer periods and face-to-face were telescoped into an online format. Although this may have meant more regular contact, it also presented some significant limitations, especially in as regards to the experiential aspect of the exchange. It is one thing to discuss work in a prison online: it is another to do it in a prison and meet some of the inmates involved.

The report also includes, as an [appendix](#), the glossary of terms and concepts developed during the year to clarify key ideas and build mutual understanding between the partners.



1 TRACTION AND CROSS-FERTILISATION

1.1 TRACTION

Opera uses all the visual and performing arts to create extraordinary experiences of passion, ideas and sensibility. It is rightly recognized as a great achievement of European culture and yet a form that has inspired social and artistic change is now often seen as the staid preserve of elites. [TRACTION](#) is a three-year research project that aims to reveal opera as a path for social and cultural inclusion, and a factor in positive social change. It does not aim to make opera palatable to those who don't attend but find new ways in which marginalized groups (people living in poverty, migrants, young offenders, people with disabilities and others) can co-create opera performances with professional artists to tell stories that matter to them, and reconnect the form with its potential for social change.

By combining best practice in participatory art with digital technology's innovations of language, form and process, TRACTION explores new approaches to co-creation, and innovate in three fields:

- Opera creation and production;
- Immersive and interactive digital media; and
- Social integration and community development.

Experimental trials in inner-city Barcelona ([LICEU](#)), a youth prison in Portugal ([SAMP](#)) and three rural and peripheral communities in Ireland ([INO](#)) are testing new ideas in partnership with the other members of the TRACTION consortium: [Vicomtech](#), [CWI](#), [Virtual Reality Ireland](#), [Dublin City University](#), [Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona](#) and [François Matarasso](#). TRACTION is funded by the European Commission through the [Horizon 2020](#) programme.

1.2 Cross-fertilisation activities within TRACTION

1.2.1 Purpose: a shared process of investigation

TRACTION is rooted in the belief that co-operation within and beyond the European cultural space is vital to the development of new and better research. Europe's diversity produces different ideas in different contexts, but often responding to common problems. The three strands of the TRACTION project – social inclusion, opera co-creation and digital technology – concern people across the continent, but their realities are not the same in rural Ireland as in the centre of Barcelona. Nor are the people and institutions concerned: a music school in Leiria does not approach co-creation like a venerable opera house; a private sector content producer has other priorities than a public research institution.

Differences can be challenging – language, culture and professional interests all create obstacles to understanding in a partnership such as this – but they are also a vital resource in research. It is the differences between the TRACTION partners that create opportunities for exchange and learning, and that permit the creation of new knowledge beyond what might



be achieved by any of the partners working alone, beyond the simple sharing of products and information. Cross-disciplinary consultation can help, but it is far less ambitious than TRACTION's comprehensive partnership approach.

Cross-fertilisation is an added-value of this partnership working, taking it beyond simple collaboration to a shared process of investigation in which the partners' diverse concerns challenge and illuminate each other's expectations. For example, co-creation can mean different things even within the field of artistic practice, a spectrum that is extended by its uses in new technology, and the ethical concerns of research. But beneath those differences lies unexpected common ground. How power is negotiated and distributed is the determining issue in all co-creation practice. It is ideas such as these that are clarified in the cross-fertilisation process, as the grant agreement makes clear:

The TRACTION project aims at a joint and agreed view on issues such as diversity, social inclusion and community participation; and the approach in each trial to achieve it. The trials that will be developed in the project will work with different communities and in different environments but they all share the common goals of increasing cohesions between participants in the trial, making opera known to wider audiences and change it in a way that makes it more accessible, more appealing and useful as a tool of societal transformation. For this reason, the consortium believes that strong collaboration and cross-fertilization between different trials is one of the priorities of the project and that each trial could greatly benefit by sharing its work with the others. (DoA Part B, p. 16)

1.2.2 Cross-fertilisation activities

The TRACTION Grant agreement describes what is meant by cross-fertilisation in Task 3.4, which runs throughout the project timeline and involves all partners.

This task will act as a bridge between the three different trials and will investigate how the experience and ideas of each trial can enrich and contribute to the success of the others. Moreover, it will explore new bridges with new trials or nodes that could be driven by Advisory Board members or external communities. This task will ensure the effective and frequent communications between participants of the trials and will explore how the tools developed in WP2 could be used to allow communication and knowledge transfer between communities, professionals and facilitators across the trial. (DoA Part A, p. 19)

In this description, the core of cross-fertilisation activity relates to ensuring that the learning that emerges from the three trial activities is shared between them, within the wider partnership (with special emphasis on the technology partners) and eventually beyond it. It is important to see this as an active, not a passive, process. The purpose of sharing 'the experience and ideas of each trial' is to test them among peers and others with specialist expertise (including the International Advisory Team), so that the knowledge produced by the trials is as clear, robust and relevant as possible.

This also concerns language and publications within TRACTION. As a Horizon 2020 research project, TRACTION will publish its findings in a range of forms and outlets to reach the widest possible audience within its fields, including through Open Research Europe. At the same time, we are committed to involving non-academic audiences, especially professionals in



the field of opera and artistic co-creation. The members of the International and national advisory teams also have an important role in this.

The advisory board will also be actively involved in the cross-trial collaboration by providing expertise, sharing the knowledge acquired in previous community opera projects and suggesting other communities which can participate in future trials. (DoA Part B, p. 16)

At this stage, with the trials at an early stage, we do not yet have much to interest this audience, especially when it faces an existential crisis as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic, but the cross-fertilisations activities provide opportunities to link TRACTION trials, communities and artists, as described in [Part Two](#) of this report.

1.2.3 The TRACTION approach to cross-fertilisation activities

As set out in the Grant Agreement, consortium partner François Matarasso (FM) is responsible for leading on the definition and implementation of collaboration strategies and helping the technological partners in the definition of the tools that will favour cross-collaboration (DoA Part b, page 16). During 2020, this work has involved four main areas:

- Input to Partnership management, evaluation and testing activities;
- Workshops and discussions with community opera trial teams and others;
- Ensuring the conceptual coherence of the community opera trials; and
- Other activities to encourage awareness of TRACTION's ideas in the field.

[Part Two](#) of the report describes what has been done in 2020 in each of these areas, while [Part Three](#) assesses progress to date and initial plans for 2021. In considering these, it should be borne in mind that all TRACTION activities involving more than one member of the consortium make a contribution to cross fertilisation. The line between the activities reported here and the rest of the programme is porous.

The public health restrictions imposed to limit the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic have had a major impact on every aspect of TRACTION's work. Cross-fertilisation activities, which depend so much on connecting people from different countries, have been especially disrupted. Only the kick-off meeting in February 2020, at Vicomtech in Donostia/San Sebastián was face-to-face (and the partnership was very lucky with the timing of that). The consequences of the travel restrictions are assessed in [section 3.1.2](#) below, but it should be understood at the outset that all the cross-fertilisation activities had to be undertaken remotely, which was neither desirable nor as originally planned.



2 CROSS-FERTILISATION ACTIVITY IN 2020

2.1 Partnership meetings

2.1.1 Kick-off meeting: February 2020

The TRACTION kick-off meeting held from 3-5 February 2020 at Vicomtech in San Sebastián (Spain) allowed the whole team to come together for the first time. It was the first opportunity to begin sharing ideas and experiences between partners with very different backgrounds. As set out in the grant agreement, a large part of the meeting was dedicated to organising cross-trial collaboration and putting in place the workflows and protocols to support it. As part of this FM led a session on the principles of TRACTION covering the common vocabulary, core concepts and main goals of the opera trials.

This session began to explore partners' ideas of co-creation, the relative weight given to cultural and social objectives, ideas of success and the aim and objectives for each community opera project. Among the outcomes of this was a TRACTION glossary, where the partners have agreed the meaning of key terms such as co-creation, participant, artist and professional (see appendix). This is a work in progress, with new terms being added as new areas of ambiguity appear through the work. The final version will be a useful resource for others working in this area, and is itself an expression of the cross-fertilisation process.

2.1.2 Partnership meeting: May 2020

The kick-off meeting was unavoidably concerned with issues of process and, more humanly, with people getting to know each other. The second partnership meeting, planned to be held at [Sage](#) in Gateshead (UK), was intended to give everyone a first-hand experience of community opera and co-creation. Sage was chosen partly because it is a leader in the integration of community music and performance and partly so the partners would get to see the premiere of a new community opera, [Song of Our Heartland](#), by [Opera North](#) and [Northern Heartlands](#). Workshops were also arranged with [Streetwise Opera](#) (which works with homeless people and was founded by ICAT member, Matt Peacock) and [The Lawnmowers](#), an independent theatre company of people with learning disabilities.

In the event, of course, the whole programme had to be cancelled as lockdown was imposed in one country after another. The partnership meeting itself was held virtually over two days in late May but, while this enabled the consortium to get its work done, it did little for the more complex business of mutual learning or experiencing artistic co-creation at first hand that would have been possible if the meeting had been able to take place as planned. Instead, as the long-term nature of the health situation became clear, the consortium moved to organise these contacts online as far as possible.



2.2 Community opera trials – Team meetings

When it became evident that the May partnership meeting could not go ahead, the decision was taken to run cross fertilisation activities online. Monthly meetings involving all the trial teams were organised by FM, with an open invitation to all of the other consortium members to join if they wished. Actually, they have rarely taken up this opportunity, which is understandable given the practical difficulties everyone was dealing with in addition to their workload. It is also fair to say that people working outside the arts may not always have felt that the subject under discussion were of primary concern to them. Nonetheless, it is only by encouraging such cross disciplinary conversations will TRACTION fulfil its potential in the development of knowledge and understanding.

For about a third of the cross-fertilisation meetings external guests were invited, and these have proved to be some of the most rewarding of the sessions. They have enabled the trial teams to meet peers working in similar contexts, and to develop their own thinking against a wider body of experience. The rest of the section briefly describes the content of each of the cross-fertilisation workshops in 2020.

2.2.1 Cross-fertilisation workshop 1 6 and 8 April 2020

The first cross-fertilisation workshops were intended to open up the whole question, and give consortium members an opportunity to reflect on what they wanted from this aspect of the project and to begin to map areas on which to focus. The trials face many common issues in the artistic, creative and social aspects of community opera and it was agreed that it would be productive to be able to discuss these and share perspectives. Several topics were proposed:

- Ethics of participation
- Recruitment of participants
- Working with institutions
- The process of co-creation
- Evaluation and social impact

It was also agreed to involve experts beyond the trials, especially people with experience of opera creation, community art and related work: those that have taken place are described later in this paper. FM also suggested commissioning some short ‘think pieces’ from key people in about community opera; two of these essays have been published so far, and are described in [section 2.4.1](#) below.

2.2.2 Cross-fertilisation workshop 2, Šančia Community Association 11 May 2020

The first workshop with external guests was held next, with Ed Carrol and Vita Gelūnienė, who are members of [Žemųjų Šančių bendruomenė](#) (Šančia community association), in Kaunas, Lithuania. The association has been working on a community opera for the past two years, as part of their effort to strengthen and protect the distinctive neighbourhood of lower Šančia. [‘The Cabbage Field Opera’](#) is being created with almost no financial resources, but in a community with many artists and musicians and a long tradition of choral singing.



Ed and Vita shared their experience rooted in community action not a musical institution, and we heard how much could be achieved with very limited resources. Although still a work in progress, the opera has been presented twice between Christmas and New Year, in the open air on the former cabbage field from which it takes its title.

2.2.3 Cross-fertilisation workshop 3 18 May 2020

The next cross-fertilisation workshop was an opportunity for the three trials to share their work and plans to date, and raise issues that they were confronting together. These included the need to work with the instability that vulnerable people live with, which may mean that they cannot always keep commitments that they undertake. The need to anticipate this and have contingency plans in place was considered. Other issues included working across generations, working with rigid hierarchies, and the need to provide people with information in useful and accessible formats. There was also discussion of ethical issues being addressed in the paper on good practice forms and the social impact evaluation.

2.2.4 Cross-fertilisation workshop 4 15 June 2020

The cross-fertilisation session in June occurred while most countries were still on lockdown, or just beginning to ease them, and it remained uncertain when planned work, even meetings with community groups, would be permitted. The session was divided between discussion about the progress of the trials and preparations for the technology tests due to take place in the autumn. This highlighted how different the concepts, language and processes used in testing technology can be from the ways that creative artists think about their work. The participation of Mikel Zorrilla (VICOM) in this meeting was essential in developing understanding between the partners.

2.2.5 Cross-fertilisation workshop 5 13 July 2020

After several meetings that had concentrated on building mutual understanding of the trials themselves, FM proposed a change of approach with cross-fertilisation meetings focussing more on external guests and issues common to the trials, so that separate meetings could be held with each trial to discuss the detail of their work. Since he had been asked to take over as leader of WP3, it made sense for him to support the trials individually, so that the cross-fertilisation activities be focus more clearly on areas of common concern. There would still be regular meetings to talk about practical experiences, as well as the fortnightly partnership meeting, but this approach would give the trial teams more space to step back from everyday concerns and focus on underlying issues. There would be no cross-fertilisation activity in August, because many people were on holiday, and TRACTION would move to the new system in the autumn.

2.2.6 Cross-fertilisation workshop 6, Co-creation with the ICAT 15 July 2020

The work of TRACTION benefits from the input of an International Core Advisory Team (ICAT), which meets twice a year to assist the consortium in reviewing progress in a wider context of current knowledge. After an introductory meeting in May 2020, principally focused on terms of reference and operations, the ICAT was convened to consider the subject



of co-creation. The session included contributions from on co-creation in performing arts Richard Willacy (Birmingham Opera Company) and Matt Peacock (Arts and Homelessness International); in evaluation from Professor Helen Simons (Southampton University); in education and new technology from Tania Banotti (Creative Ireland) and Oriol Pastor; and in social inclusion programmes from Hugo Seabra (Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian). It was a valuable opportunity to test the thinking of the trials and the wider consortium about this concept and its applicability to other disciplines.

2.2.7 Cross-fertilisation workshop 7, Community Dialogue 28 September 2020

The next workshop focused mainly on reviewing community dialogue, in terms of how the trials communicate with participants; how they communicate internally, and how the trials communicate with each other. It was important that this should embrace the full diversity not only of the trials but of the communities that might be involved in artistic co-creation projects within this broad understanding, the discussion considered dialogue not only from a perspective of who is involved or by what methods, but also the way in which power and decisions are shared, and dealing with different people's expectations. In all this, TRACTION needs to identify generally applicable principles that can guide any process of community dialogue for co-creation.

2.2.8 Cross-fertilisation workshop 8: Northern Heartlands Opera 5 October 2020

The next cross-fertilisation workshop returned to the practice of inviting external guests, in this case people involved in the community opera that the partners would have met in their May session in the UK. 'Song of our Heartland' was cancelled because of the lockdown, but after the setback rehearsals continued online and the final production was filmed on location, with a community cast; (the film has since been published on [YouTube](#)). The project organiser, Jill Cole (Northern Heartlands), the composer Will Todd, the director, Caroline Clegg, and a participant, Liz Gill, joined the session to talk about the experience from their own perspective. The discussion was one of the best that the group had yet had and confirmed the value of this approach. The links made with the artists involved in the Northern Heartlands project have continued since the session.

2.2.9 Cross-fertilisation workshop 9: Intellectual Property Rights 2 November 2020

One of the issues that had come up in different ways in each of the trials was around intellectual property rights in co-creation work. This therefore became the focus of the next cross-fertilisation meeting, and FM drafted a paper, based on his own experience and research and on feedback from two advisory team members, to guide the discussion. The session clearly highlighted the complexity of the issues in both legal and ethical terms. It was agreed to develop this thinking further, with a view to eventually publishing the paper for a field where there has been relatively little thought given to this issue. This session also considered community dialogue so that the trials could share their thinking and approach, in preparation for the report on the issue due at the end of the year.



2.2.10 Cross-fertilisation workshop 10: Co-creation in Prisons 2 December 2020

The next workshop returned to the idea of having guest speakers, in this case Alokanda Roy, a classically trained Indian dancer who has been doing remarkable work in a prison in Kolkata (India) since 2007. The session was hugely moving and rewarding for everyone, but especially for SAMP, who found much common ground with Ms Roy's work. It was also a reminder of how transformative these processes can be in people's lives. A blog post about this discussion, [What we talk about when we talk about love](#), has been read over 220 times in ten days.

2.2.11 Cross-fertilisation workshop 11: Composition and co-creation 10 December 2020

It had been planned to bring the community opera composers together in May in Leiria, where they would have time and space to explore ideas and co-creation practices together. In the event, this proved impossible, so an online session was finally held in December with the participation of [Francisco Fontes](#), [Pedro Lima](#), [Nuno da Rocha](#) (SAMP) and [Finola Merivale](#) (INO). Unfortunately, the LICEU composer, [Arnau Tordera](#), did not feel that his command of English would allow him to participate fully, so a recording was made for him to access later. There was a good discussion and FM shared some of his analysis about the different resources that professional and non-professional artists can bring to the co-creation process. Now that they know one another, it would be fruitful to arrange a second meeting to share ideas about composing with non-professional musicians.

2.2.12 Additional cross-fertilisation session: Mediaverse and IPR 2 December 2020

As a result of the work done on IPR within the cross-fertilisation strand, TRACTION was made aware of parallel work in another Horizon 2020 project, [Mediaverse](#). This is supporting 'the creation, enrichment and distribution of next-generation media, by providing users with advanced authoring tools, a blockchain-enabled rights management solution, identification services driven by artificial intelligence and smart contracts that automate cross-network rights negotiation and content monetisation'. The issue of rights management in co-creation was not yet being considered in this context, so a session was convened between TRACTION (represented by FM, UAB and VICOM) and Mediaverse (represented by Pau Pamplona, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona) to explore synergies and opportunities for collaboration. As a result, work will be undertaken to integrate co-creation within the system so that IPR created within and beyond TRACTION could be supported.

2.2.13 Cross-fertilisation workshop 12: Review of trials' progress 14 December 2020

The final workshop of the year had no external participants, but brought the teams back to sharing their thinking about their trials and the progress that had been made. In general, people felt very positive about what had been done and how the team has cohered, with a good structure in place, and effective working relationships. Team interaction is as good as could be hoped for, especially since it has to be online. The atmosphere is always positive and friendly and everyone feels able to express their view and that they are heard. People value highly that TRACTION is a learning project, with a commitment to share knowledge, and take time for reflection. In this respect the cross-fertilisation activities have been



especially good and the outside participants have brought valuable perspectives and experiences that the trial teams feel nourished by.

People recognised that there was still a gap between the artists and the technologists, and that both sides needed to do more to explain the nature and value of their work. There is a real problem arising from their very different ways of thinking and working. The technology and evaluation sides of TRACTION progress scientifically, albeit in different ways, while the artists work more intuitively, by trial and error, exploration and playfulness. TRACTION's strengths arise from the fact that it combines these different epistemologies. It was agreed to have a cross fertilisation session with the artists and the technologists early in the New Year to talk about closer integration in the next stage.

2.2.14 Social evenings

The members of the consortium agreed that being unable to travel and meet together and not only limited their ability to work in the way that had been intended but had also constrained the social relations that nourish any partnership project. Informal conversations during breaks, and social evenings, as well as the opportunity to see work, were all missed in different degrees by everyone. Therefore, in October and November 2020, FM hosted a couple of social evenings, in which people could meet without an agenda (but with a drink) to get to know each other a little better in as easy way as possible over a zoom link. Between a third and a half of the consortium took part and those who did felt it was worthwhile, even if such sessions cannot replace the natural human contact that everyone misses.

2.3 Conceptual coherence

2.3.1 Developing a common understanding

As explained in [Section 1.2.1](#), cross-fertilisation activities play an essential part in strengthening the coherence of the ideas investigated within Traction. The consortium brings together different disciplines and a majority of people for whom its working language, English, is not a mother tongue. Even when the meaning of a word is clear (e.g., 'test'), its use may vary between professional cultures. Artists continually conduct tests as part of their creative process, but they use very different methods from those used by technologists seek to solve a use problem. These differences present obstacles to comprehension, but also reflect the spectrum of knowledge that gives the project its importance

Each discipline has its own epistemology, as do its sub-disciplines: music's language and ways of knowing are not those of theatre. Inviting non-professionals into these processes – for example by creating opera with trained and untrained musicians – adds further layers of complexity and more chance of misunderstanding. This was anticipated in the TRACTION project plan, where the issue is to be addressed through 'strong collaboration and cross-fertilization between different trials.'

That is one of the key tasks of cross-fertilisation activity, and much time has been given to consideration of the central concepts. As part of that process, a [glossary](#) of terms and how they are defined in TRACTION has been developed and is expanded or revised as necessary.



It is likely that this document will have wider interest and applicability and TRACTION will keep open the possibility of publishing it at the end of the project.

2.3.2 Good practice in Artistic Co-creation

The practice of artistic co-creation always involves cooperation between people and organisations with unequal degrees of power in the project and in other situations. If not always an insurmountable problem, this is a lasting reality of social relations. That makes it all the more important to recognise those inequalities in co-creation, to take steps to limit their consequences and above all to protect those with less power, especially when they are also vulnerable for other reasons, such as social exclusion. As part of TRACTION's response to this, FM has produced a working document on good practice in artistic co-creation, to nourish and reflect discussions taking place in the cross-fertilisation workshops. Many of these are essentially ethical, moral or political questions, but the ambiguities of participatory art make them quite distinct from those typically resolved by a research ethics committee. Indeed, the problem is that many of them are not resolvable at all, since they typically balance competing harms or risks. The paper concludes with a quote from Arlene Goldberg, an American specialist in community cultural development:

The key is being able to size up each situation and respond with skill and flexibility. That skill comes with practice. Thinking and talking about values and ethics strengthen our self-knowledge, giving us ethical 'muscles' to handle future challenges. Engaging with these questions, we become more present, skilful, and creative. Then, when ethical challenges arise—as they inevitably will—by knowing ourselves, by together exploring meaning and value in the situation at hand and achieving common understanding of what's at stake, we can find mutually acceptable resolutions and move on.

2.3.3 Creative, Artistic and Social Management Plan

The Creative, Artistic and Social Management Plan, produced in August 2020, is a necessary part of TRACTION's planning activity, but it is also a foundation of the cross-fertilisation process. Its preparation required intensive discussion with each of the community opera trials to identify common ground and variations. As a result, the trial teams have been able to clarify and test their artistic and social aspirations and gain a better understanding of how their peers are approaching the same questions. In establishing a common framework of aim and objectives, it enables meaningful comparisons and contrasts between the trials.

2.4 Other cross-fertilisation activities

2.4.1 Traction essays

During the spring, it was evident that many creative artists were unable to pursue their work. TRACTION took the opportunity to invite three people with significant experience of community opera to write reflective essays for publication on the project website. Two of these – by the composer, Jonathan Dove and the director Bill Bankes-Jones – have now been published, attracting interest and positive comments. From different perspectives, they



explore some of the ways in which co-creation between professional and non-professional artists is different from conventional opera.

2.4.2 Blogging

In addition to blog posts on the TRACTION website, FM has used his own websites, with their established readerships, to reflect on the process of making community opera. [Ten posts](#) have been published since March 2020, with some of them re-blogged to other sites, helping to raise awareness of TRACTION's research more widely.



3 CONCLUSION

3.1 Assessment of progress

3.1.1 Benefits of cross-fertilisation activities

The cross-fertilisation activities between the three community opera trials have been rich and sustained. The monthly meetings have established a regular pace that allows everyone involved to step back from their everyday tasks and consider the wider issues intrinsic to the process of artistic co-creation and social change through creative work. The TRACTION plan sets out the purpose of the cross-fertilisation in some detail.

This task will act as a bridge between the three different trials and will investigate how the experience and ideas of each trial can enrich and contribute to the success of the others.

The activities described in this report explain how TRACTION has achieved this aspect of its plans. Feedback on this requested from the people involved has been very positive:

'Our cross-fertilisation activities have been especially important to [our] team. Right away because listening to leaders of other projects with common objectives, but diverse contexts and audiences is especially enriching. Although zoomed in, it has been possible to feel the energy and motivation of the guests, who leave inspiring examples and testimonies for each of us. It also seems important to us that we can be members of the 3 trials watching and commenting on another project, as it allows us to project ourselves out of our universe, and tune into our common TRACTION ideas.' (TRACTION Consortium member)

'These meetings have been very important, in order, as if it were a mirror, to be able to put into perspective the different types of approaches and methodologies used in the sessions.' (TRACTION Consortium member)

Moreover, it will explore new bridges with new trials or node that could be driven by Advisory Board members or external communities.

By inviting guest speakers to meet with the community opera trials, TRACTION has begun extending the circle of the project to include others concerned with the questions it is investigating. Again, the feedback from members of the TRACTION consortium has been very positive about this external contact. It has been especially valuable to engage with other projects (e.g., Northern Heartlands) that have faced similar challenges as a result of the pandemic.

'It's been really encouraging to see how others arts organisation have acknowledged certain challenges they've faced in their own processes. I think with the situation we're currently in, it can feel very isolating in your practice and these meetings really help counteract that. This has been a good source of inspiration.' (TRACTION Consortium member)

The feedback from external partners has been equally positive, as demonstrated by this assessment of the session by Jill Cole, Director, Northern Heartlands:



'Taking part in the online conversation with TRACtion partners was not only a great joy but also immensely helpful and productive for us at Northern Heartlands. Having the opportunity to share our story with other people embarking on equally ambitious community opera projects was very helpful as it was the first time we had verbally shared our story – both together and with other people. The session was very well managed [and] provided generous space for everyone to contribute, and it was such a pleasure to hear of some of the extraordinary work happening in Portugal, Spain and Ireland. The session helped us to see the 'bigger picture' of which our work forms a small contribution and also helped us to realise that there are community-focussed opera projects that are happening digitally by design – and not just, as ours was, by accident!' (Email communication 1.12.20)

Similarly positive feedback was received from Alokandanda Roy:

'What a delightful evening I spent with you all. It was a loving and moving experience. It was, as though I have known all of you for years. Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to share my journey and my feelings. Yes, we will keep in touch and maybe someday soon I will be able to step out of this virtual world and meet you in person.' (Email 4.12.20)

Likewise, the guest essays and blogging are public-facing activities intended to build bridges with the wider field of community opera and participatory art. The blog figures suggest that it is attracting a steady readership, with most recent posts getting nearly twice as many views as those published earlier in the year.

Publication	Blog post title	Views to 21-12/20
4/12/20	What we talk about when we talk about love (Alokandanda Roy)	233
7/11/20	Remote is the new normal (INO VR trial)	51
15/10/20	How the internet saved a community opera (Northern Heartlands)	235
28/10/20	Whose (community) opera is it anyway? (about IPR)	146
21/3/20	'The Cabbage Field': a community opera in the making	112
9/3/20	Is opera exclusive?	110

Figures for TRACtion related posts published by FM on www.regularmarvels.com

This task will ensure the effective and frequent communications between participants of the trials and will explore how the tools developed in WP2 could be used to allow communication and knowledge transfer between communities, professionals and facilitators across the trials.

Although a lot of attention has been given to how the tools developed in WP2 can be used to facilitate the co-creation process, this has been mainly on a trail-by-trail basis, because of the specificities (e.g., user journeys) of each situation. After the tests have been completed in December 2020, it will become possible to begin to share experiences with the toolset between the trials.

'It's a major boost to hear about other people's experiences in their own co-creation work. It helps us learn how to handle situations that we face, knowing that other people have gone through exactly the same thing. These sessions are a huge help in terms of asking questions, learning and bringing those lessons to our own projects.' (TRACtion Consortium member)



3.1.2 The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic

It is impossible to report on the cross-fertilisation activities without recording the negative consequences of the pandemic for this aspect of TRACTION, as for the others. Meetings and workshops that were planned to happen face-to-face have been transferred onto video-conferencing platforms. Whilst this has been vital in enabling the project to function it has necessarily changed the character and length of interactions. To take one example, plans were being made to bring all the composers together in Leiria for two or three days of discussions and creative work, in May 2020. This event had to be postponed, and replaced with an online session in December. Valuable as this was, it obviously allowed far less time and musical interaction than would have been possible in a face-to-face workshop. Artistic work embraces all human senses, means of communicating and forms of knowledge. Some, such as speech and sight can work online; others, especially physical aspects, such as space, sound or embodied knowledge, cannot.

'I don't have any ideas on how to improve [the cross-fertilisation activity] without stating the obvious – in person sessions, if only!' (TRACTION consortium member)

Perhaps the biggest weakness is the impossibility of the trial teams to spend time experiencing one another's realities. Much can be learned from *hearing* about the work SAMP is doing with young offenders in Leiria, but a visit to the prison and the chance to observe or take part in the music workshops with the young men concerned is a completely different experience. The same is true of the community operas in Ireland and Spain. Being on site, with the time to process the experience and explore ideas, would give everyone involved a much richer experience.

Of course, TRACTION shares these difficulties, to a greater or lesser degree, with the entire performing arts sector in and beyond Europe. Like them, it is learning to adapt to the changed realities and discovering how much it is still possible to achieve. Fortunately, the technology at the heart of TRACTION will help bridge the gap between people in future.

3.1.3 Potential improvements

The people leading the community opera trials have given positive assessments of the cross-fertilisation activities, which they consider essential to the project. They have not suggested significant changes to the existing approach, but they would like to expand them to involve the creative artists, and go further into the detail of the co-creation process:

'As already envisaged, I think it is very important to involve creative teams in this process, whether the composers or librettists, and very specifically the directors.' (TRACTION member)

'I'd be keen to see more focus on the granular aspects of the production process (for example, how were the songwriting workshops structured for Northern Heartlands?) as opposed to the more top-level aspects of the projects.' (TRACTION consortium member)

The focus of TRACTION's cross-fertilisation activity has been on the community opera trials, which obviously have artistic interests in common, despite the differences in situation and approach. There has also been extensive cooperation between the technology partners



through their work on the toolset, though that has offered fewer opportunities to step back and consider the broader issues that have been the subject of discussion between the trials. Still, the collaboration between partners has been constant and deep, taking account of the constraints imposed by the pandemic.

However, there has been limited interaction between the technologists and the artists except in the specific context of the toolset and its application to the trials. This is something that deserves more attention in the coming months, partly because having a better understanding of how participatory creation processes function in the arts will enrich the scientists' imagination in developing technology, and partly because both groups can learn from their different approaches to practices such as co-creation.

There have, of course, been bi-monthly partnership meetings, but these deal with project management and the practical issues arising from the research. They cannot go very far in helping people to deepen their understanding of each other's practice. One development would be to ensure that at least one representative of all the partners is involved in future cross-fertilisation activities, at least as an observer and commentator. This would contribute to meeting the commitment in T3.4 that all partners participate, and help overcome the difficulties the pandemic has created in much of the partnerships planned working together.

The time involved would not be great but it could significantly broaden everyone's understanding and support the intellectual development of TRACtion.

3.2 Plans for 2021

In 2021, cross-fertilisation activities will follow the same approach as that outlined here, but taking account of the consortium's need to expand in the following areas:

- Involvement of creative artists and more discussion of working process;
- More discussions between the trials and the technology partners;
- Beginning to involve participatory arts organisations beyond the consortium.

Several workshops are already planned or in preparation, including:

- Staging opera during the pandemic (Leeds Playhouse and Tête-à-Tête Opera)
- Evaluating social and artistic impact (Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Portugal)
- Co-creation processes (Birmingham Opera Company)



4 APPENDIX

TRACTION Glossary of terms and concepts (as at December 2020)

Accessibility	The removal of barriers that limit or prevent some people from having the same access to places, products, devices or services that others take for granted is the goal of accessibility. It is a basic task of social inclusion to remove those barriers wherever possible. This should not be confused with making the arts 'accessible' by which is meant making it easier for those to whom they are unfamiliar to enjoy them. Education and outreach work often tries to do this, for instance by offering an introductory talk before a concert. Not everyone will enjoy a three-hour opera performance, but the reasons are many and various. They might simply not like the music, and that is as good a reason as any other. But if they cannot get into the auditorium, see or hear the performance, then they are excluded for reasons that discriminate against them. The goal of accessibility is to ensure that people have equal access to public and private goods. Whether and how they use that access is a matter for them.
Aim	The purpose of a project (the change it is intended to produce)
Art	A technique for creating meaning from experience and sharing it with others, an act in the world
Artist	Anyone who is making art, while they are making it. It does not mean they are a good artist, any more than someone is a good cook because they are cooking: but they are a cook in that moment (see Professional Artist)
Audience	Someone who accesses and enjoys the artistic output, whether in live performance or subsequently through technology
Capabilities approach	As defined by Martha Nussbaum, following Amartya Sen and others, the capabilities approach 'holds that the key question to ask, when comparing societies and assessing them for their basic decency or justice, is, "What is each person able to do and to be?" [...]. It is focused on choice or freedom, holding that the crucial good societies should be promoting for their people is a set of opportunities, or substantial freedoms, which people then may or may not exercise in action: the choice is theirs. It thus commits itself to respect for people's powers of self-definition.' (Nussbaum 2011 <i>Creating Capabilities</i>). This is relevant to the social transformation impact of Traction and its approach to accessibility.
Capsule	A fully digital visual representation, typically much shorter than a Opera representation, driven by technology. It could be with Head-Mounted



Displays (HMD) or an immersive installation (a dome, projections, screens, etc.). Sometimes, a capsule could combine a non-digital part, such as a presenter or a singer, but the digital part always has a big presence.

Co-creation

Creation that results from the interaction of people with different perspectives or disciplines (e.g. technologists and opera artists), as well as of professionals and non-professionals, as in participatory art. Co-creation can result in new ideas, products, technologies, approaches, artworks and more. Co-creation can be understood as a **spectrum** of power sharing. At one end control remains with the professionals while others (e.g. end users) are consulted about their needs. At the other, the professionals put their expertise in the control of the non-professionals without reservation. All points on this spectrum can be legitimate in different contexts and relating to specific needs. The critical issue is that everyone involved understands and agrees to the balance of power between them.

Contracting

The negotiation and agreement of mutual obligations and benefits between partners in a participatory art project. This is often neglected because people assume that they know what others expect but it can cause problems when people discover that they have had different ideas.

Community art

The creation of art as a human right, by professional and non-professional artists, co-operating as equals, for purposes and to standards they set together, and whose processes, products and outcomes cannot be known in advance.

Community-centric

The quality of self-awareness and critical reflection exercised by professional artists and institutions working in participatory contexts, and the extent to which that reflection is open to all participants, is central both to an ethically-defensible process and to the probability of programmes achieving their stated goals.

Cultural democracy

the right and capacity of every citizen to participate fully, freely and equally in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to act as an artist by creating, publishing and distributing their work

Cultural democratisation

Making publicly-funded art and culture more accessible to the population, mainly through provision, education, marketing and pricing. This has been the underlying principle of European cultural policy since 1945

Early adopters

End user

Someone who uses the technology as part of an artistic experience: principally the audience

Experiments

Small scale evaluations to inform requirements and future developments



Formal learning	Learning typically provided by an education or training institution, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and leading to certification. Formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective. (Source: https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/ects/users-guide/glossary_en.htm)
Informal learning	Learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure which is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support; it may be unintentional from the learner's perspective; examples of learning outcomes acquired through informal learning are: skills acquired through life and work experiences, project management skills, ICT skills acquired at work, languages learned, intercultural skills acquired during a stay in another country, ICT skills acquired outside work, skills acquired through volunteering, cultural activities, sports, youth work and through activities at home e.g. taking care of a child (Council Recommendation 2012/C 398/01). (Source: https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/ects/users-guide/glossary_en.htm)
Non-formal learning	Learning which takes place through planned activities (in terms of learning objectives, learning time) where some form of learning support is present (e.g. learner-teacher relationships); it may cover programmes to impart work skills, adult literacy and basic education for early school leavers; very common cases of non-formal learning include in-company training, through which companies update and improve the skills of their workers such as ICT skills, structured on-line learning (e.g. by making use of open educational resources), and courses organised by civil society organisations for their members, their target group or the general public (Ibid.).(Source: https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/ects/users-guide/glossary_en.htm)
Non-professional artist	Someone who is participating in the Traction trial in a creative role (performing, writing, singing, composing) but is doing it outside of their usual work or home activity. Non-professional artists contribute solely out of choice and have no obligations except those they freely accept during the process.
Non-professional technician	Someone who participates unpaid in the technical side of artistic co-creation and/or production of the trials. They may be professionals in other fields – e.g. an electrician or a tailor – and use their skills in the trial, but their motivation for taking part is social or educational, not financial.
Non-professional user	Someone who uses the technology to access and enjoy an artistic output.



Objective	The actions that must be taken to achieve an aim
Participant	Anyone who is involved in Traction trial activities.
Participatory art	The creation of art by professional and non-professional artists
Pilot	Small/medium scale deployment and testing of technology developed in the project for the trials
Pilot Activity	Small scale evaluations of the technology developed in the project for the trials
Professional artist	Someone who is paid to work on the Traction trial in a creative role (director, musician, workshop artist etc.). They have a contract with obligations.
Professional technician	Someone who is paid to work on the technical side of artistic co-creation and/or production of the trials. They have non-artistic roles, such as a costume maker, sound engineer, video editor or stage manager.
Professional user	Someone who uses the technology as part of an artistic process or creation to enhance the experience of the audience (e.g. a sound engineer, a director, etc.)
Quality	In art, quality is a subjective judgement: that does not mean it does not exist, only that we must not mistake our judgement for a definitive, universal one. In community opera, artistic standards is only one aspect of quality, which also includes the process, outcomes for the people involved, and changes to the art form, among
Toolset	A group of tools developed in the project for facilitating co-creation of Operas
Tool	A tool from the toolset
Trial	Comprehensive technology-enabled operas as defined in the project (involving LICEU, SAMP and INO)
User	A professional who uses the technology as part of an artistic process or creation to enhance the experience of the audience (e.g. a sound engineer, a director etc.)