

FRESH PERSPECTIVES/4

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# ART FOR THE PLANET'S SAKE

*Arts and Environment*



picture: 'The drowned mermaid', Stig (from Art Not Oil coalition)

Hannah Van Den Bergh

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## FRESH PERSPECTIVES

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### Art for the Planet's Sake

#### *Fresh Perspectives on Arts and Environment*

by Hannah Van Den Bergh

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Stig, 'Drowned Mermaid' (from the *Art not Oil Coalition*)

# About

Almost 125 years ago, the Swedish chemist Svante Arrhenius drew attention to the potential global impact of fossil fuel use. At least 25 years ago we started experiencing the impacts of a dramatic rise in global temperatures, due to human activities. While scientific calculations continue to predict the catastrophic consequences another 1°C temperature rise will have on our ecosystem, world leaders are yet to agree on a course of global action to drastically reduce emissions. Time is running out.

Can art pretend to save the planet? No. And it doesn't. But if we believe in the power of art as a purely humanistic act, enriching people with non-materialistic values, art is able to tap into a different instinct, rationale and emotion than political rhetoric, corporate sales-pattern or even scientific data.

In this edition of Fresh Perspectives IETM collaborates with leading arts and environment organisation COAL to present contemporary arts models and practices that tackle environmental issues and advocate change – issues that should be the shared responsibility of all humankind. Increasingly artists and arts organisations dedicate their talent to raise awareness of the environment, scrutinize their own carbon footprints and encourage action in civil society. Time is running out. We need action to reinvent our world, and the arts help us imagine how.

This edition of Fresh Perspectives was written by Hannah Van Den Bergh and coordinated by Marie Le Sourd, Secretary General of On The Move. Special contributions were commissioned from Sacha Kagan, Marco Kusumawidjaya, Mike van Graan, Chantal Bilodeau and Yasmine Ostendorf.

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## IETM

is a dynamic, engaged and forward-looking network for the performing arts sector as well as a resource and reference point for innovative contemporary art. IETM consists of over 550 subscribing professional performing arts organisations from more than 50 countries. They are engaged in innovative, contemporary performing arts work and are committed to cross-border exchange and collaboration.

## COAL

The Coalition for Art and Sustainable Development, was founded by contemporary art, sustainable development and research professionals in France in 2008. Trailblazing and cross-cutting, COAL is working to promote a new generation of artists focusing on environmental and societal issues, in partnership with cultural spaces, NGOs, scientists and the business world. In a multidisciplinary and innovative spirit, COAL mobilises artists and cultural operators on social and environmental issues and supports the creation of artworks, creating awareness and implementing concrete solutions through exhibitions, events, the COAL Prize Art Environment, and intelligent resources like through the unique platform [ressource0.com](http://ressource0.com).

## HANNAH VAN DEN BERGH

Hannah Van Den Bergh is a writer and researcher based in the UK, working on projects exploring arts and environment, cultural mobility and site-specific performance. Hannah has worked for the Arts Council of Wales, the BBC and advises performing arts companies across the UK.

## Coordinator of this publication

### MARIE LE SOURD

Marie Le Sourd is the Secretary General of On the Move, the European cultural mobility information network. This organisation provides information about cultural mobility opportunities and funding in Europe and worldwide, and tackles various issues related to cultural mobility, including environmental ones. From 2006 to 2011 Marie was Director of the French Cultural Centre in Yogyakarta (Indonesia) after managing the Cultural Exchange Department of the Asia-Europe Foundation-ASEF (Singapore) for seven years.

## Guest contributors

### CHANTAL BILODEAU

Chantal Bilodeau is a New York-based playwright and translator originally from Montreal. She is the Artistic Director of The Arctic Cycle – an organization created to support the writing, development and production of eight plays that examine the impact of climate change on the eight countries of the Arctic – and the founder of the international network Artists And Climate Change. Recent awards include the Woodward International Playwriting Prize as well as First Prize in the Earth Matters on Stage Ecodrama Festival and the Uprising National Playwriting Competition. She is the recipient of a Jerome Travel & Study Grant, a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship, two Compton Foundation grants, and a U.S. Department of State Federal Assistance Award.

### MARCO KUSUMAWIJAYA

Marco Kusumawijaya is a practitioner, activist and thinker in the fields of architecture, environment, arts, cultural heritage, urban planning and development with more than 20 years of intensive experiences, orienting his practice and thinking towards sustainable urbanism and architecture. Trained as an architect, he has worked as architectural designer, urban designer and planner, researcher and consultant on urban management and governance. He has worked with private sectors, governments, international and local NGO's, international agencies such as the WWF, the British Council, the World Bank and UNDP/UN-HABITAT. Community engagement, community-based approach, participatory democracy in urban development and planning are always an important emphasis in his approach. His special interests include the urban study of Jakarta, city and arts, and social changes towards sustainability.

### MIKE VAN GRAAN

Mike van Graan is the Executive Director of the African Arts Institute and is the former Secretary General of the Arterial Network, a continent-wide network engaged in the African creative sector. He currently serves as a UNESCO Technical Expert on the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. One of South Africa's most prolific leading playwrights, Mike van Graan has had a long-standing association with the performing arts. His plays include Die Generaal (The Generaal), winner of the Fleur du Cap Best New Script Award 2008; Brothers in Blood, a Market Theatre production that won the Naledi Theatre Award for Best New Play 2009, and Iago's Last Dance which premiered on the Main Programme at the National Arts Festival and was nominated in the Fleur du Cap Best New Script category, 2009.

### SACHA KAGAN

Sacha Kagan is Research associate at the Leuphana University Lüneburg, ISCO (Institute of Sociology and Cultural Organization – ISKO in German). Among other engagements, Sacha Kagan is the Chair of Research Network 2: Sociology of the Arts, at the European Sociological Association (ESA) for the period 2015-2017; he is Founding Coordinator of Cultura21 International – 'Cultural Fieldworks for Sustainability', a network gathering artists, scientists and other cultural practitioners engaged for cultures of sustainability; and he is a founding member of Cultura21 in Germany (Institut Cultura21 e.V.). His main research and action area is the transdisciplinary field of 'arts and (un-)sustainability'. Some of his other areas of work and interest include the sociology of arts and culture, cultural economics, dance studies, documentary film, sustainability and sustainable development.

### YASMINE OSTENDORF

Yasmine Ostendorf is a cultural policy researcher who has founded the Green Art Lab Alliance (GALA); a knowledge alliance of cultural organisations engaging with environmental issues. She is currently doing research across Asia mapping 'Creative Responses to Sustainability' on behalf of ASEF - Asia-Europe Foundation.



Climate change engulfs us. It is the unavoidable normality that consistently adds to the order of the everyday, leaving a lasting impression through natural disasters, rising water levels, crop failure, biodiversity loss, and human conflict: a process of continual attrition. Scientists inform us that our civilisation is nearing collapse, unless we implement a radical change towards a low-carbon and low-resource economy. Art prepares us, not in calculations but in humanity.

# 01.

## INTRODUCTION

*Ecology is the new opiate of the masses.*  
Slavoj Žižek

Against the backdrop of COP21, the UN Climate Talks in Paris in December 2015, – what has been described as the ‘most critical’ climate talks to date – we anticipate a radical revision of environmental politics. Faced with conflicting ideologies, politics and approaches, can nature be the unifying policy? What we anticipate is, fundamentally, another opportunity to sit and talk. Global emissions have doubled since the first UN climate meeting in 1995, so rather than wait for action we turn to the arts. Our wealth of cultural idiosyncrasies ‘influence lifestyles, individual behaviour, consumption patterns, values related to environmental stewardship, and our interaction with the natural environment’, as defined by the UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda. Confronting ecological change with artistic response, from the arts and ecology centre in Germany ufaFabrik, to relatively new arts platforms like MELD in Greece who recognise that ‘a different kind of art is coming’.

At the heart of this debate is the pragmatism of living against sustainable principles. This must be Plan A, because there is no Plan B in terms of climate survival. The recent IFACCA/Julie’s Bicycle report, ‘The Arts and Environmental Sustainability’,<sup>1</sup> gives a definition of (the often elusive principle of) ‘sustainability’ in relation to the arts, and in anticipation of the post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda.

The authoring organisations recognise that ‘sustainability’ combines financial, social and environmental resources, but places environmental sustainability as the core principle upon which social, financial and cultural health is built. There is a need to develop a common language and shared consensus to translate this in practice: how do we shift attitudes to embrace the conservative principles of financial viability, future proofing, resilience and adaptation to secure minimal environmental impact? And with the arts enjoying a surge of activity through globalisation and cheap travel, how do we weigh this against impact and emissions? As Naomi Klein prophesised, ‘the solution to global warming is not to fix the world, it is to fix ourselves’<sup>2</sup>.

Through IETM and COAL we have found artists and organisations eager to evoke change in the climate debate. This publication does not aim to provide a series of answers, but illuminates work in practice and experimentation in the arts and cultural sector. Because culture is the main voice of humanity, and ‘human development can only be effective if we explicitly consider the integral value to the process of culture and cultural factors such as memory, creativity, diversity and knowledge’ – as outlined in the UCLG 2015 ‘Culture 21 – Actions’<sup>3</sup>. This is an outline of the role of arts in observing, understanding and critiquing approaches, and proposing solutions to environmental sustainability. It began with a call for contributions by IETM and COAL on the theme, with 34 responses from the sector. This work also draws on published writing and reports that have opened and challenged discussion about the role of the sector, and which are provided as reference texts for your further reading. Finally, special contributions from researchers, artists, managers and activists enrich this publication with an international perspective and a political contextualisation.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.thischangeseverything.org>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.agenda21culture.net/images/a21c/4th-pillar/z Culture4pillarSD\\_eng.pdf](http://www.agenda21culture.net/images/a21c/4th-pillar/z Culture4pillarSD_eng.pdf)



Picture from *The Museum of Garbage* (picture: Stefanie Kuhlmann, Judith Jung and Gabrielle Reeves)

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.juliesbicycle.com/resources/ifacca-dart-report>

This text has only sought to capture a snapshot of the activity being pioneered by the arts and cultural sector. As our climate changes, so does our response, and we anticipate a lot of change in the years to come.

The text is structured into four main parts. The first part on **Sustainable People** aims to understand and embrace the role and power of artists and creators to be the messengers of climate change, imagine the future, freely denounce and critique social and economic systems that protect working practice at the cost of our environment. As Ariane Koek, founder of Arts@CERN (the large hadron collider in Switzerland) captured in one sentence: 'The arts touch the parts that science alone cannot reach'.

The chapter **It's Not Easy Being Green** starts from the assumption that sustainable practice must extend beyond a purely conceptual subject matter in art. It is vital that the arts community sets an example by working sustainably.

Following a chapter of **Conclusions** and a set of **Resources**, the text ends with a set of **Guest Contributions** commissioned by international experts for this issue of Fresh Perspectives.

In 'Striving for Meaningful Impact' **Chantal Bilodeau** (Canada) considers the effects of arts practice on the artist, the audience, the sector and the wider community, and approaches to measuring their impacts.

In 'Community and Art as a Way Towards Ecological Sustainability' **Marco Kusumawijaya** (Indonesia) explains how we should approach connections between artists and local communities, and the role for development and change in social microenvironments.

In 'On Culture, the Environment and Sustainable Development' **Mike Van Graan** (South Africa) deconstructs the Sustainable Development Goals and how generalised approaches to policy have been interpreted in African contexts.

In 'Prefiguring Sustainability: Response-Ability and Spaces of Possibility' **Sacha Kagan** (Germany) calls for a rethink of sustainability that is holistic, encouraging 'response-ability' within local communities.

'The S-word' by **Yasmine Ostendorf** (UK) reflects on how cultural differences change meanings when considering approaches to sustainability, focusing on arts practice in Korea, Singapore, Japan and the wider ASEAN region.

## 02.

### SUSTAINABLE PEOPLE

Artists and creators can be the messengers of climate change, imagine the future, freely denounce and critique social and economic systems that protect harmful working practice, at the cost of our environment. We must stop perpetuating a norm that sees artists and scientists at two ends of a spectrum, but encourage integration, collaboration and discussion as combined creative forces. Culture has a transformative power on human development, making the complex language of environmental research relevant to the needs, worries and hedonism of a global people. Artists can be the mouth-piece, the microphone, provoking behaviour change, connecting with humanity and at times – in activism, campaigning against unethical practice. There is a place for arts within the environment discussion, and a hubbub of activity within the arts community that condemns, comments on and celebrates our natural environment, imagining the future.

#### Changing the narrative

*Culture is at the top of this agenda*  
Ban Ki-Moon on the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals

Preventing catastrophic climate change, limiting global warming beyond a further two degrees, and implementing the UN's Sustainable Development Goals are among

the greatest challenges facing humankind. The environment is undoubtedly one of the most urgent. Understanding our role and relationship to the planet – how we approach and discuss the necessity of change – can be the role of the artists. Rather than being overwhelmed and disconnected by statistical data, graphs and projections, as valuable as they are, the arts community must have a part to play in imagining the sustainable future we hear communicated at the UN Climate Talks in Paris and the numerous other international gatherings that punctuate the environmental sustainability question. It is the rich and meaningful experience art creates that has the power to target the emotions of an audience, community and individuals, that is proven effective in communicating scientific facts and phenomena. Generally speaking, global inertia continues because climate is complex and talking in quantities of the unimaginable. Change is nominal. The trend of UN conferences, Papal Encyclicals, Presidential speeches and celebrity tweets only serve to highlight our inaction. Speculation around the long-term behavioural change necessary to implement mission statements and projections such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals is rife with criticism. Contrary to popular belief, the facts cannot speak for themselves. It is the plot lines, pictures and performances that trigger connection and change. Injecting the statistics with humanity is imperative in explaining climate change: being able to understand the impact through visualisation and imagination. Marcus Brigstocke, a comedian invited to join a recent Cape Farewell Arctic expedition for artists concluded that 'the artistic community is not well placed to deal with the urgency suggested by the scientific case, because of the danger of being seduced. We should be careful about being in love with the tragedy of melting ice because it needs to translate into something that makes sense of it'<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, the echoed response by Laurent Fabius, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development, and the President of COP21, after his visit to the Arctic Circle last year is evocative: 'I have a very lively memory of the horrifying noise

<sup>1</sup> <http://conversations.e-flux.com/t/why-climate-action-needs-the-arts/2270>

and sight of huge ice blocks cracking and breaking away from the pack. The Arctic is indeed the gatekeeper of climate disorder: for years, this region has been sending us signals that we cannot neglect anymore.<sup>1</sup>

It is vital that artists are present in the global conversations on environment, so often weighed down in party politics and ideological orthodoxy, to communicate empathy, pathos, wit, beauty and human error. Beyond blind panic, **artists have the opportunity – and the power – to change the climate narrative.** As a society we need to build the confidence to believe that a different, sustainable way of living is possible.

While our path is fundamentally guided by the ongoing research of the scientific community, arguably steered by rational, practical knowledge, we also need personal, unique, aesthetic responses that engage the emotions that cause people to act. If art is to have a place in the environment paradigm, it must be to communicate, share, reflect, question and criticise. Without it, we are pre-disposed to continue in much the same manner: media reporting fuelled by data, politicians preparing rousing speeches and incremental change sacrificed by corporate profits. As Yasmine Ostendorf identifies in her attached essay 'The S-word', sustainability is becoming homogenous to a lifestyle choice that is one of expense and luxury. Art does not necessarily offer an ethical or green solution, but it has a role in challenging perception.

How can we imagine what more than two degrees temperature increase means for the future?

How do we reconcile the ecological impact of affluent societies against those with more basic needs?

How can we understand the sheer volume of man-made waste, floating plastic islands and the wreckage of a tsunami?



'Luxo è lixo' (Luxury is Trash), project by Basurama in Brasil (picture: courtesy of Basurama).

How can we transform personal responsibility into collective consensus? How can we move from denouncing behaviours to creating sustainable proposals<sup>1</sup>?

What will evoke global action?

In the summer of 2015 the world witnessed mass migration of an unprecedented and unforeseen scale. In Europe, migration from Africa and the Middle East caused in many cases by displacement, persecution, and war, was thought in some discussions to stem from the rudimentary effects of climate change: ongoing drought and spoilt crops<sup>2</sup>. The picture of a three-year-old boy lying face down on the beach in Greece, drowned crossing dangerous waters, sparked international outcry over the human cost of the crisis and, in a matter of hours, shared on social media and

web platforms, radically changed the narrative. It caused a mass outpouring of grief, expression and ultimately, action through donations, aid and housing. It was one picture, connected into human empathy, that triggered change.

In Tiananmen Square, the image of a man standing in front of four tanks, representing the disproportionate violence used against a peaceful protest. In Vietnam, the image of a girl caught in a napalm attack, her clothes burnt off her skin. The graphic images of Syrian victims tortured under the Assad regime, surfaced and exhibited at the UN Headquarters in New York. Most recently, we are heavy, shaken by savage attacks in Paris and Beirut in November 2015, targeting a music venue, restaurant, football stadium and open-air market. Overwhelmed by images of human despair we are united in humanity. Far from becoming desensitised, our response is one of solidarity.

Consider this locally: when a factory closes we are connected to the human impact of job losses, not the numbers or projections. It is the emotional power and human connection – that which we can understand,

<sup>1</sup> Morin, E., Pistoletto, M. 'Impliquons-nous', Actes Sud: Paris, October 2015.

<sup>2</sup> 'Drought is being implicated as a key instigator in the Syrian conflict... Observers, including UN experts estimated that between 2 and 3 million of Syria's 10 million rural inhabitants were reduced to 'extreme poverty' (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/capital-weather-gang/wp/2013/09/09/drought-and-syria-manmade-climate-change-or-just-climate/>)



and so imagine the impact on our own families, friends and communities – that leaves a lasting impression and the charge to cause us to act.

As author Margaret Atwood wrote in post-apocalyptic bioengineering catastrophe 'Oryx and Crake', 'When any civilization is dust and ashes... art is all that's left over. Images, words, music. Imaginative structures. Meaning – human meaning – is defined by them.' Through giving stage to the human imagination, alerting an emotional response through images, debate, theatre, poetry and performance – rousing and evocative – we have the power to give a human voice to climate change, encouraging action to move our environment away from further unnecessary destruction. We are not faced with two separate crises (environmental and cultural), but one complex question. As Ariane Koek, Founder of Arts@CERN, the large hadron collider in Switzerland, described 'the level of heated debate about the so-called two-cultures is a constant source of bafflement to me. Of course arts and science are linked. Both are about creativity. Both require technical mastery. And both are about exploring the limits of human potential.'

In his guest contribution to this publication, 'Prefiguring sustainability', Sacha Kagan describes this as 'spaces of possibility', where an artist invites audiences to experience new and uncertain situations based on relationships of trust. Working to convey and evoke the imminence and enormity of climate impacts are a roster of successful case studies:

- **MELD** is an interactive global art platform cultivating social change in **Greece**, the work of artists Corinne Weber and Yvonne Senouf. Working with a collective of artists, it aims to find creative solutions to the consequences of climate change because 'when art melds into the public realm in unexpected ways, it has the power to reach people beyond the traditional limitations of class, age, race and education to encourage public action'. The project is guided by a passionate belief in the power of art to create

and convey personal experience and cultivate social progress. A new series of work, '10+10+10=1', representing 10 artists, 10 scholars, 10 films and 1 planet is an attempt to navigate the urgent and pervasive ecological arena shadowed by a potentially catastrophic ecosystem collapse. Pairing artists and scholars, MELD will showcase ten new films and provide a springboard for the creation of new artwork that will articulate the contradictions and responsibilities that we encounter personally and as a global society, encouraging reflection on human relationships with the natural environment. The first commissions include the 'Climate Opera'<sup>1</sup>, a collaboration between visual artist Shaun Gladwell, Dr Cynthia Rosenzweig and the NASA & Goddard Institute for Space Studies, to create an audio-visual language to communicate the emotional impact of the scientific research on climate change; 'Streaming 2.0' and 'Message in a Bottle' workshop both focus on the pollution and decay of the water in Greece – the main river in Athens, the Kifissos and the Karla Lake in Thessaly. In 'Streaming 2.0' German artist Alexander Schellow follows local and trans-local narrations to create a map of walks through the city, interacting with people who live in close proximity to the river. 'Message in a Bottle' discusses the government management of the lake, to control malaria spread and annual flooding, to the point that all the water was drained. Collecting stories, Alexander Schellow and Valya Stergioti aim to 'refill' the lake with memories, thoughts and dreams.

- **FACT, Fabrique Active du Paysage**, aims to reveal public areas, to 'create places able to elicit sensations, experience, feelings and emotions' of L'Île-Saint-Denis in **France**, involving residents in artistic intervention, using their knowledge of the urban landscape. The aim is underpinned by clear environmental considerations – to create a sensitive urban

intervention that mobilises residents to discuss perception of place and to develop spaces that arouse feelings, experiences and emotions. FACT aims to capitalise and develop scientific concepts and principles sensitive to urban design, with the needs and values of inhabitants at the root of the project. Running 'workshop walks' FACT will create permanent, transient and ephemeral acts highlighting the need for greener urban thinking.

- **The Museum of Garbage** by **Flying Roots**, presents an exhibition of waste in Istanbul, **Turkey** encouraging citizens to bring waste items – compostables, one-time use rubbish and reusable waste – from the streets and households of Istanbul. Curated by Jessica Sim and Olivia Traut, out of the concern for ecology and waste management, and the responsibility of the individual consumer within a complex state-organised system. In a city where the majority of municipal solid waste is landfilled, according to the 'Gurdal Kanat Waste Management Report 2010'<sup>2</sup>, the environmental repercussions in Turkey are vast. Repositioning waste gathered from Çukurcuma as part of 'The Museum of Garbage', rather than trying to transform items into something new, created a space to access facts and figures visually and process the scale of the waste problem through interaction.
- **Basurama** is an arts collective based in Madrid, **Spain** studying the various phenomena inherent in global mass-consumer society, and the real and virtual rubbish it creates as an unavoidable outcome. Basurama encourages different perspectives on the subject to generate new thoughts and attitudes on waste management. Aiming to find gaps in the processes of production and consumption not only raises questions about society's interactions with man-made resources, but how we manage them, how we think, work and perceive reality.

<sup>1</sup> <http://blog.meld.cc/category/projects-2/climate-change-hip-pop-opera/>

<sup>2</sup> [www.yildiz.edu.tr/~kanat/wm.doc](http://www.yildiz.edu.tr/~kanat/wm.doc)

- **The Apocalypse Project** is a new art and design platform created by Catherine Young based in Singapore that creates projects aiming to confront and question the future of environment. 'Climate Change Couture' ('Fashion for a Hotter Planet') imagines the future of fashion design through discussions with scientists regarding their research. A runway of women adorned in flower gasmasks, boiler suits and netting, the U-Suit for urine sanitation, and a cooling dress with an integrated energy source to cool you down. The 'Ephemeral Marvels Perfume Store' recreates a curiosity shop of smells that could disappear from the natural world because of climate change, including coasts threatened by rising sea levels, and the honey plight due to the decline of bees. The 'Future Feast' looks at the food ecosystem and imagines the future of popular food without key ingredients such as meat and dairy. Through 'the Apocalypse Project' lies the 'intention of engaging the public in climate change in a way that makes it more personal and poetic, and less political'.
- The **Lab Teater Ciputat** in Indonesia works with inhabitants of Pulau Panggang, directly experiencing the consequence of sea level rise. Using theatre as a means of expression to communicate the relationship between nature and man on the island, fisherman are invited into rehearsals, having directly experienced habitat decline, salinity of drinking water, migration for survival.
- **7 ARTE** is a group of local artists in Mitrovica, **Kosovo** using culture to transform an industrial city to a green city. The GREEN Open Air Cinema is an annual event, inventing and promoting new public places and tackling environmental issues. Their Green Music Festival aims to raise public awareness on environmental protection and conservation, and is supported by the European Commission Culture programme.



'Ice' by Catherine Young, The Apocalypse Project - the Ephemeral Marvels Perfume Shop (picture: courtesy of Catherine Young)

- **Be The Change: A Global Inside Out Project** is a global participatory art project uniting 15 countries and 26 cities around the world with the aim to visually share the stories of those who believe in change and living a more sustainable life with respect for their natural and human environment. It was an action 'born from the realisation that climate change is not just about global warming, but about the human stories that unite us as world citizens'. Black and white photographic portraits were pasted in the streets, revealing and sharing the untold stories of everyday people. Born from the realisation that climate change is not just about global warming but about the human stories that unite world citizens, Be The Change aims to bring people together from different background to create a unified message.
- **Imagine 2020** started as a network of arts organisations in 2010. The main focus of the network was raising awareness in the cultural field and in a broader civil society context around climate change and more in general

the socio-ecological crisis that we are facing. Now, almost five years down the road the network wants to take a step up. From analysing the current crisis and raising awareness around it, it needs to focus more on imagining, studying and making prototypes of possible futures, while remaining firmly rooted in cultural practices. The new Imagine 2020(2.0) network wants to speculate about a sustainable future by modelling it in artistic creations and experiments that allow alternative perspectives to emerge.. In 2012 Imagine 2020 commissioned Michael Pinsky to create the public art project 'Plunge' in London – imagining the city 1000 years in the future, subject to the vast effects of climate change. A series of blue light rings around London marked anticipated sea level rise at 28 metres. To mark the five-year anniversary of the network, 'THERE IS NOTHING THAT IS BEYOND OUR IMAGINATION' was published, documenting artistic work and collating essays from 40 contributors.

Extending the reach to new audiences, **festivals** across the world are asking questions about the environment. These include, but in no way exhaust, the following:

- The **KOLI Environmental Art Festival** is an international environmental art project in **Finland** taking place in the Koli National Park, emphasising site-specific responses.
- **Ecoismi** in **Italy** is an international programme of contemporary art installations with a mission to convey the value of environmental sustainability, with a theme of 'man and the ways of nature' in 2015.
- The Festival **Les Envies Rhônements** takes place in the Camargue, **France**, where ecological issues are rife in the local environment.
- **ART+CLIMATE=CHANGE 2015** in Australia is a festival presented by **Climarte**, uses art as a catalyst for change, encouraging creative expression to communicate rich relationships with nature.
- **SALT** is a low-key festival that ran on the **Norwegian** island of Sandhornøy in 2015, and will circumnavigate Earth's most northerly settlements in years to come, across Greenland, Iceland, the Faroe Islands, Ireland, Scotland, Spitsbergen, Alaska and Russia. It aims to talk about global climate change in way that is honest, with care and respect for the Arctic landscape. Through readings, art projects, concerts, theatre and local food, all taking place around a central fiskehjelle (fish rack), a strong symbol of northern livelihoods.
- **2Degrees Festival** in the **UK** asks what can we do together to create a sustainable future? Presenting a number of international responses, performances, debates and public installations, the festival urges positive action in the community.



*Flower your Culture, from 7 ARTE (photo: Lulzim Hoti; graffiti by Taulant Qerqini lulzim)*

Extending beyond emotional responses, we must strive to measure the impact artistic interventions have, particularly in making change and encouraging action. Without data to support the impact of our artistic action, we are in the dark about the extent to which we are contributing. Both in terms of evoking change and thought in our audiences, and in terms of our own sustainable practice. As Chantal Bilodeau addresses in her attached essay 'Striving for meaningful impact', focus on quantifiable measurements – How many people bought tickets? How many books did I sign? How many miles did I travel? – is squeezing the life out of the industry, blind to the subtler impacts of art. It would be idle to think we can exist without measuring impact, but this has to be realistic and not excessive. Yasmine Ostendorf, in her attached essay 'The Sword' outlines the importance of Julie's Bicycle's IG Tools in measuring sustainability in a reactive and relevant way for everyday arts practitioners. Julie's Bicycle are practical, forward-thinking and not taking no for an answer in fundamentally changing the way we integrate sustainable practice in the sector. Working in partnership with Arts Council England across the national portfolio, Julie's Bicycle's 'Sustaining Great

Art Environmental Report' recognises that 'human decision-making is often not rational: it is driven by desires and fears rooted in unconscious values shaped by context and the stories we tell'.

#### • **Sustaining Creativity: Julie's Bicycle**

Launched in 2007, **Julie's Bicycle** (London, **UK**) is now recognised as a world-leading authority on environmental sustainability in the arts and culture. Their first published research working with Oxford University's Environmental Change Institute, tracking the UK music industry's annual carbon emissions has created a framework for them to develop a model for progressive change, incorporating arts, science and environmental communities in mobilising cultural practice and presentation. Their work has prompted profound changes in operational and artistic practice, carbon reductions of over 23,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e since 2008, and financial savings of over £3.7m. They are advocates for changing everyday practice and creating systemic

change, with a mission to build a global movement, fuelled with urgency and conviction, to address climate change. Starting with the 'nuts and bolts', the everyday process behind creative enterprises, Julie's Bicycle builds and reflects on the existing practice in civic society, and existing cultural values, to foster a greater narrative at policy level, 'from changing light bulbs to shifting attitudes', as it were. By focusing on increasing awareness, comprehension and sustainability skills among arts organisations, Julie's Bicycle empowers and informs cultural practitioners to create emotionally responsive work with its foundation in research integrity. Julie's Bicycle share tools, resources, research, factsheets and free guides, facilitate knowledge-exchange across the networks they're building and are ambitious in setting their goals. The work is underpinned by a fundamental basis in research and evaluation. Through the Creative IG Tools, pioneered by the charity, Julie's Bicycle can regularly monitor carbon footprint and carbon intensity in the arts, including CO2e per m2 for performance venues, CO2e per performance and CO2e per audience data per person, per day, attending an outdoor event. Through the biennial 'Sustaining Creativity' survey, targeted at senior leaders, Julie's Bicycle track changes in working culture and strategic direction to incorporate environmental sustainability in practice. This is evaluated through formal and informal indicators, including mentions of environmental sustainability in arts press, comment pieces, sector reports, and attendance at environmental conferences.

### ***A little less conversation, a little more action***

Continual market growth risks the ecological systems that we depend on for survival. Communicating the risks must go beyond discussion and reflection in favour of action. Is this the role of the arts? With the global economy facing ever-increasing challenges, and resources for art provisions being hit hard and fast, the value of a culture of creating art is undermined and threatened. If the crux of public funding is defined only by purpose, does the systemic cuts felt by the arts sector deem artistic work purposeless?

Should art extend from reflection into action? It has been fervently argued that arts and activism are different beings. But can art carve itself a place within this complex infrastructure of politics, ideologies, data and profits to influence long-term policy when it comes to our limited anthropogenic existence? Should it?

Whether that's mutations of role, taking example from Alice Audrey Grindhammer who calls herself a 'garbologist' in exploring solutions for the global waste crisis. Or holistic interpretations within our formal infrastructure, as per Amy Balkin whose 'Public Smog' project aims to list the Earth's atmosphere on the UNESCO World Heritage Register. Or, of course, there is the fundamental human right to protest. The public exposure of the Greenpeace campaign, a celebration of Shell retracting Arctic drilling garnered high-profile support from the arts community, including poetry by actor Emma Thompson, music from Charlotte Church and global support from actor Jude Law and musician Sir Paul McCartney, among many others<sup>1</sup>. What has been termed a clash of David and Goliath proportions between Big Oil and energy companies met with climate action groups singing praises of ecological responsibility, can and must be governed. It cannot rely in the hands of companies who will trade our planet's results for quick profits. Given the urgent and unstoppable question of climate change, questions need to shift to mass activity: our common global society.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/earth/environment/11898950/Emma-Thompson-joins-Greenpeace-to-celebrate-Shell-scrapping-Arctic-drilling.html>

Finding connections between communities, to share a common message, is vital in changing attitudes on a global scale. In his attached essay 'Community and art as a way towards ecological sustainability' Marco Kusumawijaya looks in more detail at the importance of community-led change, projects like that being developed at the Bumi Pemuda Rahayu sustainability learning centre in Indonesia, which uses two basic ideas to progress artistic interventions in local communities: creative conversation in people's mother language, and change created on a manageable scale.

Art that is blind to, or unaffected by the world it inhabits, of which climate change is an unwavering reality, is arguably passive or simply not looking. Climate change has no time for art in a vacuum. We need provocation.

Nudge theory is a concept that uses small acts of positive reinforcement and indirect suggestions to influence motives, incentives and decision-making. Without forbidding any options or significantly changing economic incentives, a nudge can alter people's behaviour in a predictable way. It has been found more effective than consensual change via direct instruction, legislation or enforcement. It may be as simple as putting fruit at eye level, as opposed to banning junk food. It is used avidly in behavioural science, political theory and economics. Amplifying social behaviour is reinforced by the ability to connect through networks. If social media has taught us anything, it is that relationships are fundamentally valuable in human coexistence. The scope to use nudge theory to extend from short-term often politically motivated initiatives to long-term behavioural changes that impact a whole society can be permeated by fundamental artistic preferences to communicate, educate, reflect, and question the society we live in.



- **Everything Under the Sun**, run by the Agora Collective, is an alternative education programme based in **Norway** that merges the fields of food and art to respond to the issues of climate change through an interdisciplinary experimental approach. 'Exploring through texts, sounds and other elements, the ambiguity generated by assumption is knowledge that leads to a collective paranoia and a misconception of the word 'health'. Our ecosystem will continue changing and has been in constant flux since the Ice Age – a mile-thick crust of ice covering the planet. In 2015 ten scholarships were offered to artists, chefs and other creative minds to address these issues head-on by rejecting alarmism and mirroring aspects of climate change in their work. 'The Nordic Food Manifesto – Food from the Backyard to the Table' invited chef and fisherman Roderick Sloan to discuss the threats to Nordic waters by reading environmental changes from its sea urchins and clams. The new levels of precipitation and patterns of changing temperature that are causing severe droughts across the globe are provoking a spate of agricultural fertility across the Nordic countries. This project brings together experimental cooperative organic farming and visual arts practice.
- Artist and scientist Catherine Young hiked the 43 mountains of Seoul, **South Korea** gathering soil samples from the foot of each mountain as part of the arts project **Seoul 43**. Exhibiting the soil samples she invited the public to take a direct action and plant something in the scavenged soil, or undertake a journey to return the soil home to the mountains. The work attempted to go beyond a basic discussion to encourage audiences to explore their own relationship with nature.



Gilles Jobin, Julius von Bismarck, 'Quantum Dance', inspired by a residence at *Collide@CERN-Geneva* (photo by Grégory Batardon)

It is a curious obsession to distance science and the arts. All too often separated as if incompatible, in conflict or competition. We know what unites them is the culture of creativity and curiosity: science can be creative and art, scientific. Albert Einstein famously called 'the greatest scientists... artists as well'. More recently, sculptor Anthony Gormley shared his philosophy, 'that art and science are better together than apart'. This is seen best in a number of successful collaborations that have focused on environment and the manmade world. Sharing knowledge, approach, innovation and a need to communicate on climate change, encouraging inter-disciplinary pollination bringing together new languages, and ways of working. Similarly opening up the parameters of scientific exploration to artists allows the opportunity for new approaches and innovation. This is perhaps best illustrated in the pioneering work of Cape Farewell that has sent writers, artists, comics, actors and musicians to experience the impact of global warming in the Arctic Circle. Cape Farewell asks, 'What does Culture have to do with Climate Change? Everything'.

- **Cape Farewell** unites creatives, scientists and informers to 'engage and inspire a sustainable and vibrant future society', with the ambition to amplify a creative language to communicate the urgency of global climate in a fundamentally human way. From **London and Toronto**, Cape Farewell supports action-based research to interrogate, share and educate on climate and future. Since 2003, they have led eight Arctic expeditions, two to the Scottish Islands and one to the Peruvian Andes for professional artists, scientists, educators and communicators using the power of visually experiencing the effects of climate in these places – the effects of ocean currents that regulate the earth's temperature – to interrogate a social attitude towards climate, and encourages disruption. Climate scientists predict that in as few as fifty years, without significant global change in behaviour and lifestyle, there may be no summer ice at the North Pole at the rate of warming we are currently experiencing. Using these journeys as inspiration, participants have created



a significant body of artwork, exhibitions, publications and educational resources aiming to jumpstart a cultural shift towards sustainable lifestyles. They sail to the heart of the climate debate, the tip of the iceberg.

- **Great Arts for Great Science** recognises the mutual fascination of an arts-science collaboration, initiated by the science community at CERN, the large hadron collider in Geneva, Switzerland: the largest physics laboratory on the planet. Built around three projects, [Collide@CERN](#), [Accelerate@CERN](#) and [Visiting Artists](#), and enjoying partnerships with the European Network of Art and Science and Ars Electronic, CERN is explicit in its intention to 'put art and science on the same cultural level'. In 2009 Ariane Koek, the Founder of Arts@CERN found that their scientists felt very disconnected from visiting artists and to avoid this isolation established the programme which encourages artists and researchers to work side by side. Particle physics and the arts are 'inextricably linked' in that they both grapple with concepts of our existence – what it is to be human and what our place is in the universe. Inviting artists, musicians, dancers, performers – a cross-section of the artistic community – CERN hopes to cultivate an environment of reciprocal inspiration, sharing two unique professions and two different world views. CERN also directly embraces digital technology inviting artists who want to engage with particle physics and scientific collaboration. The decision to build a cultural strategy, Great Arts for Great Science, seems only natural, rooted in a 'deep-seated conviction' that they share a single culture and equally relevant to research and innovation in the 21st century. Ariane Koek puts it simply: 'CERN scientists are selected for their excellence and brilliance'. The idea is that Arts@CERN makes steps towards doing the same, working to support excellence in the Arts community.



Olivier Darné et le Parti Poétique, 'La République forestière', 2015 (picture: courtesy of [Le Parti Poétique](#))

- **Les Échelles Perchoirs** is an art installation working with farmers living and working in Franche-Comté, **France**. In the dairy farming community there have been significant problems caused by the effects of the natural predators of water vole – buzzards, red kite, owls, etc. The impact has extended from physical damage and health risks to financial costs and use of chemical control (and the effects it has on the natural environment). This artwork created a forum to discuss and respond.
- **Fluid City** brought together choreographers, dancers, designers, scientists, an architect, planner and educator to create a collaboration increasing awareness of water issues in Tamaki Makaurau, Auckland City, **New Zealand** to coincide with the UN World Water Day in 2012. There is a sense of abundance when it comes to global water, Fluid City confronted its misuse, appropriation and pollution looking at urban ecosystems, microbiology and river geomorphology. It prompted new ways of seeing,

interpreting and sensing water, a fundamental part of Maori culture. Arts activity under the name 'Wandering Reservoirs' was designed to create environments for interactive connections with water, including a scientific laboratory, a video animation, an audio installation, site-specific choreography and outreach programmes. The artistic investigation formed part of a major cross-disciplinary research initiative at the University of Auckland, bringing researchers and academics into the project to explore sustainable interventions. 'Transforming Cities: Innovations for Sustainable Futures' published the findings of the project.

- **Ars Electronica Festival** is exceptional at encouraging conversation and innovation between art, science and design to ask questions using digital technology. Each year the festival in Linz, **Austria**, is dedicated to a theme that directly impacts, or forces change in society. In 2015, the delegation tackled 'POST CITY – Habitats for the 21st Century' innovating and

engaging in discussion around the configuration of the world cities of our future. What will things look like when there are more robots than people? What are the risks if everything is digitally interlinked? When cars drive themselves? When drones deliver mail and feed the fish? A fundamental element to the symposium theme was the effects of climate change within the eco system – how do we as artists rethink urban living spaces, particularly for cities on coastal paths? Bringing together professionals from different disciplines encourages sharing different perspectives, approaches and ultimately aims to cultivate solutions to the effects of climate change, and confronting the future.

- **'Change! The Forest Republic'**, a project organised by the Parti Poétique in **France** aims to regrow a forest in dense urban centres, linking directly into the COP21 agenda. Aiming to raise questions around sensitivity, encourage engagement and celebrate life, the forest is understood as part of the continuing artistic movement 'Fluxus', that 'art is life'.
- **The Living Data Programme** in **Australia** creates exhibitions that contribute to a 'big picture' overview of the co-evolution of life and the environment, encouraging truth to science, clear language and sensory appeal to mitigate harmful human impacts. Combining the mutual interests of scientists and artists to interact with each other and the public in a language that moves away from dense, jargon.
- **SINFONÍA TRÓPICO** is an arts-environment project that focuses on biodiversity, deforestation and climate change in **Colombia**. It uses the threat to nature as a source of inspiration for performances, concerts, exhibitions and debates at different locations and venues across Colombia. Artists explore various aspects of the continuing loss of biodiversity. Scientists highlight various environmental problems



*Sinfonia Trópico (picture: Martin Meyer)*

such as the loss of important ecosystems. Environmental activists and experts discuss the socio-economic and political contexts of diversity. In addition, the artists and experts seek to engage the public in the different areas to generate debate. SINFONÍA TRÓPICO was launched in 2014 and will extend over a period of 2 years.

#### • **COP21: The arts and civil society respond**

ArtCOP21 is an urgent invitation to artists, creatives and makers to pick up paintbrushes, instruments and join the streets of Paris to respond in numbers to the COP21 UN Climate Talks. ArtCOP21 presents a festival of cultural activity, connecting people to the climate change agenda through a global programme of 290 major events in 34 countries. It puts art in the climate debate. Activity includes the **ArtCOP21 Conference of Creative Parties**, an international summit for artists, creatives, designers, scientists, philosophers and intellectuals to develop a manifesto for tomorrow's world. Working

with Kathy Jetnil Kijiner, Gideon Mendel, Tomas Saraceno and Mel Chin, the summit collects creative ambition at the core of discussions and establishes a framework that the organisers hope will 'invent and build a better tomorrow'. **The ArtCOP21 Professional Workshop** will, over two days, invite industry professionals to share preliminary reports and international recommendations that encourage cultural leadership in sustainable development. Run by **COAL**, **Julie's Bicycle**, **IFACCA** and **On The Move**, it facilitates dialogue between policy makers, funders and the arts sector, with the aim to disseminate a common pledge developed through workshops and discussions. ArtCOP21 invites responses and action from the cultural sector across the world.

- **The World Climate Change Conference**, a Rimini Protokoll production, riffs on the discussions due to take place at the UN Climate Talks, creating a parody of the event in **Germany**. An audience meets in the Hamburger Spielhaus and is invited to represent one of the parties present at the UN Climate Talks, and negotiate on their behalf. The audience takes

on the role of the performers in this 'drama of diplomacy', playing delegates in an attempt to understand the process and questions of compromise. Parties battle with one another, block, veto, and insist on their own position. Alliances are formed and power relationships inevitable. As an audience member, you could: represent India and aim to undermine the plan of action by introducing feeble formulations and making a minimum commitment; represent Canada or Japan who have turned their backs on the Kyoto Protocol; represent Paris and champion reparations for Bangladesh as compensation for flooding and storms. Rimini Protokoll aim to look beyond the argument: 'when the issue is revealing the causes of climate change it is all about the facts. By contrast, when developing options for action the matter at hand is ultimately values.'

- **The Theater of Negotiations (Make it Work)** took place in May 2015 as a collaboration between SciencesPo: The School of Political Arts, led by political ecologies Bruno Latour, and Nanterre-Amandiers, **France**, to create an 'unprecedented political, diplomatic, educational and artistic experience'. Building a simulation of the December COP21 climate negotiations with more than 200 international students and the general public, representing 41 delegations. Designing a theatrical framework for political action, the aim of the project was not to mock the negotiations but experiment with them, understand and transform the discussion in a willing environment as a pre-enactment or simulation. The backdrop of the theatre encouraged dramatization of the discussions, to imagine a place for arts and culture that is both scientifically and aesthetically relevant. A deconstruction of the process, collecting thoughts, observations and representations of the 'negotiation' is now available to read as a theatre play – 'A Theatre of Negotiations - Make it Work' by Clémence Hallé & Anne-Sophie Milon.

- **POC21**, standing for 'Proof of Concept' 21, was an innovation camp, taking place in **France** from August-September 2015 in the lead up to COP21. Frustrated by the conveyor belt of climate conferences creating more time to talk, rather than take action, POC21 brought together over 100 makers, designers, engineers, scientists and geeks for a five week immersive camp to prototype the fossil-free, zero-waste society we should be striving for. A proof of concept that collaborative production, open source sharing and the makers movement can have on creating disruption. Building the most functional and replicable cell of sustainable society, POC21 aims to change society: change an approach that is driven by a destructive consumer culture, mainstream the means of sustainable living, change politics and attitudes. Based on principles of sharing, working locally, creating long-term solutions, and moving away from passive consumption to active advocates of sustainable lifestyles. From the work developed at POC21, open source blueprints have been shared globally
- **ArtCOP Scotland** is a decentralised artistic response to COP21 in Paris, taking place in the **UK**. ArtCOP Scotland unites different partners to explore sustainable futures, with a programme of events, creative exploration, debate and discussion. After building momentum for climate solutions with the Green Art Lab Alliance (GALA) project that took place in Glasgow, ArtCOP Scotland continues to build a creative response, led by partners Creative Carbon Scotland and Gayfield Creative Spaces.
- **The Creative Factory** at Place To B, Paris, **France**, running parallel to COP21 negotiations, creates a hot-spot of fresh thinking and ideas with the aim to rewrite the climate story in the visions of artists, filmmakers, poets, experts, journalists and campaigners. Aimed to be a dynamic and multi-disciplinary experiment, The Creative Factory will look at systemic

approaches, utopias, progressive narratives and, fundamentally, a positive, holistic vision of change. Developed as a series of two day programmes, the Creative Factory will tackle topics including 'getting to grips with behaviour change and identity', 'harnessing the power of spirituality... with faith-based communities' and 'empathy between North and South'. Run by Forever Swarm, the Creative Factory will reinterpret, and inject empathy and humanity into the topic of the day from COP21.

- **Ecostage**, a new global initiative aimed at the performing arts sector and launching in December 2015 establishing 'ecological thinking at the heart of creative practice'. The ecostage pledge will incorporate a 'stamp' to share on documentation as a mark of recognition for environmentally conscientious practice. Free to join, the pledge is a public effort to share a set of values and encourage action. Created by a team of scenographers, Tania Beer, Andrea Carr and Alice Hoult, and following an ongoing collaboration with web designer Samuel Overington, Ecostage is an 'act of storytelling'. The pledge includes commitments to 'consider local opportunities' and 'challenge existing unsustainable practices, perceptions and assumptions'.
- **Doppelgangster** indulges creative collaboration between **Australia, South Korea and the UK**, creating cultural responses to climate change, forced migration and globalisation using technology to extend their reach to new audiences. 'Doppelgangster (DEAD)' will 'debate, exchange, address and disrupt' the discussions at COP21 asking artists, scientists, journalists, politicians and citizens in Paris key questions from the negotiations. Doppelgangster aims to ask the difficult questions, with a 'brutal reckoning of rising water levels, limited supplies and hard truths'.

## 03.

## IT'S NOT EASY BEING GREEN

Sustainable practice must extend beyond a purely conceptual subject matter in art. We must recognise the importance of sustainable processes, and take action to work in a way that reduces environmental impact in the approach to creation: from production to design, management, travel and evaluation. It is vital that the arts community sets an example by working sustainably. Green practice is not achievable in isolation. To thrive, it relies on an infrastructure of financial viability, encourages digital innovation and is ambitious for lasting impact. The timeless questions remain: how do we make work abroad if travelling has large environmental consequences? How do we work with green business if we don't have the funds for investment? Where do we draw the line between ethics and sponsorship? How do we continue to make art when so much time and resource must go into measuring outputs? Influencing the infrastructure within which art is made is crucial to making active, conscientious decisions about the approach we take in cultivating environmentally sustainable practice. Rethinking policy support needs to consider the nuances of arts in the wider community. Funding institutions responsible for setting a benchmark for sustainable practice must avoid using 'sustainability' as a trend or fad, one for tick boxes on application forms and the domain of the wealthy. To truly invite a culture shift for a new environmental standard in arts practice, we need to see real financial investment to support a change in behaviour.

**Big Oil, Big Art, Big Question**

Ethics occupies a lot of the discussion when it comes to art and the environment<sup>1</sup>. The relationships between high-profile arts providers and environmentally unsustainable, profit-driven companies exploiting natural resources, is one that receives ongoing media scrutiny and activism. The freedom of the arts to confront and comment on the environment is perhaps dirtied by the affiliation with companies who have vastly contributed to climate decay. Is this justified? Do these associations restrict freedom to create dialogue in criticism of the activity of fossil fuel companies, and how do these associations implicate the artists they seek to support? Art that is dangerous, controversial or critical of big oil is undermined by sponsorship. The willingness to receive high-profile sponsorship from big oil companies, fails to tackle climate objectives.

At a time when the arts are increasingly reliant on financial backing from alternative and corporate sources due to funding cuts, do we need to be clearer about ethical values and whom we associate with? Can ethics ever be a collective decision and is it justified to vilify organisations who do choose to continue to engage relationships with big oil support? One thing is certain, funding from big oil companies and the debate it invites, has become a regular topic of conversation for arts organisations. Tate Britain has recently celebrated 25 years of BP sponsorship, and a number of other British institutions, including the National Gallery, British Museum and Natural History Museum continue to receive BP's financial support. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, home of the New York City Ballet and New York City Opera, and the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History in America have received significant sponsorship from oil fortunes. GOMA - Gallery Of Modern Art in Brisbane, Australia, received sponsorship from Santos GLNG. It was only in November 2015 that the Science Museum UK pulled out of a controversial sponsorship deal with Shell.

<sup>1</sup> The topic of ethically controversial sponsorship for the arts is discussed at length in IETM's publication *The Art of Disobedience*, dealing with the relationship between arts and politics, <https://www.ietm.org/en/publications>

In equal measure, the trend in big oil sponsorship has received plentiful opposition. Rising Tide UK's Art Not Oil coalition aims to put an end to oil industry sponsorship of the arts. Liberate Tate is a network dedicated to taking creative disobedience against the British institution Tate until it drops oil company funding. Generation Alpha have challenged Brisbane Gallery Of Modern Art (GOMA)'s oil sponsorship staging the death of a Koala bear who pretended to die after a chemical leak in a local aquifer with contaminants including arsenic, uranium, lead and nickel. Yoko Ono founded the New York alliance Artists Against Fracking. In Norway, the Stopp Oljesponsoring av Norsk Kulturliv tries to distance links between public funding and fossil fuels. Jazz sous les Pommiers in France refused Areva's support, connected with the nuclear sector. The Reclaim Shakespeare Company took the stage in an interval at the Roundhouse encouraging the general public to tear the logos of oil companies out of the theatre programme. 'At a time when the world should fear much more the heat of the sun and the furious winter's rages, BP is conspiring to distract us from the naked truth of climate change and with its daring folly burn the world' and in naming and shaming the oil giant, The Reclaim Shakespeare Company have facilitated interventions at the World Shakespeare Festival and Royal Shakespeare Company. The Fossil Funds Free consortium between the UK and America, pledges a commitment not to take any oil, coal or gas corporate sponsorship. Activists at the UN Climate Talks are planning to target the Louvre in Paris over the art gallery's ties with French oil company Total, and Italian oil company Eni.

The normalisation of fossil fuels usage means polluting the environment is an inevitable and unavoidable consequence. 'Crude' behaviour as it were, becomes normality and the social conscience attached to the profits of big oil organisations is overshadowed. Supporting culture has arguably given big oil a 'social licence to operate' or a 'licence to spill'. 'Greenwash' for big oil organisations acts to protect reputations and mythologise an environmentally responsible public image that may



have been marred by oil spills or deep-sea drilling, distracting attention and buying acceptance. Motive-driven sponsorship that seeks to cover up unethical behaviour does more damage than good and stifles the demands of justice for communities directly affected by polluting practice: a distraction from human rights impacts, and poor ecological efforts. And when it comes to arts sponsorship, motive of self-interest is hard to paint over; we must preserve clarity at the intentions and narratives behind this funding. As author, filmmaker and social activist Naomi Klein wrote in 'No Logo', 'we become collectively convinced not that corporations are hitching a ride on our cultural and communal activities, but that creativity and congregation would be impossible without their generosity.'

Mel Evans' recent publication 'Artwash: Big Oil and the Arts' confronts the intricacies of big oil relationships, and asks if cultural organisations, in accepting money, become accomplices to environmental crimes. A clean motive would perhaps be more persuasive if big oil was funding small organisations and community projects and not just aiming to win big in public relations impact by supporting Big Art with relatively small contributions.

Increasingly trusts, foundations and public funds are recognising the importance of supporting environmental practice. Earmarking resources for sustainable capital development, sustainable travel and ecological design within the process of making leaves decisions about green practice in the hands of funders, grant schemes and artist in residency programmes. From a Southeast Asian perspective, be comparison, opportunities to fund travel are limited. Being "green" becomes an achievement of financial, social and political context, far more than an active choice. Realistically, the resources and incentive for sustainable practice stops at the funder's door.

Extending visits to work with local communities, network and explore make necessary travel more sustainable. Mella Jaasma, co-director of Cemeti Art House in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, has worked with artists through a residency programme



Jason deCaires Taylor, 'The rising tide, underwater sculpture' (picture: Jason deCaires Taylor)

encouraging outreach to local people and craftsmen, inviting artists actively looking to work and learn about local materials and knowledge to influence their artistic process. Using the residency programme, Cemeti Art House hopes to highlight and extend the value of travel visits to maximise the potential both for the artist, but also the benefits for local communities.

### Green Fatigue

The newspaper The Guardian described sustainability as 'the geeky, pimply teenager who has come to our party, turned off the music and told us that we would really be much happier if we stopped having so much fun'<sup>1</sup>. Are we suffering from green fatigue? 'Sustainability' is undoubtedly the buzzword gracing the lips of artists, businessmen and politicians alike. What was once 'eco' or 'green' is now 'sustainable', and it does little to capture the imagination or understand the challenges presented by contemporary culture. It is a word that is lost in translation, not just in different cultural contexts, as Yasmine Ostendorf highlights in her work in Asia, but in everyday

practice. Sacha Kagan argues that 'sustainability' needs reinvention. It has become the go-to funder criteria, alongside 'community', 'digital' and 'innovative'. What feels like an ethical cheat-sheet – a fast track to social virtue – whereby we can tick a box to say we're sustainable without demonstrating long-term vision or impact, is a dangerous way to side-step the real environmental concerns. There is a sense that sustainability equates to social good. But the moral high ground will soon be underwater alongside Bangladesh, Venice, the Pacific Islands, and numerous coastal cities around the world.

Sustainability represents the chase for something impossible: there is simply no end game in working conscientiously. It cheats real change, and side steps a language and dialogue of positive development. Sustainability represents survival and scarcity. The world of capital, profits and instant gratification is far more interested in prosperity and growth.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/sustainability-movement-faces-extinction>



- **Julie's Bicycle Creative IG Tools** make the process of understanding environmental impact straightforward using a set of free carbon calculators. The tools measure energy consumption, water usage and generation, waste and recycling, transport and travel of audiences and staff, freighting, and impacts from production materials. Developed against a set of benchmarks using data collected through Creative Industry Green certificates, the IG Tools offer a breakdown of your greenhouse as emissions by source, and benchmarks of the typical performance in the **UK**. They offer a free way to monitor carbon emissions and help users revise priorities.
- **The Green Art Lab Alliance (GALA)** is a recent collaboration between 19 European cultural organisations using visual arts and design to explore environmental sustainability, supported by the EU Culture Programme. The [GALA Funding Guide](#) produced by On The Move and COAL, provides a comprehensive inventory of public, private, international, European, national, regional and local funds, open calls and initiatives. All sources support culture and environment projects. It includes resources and tips from the GALA partners, and explores different approaches to sustainability. GALA will expand activity into Asia from December 2015 through the 'GALA-Asia' initiative.

It is important to recognise the best practice examples where the arts community extends beyond conceptualisation to enshrine environmental practice in their approach. With support from funding bodies, and frequently with partnership from environmental organisations, the arts community is exemplary in championing social change in a way that incorporates environmental goals, be that through managing emissions, using recycled materials or using digital technology to avoid travelling where possible.

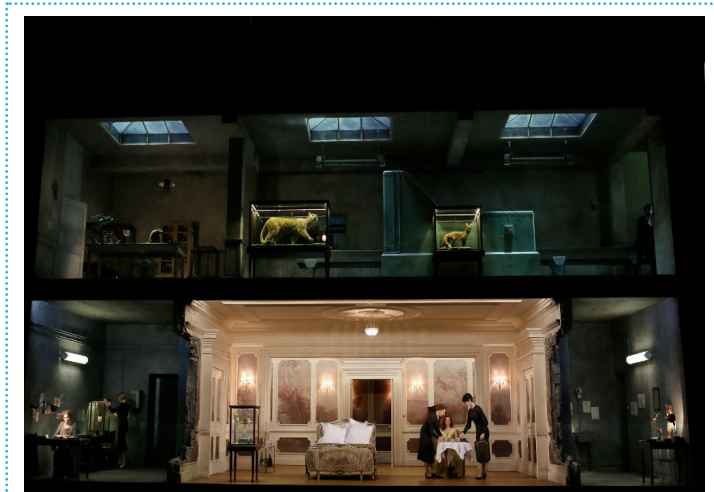


ufaFabrik in Berlin, Germany (picture: [ufaFabrik](#))

- **ufaFabrik** is an arts and ecology 'urban village' in the centre of **Germany**, using the arts to cultivate social commitment, because 'nothing is more constant than change'. It receives around 200,000 visitors per year and includes a public space for events, programming, international meetings, artist residencies and cross-disciplinary social experiences. ufaFabrik engages directly with artists and the general public to educate and share experiences on diverse approaches to environmental sustainability. They have been at the forefront of best practice in enshrining sustainability in organisational outputs. ufaFabrik introduced on the of the first combined heat and power plants in Berlin, updated with a computer-controlled system in the early 1990s. The power system fuels approximately 75% of the total electricity needed to power the buildings. The ceiling cavity is filled with environmentally friendly insulation made from recycled paper. Other areas have sheep's wool insulation in the roof space. There are solar panels fitted to the roof area, and a wind turbine that

generates enough energy to power outdoor lighting. Remaining electricity needed for the venue is provided by a 100% renewable energy supplier, and has been since 2003. All electrical appliances and equipment, heating, ventilation and cooling are monitored and controlled by a computer system specifically designed to calculate the actual energy requirements to adapt the internal energy system's outputs. The energy consumption of the seven buildings of ufaFabrik are managed and maintained so they are optimally efficient and not creating energy wastage. Green roofs on most (although not all) of the buildings aim to improve thermal efficiency: keeping the buildings insulated in the winter, and cooler in the summer. Exhaust air from a number of buildings is used in a heat exchanger to heat incoming air. Windows have heat-insulating glazing. UfaFabrik are a case example of sustainable practice being more than a concept in their work, but a conscious decision to make an active difference and put environmental sustainability at the heart of arts practice.

- **The Recycling Labyrinth** was an exhibition by Mona Sfeir built on the grounds of the UN in Geneva, **Switzerland** for World Environment Day 2011. Built with 8000 plastic bottles, the approximated number of plastic bottles that go into a landfill every second on earth, the labyrinth was a lens on the importance of recycling and enormity of waste production. It is estimated that 350-400 billion bottles are produced on a yearly basis and only around 20% of them are recycled. The rest end up in landfill. The Recycling Labyrinth only used recycled materials in its creation. Mona Sfeir's work has highlighted chemical use in the flower industry, deforestation and plan extinction and seeks to empower.



*'Alcina', International Festival of Lyrical Art of Aix en Provence, France (picture: Patrick Berger \_ ArtcomArFe*

- **The International Festival of Lyrical Art** of Aix en Provence, **France** has implemented a fundamental shift in approach to sustainable development, with a new policy including more than one hundred environmental, economic, social and governance actions. This is complemented by the 'Charter of the Eco-festival Participant', which gives advice to would-be festival-goers, raising questions and awareness about the use of natural resources around the event. In particular, this approach changes how the festival conceives design, integrating green processes to production and development. The festival has developed a concurrent research project, investing time into new materials within the production cycle (from manufacture to construction, installation and waste creation). The aim is to create a comprehensive contemporary approach to reusing and prolonging the life of design. The festival has worked with numerous partners across France and Brussels on developing this substantial project and connecting into knowledge-transfer networks. The first project implementing these changes, the Alcina opera, used 97% recyclable and reusable materials or materials that could be converted into new energy sources.

- **Megaro Goes Green** is a strategic project initiated by the management of the Thessaloniki Concert Hall in **Greece** in 2012, with an aim to facilitate a change to fully-sustainable and environmentally-friendly cultural management in their activities. It has included mapping energy consumption for lighting and air conditioning and gradually reducing consumption across usage. The policy framework for sustainable management, the first of its kind in Greece has been designed by trustee, Iphigenia Taxopoulou, who also acts as the General Secretary and founding member of [mitos21](http://mitos21.org), bringing together some of Europe's most powerful theatre institutions. mitos21 is in the process of building a transnational 'green' cultural project. At the time of printing, we wait for more information.
- **The Malthouse Greenlight** initiative of Malthouse theatre is a call to arms to act on sustainability and respond to the challenges of running a business making environmental considerations. Since 2010, the **Australian** company has been

transforming its culture, updating physical infrastructure and is explicitly 'supporting artists who address the realities of climate change in their artistic practice'. The Suitcase Series aimed to engage young audiences and teenagers with how to tackle the greatest challenge of our generation. It encouraged school students to devise their own works in response to a commissioned script, giving them a platform to respond while learning about theatre skills. The current commission is Turbine by Dan Giovannoni, and four responsive plays by students will be shared in 2016.

- Cultural think-tank **Greentrack Gent, Belgium** cultivates exchange and experimentation to target a sustainable future in the community. A network of around 50 cultural organisations in Ghent, including museums, theatres, concert halls, festivals, theatre companies and music companies are working to stimulate social and ecological action and a step-change in practice in the sector. As part of the commitment to the Greentrack, organisations commit to annually

measuring their carbon footprint and writing an annual action plan to make future improvements. The aim is to encourage a CO2 reduction estimated at 20% within the organisation, and 80% inspiring audiences (e.g. to use sustainable transport to travel to the cultural centre). The group of organisations use the forum to network, exchange ideas and share resources to look at tackling solutions together. Vooruit, one of the largest organisations in the consortium, brokered a contract with a Belgian sustainable energy provider, incorporating 9 other organisations of different sizes into the negotiation as an opportunity for group purchasing. The project has inspired action in other Belgian cities, and Greentrack consortiums are being developed in Leuven, Antwerp, Liège, Kortrijk and Bruges.

- **'Ruins of Desire'** was a phrase coined by a Japanese monk named Ennin when referring to human consumption and waste. It is also the title of a new outdoor project at the Verbeke Foundation Kemzeke in Belgium by visual artist Jan Eric Visser. Concrete is the second-most produced material in the world after drinking water. It is a highly unsustainable resource due to the emissions it takes to produce. The University of Technology in Eindhoven has developed a new type of concrete whereby aggregates and cement have been replaced by waste materials including glass. It has been rendered self-cleaning, eliminates air pollution and uses UV light to prevent the growth of algae, while biodegrading nitrogen oxides. Jan Eric Visser uses Aquadyne, an innovative material produced of 100% post-consumer plastics, to showcase the concrete for the first time in sculpture form. The piece confronts the connection between man and matter, consumer and waste. Micro and macro pores in the material allow for the roots of plants, even vegetables to grow in the innovative material.

### Art in the Cloud

Digital as a platform for making art offers an untamed realm of possibilities: how we communicate, collaborate and present work can supersede expensive, often pollutant travel alternatives. Globalisation offers us the world on our doorstep, and mobility in the arts, giving us easy access to people and new ideas across the globe, has become a crucial opportunity to create a sustainable living as a professional artist. Travel punctuates many artists' lives as a normality for sharing their work with new audiences, investigating new environments and approaching new collaborations. The artist's role in interpreting the world relies on investigation, with which comes travel. But international recognition, status and a global outlook have an inevitable environmental impact.

Art in the Cloud offers a new sustainable way of working that need not replace travel, but extend reach to new audiences and collaborations. Creating work in the digital realm offers a freedom and immediacy. It breaks the mould of traditional arts needs: web hosting instead of a theatre, PayPal instead of a box office split, Google Hangouts instead of a residency, the Cloud

instead of an exhibition, Skype and social media to gather audience feedback instead of an after-show Q&A. Not that this should exist in isolation, it presents an opportunity to fundamentally change how art is made, and in relation to environment, significantly reduce overheads and impacts that are borne in the traditional arts workplace. What we wait in anticipation of is a change in approach by funding bodies to support digital creation. The Space, a high-profile agency, commissioning body and recipient of vast public funds in the UK, aims to pioneer art making in the digital sphere. It supports artists and organisations to use technology to extend the reach of existing activities, embrace innovation, connect with new audiences, and play. 'Karen is My Life Coach', an app project created by Blast Theory and co-commissioned by The Space among other partners, uses digital technology to offer a new gaming and storytelling experience involving life coaching and personality profiling. NT Live digitally streams National Theatre productions to cinemas across the world, has displayed phenomenal success in pioneering digital enhancements to their service as a venue to bridge the gap to new audiences who may



*'Troeptuintjes', an Edible Garden Ghent - public are encouraged to pick and try (picture: Greentrack Gent)*

not want to travel, have financial limitations on affording full price tickets, or may want to take a gamble on something new.

- **Going Nowhere** displayed the possibilities of connecting with a global audience using digital, staging an event in 2014 that happened simultaneously on two sides of the globe: at the socially-engaged arts centre Arts House, Australia, and at the contemporary theatre Cambridge Junction, UK. Supported by a series of international collaborations, Going Nowhere, created a forum to discuss embracing the future, exploring how artists, communities and audiences can generate international collaboration and creative experiences from their own home: removing the need to get on a plane. The event embraced and celebrated the concept of 'staying put and reaching out'. A biennial event, we await the 2016 instalment.
- **Hydrocitizens** is a digital forum creating community space to share thoughts, ideas, projects and develop conversation on water and the impacts that affect this vital resource. It invites users from across professional practice: science and the arts to understand and share ideas around how communities function in relation to water. Supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council in the **UK** it forms part of a larger research project, Hydrocitizenship, which encourages the creation of artwork exploring human connections to water. It uses digital to create an ongoing, active and current dialogue for artists engaged with water practice, recognising the inter-connectivity is an underlying catalyst for change. It encourages users to scale their networks and become intelligently connected. Hydrocitizens includes a database of water projects, resources and an upload function to share ideas.

Digital cannot serve to replace arts practice – we must travel with more intention, stay longer, embrace new cultures, and utilise technology for keeping in touch and extending the opportunity to make and collaborate. The virtues of travel may feed a Western rhetoric, where SEA artists do not necessarily have the funding schemes to support travel projects and visas. The meeting of minds at the IETM Satellite Meeting in Melbourne in 2014 considered the environmental and practical implications of 'going nowhere' – would this create opportunities for new work using digital? Would it stop artists collaborating overseas? The question must consider the value of travel weighed against its impact. Is it pragmatic to have a "controlled" or rationalised mobility? It seems the option is more readily available to artists and cultural professionals who are presented with the choice and financial means to actively travel – through tailored grant schemes and artist in residency programmes. For instance, from a Southeast Asian, perspective (excluding perhaps Singapore), opportunities to travel are limited due to a general lack of funding support. If this is the case, being "green" becomes a construct, an achievement of financial, social and political context, far more than an active choice. Mella Jaarsma, co-director of Cemeti Art House in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, has worked with artists through a residency programme encouraging outreach to local people and craftsmen, inviting artists actively looking to work and learn about local materials and knowledge to influence their artistic process. Using the residency programme, Cemeti Art House hopes to highlight and extend the value of travel visits to maximise the potential both for the artist, but also the benefits for local communities.

Technology will completely change our approach to making, and can supplement and extend the benefits of a successful mobility programme or remote collaboration. Without the constraints of financial support for travel, digital is changing the role of the artist, the nature of practice and the exorbitant value of promotion and marketing. While this is the case, it is difficult to ignore the negative impacts of technology worldwide, as Yasmine Ostendorf

terms 'the environmental dark side'. In 2020 digital technology will be producing a larger carbon impact than world aviation. It extends beyond asking questions of how our technology has been made, by whom, where and under what conditions, to understanding the lifecycle and chain of connections that contributes to carbon emissions from your tablet, computer or phone. Data has a footprint, requiring huge amounts of energy and space to store in the cloud – like mountains of rubbish bags in landfill sites, the data we have created but don't use has its own emissions.

### Culture Shift

The purpose of governance is to change and develop policy to reflect a safe, democratic, tolerant and creative society that represents its citizens. Not just one that is profitable. It is important that the global challenges we know exist in our environment are addressed pragmatically, and action is taken with immediacy at forums like the UN Climate Talks (COP21) in December 2015, because time is running out. Culture is at the heart of this debate. As outlined in the UCLG 2004 'Agenda21' report – **we must recognise culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development, alongside the economy, social equality and environmental balance**. The UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda acknowledged that we must integrate culture in the 'conception, measurement and practice' of sustainable development. And what for the arts? It is our humanity.

Understanding the power and impact of the arts and culture to create systemic change in a society, based on values to protect our environment, must extend to policy. Local authorities, municipalities and national governments, we look to you. In anticipation of COP21, it is easy to appropriate environment and culture into policy rhetoric. But it seems to be the preserve of speeches, talks and media releases – a happy conveyor belt of world summits, international forums and talking, more talking – while we wait in anticipation for action. Xavier Prats Monne, DG for Education and Culture at the European Commission, claims 'the role



of culture for sustainable development is still not well known and we must make it known. Culture is not the cherry on the cake – culture is the cake.’ We look for action in our own communities, to make this known. An economic model, a culture shift, and a vision for global sustainability will follow. Mike Van Graan challenges ‘advocates of development’ who propose outcomes and strategies devoid of culture and ‘fail to recognise that their vision of development... is itself rooted in particular cultural paradigms’.

- In March 2015, the **United Cities and Local Governments network (UCLG)** held a world summit on Culture and Sustainable Cities, launching ‘Culture 21 – Actions’. With a delegation of municipal and local governments it presented a forum honestly and accurately of the role of culture in contemporary society, highlighting the interdependent relationship between citizenship, culture and sustainable development. Superseding the 2004 ‘Agenda21 for Culture – Culture as the Fourth Pillar of Sustainable Development’, ‘Actions’ outlines nine commitments to represent the cultural dimension of a sustainable city, including governance of culture, decision-making and public policy; culture and education, expanding opportunities for expression; culture, equality and social inclusion to develop welfare, health and self esteem; and, prominently, culture and environment to raise awareness and promote sustainable practice.
- The campaign ‘**The Future We Want Includes Culture**’ was launched by a number of international networks including IFACCA, the International Federation of Coalitions for Cultural Diversity and Culture Action Europe, as well as those listed in the footnote<sup>1</sup>. It was written in anticipation of the United Nations General Assembly

(UNGA 70) outcome document, ‘Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’. Global expenditure on development until 2030 is outlined in the UNGA document. Culture was completely absent from the Millennium Development Goals. The campaign’s mission was to see culture recognised as a central mechanism in the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals

- The **Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management (CIWEM)** developed their leading strategic programme on Arts and the Environment in 2007, leading to the formation of the Arts and Environment Network. Focused specifically on leading and influencing national policy conversations, and building relationships to meet the arts and environment agenda. Outlined in the Policy Position Statement, CIWEM share a pioneering vision to promote creativity at the heart of environmental policy and action, and advocate for a ‘whole systems’ approach based on the interdependence of natural, socioeconomic and cultural values.

<sup>1</sup> Agenda 21 for Culture, UCLG’s Committee on Culture; Arterial Network; Culture Action Europe; ICOMOS, the International Council on Monuments and Sites; IFACCA, International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies; IFCCD, the International Federation of Coalitions for Cultural Diversity; IMC, the International Music Council; RED Latinoamericana de Arte y Transformación Social



## 04.

## GUEST CONTRIBUTIONS

- **Striving for meaningful impact - Chantal Bilodeau**

The question of impact in the arts is a vexing one. Not only is impact difficult to define, it is almost impossible to quantify. Talking about impact can create the expectation that the transaction between art and audience is predictable and replicable. But it is not. Good art is unpredictable and unique, and its impact doesn't translate neatly into a spreadsheet. As a young playwright, I used to think that impact was measured by the size of the audience: How many people bought tickets? Eventually, I came to realise that this view was reductive. By focusing on numbers alone, I was overlooking smaller, subtler clues that revealed a much more profound and, I suspect, more lasting, impact.

Four groups, organised in concentric circles from smallest to biggest, are invited to experience the impacts of a work of art: the artist(s), the audience, the field, and the larger community. In the theatre, many artists – actors, directors, dramaturgs and designers, to name a few – are involved in the production of a play. Therefore, before the work is shared with an audience, it has the potential to affect many people. This became apparent to me when I was working on productions on my play 'Sila' in 2014 and 2015. Set in the territory of Nunavut, 'Sila' examines the impact of climate change on the Canadian Arctic and local Inuit population. As the themes from the play emerged through the rehearsal process, actors and directors became more attuned to the reality of climate change, dramaturgs formulated new research topics, and designers developed an interest in sustainability. That is impact.



*Sophorl Ngin, Renelta Arluk and Nael Nacer in the Underground Railway Theater production of 'Sila'. Copyright: A.R. Sinclair Photography.*

After the artists, the next group to experience a work of art is the audience. In this case, numbers do tell a story. But by themselves, they don't tell the whole story. Numbers are a reflection of interest, not impact. Impact happens later, in the privacy of one's home. It happens a day, a week or even a year after encountering the work. And it is subtle. A friend once explained to me that political campaigns divide voters into categories: building a pie chart that separates groups into their political inclinations. The categories go from far left to far right, with a number of variations in between. The goal of the campaign is not to convince voters on the right to vote for the left, or vice versa. The goal is to move voters to the adjacent category in the chart. To affect one small, incremental change.

My plays focus on climate change. It would be tempting to think that impact means turning non-believers into activists. Or believers into fanatics. But that is unrealistic. Art opens up a space for conversation; it doesn't, or shouldn't, relentlessly push an agenda. We have to meet people where they are, and allow them to take their own journey, at their own pace. At best, I hope

I can encourage people to move one step: to the adjacent category in the pie chart. Perhaps someone who doesn't believe in climate change will be open to hearing more about it. Or perhaps someone who already believes will be inspired to take a more active role. That is impact.

Beyond the immediate transaction between artist and audience, the third group that can potentially be impacted by a work of art is the field. Every play is part of an ongoing conversation with the entire theatre community. As such, every play has the power to influence the next play – to expand our ideas about process, form, aesthetic and ideology, and to shine a light on a conversation that may be missing from the stage. In collaboration with three colleagues, I am currently working on a project called 'Climate Change Theatre Action' (CCTA) in support of the United Nations 2015 Paris Climate Conference (COP21). CCTA is a series of worldwide readings and performances intended to bring awareness to, and foster discussion around, climate change in November and December 2015. As I write this, over a hundred events have been scheduled in more than twenty

countries. Many of these events are intimate; they are taking place in classrooms or rehearsal studios, with only a handful of people in attendance. But the conversation within the theatre community is far-reaching. Already, the project has shown that it is possible to address climate change without sacrificing artistic integrity; that local action can translate into a global movement and that the theatre is a powerful tool for social change. There is talk of making this an annual event.

CCTA also creates community. Fifty playwrights wrote fifty short plays that were made available to collaborators worldwide. For each event, collaborators select the plays they want to present and send us the list. We publicize this information on social media and connect collaborators with playwrights, and other collaborators. In addition to the local conversation happening around each event, a greater conversation is taking place across time zones between artists who have never met. Plays adapted into short films in California are being screened in Germany and India. Playwrights in the US are reading their plays live on Skype for events in Australia. And so on. Some of these relationships may outlive the project and lead to more collaborations. Some of these events may inspire other organizations to do similar events. That is impact.

Finally, the biggest of the four concentric circles is the larger community. Typically, this is not a group we are accustomed to think about. I certainly wasn't until I started focusing on climate change. Yet to achieve maximum impact, conversations have to transcend the walls of the theatre. With my play *Sila*, and the other seven plays of *'The Arctic Cycle'*, I strive to bring together people who may not normally encounter each other. I hope to build bridges between disciplines – science, policy, technology, humanities, and the arts. This means presenting the play in non-traditional settings such as academic conferences, scientific institutions, or university classes. It also means collaborating with earth and social scientists early in the process, inviting community stakeholders to participate in talkbacks, and engaging

local environmental organisations. In 2014, excerpts of *Sila* served as the keynote for the conference 'Warming Arctic: Development, Stewardship, Science' at Tufts University. The play introduced the topics that were going to be discussed during the conference, but framed them within very personal narratives. It set a different tone for the conference and challenged scientists and policymakers to think beyond numbers. It also created a dialogue between science, policy and the arts.

The same is true for the CCTA project. For one of the events in New York City, we invited a NASA climate scientist to talk about COP21 and the role of narrative in effecting social change. A dance company in Brooklyn, New York, invited a representative from the local chapter of the international organization 350.org to talk about their current initiatives. And various universities are incorporating their CCTA event into a larger conference that includes earth and social science, or in one case, leaders from three different faiths. This kind of cross-pollination promotes a better understanding of how people from different disciplines are tackling climate change, and how we can best support global efforts. It also creates a model for the kind of cross-disciplinary, cross-cultural collaboration that is possible in dealing with this global issue. That is impact.

Increasing self-awareness and affecting social change on a global level won't happen overnight. It is unlikely someone will walk out of a play, sell his or her car, and sign up to Greenpeace. We do ourselves a disservice when we look for immediate impacts based on metrics. From time immemorial, the role of the arts has been to create the narrative that holds culture together. Rewriting that narrative won't be easy. It is without a doubt the biggest, most fundamental shift humankind has ever had to make. Our job then is to celebrate every small step along the way. Our job is to recognize that there is potential for impact in every idea, every interaction, every performance, no matter how modest. Spreadsheets may lure us into thinking we are doing important work. But the faster we learn to see where meaningful impact

is, the better our chances of creating the sustainable culture we desperately need to ensure our survival.

- **Community and Art as a way towards ecological sustainability - Marco Kusumawijaya**

We are facing an environmental crisis. There has to be a new opportunity for communities to find alternative ways of living towards ecological sustainability – inviting critique of the state, market and desire, while also nurturing an ambition of society to go beyond mere development.

By community I want to focus on groups of people sharing relatively small geographical territories, living everyday life in common environments, sharing resources and feeling the effects immediately when something goes wrong. I exclude from this definition 'community of practice', 'imagined community' (nation-state as in Benedict Anderson's), 'institutional communities' such as European, ASEAN<sup>1</sup> and other international associations of States.

Collaborative works made with communities reflect their environment, ranging from the imperfections of the State and market they live in to internal questions of ambition and desire, inviting critique even of the community itself. Through this process communities are encouraged to criticise and challenge, and through so doing, produce alternative concepts and actions.

Community can undoubtedly play a role in challenging everyday practice, from excessive consumption, to ideologies and approaches of environmentally sustainable production. Conceptualising and practicing everyday life that builds more commons within specific and bounded communities obviously provokes a question about action in numbers: How can communities be modern, egalitarian, democratic, and offer emancipation simultaneously?

We already see a consensus for an ecological transition. Sustainable change must occur among individuals, but it will never amount to sufficient action if sustainability does not pervade communities. Changes need to be tested out and rooted at the level of 'living together'. An environmentally

sustainable approach must be (re-)discovered or (re-)constructed in this social context. Community provides change with a viable route to scale. At Bumi Pemuda Rahayu, a sustainability learning centre in the south of Yogyakarta (Java island, Indonesia), we negotiate with our neighbours to replace wood with bamboo in building, construction and furniture. We organise regular workshops with a Japanese bamboo master craftsman, Takayuki Shimizu, to weave bamboo containers for daily use, using rapidly renewable materials that are also aesthetically desirable. We work with neighbours in the community to rediscover old menus, using locally grown produce and encouraging cooking without MSG and palm oil ingredients.

Small communities like ours can, through a process of dialogue and open communication, act as a moderating voice, helping to consider if there is a sustainable alternative. Community can be a meaningful critique of consumption and production when it also comes to desire and ambition.

A community provides a shared environment for common goods and narratives,

but there are persistent threats to common attitudes and approaches. It is urgent that a community also critiques itself, including its modes of consumption and production that contribute to environmental degradation and harmful processes.

A city is more connected to its people as a local-community than on the level of a nation state, where the majority of intrusion, encroachment and transfer of the commons into public or private properties take place. This in turn weakens urban communities like cities. In post-colonial states 'nationisation' (the process of becoming a nation) and modernisation brought together rapid urbanisation. Conflicts between different approaches to housing and urban developments are witnessed across the world because of that process. Privatisation has significant effects on communities experiencing poverty. Diversity and creativity in local communities are often homogenised by governments towards one single facet or approach. These tensions reflect the distance between communities in practice and nation states championing the common interest. The successful environmental conservation programmes



*Neighbour children making theatre with a resident artist, November 2015. Picture: Kenichiro Egami.*

<sup>1</sup> Association of Southeast Asian Nations

in Indonesia evidence a common interest between community and state. The local community enjoys freedoms around autonomy, care and critique – encouraged and facilitated the conservation programme, which cannot be effectively maintained by the state.

Indonesian artists have been working with communities to share ideas and approaches together. Taring Padi has worked with farmers, Komunitas Lima Gunung revitalises indigenous language performances with fresh compositions and Jatiwangi Arts Factory brings contemporary arts into a semi-rural community. Some artistic interventions encourage community members to become artistic collaborators themselves. Others engage communities as artisans or skilled workers. All are welcomed as audiences. We have also seen ad hoc alliances between artist and community to stage work on certain issues or societal events that affect the local environment.

The Bumi Pemuda Rahayu sustainability learning centre<sup>1</sup> recognises two basic ideas. The first is about process: changes towards sustainability need to be creative and innovative, based on consensus and conversation in people's own language. They should not be simplistic and imposing. The second is about the environment: changes must be tested in, and supported by, communities on a manageable scale. Underlining this approach is the common ownership of change. Recognising discoveries and inventions that might be replicated to encourage a pluralised effect: bigger than the individual. The Bumi Pemuda Rahayu residency programme invites creative professionals to experience communities first-hand, and through this experience to feel challenged by issues, to create and be changed. The residents are encouraged to work with neighbours. The centre is located in a semi-rural neighbourhood, with great potential to develop and some small problems to address. For the neighbours, they can experience art through direct engagement as a method of investigation and reflection.

After three full years, the Bumi Pemuda Rahayu sustainability learning centre has faced many difficulties in terms of funding, programming and administration. So far our impact has been minimal, but we do not know whether this is conducive of failure, or if it is the difficulty in measuring impact. The approach is likely to cultivate more long-term change. We will keep experimenting while increasing our sensitivity to detect signs for improvements and overall evaluation. We are also still developing our approach to evaluation to record impact, and effect on community and the environment – change and recovery towards sustainability. It is important to look closely at what the neighbours involved have gained. Our future vision includes a school that combines critical thinking, coproduction of knowledge and skills, and practical works with hands and soils. In the future there will be triennial festivals of ecological arts, and more works on renewable materials such as bamboo, wood and others.

<sup>1</sup> Bumi Pemuda Rahayu ([www.facebook.com/bumipemuda-rahayu](http://www.facebook.com/bumipemuda-rahayu)) is co-founded and -managed by three partners: Kunci Cultural Studies Center, Arkam Yogyakarta and Rujak Centre for Urban Studies.



- **The cultural dimension of environmental sustainability - Mike van Graan**

2015 marks the deadline for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted by world leaders at the United Nations in 2000. The 8-point MDG programme has been supplanted by the more expansive 17-point Sustainable Development Goals, now setting the ambitious international development agenda for the next decade-and-a-half.

Yet, while climate change (SDG 13), the environment (SDGs 14 and 15) and consumption and production patterns related to these (SDG 12) are addressed in the SDG programme, culture as a transversal factor that impacts on these – as well as other SDGs – has been ignored. Conversely, the setting and pursuit of the SDGs and their impact on culture, has hardly been an issue for the political decision-makers notwithstanding the advocacy efforts of international arts and culture entities such as the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFACCA), Arterial Network, the International Federation of Coalitions for Cultural Diversity (IFCCD), United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) Agenda 21 for Culture and the International Music Council.

Inevitably then, in fifteen years' time when the achievements of the SDG agenda are being evaluated, whatever has been gained will be questionable in terms of its sustainability, unless it has taken cognizance of, and has been rooted in the belief systems, values, traditions and worldviews – in short, the culture – of the intended beneficiaries of these SDGs. In order for development to be sustainable, it requires its beneficiaries to believe in it, in the intended outcomes and in the strategies to achieve such development.

Yet, it would seem that we are less likely to learn from history, than to repeat it.

UNESCO declared 1988-1997 the World Decade for Cultural Development explaining the rationale thus:

'Despite the progress achieved, the results of the first two International Development Decades revealed the limitations of a development concept based primarily on quantitative and material growth. From 1970 onwards, critical reflection gave rise to the Intergovernmental Conferences on Cultural Policies...in all parts of the world, and finally led to the Mexico City Conference of 1982 to put forward with great conviction the idea that 'culture constitutes a fundamental part of the life of each individual and of each community...and development...whose ultimate aims should be focused on man (sic)...must therefore have a cultural dimension..'<sup>1</sup>

In the wake of numerous countries achieving political independence after the Second World War, models of economic development – based on the pursuit of individual wealth, the rapid exploitation of natural resources and consumerist values to create need – and that worked in western societies were introduced to these countries where the value systems may have been quite different, emphasizing, for example, communal well-being rather than

individual richness, greater respect for the natural environment as the source of well-being and sufficiency for everyone, rather than wasteful consumption and environmental degradation in the pursuit of maximum wealth creation for company shareholders.

In short, there was, and remains conflict in culture, in the belief and value systems, that shape how different societies relate to their natural environment, to wealth accumulation and to each other. It is for this reason that UNESCO emphasized the cultural – rather than simply the economic – dimension of development.

In his book, 'Tradition, culture and development in Africa', Dr Ambe J. Njoh writes:

'On the eve of independence for most African countries in the 1950s, development economists and international development agencies were beginning to seriously contemplate the necessary strategies for facilitating development in the emerging nations....As the 60s drew to a close, some dissenting voices could be heard in the development economic community. These voices...began to question



Art from plastic bottles (source: [Such Initiative](#))

<sup>1</sup> UNESCO's Practical Guide to the World Decade for Cultural Development, 1987



the sagacity of defining the concept of development in strictly in economic terms.'

Njoh criticised leading development economists in the late 1950s and 1960s 'who considered the cultural transformation of Africa and other developing regions as a prerequisite for economic development. For these economists...the customs and traditional practices of non-western societies constitute a hurdle to so-called modern development aspirations.'

Njoh refers to the work of a leading developmental theorist, Sorenson who summarised the 'popular theory that underdevelopment in third world societies such as Africa is due to internal as opposed to external factors' thus:

Basically, the theory holds that so-called traditional societies...are underdeveloped because of a lack of important propellants of development, including a work ethic, morals, innovative and entrepreneurial capacity, free market mechanisms, a propensity for taking risks and organisational acumen. The absence of these factors, according to the theory, is itself a function of flaws in the culture, customs and social mores of traditional societies. Particularly noteworthy in this latter respect is the fact that the theory considers the leading cause of underdevelopment in so-called traditional societies as the fact that such societies tend to place a lot of emphasis on kinship and family rather than on individual success and little or no emphasis on sophisticated technology and the acquisition of material wealth.

Those subscribing to this theory – says Njoh – 'suggested that it was impossible for Africa to develop without abandoning its traditional practices and assuming Eurocentric cultural values, beliefs and ideology.'

Notwithstanding these decades-old analyses and insights, advocates of development continue to propose outcomes and strategies that not only take little cognizance of the culture of the supposed beneficiaries of development, but fail to recognize that their version of development – notwithstanding

their good intentions – is itself rooted in particular cultural paradigms.

'The spiritual-environmental world view held by Pueblo Indians is vastly different from that held by non-indigenous, Western people who view nature as something separate from themselves. The natural world is seen as an adversarial force, something to control and conquer. This belief system leads to the depletion of natural resources as more and more is taken from the natural world. As a consequence, species are endangered and lost at an alarming rate.'<sup>1</sup>

It is because of this vastly different understanding of nature, that western forms of economic development, now adopted globally, have led to climate change, to environmental degradation and to changes in the relationship between nature and communities in many parts of the world.

While in recent times the potentially adverse impacts of development on the environment have been recognized with the introduction of environmental impact studies to ascertain and mitigate such adverse effects, the same has not been done for culture. Culture, the natural environment, economic development and social and human well-being are not separate silos, but are fundamentally integral to each other.

Rather than separate cultural impact, studies being done in anticipation of development, future development outcomes and strategies, in order to be sustainable and have maximum positive benefit, must take seriously the potential environmental and cultural impact, and related factors, into account. In this regard, the recently created Toolkit of Culture 21 Actions by Agenda 21 of the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) that reflects on the integration of cultural aspects into sustainable development strategies at a local level, is an excellent start. Interestingly, a global survey using this toolkit revealed that 'culture and the environment' as a theme received the lowest score, indicating that much work needs to be done at local

government – and indeed, national – levels, to educate decision-makers and the public at large about the importance of the relationship between environmental sustainability, development and culture.

To this end, an initiative that arose out of COP17 when it was held in Durban – Don't Cop Out, Cop Art – bears witness to the education being done in this regard. The Climate Train hosted a variety of projects, including an environmental and land artist who developed monuments and sculptures out of found objects along the train's route, with the local communities; a spoken word artists who raised awareness of climate change in Africa through her poetry, and a collective engaged in 'guerilla gardening' transforming lifeless, dull public spaces into beautiful indigenous gardens along the route of the train.

The use of waste materials to create art – both conventional gallery art and public art – is also a popular way of raising awareness among the public about issues of consumption and waste and their environmental impacts. Mbongani Buthelezi has achieved fame for his technique using discarded plastic to create portraits that appear to be paintings or pencil drawings. The Such Initiative, led by artists Hannelie Coetzee and Usha Seejarim, create large-scale public art using recyclable materials such as their award-winning plastic bottle top mosaic tapestry.

While these initiatives are encouraging, and many others like them taking place at a local, grassroots level, there is much advocacy work to be done on the global stage and at national levels to convince decision-makers of the links between development, environmental sustainability and culture.

<sup>1</sup> Becker, L., Becker, N. 'Sacred Sites International Foundation', excerpt from Abstract for a UNESCO Symposium on cultural diversity and biological diversity, Paris, 1998

• **Prefiguring Sustainability:  
Response-Ability &  
Spaces of Possibility -  
Sacha Kagan**

We must stop thinking and working in silos – and in terms of so-called ‘pillars’ of sustainability (whether the environmental, economic, social or cultural ‘pillar’), reproducing and perpetuating the failed mental models that brought us where we are. In the following lines, I suggest an engagement for arts organisations, which is not merely about sustainability awareness-raising (with a narrow focus on the environmental as a separate concern), nor just about environmental management within arts organisations, however urgent and useful such approaches are. Sustainability is about reinventing worlds; it is a cultural project. Cultural (and arts) organisations are bearers of ‘spaces of possibilities’ towards sustainable futures. This is not just about professional artists (who of course can be very inspiring initiators), or about artists in social practice and communities (also playing essential roles), but it is also about sharing response-ability for more diffused artful doing and learning by local communities in spaces of challenging experience, imagination and experimentation.

**Arts organisations and sustainability as an integrated multi-dimensional search process**

Arts organisations (like any human organisations) work in complex and rapidly changing environments – or rather than ‘environments’, we should rather say in unfolding ‘worlds’, co-evolving with the organisation. These worlds are multi-dimensional: physical, ecological, social, economic, political, historical and cultural. Worlds are made of dynamic encounters of things, people, other living beings, places and times... many of these are related to each other in specific, multiple ways – even though it is a lazy and dangerous simplification to just claim that ‘everything is related to everything else’.

Sustainability is a normative search process which aims to address these worlds as a whole – not seeing them as a collection of separate domains (with the very

unfortunate image of ‘pillars’ of sustainability<sup>1</sup>), but seeing the personal, the social, economic, political, cultural and ecological realities as different levels, dimensions of worlds (or interrelated ecologies, as Felix Guattari famously suggested<sup>2</sup>). Sustainability is not a fixed normative picture, like a fixed model or template. Because reality is complex, changing and contextual, sustainability too is a constantly changing horizon, a search process that constantly needs to be revised and critically reviewed. Sustainability as a search process seeks no universal, but transversal properties that allow trans-local exchanges and translations, thanks to inter- and transcultural learning.

This is not to say that the dimensions are only instrumental to each other. The four or five dimensions of sustainability each hold intrinsic value and point to specific goals. The **ecological** dimension is foundational upon which everything else is built, and points us to the existence-value (and not only use-value) of many forms of life than constitute ecosystems around us and often together with us, whether in cities, in rural areas or in more-or-less wild areas. The **social** dimension points to the imperative of justice, for all groups in a society, which means developing a dynamic awareness to the situations of any marginalised group and to the dynamics of injustice. The **cultural** dimension points to the value of culture, the vitality of cultural and artistic expressions and their diversity, allowing a rich cultural life, guarding against cultural homogenisation, and linking a living cultural heritage to cultural change. The **economic** dimension seeks economic viability, not only of the arts organisation itself, but also of other organisations and agents with which the organisation is related. The economic dimension of sustainability points to the question of desirable and sufficient wealth and well-being, which often can be achieved through diverse forms of mixed economies ([1] market, [2] public, [3] gift, and [4] an economy of the commons, through shared community and stewardship of available

common resources). The personal dimension points to individual self-development and fulfillment.

Arts organisations therefore need to develop an integrated understanding of these contexts for their work:

- Sound practices of environmental management
- Practices that open up to all layers of society, including marginalised minorities and those seeking social justice
- Enlivenment of the cultural dimension
- Personal fulfillment of employees, volunteers, partners and audiences
- Practices which are economically viable for oneself and for others, also questioning the typical economic self-exploitation of the creative sector

As cultural organisations, arts organisations deal, more explicitly than other organisations, with the structures of meanings that we find and that we shape in the world around us: the worldviews that we hold, the values that we cherish and that we practice, and things that are speaking back to us. Arts organisations contribute to the changes in the symbolic universe that we build and inhabit, and which is full of sensory realities, sights and sounds, smells and tastes, sensations and movements. Engaging with culture, as an arts organisation means playing an important role in society, contributing to shape the systems of meanings in that society. This does have long-term impacts. Arts organisations thus have a special responsibility towards the cultural dimension of sustainability – in the sense of ‘**cultural sustainability**’.

Cultures are also a fundamental key in the search process of sustainability, when looking at all dimensions of sustainability together, in an integrated way – in the sense of ‘**cultures of sustainability**’. There will not be a shift of civilisation towards sustainability without a fundamental shift in contemporary culture, towards an aesthetically grounded understanding and respect for life in all its human and other-than-human complexity.

1 Dessein, J., Soini, K., Fairclough, G., and Horlings, L. (Eds.). *Culture in, for and as Sustainable Development. Conclusions from the COST Action IS1007 Investigating Cultural Sustainability*. University of Jyväskylä, 2015.

2 Felix Guattari. *Les trois écologies*, Paris: Galilée, 1989.

This means, for the arts organisation, to enrich the symbolic universe which is attached to the local realities – a kind of ‘enlightened localism’ (as discussed by Manickam Nadarajah<sup>1</sup>) and to enrich the symbolic universe which is attached to global realities, at the level of the whole planet – a kind of planetary consciousness of humanity as a species (as discussed by Edgar Morin<sup>2</sup>). It also implies not only the development of certain ethical values (beyond a simplistic green moralism), but also the enrichment and diversification of our skills, competences and ways of knowing reality.

### **Constituencies and response-ability**

Sustainability is a normative search process, questioning society, not just looking at the world around and describing it with a detached gaze. It requires that the arts organisations develop a ‘response-ability’, an ability to respond to issues of unsustainability. This means first of all, an ability to respond to the multiple constituencies inhabiting the immediate environment as well as the rest of the world.

To be able to respond to constituencies and the issues they face, arts organisations first have to recognise all their constituencies and to acknowledge them. We can visualize such constituencies along three axes of space, time and otherness:

- One axis goes from the local level to the planetary level...
- A second axis goes from the long dead to the not-yet-born...
- A third axis goes from the human to the many others (that is, non-humans).

Some arts organisations may still fail to engage all of the local human constituencies: for example, among the inhabitants of a city, many non-visitors may be considered a ‘lost cause’ by certain arts organisations. Sustainability requires to seriously engage with the diversity of local communities rather than stick to the niche audiences

who do walk into the theatre. For example, the multicultural appeal of arts organisations is often still lacking (in some cases even despite genuinely emerging efforts).

The response-abilities of arts organisations are not, however, limited to engaging with immediate situations. They are relating to historical heritage as well as to future generations. Furthermore, sustainability also calls attention to our community with non-humans. For example, the local ecosystem of the river that flows through a city demands to be attended to, not only in very concrete terms (with art managers implementing good practice in environmental management), but also in symbolic terms (e.g. the symbolic relationships of the city to its river and to the river’s ecosystem).

The constituencies also include humans and non-humans that are far away from the local environment of an arts organization. Whether for geopolitical reasons – if we think of the Syrian refugees, who in Europe were long felt as ‘far away’ by many, until the reality-check came closer to home, revealing the un-reflected selfishness of many Europeans; or if we think of LGBTQI people who are persecuted in Uganda, Russia and too many other countries – or for global ecological reasons, when we refer to climate change and the many communities affected worldwide. Any arts organisation needs to address the issues related to our global interconnections, and planetary responsibilities as one fast-growing species on this planet.

If arts organisations aim to seriously relate to these diverse constituencies (as some are already doing), and to have cultural impacts, they need to further develop their approaches and formats to enhance their response-ability to this world. This asks an arts administrator or manager to think beyond existing ‘performance indicators’ and develop new ones. This requires creativity and a qualitative turn, looking beyond the existing, mostly quantitative, indicators about revenues, attendance numbers, etc.

**Arts organisations need to develop qualitative performance indicators that address the multiple dimensions of sustainability**, and that can give a meaningful feedback about the effectiveness and the limits of the work done so far. One attempt to develop such a tool emerged in Canada: Douglas Worts and his colleagues developed a few years ago a set of qualitative performance indicators for self-assessment by museums, called the ‘Critical Assessment Framework’, which focuses especially on the levels of individuals (visitors and non-visitors), communities (locally) and the museum (the staff and volunteers at the own organisation). As Douglas Worts himself argued meanwhile, such an evaluation framework would need further expansion, to also include relations with other organisations, as well as the ecology and society of whole regions and the entire planet.

### **Grounding spaces of possibility in artistic inquiry**

Thanks to artistic openness, to the new and to continuous learning, arts organisations have a great potential to become not only learning organisations (i.e. organisations that are continuously learning and evolving, developing themselves), but also open learning spaces for others.

This potential needs to be tapped into. Sustainable development requires transversal, creative ideas and approaches to new questions facing society. This is where artists come to the forefront. A growing number of artists are dealing with issues of social, economic, political, intercultural and/or ecological natures (as I discussed in the book ‘Art and Sustainability<sup>3</sup>’), which all can shed new lights on questions of sustainable development. The role of the arts organisation, in this process, is to accompany, support and foster such artistic inquiries. It is to provide a space of free play that artists need in order to be able to share their inquiries with others. But it is also to challenge and stimulate artists to further develop and realize their perspectives in relation to the locality where the art organisation is placed.

<sup>1</sup> Nadarajah, M., Tomoko Yamamoto, A. (Eds.), ‘Urban crisis: Culture and the sustainability of cities’, Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Morin, E. ‘L’an I de l’ère écologique’, Paris: Tallandier, 2007. See also: Morin, E. ‘La méthode’, Paris: Seuil, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Kagan, S. ‘Art and Sustainability: Connecting patterns for a culture of complexity’, Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2011.

As many arts organisations are well versed in, artists can bring perspectives that help develop critical reflexivity in society (when they are not content with playing within the sandbox of the art worlds):

- They can make us become aware of routines, social conventions, habits and other aspects of our lives, of which we are barely aware (or fully unaware). They can warm them and invite us to try out alternatives.
- They can shape new aesthetic experiences that open up our perception to the intricate complexity of our environment, while making it accessible. They can shape symbols and reshape the symbolic values of any aspect of everyday life. This symbolic work is very important for cultural change.
- They can help us engage in new situations with an experimental attitude that is open to sensorial and intuitive knowledge, as well as to lateral thinking (thinking in metaphors instead of thinking in a narrowly deductive way), and thinking by doing instead of first thinking and then doing<sup>1</sup>. All these qualities of 'artful doing' are not reserved to artists alone. They can become contagious.

Through sharing these different reflexive perspectives, the artists may be able to provoke detachment from lazy thinking, enchantment to envision alternative realities, and empowerment to experiment with change. These qualities of artistic inquiry, and the creative processes they awaken, should be at the core of the arts organisation as an open learning space.

To be able to unfold these potentials for change, artists need open frames that allow for unplanned experiments and stimulate critical learning. The art manager's role is thus to open up these frames, allowing and fostering these artistic reflexivities and letting them flow through the arts organisation. The arts professionals can also



The 'Tag des guten Lebens' in Cologne, is not only a yearly car-free-Sunday festival with 100 000 visitors, but a space of possibility where thousands of residents in many streets develop own creative re-appropriations of urban space (picture: Marén Wirths on Flickr).

connect together the different challenging perspectives offered by different artists.

However, the constitution of *spaces of possibility* for sustainable development requires that arts organisations move beyond their own habitual spaces (both physically, socially and metaphorically). To reach out to people who are not part of cultural elites or of activist networks, these spaces have to be located in institutionally still undetermined spaces, where creative experiments and the everyday life of local inhabitants may come together, functioning as emergent open commons. This calls forward artistic and cultural interventions across the urban fabric, beyond the spatial-temporal and conventional frameworks habitually associated to existing cultural organisations and art worlds.

In *spaces of possibility*, the qualities of artistic inquiry that I shortly listed above are embedded in local (often urban) initiatives, embedded in neighborhoods and aiming to transform everyday life while addressing urban development and politics, rather

than performed as single art projects. They are strategically deployed for the realisation of an archipelago of heterotopian spaces – where we can concretely experiment potential futures without waiting for others to do it for us. One example of such an archipelago is in the city of Hamburg (Germany), the Right to the City network (including the Gängeviertel, Keimzelle, KEBAP, Planbude and other spaces and initiatives).

Spaces of possibility are actively networked with each other and with wider movements working towards emancipatory and ecological goals (such as discussed for example in the 'Convivialist Manifesto'<sup>2</sup>). These spaces offer civil society the opportunity to activate change-agency and empowerment by operationalising 'prefigurative politics' – the immediate practical experimentation with desired future forms of social life, without waiting for (necessary) transformed larger political and economic structures to allow the wider dissemination of such

<sup>1</sup> Hans Dieleman, 'Transdisciplinary Artful Doing in Spaces of Experimentation and Imagination', in *Transdisciplinary Journal of Engineering and Science*, Vol. 3, 2012, pp. 44-57.

<sup>2</sup> 'Manifeste Convivialiste : déclaration d'interdépendance', Lormont: Le bord de l'eau, 2013 - [English version online](#)



social innovations. Spaces of possibilities are 'spaces of imagination and experimentation', as coined by Hans Dieleman.

Art organisations can contribute to grounding spaces of possibility in artistic inquiry, by opening up spaces of challenging experience, imagination and experimentation. Sustainability is a radical search process, it requires highly challenging (rather than comfortable) aesthetic experiences, while at the same time such experiences should remain accessible to different participants. The same artistic proposal will be more or less challenging, depending on the background of each participant. How to avoid merely providing comfortable aesthetic satisfaction that maintains people in a state of uncritical anaesthesia (or offers pseudo-challenges to blasé high-culture elites)? Spaces of possibility are not places for anaesthesia and political self-satisfaction.

Spaces of possibility unfold in thinking by doing. This is as if the artist, or other initiator, is inviting people to take a ride on a bike, although they have not yet learned how to ride a bike. The art organisation needs to develop safe places where participants can feel enough trust to 'take a ride' in a situation that is new and uncertain, and allow themselves to experience surprise and confusion, and still be open to learn something new out of it.

What I also mean concretely by experimentation is that art organisations can also offer some hands-on activities that invite people to experiment with doing things differently. It can be a workshop, a market, a big living room or playroom set up in the middle of the street, or many other things. It should invite people to bring together their heads, their hearts and their hands. Invite people to a place where they can test out things, like acrobats walking on a rope with a safety net below them.

Imagination is important because spaces of possibility are about exploring multiple alternative realities and alternative futures. The goal is not to close down people's imaginations so that they "get it", so that they get the one correct image or interpretation. Arts organisations are no churches for a

gospel of sustainability. The goal is to invite people to engage with situations and with their imaginations, without settling down too soon.

This is about developing safe and trust-inspiring places that invite their visitors to a participation with consequences, not just some token or superficial participation. These places need to foster a social creativity – a creativity that is no longer just the privilege of individual artists on stage – a creativity that flows as a good conversation between friends. Participants need to be stimulated to think and act differently, even if it feels silly. Creating that type of creative climate is also a real challenge for the arts organization.

Finally, shaping spaces of possibility, as arts organisations, is like weaving a spider web, not alone but together with many other spiders from outside the cultural sector – joining existing urban and regional cross-sector networks (such as 'Transition' or 'Right to the City' networks in different cities) and helping build new ones. Such networks involve a great diversity of aspects and dimensions of economy, society, ecology, culture and local everyday life. Sustainability implies moving away from thinking and acting within specific professional fields. The work of such networks is to engage each other into shared public discourses and to build a democratic space together, to continue experimenting and connecting different experiences. There can and should be tensions within such networks. It is actually deleterious to expect or enforce permanent consensus. A balance between collaboration and antagonism is much more sane, as long as the conversations and web-spinning continue (in an 'agonistic' democratic space as argued by Chantal Mouffe<sup>1</sup>).

Engaging with the search process of sustainability, arts organisations are challenged to relate both to 'cultural sustainability' and to 'cultures of sustainability'. Their potential contribution to the multiple dimensions of sustainable development implies more than mere environmental awareness raising and the necessary greening of creative processes. Arts organisations have a role to play in the wider diffusion of artful, aesthetically challenging and playfully experimental practices and spaces in local communities (based in artistic inquiry, but reaching beyond single arts projects), contributing to the development of spaces of possibility, as prefigurative politics for sustainability transformation<sup>2</sup>.

1 Mouffe, C. *Agonistics. Thinking the world politically*, London: Verso, 2013.

2 The notion of 'sustainability transformation', which has gained some popularity in the field of Sustainability Science, points to radical innovation towards sustainability, i.e. a more disruptive change than what was discussed in earlier sustainability discourses.

- **The S-word -  
Yasmine Ostendorf**

The arts and sustainability are no strangers to each other in Western Europe. For instance: since 2012 all cultural organisations that receive regular funding from Arts Council England (NPO's and MPM's)<sup>1</sup> are required to report on their environmental impacts, using Julie's Bicycle advanced carbon calculators (The Creative IG tools) that are made specifically for the cultural sector. This makes Arts Council England the first arts funding body in the world to recognise the environmental role the cultural field can play and to provide the services to the field to support the process of reducing its carbon emissions. Museums, theatres, festivals, tours, galleries, productions, more and more cultural organisations are greening their practices and starting to understand their environmental impact. The IG tools help measure energy, water, waste, recycling, travel (audience, business touring), production materials and allow you to benchmark your organisational outputs against other similar cultural organisations. The Tools currently have over 2200 users across 43 different countries. With arts funding drying out in Europe, more and more arts funding bodies are looking at this pioneering collaboration. If not for the planet, for their pockets; Julie's Bicycle's recent mid-term report Sustaining Great Art identifies a 6.3% decrease in carbon emissions in 2013/14 (compared to 2012/13), representing a saving of 7,063 tonnes CO2e or £1.25 million.

Taught to love and conditioned to use the term sustainability I left London at the beginning of 2015 to do research across different countries in Asia, interviewing artists, curators, cultural policymakers and academics about their struggles, challenges, ideals and ideas on 'shaping more sustainable societies.' Within the first week of interviews I had to ditch the word 'sustainability' as it created a lot of confusion in my conversations. I was lost in translation. Ironically the S-word was all over the websites of companies such as the environmentally

highly debatable APP (Asian Pulp and Paper), but Asian artists were staying away from terms as sustainability and climate change. Generally speaking sustainability is considered a Western word, a policy word, not having anything to do with the arts in Asia. Or even worse, the word is used as the equivalent of the word expensive. Artist Robert Zhao clarifies: 'electric cars are more expensive and organic food is more expensive' – both are supposedly the 'sustainable alternative'<sup>2</sup>.

At the National Arts Council in Singapore, Kenneth Kwok, Director (Arts & Youth and Strategic Planning) explained how they relate to sustainability not from a technical but from a cultural heritage and conservation point of view: 'We've come very far as a country and, increasingly, people are looking at other dimensions to their lives, the more intangible things that go beyond the material. Singaporeans are becoming more vocal, for example, about the importance of

culture and heritage, and about sustainability. We see more people actively and passionately speaking up about say, conservation issues rather than just leaving it to the government as in the past. There is also growing interest in the preservation of the traditional arts because of how they speak to who we are as a people and a nation.'<sup>3</sup> This more holistic approach to sustainability was central, not just in Singapore but in most other countries such as Indonesia, for instance. This approach relates not strictly to the natural environment but to tradition, each other, to the community and quality of life (and food), without S-branding it. What the West has called Urban Farming, is what practically everyone in Korea has been doing forever with pots of chillies growing on every rooftop. No one would call that urban farming in Seoul. To start to understand each other we need to understand the different rhetoric, interpretations,



MOBILE HOUSE (*Practice for a Revolution*), Kyohei Sakaguchi 2012 (source: EU-Japan Fest)

<sup>1</sup> National Portfolio Organisations and Major Partner Museums

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Robert Zhao on the 1st of May 2015

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Kenneth Kwok and Audrey Wong at the National Arts Council Singapore on 29 April 2015

understanding concepts as *gotong royong*<sup>1</sup>, *Transforming*<sup>2</sup> or a *kampung* spirit<sup>3</sup>. Especially in less developed countries there are often informal systems in place for recycling, saving energy or sharing leftover food, except these systems are not branded as being 'sustainable or green', it would just be very stupid to waste resources<sup>4</sup>.

The reality is that we are not facing the same sustainability challenges. When typhoons or earthquakes are around the corner, people are less likely to think about the long term, as you don't know what tomorrow will look like. Or, where a lot of non-Western artists often still have mobility challenges such as visa issues, the elephant in the Western cultural sustainability chamber is the exorbitant amount of flying. Flying is often part of the professional practice of a cultural operator: attending conferences, Biennales, establishing international productions, all this traffic being a huge environmental burden. Even when in Europe the distances are relatively close and international train services are offered, budget flights are too tempting. They are the hamburgers of transport; you know it's a bad choice, but it's cheap and quick. In Asia distances are quite different and a lot of countries are peninsulas so a train is often not an option, so people generally travel less. However, Low cost airline AirAsia (and other budget airlines) created a massive change and made flying in the ASEAN region accessible to a lot more people over the last decade.

Instead of flying more, we need to stay longer, making our trips more valuable, observing, learning, picking up local words, eating the local dishes, understanding the context and making new friends. To allow this, policies and funds need to be process driven, instead of outcome driven. And this travel needs to happen two ways. In addition we have a whole range of modern technologies that facilitate our keeping in touch that we need to embrace (even) more. Skype meetings, e-learning platforms, webinars; the digital shift has opened up a whole new area communication. However, even digital has an environmental dark side: by 2020 the carbon impact of digital will exceed the carbon impact of aviation. The digital industry as a whole currently consumes two per cent of the world energy and will generate as much CO2 as the airline industry within the next five years. This indicates the urgency for more research into renewable energy opportunities for the digital industry, an area in which currently North America is taking the lead.

And what is the responsibility of the artists? We just have to trust they will ask the right questions. Artists have a unique ability to respond to society, which is their artistic response-ability<sup>5</sup>. An example is the work of Japanese artist Kyohei Sakaguchi. Studying architecture in the nineties he was frustrated with the idea of having to bring more buildings into this world, whilst at the time there were six million empty houses and unused real estates in Japan. Instead of pursuing a career as an architect he started investigating the life and systems for survival of homeless people and was amazed with the creativity and innovation he found along the bank of the Sumida River. An old man explained him how his house, built from scrap wood and a polytarp panel, could be disassembled by one person into three parts for easy transportation and floated like a boat during high water. He said: 'There are so many earthquakes in Japan. I don't understand why people want to build such high buildings... It's best to live in a light weight house that

would only make a bump on your head even when it collapses, instead of burying you to death'<sup>6</sup>. It was the starting point for Kyohei Sakaguchi's project 'ZERO Re:public', which included launching a New Government. This 'New Government' is not in resistance against the current government, but co-exists in a different layer, where 'surplus' resources such as land and buildings are used. With 'ZERO re:public' Sakaguchi seeks clues for constructing an alternate system of living, challenging and questioning current conditions of labour, capital, resources and space. I was part of one of his clues: the ZERO Hotel in Gwangju, a former *goshiwon*<sup>7</sup> where instead of paying with money for my accommodation, I had to make up a currency. It was the first, but hopefully not the last time in my life I could pay with curiosity. Next to the ZERO hotel, you could find ZERO squares for public lectures, ZERO Immigration service (for new citizens of the new Government), a ZERO artist' residency and many other initiatives. All these places are free and breeding grounds to explore alternatives, share food, meet people or share knowledge (at the Immigration Service I found a comprehensive map of where to find cheap and great food in Gwangju). Kyohei is now talking to local councils about introducing more ZERO centres.

We all have our part to play but we need to realise we are playing them in different theatres. We have different challenges, different resources, and we need to watch each other and start understanding our different languages, - not just literally. We need to build solutions that speak to local audiences and environments; otherwise we remain lost in translation.

'Creative responses to Sustainability' Country Guides are free to download at [culture360.asef.org](http://culture360.asef.org) and supported by the Mondriaan Foundation and the Asia Europe Foundation (ASEF).

1 Gotong Royong refers to a collaborative approach, helping each other out, the community. It originates from Indonesia, where nationalism was on the rise after the Second World War. Indonesia's first president Sukarno actively pursued the idea of gotong royong as an Indonesian way of life in a newly-independent nation. Gotong Royong is selfless and it contributes to a higher goal, the needs of society/the community and strengthens its cultural identity.

2 Transforming is a combination of the words transformation and making, an 'invention' of the House of Natural Fibre (HONF) in Yogyakarta. The word is used at the summit HONF organised in September 2015, bringing together hackers, makers, scientists, artists and researchers to exchange ideas about transforming society.

3 A term frequently used by Ground Up initiative in Singapore, which relates to the village (*kampung*) life. It refers to sharing, trust, friendships and generosity.

4 ASEF's Country Guides 'Creative responses to Sustainability' include a Glossary, collecting different local terms that are used in relation to sustainability.

5 The word 'response-ability' is used here deliberately, as originated by philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, and refers to having a unique and creative ability to respond to something, this being the essence of the reasonable being. Levinas, E. 'Totality and Infinity', Duquesne University Press: Pittsburgh. 1961

6 Quoted as from Kyohei Sakaguchi's article 'Utopia at the Riverbank' published in Asia Culture Centre's publication 'The Book Whale'

7 Korean housing for students or people with low incomes

# 05.

## CONCLUSIONS

*The whole climate of thought will be different. In fact there will be no thought as we understand it now*

George Orwell

Arts and environment, its parameters and margins, do not present a simple discussion. The big issue of climate change has an effect on all aspects of our decision-making, a spectrum within which art is merely one facet. We must understand the fundamental importance of finding environmentally sustainable solutions to prolong massive deterioration to our planet's resources – a question that has perpetuated contemporary culture, from political point-scoring, academic literature and Papal Encyclicals: 'there can be no renewal of our relationship with nature without a renewal of humanity itself'<sup>1</sup>.

To think, however, that environmental science and the arts are polarities is ignorant to the nuances of this discussion: not one that can be pinned down in a single report, but amassed through numerous sources, artistic interventions, sustainable venues and activism across the world. Understanding art's place in this paradigm could (but by no means must) offer it a new role in the necessary culture shift we face to change attitudes. Art helps us to think, question and criticise the 'big issues' at the heart of climate questions, communicate with a humanity and understanding. Our cultures allow identities and differences, behaviours and challenges to be continuously redefined. In the way that one photo can change a narrative, so too can theatre or music communicate in a way that resonates beyond the scientific core of a discussion. As physicist Max Planck put it, 'Science cannot solve the ultimate mystery of nature because we ourselves are part of nature and therefore part of the mystery we are trying to solve'.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2015/06/18/read-pope-francis-full-document-on-climate-change/>

This sentiment is echoed in the recent publication of the Arts Council Wales strategy for 2018, titled 'Imagine', where they are clear in their vision that 'at its most basic, climate change and environmental protection are amongst the most urgent and all-encompassing issues of our time. We therefore need to understand the particular responsibilities that we have in the Arts, and to help our sector to understand and address those issues'.

Art does not pretend to know the answers, but it is fundamental in evoking the discussion, with audiences from all backgrounds across the globe. Jay Griffiths described **artists as shape-shifters with a hope which whispers of possibility, vision and change** and it is this characteristic that acknowledges the truth and severity of climate change. The vision and energy of artists outlined through this report seeks to change the narrative, and evoke a change, a provocation in audiences. It includes work that encourages discussion, work that reuses waste materials, work that combines disciplines with food, nature and physics, work that is built on sustainable principles, and activism that tackles the ethics of funding. These are only part of the art and environment question, which is changing and evolving rapidly.

Within this debate is the question about how we communicate and how linked emotions are in creating behavioural changes and actions. Art acts in this sphere by changing the narrative, moving away from the important (but often, impenetrable) statistics, charts and figures, making this instead a discussion about human beings, questions of survival and compassion. It is with people whom we identify.

There is an obvious role to play for sustainable practice and green business in the arts. Institutions that run using renewable energy sources, or integrate sustainability policies within their administration, offer an insight into best practice in improving industry standards. Funding is an unavoidable part of this paradigm. A perpetual cycle exists in arts and public funding, and alternative sources are few and far between.

Ethics, of course, has a seat at this table, and must be transparent and visible in the arts and environment debate. Unethical funding from sources that perpetuate damage to our ecosystem cannot be provided a 'licence to spill', cleaning dirty reputations (constructed on environmental damage, oil spills and arctic drilling) by funding national art institutions.

'The answer to inequality, democratic disengagement and climate change is not simply more art'<sup>2</sup>. COP21, and similar negotiations worldwide, are not an arts vacuum, but an opportunity for culture to influence policy. How best practice in the arts and evidence of its impact can work beyond immediate influence to play a bigger part in shaping discussion and behavioural change is a question the sector must now consider.

<sup>2</sup> Tims, C., Wright, S. 'The Invisible Hand. Art in the transition to another economy' IETM, 2013.



# 06.

## RESOURCES

There is a wealth of resources, publications and articles that develop the arts and environment question. Below is a selection of interesting literature that was used to develop this publication, and will provide you further reading to continue to find inspiration, question arts practice and make change.

[Artists and Climate Change: Contributions from the artistic community in response to the questions of climate change.](#)

[ASEF, Green Guide – Korea, launched 24 November 2015](#)

[ASEF, Green Guide – Singapore, launched 3 December 2015](#)

[ASEF, Connect2Culture, 'Linking the Arts to Environment & Sustainable Development'](#)

[CERN, 'Great Arts for Great Science' \(scroll until the bottom of the page - Press pack\)](#)

[Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management \(CIWEM\), 'Policy Position Statement, Arts and the Environment' \(browse under 'Other topics'\)](#)

[Cultura21](#) is a transversal, translocal network, constituted of an international level grounded in several Cultura21 organisations around the world.

[Culture\(s\) in Sustainable Futures – 2015: Conference and main outputs of the process.](#)

[Emergence, 'Culture Shift'](#)

[European Cultural Foundation, Idea Camp](#)

[Green Art Lab Alliance, 'A selection of funding opportunities for arts and culture projects related to environmental sustainability'](#)

[Greenpeace, 'Make IT Green: Cloud Computing and its Contribution to Climate Change'](#)

[IFACCA, D'Art Report 34, 'The Arts and Environmental Sustainability: An International Overview'](#)

[Imagine2020, 'THERE IS NOTHING THAT IS BEYOND OUR IMAGINATION'](#)

[Julie's Bicycle, 'Practical Guide: Communicating Sustainability'](#)

[Julie's Bicycle, 'Fit for the Future Guide: Investing in Environmentally Sustainable Buildings'](#)

[Julie's Bicycle, 'Practical Guide: Audience Travel'](#)

[Julie's Bicycle, 'Practical Guide: Waste Management in Buildings'](#)

[Julie's Bicycle, 'Where Science Meets Art'](#)

[Julie's Bicycle, 'Sustaining Great Art: Arts Council Year Three Report'](#)

[Mel Evans, 'ArtWash: Big Oil and the Arts'](#)

[Naomi Klein, 'This Changes Everything. Capitalism vs The Climate'](#)

[Nesta, 'Selling Sustainability'](#)

[Nesta, 'Galvanising Community-led Responses to Climate Change'](#)

[Ressource0: a resource platform on art, ecology and sustainable development, developed by COAL.](#)

[TINFO, Theatre Info Finland, 'TINFO News – Sustainability, Resilience and Performance Utopias'](#)

[United Cities and Local Governments, Agenda21, 'Culture – Actions'](#)

[United Cities and Local Governments, Agenda21 for Culture, 'Culture as the Fourth Pillar of Sustainable Development'](#)

[United Cities and Local Governments, Culture Summit, 'Culture and Sustainable Cities Final Report'](#)

[UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda, 'Culture: a driver and an enabler of sustainable practice'](#)

[IETM's Fresh Perspectives series - see \*IETM's publications\*](#)