

BIOCENTRICA

How human-nature relationships are transforming society



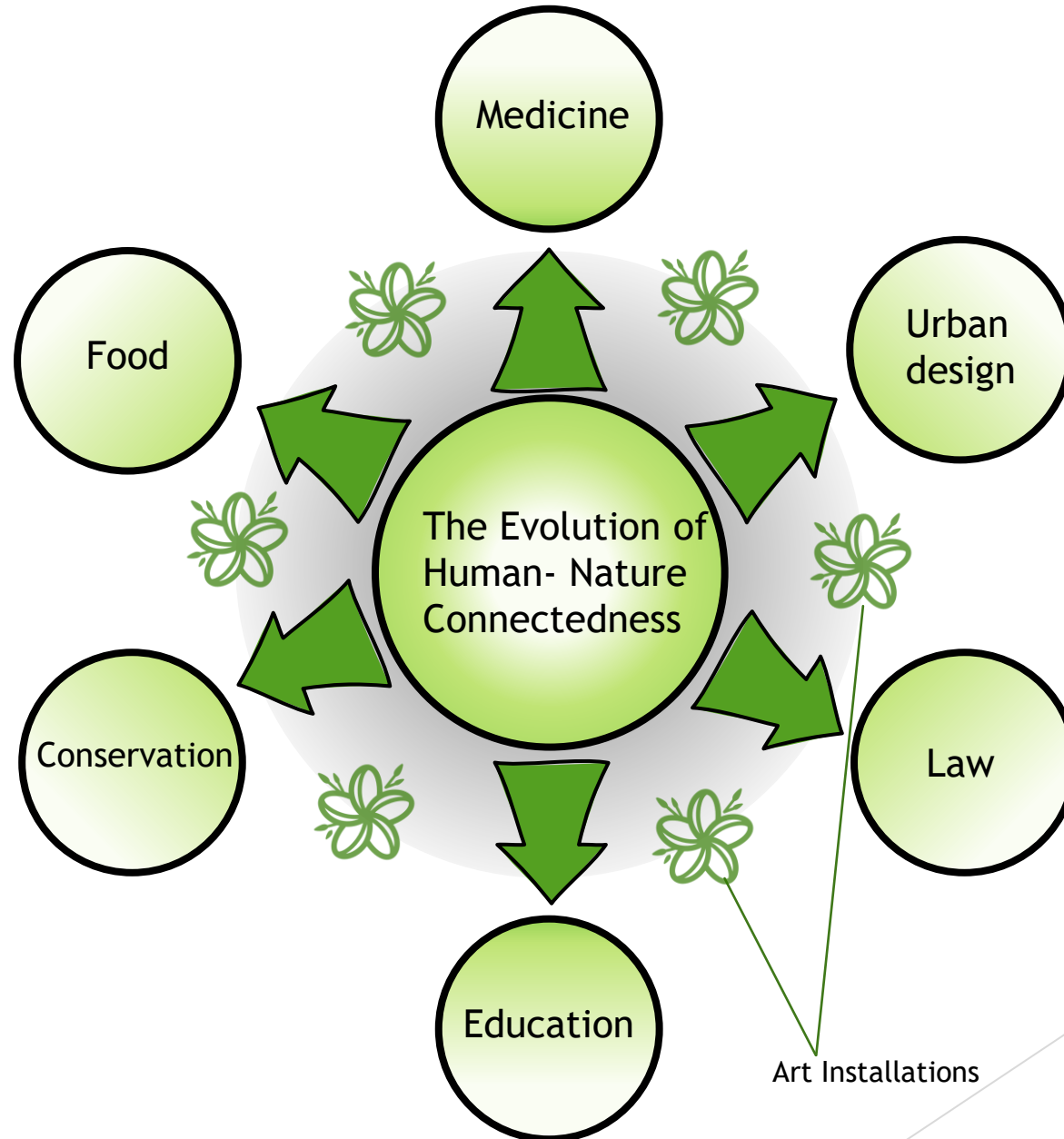
CONCEPT

- ▶ **WHAT-** An immersive exhibition exploring the root cause of the environmental crisis - the human relationship with nature. For too long that relationship has been based on exploitation and control, leading to the destruction of nature. Yet, worldviews are beginning to shift from separation and domination to an understanding of deep connection and embeddedness within nature (biocentrism).
- ▶ **WHY-** There is growing recognition of the need to move beyond treating the symptoms of the environmental crisis, to fixing the broken relationship with nature. This transformation of worldviews and society has begun and showcasing the journey from separation to connection can help catalyze further transformation towards a sustainable future.
- ▶ **WHO-** A leading museum to host a semi-permanent display and associated web-presence, with high profile speakers at a public launch event. Project guided by learned societies, expert academics and sector specialists, and sponsored by social/environmental value-driven corporations.

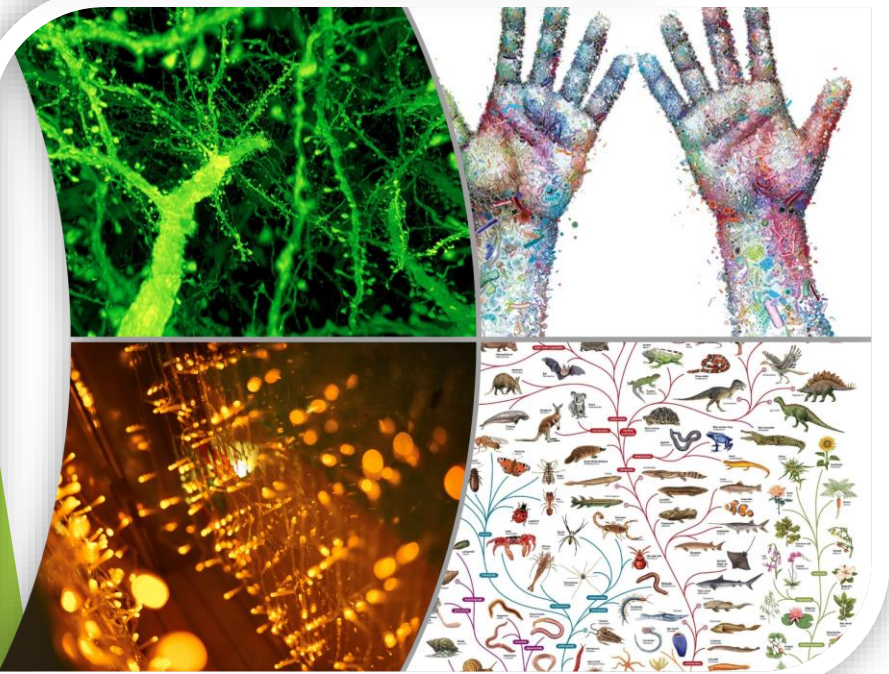
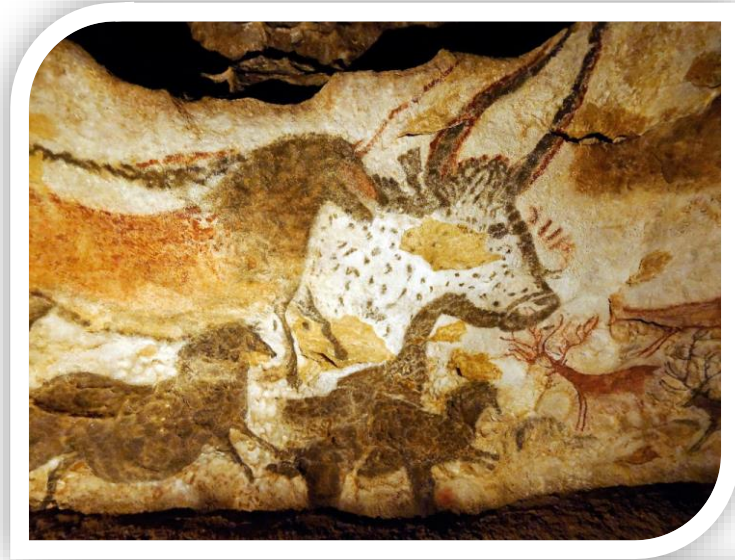


DESIGN

- ▶ 'Hub and spoke' design
- ▶ Central area focuses on science and history of human – nature connections with interactive displays
- ▶ Surrounded by art installations
- ▶ Spokes are displays showing how specific sectors of society are being transformed by a new (biocentric) worldview



The Evolution of Human- Nature Connectedness



INDIVIDUALITY IS AN ILLUSION

INFORMATION



Neural networks in brain (connections between 170 billion neurons) continually change in response to ideas from others



Attitudes and behaviours (such as obesity risk, voting preferences, taste in music) are contagious across social networks



Viruses carry genes from other species and insert them into our genome

ENERGY



38 trillion bacterial cells influence our moods and behaviours



The body contains around 40kg of oxygen molecules that if, spread around Earth's entire atmosphere, would be 0.03mm apart

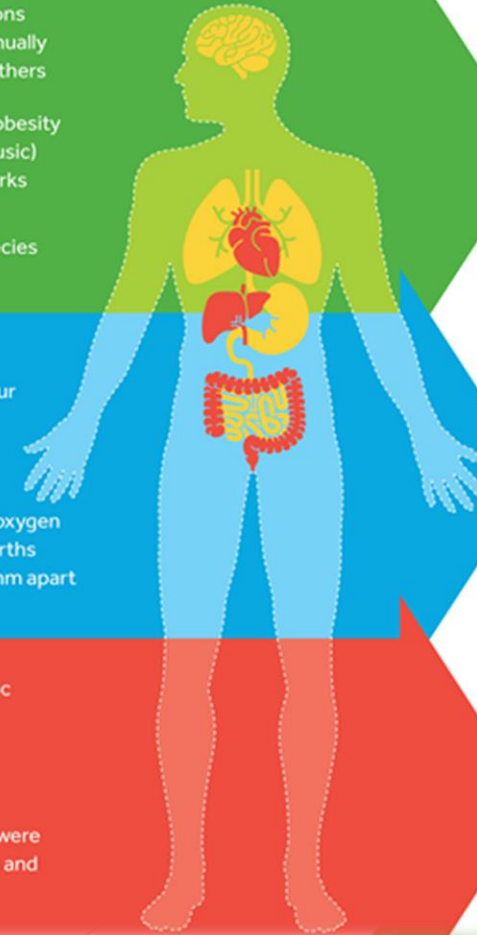
MATTER



Our skin sheds 1 million microscopic particles every hour to produce a 'signature' cloud around us



The molecules building our bodies were once part of countless other plants and animals including dinosaurs



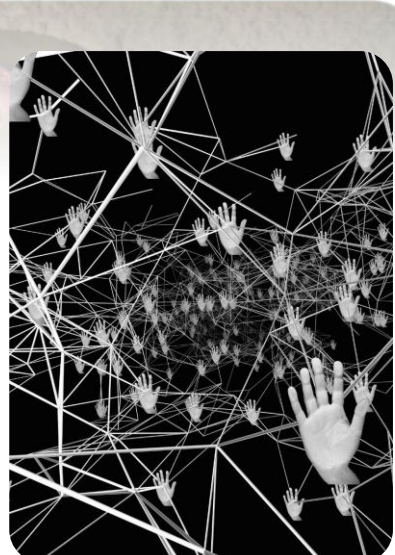
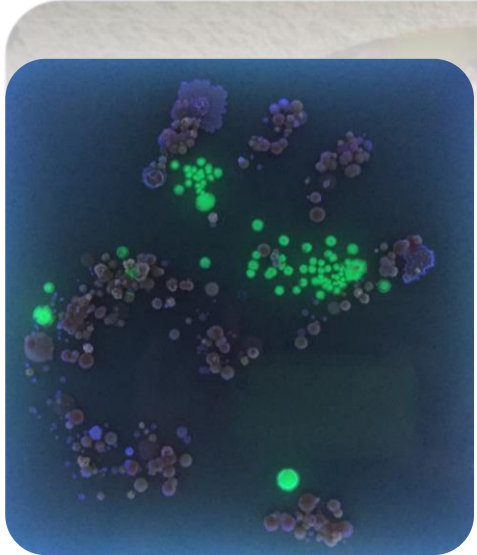
The Evolution of Human- Nature Connectedness

DISPLAY IDEAS

- ▶ Look down a microscope and see the mites on your own eyelashes
- ▶ Simulation of molecules in body how they have been parts of thousands of other animals and plants (e.g. see [here](#))
- ▶ Life size microbiome – Bacteria, fungi and protozoa. Interactive computer game exploring influence of diet and environment on microbiome composition, and subsequent impact on human mood, emotion and health.
- ▶ VR headsets linked to biometric monitoring. Experience being in natural versus busy urban environment showing shift in stress responses. Live feed for those watching and statistics recorded for participant.
- ▶ Simulation of brain and how neural networks are being continually rewired in response to external stimuli
- ▶ How connected to nature are you?– Interactive psychometric survey with live results
- ▶ Experience the world as a Neolithic human



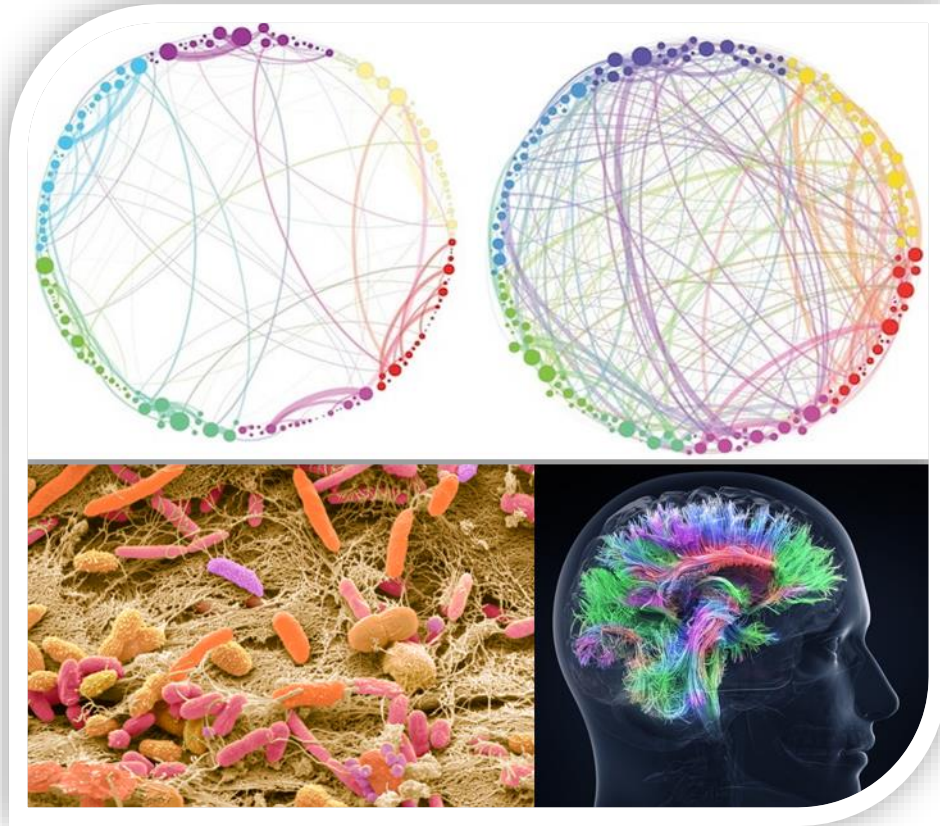
Art Installations



Images: [Sonja Bäümel](#), [Richelle Gribble](#), [Adrienne Beth Jenkins](#), [Jeffrey Shaw](#)

Impact on society

MEDICINE



- ▶ New innovations in the use of psychedelic drugs (which reduce egoic identity to more biocentric perspective) to treat anxiety and depression
- ▶ How understanding the microbiome is leading to better treatment of autoimmune disease
- ▶ Frontiers in personalised medicine tailored to our unique 'human ecosystems'
- ▶ 'Green social prescribing' brings clinically proven benefits to mental health



Impact on society

URBAN DESIGN



- ▶ 'Biophilic' cities (e.g. Singapore) being designed to improve health and nature outcomes.
- ▶ People living in highly urbanised areas shown less capacity for systems thinking to understanding environmental issues, and less likely to show pro-environmental behaviours
- ▶ Access to green space in cities has been shown to dramatically improve physical and mental health



Impact on society

LAW



- ▶ Personhood rights to nature are being granted in many countries from rivers in New Zealand to citizenship for bees in Costa Rica
- ▶ Many South American countries now have the rights for (Mother) nature written into their Constitutions
- ▶ New legal cases are being fought to defend nature's rights



Impact on society

EDUCATION

rspb giving nature a home

Connecting to nature

Day 1 Find a cosy spot to sit near a window. Perhaps grab a drink and a biscuit and spend some time noticing and appreciating anything that you see.	Day 2 Find a notebook or some paper you can use for any of your nature reflections over the next few weeks.	Day 3 Appreciate the sky. What colours do you see? Are there any clouds today? Notice their changing shapes.	Day 4 Sit by a window for a while and enjoy the sunshine. If the sun doesn't reach you, imagine breathing in some sun.	Day 5 Notice the first star appearing in the night sky.	Day 6 Look for a natural object in your home – for example a plant, stone, shell or pine cone. Look closely at your object and notice any details you haven't seen before.
Day 7 Bake something special and shape or decorate it with a nature theme. Bird-shaped bread rolls? Ladybird cupcakes? #bakeformature	Day 8 Use the colours of the rainbow to inspire your art.	Day 9 Find a natural object in your home and notice any details you haven't seen before.	Day 10 Note three good things in nature and write them down. Perhaps look at some photographs for inspiration!	Day 11 List all the different things you enjoy most about springtime eg things you see, hear, smell and touch.	Day 12 Open a window and feel the fresh air on your face, skin and hair. Take a slow deep breath.
Day 13 Find a film or a book exploring nature and settle in for the night.	Day 14 Recreate a natural scene in your garden or on a piece of paper.	Day 15 Find a natural soundscape online (perhaps the sound of rain, the sea or woodlands). Take a seat, close your eyes and go on an imaginary nature journey.	Day 16 Write down three more good things in nature and reflect on your list.	Day 17 Bring to mind a time when you felt peaceful or cheerful in nature. Can you tune into that feeling now?	Day 18 Draw or make some pollinators for your plants! Create a "buzz" around your Wild Window.
Day 19 Find a natural soundscape online (perhaps the sound of rain, the sea or woodlands). Take a seat, close your eyes and go on an imaginary nature journey.	Day 20 Listen out for a bird call or find one online and try to copy it. Can you "talk" to a bird?	Day 21 Notice the changing light of a sunrise at the start of the day, or the soft dimming of light at sunset.	Day 22 Bring to mind your favourite season. What do you like most about it? Can you capture that now in pictures or words?	Day 23 Reflect on your connection to nature over the month, what have you enjoyed the most? Perhaps create a reminder of it somewhere in your home.	Day 24 Draw or make some pollinators for your plants! Create a "buzz" around your Wild Window.
Day 25 Listen out for a bird call or find one online and try to copy it. Can you "talk" to a bird?	Day 26 Notice the changing light of a sunrise at the start of the day, or the soft dimming of light at sunset.	Day 27 Bring to mind your favourite season. What do you like most about it? Can you capture that now in pictures or words?	Day 28 Reflect on your connection to nature over the month, what have you enjoyed the most? Perhaps create a reminder of it somewhere in your home.	Day 29 Write down three more good things in nature and reflect on your list.	Day 30 Draw or make some pollinators for your plants! Create a "buzz" around your Wild Window.

Are you ready for 30 Days Wild?

THE WILDLIFE TRUSTS
#30DaysWild

Some of these ideas have been inspired by our Nature Prescriptions project in Shetland, and our pilot project in Edinburgh, which is currently paused. You can find out more about RSPB's Nature Prescriptions at rspb.org.uk/naturesremedy

Find out more about what you can do at www.rspb.org.uk

- ▶ Outdoor education programmes (e.g. Forest Schools) help children to connect with nature.
- ▶ Conservation charities such as RSPB and Wildlife Trusts have devised evidence based programmes
- ▶ Connection to nature depends on experiences not just cognitive understanding



Impact on society

CONSERVATION



- ▶ New psychological surveys assess people's connection to nature and show links to pro-environmental outcomes
- ▶ Behaviours such as recycling, reducing carbon footprint, volunteering for environmental organisations, are all more likely for those who feel connected to nature



Impact on society

FOOD



- ▶ Major bodies like the UN Development programme are developing initiatives to transform food systems by enhancing attitudes of connection to nature of key actors



*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*



Exhibition Rationale

- ▶ There is now a broad recognition that a revised human relationship to the natural world is needed to reverse the planetary environmental crisis.
- ▶ A successful transformation to sustainability depends on moving beyond superficial economic tweaks and dangerous technofixes. It requires a paradigm shift to a new narrative for our human-relationship with nature.
- ▶ Only such deep inner transformation can allow re-orientation of identity, values and attitudes which unpin individual pro-environmental behaviours as well as the structure of our institutions. This need for a paradigm shift is now well recognised by mainstream science-policy organisations such as the UN, IPBES, European Environment Agency and some national governments, as well as leading post-disciplinary authors. However, despite this 'intellectual inflection point' there is little public appreciation of these changes, and the media portrays a world which is becoming increasingly dominated by anthropocentric, individualistic and even survivalist values.



Exhibition Rationale (continued)

- ▶ Positive transformations in worldviews are currently going ‘under the radar’. This exhibition will draw together how many progressive changes in society are already underway- from within law, medicine, the arts, urban design and in food and education systems - all based on a radically different view of our relationship to nature.
- ▶ There are limitations to defining this as a single perspective, given there is a plurality in values that should be celebrated, but a common thread is seeing humanity as much more deeply embedded in the web of life. This ‘**biocentric**’ perspective rejects human exceptionalism and recognises our deep interconnection to natural ecosystems.
- ▶ Showcasing these transformations in society that are already underway will help shift the ‘Overton window’ of opportunity. And by inspiring awe and wonder at our hidden connections to nature this exhibition will help to catalyse a wider transformation of worldviews to help us to deal with the planetary environmental crisis.



The need for a paradigm shift is now well recognised by mainstream science-policy organisations



UN Environment Programme

Only a fundamental, system-wide transformation across technological, economic and social factors, including paradigms, goals and values can reverse the current trends that threaten the well-being of present and future generations and the survival of other species.



European Environment Agency

The mindset or worldview from which individuals, groups and organisations engage with systems change is a critical factor in transformations of socio-ecological systems.



Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change

Inclusive planning initiatives informed by cultural values, indigenous knowledge, local knowledge, and scientific knowledge can help prevent maladaptation.



Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

Pathways to sustainability will require shifts from broad values of individualism and economic profit to sustainability-aligned values of collectivism, care and equality.



President of the UN General Assembly

Mother Earth will only be preserved "through a paradigm shift from a human-centric society to an Earth-centred global ecosystem".

Source: [Inner Change to Tackle the Climate and Biodiversity Crisis - Psychology Today](#)

[Using Systems Thinking to Tackle the Climate and Biodiversity Crisis - Free Online Course \(futurelearn.com\)](#)

How & Who...?

- ▶ Identify a leading global institute(s) (e.g. museums) to partner and host a semi-permanent display and associated web-presence, with high profile speakers at a public launch event and weekly public dialogues.
- ▶ Additional sponsorship sought by social/environmental value-driven corporations
- ▶ The project would be guided by advisory panel from learned societies (e.g. Royal Society, Royal College of Art, RSA), expert academics and sector specialists.
- ▶ Current concept has been developed by:



Professor Tom Oliver, an applied ecologist and Environmental Advisor to UK government, OEP and European Commission.

Author of *[The Self Delusion: The Surprising Science of Our Connection to Each Other and the Natural World](#)*



Dr. Danielle Barrios-O'Neil
Head of Programme for Information Experience Design at the Royal College of Art



Professor Miles Richardson, an environmental psychologist who works on nature connectedness programmes for children led by the RSPB and Wildlife Trusts. Author of *[Reconnection: Fixing our Broken Relationship with Nature](#)*



To follow up please contact Tom Oliver
t.oliver@reading.ac.uk