

Publication

Climate Justice

Through the Creative Lens of the Performing Arts

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Foreword



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2023 has once again proved to be a year of learning for IETM. Through our events, research and training programmes, we digested and discovered the different facades, challenges and solutions that **green practices** can bring. We learnt how dominant western science on climate change has largely ignored **Indigenous knowledge**, despite the fact that Indigenous lands make up 20% of the Earth's territory and these lands keep and safeguard 80% of the world's remaining biodiversity. Indigenous peoples are the strongest protectors of our environment and we were blessed to hear and be provoked by artists and activists from the Indigenous communities of the Global North at the IETM Aarhus Plenary Meeting 2023.

Throughout our exploration, IETM has in different ways examined the change in behaviour and practise our sector can and should work towards, in order to take collective responsibility for the impacts of greenhouse gas emissions. This exploration has led us more and more towards the concept of Climate Justice - a concept which resonates well with the intersectional approach IETM has adopted in its work: namely - in this case - that green and fair transition can not be achieved without addressing the inequalities and disparities in society and across our performing arts sector.

In this context, IETM is proud to present this research on climate justice and how the performing arts can - and should - pay more attention to the **implications, responsibilities and artistic opportunities of climate justice**.

The following extract from the Research Results of Perform Europe, a Creative Europe project led by IETM, highlights the creative role the performing arts can take in paving a just green transition:

*'The performing arts can play a meaningful role in the transition of our societies towards a more just and sustainable future which goes further than just reducing the environmental impact of their activity. The performing arts can be a laboratory stimulating our collective imagination of a more sustainable reality which is not only environmentally sustainable, but is also fair and just in a global context.'*¹

As a diverse and international network which encompasses members from a rich and varied geographic and socio-economic contexts, IETM has a responsibility to approach the climate change debate in a holistic and balanced way. Through this, the concept and reality of climate justice is pivotal.

This research reflects and explores various aspects of climate justice, offers an overview of current literature and shares examples and practices from different contexts through a worldwide peer to peer consultation.

We sincerely hope that you will take the time to read or listen² to the many strong ideas and reflections this work entails and join us on our journey of realising the role of the performing arts in the fight for a climate just world.


 Ása Richardsdóttir
 IETM Secretary General

¹ See 'Perform Europe' report : <https://www.ietm.org/en/resources/reports/research-results-of-perform-europe>

² The collective contributions towards this research which took place in the form of regional Focus Groups discussions are also available through three podcast episodes on IETM's website, to be released in December 2023 and January 2024.

Introduction

Climate justice addresses how the impacts of and responsibility for climate change are highly unequal. It is a fact that those worst affected by climate change are the poorer and more disadvantaged³. This includes *inter alia*, poorer nations, ex-colonies and Indigenous peoples worldwide, as well as disabled people, and ethnic minorities. Moreover, existing climate governance⁴ does not necessarily support inclusivity, and the voices of local people are rarely heard when climate decisions are being made. Women, youth, Indigenous people and other underrepresented groups are generally absent from the debate, yet they are disproportionately affected by the worst consequences of climate change⁵.

However, local communities and civil society organisations are often innovative agents of change. Their knowledge of the local ecosystem leads to actions with a greater and more inclusive social and economic return, and ultimately with more sustainable impact⁶. Only when local civil society has ownership over climate action, will the transition be effective, inclusive, and just.

As highlighted in this research, the performing arts have huge potential to effectively engage with communities on the topic of climate change and climate justice. Through creating a narrative, the performing arts embody experiences and present complex issues in an accessible, digestible form, allowing audiences to understand the meaning and implications of climate justice and thus take action for change.

Objectives

Based on the above, the main objective of this research is to explore the meaning, implications, and artistic opportunities of climate justice for performing arts organisations, as well as to highlight initiatives taken by the sector to respond to the climate emergency in different socio-geographical contexts.

Through literature analysis, a series of conversations with performing arts professionals across the globe and examples of projects in different geographical contexts, the research casts a light on how the performing arts can:

- contribute to shifting narratives around climate change, highlighting its human dimension;
- present complex issues, such as climate change and climate justice, in an accessible way and allow audiences to understand their meaning;
- raise awareness and facilitate learning around climate change and climate justice;
- enable stronger connections between humans and the natural environment through creative imagination;
- play a significant role in reaching local and disadvantaged communities and involving them in climate action;
- draw attention to traditional and Indigenous knowledge.

Finally, this research shares recommendations with the performing arts sector and its stakeholders (e.g. policy makers, funders, partners).



Methodological approach and structure

At the centre of reflections on climate justice is the acknowledgement that climate change is experienced differently across time and place. Therefore, climate change policy or actions should not contribute to reinforcing social, economic, and political inequalities, whether at local, national, or international level. Taking this into account, IETM has chosen to integrate into this research a diverse range of voices and perspectives, from different countries and regions, as well as different areas of expertise.

In addition to a literature review covering a wide range of sources on the relationship between climate change, climate justice, and the performing arts, the methodology supporting this research includes an online survey of IETM members on their climate change and climate justice activities. It also includes a set of interviews with relevant performing arts professionals in different parts of the world, and the organisation of focus groups or consultation exercises with performing arts professionals and other stakeholders in the arts in Latin America, southern Africa, and the Asia-Pacific region, in collaboration with experts in the region who facilitated the consultations and provided broader context⁷.

This publication is divided into the sections detailed hereafter:

- **Introduction**, introducing the concepts, methodology and structure.
- **Chapter 1**, entitled 'Climate Justice: What is the debate about?' aims to introduce readers to key elements of climate justice as well as to consider why climate justice matters in the performing arts and in culture more generally.
- **Chapter 2**, 'Positioning the performing arts in climate justice', has a more practical approach, identifying the areas of action and types of measures that may be adopted by performing arts organisations around climate justice. It includes some illustrative case studies.
- **Chapter 3**, 'An enabling environment for climate justice through the performing arts' refers to the policies and networking dynamics that may be necessary to support performing arts organisations' work on climate justice.
- Finally, the publication closes with a set of **recommendations** for performing arts organisations, policy makers and funders, as well as a set of **conclusions**.

³ As this publication will later explain, the definitions and meanings of climate justice vary according to contexts. The examples presented throughout the publication will serve to illustrate how the term is perceived in different socio-geographical contexts.

⁴ Climate governance is the structure of rules and processes put in place to manage responses to the risks and opportunities of climate change.

⁵ This was the focus of the keynote speech by Aili Keskitalo, former Sápmi president from Sápmi Land/Norway during the Aarhus IETM Plenary meeting, June 2023. Video available here: <https://www.ietm.org/en/meetings/ietm-aarhus-plenary-meeting-2023/resources>

⁶ See organisations working in this field, such as The Nature Conservancy: <https://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/who-we-are/how-we-work/community-led-conservation/>

⁷ Information about participants in regional consultations and interviews is provided in the Annex .

CHAPTER 1:

Climate Justice:

What is the debate about?

Climate Justice: What is the debate about?

Diverse contexts of climate change

Climate change is a global phenomenon, which has impacts everywhere but affects communities in very different ways. This can be observed, for instance, in the different impacts of climate change in seaside or inland areas, in mountains or plains, in urban or rural areas, and in how different countries experience specific effects depending on geographical location or other factors. Weather phenomena (rains, droughts, etc.) and impacts on nature (deforestation, floods, etc.) or the availability of natural resources (e.g. water) are highly variable, even if the effects of climate change, in one way or another, can be observed everywhere. As a result, responses to climate change need to take into account the global context but also be tailored to how climate change is experienced locally⁸. Furthermore, while climate change is, to a large extent, caused by human action, the degrees of responsibility vary widely: consider large-scale polluting companies as opposed to many small-scale rural initiatives, or highly industrialised national economies as opposed to countries where economic development has been largely based on primary sector activities for many years.

However, very often, those who are least responsible for climate change are the first and worst affected by its impacts. According to the Creative Climate Justice Guide by Julie's Bicycle, it has been estimated that the world's richest 10% cause 50% of emissions, claim 52% of the world's wealth, and are concentrated in North America and Europe. Meanwhile, the world's poorest 50% contribute approximately 10% of global emissions and receive about 8% of global income. The average CO2 emissions of citizens in countries most vulnerable to climate change impacts, which are generally in the Global South, are significantly lower than those in the Global North⁹.

Climate justice acknowledges the structural inequalities which lie behind – and risk being reinforced by – climate change. The term has become a frequent reference in contemporary reflections around climate change, at least in the last few years. Paying attention to climate justice serves to understand how climate change has significant economic, social, political and cultural dimensions, with structural, cross-cutting inequalities and forms of injustice. An example of this injustice is the high number of social conflicts connected to environmental issues across the world, where communities struggle to defend their land, air, water, forests, or livelihoods from damaging projects and extractive activities. The Environmental Justice Atlas, an international initiative coordinated by the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB), has reported over 3800 cases of ecological conflict around the world as of May 2023¹⁰. Climate change is largely a consequence of prevailing economic models and has led to social inequality within societies and also at international level. It is therefore of utmost importance to consider the economic and social implications of climate action, preventing it from further exacerbating injustice.



Papermoon Puppet Theatre
Photo credit: Rangga Yudhistira

Definitions of climate justice

At the basis of climate justice is, as Creative Carbon Scotland has argued, 'a people-centred approach to climate change, treating it as a social, political and cultural issue as much as a scientific and technological one'¹¹. Others have also emphasised the close connections that exist between climate justice and the promotion of human rights and a human-centred approach to development¹².

Achieving climate justice thus requires strong action on climate change, but this needs to be fair and equitable, countering rather than worsening existing inequalities. In the words of Arie Lengkeek and Carolina Mano Marques, from the EU-funded *ACT – Art, Climate, Transition* project, climate justice illustrates that 'it is not just transition, it is a just transition that is urgently needed: a transition based on our ethical awareness and ecological understanding of interaction between species, humans and their political and natural environments... [Ecological] and climate justice cannot be envisaged without social justice. Without perceiving the world as an interconnected web of things and people – and being sharply aware of institutionally embedded inequalities and dependencies'¹³.

Therefore, climate justice calls for an **interpretation of climate change not primarily as an environmental or scientific problem, but rather in how it intersects with several other areas**. Inside each society or community, climate change often intersects with, and reinforces, patterns of inequality and discrimination, including intergenerational injustice (i.e. the fact that younger generations, which are less responsible for climate change, will bear a more significant burden) and socio-economic injustices (because it is generally those who are less well-off that will be more affected and have fewer opportunities to adapt to the impacts generated by climate change)¹⁴. Furthermore, as described by Julie's Bicycle, climate justice is deeply tied to land justice, water justice, environmental justice, disability and racial justice, and the effects of climate change should be understood as closely connected to systemic inequality, the legacy of colonialism, human rights and the rights of nature, capitalism, etc¹⁵.

8 UNEP, 'UN resolution billed as a turning point in climate justice', 31 March 2023, <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/un-resolution-billed-turning-point-climate-justice>

9 Harpreet Kaur Paul and Farah Ahmed (2022), 'Creative Climate Justice Guide', Julie's Bicycle, <https://juliesbicycle.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Creative-Climate-Justice-Final.pdf>, see table on page 6.

10 The promoters of the Atlas define socio-environmental conflicts as 'mobilisations by local communities, social movements, which might also include support of national or international networks against particular economic activities, infrastructure construction or waste disposal/pollution whereby environmental impacts are a key element of their grievances.' Such conflicts are frequently connected to structural inequalities of income and power. See <https://ejatlas.org/>

11 Creative Carbon Scotland, 'Climate justice', <https://www.creativecarbonscotland.com/project/climate-justice/>

12 Mary Robinson Foundation (2011), 'Principles of Climate Justice', <https://www.mrfcj.org/principles-of-climate-justice/>

13 Arie Lengkeek and Carolina Mano Marques (2022), 'Ecologies of change. How art explores the pathways for a just transition', Field Actions Science Reports, Special Issue 24, pp. 102-104, <https://journals.openedition.org/factsreports/7023>

14 Summary of the presentation by Mary Robinson at the IETM Galway Satellite Meeting (December 2020), available in Natalia Skolczylas, 'Climate Action and the Performing Arts, IETM, <https://www.ietm.org/en/resources/reports/climate-action-and-the-performing-arts>

15 Julie's Bicycle, 'Creative Climate Justice: An Overview', <https://juliesbicycle.com/hub-toolkits/climate-justice-an-overview/>

Several authors and organisations have emphasised the close relationship between the exploitation of the environment and forms of racism and colonialism. In particular, the fact that the vulnerability of ecosystems and people to climate change is influenced by ‘historical and ongoing patterns of inequity such as colonialism’ was acknowledged in 2022 by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the UN’s body for assessing the science related to climate change¹⁶. In 2023, IETM and its co-organiser, the Performing Arts Platform, has chosen to address the relations between the exploitation of the environment and colonialism by bringing the voices of Sámi people from Norway and Inuit people from Greenland and Canada¹⁷ to the IETM annual plenary meeting, held in Aarhus Denmark.

Addressing climate change from a climate justice angle, requires a transformation of values as well as forms of relationship, redressing the unequal legacy of the past and rebuilding more balanced forms of exchange with one another and towards nature. In this context, climate justice advocates retribution for the damage already done to the planet and particularly to countries that have suffered colonialism (in line with what climate change debates tend to refer to as compensation for ‘loss and damage’) as well as deep ‘societal shifts to cultures where life in nature is valued, and not exploited for personal gain’¹⁸ – as illustrated in particular by the experience of Indigenous peoples and other communities where traditional knowledge retains an important place¹⁹. In this respect, the Bali Principles of Climate Justice, adopted as early as 2002, argue that climate justice ‘affirms the rights of communities dependent on natural resources for their livelihood and cultures to own and manage the same in a sustainable manner, and is opposed to the commodification of nature and its resources’²⁰.

Indeed, because the societal shift required for a just transition involves mindsets, values and behaviour, it requires a cultural change, and new practices and relationships within societies as well as across national borders. As the Green Art Lab Alliance (GALA)²¹ affirms, ‘We believe in the power of solidarity, international knowledge exchange and genuine and fair collaboration in order to demand and build new systems that serve people and planet in an equal and balanced way, recognising the problematic underlying legacies that have informed our current world, including colonial, patriarchal and geopolitical histories of power.’²²



Implications of climate justice: from new ways of looking to new ways of acting

Transforming our mindsets by recognising the underlying patterns of injustice on which they have been built should lead to changing how we approach contemporary problems, such as climate change. Writer and consultant Selina Nwulu has emphasised that power and inequality have traditionally affected what impacts of climate change are taken into account in research and policy decisions, as exemplified by how the air and odour pollution in disadvantaged neighbourhoods of London is hardly considered a serious issue. This is where climate justice comes into play, because ‘while climate change will affect everyone, climate justice looks at the evidence and questions whether something as serious as “unbreathable air” would be such a long-lasting and overlooked issue in wealthier, and whiter, areas. Much of this, as is the case with so much injustice, links to power.... When talking about climate change, and by extension justice, it is crucial... to notice whose pain and injustices are listened to and whose lives are deemed worth sacrificing.’²³

This serves to reiterate the localised ways in which climate change is experienced, and therefore **the need to consult communities** when analysing its impacts and envisaging climate action: ‘Climate justice acknowledges the need to centre the voices of communities most negatively affected and requires us to act in solidarity with them, to ensure their survival and for a truly just way of moving forward.’²⁴ This also has implications when considering the relationship between climate change and the arts. Melissa Lim, the General Manager of Singaporean theatre company The Necessary Stage and the Executive Producer of the M1 Singapore Fringe Festival, who was interviewed for this publication, emphasised that, because starting points across world regions are very different, ‘there shouldn’t be one authoritative definition of what dealing with climate justice or dealing with climate change in the arts should be. There needs to be a myriad of voices, some of which may not be as palatable as perhaps the European counterparts may be more familiar with or comfortable with’.²⁵

16 IPCC (2022), ‘Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability’. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, p. 12;

17 For more information: <https://www.ietm.org/en/aarhus23>

18 Charise Johnson (2022), ‘An introduction to climate justice’, ENCATC Magazine, n°3, p. 72. https://www.encatc.org/media/6354-encatc_magazine_issue3_050922.pdf

19 This point was also discussed during the IETM Aarhus Plenary, see report ‘Indigenous Ecological Knowledge: Insights from Outside the Arts’ by Máté Tenke. <https://www.ietm.org/en/resources/reports/indigenous-ecological-knowledge-i-insights-from-outside-the-arts>

20 International Climate Justice Network (2002), ‘Bali Principles of Climate Justice’, para. 18. <https://www.corpwatch.org/article/bali-principles-climate-justice>

21 GALA is an informal knowledge alliance of around 60 art organisations in Europe, Asia and Latin America seeking to connect with each other over issues of climate justice and environmental sustainability. GALA’s activities include residencies, publications, and working groups. The latter have addressed issues including land rights and Indigenous territories, urban-rural relationships, and regeneration and biodiversity. See: <https://greenartlaballiance.com/>

22 GALA ‘Manifesto’, <https://greenartlaballiance.com/about/manifesto/>

23 Selina Nwulu (2021), ‘From the Niger Delta to Southall: Understanding Race and Climate Justice’, Autograph, <https://autograph.org.uk/blog/from-the-niger-delta-to-southall-understanding-race-and-climate-justice/>

24 Ibid.

25 From the Asian consultation led by Katelijn Verstraete.

At the core of approaches to climate justice, therefore, lies the need to acknowledge the specificity of contexts and how forms of inequality and injustice operate within them. While an awareness of injustice and climate challenges is required everywhere, climate justice approaches will need to be tailored, adapted to local circumstances and to the specific issues and forms of injustice which are locally relevant.

Climate justice thus involves changing the way we look at climate change, and acting accordingly, as this ‘needs to be fair and equitable and should counter rather than worsen existing inequalities’²⁶. **Only if inequalities are addressed can climate action be effective and non-discriminatory**²⁷ because, at the end of the day, ‘[no] measure is ever applied in a vacuum’, as Mexican artist Lázaro Gabino Rodríguez argued in his Open Letter to French choreographer Jérôme Bel: solving an ecological problem without considering social inequality can be a way to reinforce inequalities and colonial structures.²⁸

Just as communities affected by climate change need to be consulted when the impacts of climate change are analysed, so should they be involved in envisaging actions, something which requires suitable strategies of listening to and empowering communities, with solutions built with and for the people and places most affected²⁹ as well as strengthening connections between civil society groups experiencing the impacts of climate change in different places³⁰, and fostering solidarity. In the next chapters, we will identify areas of action and types of measures adopted by performing arts organisations, as well as principles for change when it comes to climate justice.

Why does climate justice matter in the (performing) arts?

As the previous sections have shown, several features of climate justice illustrate its cultural dimension: **climate justice demands a holistic approach, and challenges prevailing ways of understanding** (e.g. the understanding of climate change as primarily a scientific issue, which should be solved through science and technology) as well as mainstream values and behaviour. As such, climate justice has a significant cultural component and invites us to consider how the arts in general, and the performing arts more particularly, are significant in this context. There are at least seven reasons why climate justice matters in the performing arts and in culture more generally, as detailed below.

1. Because climate justice requires a holistic approach, it provides a space for cultural actors to intervene

Climate justice takes a holistic, people-centred, context-based approach to climate change, going beyond a notion based exclusively on scientific or environmental aspects: it takes into account how our ways of understanding climate change are shaped by perspectives that highlight some impacts and neglect others, how our relationship with nature and with other human communities is determined culturally, and how new narratives are needed to better understand the many impacts of climate change.

In this context, professionals and organisations in the arts have an important role to play – ranging from arts and heritage initiatives casting new light on the legacy of colonialism, to artists exploring and creating narratives or challenging mainstream views to illustrate climate change from a variety of viewpoints. The arts therefore play a significant role in understanding climate justice and generating a context where fairer climate action can exist.

This holistic approach also means that, even where some performing arts projects may not be explicitly presented as addressing climate justice, artistic work around issues such as social inequality, Indigenous peoples, the struggle for rights and against discrimination, or the impact of contemporary lifestyles on traditional communities, will often be interconnected. Therefore, they provide a lens into issues of climate justice and into how climate change is experienced locally. This interconnectedness of social, environmental, cultural, and political issues may happen more naturally in non-European societies, as some of the regional consultations held in the context of this report suggest.³¹

2. Because any consideration of the relationship between arts and culture and climate involves acknowledging diversity and injustice

Recent years have witnessed increasing awareness of the relationship between culture and climate change, visible at several levels: in the acknowledgement that aspirations, values and lifestyles are a key factor in explaining the human impact on the environment (e.g. how values related to capitalism, consumerism and individualism are connected to mass production and accelerated lifestyles, with significant environmental impacts); the potential role of the arts in generating **new narratives around the environment and climate justice** (e.g. through performing arts works that address climate change, as well as awareness-raising campaigns involving artists, see examples in chapter 2); the acknowledgement of the responsibility of cultural actors in reducing their carbon emissions (e.g. through carbon footprint calculators and audits, leading to impact reduction measures); and the impact of climate change on the loss of tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

In this context, the former UN Special Rapporteur on Cultural Rights, Karima Bennouna, has argued that ‘[taking] seriously the climate-cultural rights nexus also requires a transnational approach committed to climate culture justice, as those most affected by climate change and who have often done the least to contribute to it have fewer resources to protect their cultures from its effects. This could result in a terrible climate culture apartheid, and a catastrophic ‘editing process’, in which much of the history and cultural traces of the biggest victims of climate change are allowed to disappear while the traces of those most responsible for it are more protected and more likely to survive... We cannot be passive observers of cultural extinction.’³²

In this respect, concern for how climate change affects the cultural sphere should take into consideration the threat of losing valuable cultural knowledge, which could involve less cultural diversity, and it should reinforce awareness of how the experience of climate change is underpinned by inequality and injustice. Therefore, considering the culture-climate nexus should inevitably lead to incorporating a climate justice approach.

26 Creative Carbon Scotland, ‘Climate justice’, <https://www.creativecarbonscotland.com/project/climate-justice/>

27 Creative Carbon Scotland (2020/2022), ‘Guide to climate justice for cultural organisations’, <https://www.creativecarbonscotland.com/resource/creative-carbon-scotlands-guide-to-climate-justice/>

28 The main focus of Rodríguez’s Open Letter concerned how artists in many parts of the world cannot afford to reduce their international mobility on the grounds of environmental sustainability because their professional careers would be at stake and because mobility networks in their countries and regions are not comparable to those of Western Europe. Lázaro Gabino Rodríguez (2021), ‘Open Letter to Jérôme Bel’, <https://somosreclamos.blogspot.com/2021/02/open-letter-to-jerome-bell.html>

29 Charise Johnson (2022), op.cit, pp. 67-72. https://www.encatc.org/media/6354-encatc_magazine_issue3_050922.pdf

30 Hivos (2021), ‘Climate Justice White Paper: Putting Justice, Equity and Human Rights at the Core of Global Climate Action’, Hivos. <https://hivos.org/document/climate-justice-paper/>

31 See examples in chapter 2.

32 UN Special Rapporteur in the field of Cultural Rights (2020), ‘Report on climate change, culture and cultural rights’, A/75/298, para 26. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/a75298-report-climate-change-culture-and-cultural-rights>

3. Because the same factors that led to climate change have led to a loss of traditional knowledge and lifestyles

Extractive economies, typical of capitalism, are at the root of climate change and have generated a context in which valuable forms of existence, based on a balance between humans and nature, have progressively been left behind. The Global Research and Action Agenda on Culture, Heritage, and Climate Change, developed by a range of organisations including the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and UNESCO, has highlighted how extractive economies have *'actively [repressed] the ability of Indigenous Peoples and local communities to access, practice and nurture their own ways of knowing and being. This has led local communities and others to abandon traditional knowledge and practices that are valuable for mitigation, climate adaptation and for developing resilience, as well as practices for use when adaptation capacities are overwhelmed.'*³³

In response to this, former Sápmi President Aili Keskitalo, spoke during the IETM Aarhus Plenary about the *The Land Back* grassroots movement that aims to return sovereignty over land to Indigenous communities and redress their systemic oppression. They do so by reclaiming land and restoring their cultural practices and recognising their unique relationship with the land. This movement is crucial for protecting Indigenous rights and preserving biodiversity.³⁴

One of the possible responses by artists, culture professionals, and organisations is through contributing to a **democratisation of knowledge** and, as underlined in the GALA Manifesto 'making space for different knowledge systems, not just the dominant one(s)'.³⁵ They can also shed light on the ways in which valuable knowledge has been concealed, something that the next chapter will explore further.

4. Because creative imagination is needed to conceive new, fairer approaches to climate action

The complexity of climate change, and the many forms of injustice that it conceals, require creative, imaginative ways of thinking, which can potentially provide hope. This is particularly important given the risk that a feeling of confusion and fear in the face of climate change and associated injustices may lead to dismay and inaction. The collective manifesto on Ecoexistence, developed by African Crossroads, a community of future-oriented African thinkers and doers, **has regretted that policies and measures to address the climate emergency have failed to include 'an integrated arts-based approach that could attend to and transform emotions, creating hope and responsibility, care and solidarity to change societies'**.³⁶ As a result, this has led to 'a reduction in expansion of knowledge and imagination for young [creative] people which would empower them to be co-creators of a new transformative change'.³⁷

Similar calls to use creative imagination to find ways out of a crisis can be found in the aforementioned GALA Alliance which has affirmed its commitment to 'collectively take up the challenge of envisioning alternatives and of broadening our communal imagination of what is possible...'.³⁸ The Friedrich Ebert Foundation has emphasised the need for communication on climate issues to 'focus on constructive visions of sustainability and justice that are primarily inspiring and motivating', and which can stimulate creativity and openness.³⁹

The specific value of the arts in addressing issues related to the climate transition in a socially just perspective also lies at the heart of the ACT (Art, Climate, Transition) project, presented below.

ACT (Art, Climate, Transition)

ACT (Art, Climate, Transition) is a European cooperation project on ecology, climate change, and social transition. Initiated by 10 organisations in the performing and visual arts and supported by the EU's Creative Europe programme, it emerged from a previous European project, Imagine 2022, which aimed to raise awareness of the climate crisis and present the arts as a designer of possible futures.

Building on that, ACT places additional emphasis on issues of inequality, climate justice, and urban ecologies. Themes such as climate migration, gender and ecofeminism, and the inclusion of voices from the Global South, as well as the revision of artistic content and formats, have gained importance with regard to the previous project. The promoters of ACT emphasise the unique ability of artists to look at things in unexpected ways, thus enabling new angles and generating interesting conversations with scientists and activists.

In practice, these issues have been explored through artistic productions and co-productions, discussion spaces and labs involving all partners, conferences and seminars, publications and creative works presented in the context of major political events, such as the World Conservation Congress held by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in Marseilles in 2021. On that occasion, a large-scale mural with birds, painted by Greek artist Fikos, was unveiled in Marseilles, and other ACT partners replicated the action in their territories, by commissioning murals featuring local birds.

This exemplifies ACT's balance between the European and the local. While there has been increasing interest in ensuring that activities are relevant to local sustainability challenges, project promoters also emphasise the importance of knowledge exchange and cross-border conversations. This is illustrated in the notion of 'rooting and circulating', used by project partners, which combines local relevance, cultural diversity, and a sense of commonness.

↓ For additional information, please visit <https://artclimatetransition.eu/>

5. Because the arts are one of the low-carbon sectors that are necessary for a just transition

Reflections on climate change and climate justice have emphasised the need to move towards economic models that are less reliant on extractive energy and polluting practices. While all sectors in the economy, including the arts and culture, need to revise their own practices to reduce environmental impacts and increase social justice, there is also potential for the arts to be one of the areas that gain importance in the transition to a more sustainable, resilient, and fair society.⁴⁰

33 H. Morel et al. (2022), 'Global Research and Action Agenda on Culture, Heritage and Climate Change'. ICOMOS & ICSM, p. 26. <https://openarchive.icomos.org/id/eprint/2716/>

34 See video : <https://www.ietm.org/en/resources/videos/climate-justice-ietm-aarhus-2023-wednesday-keynote>

35 Green Art Lab Alliance, 'Manifesto', <https://greenartlaballiance.com/about/manifesto/>

36 African Crossroads (2021), 'Eco-Existence: A Climate Justice Manifesto', African Crossroads Communication Council, p. 3, <https://africancrossroads.org/event/collective-manifesto/>

37 Ibid.

38 Green Art Lab Alliance, 'Manifesto', <https://greenartlaballiance.com/about/manifesto/>

39 Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (2020), 'Climate action. Socially. Just. A manual of arguments for a fair and ecological society', p. 12. <https://www.fes.de/sociallyjust-climate-action>

40 IETM and 15 other international cultural networks have committed to implementing the SHIFT eco-guidelines for networks that aim to minimise their footprint, optimise environmentally sustainable practices, and act as an example of good practice for their members and other networks: <https://www.ietm.org/en/resources/reports/shift-eco-guidelines-for-networks>. In addition, IETM has dedicated its April 2022 Focus meeting to fair practices in the performing sector. See 'Fair Enough Report': <https://www.ietm.org/en/resources/reports/fair-enough-report-from-the-ietm-focus-meeting-brussels-7-8-april-2022>

The report on culture and climate action published by the British Council and Julie's Bicycle in the lead up to the COP 26 conference in Glasgow (2021), highlighted that in post-COVID efforts towards a just transition, 'there are significant opportunities to build a creative economy that offers low-carbon employment opportunities at the intersection of heritage, design, social enterprise, and creative skills.'⁴¹ In Canada, the Leap Manifesto, a roadmap for a transition beyond fossil fuels towards a route which leads to a more just, fair, and caring world, calls for expanding 'those sectors that are already low-carbon: caregiving, teaching, social work, the arts and public-interest media.'⁴²

6. Because arts organisations also need to revise their environment practices and make them fair

Social injustice, gender inequality, and colonial relations, which intersect with the experience of climate change and contribute to reinforcing injustice, are embedded across society, and are also visible to a greater or lesser extent in the practices of organisations in culture and the arts. In this respect, just as arts organisations are evaluating and revising their practices to reduce environmental impacts, they should also integrate a climate justice lens into their work.

An illustrative example of this is the UK-based Culture Declares Emergency initiative, whose values include a commitment to 'understanding and communicating how the Earth crisis has arisen from historic and deeply rooted injustices, the impacts of this on human and biodiverse communities, and how transformative solutions must honour the perspectives of those affected.'⁴³ Furthermore, signatories of Culture Declares Emergency also commit to 'eliminating all forms of oppression from all aspects of our work and seek to create an environment where we dismantle attitudes and biases that hinder positive relationships and progress in our work.'⁴⁴

The Culture Takes Action framework, developed by creative curator and consultant Bridget McKenzie, which adapts Kate Raworth's Doughnut Economics for cultural action, includes among its eight areas of action 'decarbonising cultural practice' (through, among other activities, resisting and working to end cultural sponsorship by harmful industries, particularly fossil fuels) and 'decolonising culture and seeking reparation' (by, among other things, tackling inequalities in cultural and environmental movements).⁴⁵

Several initiatives have also suggested the need to switch to ethical banks, revise procurement and supply chains, ensure a just distribution of resources, strengthen local solutions, and consider practices in areas like energy, waste, water and food.⁴⁶ The Theatre Green Book, which provides standards to increase the sustainability of theatre productions, buildings and operations, originally developed in the UK, has subsequently been translated and adapted to different settings, as interviews and consultations for this report show.⁴⁷

While fully integrating climate justice principles into one's own activities may seem daunting at first, and indeed could require long-term development, it should be noted that many performing arts organisations are already revising their practices from the perspective of environmental sustainability or from that of social justice (through practices which, depending on the context, may be termed 'equality, diversity and inclusion' or similar terms).



Play 'Soha Fuku no Yoru Tokoroni' directed by Yuko Naito, Photo credit: 'Theatre group EN.io Silva Castro

Frequently, action already taken under these topics may provide the basis, through the combination of both perspectives, for a more comprehensive climate justice approach and the elaboration of specific climate justice policy.⁴⁸

It is important to note that, in addition to those practical changes that may be similar to other sectors, there are some specificities in artistic practice. Participants in regional consultations for this research, for instance, stressed that considering climate change and becoming more aware of environmental issues are leading some performing arts companies to develop smaller-scale works, enabling closer, more intimate relations with audiences, allowing them to easily relate to the issues addressed. Other performing arts organisations have decided to produce longer-lasting works. For example, the Danish production Aquasonic⁴⁹ by Between Music has been touring for eight years allowing it to reduce waste, preserve energy, and develop deeper meaning.⁵⁰

Elsewhere, new approaches to stage design may rely on traditional reuse and recycling practices, as highlighted by Japanese stage designer Hiroko Oshima. 'We need to give the Japanese theatre goes a chance to reflect on social issues, but in order to do this we need to change the way we work,' noted Hiroko Oshima.⁵¹

7. Because in the light of climate justice, mobility decisions should be adapted to diverse contexts

International mobility is a fundamental element for the arts and the performing arts in particular, as it contributes to enriching creativity through encounters, exchanges and co-productions involving artists and companies from different countries and regions. It broadens opportunities for professional development and income, and it provides a more diverse offer for audiences, including those who, because of their own contexts of disadvantage and limited mobility options, have few opportunities to access diverse live cultural expressions.

41 Julie's Bicycle (2021), 'Culture: The Missing Link to Climate Action. Summary Report'. British Council and Julie's Bicycle, p. 25. <https://juliesbicycle.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Climate-Connection-Report.pdf>

42 The Leap Manifesto, para. 12, <https://theleap.org/portfolio-items/leap-manifesto/>

43 Culture Declares Emergency, 'Our Vision, Mission and Values', <https://www.culturedeclares.org/about/>

44 Ibid.

45 Kate Raworth's 'Doughnut Economics' provides a framework in which the basic social foundations for human development are balanced with the planetary boundaries of environmental sustainability. For its adaptation to cultural action, see Bridget McKenzie (2021), 'Culture Takes Action framework', <https://bridgetmck.medium.com/culture-takes-action-framework-29e8dfaa24>

46 Green Art Lab Alliance; Hivos; Harpreet Kaur Paul and Farah Ahmed (2022); Jordi Baltà Portolós (2022).

47 See <https://theatregreenbook.com/>

48 Creative Carbon Scotland (2020/2022), <https://www.creativecarbonscotland.com/resource/creative-carbon-scotlands-guide-to-climate-justice/>; Harpreet Kaur Paul and Farah Ahmed (2022), <https://juliesbicycle.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Creative-Climate-Justice-Final.pdf>

49 See: <https://www.betweenmusic.dk/aquasonic>

50 See IETM Plenary report 'Art and Activism I - Environmental crisis: a dilemma for the artist?' by Fanny Martin: <https://www.ietm.org/en/resources/reports/art-and-activism-i-environmental-crisis-a-dilemma-for-the-artist>

51 From the Asian consultation led by Katelijn Verstraete.

At the same time, the environmental impacts of international mobility mean that this is a frequent issue in discussions on how the practices of arts organisations, particularly in the Global North, can become more environmentally sustainable. However, solutions provided to reduce carbon footprints need to be contextualised.

Mobility is, therefore, one of the issues that makes the need for a climate justice approach more evident: as the aforementioned Open Letter by **Lázaro Gabino Rodríguez** shows, mobility opportunities are highly unequal and the ability to freely choose is to a large extent dependent on provision of sufficient professional development opportunities at home.⁵² Similarly, **Selim Ben Safia**, choreographer, dancer and artistic director of Tunisian association, Al Badil - L'alternative Culturelle, wrote in the latest On the Move Cultural Mobility Yearbook that '[f]or Tunisian artists, the international dimension is vital. In order to nourish their artistic works, in order to share with other artists, in order to discover new forms of creation, the need to travel or to host is essential. To 'go local' you need an infrastructure that allows it.'⁵³

As also argued by some interviewees consulted during this research process, artists and culture professionals in the Global South would like to enjoy opportunities to engage in training, exchange and touring across borders, as others have done for many years. Indeed, in many parts of the world, **travel opportunities for artists remain scarce or non-existent, either due to the lack of economic resources or to the highly restrictive visa regimes prevailing in the Global North, in what can be interpreted as a form of injustice.**

Furthermore, as Marie Le Sourd, the Secretary General of On the Move, the international cultural mobility network, has noted, 'even if more attention is being paid to environmental sustainability and artistic mobility, the responsibility, and notably the cost, falls mostly on the artists and culture professionals themselves. We are still lacking a systemic shift in our understanding of the motivations and patterns that lie behind mobility and reveal interdependencies, as well as an effective approach to using funding to support fairer and more inclusive working conditions for mobile artists and culture professionals.'⁵⁴

All of this suggests the need to develop information and criteria that allow conscious mobility decisions, generating a context in which environmental responsibility, professional development and cultural diversity can be balanced. The GALA Alliance has made a commitment to 'stimulate and guide our artists and other visitors in making environmental choices when they visit our organisations, by providing them with information on the best travel options to reach us.' The network also chooses sustainable travel options whenever possible.⁵⁵

This approach is consistent with the set of guiding principles for mobility published by the European Dancehouse Network in 2022: these include giving mobility priority to those who generally face more obstacles to travel, or who have more challenging contexts at home, making the most of each trip (e.g. by combining research, creation, production, presentation, and/or networking activities), strengthening local and regional collaborations, and contributing to addressing the imbalances that make mobility compulsory for some.⁵⁶

Observations

- In spite of the arguments presented above, the engagement of (performing) arts professionals and organisations in addressing climate change and climate justice is often limited. As shown in an IETM survey of its members, carried out in preparation for this publication,⁵⁷ 81% of respondents considered climate action a priority in their practices. However, over 70% indicated that lack of finance and practical resources are preventing them from introducing green transitioning into their practices. This was also raised by participants in the Asian and African regional consultations which was conducted in the context of this research.⁵⁸ For them, the primary concern is the sustainability of their organisation.
- Furthermore, as will be developed in the next chapter, climate justice is sometimes perceived by non-European organisations and professionals as a foreign concept which has been imported. 'The terminology feels being injected from abroad; there is a distance with that word', according to Maria (Ria) Tri Sulistiyani (Indonesia), co-artistic director of Papermoon Theatre.⁵⁹

While there are many arguments to consider the relationship between climate justice and the performing arts, and several ways in which this can be explored in practice, as the next chapter will show, there is no common model which can be applied equally to all organisations and projects. Indeed, it is also worth stressing that, for many professionals and organisations in the performing arts, working on climate justice may be only one among several other priorities. One of the observations emerging from the regional consultations leading to this publication was that there is also a sense of injustice in how the performing arts are frequently left behind in policy support and in how society treats them. As stressed by Mark Chilongu during the Southern Africa focus group⁶⁰: The voice of artists is never heard! If artists are not involved at all levels then there is no justice.

These observations serve to highlight, again, **the different ways in which climate justice can be understood, as well as the need to consider local circumstances when addressing the implications of climate change and climate justice in particular contexts.**

52 Rodríguez (2021).

53 Selim Ben Safia (2023), 'Letter from Tunis...', in On the Move, Cultural Mobility Yearbook 2023, p. 39, available at <https://on-the-move.org/resources/library/cultural-mobility-yearbook-2023>

54 Marie Le Sourd (2023), 'Foreword: Naming and understanding contexts', in On the Move, Cultural Mobility Yearbook 2023, p. 4, available at <https://on-the-move.org/resources/library/cultural-mobility-yearbook-2023>

55 Green Art Lab Alliance, 'Manifesto', <https://greenartlaballiance.com/about/manifesto/>

56 Jordi Baltà Portolés (2022), Environmental Sustainability in Contemporary Dance: Emerging Issues, Practices and Recommendations. European Dancehouse Network. <https://www.ednetwork.eu/news/edn-publication-2022>

57 The survey was conducted in early March 2023 and the key findings were presented during the launch of the IETM Green School on 21 March 2023.

58 See chapter 2.

59 From the Asia consultation led by Katelin Verstraete.

60 The focus group was organised by Hivos South Africa and IETM and chaired by Samantha Nengomasha. Mark Chilongu is the co-founder Africa Directions.

CHAPTER 2:

Positioning the performing arts in climate justice

Positioning the performing arts in climate justice

The previous chapter has shown that climate justice implies looking at climate change and social justice in an interconnected way, and that this should also have specific implications in effective action. These implications will be further explored in this chapter, which will describe the ways in which **performing arts organisations can effectively act to foster climate justice**. In doing so, we draw on the seven reasons why climate justice matters in the performing arts, as discussed earlier: the ability of artistic approaches to provide interconnected, holistic approaches, the acknowledgement of diversity, the potential to acknowledge traditional knowledge and lifestyles, the importance of creative imagination, the need to revise existing practices in the sector, etc. This chapter also takes into consideration existing literature, as well as evidence collected in interviews and regional consultations, illustrating arguments with a series of examples.

Creativity and narratives

Contribute to shifting narratives around climate change, highlighting its human dimension

Stories and narratives in theatre, dance and other performing arts have the potential to capture the imagination of audiences, raising awareness about climate (in)justice and helping to imagine more sustainable futures. They can also stress how climate change is experienced by specific groups and communities, emphasising its human dimension, fostering empathy and taking advantage of the ability of the performing arts to ‘trigger a very special human trait: **the ability to identify with the “other”, to empathise with the character or the body on stage...** The performing arts have an inherent power to promote humanitarian values. They enable citizens to break out of the increasingly predominant simplistic us-against-them discourse.’⁶¹

Regional consultations leading to this research have highlighted **the ability of the performing arts to present complex issues in an accessible, digestible form, thus raising awareness about them and allowing audiences to understand the meaning and implications of themes such as climate justice**. This point was in particular stressed by participants of the Southern Africa focus group⁶² who see the role of performing artists as raising awareness amongst populations, and help them digest a complicated topic like climate justice in their local language. As highlighted by stand-up comedian Kadem Katuka, ‘we are here to translate a serious topic into an entertaining content’.

The anthology of short audio plays *Climate Change and Other Small Talk*, presented below, provides an excellent example of how the performing arts can present complex stories in accessible ways, integrate local challenges and a global perspective, and encourage reflection and action.



Participatory theatre outreach program conducted by Africa Directions in Mtendere Lusaka. Photo credit: Africa Directions

Climate Change and Other Small Talk

Climate Change and Other Small Talk is an anthology of short audio plays created by nine companies in Canada, India, Nigeria, Australia, Chile, and Mauritius. It was produced in 2023 by Sunny Drake Productions in association with Why Not Theatre (Toronto, Canada) and nine companies around the world. Each company commissioned a local playwright to tackle climate crisis and climate justice issues from a fictional and humorous angle. Partner companies were selected with a view to ensuring that a majority of the writers are from Indigenous, Black and Global South communities, i.e. those most affected by the climate crisis.

The project emerged from theatre and TV writer and creator Sunny Drake’s artist residency in the Arctic Circle, which led him to realise how, in order to really understand climate change, both local and global data are needed. Just as scientists combine their data with hundreds of other weather stations, why not do the same thing with artists? This led to the idea of creating locally relevant stories that could be combined into a global creative project, to offer listeners both a take on how the climate crisis affects local communities and how systemic issues perpetuate climate injustice.

While the podcast series can reach a global audience, local listening parties held by each participating company provided a focus point for a gathering where organisers can host dialogue and information sessions, and where audiences can build shared memories that will sustain their commitment to turning the indecision, fear or curiosity they may feel in face of the climate crisis threat into action. The project is based on the perception that, in addition to scientific data, stories are needed to change culture and ways of living.

Producers supported local companies to find their own delivery style for their listening parties, to tailor their climate messaging, sustain the advocacy efforts of local activists, highlight local actions and forge deeper links between concerned residents. Group meetings across time zones were also organised to align values, sharpen participant companies’ climate change knowledge and circulate ideas about the project approach. Overall, 100 artists have contributed to producing the project, and podcasts have reached the top 10 podcast charts in many participating countries.

↓ For additional information, please visit <https://www.sunnydrake.com/climatechangeandotherssmalltalk>

61 IETM, European Dancehouse Network, IN SITU, Circostrada and European Theatre Convention (2019), ‘Power of the performing arts in Europe’, Brussels, p.3. https://www.ietm.org/sites/default/files/attachments/policypaper/power_of_performing_art_in_europe_final.docx_1_0.pdf

62 The focus group was organised by Hivos Southern Africa and IETM.

As explained in the article ‘Recycling Waste: Does Culture Matter’⁶³, there is evidence that people who take part in cultural activities more frequently also tend to engage more in activities related to environmental sustainability, such as the recycling of waste. The cause for this seems to be related to how cultural experiences, through the narratives they convey, help to develop an awareness of the complex relation between everyday choices (such as recycling) and long-term social outcomes (such as the preservation of the environment and climate change mitigation).

Furthermore, in contexts where human rights are repressed, arts can advocate in smart ways, without overtly being confronting. **‘Activists have to be smart to bring their message as they get silenced. Arts can advocate without confronting’**⁶⁴ said Geli Arceño, cultural practitioner and activist from the Philippines, who shared how Youth for Climate Hope unites all kinds of young people including artists to take climate action, using performance art in effective ways.

Yet, while the power of the performing arts to raise awareness of complex issues cannot be denied, there is also **the risk of seeing the arts to be instrumentalised and being seen primarily as a communication tool**. Some of the participants in regional consultations described how they had mainly engaged in work around climate change when requested to do so by environmental groups and platforms, frequently in the context of public events in which a visible activity was required – a risk that needs to be taken into account. In particular, participants in the Southern African and Latin American focus groups deplored the way artists are brought in as a last resort. They pleaded for a coordinated approach between artists and other sectors of society. They argued that in order to popularise a governmental decision addressing climate change amongst communities, they need to be involved in the different levels of decision making and not in an ad hoc manner.

Embody the experience

One distinctive potential of the performing arts lies in their ability to enable creative imagination because, through them, **experiences can be embodied, helping to make an awareness of one’s surroundings more present, and making connections between humans and the natural environment stronger, bound with one another**, as emphasised by some participants in the Latin American focus group. Tiago Gambogi, co-director of f.a.b. – The Detonators (a dance and physical theatre company) stresses that **‘the performing arts naturally have a connection with the body, and the body is connected with the environment’**⁶⁵, so the performing arts allow people to ‘be brought into their bodies’ and to connect with the natural environment.

Participants in the consultation conducted in Asia also argued that, by creating a narrative, theatre can develop an imaginary approach, help embody experiences, and create intimacy and togetherness in a particular space and time. It can bring untold stories to the surface and create conversations and relations, building bridges across boundaries and developing joint reflections and actions. Educator, art writer, cultural worker and activist Geli Arceño, who was interviewed during the Asian consultation, stresses the power of performance art to help people connect to the bigger picture in unexpected, cathartic ways.⁶⁶ Through her work she has witnessed that audiences can really identify with the embodied experience of performance arts, much to the surprise of activists who were not convinced at first by the power of performance art.

The interactive performance **Point Nemo** staged at Reactor⁶⁷ in 2023, immerses participants in the problematic situations created by climate change and the questions of climate justice.



63 Alessandro Crociata, Massimiliano Agovino and Pier Luigi Sacco (2015), ‘Recycling Waste: Does Culture Matter’, Journal of Behavioural and Experimental Economics, 55. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/271134128_Recycling_Waste_Does_Culture_Matter

64 From the Asia consultation led by Katelijn Verstraete.

65 From the Latin American consultation led by Pedro Affonso Ivo Franco.

66 From the Asian consultation led by Katelijn Verstraete.

67 Reactor is an independent theatre rooted in the alternative art community of Cluj-Napoca, Romania’s second largest city.

Point Nemo

The international co-production Point Nemo written by Selma Dragoş and Catinca Drăgănescu, was created under the pan-European collaboration project Stronger Peripheries: A Southern Coalition⁶⁸, which is co-funded by the European Union through the Creative Europe Programme.

In a none too distant future, the world is in full climate crisis and humanity is suddenly wiped out by a new virus, except for two tour groups arriving at a fictional island located at 'Point Nemo' in the Pacific Ocean. In anticipation, the tour operator has built a domed settlement on the island that will enable its population to survive in comfort for a hundred years, at the cost of using up all the resources of the island.

However, the Dome can only sustain one tour group and it appears that the island is already inhabited by a community that has long survived by population control and sustainable use. Now it faces death by environmental destruction from the new arrivals. As volunteers in the audience step into the roles of tourists and locals, the audience faces questions such as: should each group proceed in its own interest? Or what, if any, is a fair solution for all groups, but also the best for the future of humanity?

The performance is led by four performers. While one performer contributes live music and voices from the island, the other three act as narrators and hosts. The performance culminates in the fateful debate between the three groups.

The following points were observed in the first performances.

- Usually, the stronger of the two tour groups occupied the Dome. As they got the chance to take in select individuals from the other tour group, they faced the question of what makes a human worth saving.
- Upon learning that the locals are the people in the audience, the dominant group began to have doubts about inhabiting the Dome.
- Usually, all three groups merged and the environmentally destructive Dome was shut down.
- Half the time, the debate concluded with the agreement to postpone the tough decisions.

The same questions of morality and strategy that the audience faces in Point Nemo are discussed today in the context of global climate justice. They refer, for example, to the fair distribution of scarce resources, fair compensation for damages, and the responsibility to help those in need, including future generations. They also suggest that we need to adapt the very structure of our civilisation.

↓ For additional information, visit:
<https://reactor-cluj.com/en/spectacol/point-nemo/>



Awareness raising, learning and advocacy

Learning about climate justice

Climate justice is still a relatively new or not frequently used concept with the public in many parts of the world. Indeed, in Southern Africa, the concept of climate justice is not well understood by artists and communities and as O'Brien Makora, Executive Director of EDZAI ISU Trust in Zimbabwe, noted: 'We have to educate creatives. We cannot simplify something we don't understand'⁶⁹. Artists' capacity building is therefore essential to convey the information, and to build a creative programme addressing climate change and climate justice.

Relevant learning processes may involve challenging consumerism and raising awareness of the interrelation between colonialism and the loss of traditional ways of knowing and doing, as some of the regional consultations leading to this report suggested. The provision of information and tools to understand the dynamics of climate justice and how to address it is also essential and can take many forms. One of them is the Creative Climate Justice Hub established by Julie's Bicycle, as described below.

Creative Climate Justice Hub

The Creative Climate Justice Hub is a dynamic library established by not-for-profit organisation Julie's Bicycle, providing climate justice resources. It aims to enable artists and cultural practitioners to understand the systemic causes of the climate crisis, how it intersects with issues of social, economic and environmental injustice and how arts and culture are responding creatively.

Combining case studies, creative content, publications, links to relevant organisations and projects, and other content, structured on the basis of a set of transversal themes (e.g. racial justice, decolonisation, regenerative systems, natural resources, health and wellbeing, land and nature) as well as curated toolkits (e.g. resources and educational tools explaining the fundamentals of climate justice).

The Creative Climate Justice Hub takes advantage of Julie's Bicycle's previous work in this area and invites users to submit their own material. Promoters suggest that they are particularly interested in work led by and centring on BIPOC, LGBTQ+ and disabled communities, refugees and migrants, and communities in the Global South.

↓ For additional information, please visit
<https://juliesbicycle.com/creative-climate-justice/>

⁶⁸ or more information: <https://strongerperipheries.eu/>

⁶⁹ From the Southern Africa focus groups organised by Hivos Southern Africa and IETM.

Raising awareness and advocating

There are also cases in which performing arts directly address the issue of climate justice, contributing to raising audiences' awareness and fostering change in their actions, as well as those of policymakers and institutions.

Pangrok Sulap, a Malaysian collective of artists, musicians and social activists with a mission to empower rural communities and the marginalised through art, works passionately on climate justice issues. Their work focuses on telling the narrative of rural communities of Borneo and captures light-hearted moments of human interaction, as well as exploring more hard-hitting content such as human rights, political corruption, and the environment.

Zuppa, a theatre company in Halifax Canada, produced 'In the dumps', an audio play by Shauntay Grant, as part of the 'Climate change and Small Talks Series' (see above). It tells the story of a father unleashing his eleven-year-old son in an act of illegal dumping to challenge decades of environmental racism in their rural Black Nova Scotian community.

The play tackles a harsh reality for many Indigenous and Black Canadians living near toxic dump sites. Areas such as these release methane into the atmosphere and pose numerous health and environmental risks. In the Dumps introduces two important concepts: environmental justice and environmental racism. It also shows us the importance of taking action: in this case, education and intergenerational learning as a practice of addressing systemic injustices and debating the ethics and politics of action. In the play, as well as engaging in dialogue to educate each other, father and son are undertaking an act of civil disobedience.

In order to spark local conversations on climate justice, Zuppa teamed up with Africville Museum, Mayworks Halifax Festival of Working People & the Arts and The Ecology Action Centre to offer a relaxed and contemplative experience to audience members, who could listen to the play on headphones scattered about the museum's outdoor spaces.



Audience listening to Africville.
Photo credit: Tee Porter.



Audience listening to Africville.
Photo credit: Tee Porter.

Recognising knowledge from the Global South

In the light of the climate change crisis, the deplorable loss of traditional knowledge happening in all corners of the globe is distressing because it is often the sustainable, adapted ways of relating to nature, which local knowledge is based upon, that we most need today. Such loss has been driven to a large extent by the exploitation and discrimination of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the Global South, but not exclusively. In light of the ecological crisis, the Western development model and the self-perceived superiority of 'modern' societies are being questioned while Indigenous Peoples' knowledge and skill to live in harmony with nature is increasingly recognised.⁷⁰ For Sámi scholar Liisa-Ravna Finbog, the concept of 'sustainability' is a Western concept, a necessary amendment to maintain Western living standards.⁷¹ It is nonsensical for Indigenous people because their way of living has been sustainable from the very beginning.

Climate justice involves taking measures to redress the damage done, and includes a recognition of the value of traditional knowledge – something to which performing arts initiatives can contribute by, for instance, showcasing stories that give value to such knowledge. For instance, performing arts company AzkonaToloza has produced a trilogy of works dealing with stories about Indigenous peoples and the extractive operations of Western companies in Latin America, which serves to explore the connections between colonial history and the loss of knowledge and identities which are essential to the sustainability of the planet.⁷²

The work done by People's Palace Projects with Indigenous communities in the Brazilian Amazon region, and in connecting them globally, is also illustrative of the recognition of valuable traditional knowledge and how to use it appropriately (see below).

70 See report by Máté Tenke: 'Indigenous Ecological Knowledge I: Insights from Outside the Arts': <https://www.ietm.org/en/resources/reports/indigenous-ecological-knowledge-i-insights-from-outside-the-arts>

71 Ibid.

72 See <https://miprimedrop.wordpress.com/portfolio/trilogia-pacifico/> for additional information on AzkonaToloza's Trilogia Pacífico and <https://miprimedrop.wordpress.com/blog/> for a selection of texts in several languages.

People's Palace Projects

A subsidiary of Queen Mary University of London, People's Palace Projects (PPP) is an arts research centre that brings a diverse range of artists, activists, academics and audiences together for social transformation and change. Its mission is to investigate the power of creativity and collaborate with marginalised communities to make change. With a growing global network of partners, it advocates for equality, climate justice and better health through the arts.

One of PPP's four areas of activity is 'Indigenous Exchange and Climate Action', based around work in the Xingu Indigenous territories of the Brazilian Amazon region. This collaboration between Brazil and the UK has produced a series of artworks and initiatives documenting, celebrating and advocating for the culture and communities of the Xingu territory. Artistic residencies, theatre plays and online workshops involving young people have taken place in this context. The work serves to denounce the environmental damage, killings and persecution of Indigenous peoples in the Amazon, as well as to reflect on how cultural organisations have a crucial role to play in raising international awareness about these events and about the essential role of Indigenous peoples in the fight against climate change.

In this respect, PPP has also fostered Indigenous Research Methods, connecting academics across the globe, with a focus on issues such as culturally sensitive knowledge exchange between Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners, equitable co-creation and mobilisation for meaningful impact. Collaborations in the context of PPP have also been presented at major arts events and venues, including the Venice Biennale 2021, Tate Modern and Horniman Museum.

↓ For additional information, please visit <https://peoplespalaceprojects.org.uk/en/>

Appropriate use of traditional knowledge involves the prerequisite for relevant communities to give free, prior, and informed consent for access and use of knowledge systems, for the proper protection of cultural and traditional intellectual property, and for clear data-sharing and benefit-sharing agreements.⁷³

Inherent in the performing arts is the power to tell stories which are relevant locally, stories which can contribute to increased self-esteem among disadvantaged communities, whose forms of knowledge and lifestyles have frequently been disregarded – as exemplified, for example, by communities that have been subjected to colonialism.

While traditional knowledge emanating from communities in the Global South is particularly significant in this context, instances of climate injustice are visible across the world and, therefore, there are other opportunities for the recognition of local knowledge elsewhere too – among Europe's own Indigenous Peoples, as well as other disadvantaged communities whose experience of climate change is also marked by social injustice.⁷⁴

Since the nature of knowledge and learning that will be relevant to each context varies widely, there are also many different ways in which performing arts organisations may act in this area. The 8th Kenya International Theatre Festival (#KITFest2023), presented below, can be seen as a good example of this.



Play during the Kenya International Theatre Festival. Photo credit: the Kenya International Theatre Festival.

Theatre for a Sustainable Future: Telling Stories for Climate Action – the 8th Kenya International Theatre Festival

The Kenya International Theatre Festival (KITFest), organised by the Kenya International Theatre Festival Trust in partnership with the Kenya Cultural Centre, will celebrate its 8th edition in 2023. Both the festival and the Cultural Centre use the theatre for development approach, where audiences, and particularly vulnerable communities, are part of the performance. Previous editions of KITFest have addressed issues such as gender equality, leading to more awareness and changes in more equal relationships within families and communities.

KITFest2023 (November 23) entitled 'Theatre for a Sustainable Future: Telling Stories for Climate Action', aims to respond to the severe impact of climate change in Kenya, where drought has significant effects on agriculture and breeding, among other visible impacts. Climate change is also becoming increasingly a policy priority.

In this context, festival organisers believe that theatre has the potential to raise awareness and engage communities in facing the challenge, by looking for solutions which are adapted to local contexts. Indeed, KITFest2023 will unfold first in six counties, where local theatre companies will present their work and be able to take part in training and educational activities, resulting in the writing and production of plays around climate change. Productions will then be staged in public spaces, involving members of the community in reenacting the plays so as to discuss the issues raised and provide solutions which are relevant in the local context. The best local productions will later be presented in the main festival, to take place at the site of the Kenya National Theatre.

In addition to local productions, the festival includes plays by renowned international companies, thus enabling exchange and accompanying training activities. KITFest2023 also draws on the expertise of Climate Change Theatre Action, a worldwide festival of short plays about the climate crisis. Overall, it amounts to a good combination of local knowledge with experiences from abroad, translating them into the language of theatre and allowing local communities to own the knowledge generated and act accordingly.

↓ For additional information, please visit <https://kitfest.co.ke/>

73 H. Morel et al. (2022).

74 See IETM Report 'Indigenous Ecological Knowledge', in particular contributions by Kimaren Ole Riamit and Pratima Gurung.

Community building and empowerment

Engaging with communities and empowering them

At the basis of climate justice is the acknowledgement that climate change acutely affects those who are more vulnerable, and who frequently have less resources to make their voices heard, influence climate action, and contribute to redressing inequalities. Therefore, involving local communities and empowering them is a key factor in fostering climate justice, and the performing arts have significant potential in this respect.

This theme was particularly raised during the focus group meeting in Southern Africa. For Adrian Maanka A. Chipindi, Director of Arts Council Zambia, the performing arts have the power to disseminate information and influence the community to act. He sees artists as playing a role in bringing the voice of the community. O'Brien Makore, Executive Director EDZAI ISU Trust, Zimbabwe noted that communities have in-depth knowledge on how to face climate change but more funds should be available to develop local expertise.

As suggested by dancer and arts manager Jorge Guillén, who took part in the regional consultation in Latin America, 'People can't imagine being part of these discussions because this can be out of their scope, out of their responsibility and through performing arts people and communities feel they can address these issues more closely.'⁷⁵

Wayla Amatathammachad, who participated in the Asian consultation, is also engaging audiences through performing arts in the countryside of Northern Thailand. With a professional background as a theatre producer and festival organiser, he is working on issues relevant to the communities (e.g. flooding, sustainable farming). He uses performative approaches to tell stories about local wisdom through the act of making food and eating together. For instance, Dansai Food Story aimed to increase environmental awareness through food.

In Cambodia, Epic Arts develops community arts and education programmes for people with and without disabilities. It raises awareness about human rights and environmental issues (especially plastic pollution) and embeds sustainable practices within the organisation.⁷⁶

In Indonesia, Papermoon Puppet Theatre, founded by Ria Tri Sulistyani, undertakes intensive research work with communities, developing work that is often related to environmental topics like pollution and the relationship between humans and nature, involving communities and schools. For example, *Bucket of Beetles* is about the relationship between humans and nature inspired by a story of Ria's 4-year-old son. Ria wants to inspire children and parents with stories about the love for nature.⁷⁷ She believes that women and children are the most vulnerable in the climate emergency and deserve to have their voice heard. Therefore, making theatre for young people and reaching new audiences is her mission.

This is also the journey undertaken by Fragments Theatre in Palestine, where children and young people engage in addressing the local experience of climate change, and ways to address climate change. It also illustrates how participatory processes can provide tools to take action in a context marked by vulnerability (see below).



Performance at Theatre paBridge Zimbabwe during the Green Crusade event. Photo credit: African Crossroads



Theatre paBridge Zimbabwe during the Green Crusade event. Photo credit: African Crossroads

⁷⁵ From the Latin American focus group discussion led by Pedro Affonso Ivo Franco.

⁷⁶ See <https://epicarts.org.uk/>

⁷⁷ See for example 'Stream of Memory' (<https://www.papermoonpuppet.com/category/performance/>) and 'A Bucket of Beetles' (<https://www.papermoonpuppet.com/a-bucket-of-beetles/>).



Bucket of Beetles performance by Papermoon Puppet Theatre
Photo credit: Rangga Yudhistira

Fragments Theatre's work around climate change in Palestine

Fragments Theatre is a cultural organisation, founded in Jenin, West Bank, by a group of actors, filmmakers, and technicians who were inspired by Juliano Mer-Khamis, a theatre director who was assassinated in 2011. It aims to provide a safe space for children, women and young people to exchange, interact and express themselves through creative work in media, theatre and visual art, thus ensuring that local voices are heard. Particular emphasis is placed on the creation of stories, which enables engagement from everyone and can lead to accessible, small-scale, rather than large-scale productions. Beyond giving hope, Fragments Theatre helps vulnerable populations in managing their stress and trauma through the arts.

The organisation has identified climate change as one of its focus areas, following a research process that pointed to the lack of social awareness around environmental issues and upon realising that public authorities were not acting in this area. The permanent situation of insecurity in the context of the Israeli occupation and the critical economic situation are some of the factors that prevent the community from focusing on the environment, despite the need to take action. In this context, Fragments Theatre identified garbage sorting and recycling and the mass cutting of trees as some of the locally relevant issues that helped to address climate change in tangible ways. Through participatory creative processes, in which children and young people were encouraged to create their own stories, accompanying them with drawings and music, they have contributed to raising awareness. Children's engagement has also had a multiplier effect, by raising awareness among their families as well. This has led to a change in habits and improvements in recycling, street cleanliness, and tree cutting, among other things.

The example serves to highlight the potential of the performing arts to empower participants in order to take action, to resist in a context of severe adversity, and to identify ways in which to address environmental risk at the local level.

↓ For additional information, please visit
<https://fragmentstheatrepa.wixsite.com/fragmentstheatre>

In addition to enabling access to knowledge, empowerment can also emerge through the strengthening of bonds among community members. One good example of this is the Refuge project, a five-year interdisciplinary collaboration in Melbourne, addressing contemporary emergencies (floods, heatwaves, pandemics) and how communities could be empowered to react with creative solutions in the face of catastrophe.⁷⁸ A participatory action research project, which engaged people at a deep emotional and personal level, it serves to illustrate how the performing arts may help to rehearse narratives of possible futures through embodiment.⁷⁹

The examples above have shown how performing arts organisations can contribute to empowering local communities by creating inclusive spaces, allowing them to address locally relevant issues. As noted by Ericky Nakanome, an artist and lecturer in visual arts at the Federal University of the Amazon, Brazil, and a promoter of local folk cultural initiatives and events, 'in contexts in which people rarely stop to think and consider issues such as river pollution, festivals have this power of time, of giving people time to stop and think about these issues in a very natural way'.⁸⁰ This process of empowerment is also facilitated through collaboration and networking between different organisations, contributing to generating an enabling environment, as the next chapter will explore.

78 Georgia Symons (2020), 'When art meets emergency at Refuge'.

79 From the Asian consultation led by Katelijin Verstraete.

80 From the Latin American consultation.

CHAPTER 3:

An enabling environment for climate justice through the performing arts

An enabling environment for climate justice through the performing arts

As previous chapters have shown, adopting a climate justice approach in the performing arts involves assuming a nuanced approach to international mobility, an increased acknowledgement of local knowledge and the building of common spaces and the exercise of solidarity. All of this needs to be accompanied by enabling environments at local, national, and international levels.

At national level, this involves strengthening cultural policies to achieve a suitable balance of support for creation, distribution and inclusive access, while also ensuring that performing arts receive adequate resources and consider their connections with both the environment and social justice. At the same time, it is necessary to establish frameworks based on international solidarity and which contribute to sustainable cultural and creative ecosystems, such as those proposed by the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions⁸¹. In recent years, some initiatives have called for revising funding for international cultural exchange, integrating a climate justice component, so that climate change and balanced international cultural exchange can be addressed simultaneously.⁸²

It is also crucial to redress the inherent injustice in downplaying the arts, and the performing arts more specifically, when tackling global issues such as climate change and climate justice. The ongoing lack of funding and representation of the artistic sectors in the decision-making process, as well as the feeling of being 'instrumentalised', has been underlined on several occasions during the regional consultations. The importance of joining forces, and the frequent lack of platforms in certain parts of the world bringing together artists and organisations addressing environmental issues, also emerged as a common concern in several of the regional consultations. As noted by O'Brien Makore, there is a lack of connection between governments, scientists and the artists, and such a connection, he insists, is critical for reaching local communities and enabling a just transition.

Initiatives such as the Green Art Incubator in Serbia (see below) exemplify how stakeholders in the arts and climate action can join forces in order to raise awareness and advocate for more enabling policies.



Green Art Incubator's networking and capacity-building activities in Serbia

Green Art Incubator (GAI) brings together organisations and activists in the arts and climate action, in order to foster the recognition and strengthening of culture and art as relevant spaces for thinking about the climate crisis. It does so through education and capacity-building of arts organisations and professionals, and the adoption of green principles in their practice.

Regretting the lack of public policies in this field, and following an analysis and mapping of the existing practices in theatre, the audiovisual sector, and museums and galleries, GAI developed three green e-toolkits for these sectors, drawing on internationally available guidance and adapting them to local specificities. They serve to make the case for – and illustrate the social role of – culture as an agent of change and as 'a powerful place for reflection on the climate crisis', and to provide professionals and the general public with information on how to address climate change in practice.

Over the last two years, the platform has contributed to bringing together individuals and initiatives that were isolated up to that point. As a result, its promoters feel that they have managed to connect two sectors, that of the arts and that of climate activism. Connections with international experts and practitioners active in this area have been established through, among others, invitations to take part in training and awareness-raising activities.

Ultimately, GAI also aims to bring about change at policy level, as there is limited public action on climate change and limited support for the arts. Indeed, lack of financial resources prevents many arts organisations from introducing changes in their venues and practices to make them greener. The progressive building of a network in this area aims to progressively change mindsets and lead to action.

↓ For additional information, please visit <https://greenartincubator.org/>

81 UNESCO (2005), Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, especially articles 12-18. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000246264?posInSet=1&queryId=85dde93e-9ef6-402b-bc9f-452e6a399382>

82 DutchCulture (2020), 'Report on Fair International Cultural Cooperation #2 – Climate Change: Conventions and practical issues in funding international activities', https://dutchculture.nl/sites/default/files/atoms/files/dutchculture_report_-_fair_international_cultural_cooperation_2019.pdf; Cristina Farinha, Avril Joffe, et al. (2022), 'Not a Toolkit! Fair collaboration in cultural relations: a reflAction', EUNIC, see esp. 'Ways of Thinking: Climate Emergency', <https://www.eunicglobal.eu/fair-collaboration>; and Julie's Bicycle (2021).

The example of GAI in Serbia illustrates one of the different ways in which networking can advocate for a better environment for performing arts action on climate justice.

At this stage, it is important to emphasise that the significance of both local and international arts networks have been demonstrated on many occasions. Due to their capacity to facilitate cross-learning, promote the exchange of best practices, and advocate for the sector and for policies that support justice, these networks have a vital role in ensuring that the arts – and the performing arts in particular – make a substantial contribution to the climate justice cause.

Recommendations

This research has provided versatile examples and arguments, supporting the role of the performing arts in the fight for climate justice. With this in mind, we offer below a set of recommendations for a number of areas.

Performing arts sector

1. Revise own practices

- Consider how organisations' own practices may contribute to reinforcing climate change, inequality or exploitation, e.g. in terms of energy or sponsorships.
- While revising one's own practices from the perspective of environmental sustainability or from that of social justice (e.g. equality, diversity and inclusion), develop a more comprehensive climate justice approach and consider the elaboration of a specific climate justice policy.

2. Outreach, awareness raising and narratives

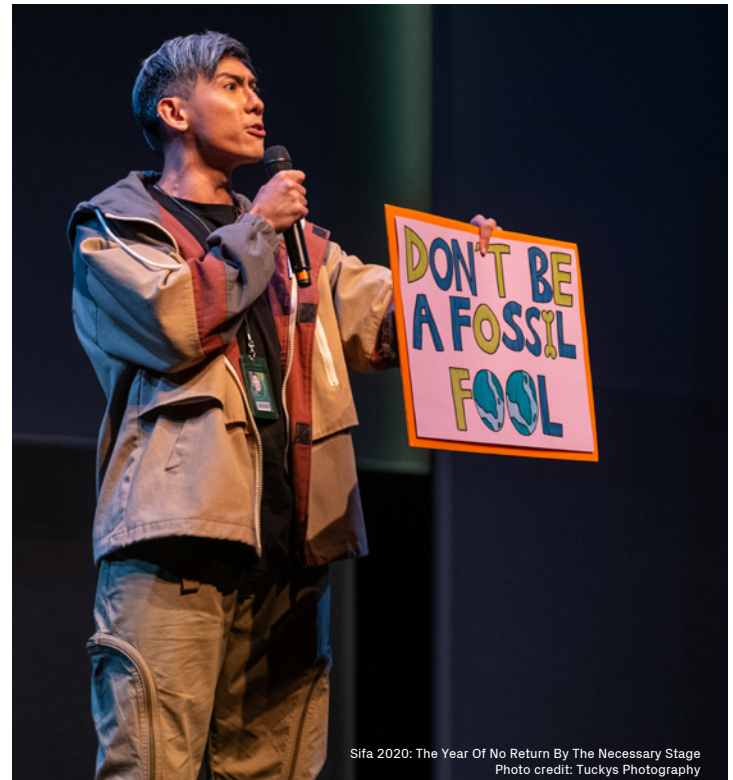
- Reach different audiences and include groups who will be most affected by climate change or who encounter barriers to participation.
- Commission or produce justice-focused work, which serves both to denounce climate injustice and to highlight the potential for change.
- Provide a platform for people from affected groups to share their experiences.
- Take advantage of the power of the performing arts to enable an understanding of complex relationships, such as those that connect climate and social justice.

3. Collaborations and partnerships

- For organisations in the Global North – encourage co-creation with peers from the Global South and Indigenous communities to highlight their knowledge and identities and their role in the fight against climate change.
- Join or establish own networks or platforms that contribute to facilitating the connections between culture, climate change and social justice, and lobby for suitable enabling policies and support mechanisms for the sector.
- Collaborate with environmental and educational organisations and policy-makers in activities that aim to raise awareness of the local impact of climate change and issues related to climate justice.

Policy makers and funders

- Foster national and international policies that strengthen performing arts ecosystems, through suitable support mechanisms at local, national and international levels. This includes policies to safeguard the rights of artists and promote fair working conditions, and the development of programmes to develop skills among creatives.



Sifa 2020: The Year Of No Return By The Necessary Stage
Photo credit: Tuckys Photography

- Develop policy and programmes in relations to climate change at global, national and local levels designed for artists and performing arts organisations from and with indigenous and disadvantaged communities, who wish to work with experts on the topic from other sectors of society.
- Develop transregional programmes in order to increase collaboration between arts organisations in different regions of the world. More specifically, the European Commission should increase coordination between its relevant departments⁸³ to enable North-South collaborative arts programmes related to climate change.
- Financially support the creation of local networks and strengthen the financial capacity of international networks to increase international exchanges and co-creation between the Global North and the Global South.

Performing arts sector, funders and policy makers

- Apply principles for mobility contextually and give mobility priority to those who generally face more obstacles to travel, or who have more challenging contexts at home, and provide top-ups to compensate the extra costs.
- Develop green mobility policies according to geographical contexts.
- Develop adequate training programmes on climate change and climate justice locally and globally for arts organisations and performing artists.
- Co-design policy discussion on the topic of (performing) arts and climate change with disadvantaged communities.
- Develop further research on the theme of climate justice and the performing arts.

⁸³ For instance, the directorates-general (DGs) responsible for education & culture, international partnership, neighbourhood and climate.

Conclusions

Climate change disproportionately affects those who have contributed the least to it, jeopardising their cultural heritage and knowledge. Failure to protect these cultural resources could exacerbate climate-related inequality and injustice.

The suppression of traditional knowledge by extractive economies has hindered climate mitigation and adaptation efforts. To transition to a more sustainable, resilient, and equitable society, all sectors, including arts and culture, must reduce their environmental impact and promote social justice.

Efforts such as ‘decarbonising cultural practice’ by ending harmful industry sponsorships, particularly from fossil fuels, and ‘decolonising culture and seeking reparation’ through addressing and redressing inequalities are crucial steps. However, what this publication has also shown is the difficulty of establishing universal solutions; it is always necessary to consider what justice and injustice mean in specific contexts, and to empower local actors to negotiate these implications. The transition to a localised approach also requires infrastructure support, and artists from the Global South should have opportunities for training, exchange, and touring without facing economic or visa-related barriers, which are perceived as forms of injustice.

Therefore, addressing climate change necessitates a fundamental shift in values and relationships, rectifying historical inequalities, and fostering more equitable interactions with nature and each other. Climate justice emphasises the importance of recognising context-specific inequalities and injustice as central to effective action. It calls for fairness, equity, and the reduction of existing disparities in climate mitigation and adaptation efforts.

Community involvement is vital, not only in analysing climate impacts but also in shaping solutions, requiring strategies that empower and listen to affected communities. Additionally, climate justice acknowledges the cultural dimension, highlighting the potential role of the arts, especially the performing arts, in promoting awareness and addressing climate-related inequalities. Examples throughout this research presented multiple ways in which the performing arts can approach climate justice, ranging from creative storytelling around the local impacts of climate change, through community empowerment, devising more just, conscious forms of international mobility, and calling for more robust support policies.

They also demonstrate that many professionals and organisations in the performing arts are increasingly considering the ethical implications of addressing the climate crisis and the need to integrate a more complex, holistic lens when doing so.

As this publication has extensively argued, attention to local contexts and challenges should be central and will inevitably shape action. However, a consideration of the global level (the global nature of the climate crisis, continuing international inequalities which affect the experience of climate change, and the resulting need to foster global awareness and solidarity) should also be considered. In this respect, international networking and, in particular, arts networks such as IETM, have an essential role to play in helping to facilitate discussion and collaboration, uncover valuable stories and knowledge, and call for adequate support frameworks that lead to a more just, sustainable future.

The research also calls for public authorities to recognise the role played by the performing arts in the area of climate change and climate justice. Indeed, more efforts are needed towards holistic policymaking and programme design, integrating an awareness of social inequality and environmental aspects into one another, and adapting support mechanisms accordingly.

It is important to mention that the research conducted was carried out within a limited timeframe, and the examples provided are by no means exhaustive. In addition, the regional consultations have shown that climate justice is often perceived as a new and little-known concept, rather than a central theme from the perspective of the performing arts. For many of those interviewed or consulted, and particularly those outside Europe, discourse on climate justice remain a foreign concept, with the term itself seen as being imported. And yet, the research also reveals that the Global South is often where holistic, interconnected perspectives on social, environmental, cultural and political issues emerge more naturally.

While the reflection and actionable strategies are still in their early stages, the presented arguments and examples underscore the meaningful role of the performing arts in envisioning a more equitable and sustainable future, extending beyond mere environmental concerns to embrace social justice and fairness. We are, as yet, at the beginning of this reflection and call for action.



Play during the Kenya International Theatre Festival.
Photo credit: the Kenya International Theatre festival.

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Annex

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The research was conducted between March and September 2023.

The examples presented in the text are based on desk research, documents and a series of interviews.

FOCUS GROUPS AND INTERVIEWS

Three focus groups with experts from three continents and several interviews were conducted in relation to the research to enable IETM to gather views 'from the field', in order to understand how local civil society and underrepresented groups are taking a central role as creators, facilitators and advocates of innovative climate solutions. The diversity of regional perspectives allowed us to better understand how specific regional circumstances, as well as different forms of inequality, intersect with approaches to the climate emergency.

IETM thanks all the interviewees as well as the focus group facilitators, their organisations and participants for their valuable contribution.

They are:

Focus group facilitators:

Samantha Nengomasha
Pedro Affonso Ivo Franco
Katelijm Verstraete
Levina Wirawan

INTERVIEWEES

Fanny Martin and Sunny Drake (Climate Change and Other Small Talk)

Mark Deputter and Carolina Mano Marques, Culturgest (ACT - Art, Climate, Transition)

Thiago Jesus (People's Palace Projects)

Rawand Arqawi (Fragments theatre)

Kevin Kimani Kahuro (The 8th Kenya International Theatre Festival)

Nađa Marjanović, Vladimir Djurdjević, Jovana Karaulić, Tijana Micanović, Ksenija Marković (Green Art incubator)

Yasmine Ostendorf (Green Lab Alliance, GALA)

Philipp Thapa for contributing to the Point Nemo case study based on interviews with **Oana Mardare, Ioana Hogman** and **Petro Ionescu** (July 2023), as well as written comments from Selma Dragoş

Paddy Dillon for presenting the Theatre Green Book

Máté Tenke and Pippa Bailey for providing contact and information on projects addressing climate change.

Milica Ilić for providing background information on climate change and the performing arts sector in the Balkans

FOCUS GROUPS

Southern Africa

The focus group meeting was organised by IETM in partnership with Hivos Southern Africa. The meeting was chaired by Samantha Nengomasha, Hivos Zimbabwe.

Participants:

O'Brien Makore

Executive Director at the EDZAI ISU Trust, a Zimbabwean transformative arts organisation that uses theatre, poetry and music to ignite alternative thoughts and views around critical societal issues.

Phillip Kamphilikwe Kaluba

Theatre for development group in Zambia.

Mark Chilongu

Co-founder of Africa Directions, an Indigenous Zambian youth-led organisation.

Adrian Maanka A. Chipindi

Director of the National Arts Council of Zambia.

Wencelacy Katuka 'Kadem the Comic'

Stand-up Comedian at Sinuka comedy, Zimbabwe.

Latin America

The focus group meeting was organised and chaired by Pedro Affonso Ivo Franco, a consultant based in Brazil and Germany.

Participants:

Victoria D'hers

Artistas por la Tierra, Argentina.

Tiago Gambogi

Independent dancer, theatre artist and co-director of the company F.a.b. - The Detonators, Brazil and UK.

Urpí Castro

Tremanda Cultural Space, Peru.

Jorge Guillén

Dancer, Project 3, Mexico.

Ericky Nakanome

Visual artist, professor of Visual Arts at UFAM and president of the Arts Council of Boi Caprichoso - Parintins AM, Brazil.

Asia

The consultation in Asia included a series of interviews conducted by Katelijm Verstraete and Levina Wirawan.

Interviewees:

Tan E-Jan, founder and director of In Situ, an arts management consultancy that specialises in facilitating international exchange and collaborations between Southeast Asia and the world at large, Malaysia.

Siree Riewpaiboon, performer, interpreter, performing arts manager and producer, Thailand.

Geli Arceño, educator, art writer, and cultural worker in Bacolod City, Philippines.

Park Jisun, creative producer, researcher, and arts policy advisor, South Korea.

Hiroko Oshima, scenographer and theatre workshop practitioner based in Tokyo, Japan.

Wayla Amatathammachad, director of the International Low Fat Art Fes and researcher in contemporary art management, Thailand.

Mellissa Lim, General Manager of The Necessary Stage (TNS) and the Executive Producer of the M1 Singapore Fringe Festival, Singapore.

Angharad Wynne-Jones, Head of Audience Engagement at the State Library of Victoria, Australia.

Benjamin Milton Hampe, Project Director at the ASEAN Foundation, Myanmar/Australia.

Onn Sokny, Country Director, Epic Arts, Cambodia.

Nova Ruth Setyaningtyas, musician, political and environmental activist, Indonesia.

Maria (Ria) Tri Sulistiyani, co-artistic director, Papermoon Theatre, Indonesia.

